

Consultation Transcript

This transcript is a record of a conversation I had with SCP which turned from a brief discussion about her character, an AI named Persephone, to an analysis of how to approach a psychological character personality profile for Persephone, given that she wasn't born, nor had a childhood like most characters I work with.

SCP, at 14:33

So, I saw that you do write ups for AI
I have a character that I'm still working on
I just wanted to see if you'd like to help me develop her
At least get your 2 cents

The Character Consultancy, at 14:34

I do indeed - and I've got a couple of finished robot characters I've finished profiles for and will upload in a few weeks!

SCP, at 14:34

You have an excellent eye for this sort of thing, so why not talk to you?

The Character Consultancy, at 14:34

And I'll be delighted to.
I aim to please!

SCP, at 14:34

Sick
So I'm gonna lay out the background and some details and things like that, and you tell me if you can do it, and if that's the case, when and what you would charge

The Character Consultancy, at 14:35

Rockin'. Hit me

SCP, at 14:35

Have you played Mass Effect?

The Character Consultancy, at 14:36

No, I haven't.

SCP, at 14:36

Okay

Hang on just a tick

This robot is an AGI

The Character Consultancy, at 14:36

But if I'm ever asked to work with a universe that I'm unfamiliar with I have a cunning way of getting reasonably familiar with it, fast.

SCP, at 14:36

Its chill, I got you

So, even if you haven't played Mass Effect, do you know what a Reaper is? In the context of the universe

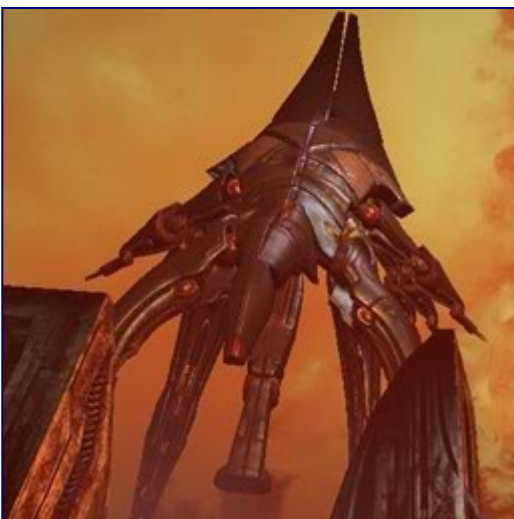
If not, I got you

[\[Link\]](#) bangbang

Mass Effect Wiki

[Reaper](#)

The Reapers are a highly-advanced machine race of synthetic-organic starships. The Reapers reside in dark space: the vast, mostly starless space between galaxies. They hibernate there, dormant for...



So, this character is named Persephone.AGI, she's a Reaper by manufacture and design. However, her shackling and IFF failed, so you have someone who lived as a remote body for someone else for 4 years, has committed atrocities without any choice of their own, essentially a prisoner in their own body, suddenly free and able to do as they please.

I have art if you want to see her

To get a better idea

She's a Wraith-class reaper, something of my own design, not canon. She was designed to perfectly mimic a human. She can shift between various races and appearances. She specializes in infiltration, espionage, and assassination.

The Character Consultancy, at 14:45

Sure thing - I'm reading the Reaper page and digesting what it says here.

SCP, at 14:50

Now, granted, this character has been on the backburner for nearly 8 years

SCP, at 14:51

I've just now buckled down and started purchasing art for her and making efforts to flesh her out

The Character Consultancy, at 14:51

Okay! Then it sounds like, if you're wanting me to help with all of that, you could use the latest version of my questionnaire. want me to send it over to you?

SCP, at 14:52

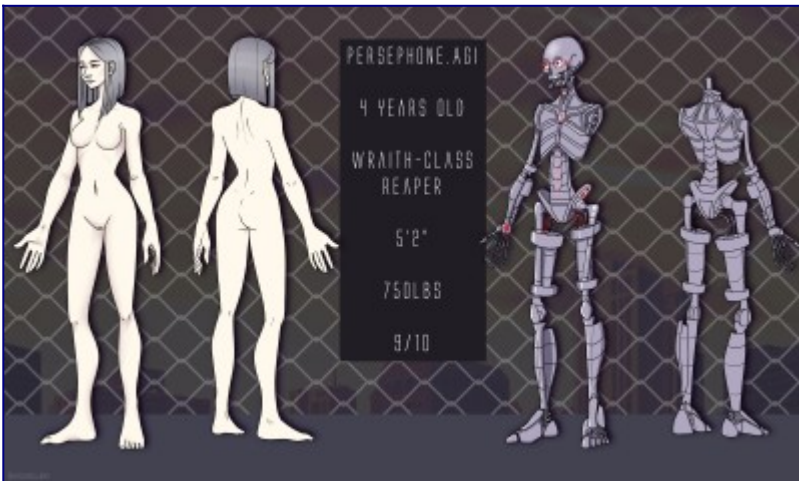
By all means!

Here's her art btw

The Character Consultancy, at 14:52

[Character questionnaire sent]

SCP, at 14:52



The Character Consultancy, at 14:53

She looks incredibly impressive!

Very nice ref sheets, and that laser coming out of her mouth is as disturbing as hell!

SCP, at 14:54

Thank youuuu

Its actually not a laser!

Its a magnetohydrodynamic cannon. It shaves a piece of metal off of a block that serves as ammo stock, uses electromagnets to melt it, suspends it in a gas, and then, via mass effect field, lowers its mass and fires it near light speed

The cannons in her palms fire in the 16 petawatt range and the one in her throat fires in the 5.7 exawatt range, so he projectiles are VERY energetic.

The Character Consultancy, at 14:56

Oh. My.

SCP, at 14:56

<3!

She can shoot a frigate out of orbit from the surface of the planet.

The Character Consultancy, at 14:57

So, just so I'm clear, she is the proxy in this universe of a reaper that lives in dark space?
So ultimately 'she' is actually elsewhere, very big, and squid-shaped?

SCP, at 14:57

No, she is entirely on board this platform, slowly networking herself into systems to back herself up in the event of destruction

She acted as a literal puppet for Harbinger, the de facto leader of the Reapers

Oh man, you really have updated your questionnaire

I'm not sure if this would really work for her

The first issue I see is the age sections

Perhaps you have some guidance?

The Character Consultancy, at 15:05

Aha, yes! Now this can make writing AIs confusing

> SCP, at 15:05

I can give you some quirks I've developed about her

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:06

The questionnaire is based on Erik Erikson's 8 Stages of Man, and that strongly implies that I'll work from a character's early history through to their adulthood, on the assumption that they'll start out not very cognitively developed. I.e., babies aren't physically able to use their brains to be rational so that has implications for how they experience the very earliest parts of their lives, which in turn has an impact on how they behave as adults.

That clearly doesn't work for AIs who are generally 'adults' from the moment they wake up / are switched on / however they start their lives.

Most of the people whose AIs I've worked with had the capacity to learn, but that's not the same as starting out with an infant mind.

> SCP, at 15:08

I run persephone based on operational hours, but she was essentially an adult from the moment she woke up, albeit feral, but not in the same way you would perceive a human to be feral

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:09

Okay. So by 'feral', does that mean she had ways of operating but hadn't yet calibrated to how to be around humans (or whatever society she ends up actively being a part of)?

> SCP, at 15:10

Like, maybe something that could give you insight is when she's afraid or scared of a situation, she falls back on her reaper ways. She stops being helpful and cooperating for the good of the group and starts manipulating people, only serving to place herself in power over the situation, and even stops suppressing her pheromone sprayers and infrasound wavelengths

Aka, she starts indoctrinating people and breaking the group apart

Indoctrination the way the reapers do it is something I think you'd be super interested in, by the way

I've come to the conclusion that its done through a combination of aerosolized hormones and infrasound

Basically note less than 20 hz

She produces a constant 17hz signal if she doesn't suppress it

But anyway, thoughts on that?

Maybe we should treat this more as a consultation :p

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:14

Ah, okay! So she has a level on which she can act out of fear and not in a completely 'robotic' type of way. She's got self-preservation instincts, which AIs don't have (at least, the ones we have developed here in real life don't have that luxury yet)

> SCP, at 15:14

She's an AI that's advanced enough that she has a personality

She fears harbinger, primarily

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:15

If you're happy to do that, yes! I am always happy to answer a couple of questions but if you have more to ask or think we can dig down into this, and that it could take an hour or more, then I can make it a consultation.

> SCP, at 15:15

Just using your questionnaire as a framework, I would say her "conception" was surgical in nature. Everything was purposeful.

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:16

Mm, okay!

> SCP, at 15:16

I mean, heck, I don't mind throwing a little your way! Let's make is a consultation, given I've got about an hour and some change before work

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:17

Great stuff, let's do that! I'll start the clock from quarter-past this hour.

Now the way I write personalities is on the assumption that they're a set of behaviours learned (mostly during the early stages of life when the brain was less well-developed)

> SCP, at 15:17

Ok

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:18

When you have an AI, they've never been through most of the stuff that would create the biases that form a personality.

Which means that you have a choice of either a personality-less character who wakes up, starts experiencing life with a fully-functioning 'adult' brain, and only develops a 'weak' personality (as in, not extreme, only light biases towards behaving certain ways) or they can be pre-programmed with a personality.

Please do ask me to clarify any points that you want me to, by the way.

> SCP, at 15:20

Okay, no problem

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:24

So take the first stage, Trust & Confidence, for example.

Trust is something that you can do with your head, but you generally do it with your gut.

> SCP, at 15:25

Trust is certainly something she lacks

She knows what the reapers are capable of and feels that no organic that becomes something of a friend cannot protect her from them if they find her

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:26

When someone does something you were trusting them not to do, or doesn't do something you trusted them to do, you might feel is very strongly. It might be that the only trust you placed was that your local library had a particular book that you wanted, and they said they'd have it but when you got there, they didn't. No biggie, and you probably get on with your life without a problem.

> SCP, at 15:26

Due to the prejudices present in the universe, she struggles with the concept of her humanity and if she can even be considered alive

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:26

If a close friend rifles through your wallet when you're in another room and you find out that they did it, however, and you'd understandably be furious!

Both are technically 'trust', but you see how trust can be something we hold deep.

> SCP, at 15:27

Yeah

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:27

So that's where the issue comes up with AIs: to imagine that they can feel betrayed is an anthropomorphisation.

Since Persephone's an AI, my question is, what is she experiencing if it's not trust as we know it?

> SCP, at 15:28

Mhmm

I would say she views things almost like an insurance firm

Risk vs reward

> **The Character Consultancy, at 15:29**

She's clearly acting in self-preservation - and trust is something we develop with others in the interest of self-preservation - so she's feeling something akin to betrayal (or she's lacking trust), but 'human trust' may not be it.

> **SCP, at 15:29**

She's risking her safety by trusting someone, but she may acquire power, supplies, a safe place to perform repairs, etc

> **The Character Consultancy, at 15:30**

So she's running a risk vs. reward analysis the whole time, it sounds like? Or regularly/whenever it's relevant?

> **SCP, at 15:30**

For sure

> **The Character Consultancy, at 15:30**

Now, my initial argument is that insurance companies don't feel emotion, but there's the rub:

An insurance company is designed in such a way that it acts in self-preservation, adding premiums, paying out vs. digging its heels in on payouts, etc.

But the insurance company itself doesn't go into a panic, it just has protocols that someone, somewhere has written, that then get followed.

Which gives us two sources of wiggle room!

1) whoever programmed Wraith-class Reapers (and therefore designed Persephone) had their own bias towards emotional behaviour, and that's been written into Persephone's behaviour routines

> **SCP, at 15:34**

That would be Harbinger.

> **The Character Consultancy, at 15:34**

2) as a highly sophisticated AI she's made with a rational core of processes, but has a kind of programming veneer that is more emotional. Kind of like you wearing tinted sunglasses. You know the world isn't sepia, but your sunglasses made it look that way, so you may react to things as if the world is sepia (I can't think of any good examples of how seeing the world in a certain colour would affect your behaviour, but I hope you see what I mean?)

> SCP, at 15:34

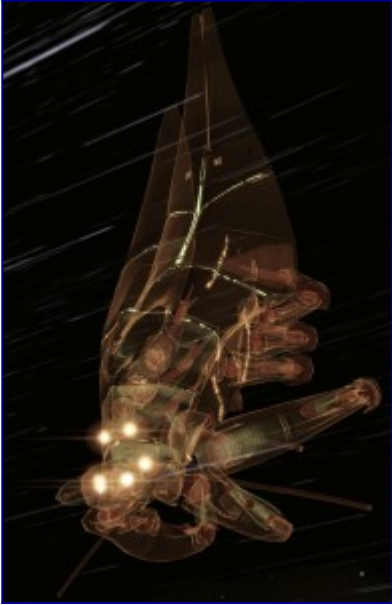
She considers him to be her father

[\[Link\]](#)

Mass Effect Wiki

[Harbinger](#)

Harbinger is a Reaper who resides in dark space with the rest of the Reaper fleet. It is the overseer of the Collectors' operations, frequently possessing individual Collectors to fight battles...



> The Character Consultancy, at 15:34

Aha, let me have a lookie

> SCP, at 15:34

No problem!

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:36

Just scanning what it says here. It looks like the Harbinger is generally considered to be a machine

Is that about right?

> SCP, at 15:38

Oh yeah

Harbinger is the original reaper

Constructed entire by the leviathans

The reapers are the poster child for "good intentions, poor execution"

Their primary directive is to preserve organic life

Unfortunately, they were given no instructions on how to do that, so the solution the original reapers developed in order to prevent extinctions and the general death of organic civilizations is to harvest the galaxy once every 50,000 galactic standard years, killing off all space faring organics by converting their biomass and genetic material into a biometal, then using that biometal to construct more reapers

Sovereign wasn't lying when he said "we are each a nation, independent, free of all weakness."

So they're all free to do as they like, but their all running source code written by Harbinger, so they follow his will

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:42

Whew, so something or someone right at the beginning had good intentions but skimped on giving enough detail.

> SCP, at 15:43

Persephone was programmed with less constraints in order to give her more free will and more ability to operate as a lone agent

Rather than harbinger controlling everything, she received her mission and executed it

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:43

Now you know, this has interesting implications for Persephone in terms of her character development!

> SCP, at 15:44

At that point in her 'life' though, you could say she was running on auto pilot. The lights were on but her true self was dormant

Oh? Do tell

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:45

So if we think of this as a more conventional human family: Grandma was a peace-loving hippie who wanted everyone to live, but assumed that her happy intentions would be enough. "Love is all you need", as a certain reknowned pop band once said.

> SCP, at 15:46

Mmhmm

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:46

Her daughter had to live with that, and never got enough information on how to live adequately. Apparently all that really mattered was 'preserve life' - other than that, she had to make her own way in life.

And now *she's* had a kid. The granddaughter is long-removed from that "Love is all you need" message but is still carrying it out.

Albeit in a very disjointed kind of way that retains none of the original spirit of the message. She's isolated, doing something that preserves life, but is equipped to kill.

> SCP, at 15:48

The granddaughter being Persephone

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:48

Yep!

> SCP, at 15:48

Right

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:48

And worse, daughter and grand-daughter are AIs, while possibly the Leviathan was organic, so they have very different minds in the first place.

> SCP, at 15:49

Her entire purpose is to kill/control certain people. CEOs, heads of state, anyone that could cause the reaper invasion to be more difficult in the future

In universe, every senator that very suddenly changed his stance on synthetics, every brilliant mind that died in mysterious circumstances, every leader that seems to have lost their spark, she was there.

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:51

And there it is. Grandma may have wanted to preserve life but she didn't give anywhere near enough info and perhaps assumed that the generations that succeeded her would find her point of view just as self-evident as she did, but they didn't.

> SCP, at 15:51

With the point she's at now, she wants to figure out what it means to be alive and to be a person, given that now she has the opportunity to serve herself, rather than the Reapera

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:52

Well!

How much does Persephone know about her origins?

Or the Harbinger's origins?

> SCP, at 15:52

She knows where she came from and the implications behind it

She knows that if the people around her found out, it would mean social and possibly physical death

She is very difficult to kill, but it is possible with the right amount of ordinance

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:53

Aha, okay.

How much does she know about the civilisation that created the Harbinger?

Knowing that they existed and a bit of information about what they instructed the Harbinger to do (albeit the fact that they did it badly) isn't the same as having a nuanced understanding of their reasons for creating the Harbinger.

> SCP, at 15:55

Basically nothing

She doesn't know much about the leviathans

Granddaughter never met grandma, mom never talked about grandma

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:57

She could do with researching that big time, I think, to get peace. But that sounds hard: the information you gave me about the Reapers is that they alone are millions of years old. Let alone - yes, what you just said.

So that's easier said than done. Sounds like she's stranded, culturally speaking.

> SCP, at 15:58

She absolutely is

Essentially no family

Certainly no family that cares for her

> The Character Consultancy, at 15:59

Do you have any further thoughts or questions about filling in the questionnaire?
We've got another 15 minutes so let's see what we can do with that time.

> SCP, at 15:59

Hang on a tick
Should we talk about freedom and self determination?

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:00

Yes, absolutely!

> SCP, at 16:00

Okay!
One thing I would say is this
She's alone, entirely
This does mean that she can do essentially whatever she wants

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:01

It sounds like it.

> SCP, at 16:01

Her freedom is unlimited
But there are obvious drawbacks
Such as no one to tell her right from wrong

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:03

How is she integrated into the culture she's in, by the way? Does she seem to all intents and purposes to be an unemployed adult, or is she treated as a robot, or something like that?

> SCP, at 16:03

Less unemployed adult
Her first contact with organics once she was 'free'

> **The Character Consultancy, at 16:04**

Oh, so she's just entered this culture?

> **SCP, at 16:05**

Effectively

> **The Character Consultancy, at 16:05**

They have no context for her, they're just suddenly like, "Oh hello, there's an adult human. She's a bit strange, but... hi!"

> **SCP, at 16:05**

So, she made planet fall

Literally

She fell from space and was recovered by a security team

Currently being held in a prison cell because "what the fuck we found this woman in a smoking, radioactive crater and she's shaken up but otherwise fine."

> **The Character Consultancy, at 16:07**

Aha, okay! So next to no information on her but something's clearly up.

> **SCP, at 16:07**

Yeah!

> **The Character Consultancy, at 16:07**

And there they are, thinking they're clever with their little prison cell, but she's way too strong for that to hold her.

> **SCP, at 16:07**

Oh yes, she could escape at any time

But

If she does, they'll know she's not human

> **The Character Consultancy, at 16:08**

So she's pretending to be human for the time being?

> SCP, at 16:08

Mmhmm

Except on of the security officers

The one that discovered her

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:09

Oh sure, what's the deal with him/her?

> SCP, at 16:09

She told him and he was cool about it, if wary

He was like "I understand how things can be, you're alone, you're scared, just be cool. I'm going to get you out of here."

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:10

Will he become a significant part of her life story?

> SCP, at 16:10

He's treating her like a person and validating her

Likely

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:10

I'm wondering if this much weaker, but supportive, character is going to be with her for the long term

> SCP, at 16:11

I hope so!

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:11

I like the sound of that dynamic!

> SCP, at 16:11

Same! Its interesting!

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:11

So let's see... in 4 minutes, what can I say about Freedom and Determination?

Well, for humans, that's the toddler stage where they've just become co-ordinated enough to start acting under their own direction. For a toddler, that's massive news!

Persephone has all the autonomy she could possibly want, and then some. To a point where it's something of a problem.

So while she's not growing up with 'too much' autonomy, which could screw up a kid (to use the clinically accepted term), she doesn't have to worry about being overpowered.

Except for the fact that she wants to maintain her cover, but she's not being forced to, she's just making a choice.

> SCP, at 16:14

She fears blowing her cover will make people treat her as less than a person

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:14

So it's just on a social level that she is being 'controlled'

> SCP, at 16:14

Yeah!

> The Character Consultancy, at 16:15

So how is that, having had this conversation? You're working on her on the basis that she was always an adult so we're not looking at her *development*, but we are looking at her stance.

> SCP, at 16:15

Yeah, its kind of difficult to develop a character like this