

Separation Anxiety

A scenario for The Strange
By Alexei Othenin-Girard

Overview

In The Strange, there are an uncountable number of recursions. Some, like Ruk and Ardeyn and Earth, are well protected. Others, no matter how beautiful, are not so lucky. One such recursion is a world called by its inhabitants *Ketherelanishmetsar*, and called by the very few others who know of it *Ketherel*. Ketherel is a gorgeous world, a world where that which is fractured is made whole and bettered by it. The people of Ketherel are gestalt entities. Each one is born as two distinct but intertwined consciousnesses in one body. Not wholly one person or two, the people of Ketherel never know loneliness, two halves which make an indelible whole.

Ketherel is dying. Thirty years ago, the Ketherians were experimenting with Strange technology, and sent a group (The Advance Team) out into the Strange. Planetovores found it and, despite the best efforts of the *Ketherians*, despite their strange resonant magic and their ability to hold two thoughts simultaneously in one head, they have not been able to do more than buy themselves time. In desperation, the Ketherians have started to uncover the secret of The Strange. They have sent six *quickened* gestalts out to The Strange, in a desperate attempt to find someone, anyone, who might be able to help them. What the Ketherians don't know is that their gestalt nature is incompatible with most other worlds, and translation is a profound shock for them. In each world that they translate to, their arrival causes intense chaos, as the rupture of their bond releases powerful destructive energy.

In each world that they travel to these six beings will need help and guidance, both to put themselves back together and to travel back to their home recursion. Fighting the planetovores isn't an option, the recursion will have to be evacuated. It will be up to the players, as diplomats from their various recursions, to determine where the Ketherians will go.

Five Act Structure

At each table/world, we can follow the five act structure over the course of five days. As long as the basic structure gets adhered to, each game should arrive roughly at the same place at the same time. GMs can have a lot of freedom within this structure to introduce new elements, plots, etc., as long as they make sure to hit the storytelling beats for each Act.

There are a couple of specific terms that should be pointed out. Each world has a **Limiting Resource**, a basic lack that would make it difficult to take the Ketherians as a whole. In the final negotiation scene, players will need to determine how their world will cope with the refugees based on their Limiting Resource. Canny players might be able to increase the supply of these resources, in some cases.

Act 1: Discovery and Deployment

Beats

- Players discover an anomalous situation related to a stranger or recently arrived member of the community.
- Players discover that two people/entities in the community are translated from another recursion
- Players reunite the two people
 - Depending on the situation, this may not be possible.
- The world's **Limiting Resource** is introduced.
- Players hear about the plight of Ketherel
- The Ketherians ask the players to take them to their "leaders" that they might plead for the resources that they need to move their people off their world.

Act 2: Straight to the Top

Beats

- Players must find an opportunity to get a hold of the heads of their respective organizations. This can range from infuriating (Earth) to comical (Oz.)
- They are stymied by bureaucracy, and possibly harried by enemies who are curious about the Ketherians.
 - "We registered an energy spike in this area and came to check it out. Looks like it was coming from those two. Hand 'em over."
- A friendly NPC aligns with them to further both of their goals.
 - The PCs are allowed into the halls of power, but may need to prove themselves or their intentions.

- The PCs are set a challenge or a task by the person who can help them, possibly one where the Ketherians are able to be helpful.
- AND/OR: An antagonist begins to use the Ketherians as a foil to advance their own agenda.
 - The PCs must avoid or evade their enemy's attacks, and may need to make choices between the safety of their community and their sense of what's right.
 - The PCs must defend the Ketherians against charges of conspiracy from the antagonist, in public.
- The PCs are contacted by an agent of the Quiet Cabal, who tells them about a World Seed that could be used to grow a new recursion for the Ketherians.
 - The PCs learn that other worlds have discovered the Ketherians, and other heroes are helping them.
 - The PCs learn that in order to have the World Seed sprout, it must have six (or however many number of tables we have) objects of power.
- The PCs are sent after one of the items of power.

Act 3: McGuffin Hunting

Beats

- Each table does its own thing. This could mean travel to another recursion, or a day-long quest in their own recursion.
- Over the course of their translation, they find an **Overwhelming Abundance** (CROW COIN). These play into the rules for the Negotiation down below.
- Antagonists in Act 1 and Act 2 can begin paying off here.
- PCs make measurable progress towards finding the McGuffin, using both combat and research skills to advance their investigations.
 - Possible Twists Include:
 - One of the antagonists from Act 1 or 2 becomes convinced that the Ketherians must be stopped or suborned at all costs.
 - Players must continue towards the object of power while they're being aggressively pursued/thwarted by their antagonist.
 - Eventually, players acquire the Object of Power
 - ALTERNATELY: Players discover the object of power early and are ambushed by their antagonist on their way home.
- When the PCs find the McGuffin, they are contacted by a representative from the Quiet Cabal, who invites them to translate there as neutral grounds.

Act 4: Revelations & Negotiations

Scene 1: A Meeting at the Old Keeper's House

- **SETTING THE SCENE** (WHOLE GROUP) **10min**
 - Upon arriving on Earth, each group is brought by their respective contacts, all **Agents of the Quiet Cabal**, to what is known as a Sanctum. The Sanctum used by this group of **Agents** is a Bed and Breakfast on the coast of Oregon in an old Lightkeeper's House. The kind couple who run the establishment are welcoming and generous, and don't bat an eye at anything 'strange'. The **Agents** seem comfortable and make themselves at home, and after settling in, all are brought to a large dining room of dark woods and fine, if not somewhat aged, furniture and decor...

- **NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN:** (WHOLE GROUP) **15min**
 - Bert will preview the following activities, and set expectations* for participation in both the WHOLE & TABLE GROUP settings. He will also set the goal of earning at total of ____ "NEGOTIATION POINTS" to successfully complete the NEGOTIATION segment of this week's game.

- **PHASE 1: Combine Information** (WHOLE & TABLE GROUPS) **40min**
 - i. GMs will lead their TABLE GROUPS in a discussion to answer the following questions: **(15m)**
 - What is Ketherel?
 - What are Ketherians?
 - Who are the Ketherians they've met?
 - What is the Ketherian's plight, or what challenge must they overcome?
 - **GMs should help groups select presenter(s) to WHOLE GRP.**
 - ii. Bert will now lead the WHOLE GROUP in presenting their answers to the questions above. The main points they should cover are: **(25m)**
 - Ketherel is a world under imminent threat by a planetovore.
 - The Ketherians are a race of composite beings
 - When the Ketherians translate, their bodies and minds become separated to various effect.
 - These Ketherians left Ketherel to find help in moving their populace off their world.
 - They can make the world seed out of the 'Objects of Power' that they recovered on their respective missions to various recursions.
 - They need a bridge to get the Ketherians out of their recursion.
 - The Ketherians need somewhere to stay once they're taken off-world.
 - iii. **For each event correctly identified and put into context, the Negotiation gains a Point. Points are tallied by GMs.**

- **PHASE 2: Generate Possible Solutions** (WHOLE & TABLE GROUPS) **35min**
 - i. GMs will lead their TABLE GROUPS in discussions about possible solutions. **(15m)**
 - Each table should be supported to identify any **Abundances** or **Lacks** they discovered, and to then discuss how these might affect the Ketherians in their efforts to relocate.
 - **Each Abundance and each Lack discussed gives the Negotiation a point (GMs tally these)**
 - ii. Bert will lead the WHOLE GROUP in discussing Possible Solutions **(20m)**
 - **Each Possible Solution presented clearly that is**
 - a. viable, and
 - b. includes a use for at least one **Abundance** or **Lack**, and
 - c. Includes a suggestion for a **temporary location gives the Negotiation a Point.**

- **PHASE 3: Make a Plan** (WHOLE & TABLE GROUPS) **40min**
 - i. The **Quiet Cabal Agents** will lay out 2 specific challenges that need to be overcome in order to install the gates that will allow the Ketherians to escape their dying world. During this portion of the game, players will engage with maps & puzzles in their TABLE GROUPS.
 - Bert will preview the following activities, and set expectations* for participation in both the WHOLE & TABLE GROUP settings. **(5m)**
 - **CHALLENGE 1: Locations for Translation Gates** (TABLE GROUP) **(20m)**
 - a. “We have projected 4 maps of Ketherel based on limited and old info...” Teams must find suitable locations in each of the 4 sections of the map for the gate *given the following criteria:*
 - Flat
 - At least 1.5 in. (360x160 ft)
 - Good sight-lines
 - Near Water
 - b. GMs will facilitate players’ problem solving at TABLE GROUPS about which sites seem to make the most sense. When the players have agreed, GMs will tally **Negotiation Points:**
 - **Each viable site will earn another Negotiation Point. Each site near to population centers will earn an extra Negotiation Point.**

- **CHALLENGE 2: Gate Encoding** (TABLE GROUPS) (20m)
 - a. A series of codes and arcane glyphs must be inscribed on the gate.
 - Players will work in TABLE GROUPS with their GM supervising to solve cypher and other puzzles.
 - Suggested codes for translation:
 - All things beginning to end
 - All things ending to begin
 - Two become one
 - Ketherian exodus
 - b. **Each puzzle solved earns another Negotiation Point.**

Scene 2: The Worldseed

- Back in TABLE GROUPS with their respective GMs, players can now approach the **World Seed** and offer their Object of Power to help it sprout. (GMs should feel free to creatively describe this scene as per details below, and can explain that other groups will each approach the **World Seed** separately (in different scenes). **10min**
 - From Keeper's House, 20min walk down winding, wooded path through rain to small beach.
 - Wading boots are provided, and PCs are led out into surf toward huge rock.
 - Inside rock is natural cavern with tech devices anchored into walls that project an energy field that contains World Seed.
- Players can add a quality to the new world, as per the "growing recursions" rules (**see Core Rulebook p.136-144**). **20min**
- Players discover that the **World Seed** will take decades to develop into an habitable recursion.

Act 5: Journeys and Beginnings

Scene 1: The Worldseed

- GROUP NARRATION
 - After a long negotiation that lasted through the night and well into the early hours of the next morning, the group dispersed and each member found their simply furnished but quite comfortable room in the Old Keeper's House, and soon drifted into a deep and restful sleep- the kind that comes only after a long day of challenging, but ultimately productive and rewarding work. The group was successful in its negotiations, and the **Quiet Cabal** has committed to facilitate the plans agreed upon early that morning, which included:
 - i. Negotiations with the leaderships of the proposed host-worlds, including Ardeyn, Ruk and others.
 - ii. Construction of Translation Gates on Ketherel and on the several host-worlds.
 - iii. Evacuation of the Ketherians to their targeted host-worlds.
 - The following afternoon, all are awoken by the delicious aromas of Mrs. Gundren's cooking, and drawn back to the great dining room, which is now set for a late brunch consisting of 7 courses, including fresh and exotic fruit frappes, freshly baked pastries of every imaginable kind, eggs cooked to perfection in steaming frittatas or perfect quiches, and an endless succession of platters filled with sausages and other meats, pancakes, waffles, fruit and nuts and cheeses and spreads and breads and everything that these recently translated 'Recursors' never knew they so desperately wished to taste, and will now forevermore crave.
 - After the meal, the **Agents of the Quiet Cabal** casually announce that each group will soon be invited to infuse the **Worldseed**. Mrs. Gundren interjects that all should dress warmly and bring scarves and hats. When she recognized the confused looks crossing her guests' faces, she smiles and says that these insulating articles of clothing will be provided for them.
 - Each group is then perhaps surprised by being led on a brisk walk through a midday spat of cold rain and wind, down a steep, winding path from the Old Keeper's House that lets out onto a small beach hidden by huge rocks standing just offshore that break the ocean's waves in stalwart defiance of her relentless approach.
 - One Agent pulls a netted bag from the jagged cliff-face, and each group member is given tall wading boots and led out into the cold Pacific tide to a hidden entrance that gives way to a chamber within one of the great, defiant rocks. Once

inside, the group can now behold the **Worldseed** hovering in a web of protective energy being projected by 'Strange' devices embedded in the inner rock walls...

- Back in TABLE GROUPS with their respective GMs, players can now approach the **World Seed** and offer their Object of Power to help it sprout.
 - GMs should feel free to creatively describe this scene, and can explain that other groups will each approach the **World Seed** separately (in different scenes).
 - Players should be told that the **World Seed** will take decades to develop into an habitable recursion.
- **OPTIONAL:** Players can add a quality to the new world, as per the “growing recursions” rules (see **Core Rulebook p.136-144**).

Scene 2: Securing the Future

- **OPTIONAL:** PCs may return to (or travel to) a Recursion that has been identified as a possible host-location for the **Ketherian refugees**.
 - This is mostly for Ruk (Jeffrey) and Ardeyn (Bert), but **any GM** may choose to return to their original Recursion (or travel to any other) that has been identified as a possible host-location for the **Ketherians** while their new world ‘sprouts’. This visit could include any of the following scenarios:
 - i. The PCs will spearhead negotiations between governmental or otherwise powerful factions on that world to secure aid for the **Ketherians**, potentially utilizing any **Abundances** identified during their Negotiations with the **Quiet Cabal** on Earth
 - ii. The PCs will be confronted by a faction or operator from the target Recursion that doesn’t want to aid the **Ketherians**, and they must resolve this tense encounter either passively or aggressively, or utilizing some other combination of approaches.
- **TABLE GROUPS**, along with teams of **Quiet Cabal Technicians** will now translate to Ketherel to encounter the **Ketherians** on their home world for the first time, and to construct the Translation Gates that will allow them to evacuate their world
 - GMs will each describe the **Ketherians** living on their targeted, Season-based continent.
 - i. Autumn:
 - ii. Winter: **Mitch**
 - iii. Spring: **Bert**
 - iv. Summer:

- GMs may also choose to create a scene or scenes around social encounters with the strange and interesting beings they are rescuing.

Scene 3: Hold Back the Planetovore!

- PCs will travel to the targeted locations to construct their Translation Gates.
- While the **Quiet Cabal Technicians** begin to construct the Translation Gates, PCs encounter a hostile force intent upon stopping them! This force can consist of MINIONS of the Planetovores, or previous enemies that have followed the PCs to this Recursion to stop them. GMs may choose to find or create their own enemies, or use any of the following suggestions:
 - Cypher Eaters (L3) **Core p.263**
 - Betrayer's Homonculi (Green L3 & Red L5, sent by Betrayer on Ardeyn) **Core p.259-260**
 - Inklings (Lessers L2 & Snatchers L7) **Core p.273-274**
 - Kray (Scurriers L3 & Drones L5) **Core p.276-277**
 - Venom Troopers (L3, sent by a faction from Ruk?) **Core p.300**
 - Dark Energy Pharoah (L8) **Core p.264**

Scene 4: Epilogue

- In the WHOLE GROUP, Bert and ALL GMs will help to narrate the results to the day's endeavors, and hint at a possible future for the **Ketherians**.

Table 3 - Ruk - Alexei

Tone: Genre-wise this game is squarely in the noir tradition. Ruk is a twilight-shrouded world where identity, loyalty, and motive are just as murky as the never-sunlit sky. This version of Ruk is held in a delicate balance by a set of powerful faction who are always on the verge of tipping into open conflict, but who instead use back-alley deals, subversion, and skullduggery to execute their agendas.

GM Notes: Keep Ruk as mysterious and threatening as possible, without tipping over into being “grimdark.” Shadows are deep, and the PCs can’t trust that anyone is who they say they are. Ruk’s technology is easily used to fool people, so false signatures, false faces, and false identities are all emphasized. That said, the PCs are detectives, so make sure that there’s a tell or a flaw in disguises, so that PCs can outsmart their opponents. The two things that I would say are off limits are: don’t let the PCs get paranoid about each other, and keep at least one Quiet Cabal contact who the PCs can count on and not be suspicious of. The tone of this game should be noir, not paranoia, if that makes sense. In other words: Ruk contains many mysteries/illusions/deceptions, but at its core is a place that can be understood and navigated, especially with reliable friends.

PC Group: The PCs in this game should be a cell of **Quiet Cabal** agents. Close ties to Earth, and mid-level standing in the faction itself, but still at the point where they’re getting sent out on ground-level missions.

PC Foci: Any of the Ruk or Earth Foci are fine, although if someone takes Adapts to Any Environment, I leave it up to the GM to put something in the game that lets the player feel cool. Infiltrates and Processes Information would both be especially useful in this game.

Background: Ruk is run by a series of ancient Factions, each constantly vying for power, information, and control. However, Ruk is also a deeply connected society, where the All Song makes information transfer easy and quick, so each Faction is also keenly aware of its public image. Thus, Factions breed black-ops splinters, deniable cells that act with that Faction’s silent approval, but whose action can be disavowed publicly if things go wrong.

One of these splinters is the **Holy Order of Embodied Reformers**, a group of ultraorthodox **Church of the Embodiment** religious fanatics who believe that the All Song is a corruption of the True Code and should be destroyed at any cost. They operate with the Church’s blessing and resources, and the more central Church uses this leverage to keep them on a shorter leash than they would have otherwise. One of their projects (which the Church knows about) is that they’ve created a virus that attacks All-Song terminals, and hidden that virus in a bunch of clone bodies in different locations in Harmonium. Their plan is to activate the clone bodies, piloted remotely by Holy Reformers, connect to All Song terminals, and bring down the All Song network, then get rid of the evidence. The Central Church knows about this plan, but is applying pressure to keep the Reformers from actually executing. (The Church doesn’t want to get rid of

the infected clones because...what if they DO want to destroy the All Song at some point?) The person in charge of the Holy Reformers' virus/clone project is **Besir-Desawar**, a religious fanatic who has tried to modify their own body to reflect what they think the "original" Rukian phenotype was. Their body and limbs are all elongated, and their hands are five fingers radially arranged around a central palm.

The Twist: **KasParMinTen** is an explorer and a joyous, exuberant seeker of knowledge, who has readily agreed to go out and try to find help for Ketherel's plight. Unfortunately, the translation process is brutal, shearing **KasMin** and **ParTen** into separate beings, and flinging their consciousnesses into the bodies of clones in the Holy Reformers' facility. (This is Ruk's best solution to the problem of taking one person and splitting them in two, while keeping them still "one person.") Those clones awaken and activated, filled with military gear and the black-ops anti-communal virus. Worse, KasMin and ParTen's biopsychology has altered that virus, making it much more virulent and able to infect people who connect to the terminals after them.

Decanted from their vats, KasMin and ParTen are lost, alone, and confused on Ruk, knowing only that there's someone they must find somewhere not far away. They each escape the facility they're in, causing not insignificant damage on their way out, and begin searching for each other through the city. It's been a few days, and the sickness is starting to spread. The Church of the Embodiment has caught wind of the damage, and dispatched a cleaner, **Saoula**, whose job is to make this whole mess go away before someone traces it back to the Church.

The Hook: The PCs are a group of Quiet Cabal agents who have been asked to look into why All Song communals are going offline. The Quiet Cabal in this case has been hired by the **Zal** faction to see what's going on, and their contact is someone called **Mr. Pinstripe**, an agent of the Zal Corporation.

Setting Information:

- Ruk's **Overwhelming Abundance** is "medical technology," and most of the people the PCs meet who are "killed" in the course of the game should actually show back up again later, as Ruk's bioengineering means that all but the most grievous wounds can be quickly and easily repaired.
- Ruk's **Limiting Resource** is "political stability." The Ketherians would immediately become pawns in Ruk's eternally unstable politics, in ways they probably don't want to be.

Important NPCs

KasMin And ParTen

KasMin and ParTen were part of the Gestalt entity KasParMinTen, and their translation to Ruk has partitioned them into two separate bodies in slightly different parts of Harmonium. The two newly minted beings are desperately trying to find one another, and they've been directed by locals to try the AllSong Communals to try to send messages to one another. Their neurology interacts oddly with the communals technology, though, so they can only be in communication for a brief moment before the communals begin to degrade. They've been moving to other terminals to try to find one another, but they're lost and alone and panicked and haven't been good at communicating. They're also chock-full of illegal military bioenhancements. People who use the terminals after them report nausea, pain, and disruption to their bioenhancements.

Besir-Desawar

Besir is a dyed-in-the-wool religious fanatic, who has devoted their life to pushing themselves away from the human-like phenotype common in Ruk, in search of a form more "harmoniously in line with the True Code." Their current form has an elongated torso and limbs, radially-arranged hands, and a wide variety of other strange features. (GM's choice.) They are motivated by a deep seated fear of humanity, due to a traumatic translation to Earth many decades ago. They are committed to pulling themselves as far away from humanity as possible.

Level 6, +1 to interaction tasks, +1 to fighting, can disgorge poisoned darts from their forearms to attack at range, + 3 to bioengineering.

Saoula (Sao-OOH-la)

Saoula is a fixer, tasked with making problems for the Church of the Embodiment disappear. She's motivated mostly by money and prestige, which the Church offers in spades. Her job here is to figure out what's going on, and forcefully and discreetly sever any chains that would lead trouble back to the Church's door. She and Besir-Desawar have crossed paths before, and Saoula strongly feels that the Reformer is mad and will make difficulties for the church.

Saoula cuts an imposing figure, preferring a long overcoat and a wide-brimmed hat to conceal both her identity and her complex organic weaponry. She's deeply enmeshed in the dirtier side of the Church's business, and it would be hard to convince her to give up on that mission without some assurance that she could be safe from the Church's reprisals.

Level 5, -1 to Interaction Tasks, +2 Fighting, +1 to resist social manipulation, +2 Disguise

Mr. Pinstripe

Mr. Pinstripe is the Zal Corporation's representative in this mess. He knows that All Song communals are being compromised, and needs to get to the bottom of why. He has engaged the Quiet Cabal's detectives to get to the bottom of this. Zal has decided to draw on the Quiet Cabal because they suspect that the Church of the Embodiment is somehow involved, and if they can get independent confirmation, Zal will have the independently-verified evidence they need to start a big publicity campaign against the Church. Any information that connects the Church to any trouble will be met with great encouragement from Mr. Pinstripe.

Mr. Pinstripe, Level 5, +2 to manipulate tasks, +3 connections in Harmonious. Vast resources, can call on the economic might of Zal if necessary.

Quiet Cabal Agents

- Arus, a field agent, covered in floating, jellyfish-like fronds that wave in a nonexistent breeze
- Netra, an operations agent, runs the safehouse. Perfectly smooth, porcelain-like skin, doll-like joints, clicks when she talks, blinks, or moves.

Act 1 : Communal Problems

PCs are tasked with checking out several places where All Song Communals have stopped working. They can investigate the Communals with a level 4 intellect task, and get some information on the virus that is affecting them. Once they've done that, they can do another Level 4 intellect task to get more information from the people who are sick. Once they've investigated at least two communals and two sets of sick people, they can start to understand that people have been infecting these communals with the virus. PCs who try to connect with functional communals must make a Level 6 resist roll or become sickened until they can get medical attention.

Sites that have been affected include:

Central Harmonium

- Near an Elite Creche- This communal is near a gleaming building where adolescents picked by the factions for their exceptional abilities are educated.
 - Difficulty 4 Intellect challenge to talk to students and get a description of KasMin. They describe KasMin as raggedly dressed and panicked, and seemingly unfamiliar with the basic geography of Harmonium. Difficulty will increase SHARPLY (to 7 or 8) if the students aren't approached as potential equals. Some of the PCs may have attended this Creche.
- Transcriptase, an Upscale Biobar- This terminal is located near an expensive bar that crafts food and drinks specifically designed for your genetic profile.
 - Difficulty 4 Intellect challenge to talk to the AI that runs this bar, who got a sample of KasMin's DNA when they came into the bar. That sample has been corrupting the bar's systems ever since.
- True Code Cathedral - Not the big central cathedral, but a very swanky True Code Cathedral in the nice part of town.
 - Saoula has been seen several times around here lately.
- Transit Center - The transit center is a place where people can get on transit to other parts of Harmonium, but also is a hub for the pneumatic tubes that take people down to the surface of Ruk.

Down-town, near the bottom of Harmonium where things are a bit dicier

- Slabtown, an Organ Bar - A sleazy body modification joint/bar.
 - Difficulty 4 Intellect challenge to get some genetic information from ParTen, who came through here and let themselves get scraped before realizing what was happening and fleeing.
- Market Square - A widely used public communal near a busy market
 - Difficulty 3 Intellect challenge to get a physical description of ParTen.

- Bio Vats - An outdoor communal near some vats of bioluminescent ooze
 - A Karum agent is hanging out around here, and will pick up on the characters if they're being obvious in their investigations.
- Myriand Outpost - This communal is right outside a place where Myriand battle chrysalides are outfitted, so security is high.

Once they've investigated 4 Communals total, it's a difficulty 6 Intellect challenge to diagnose what's wrong with the communal: A self-perpetuating memetic virus has taken hold and is starting to unspool the communal at the genetic level. The virus resists all attempts to cure it, mutating in a weird way, seeming to almost use the Strange to shift to new forms. If any players get infected, they can do a Level 8 medicine check (level 6 if they have access to medical equipment,) to neutralize (but not cure) the virus for a few days.

As players explore, they should get the following information:

1. It's been a bad week for industrial explosions, there have been two in two different parts of the city. The sites are both under deep clean protocols, and no one is being allowed in. Both were listed as "biocontainment facility," but no further information is available about exactly what was being contained.
2. Two different sets of communals are being taken offline, in two areas of the city.
3. A mysterious figure (Saoula) has been seen skulking about the same areas that the PCs are investigating.
4. Two confused, identical people are wandering around the streets. No one seems to know what faction they're from, and they both lack basic knowledge of the city. This should come in the form of two different reports from two different sides of town. Players can get this from surveillance cameras also.

Outcomes: The players, unknown to them, are actually caught between two opposing forces. The inhuman Besir-Desawar is desperately trying to find his two escaped clones, and Saoula is hot on his trail. If the players make too much "noise" during the investigation, Besir will find them and try to, in order, throw them off the scent, buy their silence, or kill them. If players manage to overcome him, he will lead them to the location of one of the clones (KasMin.)

Alternately, if the players's investigation is successfully discrete, they'll catch up with Saoula just as she finds the other clone (ParTen.) Saoula is also likely to be unfriendly, because she can't guarantee the silence of the PCs. If she learns that they're from the Quiet Cabal, however, she can talk to her superiors to ensure that this whole thing stays under wraps, at which point she's more comfortable working with them.

In either case, the PCs should end the day with access to one clone. That clone, if interviewed, is lost, confused, and desperate to find their "other half," and without both of them, it doesn't seem possible to build any kind of antidote to the virus.

Act 2 - The Shadowed City

With one of the Ketherians in their grasp, players must now find the second one. Whichever NPC they did not engage with in the previous section (Saoula or Besir-Desawar) now becomes more firmly an opponent.

- Besir realizes that someone's been investigating their clones, and knows that they must "clean up" this mess, so goes on the offensive.
- Saoula has been trailing the PCs, and:
 - If they befriended Besir-Desawar, tries to split the party up and pick them off one at a time,
 - If they defeated Besir-Desawar, Saoula realizes that this is a perfect time to throw them off the scent and try to take the other clone for herself.

Either way, this sequence should be a "chase through the shadows," as the players are trying to get more information about the other clone, with the opponent getting closer and closer to them. Contacts that players made in the first session could reappear dead or mind-wiped so that they can't offer more information.

Halfway through the day, Mr. Pinstripe will ask for a situation update, and give the players some information about whichever opponent they're facing. Pinstripe will have the following information:

- Name of the opponent
- Factional association

Zal is very interested in this event, but their motives are pretty dark: They want to make the situation as bad as possible so that they can launch a massive anti-church PR campaign, with the intent of toppling the Church of the Embodiment entirely.

Eventually, players should encounter whichever NPC is the opponent in this situation, and overcome them, to get access to the second clone.

Scene - Reunification

Bringing the clones together definitely should have a portentous feeling to it. KasMin and ParTen see each other for the first time and suddenly begin to remember At who and what they are. As their mental coherence increases, however, their clone bodies begin to degrade. This doesn't need to be horrific, necessarily, but it should definitely make them feel less "human. I'm imagining that they wind up growing gills and scales, maybe even feathers. They definitely stay symmetrical, no matter what they wind up looking like. Their bodies are trying to bring them together, but instead they're activating weird military bioware. It can look however you want it to. At this point, the clones remember about Ketherel, about their mission, and realize what's happened to them. They implore the players to get help for their mission, and the Quiet Cabal

communicates to the players that they need to get KasMin and ParTen to a Quiet Cabal safehouse while they can figure out what to do.

This sets up the third act of the game: Zal Corporation and the Church of the Embodiment both now realize that they need to get a hold of the clones at all costs, and the PCs must get the clones to safety while they fend off attacks from both factions.

Act 3 - To Safety

Scene 1 - Across the City

The PCs must get the now-mutated clones across the city in safety, with the resources of Zal Corporation and the Church of the Embodiment rallied against them. The Church will send hit-squads of suborned Myridians, while the Zal Corporation will use black-ops ninja troops. Use environments that the players visited in the first act, to show how the city is on high alert as two of the factions begin to mobilize in secret. One major challenge in this first part is to disguise the clones so that the players can move them safely. Another is to find a safe path to the safehouse that avoids surveillance and any of the large outposts of the Church or the Corporation. Stealth and secrecy are great weapons, players should be able to avoid encounters if they approach them carefully. Going head-to-head should cost resources, and put the clones in danger.

Scene 2 - Confrontation

As the players get closer to the safe house, Zal and the Church will change tactics. Zal will try to buy the clones back, promising high ranking positions, status, and money to the PCs. The Church will try to scare the PCs, threatening them with excommunication from the True Code (whatever that means,) in an attempt to force the players to give up the clones. Zal's agent can be Mr. Pinstripe, now very much an antagonist. The Church's agent should be Saoula's boss, **The Reverend Pater Pious**, an imposing and militant church official. Use what you know of the PCs to tempt them: they should have to make a firm commitment to the clones. If it looks like one or more PCs are going to cave, you can have a Quiet Cabal agent appear and save them, explaining that the offers are bogus, just meant to separate the group.

Scene 3 - Safety

Having overcome the best that the church and the corporation can throw at them, the PCs arrive at the safehouse and meet their Quiet Cabal contact. This is where they learn of the efforts by the Estate to hold the negotiation, and are asked to translate to Earth to conduct the Negotiation on behalf of Ketherel. Translation to Earth and introduction to the Estate should be take up the rest of this scene.