

The Watchers

A Game of Thrones, Dominions, and Powers



*A 24 hour RPG by Nick Wedig
For up to five players, and one GM*



*How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who said the nations low!
You said in your heart,
'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
on the heights of Zaphen;
I will ascend to the tops of the clouds,
I will make myself like the Most High.'
But you are brought down to Sheol,
to the depths of the Pit. "*

-Isaiah 14:12-20

It is some time after the Creation and before the Great Flood. War rages across the Heavens. Some angels sinned against god, and were exiled from Heaven. Others chose to rebel against the Lord. Under Samael's leadership, these fallen angels wage war against to forces of the Creator.

In every war, there is espionage. You have been chosen by the Lord to infiltrate the rebel angels, and sabotage their actions from within. But is it rebellion or obedience to sin if God asks you to?¹

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Background

"The story so far:

In the beginning the Universe was created.

This has made a lot of people very angry and been widely regarded as a bad move."

-Douglas Adams,

"The Restaurant at the End of the Universe"

Before the creation of the earth, all was well in Heaven. All the angels obeyed and respected God and the divine order of things. But when God created Earth, he also created mankind. Many angels, especially Samael, resented humanity. The Lord had chosen mankind to be the centerpiece of creation, and their moral development was seen as of primary importance. The angels, once God's most beloved creations, were now to be subservient to mankind. Samael, and other angels, could not accept this, and began to agitate for change.

Shortly after humanity's creation, a host of angels, led by Semjaza, became enamored of human women. They taught these human women heaven's secrets, like metallurgy and astronomy, and fathered children with these women. These children, when born, were the monstrous giants known as the Nephilim.

When the lord God learned of these Nephilim, he ordered the sinning angels banished from Heaven. The angel Metatron, who had once been the human Enoch, tried to intercede on the angel's behalf, but the Lord would not listen. "You were formerly spiritual," they were told, "living the eternal life and immortal for all generations of the world; and therefore I have not appointed wives for you."²

When these angels were banished from Heaven, Samael moved from complaining to outright rebellion against the Lord. He chose to leave Heaven and the Lord's service and fight for control of Creation. About a third of all angels left with him. These rebel angels have created an alliance with Semjaza's exiled angels, but this alliance is an uneasy one: those that left willingly left for political reasons, but the exiles are criminals, and many penitently wish to return to the Lord's service.

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Character Creation

*"Somewhere they're meeting on a pinhead
Calling you an angel, calling you the nicest things."*

*-They Might Be Giants,
"She's an Angel"*

You are an angel, created to serve the lord God. In the war in Heaven, God has decided that you will play a special role: you will pretend to be fallen angels, and thereby infiltrate their ranks. Then you will report back on their actions, and attempt to sabotage their actions from the inside. Though an angel cannot die, this job is extremely dangerous: if you are discovered by the enemy, the mission will be compromised, and you may be abducted to Hell to be tortured for the rest of eternity. In comparison, mortal spies have it easy.

The first and most important thing to consider is who your angel will be. What is the angel's personality like? Are you going to be a high ranking angel, or a low ranking one? Are you an angel with a specific domain, such as the angel of fire or the angel of marriage?

Consider also what your angel's *cover story* will be. When they join the hosts of the fallen, what will they tell them? Did they chose to rebel, like Samael, or were they exiled for some sin, like Semjaza?

Each player character will have four relationships:

- one good relationship with an angel in Heaven
- one bad relationship with an angel in Heaven
- one good relationship with one of the fallen angels, or some mortal on earth
- one bad relationship with one of the fallen, or a mortal being

A "good relationship" means that you genuinely wish well for that being. A "bad relationship" means anything from rivalry to intense dislike to outright kill-on-sight hatred. Relationships with angels primarily will have to deal with personality clashes, relationships based on your job(s) in heaven, or past actions. Relationships with mortals can bring in blood ties, which make for meatier stories. Perhaps you have a human wife, or a Nephilim child.

If you want, some of your relationships could be to other Player Characters. Additionally, two of your relationships need to be with the same character another player character has a relationship with. You don't need to have the same sort of relationship



with the character as the other PC has; you might have a good relationship and they have a bad one, or vice versa. Obviously, discuss these relationships with the other players as you create them, so when you both tie your characters to Azazel, you both agree more or less on what Azazel is like.

Now you have two of your relationships tied to another PC's relationships. For your other two, keep those secret. Of course you should reveal them to the GM, but otherwise hide them from the other players, even if they are completely innocuous. Of course, if you have some illicit relationship: a Nephilim child, for example, you probably want them in a secret relationship. But these relationships are universally secret so that the PCs with secret relationships are not the only PCs with illicit relationships.

Every player character finally needs a *secret*. This is something that you wish to hide from the other player characters. Things like past sins (illegitimate children, in our continuing example) or secretly being an agent of the rebel angels. Take the GM aside for a moment to discuss your secret with her. She'll likely have feedback on the idea and will help you flesh it out. Listen to the GM's advice: she'll know what is going on in the game, and so some ideas she suggests that sound odd might be connecting your secret into another PC's secrets or to some other part of their plot. Be flexible about your character idea, and you'll have more fun in the long run.

While talking secretly with the GM, discuss where your character's *true allegiance* lies initially. Is the character really loyal to God and the forces of Heaven, or have they been sympathetic to the rebel or exile angel factions? This allegiance is only your initial starting point, and you can change your loyalties at any time, but it's good to let the GM know your initial intentions. For most of the game, you're keeping some secrets from the other players, but you should endeavor to not keep anything secret from the GM.

On your character sheet, write "Pool: 3". This number is how many points start out in your pool. This number may go up or down, but every character starts with the same number of points. Spending a point gives you an extra die to roll in a conflict, and spending several points can give you new secrets or relationships.

Create a Restriction for your character: something they cannot or will not do. Every time your restriction prevents a course of action, add a point to your pool. Restrictions represent the moral code you live by, and so violating your code is anathema to your character.

Finally, name your angel. For a good list of names for angels, you should check out:

- http://www.bulypulpitgames.com/projects/names/angels_and_demons.pdf
- <http://www.bulypulpitgames.com/projects/names/biblical.pdf>



Characters in Action


*"And there was war in heaven;
Michael and his angels fought against the dragon;
and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not."*

-Revelation 12: 7-8

As angels, your player characters are extremely competent. Because of their innate competence and their supernatural ability, any unopposed action they attempt will automatically be a success. So your angel could, if you wanted to, pick up a mountain in one hand and crush it to pieces with only a small effort.

But the bigger your miraculous actions are, the more likely they are to draw unwanted attention. If you were to destroy a mountain, there is likely a patron angel of said mountain, who would want to oppose you destroying their home. Small actions, that have only local effects, can often go unnoticed by NPCs, but if you push reality too hard, then the other angels (or other supernatural beings) will begin to push back. Additionally, you are angelic spies, so it is advised that you keep a low profile as much as possible. But sometimes you really need to move that mountain and don't mind if it annoys some minor Principality. And in those cases, you need the conflict rules.

When one player declares a character's action, and another tries to oppose that action, we have a conflict. In this situation, everyone should discuss what the conflict is about, what everyone's initial goals are and how much this conflict will decide. Suppose the player character's mission is to befriend Azazel, then capture him and return him to Heaven for trial. In this instance, we could theoretically cover that entire mission in a single conflict, but this would gloss over a lot of cool details. Maybe we would do this if it is a sideline mission, going on in the background while the main plot happens elsewhere. But if we are actually interested in the mission, we probably want to break it up into several smaller conflicts: one to fool Azazel, one to capture him and one to return the prisoner safely. Maybe several others along the way. So, we might zoom in on one specific moment, to see how it goes. Perhaps we zoom in even farther: not just one conflict to acquire Azazel's trust, but one convince his guards to let us see him, one to convince him we were fallen from heaven, another to convince him to put us in positions of power, etc. The GM and players need to each discuss all this and come to some sort of agreement about what this particular conflict is about. But note that these stakes can change after each round of combat, so your character may initially start trying to fast talk Azazel's guards, but wind up fighting for their life.



To resolve a conflict, this game uses a variant of Liar's Dice, a simple dice game. Each player will need several six sided dice (d6s); at least three and maybe as many as seven or eight. The GM will need about twice this many, so probably ten to fifteen dice.

At the start of a conflict, every player involved rolls three dice (3d6) and keeps their results hidden. If a player wishes, they can spend points from their pool to increase the number of dice they roll, on a one for one basis. The GM will roll three dice, plus another die for every player character involved in the conflict. The GM also keeps their results hidden.

Play begins with whoever started the conflict, i.e. the player who objected to another player character's action. That player describe in a sentence or two one action their character takes toward achieving their goal. He will then declare a number of dice showing a given face value. He states that he believe there are at least that many dice with that face value on the table. The next player can either Call Their Bluff, and demand everyone reveal their dice, or make their own bid. Every bid a player makes must either increase or keep the same quantity of dice, or it needs to increase the face value bid. You can do both at once, even. You cannot decrease the quantity of dice you bid, though you can decrease the face value if you increase the quantity of dice you bid.



Example: The player characters are trying to gain admittance into Azazel's palace in Hell. Amber has hidden two 3s and a 5, so he reasonably expects there to be at least another 3 somewhere hidden in other player's hands. She decide to bid "three 3s" and describes her character telling a long, very sad story of her exile from Heaven at the hands of an unjust God. Ben, the GM, has to either declare three of some other, higher face value, or four or more of any face value. Ben has six dice (three plus one for each of his three players), showing 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. He's pretty sure there are at least three ones in play, but he can't bid that since Amber started at three. He chooses to bluff and bid three 4s. The guard is not moved to pity: he is one of the fallen, who chose to leave of his own accord, so exile does not sound like harsh punishment to him. Carl has 1, 1, 4 showing, so he decides that it's worth escalating the bid quantity to be a little bit safer. He bids four 1s. His character tells of how he, too, had been disgusted with the administration in Heaven, and chose to leave rather than serve.



If you have several characters all attacking the same character, then the player who is being ganged up on will alternate in the bidding order with the attacking players. Most often, this situation takes the form of several player characters all focusing on the same NPC. That's why, in the example, Amber goes, then Ben (the GM), then Carl. If the example went further, it would be Ben again, then the third player, Dave, and Ben again, before play returns to Amber, where it started.

You cannot bid a face value outside of integers between 1 and 6 (the possible die results), but you can bid as any (integer) value you want for the quantity, including more than there are actual dice rolled.

When it is your turn, instead of making a bid of dice faces, you can choose to Call Their Bluff. When you think a player's bid went too far, you Call and then everyone will reveal their dice. Count the total number of dice on the board showing the face value that was bid. If there are less than the quantity bid, the player who made the bid is eliminated from the conflict; they have lost this conflict. If there are equal to or more than the quantity bid, then the player doing the calling is eliminated from the conflict: they have lost. In either case, narrate how the losing player character is eliminated from the conflict. In combat situations, injury is the most likely reason to be out of the combat. In non combat situations, the elimination needs to be appropriate for the conflict.

When one player is eliminated, take the time to renegotiate the stakes of the conflict. Are the original goals of the conflict still achievable? Have some characters switched allegiances or side? Bidding begins again, with the bid values reset back to the beginning. The minimum quantity and face value are both once again one, and the bidding begins escalating again.

One last quirk, which is important. Whatever the face value of the called bid was, it is now an invalid face value to bid. So if Ben called Carl's bluff of seven 4s, then in the next round, where Ben keeps competing with Amber and Dave, no one is allowed to name any quantity of 4s as their bid. So as a conflict goes on, your options diminish steadily.

Continue the cycle until there is only one player left, who is the winner. If a player wins a conflict, they add a point to their pool.



Relationships in Play

*"The Nephilim were in the earth in those days,
and also after that, when the sons of God came unto the daughters of men,
and they bare children to them:
the same were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown."
-Genesis 6:4*

While in a conflict, you can invoke your relationships to other characters to gain bonus dice. You do this any time it is your turn to make a bid, just by explaining how your relationship with that character is important to you in the conflict. If the character is present, this is usually pretty easy: they lend you a hand in what you're doing. If they aren't present for the conflict, you need to explain how something the character has taught you gives you an edge in this conflict. Your old mentor back in Heaven may not be around when you're knocking heads with the fallen angels, but you can think back to his advice as you do so, and gain an advantage. Justify your using the relationship to the GM.

If your relationship to another character is relevant to the conflict, you can put that relationship on the line. In doing so, you are risking that relationship: if you fail, then that relationship will be hurt. A good relationship will become a bad one, and a bad relationship will go away. You'll still know and have negative interactions with that character, but you'll just not get any mechanical benefit for those interactions. How a conflict makes a good relationship into a bad one is a question for you and the GM to discuss. It's a lot easier if the change in relationship is a direct result of the conflict, but in those cases where the other character isn't present, you may need to make the change in relationship a coincidental event or an indirect result of the conflict.

So those are all the risks you take in invoking your relationships. What are the benefits, you ask? For each relationship you bring into a conflict, you roll an extra die and add it to your pool of hidden dice. This gives you more information about what is going on, so you can better make bids and bluffs. So instead of having three dice to look at for guidance, you get four or more, depending on how many relationships you can bring in.

You can spend three points from your pool to acquire a new negative relationship, or five points from your pool to acquire a new good relationship. To make your bad relationships into good relationships, you need to spend two points from your pool and stage a conflict with stakes along the lines of "Get NPC X to like me".



Secrets in Play

*"This angel requested Michael to show him the hidden name,
that he might enunciate it in the oath,
so that those might quake before that name and oath who
revealed all that was in secret to the children of men.
And this is the power of this oath, for it is powerful and strong,
and he placed this oath Akâe in the hand of Michael."*

--1 Enoch 69:14-15

All PC angels have some dark secret that they wish to keep hidden. If these secrets were revealed, the angels might be cast out of Heaven, or horribly punished.

In a conflict, you can also bring your Secret into play and gain a benefit. Like with your relationships, your secret needs to be relevant to the conflict in some way.

When it is your turn to bid, you will make some hint towards what your secret is in describing your actions. If your secret is, for example, "has a Nephilim son", then you could invoke your secret by acting especially nice to the giant monster the PCs are dealing with (who happens to be your Nephilim son). Or you might invoke it when arguing that the Nephilim should not be slaughtered wholesale. Or you might use it in other situations by a simple slip of the tongue – including yourself in a list of sinning angels following Semjaza, perhaps. Get creative, but make sure each time you invoke your secret, it gives the other players a little more of an idea what your secret is. GMs should monitor the use of secrets carefully, to make sure it really is a valid hint towards the secret. Obviously, you can't use the same hint multiple times, since that doesn't give the other players any new information.

When you invoke your secret, you get to reroll as many of your dice as you wish. Tell the other players how many you are rerolling, and let them see said dice, but then roll them in secret and keep them hidden, as normal. This is advantageous, because you can try to build a bigger matched set by leaving some of your matching dice unrolled. You could do this multiple times in a single conflict, if you make multiple hints toward your secret.

At any time, you can reveal your secret through your character's actions. Doing so will erase the secret from your character sheet, but you add five points to your pool. So you can't reroll, but you do get a benefit when your secret is out in the open.

However, if any other player – not the GM – reveals your secret before you do, *they* add five points to their pool. So you want to keep hinting at your secret, but doing it too much will allow other players to guess your secret. So then the question is: do you want to hint at the secret, reveal it or just keep your mouth shut? That's a question you'll have to answer for yourself.

You can, at any appropriate time, add another Secret to your character by talking with the GM about it and spending five points from your pool.





Restrictions in Play

*"The virtue of angels is that they cannot deteriorate;
their flaw is that they cannot improve.
Man's flaw is that he can deteriorate;
and his virtue is that he can improve. "*

-The Talmud

Angels are divine being, and so moral laws have greater weight with angels than they do with humans. For the angels, a moral code has the same reality that the laws of gravity has for humanity: perhaps it can be overcome or circumvented, but not without effort. And in both it can never be ignored.

Restrictions are the way these moral facts affect the game. Each angel will start with a single Restriction, which outlines some sort of act that that angel may never take. When you make your character, consider moral codes and pick one aspect of one that you think might be interesting to have as a limitation. Some angels cannot lie, while others cannot harm others, or express any form of pride.

The point of these Restrictions is to make espionage more complicated for the angel PCs. So pick something that would create interesting situations for your character. Every time your Restriction makes the mission more complicated for your angels, you add one point to your Pool. You only get the point if the Restriction is genuinely inconveniencing your character; no invoking your restriction for really minor matters.

Some Restrictions will come into play a lot, and some rarely. That is okay – the ones that come into play are a lot more hassle for their players. If your angel cannot lie, that is going to make espionage an especially difficult profession, so you will get lots of points. If you have decided your angel cannot kill a mortal being, but then find violence against mortals is rare in the game, you will get fewer points but also not as much hassle.

If you want, you can change your restriction. You need to win a conflict with the GM, who uses your PC's character information as if it were an NPC you were in conflict against. So the GM can use your Relationships and Secrets against you. You and the GM should narrate out the internal conflict going on in your character, with the GM stirring up memories and ideas that want to keep you the same, and you representing the new ideals you wish to stand for.



Angels

*"Go, Michael, of celestial armies prince,
And thou, in military prowess next,
Gabriel; lead forth to battle these my sons
Invincible; lead forth my armed Saints
By thousands and millions ranged for fight."
- John Milton, Paradise Lost*

Angels in general have a broad range of abilities. They can all fly, and perform various miracles, and they can choose to appear as human or in their awe inspiring heavenly form. Notably, though, angels are more or less limited in their sensory capabilities to what a human being can sense. God may be omniscient³, but angels certainly are not. This is part of why the Player Characters are expected to participate in espionage.

Angels are universally immortal, and cannot die by accident. The only way an angel can die is if the stakes for a conflict are explicitly "Whichever character loses this conflict dies" or similar situations.

Angels are ordered according to a strict hierarchy. In order from highest ranking to lowest ranking, you have Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones in the first Circle, Dominions, Virtues and Powers in the second Circle, and Principalities, Archangels and Angels in the third Circle. Higher ranking angels are allowed to order lower ranking angels around and expect to be listened to.

Below are sketches of several angels and fallen angels, suitable for use as NPCs. Note, however, that if any player wants to play that particular angel (which may happen for well known angels like Gabriel, Michael or Samael), their desire overrides anything written here about the angel in question. You still might use the angel and just rename them, of course.

Michael

Michael is the leader of Heaven's armies, and is particularly gruff and hard for an angel. When Semjaza and the other angels were initially cast out of Heaven, they asked for Michael to intercede on their behalf. He refused to take their entreaty to the Lord, and so the fallen angels had to ask the Metatron for aid. Michael views any sinners very harshly: when the end times come, he will be the judge whose scales weigh the hearts of

³ Or maybe not. God's omniscience and omnipotence is up to the GM to decide. See GM section for more.



men. Michael does not expect many of the risen dead to be found worthy of entering Heaven.

Raphael

Raphael is “the sociable spirit” and “the affable angel” according to *Paradise Lost*. He has a heart full of empathy for the weak and helpless, and wants everyone to get along as much as possible. Raphael would end the war against Hell and offer clemency to the fallen angels, if he was in charge of the hosts of angels.

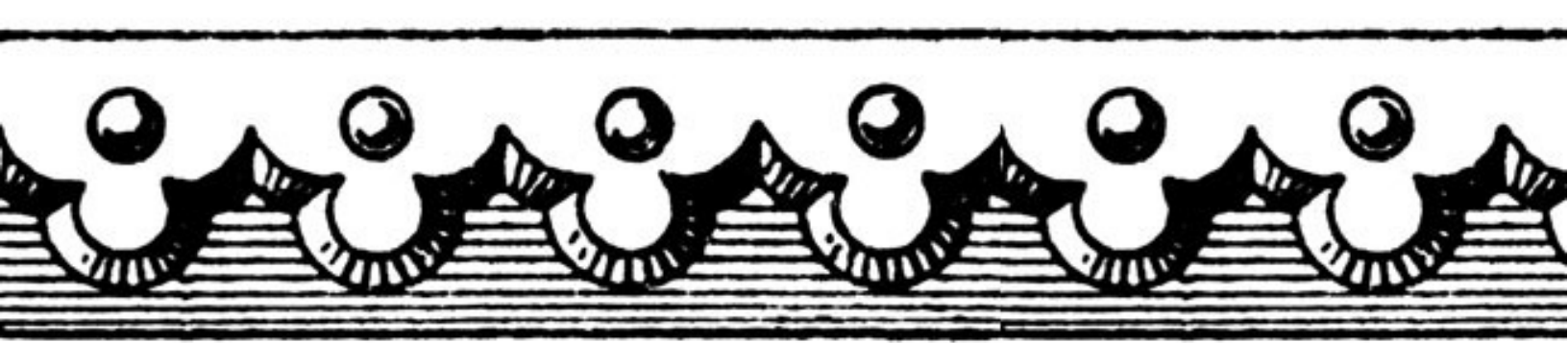
Raphael was personally responsible for casting Asmodai out of Heaven. Not only had Asmodai fallen in love with the human woman Sara, Asmodai had murdered each of Sara’s seven successive husbands, so that the fallen angel could keep her to himself. Raphael was particularly horrified by this perversion of marriage. Rage overcame Raphael’s usual mercifulness, and he singlehandedly fought with Asmodai and threw him down into Sheol. Asmodai and Raphael hate each other still, though Raphael feels somewhat bad for performing an act of violence.

Gabriel

Gabriel is God’s chief messenger; it is Gabriel who announces the birth of Jesus and of John the Baptist, and who conveys the text of the Koran to Mohammed. Gabriel is also the chief of Heaven’s guards. Finally, it is Gabriel who will rain fire and brimstone down on Sodom and Gomorrah.

How do these roles fit together? Obviously Gabriel is the head of Heaven’s espionage department. It is Gabriel who is the commander of all of Heaven’s spies, and who ensures the security of the Heavenly palace and all angelic communications. He is the one who has assigned your player characters to their mission, and he isn’t afraid to get in and get his own hands dirty.

Metatron



The Metatron was once Enoch, who “walked with God; then he was no more, because god took him.”⁴ Once he was taken into Heaven, Enoch was made into the angel Metatron, who speaks for the Lord. Ever since Enoch came to Heaven, God no longer speaks directly to any of the angels: all communication with the Lord is through Metatron.

Metatron also acts as an intermediary between the warring factions. Having been born a man, Metatron is often more willing forgive lapses of judgment than the angels, who expect perfection. Metatron tried, but failed, to convince God to allow the exiled angels back to Heaven. For similar reasons, Metatron is used as the contact for undercover angels: if their meeting as discovered, Heaven’s spies can plausibly claim they were asking once more for an intercession on their part.

Melek Taus

Melek Taus was the first candidate for the angelic espionage program. But when God asked Melek Taus to lie and betray the Heavenly Code, Melek Taus refused, fully expecting divine punishment for his disobedience. But instead, Melek Taus was promoted for his honesty and integrity. Melek Taus remains in Heaven, and is strongly opposed to the espionage program. For this reason, Gabriel and Michael do not trust Melek Taus, who is willing to disobey a direct order.





Sitra Achra (the Other Side)

*"You are gods,
Children of the Most High, all of you;
Nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,
and fall like any prince."
-Psalm 82:5*

The armies of the exiled angels are roughly divided into two factions: those that chose to leave and those that were forced out. Samael is the nominal leader of the entire group, but the exiled angels will listen more readily to Semjaza or Azazel than they will to Samael. Semjaza was the first of the angels to sin, but it was Azazel that masterminded the attempt to cover up the sins. Often conflicts arise among the fallen angels, as the exiled angels still wish to return to heaven, but the rebel angels chose to leave voluntarily for political reasons. These divisions in the fallen angels can be used by Heaven's spies to create opportunities. The fallen angels follow a hierarchy that parallels the heavenly hierarchy. The fallen's organization, though, is much looser, as many of the angels that fell are a lot less willing to listen to authority.

Samael

Samael was once God's right hand man (so to speak). He was the highest ranking of the angels, but he could not abide how the Lord favored mankind over the angels. All the hosts of angels knew that Samael was unhappy with the creation of the earth. When Semjaza and the others were exiled, Samael went from loudly complaining about the situation in Heaven to armed conflict against the Lord. Samael stormed out of Heaven to join Azazel and Semjaza in Sheol. There, he leads the hosts of Hell into war against Heaven. Samael is often brash, and always prideful. He knows, with complete certainty, that he is the second most powerful and important being in the universe. This knowledge of his importance often means Samael sees every other being as beneath him. Samael leads roughly 133,306,668 fallen angels.⁵

Semjaza

Semjaza was the first of the angels to become enamored of a human woman. His

⁵ According to Pope John XXI

lust overcame his common sense, and he father various Nephilim children. Semjaza also convinced many other angels to commit a similar sin, so that he would not pay the penalty of sin alone. These lustful angels swore an oath to Semjaza, and maintain their loyalty to Semjaza alone. Semjaza is a reluctant leader, though, and allows his emotions to override his intellect very often.

Azazel

Azazel was one of the angels who Semjaza tempted into sin. Once Azazel had taken a wife, he taught her the secrets of Heaven, like metallurgy and astrology. Azazel became worried about being discovered, so he organized a cover-up of the sin, which eventually failed and they were discovered.

Now in Hell, Azazel tries to play the evil mastermind, and the power behind the throne. He plants ideas and advice in the ears of Semjaza and Samael, and controls the hosts of the fallen without being the highly visible leader.





GM Section

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers "
-Colossians 1:15-16*

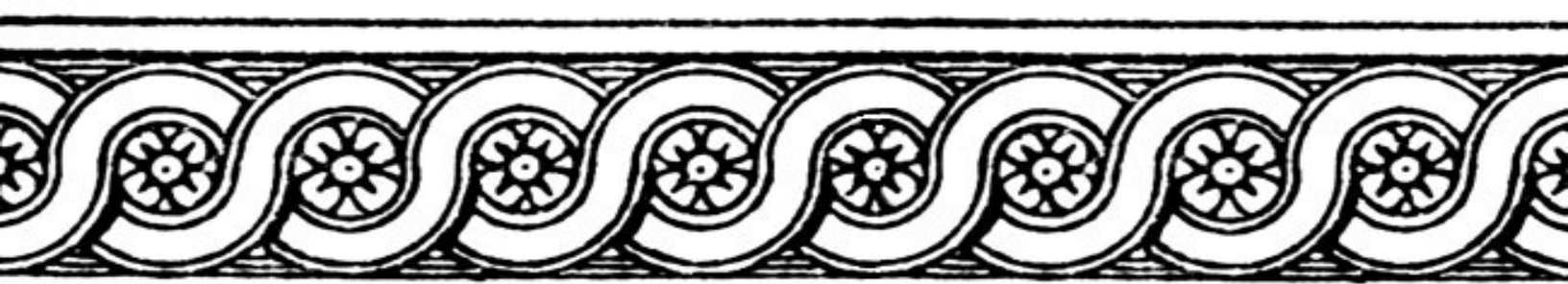
So you're the GM. The question is, what do you do? How do you run this thing, anyway? Well, I've tried to covertly give you a lot of tools to make the game run better. As a GM, you have access to a lot of secret information about the PCs. In particular, each PC's Secrets and Relationships and Restrictions are at least half tools for you, the GM.

Though one of the goals of this game is to give the GM a hefty dose of power and ability, you have one important restriction: any scenes that you frame need to be aimed at maximizing how much the PCs use their character sheet. You want, ideally, to have every PC using Relationships and Secrets all the time. Any scene you frame where these parts of the character sheet never come into play is a failure for you, the GM. The reason for this is simple: the NPCs, and the world, exist only to highlight the character of the PCs.

You may even want to keep score for yourself: after each scene or each session, note down what Relationships, Secrets and Restrictions came into play. Over multiple scenes and sessions, try to get your score to continually increase. How many pieces of a character sheet can you hit in a single scene?

The most effective way to make this happen is to construct situations where two or more parts of a PC's sheet pull them in different ways. Perhaps a fallen angel that a PC has a relationship with asks for the PC to do something that violates their restriction. Or the PC has a restriction to never disobey a direct order, but their mission would require revealing their secret. These examples illustrate situations where the PC has to make a choice, and whichever choice they make will be interesting and have complex, dramatic consequences. Then you take those consequences and run with them, toward hitting more parts of the character sheet..

Depending on the sorts of players you have, you may find your game wandering



into a philosophical and theological quagmire. Why is an omniscient God sending spies into the enemy? Is sinning justified if God orders you to do so?

Your goal as a GM is to keep these issues from overwhelming your game. As far as the question of why God would need spies, the answer is twofold. First, this game is set in Old Testament times, when God was a lot more limited in his capabilities. Like how Superman grew from merely lifting cars to throwing around planets, God grows in power over the Bible's course, eventually becoming fully omnipotent. But this game is set early on, when God still has to ask questions to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and of Cain when Abel dies. Secondly, even if God himself is omniscient, He has become distant from the angels in Heaven. Michael, Gabriel and the other Seraphim have no direct contact with the Lord; they can only go through the Metatron. So for the angels to make appropriate decisions, they need to acquire the sort of information that God already knows. God in the game tends to be distant and only accessible through Metatron, who may not be entirely trustworthy. Thus, you can leave this question open for a long time, and only answer it if you think you can hang an interesting plot off of the answer.

As for the morality of lying and sinning in God's name: even the angels don't know if this is morally acceptable or not. In many ways, having each PC answer this question is one of the goals of this game. Your job as GM is to make their moral choices difficult and interesting, by pushing against their moral restrictions, giving them morally questionable missions and making a case for both the angels and the Fallen. While you don't want to be forcing the PCs into one outcome or another, you want to give them a moral choice that is hard to resolve.



Missions

"All God's angels come to us disguised.."

~ James Russell Lowell

The Player Characters are sent to act as spies within the army of the fallen angels. So what sorts of spy missions do the angels perform? There are two approaches a GM could take when creating missions: starting from the spy end or starting from the angelic end.

For the spy end, you simply take a standard espionage plot, then rewrite it into the War in Heaven. The War in Heaven is much like any other war, with troop movements and secret actions whose plans can be stolen, with MacGuffin items that need stolen or destroyed, or a host of other plots. Watch a spy movie, or read a spy novel or a historical account of an actual espionage mission, then think about how to remap that onto a world of angels and demons. You might base a mission off of the famous Operation Mincemeat, from World War II. Operation Mincemeat involved the Allies convincing the Germans that they had uncovered secret Allied invasion plans, attached to a corpse that washed onto a neutral country's beach. In this game, you could make the fake secret plans with a fake secret name of God, which would hold immense power if it were real. Instead of a corpse washing on shore in neutral territory, perhaps the angels in Heaven will allow a message from Heaven fall into the wrong hands – perhaps Nephilim hands, who will then, predictably hand the secret off to the fallen angels.

The other way to create a mission is to start with Biblical events and consider what actions the two opposing sides are taking in relationship to that event. Consider when Abraham is ordered to sacrifice his son Isaac.⁶ What were the motives of each side? Was the initial order to sacrifice Isaac really sent by the forces of Heaven, or was it a false order sent by a fallen angel? Were there fallen angels sent to delay the angel who stopped Abraham's hand? The forces of Hell know in general that the course of human events is central to God's plan, and so are working to derail those events however they can. In all these examples, the PCs will likely fall in the middle somewhere: told by Hell to force Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but told by Heaven to save Isaac's life.

As a GM, it is best for you to simply give a specific objective, but leave the method of accomplishing the goal up to the PCs to plan. This allows the PCs a lot of freedom, which they will like a lot better than if their every action were ordered beforehand.



Author's Notes

"I saw the angel in the marble and I carved until I set him free."

-Michaelangelo

In making this game, a couple of books were invaluable:

- Bamberger, Bernard. *Fallen Angels*.
- Murphy, Bruce, ed. *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*.
- Unterman, Alan. *The Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*.

My on-hand Bible was a copy of The New Revised Standard version (with Apocrypha!). But most of the time that was a quick reference, and then I would find the quote online and shop around for the prettiest sounding translation. So the Biblical quotes come from a variety of sources.

Much like the Bible quotes, the setting for the game is a haphazard mishmash of Old Testament and medieval, or Biblical and non-canonical material, and of Christian, Jewish and in one case Kurdish myth. This is deliberate; it is done to make the setting into a sandbox, where you can have angels and demons from all sort of Western mythologies⁷ intersecting, without any worry about keeping your myths canonical. Basically, pick any legend involving fallen angels, and throw it into the game.

Gamewise, I was aiming deliberately to build a game with a more traditional setup, involving a GM and players and such. The last couple games I've designed involved weird indie game traits, like GMlessness and a forced endgame. So this game's goal was to have a GM who has mostly unlimited power, and the game continues until all the players decide the campaign has reached an endpoint. Within those constraints, I tried to change up how things work, by restructuring the conflicts after Liar's Dice, and by defining player character on their relationships and limitations instead of their abilities. I was also inspired by how LARPs involve many secrets that players hide from one another, and wanted to capture some of that in tabletop play. We'll have to do some playtesting to see how those ideas turned out.

One last note: I'm an atheist who comes from a Catholic background. I tried not to make this game any sort of propaganda, even for my own religious beliefs. I just think the ideas of angels and demons are interestingly problematic and cool to play with.

⁷ I know; I know: "God hates it when it's referred to as 'mythology'." - *Dogma* (1999)