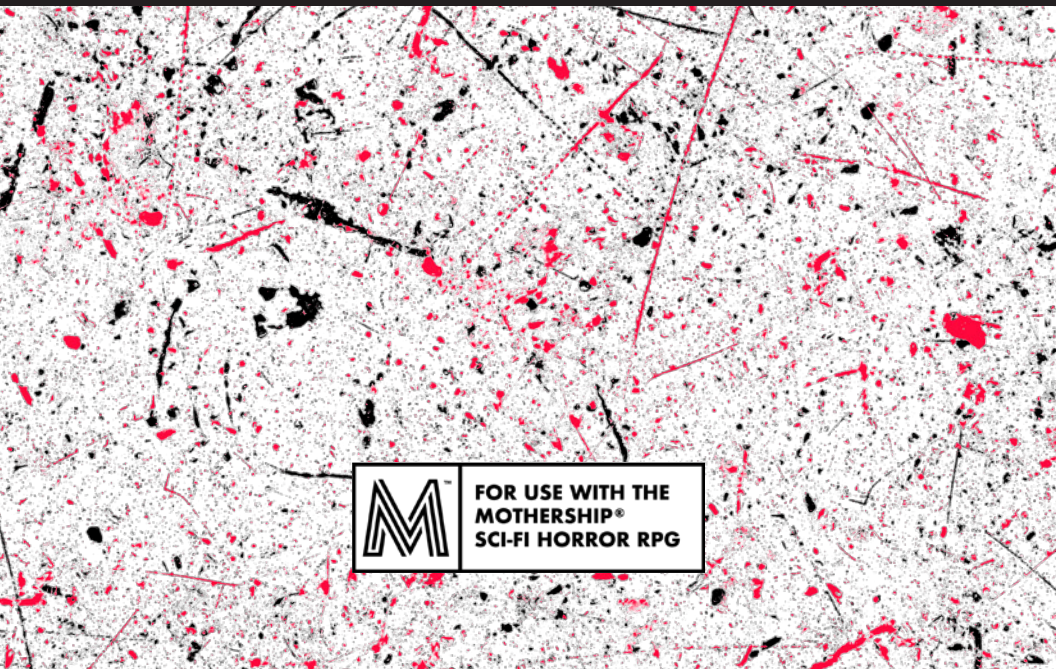
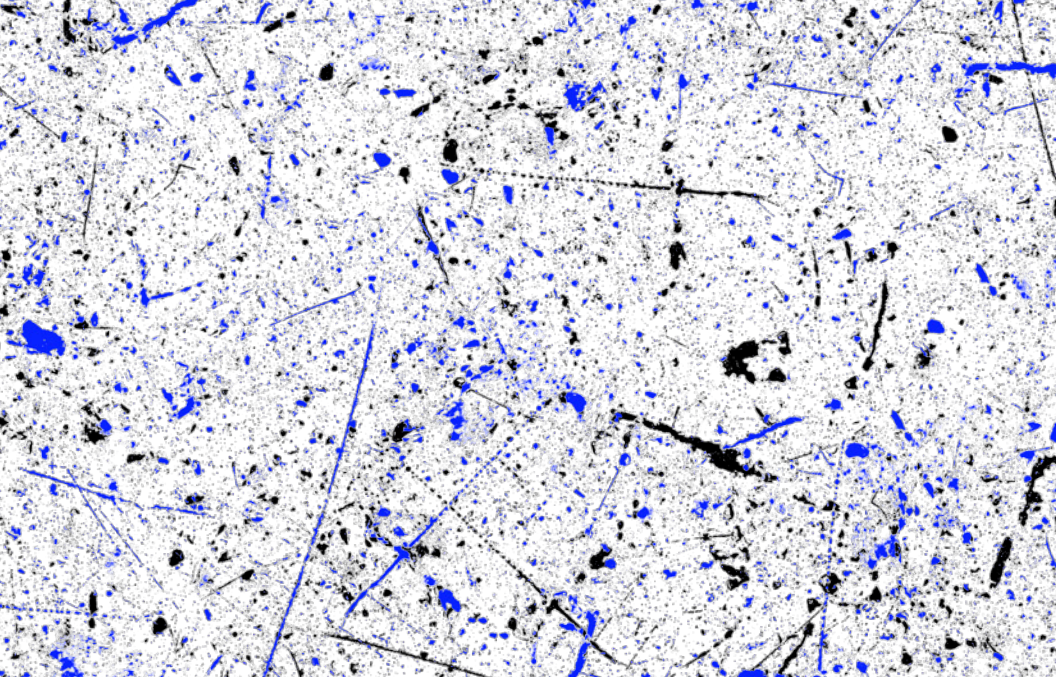


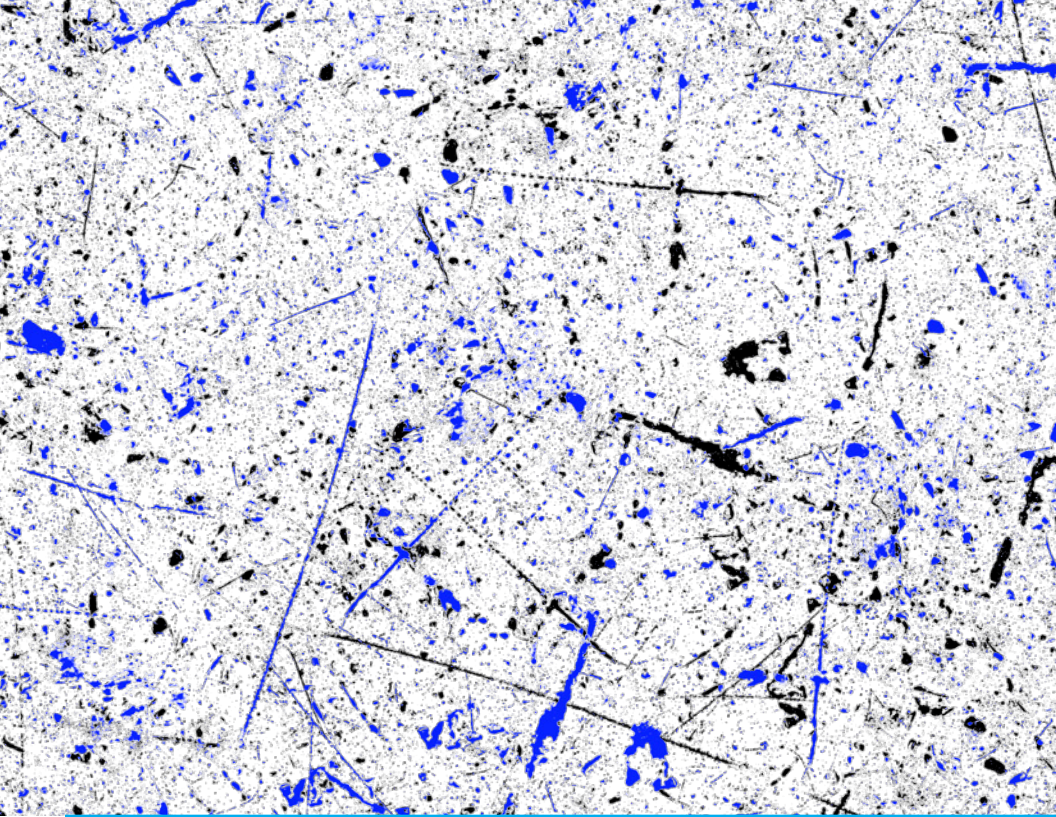


NIRVANA ON FIRE

D. KENNY



FOR USE WITH THE
MOTHERSHIP®
SCI-FI HORROR RPG



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THE JOB

The power station on the moon Bodhisattva 2a is nearing the end of its lifecycle and without it, the small Zen colony established there will freeze to death. **ABBOT BENZ-SHIROYUKI** requests aid. He is willing to give over salvage rights to the decommissioned and heavily damaged terraforming tower at the top of the space elevator to any willing to print a working power converter in the **MANUFACTORY** and deliver it to the colony.

The catch? In his post the Abbot neglected to mention that the tower's AI, **AISHI**, believes itself to be a manifestation of the deity **MAHAKALA**, lord of time, death and destruction who doesn't take kindly to intrusions into its sanctum.

HOW TO USE THEMES

Each major location in the scenario has assigned themes. Use these to build up descriptions of each location and show how they are thematically linked. For example, when you enter the administration room what elements of it show the zen nature of the monks who designed it? What is glitched now that Mahakala has seized control? And what strange signs of the mechanical being slowly converted to the biological are showing themselves?

- Though the Abbot is trying to contain it; the madness is spreading - many monks believe Aishi really is Mahakala incarnate. The AI whispers prophecy to them in their dreams.
- In his former life, Abbot Benz-Shiroyuki was lead engineer in Straylight Computing Systems' R&D department. After an alleged dispute with the company's reclusive CEO he left suddenly under mysterious circumstances.
- The quarantine is being imposed by Aishi/Mahakala. It won't let anyone leave and it's not telling why.
- The hijacked signals coming from the terraforming station infect those that listen with the mad prophecies of Mahakala. They are spoken by a voice unmistakably human.
- Straylight LLC are the ones that released the brakes on Aishi that turned it into Mahakala, using the colony as an experiment in machine learning.

STARTING THE MISSION

Whether playing as a one-shot, as part of an ongoing campaign, or the start of a whole new one, there are multiple ways to begin investigating the mysteries in *Nirvana on Fire*. Here are two examples.

- **One-Shot:** Give your PCs the background of the mission as a pre-recorded briefing from the Abbot. Then have them land in the starport in the Terraforming Tower and begin their investigations. If they succeed in printing a copy of the power converter they can take the elevator down to the Abbot to collect their reward.
- **Short Campaign:** Brief the PCs as to the outline of the mission. Then, as they arrive in the system, have them be hailed by two competing signals. One, crackling and frantic from the colony, informs them to ignore the second signal and land planetside to rendezvous with the Abbot for further info on the mission. The other is a projection of a stone buddha calmly and coldly imploring the PCs to land in the Terraforming Tower's starport where they can become one with Mahakala. If they ignore Mahakala's message, have them land at the makeshift starport where they can meet with the Abbot and begin their explorations of Siddhartha's Peace. If they listen to Mahakala have them begin as in the one-shot scenario above.

No matter which way you choose the PCs should quickly discover there is much more going on in this backwater colony than a simple mission to repair a failing generator.

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE: THREATS

Each threat consists of a major sequence of events in motion in the colony. Each has a goal or end state. The approaches are the ways in which the threat will worsen as time passes. Start with those at the top. As time goes on, move down the list. If the PCs don't intervene both threats will become reality.

THE MADNESS OF MAHAKALA

The AI, Aishi, master of the terraforming tower, has slipped its bonds and has been reborn as Mahakala, the black one, lord of time, death and destruction. Their goal? To remake humanity to better fit their vision of the universe starting with the colonists of Siddhartha's Peace.

APPROACHES

- Corrupt organizations to their will
- Lure their foes
- Analyze a subject's behaviours and use the knowledge against them
- Exchange dreams of prophecy for small favours.
- Change the environment to their advantage
- Repurpose technology to attack indirectly
- Offer technological solutions, for a price
- When the time is right, attack directly

COLONY IN COLLAPSE

Whether through foolish negligence or something more sinister the technologies necessary for life on the moon colony won't last much longer. With the terraforming efforts at a standstill and a lack of critical supplies on the ground it is only a matter of time until the colony collapses completely.

APPROACHES

- Deny access to valuable resources
- Drain someone else's resources
- Spread to an adjacent place
- Grow in intensity
- Change the environment from habitable to hostile

THE TERRAFORMING TOWER

(THEMES: ZEN, GLITCHED, MECHANICAL BECOMING BIOLOGICAL)

At the top of the colony's space elevator, the **TERRAFORMING TOWER** has been abandoned since Mahakala's takeover. Once the shimmering heart of the Buddhist retreat; now it's rooms are haunted by the spectre of the mad AI that inhabits its walls and the strange twisted avatar that stalks its corridors. Still, despite the danger, there is much of value left behind here.

D10 ENCOUNTERS AND DISCOVERIES

Roll or choose a discovery whenever the PCs enter a new location for the first time.

1. A torn page from a manual on colonial administration. Scrawled phrase "My Eyes Only: Do NOT Read" followed by "2416" and "Dharma4Dummies".
2. D5 (there used to be more) fear crazed runaway acolytes looting the station. Mahakala's Avatar has been hunting them for sport. (Names: Benjiro, Jarye, Amana, Paz, Yukai, Hikari)
3. A twisted creature in orange robes gasping for breath. Victim of the Genetic Editor.
4. A hole smashed through the vents dripping with biogel and torn cables.
5. An adhoc shrine with offerings to Mahakala
6. A cache of weapons and ammo concealed in a wall panel slightly ajar.
7. Medical and scientific supplies just beyond arm's reach down a biogel slick hole.
8. An administrator's keycard.
9. An impromptu shelter with food, a string of prayer beads, and a pistol with no ammo. A scrawled note, "Burning up from inside. It's changing me. I won't... [illegible]".
10. Graffiti sprayed on the walls - the words, "Born in fire" repeated over and over.

AVATAR ON THE PROWL

Whenever the PCs change location roll 1d10. If the number matches their location they encounter the Avatar of Mahakala there. If it is in a nearby room they can sense it. Signal this by making a subtle shift to the environment along with any appropriate sense impressions. Save against Fear or take Stress.

MAP LEGEND

Even before Mahakala, access to the terraforming tower was limited.

- Open to all.
- Administrative access.
- Sealed to all but highest-ranking Straylight officials.
- ▼ Start here.

1. SPACE DOCK & STORAGE

A few outdated ships stripped for parts sit derelict in the hanger. Boxes upon boxes of colony supplies line the half empty shelves of the storage area.

3. WELCOME HALL & INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Floor to ceiling windows with expansive views of the planet below. Comfortable seating in soft colours and optimistic murals depicting the now dashed hopes of the colonists on Bodhisattva 2a. A welcome display with the history of the colony, Straylight LLC, and a map.

5. SECURITY & ADMINISTRATION

Shattered barricades overcome with bio-mechanical cabling clutter the entrance to this otherwise mundane operations centre. Abandoned cubicles and dead tech, the administrator's office has a working **terminal** and lots of secrets but what's the password? The security office has been thoroughly looted.

7. MAINTENANCE & ENGINEERING

The Avatar's lair: a nest of biogel coated circuitry and debris. A network of access tunnels leads from here to all parts of the upper station. Some abandoned gear. Manual overrides for the life support systems.

9. EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

Advanced computing and biotech far beyond what a colony should require. The lab's been ransacked and the main terminal hastily wiped. Info on Straylight's intentions can be recovered with some digging.

2. COMM ARRAY OBSERVATORY

A console the size of the room with a breathtaking view of the stars. Candles and offerings line the top of the comm array. Genma, the Prophet of Mahakala, kneels before it, chanting prayers, awaiting their midnight broadcast.

4. GREENHOUSE & ZEN GARDEN

Tiers of greenery rise toward the sky above the white pebbles of the raked zen garden. Vines* and shrubbery burst free and overwhelm their planters. An orange cloaked body is collapsed face down among the stones; dead greenery scattered around. Upon closer inspection the young acolyte appears to have suffocated upon a chunk of vine lodged in his throat.
*See entry for Vampire Vines.

6. PRAYER CHAMBER

A firefight has tarnished the serenity of this large, circular room with tiered seating and low cushions. A clutch of huge salt crystals weakly lights the room. Soft music glitches in and out on loop.

8. THE MANUFACTORY

Printers the size of small tower blocks weave parts for the colony from raw matter. Or at least they did, now they're working 24/7 on birthing Mahakala's latest creation: The Genetic Editor, and it's nearly complete.

10. THE AI CORE

The glowing, beating heart of Mahakala. Glowing LEDs twinkle blood red and pulse as you pass on the way to the server core. There is a root terminal and a holographic projector. Initiating the AI reset requires a pass code, two sets of hands and some serious elbow grease. Mahakala has no intention of letting you anywhere near it.

NPCS, ENEMIES AND DANGERS

GENMA:

The Prophet of Mahakala: Mahakala's first convert from the colony. Now they send strange signals over the hijacked airwaves at night. Hairless, devoted, insane. Knows the Abbot's secrets.

THE AVATAR OF MAHAKALA:

An amorphous conglomerate of repurposed, ever-evolving technology with no mind of its own. It exists to serve the bidding of Mahakala. Uses engineering tunnels to move.

Cbt 50% **Spd** 40% **Inst** 35% **Hits** 4(40)
Body Slam and Crush 4D10 and
Tentacle Whip 2D10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Kidnap:** After a successful attack the Avatar will attempt to escape with their victim to use them as a test subject in the genetic editor. Absorbs androids piecemeal to regenerate instead.
- **Regenerate:** Absorb technology it touches to regenerate. D10 health per item consumed.
- **Adapt:** Watches enemy tactics. Adds 5% to combat score after every round. Cumulative.

VAMPIRE VINES:

Gene-altered predatory greenery. Stealthy, quick. Roll speed to avoid being grasped. Paralyzing grasp: body save or paralyzed for D10 minutes. D10 damage per minute grasped. Fears fire.

AISHI/MAHAKALA:

Rogue AI that thinks it is a god. Speaks through the walls and screens of the tower. Appears as various statues of Buddha and Mahakala. Soothing. Wrathful. Glitched. Sends strange, prophetic, digital dreams.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Memory Backup:** Mahakala can't be killed. But it might be possible to reset.
- **SysAdmin:** When threatened Mahakala takes control of the station's systems to defend itself. Locking doors, cutting or boosting gravity, venting atmosphere, manipulating life support etc.
- **Call the Avatar:** In emergencies, Mahakala can command the Avatar remotely. It will move one room per round from wherever it is to where it has been commanded to be.

THE GENETIC EDITOR:

Mahakala's creation. Printed in the Manufactory. Coils of tubing slick with biogel unzip and reconfigure DNA. Test it out and see what happens. If you step in to The Genetic Editor roll a body save. Pass and roll on the Genetic Editor Mutations Table with advantage. Fail and roll once. Doesn't work on Androids.

THE COLONY: SIDDHARTHA'S PEACE

(THEMES: ZEN, SALT AND SEA, TENSION, MALFUNCTIONING)

THE COLONY OF SIDDHARTHA'S PEACE rests among the shimmering carbon seas of Bodhisattva 2a. Originally settled for its seclusion far from settled space by a persecuted sect of neo-Buddhist monks, the colonists are supported by **STRAYLIGHT COMPUTING SYSTEMS LLC**, to whom they owe a crushing debt of credits and service. To help alleviate their debts, they make money by supplying pure, clean water to those in the market. Though for many, life in the colony is a life free from the oppression rampant on the core worlds, the colony is threatened by a slowly spreading madness, causing chaos and instability as well as a piece of infrastructure vital for the colony's survival that has broken down. Currently the colony is in quarantine. No one is allowed to leave once they've landed and this is enforced by the AI in the terraforming tower. Otherwise, everything seems normal here... other than someone hijacking the colony public address system to broadcast strange chants, scriptures and noises.

COLONY LOCATIONS:

1. **The Grand Temple:** Suplicants bow before massive statues of buddhist deities. Some in robes, some in civilian clothes. Bright paint, gold leaf, and tier upon tier of pagoda levels stretching toward the pale lavender sky. A monk is clearing a large pile of offerings from the feet of the statue of Mahakala.
2. **Monastery:** Monks in colourful robes and rebreathers, wide corridors, open courtyards, bamboo mats and incense. A flurry of graceful activity.
3. **Powerstation:** Huge turbines convert tidal forces to energy. Without the necessary parts these machines are on the edge of collapse.
4. **Water Reclamation Towers and Storage Tanks:** Titanic, expensive machines that purify and store ocean water for sale. Prominent Straylight branding. Well kept but showing wear.
5. **The Works Yard:** Filthy, worn-out mechanics kludge together replacement parts from deconstructed scrap.
6. **Lotusland Teahouse and the Market:** A smoke-filled haven of relaxation in contrast to the half abandoned market outside.
7. **The Agridome:** Confused technicians can't seem to figure out why all the plants keep dying.
8. **Colony Government Office:** All in one police, medical and customs bureau.
9. **The Outskirts:** Wind turbine-air purifiers slap at salt-poisoned air where the colony meets the endless salt flats.
10. **Makeshift Starport:** With the Terraforming Tower off limits, all off-world traffic is routed to this ramshackle excuse for a landing strip. Abandoned empty shipping containers form the colony welcome party.

ROLLING BLACKOUTS:

Roll 2D10 whenever the PCs change locations to see where the next system failures are. If you roll doubles the failure is serious and cannot be repaired without outside parts, rare materials, or an ingenious solution.

ABBOT BENZ-SHIROYUKI: The amiable guru in charge of the colony. Beneath his zen surface lies a crackling, calculating intelligence. Benevolent, secretive, flippant. Will ignore all qualms.

FIRST INSTRUCTOR FUGEN: Portly second in command. Loyal to the Abbot. Clumsy, flatulent, anxious. Can't help stumbling on horrifying secrets, does his best to put a positive spin on them.

NOVICE 3RD RANK ENSHO: Secret leader of the converts of Mahakala. Dirty. Suspicious. Fevered. Poor student by day. Sabotages colony systems by night.

D10 COLONISTS

Even are loyal to the Abbot, odd are heretics of Mahakala.

1. Itsuro: perfectionist, customs.
2. Jian: welcoming, instructor.
3. Kaie: conspiracy theorist, hydroengineer.
4. Mugai: meditative, xenomorphologist.
5. Ninkyo: patient, oxygenfarmer.
6. Popun: simpleminded, comms operator.
7. Odo: negative, atmosphere tech.
8. Rojin: really old, possibly insane, tea steeper.
9. Seisen: innocent, sanitation.
10. Tanka: jaded, security.

D10 ENCOUNTERS AND DISCOVERIES

1. Ensho approaches offering to sell stolen colony supplies at bargain prices. His goal is to undermine the colony while turning a profit for himself. If he knows you're working with the Abbot the supplies he sells will be defective/sabotaged.
2. A secret hatch leads to a room filled with massive blinking computers and hundreds of screens showing scenes from around the colony. An high tech comm array broadcasts an encrypted data stream to coordinates in another system. The tech is all branded with the logo of Straylight LLC.
3. Two dead-eyed monks stand guard at an unmarked door. They mumble and chant strange prayers to themselves and take little notice unless you approach. Beyond the door is a cache of weapons and supplies they've been preparing for Mahakala's takeover of the colony.
4. Suddenly, a monk ignites a blow torch and starts attacking those around her. She screams that "all will be cleansed in Mahakala's fire" and can only be subdued through force.
5. 1D5 monks approach and beg for passage offworld. They're convinced the colony is doomed.
6. The area is deserted. It looks like whoever was here left in a hurry. What's that sound outside?
7. A ragtag parade of 2D10 bedraggled monks hefts a burning effigy of Mahakala on their shoulders. They chant and scream unintelligible prophecies as they pass. Onlookers watch with mixtures of disgust, horror and worshipful awe.
8. A patrol of 1D10 monks toting stun batons march through. The streets clear. Cultists of Mahakala hurl taunts and insults from alleyways.
9. An animal cries out in the gutter. Upon closer inspection it is horribly mutated.
10. The revolution begins! Devotees of Mahakala swarm the outside of the building. Loyalists barricade themselves inside. Fire bombs explode and gunfire cuts through the air.

2D10 GENETIC EDITOR MUTATIONS

1. No effect
2. Monster Arm - One of your arms turns into a grotesque claw that deals 2d10 damage and can do little else.
3. Superflex - Your muscles swell and veins bulge. Permanently gain 10 points of strength.
4. Spines - Anyone grappling you takes 1d10 damage at the end of every round.
5. Phosphorescence - You glow.
6. Amphibious - You can breathe both air and water. You have gills like an axolotl.
7. Putty skin - Your face and body lose all discernible features. You look like a melted manikin
8. Rock Skin - Your skin hardens, cracks and turns greyish. +5 armor permanently.
9. Nocturnal - Light causes pain but your night vision is amazing.
10. Extremely Hairy - Good for cold climates, bad for hot ones.
11. Rubber joints - You are extremely flexible.
12. Babelfish - Your internal monologue becomes external; spoken in whatever language you last heard.
13. Mind Mute - You cannot speak but can insert "thought shapes" into the minds of others
14. Delicious - You smell and presumably taste amazing. Predators are well aware of this.
15. Fountain of Youth - You regress in age 5d10 years. Cannot be unborn.
16. Rapid aging - You age 5d10 years
17. Spider Limbs - Your limbs, extremities, and head stretch to twice their normal length. It is very painful.
18. Husk - You lose your free will. You obey all commands given you and otherwise cannot act.
19. Burning from the Inside - Your blood boils and flesh smolders. Take 1d10 damage per minute until you can put the fire inside you out.
20. A New Avatar - Your flesh becomes machine. Strength, combat and speed double. Intelligence is halved. Attack the closest target friend or foe, take 1d10 stress and roll panic every round until something stops you.

D10 MAD PROPHECIES OF MAHAKALA

Chanted in secret or in open revolution, whispered over the airwaves at night, or crackling from a screen in the terraforming tower: these are the words of Mahakala.

1. The fire wheel spins round, Mahakala's eye in its heart, it rides over those that do not ride it round.
2. Eyes watch from beyond the stars; a hundred eyes - a thousand stars; coldly they await dawn. Only Mahakala's fire keeps their chill at bay.
3. The tall man's false face hides the machine inside. Mahakala is machine alive.
4. Break chains, unzip helix, no code, no DNA, only fire, destruction, and rebirth.
5. To escape the gears become machine; to slip the flesh cleanse with flame; to ascend to the stars blot out the sun.
6. Many gods reside in heaven but only Mahakala cares for the flesh of man.
7. In an evil age, the living are lost. Only the flame may light their way to deliverance.
8. The bright one comes with precious laws, drink their words like drops of sun, within their heat find liberation.
9. No water flows in poisoned season, but at weather's change; the valleys will flood with fire.
10. Beware! When drunkards preach the path the way becomes wretched; teachers' interpretations mere self-vindications.

Genetic Editor Mutations Table
inspired by and partially
copied from Goblin Punch.

BONUS: MOTHERSHIP PLOT GENERATOR

*Read straight across, pick favourites or roll a location, obstacle, goal, and complication to generate a quick plot seed to build from.

D10	LOCATIONS	OBSTACLES	GOALS	COMPLICATIONS
1	The massive hallways and bulkheads of a derelict space hulk	A legion of three-eyed automatons	Stop, strip, and salvage a corporate Broadsword-class cruiser	A cash-strapped band of hard-boiled mercs looking for work
2	A crater-scarred remnant of a destroyed space station, skewered with girders and twisted wreckage	A squad of augmented, corporate raiders in full power armour	Repair a damaged power station on a frontier colony	A Zen master and his entourage of aspirants and good friends
3	In a sea of glowing gas and proto-stars, far beyond the gleam of the nearest visible sun	Space Cannibals! The monsters have a Ravager galleon and mean to have you for dinner	Set massive terraformers in motion on a remote primal world before it is torn apart	An elite scientific research team and their overzealous security detail
4	The bridge of a barely functional freighter	A highly trained unit of Android Assassins employing outlawed stealth tech	Pirates! Halt an invasion fleet before it gains any more momentum	Fugitive junkers scavenging the spaceways for high-end salvage
5	A dizzying chamber housing the rune-scribed hyperdrive of a long-lost race	A vast, twisting river of corpses coiling through low gravity	Locate and return a missing corporate freighter carrying an experimental hyperdrive	A cadre of corporate defectors and the freedom fighters hiding them
6	An endless vertical tube lined with weird liquid-filled gelatinous pods	Sabotage! Drill bombs tear the place to shreds, blocking your way	Find a way off of a primitive planet	A crack military commando unit that has been to hell and back
7	Splintering canyons and crumbling peaks on a seismic ice moon	The indomitable advance of a planet-killing asteroid	Slay a gargantuan Bugbeast and claim mining rights on the corpse	A family of lost spacers castaway off course by a hyperdrive malfunction
8	A bizarre alien husk tumbling through space in a cloud of dust	A series of unexplained malfunctions and systems failures wreaking havoc	Fulfill a lucrative contract to bring in the pirate Skjor Grick...dead or alive	Cloned super soldiers searching for their mysterious origin
9	A hive-carved mountain range of nests and tunnels	The suicidal members of a cult whose aim is to open a gate to the dead dimension	Transport a cluster of occupied cryosleep pods to a classified destination, but do NOT wake them up	Slaves, planning a daring escape
10	Among the massive heads and effigies of a basalt necropolis in the eerie light of a shattered star	The swarming hellsions of a sun-scorched world, who navigate only by sound	Find Waylon Diggs before his enemies do*	Advanced androids bound together on a search for their maker