



THE ADAMANTINE ARROWTM

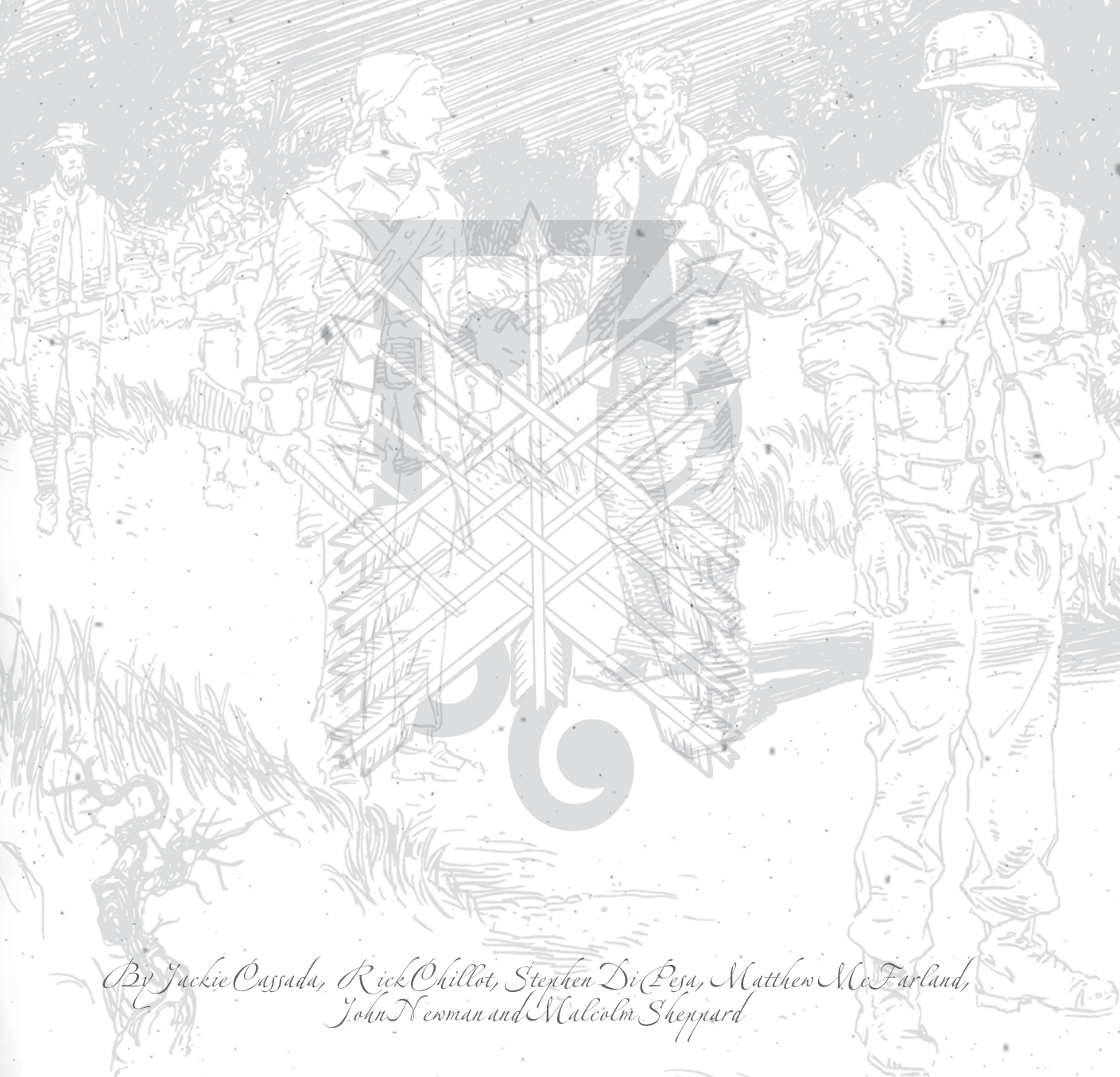
the World of Darkness



MAGE[®]
THE AWAKENING



THE ADAMANTINE ARROW



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WHY WE FIGHT

He could hear them, all around him on the road, their footsteps moving softly across the dirt and stones. Some fell in a disciplined rhythm. Others came at odd intervals, a scrape here, a shuffle there. Close. Far away. Another, and another. More and more until they were like falling rain, the patterns indistinguishable in the greater torrent of noise. The sky was lit by a half-moon and a few weak stars; the trees on both sides of the road were black and leafless. He couldn't see the walkers yet, but he could hear them.

When the closest footsteps fell into a rhythm with his own, Michael glanced to his left. A young man walked beside him. A boy, really, in a ragged hunting jacket, tattered breeches, toes visible through the holes in his boots. He carried a musket in his right hand; his left rested on the powder horn slung at his side.

They walked awhile, and Michael said, "I know he's forbidden you to speak. But you can speak to me, if I offer you something in return." Michael removed a bundle from the pack hanging over his shoulder. "That's a law that's older, more powerful, than he is."

The boy gestured with his musket. "Most folk here can't talk at all, sir, even if they wanted to." He regarded the cloth-wrapped bundle in Michael's hands. "But I'll speak with you awhile. My name is Nathaniel Wilson."

Thick clouds rolled in, reducing the moonlight to a vague glow. "I wonder," Michael said then, "if you could tell me how you came to be here."

He shrugged. "Same as yourself, or anyone else, sir. The Man-eater."

"What I mean was, how did it happen?"

The boy considered this. Then he said, "It's not a good thing to speak of him, sir. These are his trails, his woods. And he hears what's said. He'll come around to me again, eventually, like he always does. But I have no wish to make that happen any sooner than it needs to."

"I understand." Michael looked at the bundle he held, then at the boy.

The boy licked his lips.

"All right. All right. I'll tell how it happened."

"I was barely out of common school when the Revolution came, sir. I joined the militia gladly. But by winter

time I was forgetting about liberty and just hoping all my toes would stay on my feet. And then one day in February it got strange warm. Me and some of the other lads were left behind to guard the powder house. These boys, sir, I didn't want to learn their names, knowing they'd be dead soon, or I would.

"Late afternoon, black, porridgy clouds rolled in, and with the sun so low in the sky it got to be like twilight out. And then the cannons started. Far off, at first, but they were taking our distance, we knew it. We looked to each other, fingering our muskets, and wondering who would be the first to break and leave the powder to some bunch of Redcoats. And then I was running away, hell-bent and cowardly.

"Came the loudest crash of all, sir, with a light so bright I thought my eyes would catch fire. When my head cleared, I saw the powder house in ruins, the lads scattered around all broken. It wasn't cannon that did it, sir. It had been a lightning strike, and I could still see the smoke rising from the ground. Then I saw something else, and I had to walk closer to be sure, my legs quivering like a little baby learning to walk.

"It wasn't black powder that had been in the barrels in that power house. Every one of them was split open now, and every one of them had been filled with sand. Just sand. They used to do that to fool the British, so they wouldn't see how desperate we were.

"And that's when I saw the Man-eater, though I didn't know what he was. He looked like just this tall, lanky fellow, dressed sort of like a minister, with a thin face and a toothy grin. It startled me to see him there, and I tried to raise my gun, but my hand shook bad. 'I'd get out of here, if I were in your boots,' he said in that gravely voice he has. I sort of stared at him for a moment, and then I half-ran, half-stumbled away. When I couldn't run any farther, I just dropped to the ground. I could see those thick clouds above, and now and then a lightning flash, and in a moment I knew that people like me could fight all the wars we wanted, but there'd always be another one coming. Even the wind and the clouds and the lightning were fighting against each other, pounding at each other because if one went higher, another had to be lower.

"I Awakened then, and took my trip to the high heaven, and afterward wandered around thinking the lightning had touched me in the head. Later I fell in with an Indian named Thunder-catcher, and he became my teacher. Thunder-catcher had been given word that the Man-eater was near, and had been tasked to find and destroy it if he could. One day he told me to stay put and laid down some circles of power to shield me. But I was headstrong, of course, and got tired of waiting. I walked out into the night to see what I could see. And there he was, like he was waiting.

"So we meet again," he says, like we'd crossed paths in the town square."

"I'm not as I used to be," I told him. "And I know you're not what you seem to be."

"Is that so?" he answered. "Well, you're still too small a fish for me." He leaned back on a tree trunk like he had all the time in the world. "Go away now. Take some time, some years to get stronger, wiser. Make our next meeting more interesting for me."

"He knew, by saying that, I wouldn't do anything but stay right there. Not after he'd been at the site of my cowardice, my awful flight from duty. I had abandoned my post then, but been spared death and granted a new life. I no choice but to stand my ground now.

"Where there was a lanky man of skin and bones, he had teeth and claws and blood like fire. I fought back like I knew how, but he'd chewed up bigger mages than me. So he asked his awful question and then swallowed me up and ground me down. And now I wander this dismal place, another lost soul for the Man-eater to feed on when he wills. With nothing left of me in the world, since he even ate my bones."

"Not all of them," Michael said. He took an object from the pack at his side and held it toward the boy, flat on his outstretched palm. "Take it."

Gingerly, as if lifting a hot coal, the boy took the bone fragment from Michael's hand. It was the head of a human femur, and part of the shaft, the broken end jagged and split. The boy turned it over and over again, staring at it in wonder.

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Farther down the road, Michael could make out the silhouettes of the soldiers, their outlines barely there, like a trick of the light. They marched silently, bearing weapons of all sorts, wearing uniforms pocked with bullet

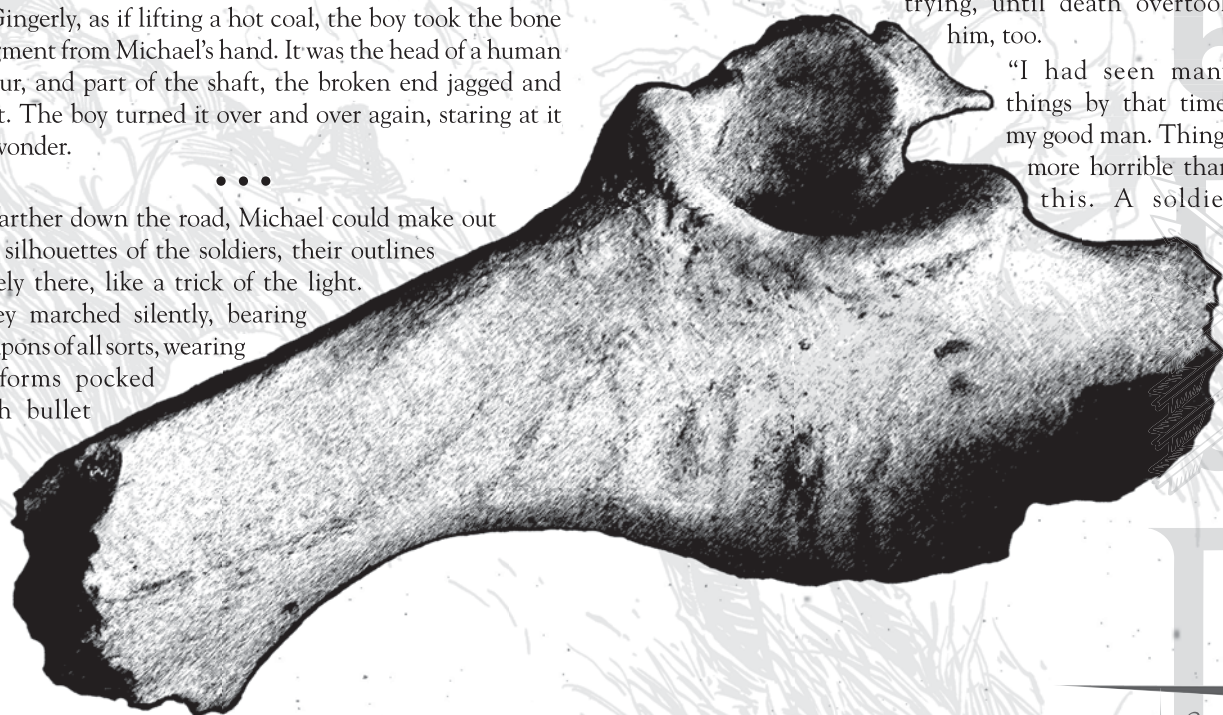
holes and shrapnel shreds and saber slashes. Then he saw one who seemed solid and alert, a man in gray who locked eyes with Michael and walked briskly toward him. "Conrad Shane, cavalryman, at your service," the man said. He told his story without looking at the parcel Michael offered.

"There was much work to be done by our order in my war, I'll tell you, brother. All those bodies, all that blood, all that despair... it brings things out of the woodwork. The Man-eater was one of them. I spent weeks tracing threads and peering through time to find the most advantageous moment to confront the beast. I was riding Hector that day. How I miss that horse... We came through a tree line to a dilapidated barn that overlooked a field of rotting cattle-corporse. The smell was like a wave of poison bound to drag your senses down to Hades. As we trotted closer, I could make out two figures in the dry grass.

"The old man had been shot in the side of his head; a swarm of flies feasted on his brains. The child curled up next to his grandfather, if that's who it was, he had no mark on him. Now, the moment I'd been working toward was coming within the hour and I needed to get to it. But a curiosity caught my attention. The old man's mouth seemed to hang open; I knelt to look closer, and after a head-scratching moment, I saw a heel of bread there. I meant to pull it out, but rigor kept the jaw clamped shut upon it, so that only a piece of the soft loaf came free. Another crust lay upon his chest, with crumbs scattered throughout his beard. Then I regarded the boy. He held a chunk of bread in his right hand, it was also soft to my touch.

"The man had clearly been dead for days, but the bread was not stale. I couldn't say what was bothering me about the tableau, and then it came in a flash. The old man had been shot dead. The boy, unable to rouse him, had tried to feed the corpse, hoping in his ignorance that the bread would make things better. He'd stayed by his side, hoping, trying, until death overtook him, too.

"I had seen many things by that time, my good man. Things more horrible than this. A soldier



strangle his fellow over a spilled canteen of water. A vampire burrow into a mass of amputated limbs to hide from the rising sun. A widow, mad from grief, wearing as jewelry the tongues of Confederate and Union dead alike. But on that day, in that place, this scene became too much to bear. And before I knew otherwise, I was swearing an oath to lay these poor corpses to a proper rest in advance of sundown. I got so far as to find a shovel in the barn before I realized what I had sworn on to. For taking the time to give these poor folk the burial they deserved would surely cause me to lose the strategic time and place against my foe.

"There was nothing for it. I found a level spot of ground put spade to earth. These were simple Christians; I knew the type, and they would surely consider it anathema were I to use the *ars magica* to inter their mortal remains. So I dug, as the hour slipped by, a pit deep and square enough. I placed the old man within, composing his form into as dignified a disposition as I could. And when I climbed out and set myself aside the pit, I saw the Man-eater standing there.

"He was as those who'd described their glimpses to me always said: tall, lean, with a wild beard and eyes too large and bright. His fingers were bony with yellow, ragged nails; his hair like the mane of a lion. He cradled the corpse of the boy in his arms.

"His eyes fixed on me, he lifted the burden, waited for me to take it. And I did.

"The strange creature said nothing until I reached for the shovel to complete the interment. His voice was as unremarkable as a shopkeeper's. 'If I kill you before you finish this thing,' he said, 'will your ghost not regret your vow?'"

"I began to drop soil into the grave. Though inwardly I was ready for battle, I tried to comport myself with a calm manner. 'If I die fulfilling my word,' I said, 'I die as myself. No man could regret that.'

"Finish, then."

"I don't suppose I'll describe our fight, or its outcome. I was not surprised when it showed its true form, its claws and the rows of teeth. I did try to answer its question as best I could. But you see how things went."

Michael presented Shane with a bundle. Shane snatched it from him, pulled at the wrapping until the rounded white shape beneath was completely exposed.

"Is this..."

"Keep it."

The soldier cradled the skull as if it were an infant, stroking it, slowly.

A little further on, and now the ghosts were substantial enough for Michael to see their faces, but mostly he didn't look. The clouds were thicker, and the trees seemed to lean over the road to block out the dim moonlight. Michael found himself walking near a broad-shouldered man dressed in jungle camouflage.

He read the words inked on a strip of cloth above his heart: MARTIN. As the stranger came closer, Michael could see that there was tattered skin and empty space where his throat should have been.

The Manticore, came a voice in Michael's head. He came through here hungry not long ago. It'll be a while before it grows back.

Martin's story unfolded not just in words, but with images, sounds, sensations.

[A lush, green country of river and jungle.

Scent of earth and grass.] The Vietnam conflict was like a damn magnet for the Awakened, man. For our order, it was a golden opportunity to witness new variations on fucked-up art of warfare. [Choppers hover over smoke; men crawl through earthen tunnels.] But for others, it was a cover, a smokescreen that let them dig out the secrets that were being kicked up in the bok-bok. I was humping in Cambodia, following up on a distress call from this cabal of relic-hunting mystagogues. They'd were in some kind of trouble. About two hours inside the border, I reached the spot they'd described in their message. [An old shrine of faded reds and golds, an ornamented, two-story hut overrun with vines, with a winged

roof and a half-rotted fence around it. The smell of incense and rotting plants.]

A single wizened monk stepped out as I walked to the front gate.

I bowed and replied in Khmer, "Please excuse my presence in this place, sir. I mean no disrespect." If he was surprised to hear an American jerkoff speaking his language, he didn't show it.

[The walls of the shrine. Faded carvings. Knives that drip blood, clashing armies and the tears of women.] "Sir," I asked him. "Whose house is this?"

"We serve the spirit of war." [Twelve monks step out of the shrine, stand in semicircle around Martin.] "He is a hungry spirit," the head monk continued. "And if you leave now, he may not devour you."

I stared back at the monk. He was damn taller than any Vietnamese or Cambodian I'd ever met, and unnaturally twiggy, even for an ancient ascetic who ate bamboo shoots for breakfast. "And has this spirit of war devoured other souls recently?" I asked. "Of men like me? Westerners, traveling through here without escort, men of power seeking buried mysteries?"

[The monk smiles: dead eyes and a shark's teeth.] "The men you seek are unharmed. They are imprisoned in the labyrinth buried below this place." [Darkness, walls, chains.]

I nodded. "And why did you not devour them, Black Dragon?"

"Ordinary souls are like grass to me, tasteless and not fit to eat. Souls of fallen warriors are like bread; filling enough, but not very interesting to the palate. Souls of the Awakened, now, they make a fine meal. But it occurred to me: keep these fools alive and confined, soon enough an Awakened warrior might come looking for them. And that is the finest feast of all." [Wind blowing through the jungle canopy, a flock of birds flutters to earth.]

"And what now? You release them if I take their place?"

"What happens to them is of no consequence to me. Perhaps they'll free themselves after you die, perhaps not. It's not my concern."

"Release them."

"Or what? You'll fight me with magic, with guns, with your bare hands? These things bore me, because they are no threat."

I considered that for a moment, then said, "Perhaps you'd like to battle in some other manner?"

[The old monk raises an arm, the monks bow low and back away.] "Are you trying to delay your demise?"

"No. I'm just wondering, well, what other skills could you bring to a competition? What skills does the renowned Black Dragon have, aside from killing? I've heard stories about you..."

"Skills? Too many to name, little mage. I'm a creator as well as a destroyer. And I carry all the knowledge of every soul I've devoured, of every corpse I've ground to dust."

"Really? You truly consider yourself a creator?" [A mosquito crawls along the back of Martin's neck.]

"Yes!" The bastard actually sounded amused now. "I could build a temple ten times the size of this hovel in the blink of an eye! I could adorn it with murals the likes of which no human

eye has ever seen. Shall I craft a chain as fine as silk that could imprison a tiger? Shall I ring this vale with a song that makes the sun stop in its path to listen?"

"Singing..." I interrupted him then. "I have something of a good voice myself."

"Ha! A warrior mage who prides himself on his singing voice?"

"Soldiers have been singers since the first human tribes went to war," I answered. "Songs of battle, of inspiration, of comfort... a warrior who won't sing has already given up the battle."

"True enough. Well, if it's a singing contest you propose, I'll agree. Defeat me, and your comrades will be released, and I'll let you walk away. Lose, and you'll feed my hunger, and they'll rot until I grow hungry again."

"All right."

"And who shall judge the winner?"

I shrugged. "Your monks."

He laughed. "You wish my servants to arbitrate this? You think they'll be fair?"

"If you tell them to."

So we went to it. The Black Dragon sang first. [His voice, like a thousand voices, like a million insects echoing in the night. No words, but something deeper than words. Stars clash against each other, mountains rise and fall, gods and heroes struggle. Afterwards strange echoes rumble around them and then the jungle noise slowly rises.] We turned to the monks. They said nothing, just bowed low to us, and then they turned to me and waited.

I nodded to the old one. [The wind shifts. Thunder, far off, faint.] I breathed three deep breaths, stilling my mind. Then I sang the first phrase:

"Let the sun rest his head..."

[Martin's baritone, soft, clear. A song about birds returning to their nests, farmers laying down their tools, cattle lying down in the grass as the wind blows softly. Dusk paints the horizon in deep blues and purples, the stars came out one by one, and the moon. Crickets trill.] It was a lullaby, an old one. I sang it in a Khmer dialect, because I knew the language well, and the people. I'd been wandering all over South Asia for years, collecting songs and stories. I knew these monks, the villages they came from, where they'd been born. And I knew they probably hadn't heard this song for a long, long time.

To their credit, the monks kept absolutely silent, absolutely still, as tears ran down each of their faces. I waited for the Black Dragon to speak first.

"It seems," he said, without emotion, "that the judges need not speak to render their decision."

"Yes."

[The old monk's face, a mask of calm, of stone.] "So be it. I will honor the terms."

[The monks slowly walking away, not single file, but each moving toward the jungle at his own pace.] For the first time, I saw the Dragon look puzzled. "What... what are they doing?"

"Well, it seems," I said to him, "That the judges decided they no longer want to serve you."

"BUT

THEY'RE MINE!" And with that I saw the Black Dragon's other shape, man, the nightmare like a lion, like a crocodile, the rows of jagged teeth and claws like knives. [A monster pounces on the closest monk, grabs him in his teeth, shakes him so hard that his head tears loose from his neck.] When he dropped the head in the grass, I saw its lips still moving. The Dragon shook the blood from his chin and moved for another victim.

[Blackness, Martin's voice.] We fought for the better part of the day. I did pretty well at first, but eventually my strength flagged, and his never did.

When Martin finished the story, he held out his hand. Michael opened his pack, took out the pale, yellow-white rib and handed it to him. "It was all I could find," Michael said. Martin simply took the bone and walked away.

...

There was a place where the road was divided by a cluster of dark trees, creating two parallel paths that would join together a little farther along. The ghosts of the soldiers moved to either side as they marched, not caring.

She was waiting for him there. Her eyes were much as he remembered them: dark, fierce, thoughtful. The kind of eyes that took nothing for granted. He was wishing he could remember what he'd planned to say to her, when she spoke first.

"Oh, Michael," she breathed, almost a sob. Then, her voice steady, she said, "Michael, I was hoping so much I'd never see you here."

"I — I'm not..."

"You're not dead, I can still see that much. But, Michael, what are you doing here?" She stepped closer, reached for his hands, did not touch them. "I won't be able to feel them, and I don't think I could bear that," she said. "Mikey... oh, Mikey. Why?"

His throat was tight as he answered. "Because this has to stop, Laurie. It's gone on for far too long."

"Oh, Michael Colter, you're not a warrior. I don't care how buff you've gotten or how many fighting styles you've learned. You can't do this."

"You sound like Dad did, when he was telling you not to enlist."

"Why do we have to fight, even now?" She shook her head. "Oh, Mike, why didn't you join the Mysterium like I told you to? Or the Free Council?"

He turned away, took a deep breath. "I couldn't, Laurie. I couldn't. What was my Awakening for? To dig up books and scrolls? To figure out how to make a computer send e-mail to the Dreamtime? Laurie..." He shook his head. "I walked all the way to the Stone Book and back," he said, softly. "And I want that to be in the service of something. Something important. A higher calling."

"Michael," she answered, "the highest calling is the one that fits you. We can't have a society of only warriors, anymore than your blood can consist only of antibodies. A bone can't be a muscle, a star can't be a planet, Stygia can't be Arcadia and even before the Fall, the Supernal World wasn't the only reality, it was just one part of it. That's how the universe works, with everything playing its role."

"And the Manticore?"

For a moment, she stared down the road. A quartet of shadowy men in chain mail and crested helmets passed by silently. Then she said, "Do you remember the e-mail I sent you, about a week before..."

"Yeah... that patient in Baghdad. The translator who'd lost a leg to an IED."

"He'd been working with an embedded reporter killed in the same explosion. They'd become close, like brothers, the man told me. And there was a sliver of his friend's bone lodged near the base of his spine, too close to a nerve plexus to be removed safely. This made him happy. He said, 'I'll carry my friend with me wherever I go. He'll always be part of me now.'"

"You didn't mention that it was quite possible that other bone fragments had contributed to the loss of his leg."

"No. But this what you need to understand, Mikey. The Manticore, he's not something that belongs here, not even here in the Shadow. He's a fragment from something else, embedded in the Fallen World. Dug in so deep that no one will ever be able to push him out. He killed me, Michael. He wanted to insinuate himself in the 68th, waiting for my patients to die so he could devour their souls like a snake eating mice. He didn't belong there and I didn't want him there. And I tried to make him leave, so he killed me, ate me and now I'm here with the rest of his herd of the damned. And you're right, he does need to be stopped. But coming here alone isn't the way to do it."

Michael reached into the near-empty pack. He brought out a torn, white cloth, stained with a deep red. He offered it to her. "But I'm not alone."

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There's a place up ahead where the forest stops, she'd told him. The trees thin out, and then they're gone. And the road ends, and there's nothing but black earth on all sides. The dead can't go there. And that's where he waits, until he's hungry again.

Michael was several dozen paces from the road when he saw light ahead. In another minute, the reddish glow was clearly a campfire. As Michael approached, he saw the black silhouette crouching over it. The shadowy figure stood and waited.

"I don't get many visitors here," the man said. In the light of the fire, Michael could see the wide eyes, the ragged beard and claw-like fingernails.

"No, I don't suppose you do." He shifted his weight to the balls of his feet, made a slow gesture with his left hand.

"Whatever magic you're making," the Manticore told him, "it won't help you."

"Then I wonder if I might ask a question."

"Ask quickly, living man. I'll be hungry soon."

"Why do you do what you do? I mean, do you have a choice?" Michael frowned as the stranger dropped to the ground, legs crossed. "If you could change your behavior..."

"It's funny that you ask me that. Because that's the question I've been asking for all these centuries. 'Why do you do it?' No soldier, no warrior ever has an answer. Oh, each can tell me why he does it. Or she. But not why you all do it."

"I don't understand."

"Why is there war, mage of the Adamantine Arrow? I want to understand that. I want to understand war. Where I'm from, you see, there is no war. Yes, we have the spirit-eat-spirit struggles of the Primal Wilds. The painful trials of Pandemonium. But true warfare... that, it took human beings to create. And, so I ask you, as I've asked so many others, why is there war?"

"Are you claiming..."

"I am Supernal."

"I'm not sure I believe you."

"And I'm not sure why that should be important to me." And then the tall stranger was lunging at Michael, eyes burning, jaws thrown wide to reveal row after row of jagged teeth.

But Michael jumped, launching high into the air as the stranger's body rippled like water and transformed into a thing of leonine strength and ragged talons. The creature, the Manticore, landed on all fours, twisting, its neck stretching. Michael came down to land a kick at the back of the creature's skull. He skidded on the soft dirt and gestured, raising his two hands to shoulder level, palms up. The beast spun around to face him; Michael pushed at the air. A wind kicked up; the creature dug its claws into the soil, but was pushed slowly backwards.

A dust cloud filled the air now, a haze of black soil that diminished the campfire, the feeble starlight, to nothing. The monster turned in a slow circle, eyes glowing, until he saw Michael's shape, slightly blacker than the gloom. Growling, the creature dug its claws into the turf and then leapt.

Michael was not fast enough. The thing knocked him to the ground and clamped its jaws around his left arm. He grunted in pain, heard his bones crunching like a box of crayons stepped on by a spiteful child. He reached his free hand around, gripped the monster's hair. Flames licked along his fingers. There was a smell of cooking meat.

The creature shook its head, tossing Michael like a toy. He flew 20 feet, twisted in midair and landed on his knees. He forced himself to his feet. His arm hung at his side, bloody, flesh shredded, muscle tissue hanging in tatters.

The monster was charging. Michael jumped backwards, covering 10 yards in one leap, then 20. The blood stopped pouring from his arm; the skin knit itself together.

Michael was on the road, braced and ready, when the monster burst from the tree line at Michael. Michael turned, sideways, and when the creature came at him, he bent at the knees and threw his arms around its forward leg. Razored thorns sprouted from the monster's hide, sliced at Michael's hand and arms. He grunted and pushed, lifting the thing's forequarters off the ground, squeezing tight as the blood threatened to loosen his grip.

The Manticore's neck twisted back on itself, and the creature spat a dark spray of oily liquid at Michael's face. He felt each droplet hit his skin and burn like acid. A numbness spread over him, a tightness that gripped every muscle in his body, locking him motionless.

"This is how it ends for you," the Manticore said. His shape melted away, until he was the tall, thin man again. "I prefer to eat with human hands."

The blow came from the left, a blur that made no sound. It impacted the tall man's temple. Nathaniel Wilson stepped back. In his hand, he gripped the broken thighbone like a



hammer. He swung it again, catching the Manticore's cheekbone this time, making the tall man stagger backwards. "Where did you get that?" the Manticore snarled.

Wilson said nothing. He pointed the bone at the Manticore, and the air between them rippled. The tall man was pushed backwards, almost lost his footing.

"So you found some little piece of yourself," the man snarled. "A fragment of your old power. So what. It's just more for me to dine on —"

Martin was there. He gripped the man's neck from behind, taking him in a chokehold. Martin plunged something flat and curved into the creature's side, pulled it out, stabbed again.

The Manticore howled. He threw Martin off him, took two steps forward and fell to his knees. "This... won't matter..." he gasped. "You can't beat me..."

There was a disturbance in the tree line. And then a great, spectral warhorse erupted from the brush. Its body was like smoke, shifting and translucent. Through the insubstantial flesh of its head, the bone of its skull was visible, so white it seemed almost blazing.

Conrad Shane sat atop the horse, urged the steed forward, guiding it with his hands, shouting and leaning in close to its neck. "Go, Hector, onward! Onward!" The horse closed the distance, and crashed into the Manticore like a wild bull. The Manticore slid across the road on his back; the horse pursued and reared up. And then slammed its front hooves into the Manticore's chest.

The Manticore rolled away, stood up, swaying slightly. Tendrils of gray smoke began to issue from his nostrils. He said, "I'll make you rip that animal to shreds with your teeth, then I'll do the same to you."

But then the ghosts came. Silent, expressionless, a score of soldiers from a dozen different ages came out of the woods, rushed toward the Manticore. More, and more, until he was surrounded by a hoard of the specters.

"Get away, you mindless husks," he commanded. But they kept coming. When the first was within arm's reach, the Manticore shoved him aside like a scrap of paper drifting on the wind. But then another came close, and another. The Manticore pushed at them, but in their numbers they had enough substance to resist.

Laurie Colter walked behind the ghosts, a bloody shirt wrapped around her left arm. "Hold him," she called out. "Press him." The specters said nothing as they obeyed, but their eyes held purpose.

Martin pushed his way through the ghostly multitude, reached the center where the Manticore was held down by a throng of transparent hands. "Release me," the man-shaped monster hissed. "Release me!"

Martin raised the rib in both hands, then plunged it like a stake into the tall man's left shoulder. The Manticore

shrieked as the bone pinned him to the ground. Then Wilson was there, pushing the jagged end of the broken thigh bone into the Manticore's left hip, pushing the bone through the creature's body and into the stone and earth beneath.

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"You!" the Manticore shouted as Michael came near. "You think you've won? This doesn't matter. You can't kill me. You can't destroy me."

Michael nodded. "I didn't come here to destroy you."

The Manticore thrashed, growling, but could not pull himself free. "Then what is this? What do you want?"

"I came here to serve you." Michael crouched down, met the creature's glare. "We can't kill you. But we can keep you here a long, long time. And that will be a long time to be hungry. But there's another way."

The Manticore was calm now. His eyes, looking human, narrowed. "Is that so? And what would that be?"

"Let me serve you. Agree to stop hunting, to stop feeding on the Sleepers, on whatever mage crosses your path. Let me lead you to better prey. Swear an oath to it, and I can arrange for you to contend with the mightiest warriors our order has to offer. Warriors who will combat with you willingly, who will give you challenges you've never experienced. The best of our best. If you truly want to learn about war, this is an opportunity beyond any you've known."

The Manticore laughed. "I know quite a bit," he said. "More than you might imagine."

Michael shrugged. "I don't need to get into a pissing contest. I'm not the one who's going to be pinned in the Shadow for a millennium or two."

"I might agree to this," the Manticore said. "But I need food right away. And I want it to be flesh of my choosing."

"That might be possible."

"It would be you, of course."

"I expected as much."

"Let me up, then."

Later, they stood by the fire. "You didn't answer it before. Why is there war, Michael?"

"I don't know."

"The boy, Wilson, told me that war is like weather, predictable but unstoppable. The horseman said that every war begins with a broken oath. The man Martin called war the inability of two sides to adjust to each other's existence. And your sister, she said that war is as understandable as the human soul."

"All I know for sure," Michael said, "is that there's only one reason to fight one."

"And that is?"

"To make the fighting stop."

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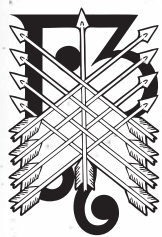
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THE ADAMANTINE ARROW

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INTRODUCTION

*War is the province of uncertainty:
three-fourths of those things upon which action in war must be calculated,
are hidden more or less in the clouds of great uncertainty.
Here, then, above all a fine and penetrating mind is called for,
to grope out the truth by the tact of its judgment.*

— Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

What does it take to set a newly Awakened mage on the path of war? At first glance, it might seem an unattractive proposition. There are numerous threats surrounding the mage, threats that are dangerous enough without actively seeking them out. Lying low from Sleeper and supernatural attention alike can seem the most prudent path.

But nobody can run and hide forever. Sometimes it's necessary for good men and women to stand and fight. For those who see the need to take a stand, to better themselves to be prepared for the inevitable conflicts ahead — or those who are open to being convinced of the need — the Adamantine Arrow is willing to share its secrets.

The mages of the Arrow, the Dragon's Talons, are as deeply entwined in the shadowy world of the occult. "Warrior" is a way to describe them, but it doesn't quite tell the whole story. The Arrows aspire to be sages as well as combatants, the *Ars Mysteriorum* their weapon and their armor. Some may be pantherish, physical men and women who use their learning to augment physical strength — but they also might be lean and bookish-seeming scholars who kill with words. They don't all come from soldier or law enforcement backgrounds, and many aren't as interested in the physical arena as the battle lines of the occult war. But they share the knowledge that it's best to prepare for anything. The enemy can hit you from any direction, and the perfected mage is ready to do the same.

They are dangerous, these mages, because they are committed. The Arrow has seen beyond the Lie and decided to meet the dangers of the secret world head-on. They are trained to have the fortitude to die for their cause if necessary — but more than that, they are trained to win. The stakes are far too important for anything less.

Existence Is War. Are you ready to stand and fight?

Theme

The heart of every good story is conflict, but the Adamantine Arrow takes it a step further. The order is defined

by conflict. Working magic is the struggle of the will against the Lie. There are enemies to north, south, east and west, willing to destroy both body and soul to keep the Awakened from achieving their destiny. The mages of the Arrow look this conflict head-on. They choose not to hide or evade, or to send others into battle for them — they meet challenges and enemies head-on, with all the strength they can muster. That doesn't mean that they always take the most direct route, of course. The Dragon's Talons are also masters of strategy, and excel at striking at opponents on their own terms. It also means being ready for when the enemy makes a sudden strike.

This conflict is the heart of the Arrows' path to perfection, but this conflict can also be their downfall. Not all mages have what it takes to endure and excel in the face of stern odds. Still, the philosophy of the order demands that one must be quick to face a challenge and strong enough to endure it, like the arrows of adamant from which the mages take their name. The Brilliant Road is paved with conflict, but its endpoint is perfection.

Mood

The mage of the Adamantine Arrow is like a storm cloud. Before the storm hits, he is vigilant, tense with anticipation of the battle ahead. When the first thunderbolts fall, he may be a creature of righteous wrath, or of bitter cold or of energetic exultation. And when the storm is past, the Arrow mage feels the quiet stillness settle over him, the temporary peace that can only come in the wake of conflict.

The Arrow is suffused with this kind of energy and tension. When a Dragon's Talon retreats into his library to study, it isn't an escape from the greater conflicts that face him; it's more of a chance to meditate and prepare himself to give battle anew. When he steals another night with his lover, he makes love with the intensity that comes from knowing his own mortality. Some Arrows derive a profound joy and satisfaction from their life's work. Others are cold

and withdrawn, cutting themselves off from their fellow mages. And others are suffused with an anger, righteous or not, that directs their strikes against the Exarchs and other foes. But all share in an intensity that is sometimes low-key and sometimes palpable. That's the mark of the Adamant Way — the intensity of the mage on the path of war.

How to Use This Book

Arrows don't just Awaken — they are forged. Their search for knowledge takes them to places other mages may ignore, striving to understand the physical vessel as well as the enlightened soul.

Chapter One: The Smoke from Distant Fires

The history of the Adamantine Arrow follows in the path of conflicts. Their legends focus on the battles that erupted around Atlantis and the roles these mages played in the strife surrounding the Fall. In addition, the Arrows have gradually evolved along with the face of war itself, learning and teaching wherever conflict has erupted throughout the centuries.

Chapter Two: Sown from the Dragon's Talons

The Arrow could be said to be both occult brotherhood and military organization, and both need rules to be effective. The philosophies that drive the order need to be explained, as does the order's praxis — as well as the sort of actions Arrows find heretical. This chapter explores those aspects of the order that are predicated on internal rule and ritual, the traditions that have sustained the Ungula Draconis for centuries and even millennia without warping the Arrow so that it can no longer fly.

Chapter Three: Among Warriors

The Adamantine Arrow's ideology places less import on internal politics, but the order is ultimately a society as human as any other. Arrows have their prejudices and preferences, many of which evolve separately from their traditions. The looser culture surrounding the order is detailed here, such as internal politics, dealings with other orders and interactions with those outside Awakened society, from Sleepers to supernaturals.

Chapter Four: Factions and Legacies

Even within the greater cause of opposition to the Exarchs and their pawns, Arrows are prone to factionalize based on methodology or perceived priorities. What are the most important principles of the larger war? What is the best path for the warrior to take? Here you'll find some details on those factions, and some sample warrior-cults that arise. In addition, three new Legacies based on the Arrow's teachings are presented here, including a Left-Handed Path that twists the Arrow's principles into something bloodier.

Chapter Five: Magic

The Adamantine Arrow's use of magic reflects the principle that existence itself is conflict. The order's various magical methods, from Arcana tactics and rote specialties

to mudras, are explored here. In addition, a number of spells and items can be found to bolster the Arrow's cause in your chronicle.

Appendix: Allies and Antagonists

Many roads cross on a battlefield, and many paths might intersect with the Adamant Way. The mages presented here may serve as allies and rivals to Awakened of any stripe. These characters may come to oppose the troupe's characters in direct conflict, or act to support them no matter who the enemy.

Sources and Inspiration

War's a popular subject. Mentioning all the good books and movies that deal with war, or even just a selection of the good ones, could run for pages. There's so much out there that you should never lack for inspiration.

The philosophy of the soldier, officer or professional warmaker has been elucidated on in many works. Some of the most enduring and accessible are still worth a read: specifically, *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu (and the work of his descendant Sun Pin, *Military Methods*), *The Book of Five Rings* by Miyamoto Musashi and Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*. All involve a measure of tactical advice that can be adapted to a wide variety of situational conflicts, and just as boardroom executives apply these principles to business, a mage can apply them to magical conflicts. Even better than the tactical advice is the more philosophical discussion that an Arrow mage might embrace, modify or reject. There are certainly many more works on military tactics and philosophy, but these classics are the ones most likely to be absorbed by the greater portion of the Adamantine Arrow.

Epic poetry is also a strong resource. The *Bhagavad Gita* in particular concerns the warrior-caste hero Arjuna asking why one should fight, and the answer lies with the universe and its workings — a strong argument for why "Existence Is War" carries more than its literal meaning. The *Iliad*, *The Song of Roland*, Arthurian legend, *Beowulf*, the Icelandic sagas such as *Njal's Saga*... inspiration aplenty lies within.

Where films are concerned, *The Seven Samurai* is one of the best and most archetypal; one could argue that the Arrow is to the Sleeper as the samurai is to the peasant. Many war movies such as *Saving Private Ryan* make a strong argument for presenting the horrors of combat without varnishing, and this has its place; Arrows are well aware of how brutal and petty combat can be. However, the Dragon's Talons also believe in the glory that's attached to fighting for the right cause and winning. Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* is a fine example of the duality of the Arrow: the righteous flame of the cause, the blazing charisma that can be used to inspire or terrify, set against the raw ugliness of carnage.



CHAPTER ONE: THE SMOKE FROM DISTANT FIRES

"Here it is, the ancient battleground." Crimson River stood in a high valley, surrounded by mountains, imagining the clash of armies so many hundreds of years ago.

Her companion, Serpentine, watched with obvious pride and admiration as the lithe First Talon stood in the middle of the field, facing into the wind that blew cold and sharp around them even though it was summer. The alpine climate was unforgiving to those who ignored its demands.

"This is where Rome fought off Hannibal and the armies of Carthage?" Serpentine asked, his eyes taking in the rock-strewn meadow. His brow furrowed as he tried to imagine the clash of Roman legions and Carthaginian warriors with their elephant "cavalry."

"No!" she replied, beginning a familiar kata. "That war happened about a mile to the east. But here," she said, a carefully placed fist punctuating her statement, "General Leomundis brought his elite unit of Adamant Sages to meet the forces of the Black Exarch only to discover that his enemy was his own brother and that the order had been betrayed from within. Only his military expertise and the magical workings of his First Officer and Chief Battle Mage Estarienne prevented the usurping Seers from destroying the founders of our alpine base so many, many centuries ago."

As she spoke, Crimson River advanced in measured steps toward Serpentine, her dark eyes blazing in the back light of the pale alpine sun. Serpentine felt his mouth grow dry, and his muscles began to twitch, alerted to something sinister in the small woman's advance.

"That was a long time ago." He laughed nervously. "Our order is safe here and has been for many centuries."

"Yes," Crimson River agreed, "until now." Her voice was soft and tinged with regret. "This is not a pleasure outing for us," she said. "I regret that, please believe me. This is judgment, sentencing and execution," she said. "Willem Klannach, servant of the Exarchs and revealed spy within the ranks of the order of the Adamantine Arrow, in which he is known by the name of Serpentine, you are found guilty of transmitting order secrets to your superiors in the Seers of the Throne and you are sentenced to death by lethal combat."

By this time, Serpentine had shed his excess climbing gear and was desperately attempting to ready his own body for battle. He had seen her take many an opponent near death in training classes; he tried to force himself to shut out the memories of their cries.

"Defend yourself well, and you will die with one last bit of honor," she said, leaping forward, hands forming claws as she spoke. Her nails were dyed the crimson color of fresh, arterial blood.

*Beowulf spoke, and a battle-vow made,
his last of all: "I have lived through many
wars in my youth; now once again,
old folk-defender, feud will I seek,
do doughty deeds, if the dark destroyer
forth from his cavern come to fight me!"*

— Anonymous, Beowulf

Before the Fall

Everything begins with Atlantis, with the visions that came to the mages who visited the Dragon's Tomb, falling deep into the dream-life of the Supernal World and Awakening to the knowledge of magic. While some of those first magi dreamed of the secrets of magic or the ability of magic to forge new paths or to see the world in different ways, others dreamed dreams of might, of how magic could be harnessed through conflict and in conflict. This is how their legends go.

Those who came to the island of spires and deep caves left a world where battles daily determined who lived and who delivered their bones to the earth and their flesh to their conquerors. Some of these journeyers received visions of how magic and battle could entwine themselves about the heart of a magus, instilling in him a mystical union of body, will and mind. These were the Ungula Draconis, the Talon of the Dragon.

From the moment of their release from the Dragon's Tomb, these Talons assigned themselves the task of protecting the magic of the island that, even then, was becoming Atlantis. As spires of rock transformed into spires of crystal, gold, silver, moonstone and adamantium, the mage-warriors transformed into creatures of might and magic.

As the island grew, the Talons grew with it. At home, they harnessed the guardianship of the city to their will. They trained the common foot soldiers and the elite mounted warriors. They gave direction to the internal guard of the city's safety. When recruits showed promise, the Talons helped the recruits Awaken to their magic, strengthening the number of warrior-mages on the island.

When the keepers of the mysteries of magic, those who would call themselves the Mysterium, ventured from the island to seek out other possible hiding places of magic, members of the Talon accompanied

the Mysterium as protection. The Talons realized that these voyages into the unknown also served as ways to hone their skills by pitting their prowess against the monsters that lurked within the dark crevices of the world. Some Talons set out on their own, following dreams of conquest, seeking to expand the borders of Atlantis through bringing more of the unenlightened world under Atlantis's benevolent control. Others sought to prevent unwanted incursions onto the island by other lands through pre-emptive actions. No matter what their aim in traveling from Atlantis, each group of Talons had a purpose and a direction.

Soon, voices began to compare the Talons to "arrows," which, unlike the talons of a dragon or any other claw-footed beast, could separate themselves from their anchors and take flight toward their target. The mages who followed the Adamant Way and who had adopted the name Ungula Draconis also started calling themselves the Adamantine Arrows, particularly when they went abroad, launched, as it were, from the bows of Atlantis.

As the city grew, so, too, did the Talons. Their leaders became generals, moving in armored splendor throughout the island, their magical protections made visible so that all could admire the gleaming trceries of power that clung to them. While most members of the Ungula Draconis maintained their focus on magic and the perfection of mind, body and will, a few succumbed to the lure of power and allied themselves with Atlantean kings and queens of like mind. Others, a potent few, sought power for themselves, taking the title of warlord and honing those who followed their leadership into their personal, magical army.

Talons returned from their expeditions abroad, bringing with them news of the world outside Atlantis

—and bringing in their wake seekers from other lands, eager to find for themselves the dream of magic. Many of the newcomers died, felled by the incandescent brightness of their own dreams, but a few survived to swell the ranks of magi. Likewise, their families developed a tradition of giving sons and daughters to Talons to serve and learn from them in the hopes of one day joining them as one of the Awakened warriors of Atlantis.

An era of personal armies arose in the fair City of Spires, yet even then competition among them took the form of athletic rivalries, war games and field trials — all purportedly in the name of maintaining physical excellence and vigilance against the enemies of Atlantis. Among the other orders, factions and divisions, both social and philosophical, assumed greater and greater import, subsuming the search for magical truths behind the façade of elegance, decadence and might.

In the meantime, in lands far to the west and east, to the north and south, in Lemuria, Mu, Ultima Thule, in Caral-Supe and the lands of the Yellow Emperor, Arrow mages traveled wherever they could, seeking out greater and greater challenges. They brought back news of the monsters that inhabited the dark corners of the earth, of blood-drinking humanoids, shape-changing wolves, shades from the realms of the dead and other dangers, some named, others too inconceivable to put a name to.

Though many Arrows were aligned with one side or another, a good many others were caught by surprise when mage turned upon mage in the city of Atlantis. Needless to say, the Talons and their unAwakened troops bore the brunt of the actual clashes, though the Dragon's Eyes, Wings and Voices fought in their own manner, through acts of sabotage and assassination, information gathering and dissemination, influence and leadership. Some say that at least half of the Arrows on the island perished during the mages' war and the panicked retreat of the defeated from the shores of their home.

The last thing a warrior wants to do is lose. Even more than death, the warrior spirit fears inglorious defeat. And so, the Arrows in exile immediately sought ways to re-enter the fight, to bring the builders of the Celestial Ladder — the théarchs who would be gods — to their knees. Aided by the other orders, the generals of the Talon reorganized the army of the Exiles for an assault on Atlantis. This time, the Talons would not be undone by the audacity of the théarchs, for even now, the ripples of magical dis-

turbances resonated throughout the world. Tremors shook the lands nearest Atlantis, and huge waves billowed out to engulf small island principalities that lived and died in nameless anonymity. The foundations of magic were growing more and more unsteady. Diviners among the Exiles made their determinations public to the other Exiled mages and their anxious troops. The war was not yet over; in fact, it had barely begun.

The Fall

War is hell. But for the warrior who is most alive in the midst of battle, war is home. Who better to tell the story of the Fall of Atlantis than the Dragon's Talons, who lived and breathed that cosmic event from beginning to end? In some ways, the warriors of the Adamantine Arrow still fight the War of the Celestial Ladder, still feel the ripping asunder of the Supernal World to reveal the great Abyssal gulf separating what had become two distinct worlds, still reach out with hands that refuse to relinquish their weapons to grasp for that which could no longer hold them up. The Arrow perpetually falls toward its target.

Between the Exile and the Return to Atlantis, an indeterminate amount of time passed. Many believe that the growing disturbances felt along the lines of power played havoc with the passage of time so that no one knows for certain how many years passed before the Atlantean Exiles once again set sail for their island home with a view to reclaiming it from the théarchs.

Word came from Guardians loyal to the exiled mages, spies who elected to remain behind under the most extreme covert conditions and report on the doings of the victors, that the "lords of Atlantis" had succeeded in building a Celestial Ladder to the Supernal Realm so that they might go in body where heretofore they had traveled only in spirit. The disturbances increased as the Supernal World and the lower world collided through the uniting force of the Ladder.

The decision to assault the shores of Atlantis and the Celestial Ladder did not happen overnight, or the planning and regrouping, for in the flight from the Island of Spires there were almost as many destinations as there were fleeing magi. But the mandate from the heart of the world was clear — the Supernal World was never meant to wear the trappings of the Lower World. The taint of mortality

acted as a catalyst, eroding the substance of reality in both worlds.

And so it was that a call went out throughout the lands of exile, a gathering of the troops for an assault on the island of magic. And from all corners of the lands, the Exiles came. With them also came those mages who had been caught away from Atlantis when the war broke out and who had been unable to make their way back in time to participate in the struggle. This time, they were ready.

*Dark grow the tides, wide stretches the sea,
Blood-red the far sun rises,
Come, then, to me.*

*Gone your denials, far from ocean's shore
Bravely met through storm and trials,
Come, then, no more.*

*The long boats strike forth, wide stretches the sea,
Ahead the silv'ry spire arises
Come, then, to me.*

*Even now the stairway beckons, far from ocean's shore,
Feel the shudder, judgment reckons,
Come, then, no more.*

— General Arabaccis, Ungula Draconis, "Warrior's Lament for Lost Atlantis" (attributed)

The annals of the Adamantine Arrow that exist today often begin with reminiscences from the final assault on the Celestial Ladder. Collected by survivors of that unfortunate debacle, firsthand accounts are, if not suspect, then open to interpretation, for the psychic repercussions of the Fall of Atlantis drove many magi temporarily insane or erased many memories of that day. Still, a few tales exist that describe those chaotic times. The following compilation pieces together several accounts into a relatively cohesive narrative.

Beachhead Atlantis

Cloaked by powerful spells of silence and invisibility by the Guardians traveling with the returning army, the many ships that set out for Atlantis made landfall under cover of darkness, securing their ships in one of the coastline's less conspicuous coves. With rehearsed precision, the Exiles and their armies gathered for a final casting of spells that would protect the troops at least during the first crucial moments of the assault, when surprise was of the essence and the course for victory could be set. With one heart and one will, the armies marched upon the City of Spires.

How was it that no advance warning was given to the Exarchs and their armies? For it seems that the entry into the city occurred without great opposition.

*Eyes closed,
Ears closed,
Listen to your heart beat,
At the Ladder's top.
Outside nothing,
Inside everything
Listen to the world beat,
At the Ladder's top.*

— Anonymous, "Ladder Poem," *Songs of the Fall*

This brief singsong poem provides a clue as to the attentiveness of the Exarchs to the world outside their immediate concerns. The magi who attained the top of the Ladder and ruled Atlantis from their stolen thrones in the Supernal World paid more attention to their own thoughts and ponderings, their self-awareness inflated by their megalomania until they ignored all but the most pressing and intrusive actions at the Ladder's base.

In short, the invading Exiles were able to make their entry into the city with little opposition because the Exarchs had almost forgotten that the world beneath them at the foot of the Ladder even existed. So caught up were they in their own explorations of the Supernal World and their own self-appreciation that they did not realize they were under attack until it was too late.

By then, the streets of Atlantis had sprung to alarm, and the Exarchs' forces responded to the sudden realization that they were being invaded. Entering the city through all of its gates, the Exiles' armies poured into the city. Here, the brilliance of the Talon war leaders' forethought paid off. Through a judicious use of spells of deception and influence along with strategic placement of officers and banners, the armies that won through to the city proper appeared at one and the same time more vast and better armed than they actually were. Many Talon generals elected to remain on the ground with the mortal armies, forswearing for themselves the glory of carrying the battle to the Supernal Realms atop the Celestial Ladder. These Arrows had two purposes: to lead their armies in such a way that those who opposed them were convinced they faced the main thrust of the invasion and to keep the defenders' focus away from the small group approaching the Celestial Ladder.



The Ladder's Heights

Something few understand when they hear the term "Celestial Ladder": this structure far exceeded the connotations of the word "ladder" as we know it today. The Celestial Ladder was essentially a bridge to the stars and, beyond that, a physical link to the Supernal World. The destruction of a ladder made of brick or marble, regardless of where it began and where it ended, regardless of the spells that tied it together,

would not have the impact on the world that resulted from the Fall of the Celestial Ladder.

To build the Ladder, the mages had to reconstruct the fabric of reality, binding Matter to Space and Spirit, weaving spells of Time and Prime about the Ladder to give it substance in past, presence and future as well as in the magical and physical worlds. Protections from the various powers of the Forces Arcanum and the erosive properties of Death sealed the structure from many attacks that could harm it, for the Exarchs had no illusions that one day it would fall under attack.

The Celestial Ladder was a building that spiraled upward beyond imagining, and as it ascended, its substance became more and more entwined with the "stuff" of the Supernal World so that those who traversed the Ladder became Matter suffused with Primal energy until Matter and Prime were one and the same. In that form, the

material person of a mage could occupy the Supernal Realm that awaited at the end of the stairs, on the roof of the Celestial Tower.

For many months before the assault actually took place, the war leaders of the Adamantine Arrow met with members of the Guardians and the Mysterium to puzzle out the best way to go about gaining access to the Ladder. In the end, everyone knew, it would come down to legwork, the physical assault on the

Ladder by individuals intent on reaching their goal and throwing down the structure that was wreaking havoc with the world's very core. The Guardians in Exile had kept in touch with members of their order who had remained behind covertly to gather information that would be of use to the Exiled mages. These Eyes sent word of weaknesses in the Ladder and in the spells that bound it and transformed its substance. To this, the mages of the Mysterium added bits and pieces of their own carefully guarded lore to help develop a plan of attack. But it was clear to everyone, even the leaders and advisors of the Silver Ladder, that the Arrows would lead the assault. Only they had the martial training, the military discipline and the warriors' persistence to forge ahead in an impossible assault. Once the Arrows had broken through, the other orders could follow in their wake, and their skills would have a chance to shine. But first, the flight of Arrows.

The names of the first mages who reached the top of the Ladder and prepared to do battle with the Exarchs have disappeared behind the veils of history and legend. "Better not to know," runs one maxim, "for in anonymity we have universality. So long as we have no name to attach to the leaders of the assault on the Ladder, it is emblematic that anyone might have led the charge." But reach the top the Exiles did, and the struggle to save the world and the magic of the world began.

Stories differ, as stories will when the means to verify the "facts" have perished. Some accounts of the Battle of the Ladder say that the Exiles struggled with the Exarchs for days, one account speaks of it as the "battle that stretched across time and space," and yet another claims that the crucial clash was over in seconds, with the force of a single blow. Regardless of how long the battle actually lasted, every version agrees that when the Exiles struck the telling blow that caused an irreparable crack in the fabric of the Celestial Ladder and sealed the doom of the structure — and the island — everything stopped.

The Ladder shuddered into the silence. For a moment, all was silent and motionless. Birds hovered in mid-air, animals and people in the streets and fields below paused in mid-step. Between heartbeats, everyone who could feel felt the world change utterly.

*Like a blow to the heart, so it began;
As water falls in cataracts, so magic fled;
The land screams; nothing stands against it.
A new terror arises — reality splits!*

*The dark maw opens and torn, bleeding magic rushes to it,
And disappears.*

Those atop the Ladder have only one choice: to stand their ground or to flee.

The juddering island shivers, finds nothing to latch onto.

Pieces of the land fall away; the Ladder warps and wrests itself from its earth roots.

Boats and running figures seek the safety of water and distance.

Farewell, sweet city!

—General Arabaccis, Ungula Draconis, "Warrior's Lament for Lost Atlantis" (attributed)

Just as the Adamantine Arrows led the assault on the Celestial Ladder, they marshaled its forces and its skill to lead the flight from the sinking island. Even then, the Exarchs' loyalist factions sought to prevent the resurgent army from leaving. The retreat to the shore and safety involved hundreds of skirmishes. Often, Arrow mages stayed behind to hold back the enemy so that others could escape. A few of those who undertook a holding action managed to take one of the last fleeing vessels. Most did not. They are remembered to this day as the Sacrificial Flight and are the first to be honored when the Arrows pay tribute to their fallen members.

The After Times

One fact inevitably became clear to all the survivors of Atlantis: the Fallen World could not support the same concentration of magical energy as the world had before the Fall. The Abyssal gulf between the Fallen and the Supernal worlds weakened the flow of power, making it tentative and unreliable. In large concentrations, magic became dangerous and volatile, warping the physical laws of reality, bringing into existence the laws of Paradox, particularly when magic involved the perceptions of Sleeping humanity. For many Arrows, this was the saddest of all discoveries — that so much of humanity fell asleep to their magical potential in the weeks and months and years after the Fall of Atlantis. Gone were the armies of receptive men and women who had followed their mage generals and war leaders, relying on their officers' magical protections to augment their defenses. Gone, too, was the ability to cast those protections as freely as before.

The chaos of the flight from the sinking island drove the mages in all directions, some by choice and some by circumstance. Little by little, the surviving Talons, now calling themselves the Adamantine Arrows in reference to their need to harden themselves to deal with the exigencies of the Fallen World, managed to locate one another to hold meetings among their leaders, in some cases to choose leaders to replace those who had fallen.

The greatest question the Arrows faced involved how best to structure their order to survive the coming hard times. Even though they had some dealing with

mages of the other orders, the Arrows realized that the old structures of mage society would no longer suffice. While maintaining the need to communicate with the other orders, the Arrows realized that their best interests lay in staying together as an order, even if the distance between members or cabals was vast.

New cabals of Arrow mages formed, each one based upon a particular style or method of warfare. By such means, the Arrow sought to preserve its martial lore while ensuring the greatest diversity. Arrow mages understood that even though their cabal might focus on the use of the bow and arrow, they would expect to acquire as much knowledge about other styles of fighting as possible in the interests of becoming the complete warrior.

In addition to the formation of new cabals, the order decided to send each cabal off to a different part of the world. The Space and Mind Arcana would enable the cabals to keep in contact with each other despite great distances, and they planned on periodic gatherings of the entire order, or representatives from each cabal at the very least, to share information and reassess their role in the Fallen World.

With these decisions behind them, the Adamantine Arrow took aim at the far ends of the earth and embraced an uncertain future in a world where magic was fighting for its survival.

Arrows of the Ancient World

With the accuracy of a well-placed missile, the order of the Adamantine Arrow entered into the history of the Fallen World, seeking to make the best of the Arrows' new existence and to make certain that their strange new home would be as amenable to them as possible.

Unlike the mages of the Guardians of the Veil and the Mysterium, who preferred to remain behind the scenes in most of their dealings with the Fallen World, Adamantine Arrows involved themselves directly in the events surrounding them. As combat-oriented warrior-mages, order members plunged into the sequence of wars and subsequent interludes of peace that would form the history of the world. Rarely did an Arrow admit to the practice of magic, though many war leaders belonging to the order drew soldiers to their fiery leadership through subtle magics of Mind and Spirit while others achieved legendary status due to their brilliant military strategies and uncommon battle savvy.

Dating the Fall of Atlantis

A peculiar anomaly of the Time and Space Arcana makes it impossible to place the destruction of Atlantis at an exact place and time in the Fallen World. Such a comprehensive event as the destruction of the island of magic and the ripping away of the Supernal World from its physical anchor in the world of objects and material existence must have had some effect on both chronology and geography. The search for the ruins of Atlantis that drives many metaphysicians and archaeologists in modern times and, indeed, throughout recorded history is a fruitless quest. Even if powerful magics did not conceal the shattered remnants of Atlantis, these broken pieces of a lost world would still remain hidden because they do not exist in the world that came after the Fall. Or so it is said by more than one philosopher-mage.

Many scientists and other experts contend that the "legend" of Atlantis and its fall into the sea has its origin in the eruption of the volcano Thera and the destruction of the Minoan civilization sometime between 1550 and 1517 bc. Some Awakened students of Atlantis's Fall point out that this could, in fact, be true — in the Fallen World. Atlantis's Fall removed the island from the timeline of the world and from its physical reality. The event, however, found a reflection in the Thera eruption — a Fallen World analog. Still other mages insist that Atlantis fell millennia before Thera erupted, but that the disruptions in time and space led to the expression of that event in the Fallen World in the form of the Thera disaster.

The First Battle of Megiddio, 1457 BC

Members of the order traveled to North Africa in the last years of the reign of Hatshepsut, one of Egypt's few female Pharaohs. After her death, her stepson, Thutmose III succeeded her and almost immediately faced a rebellion by one of Egypt's subject nations. The Canaanites, under the leadership of the charismatic kings of Kadesh and Megiddio, the two largest Canaanite cities, rose up to declare their freedom from the yoke of Egypt. Thutmose III called together an army from within his borders to put down the rebellion. Chariots and foot soldiers thronged to the call of the Pharaoh.

At Thutmose's side, his generals advised him as to the best course of action to take against the rebels, who had gathered at the city of Megiddio, a fortress-city that sat atop a hill of the Carmel Ridge and looked out over the Jezreel Valley. One of those generals, whose shadow name and true name have fallen to the dusts of the past but whose deeds remain alive today, warned Thutmose against taking one of the two safe paths to the city, advocating the riskier but more effective frontal assault.

This same general belonged to the Adamantine Arrow and saw in Egypt the possibility of a powerful empire that could bring order and stability to the world, or at least Egypt's corner of it. At his urging, the Egyptian charioteers were equipped with weapons they had practiced with and that proved more suitable for combat. For the first time in recorded history, the composite bow made its appearance in a battle that set the course of civilization along the Nile Basin and much of the Middle East for centuries to come. The Egyptian army routed the rebels, though their leaders took refuge within the walls of the city of Megiddio. Eventually, the besieged city surrendered, and the leaders were given the opportunity to accept the leadership of Egypt once again. They also agreed to send one of their sons to Egypt to be raised in the palace and educated so that their allegiances lay with the Pharaoh rather than with their own lands, thus assuring that when they returned to their homes as rulers, their actions would reflect their Egyptian upbringing.

The Battle of Megiddio, which took place in 1457 BC, also boasted the first written record of a body count being taken during a war. Hieroglyphs were carved into the walls of the Temple of Amun at Karnak in Thebes (now known as Luxor) by Tjaneni, a military scribe thought by many contemporary

members of the Adamantine Arrow to have held a position in the order's upper ranks. In some ways, this act marked the beginning of recorded military history, as well.

After Megiddio, Egypt went on to expand and consolidate her power over the lands around her for the next thousand years, until she fell, first to Assyria and then to the armies of Alexander the Great in the third century BC.

A Warrior Caste: Vedic India, 1500–500 BC

The subcontinent of India drew members of the Adamantine Arrow who felt the rise of something significant among the Sleeper population. A culture was growing up around the creation and composition of sacred texts

A World Without Cannibals

Throughout the world, human tribes and proto-nations existed on a brutal, survivalist level. Practices such as human sacrifice and its corollary, ritual or routine cannibalism, appeared in many societies where the means of sustaining life and acquiring food did not quite meet the demands of the population. Thus, war captives or victims of tribal raids often found themselves on the lower end of the food chain. This happened among the Aztecs of Mexico, the native tribes of the icy northern American continent who followed the cannibal Wendigo spirit, the head hunters of New Guinea and among the Aryan tribes of India. The mythologies of Greece and Rome also contain references to cannibalism during the early ages of their civilizations (or pre-civilizations).

The order of the Adamantine Arrow found such practices unacceptable and counter-productive to the growth of the human spirit and the eventual rejoining of the Fallen and Supernal worlds. To this end, whenever Arrows inserted themselves into a culture, they took steps to ensure that the wastefulness of cannibalism and human sacrifice became unnecessary and undesirable.

Unfortunately, from time to time, the Arrow finds itself coming up against new versions of this old perversion, persisting even into the present day – and into the order itself, in a new form.

that codified in song, story and mantra the cosmic history of the inhabitants of the Indo-Gangetic plain, the heart of Indian civilization. The hymns of the *Rigveda*, the mantras of the *Samaveda Samhita*, the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads*, along with other writings and oral compilations illustrated the power of the word to create a culture. The glorification of the warrior caste, the Kshatriyas, and their position, along with the Brahmin priests atop the social pyramid or ladder, resonated in sympathy with the desires of many members of the Arrow for an orderly society in which everyone knew his place and where those who risked their lives in warfare created the rules of the society for which they took such risks.

By finding a place in a society much in need of a standing army to protect its food-gatherers and common laborers and to augment the desires of its priests, or Brahmins, the Adamantine Arrow was able to influence the direction of Vedic society. Though not directly responsible for either the creation of the sacred texts or Vedas or the rigid stratification of Indian society into four distinct castes, Arrow mages saw to the development and training of the warrior caste, instilling in the military elite the principles of honor, fairness and excellence in battle.

With the appearance of Buddhism and the tales of Gautama Buddha, who espoused simplicity and non-violence, Arrows had their first close experience with a philosophy so totally incompatible with theirs as to make it almost impossible for an Arrow to follow the Eightfold Path of Buddha (himself a former Kshatriyas warrior noble) and remain within the order. Though officially considered heretical, a ritual was developed to deal with the pacifist heresy in a method strangely in keeping with the nature of the heresy itself.

As Vedic India grew and evolved into the 16 Great Kingdoms of the Mahajanapadas, Adamantine Arrows were able to use their positions in the courts of the various kings to polish their skills on and off the battlefield, to use subtle magics to influence the outcomes of wars and to keep alive the martial tradition so essential to the life of their order. Some order mages even sought to find a suitable kingdom among the Mahajanapadas (or 16 Great Kingdoms of the Indian sub-continent) in which to recreate even part of the glory that was Atlantis. Though many of the kingdoms presented possibilities, each developed some quality that doomed the experiment to failure. The general consensus among members of the order interested in reviving the lost homeland was that the time was not yet right for the unAwakened to experience magic on the scale that rebuilding Atlantis would involve.

The Philosophy of War: The Warring States Period of the Zhou Dynasty

The question has arisen over the centuries as to whether Adamantine Arrows encouraged warfare in the Sleeper societies in which the mages chose to participate or whether they were drawn to those societies because of their penchant for war. In each case, the Arrow has the same answer: "The wise archer never keeps his bow and arrows further than a thought from him. When the need arises, it is instantaneous and irreversible."

When the Zhou dynasty took over the reins of power from the Shang, a cabal of Adamantine Arrow mages was ready to provide expertise to the new rulers of China. Under the Zhou, a feudal state arose, with nobles — the rulers and the warriors — governing and protecting the many laborers and farmers.

When the wandering teacher K'ung Fu-tze (also called Confucius) appeared on the scene, among his followers were members of the Arrow, eager to learn from this brilliant new philosopher and codifier of manners as well as to spark this man's intellectual curiosity and make sure he molded a society that was not inimical to wonder or honorable war. The great philosopher's vision of an ordered society based on appropriate actions, respect and compassion was not far from the Atlantean ideal. Confucius's views on war, however, were less than what the Arrow hoped for. He believed that combat was a last resort and that wars should occur only when every other means of negotiation had failed.

A contemporary of Confucius, the great general Sun-Tzu, supplied the missing elements of the perfect society, according to the principles of the Adamantine Arrow. During the late Zhou dynasty, or Warring States period, the Arrow, already in place and entrenched in the philosophical and practical aspects of Chinese society, honed the order's skills and took advantage of (perhaps even helped along) the many technological advances produced by the political and social chaos. By the time the many warring nations were finally reunited under the Qin dynasty, the Arrow had active advisors and hidden observers placed in every corner of Chinese society, and found that the emerging philosophies of this part of the Fallen World resonated strongly with the unified body and mind awareness of Atlantis.

Some believe that the experience of Arrow mages in China during this period helped temper the order's attitude on war, sharpening its effect while restraining a tendency to use war as an answer to

everything. Sometimes a soldier's best move is not to fight. An army's potential threat is greater than its actual one — once committed to action, an army has lost the mystery of what might have happened. China taught the Arrow the value of choosing the right battles to fight and fighting them with one purpose in mind — victory and its subsequent restoration of peace.

The Arrows of Rome: Julius Caesar's Gallic Campaign

From Rome's founding by twin sons of Mars, or by the Trojan warrior Aeneas, depending on which legend prevails, to its official end in 476 with the deposing of the Emperor Romulus Augustus by the Scirian barbarian Odoacer and his assumption of the throne of Rome, the political entity that became the Roman Republic and then the Roman Empire lasted for more than a thousand years. During that time, human civilization in Mediterranean Europe, northern Africa and the Middle Eastern lands made great progress in terms of philosophy and technology. Rome drew the Atlantean survivors to its promise of power and prosperity, and, of course, the orders each sought to choose the best direction for Rome — often acting in opposition with one another. The Silver Ladder sought to influence Roman politicians, while the Mysterium sought access to the mysteries of Roman religions and to the truths behind the many legends of the gods and goddesses of Jupiter's court. The Guardians of the Veil became consummate gatherers of information and moved through the political arena of Rome with almost as much skill as the Ladder.

The Adamantine Arrow concerned itself primarily with the Roman army, now developing new methods of fighting and perfecting their old ones. Within the army itself, the development of the phalanx and the shield wall as ways of intimidating the enemy while protecting the advancing soldiers became an integral part of the structure and function of the Roman legions. Members of the Arrow, using their own battle expertise, served as centurions in the legions. Some led groups of equites as decurions; others marched as common foot soldiers, quietly using their magic to elevate the spirits of the troops or protect them during the heat of battle.

Whether or not the Arrow mages in Caesar's army made themselves known to him for what they were is unclear. Certainly, Julius Caesar conducted his campaigns against the Gauls with such aplomb and

confidence that he might well have been aware of the magical assistance he received. The Arrow felt more at home on the march than within the confines of Rome itself; their magic flowed more strongly when combined with a martial atmosphere and the hardships of the long-term battle campaign.

The order watched Julius Caesar closely, seeing in him a great leader with the potential for Awakening. In his battles against the Helvetii, the first of his Gallic campaigns, Caesar proved his able leadership in the decisive victory of the Battle of Bibracte, in which his choice of a hill top location for the deployment of Roman legionnaires gave him the advantage of the high ground as well as the assurance of picking his battle site.

The methods of the Helvetii, the Suebi, the Veneti and the other Gallic tribes that Caesar fought were also of interest to the Arrow. From the beginning,

The Druids of Britain: Close Encounters

Arrows who traveled with Caesar on his two expeditions to Britain in 55 and 54 BC discovered, along with the Roman legions, the existence of a group of powerful nature priests and lorekeepers — the druids. Greeting the oncoming armies of Rome with the same aplomb and complete confidence in the power of their magic often shown by Arrows in battle, these priest-mages, though they did not fight — at least not initially — still provided important information and continuity for their armies and gave their soldiers the confidence that their gods were with them.

The practices of the druids, in fact, so fascinated some Arrows traveling with Caesar that, when they next reported back to their order's superiors, they received orders to pursue the magic of the druids and analyze it. Though these Arrow mages knew they would be branded as deserters and traitors by the Romans, the mages obeyed their leaders in the order.

When the Romans finally succeeded in gaining a foothold in Britain and invaded the sacred isle of the druids at Mona, cutting down their groves and slaughtering any druids they could find, the Dragon's Talons living with the druids either fought to their deaths or retreated to Ireland.

the Prime-sensitive mages of the Arrow were able to sense the presence of mages among the barbarians, though they called themselves shamans or some other native name. Their methods of focusing power differed greatly, from the berserk shapeshifting warrior elite of more northern tribes to those who used their magic in more subtle ways, by influencing the weather or the angle of the sun to favor their own.

Order mages still differ in opinion as to the source of these barbarian-mages. Some wrote them off as byproducts of early expeditions by Atlantean mages, their powers inherited as they sometimes can be. Other mages believed these barbarian-mages arose independently of Atlantis and that these unattached mages might provide the Arrow with the key to reuniting with the Supernal World.

Arrows of Light in the Dark Ages

After the fall of Rome, the lands of western Europe foundered without her leadership. For mages of the Adamantine Arrow who had invested themselves in the fortunes of Rome's empire, the centuries immediately following her fall served as a time to regroup and recast their future. And what they saw of the immediate future was fraught with danger and obstacles.

Not only were people suddenly without the stability that Rome's presence had represented, they also fell prey to the waves of tribal armies that migrated across Europe and came out of Asia, seeking to claim new territories for themselves.

While a few places managed to preserve vestiges of the glory that was Rome — or at least some of the knowledge contained in her centers of learning — other places lay open to the looters and plunderers that inevitably followed in the wake of armies on the move.

Since the order's focus lay more with conflict and challenge than with politics and social order, members of the Arrow found their way into the various barbarian groups: the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Suebi, Vandals, Alemanni, Burgundians, Jutes and others.

By insinuating themselves into these tribes, Arrow mages ensured the survival of the order in Europe beyond the fall of Rome and guaranteed themselves a spot on the ground floor of the new social orders (with their attendant armies) that embodied the future of the Fallen World. In some cases, Arrows discovered members of other orders traveling with and concealing

themselves within the various migrating tribes. Where contact was friendly, the Arrows acted as additional defenses for the less combat-oriented members of the Mysterium or the Guardians. Occasionally, the situation led to conflict over which order would hold precedence. The resulting inter-tribal war between two factions of Visigoths, one led by a member of the Silver Ladder, the other by an Adamantine Arrow mage, caused the extinction of an entire line of Visigoths and resulted in intervention by other members of both orders to prevent further outbreaks of a similar nature.

An early Arrow mage, whose shadow name translates from ancient Suebi into Keenheart, pointed out something that many mages were only just beginning to realize: they were being hunted by enemies who had followed the mages from the ruins of Atlantis. Not only the Seers of the Throne but also a few members of a fringe group of Atlantean mages known as the Timori, or the "fearful," had crossed into the Sleeping World seeking refuge. These reluctant mages hoped to find surcease from magic and its terrors in the Sleeping World. When they discovered that, to their dismay, the Atlantean orders had already gained a foothold in the Fallen World, these survivors swore to dedicate themselves to banishing the practice of magic wherever they encounter it and to neutralize or kill those who pursued magical knowledge.

Some of our enemies are as old as we. They hate us for our magic, or they hate us for ourselves. We cannot afford to be distracted by enemies we make apart from these. Our concerns should be these fearful deniers of magic and the accursed slaves of the Exarchs. They are the true threat!

— Keenheart, in a letter to a superior in the order of the Adamantine Arrow

Because of the Arrows' martial training and their orientation toward conflict and battle, members of the Adamantine Arrow, at Keenheart's behest, came together in AD 676 for one of their rare convocations to discuss this matter. Arrow mages from all over Europe and from some more distant lands met in the commune of Chalons in the northern part of what is now France, on the probable site of the Battle of the Catalaunian Fields, where in AD 451, in the last major military action of the Western Roman Empire, a coalition army led by Roman General Flavius Aetius and Theodoric I, King of the Visigoths, met the hordes of Attila the Hun and halted that force's westward impetus. Though Arrow mages participated in both

sides of that battle (as they did in most battles in the Fallen World), the Adamantine Council of Chalons' purpose in meeting on the battle site 200 years later was to acknowledge the importance of the threat posed by the Exarchs and the Banishers, and to give those groups priority over mere antagonists originating in the Fallen World.

Although some Sleeper societies and cultures contained individuals who had the power to cast spells, the Arrow realized that these native sorcerers lacked the Supernal knowledge that powered their magic, whereas the Seers of the Throne and the Banishers both drew on their former connections to the Supernal World, and their magic was, in effect, "pure." Furthermore, these two "orders" of mages specifically targeted the Atlantean survivors or, in many cases, their descendants based, not on national or tribal allegiance, but on their ability to work the magic of Lost Atlantis whether or not they saw it as such.

Another related concern brought up first at this Council but soon growing to proportions that warranted almost continuous monitoring was the increasing hostility of the emerging Catholic Church, now the power behind the Holy Roman Empire based in Constantinople, toward those who practiced any sort of magic whatsoever without the approval of the Church and without the labeling of such magic as a "miracle." In almost every case where Arrow mages or infiltrators from other orders investigated instances of Church-led persecution of mages and their families, a Seer or a Banisher surfaced as the prime instigator of the attacks.

Arrows for and Against the Church

In 379, when Theodosius I became Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire and again in 394, when he ascended to the imperial throne in the Western Roman Empire, he banned pagan religions and made Christianity the official religion of the realm. He was the last Roman emperor to rule a united Empire; after his death, his sons Honorius (in the West) and Arcadius (in the East) divided the lands once ruled solely from Rome between them. The position of Emperor, in the West, at least, degenerated until in AD 476, the barbarian chief Odoacer deposed the Emperor — an event synonymous with the fall of Rome. The Empire in the East, ruled from Constantinople and known as the Byzantine Empire, continued on for another thousand years, until it fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1453. Meanwhile, the triumphant Germanic and

Charlemagne: The Arrow, the Ladder or the Cross?

At one time or another, both the order of the Silver Ladder and the order of the Adamantine Arrow have claimed Charlemagne as one of their own, a warrior-mage-king who sought to rebuild Atlantis from the ashes of Rome and to revitalize that magical utopia with the heartiness and tenacity of the Franks and Germans.

Though both orders have made reasonable strong cases, playing to Charlemagne's remarkable leadership and charisma as proof of his Ladder affinities and to his tactical sensibilities and military victories as indicative of his membership in the Adamantine Arrow, in truth it is almost certain he was neither. No actual evidence of his ability to even use magic has surfaced. It's also been theorized that Charlemagne had Ladder and Arrow representatives at his side, advising him and strengthening his resolve to unite the world under One Church while simultaneously using the king's power to complete their own agenda — a new Atlantis emerging in central Europe.

Then, too, the influence of the Church figured strongly in the direction of the Holy Roman Empire, and while many Atlantean mages maintain that the Mysterium pulled many of the Church's strings, the influence of the Seers of the Throne is all too visible in many papal decisions regarding those who cast spells. Those looking for evidence of Arrow or Ladder influence within the Church must also consider the overshadowing icon of the Throne.

Frankish tribes attempted to re-form the Western Roman Empire. In 800, Carolus Magnus, or Charlemagne, King of the Franks, convinced Pope Leo III to crown him *Imperator* of Europe in an attempt to revive the glory of Rome. The Holy Roman Empire in the west was born.

Over the centuries, from the First Ecumenical Council in AD 325, known as the First Council of Nicea onward, the Church's bishops met regularly to hammer out Church doctrine, condemn heresies and dictate the direction of the Church. Despite the best efforts of covert Atlantean mages to keep the Church in ignorance about their existence, the knowledge that



magic — and those who practiced it — existed came to the attention of the Church fathers. These bishops and cardinals, all the way up to the position of pope, saw practitioners of magic as not only heresy but also as direct competition for the same people. Greater and greater opposition built up toward mages of any kind, whether descendants of Atlantean refugees, tribal shamans or diviners who practiced the ancient oracular magic of Greece.

This aversion to magic persevered within the Church through schism and revolution, with the emergent Protestant sects condemning witchcraft as soundly as their Catholic predecessors.

To counteract the abilities of the Church to identify and persecute mages, the Adamantine Arrow enlisted in the newly created militant priestly orders, such as the Knights Templar, Knights Hospitaller and other lesser known groups. The mages sought in that fashion to use their influence to dissemble, pointing the Church's wrath toward mages who had served the Exarchs or those Banishers who had sought to destroy magic by destroying the mage. At times, these Arrows served as cullers of the mage population, bringing the Church's opprobrium down upon any mages who, in the opinions of the Atlantean mages, proved of questionable motive or whose magic was uncontrollable.

Arrows of the Prophet: The Arab Conquests (632–732)

After the death of Muhammad in AD 632, his followers sought to spread the religion he founded throughout the world. From their base in Arabia, the home of the prophet, the Islamic armies moved through Damascus and Syria, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa. Next they crossed the Straits of Gibraltar into southern Spain, moving through Andalusia and Toledo until, by

AD 750, they occupied most of the Iberian Peninsula. The French stopped the northern thrust into Europe at the Battle of Tours in AD 732.

Under Muslim rule, Christians and Jews enjoyed religious freedom in return for their political fidelity. Despite their stated mission of conversion by the sword, Islamic rulers preferred to bring people to their version of the truth by example — and, perhaps, some social pressure.

In the intermingling of East and West that took place under Muslim rule, Atlantean mages belonging to factions that had separated centuries earlier were able to reunite. Mages of the Adamantine Arrow served as warriors and leaders in the Islamic armies; meeting with their colleagues, first as conquerors, then as eager allies, provided a fruitful exchange of knowledge and skill, magical and mundane. This period served as the calm before the storm that was the Crusades wracked Europe and the Middle East for more than 200 years.

Arrows of the Samurai: Feudal Japan

After a catastrophic encounter with the Tang dynasty of China, Japanese society and, in particular, the military class, underwent major reforms, emerging as the consummate warrior society of the samurai. Originally known as those who followed “the way of the bow and horse,” Japan’s military clans evolved into protectors of the agrarian classes and constituted the ruling noble class of Japanese society. Following the strict ethical and moral code of *bushido*, the Japanese soldier emerged as a bastion of culture as well as a skilled and honorable warrior. The importance of the bow, while it remained part of the samurai arsenal, gave way to the *katana*, which, in the hands of a samurai, became a quasi-holy weapon.

The Adamantine Arrow’s interest in the philosophy of the samurai became apparent in the almost mystical dedication these warriors showed to their weapons and their military duties. The later influence of Zen Buddhism completed the unification of mind and body in samurai philosophy. Many Arrow mages claim the samurai philosophy to be their crowning achievement, the closest they could come in the Fallen World to creating an army of Sleepers who conducted themselves with the discipline, if not the magic, of those who had Awakened.

The Crusades: 1097–1291

Toward the end of the 11th century, the Byzantine Empire requested help from the pope in Rome to assist them in fighting back the onslaught of the Turks. The pope answered by calling for the first of what would be many Crusades. Ostensibly, the Crusades’ purpose was to recapture the Holy Land from the followers of Muhammad, and the first few Crusades did, in fact, attempt that feat. Later Crusades, however, became tools of the pope to bring holy armies against the Church’s perceived enemies, including the Albigensians or Cathars, the King of Aragon and the Hussites or followers of religious dissident Jan Hus.

The first three Crusades actually reached the Holy Land, though none actually achieved their goal. The fourth Crusade encountered many problems and resulted in the crusaders turning against Byzantium and sacking the city of Constantinople — an ironic development considering the nature of the request that initiated the holy wars.

For the order of the Adamantine Arrow, the Crusades marked a meeting across the battle lines of Christian-allied and Moslem-affiliated Arrow mages. To the extent that they were able to identify one another, Arrow mages on opposite sides of the battle attempted to transform any contact between them into a dispassionate comparison of skills, a way of testing one another and gauging the development of martial and magical excellence in the Eastern and Western worlds.

The Nature of the Beast

Since the fall of Atlantis, mages of the Adamantine Arrow have often met in combat, opposing one another with a bitterness stemming from their allegiances to Sleeper causes rather than any personal hostility. This state of affairs is accepted by Arrow mages as a natural corollary of the order’s First Phalanx:

Existence Is War.

The idea of partisanship to Sleeper causes is one that spurs a great deal of debate. Most members of the Arrow tend to put the order’s cause first, and then respect Sleepers to varying degree. Modern approaches to this question are discussed on p. 31.

Despite many negative repercussions, such as a longstanding hatred between Christians and Muslims due to atrocities on both sides, the Crusades served to re-establish commerce and congress between East and West. For the Adamantine Arrow, the Crusades served to cement ties between members of the order who had become increasingly distant from one another.

The Enlightened Warrior: The Renaissance and Enlightenment

The Middle Ages saw the rise of feudalism and the creation of knights, nobles dedicated to the art of war in defense of their subjects. Time and time again, the mages of the Adamantine Arrow involved themselves in the process of acting as defenders, either against the enemies of the Sleeper lords they chose to serve or against the Seers of the Throne or the Banishers who had targeted Atlantean mages for destruction or conversion.

When the first stirrings of the Renaissance began its transformatory powers in Europe, changing a feudal society into one that was largely mercantile and bringing forth a blossoming of the individual apart from the group, the Arrow mages took a keen interest in certain aspects of the new movements. In particular, the Arrow found itself drawn to the refinement of European swordplay and the art of dueling, since it resembled the ritual combats often used by Arrow mages to test one another at various times during their growth as mages and warriors.

The first dueling codes, which appeared in Renaissance Italy and France, were allegedly “gifts” from Adamantine Arrow mages to make certain that Sleepers did not corrupt the underlying purity of the combat of honor.

On the darker side of the Renaissance, this period saw the proliferation of mercenary companies that challenged the entire concept of honor. The emergence of the first of the heretical Free Companies of self-serving Arrow mages during this period emphasized the dangers of using magic to achieve base purposes.

With the development of gunpowder and muskets during the Renaissance, war took on a different and more deadlier form. Likewise, duels became shorter and deadlier. As guns put killing power in the hands of anyone who could “point and shoot,” nullifying the protective armor of knights and leveling the playing field, the nature of war itself changed.

The Arrows, as usual, adapted to the new, deadly Sleeper technologies, incorporating them into their magic while keeping to the spirit of their order. Within their own company, apart from the Sleepers, the Arrow mages sought to preserve the purity of their rites, seeking to keep strong the connective thread of magic that linked them, however tenuously in a world steadily growing away from it, to the Supernal World.

The New World: Atlantis Reborn?

With the discovery of the American continents by Europeans in the late 15th century and their exploration and colonization in the two centuries that followed, the Old World fell into a flurry of competition as nation rivaled nation to claim more land, build more colonies and extend their territorial claims as far as possible. Seizing upon the hope that a new world might present an opportunity for magic to reassert itself without the weight of Sleeping centuries, many Arrow mages made the journey across the Atlantic (or arrived on the shores of the New World by more devious methods). Hoping to find a site for a New Atlantis, the Arrow encountered the civilizations of the Algonquins and the Iroquois, the Cherokee and the Seminole. In Central America, Arrows found the Mayan and Aztec cultures while South America brought to the mages the secrets of the rainforest and of the mighty Inca.

Unlike many of the European explorers, who saw only savage tribes with barbaric and violent ways, the Arrow trailblazers saw highly ritualized civilizations that accepted conflict, war and death as natural parts of their lives.

Hope for a magical resurgence rose again.

The Arrow mages — along with other Pentacle mages in the New World — underestimated the corruptive factor of the Fallen World. Where exploitation of native peoples and natural resources was possible, the mercantile interests of England, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain prevailed, and greed for the novelties brought to the natives from over the wide water by the pale-skinned visitors opened the door for wholesale suborning and eventual destruction of the native cultures. Missionaries from Catholic and the newer Protestant faiths, accompanied in some cases by Seer and Banisher mages, attempted to transmit their contempt for magic to the native tribes, with varying degrees of success.

Sacred Competitions: Tlachtli

Arrow mages who encountered the Aztec civilization in Mexico were immediately taken with the phenomenon of the sacred ball game known as *tlachtli*. Playing within the confines of a rectangular court, two teams attempted to maneuver a small, hard rubber ball through a ringed basket without using their hands.

Because this game was considered sacred to the gods, the losers of the game lost not only their social standing but their lives, since they were sacrifices meant to ensure continued prosperity for the tribe.

For some Arrow mages, this game represented the ultimate test of skill at magic and combat. While many lost their lives, a few survived, and some of their descendants were there to greet the European Arrows, either as colleagues or as rivals.

With its sacrificial and ritual killing aspects pared away, *tlachtli* has survived to the modern day, though now called basketball. In the fierce rivalries and the practices of trading away or otherwise symbolically "killing" poor players, some of the original aspects of the old Aztec ball game still remain.

At least one Arrow cabal in Honduras has conducted research in an effort to resurrect the true magical aspects of the game, including the human sacrifice that seemed, in the end, to unite the tribe in the ritual shedding of blood. If so, this group maintains, they can grow closer to re-establishing a new link to the Supernal World through the development of a New Atlantean civilization in the tropical rainforests.

In some cases, Arrow mages encountered colleagues, inheritors of Atlantean magic who had learned their rites and enchantments painstakingly through generations harking back to some of the first survivors of Atlantis's fall, Arrow mages whose journeys had taken them into other parts of the Fallen World than the Eurasian and African lands.

Centuries of War and Revolution: The Arrow Ascendant

Though much progress on the scientific and economic fronts led to prodigious advances in the lives of Sleepers, the 18th and 19th centuries also saw the growth of less favorable trends, as competing empires exploited whole groups of people, enslaving or persecuting them in the name of imperialism, capitalism, socialism, fascism and other such philosophies. The rules that had once held war to at least a semblance of honorable combat changed. Weapons appeared that had the capability of mass slaughter. While such a potential had always attached itself to war, now they became inseparable.

As always, the Adamantine Arrow played a part in the many wars that filled these centuries, doing what they could to maintain their own standards of combat while increasing their knowledge of the ever-changing technology of war.

In the New World, the American colonies had grown tired of the increasing demands from England. Cabals of Atlantean mages joined forces with revolutionaries to spark the flame of revolution. Though all of the orders were involved in some fashion, the Adamantine Arrow plunged directly into battle. Within mage society, divisions occurred between European and American Arrow mages as differences arose over everything from whether or not centralization of authority was still possible in an expanding world to which part of the world held more promise as a base upon which to construct yet another stab at a New Atlantis.

The process of revolution repeated itself in France a little more than a decade after the American Revolution. American Arrow mages traveled across the ocean to assist their French colleagues and sharpen their military skills. This time, however, though the "revolution" succeeded in bringing down the French monarchy in favor of a republic, a group of Banishers managed to run riot, cloaked by the infamous Reign of Terror that stripped France of its aristocracy. The thinking among the Banishers was that mages came most often from positions of privilege, so by destroying them, the Banishers could hope they had dealt magic-wielders a crushing blow.

In the 19th century, war again seemed to dominate the world arena, and the Arrow played its part on the Sleeping and Awakened battlegrounds.



The American Civil War pitted two ways of life against one another. Most Arrow mages who chose to get involved joined the Union, recognizing the Confederacy as representing a way of life that had run its course. Most Arrow mages opposed slavery even though they supported strict hierarchies. Slavery was static — slaves rarely moved upward in their society; other hierarchies, whether military or social, recognized that effort and expertise merited higher standing. The Arrow mages who supported

the South usually did so for personal reasons, because they chose to fight alongside their Sleeper families.

Throughout Europe, as well, wars united countries — such as Italy and Germany — and expressed a growing political unrest along economic and social class lines.

Global Wars: Shrinking Battlegrounds

The 20th century saw the culmination of what had begun with the appearance of the composite bow at the Battle of Megiddo more than three thousand years earlier. Two World Wars involved almost every country — certainly every continent — in brutally devastating wars that changed the political and social structure of the world and revised the economic pecking order among developed countries. Once more, as in the days of the Roman Empire, a few superpowers ruled the world and dictated the direction of the future.

In the middle of the 20th century, when the superpowers were reorganizing themselves yet again at the end of World War II and the world was just beginning to come to grips with the horrors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in the Pacific Theatre and the mass extermination of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and others in the European Theatre, members of the Adamantine Arrow worldwide gathered in a caucus in the mountains of Tibet. High above the world, representatives from all parts of the world and both sides of the recent

conflict met to discuss the future of the order and its relationship with the other orders as well as the Sleepers. The increasing activity of Seers and Banishers also ranked high on the Arrows' agenda.

After seven days and nights of sometimes heated discussion and ritual combat to bleed off excess tempers, the order came to some decisions.

- **The Meaning of War Has Changed:** The last century saw a separation between what the Arrow used to know as honorable war or logical conflict and eruptions of chaos or intentional terror. Where possible, the Arrow has decided to attempt to continue such participation in the former when it seems appropriate and to either eschew or actively prevent the latter. For the Arrow, terrorism and glorified uncontrolled destruction dishonor the concept of war and go against the natural order.

Recent situations in the Middle East and Africa and the spread of global terrorism to countries where the concept had heretofore been only a word have caused the Arrow to consider carefully before joining in any battles on either side. One exception, however, dictates that whenever the Arrow sees evidence of one of the heretical Free Companies, the order will take every opportunity to negate the influence of the Free Company and either capture or neutralize the errant mercenary mages.

- **The Order's Real Enemies Are Timeless:** The Seers of the Throne and the Banishers pose threats to the Adamantine Arrow and to all Pentacle mages that Sleeper groups can't hope to emulate. These foes should occupy the highest priority in the order's involvement in conflicts of any sort. Many battles between these traditional enemies take place alongside Sleeper battles, but others occur in hidden-away places, either deep within the rainforest, in a desert sanctuary or high in a mountain fastness.

In these faraway places, Arrows can make better use of their offensive magic without triggering the Paradox that might ensue on a battleground shared with Sleepers. When evidence proves that either Seers or Banishers have infiltrated a Sleeper army or military unit, the Arrow does everything in its power to isolate that group to fight it on magical terms or, failing that, engages the enemy in battle within the ground rules of the Fallen World.

- **Knowledge Is the Best Defense:** Rather than shy away from forms of warfare that the order frowns upon or outright condemns (i.e., germ or chemical warfare), members of the Adamantine Arrow try their

best to study and master even the most forbidden of these methods in order to best defend against them. Seeing in this area their responsibility to the ignorant Sleepers, the Arrow acts as a first line of defense so that non-magical humanity does not suffer needlessly.

Throughout the cold war and its end, the Balkanization of Europe, the fall of the Soviet Union, the growing dialogue with China, the fall of apartheid in South Africa and Japan's economic and technological victories over the rest of the world, the Arrow has maintained itself in a state of alertness, watching Sleepers and Awakened alike as the inhabitants of the Fallen World face a future that steadily builds toward a tipping point. Either the combined weight of millennia of abuse of the world's resources will trigger the collapse of the modern world into chaos or the work of the Seers and the Banishers will succeed in completely severing the connection between Supernal and Fallen worlds, a state of being that can only end in the triumph of the Abyss. The Arrow has taken upon itself the task of preparing to wage perpetual war against the Abyss as the 21st century unfolds.

Today

The new century opened with an act of terror that galvanized the world of Sleepers and brought home to Sleepers and Awakened just how vulnerable a target even the most sheltered places present to the determined, the desperate or the hate-riddled. For perhaps the first time since the Arrow's flight from Atlantis, Arrows felt a true challenge from the Sleeping world. In the past, Arrow mages had involved themselves in the wars of Sleepers as much to keep in practice as to achieve victory for one side or another. In most wars, Arrow mages faced each other across battle lines and sometimes fought occult battles under cover of the confusion of the clashes between Sleeper armies.

The escalation of the tactics of terror and the growing association of war with atrocity have driven Arrow mages to consider carefully when and how to involve themselves. Decisions to favor one country over its enemy or one faction within a country against its rival now depend more on the ethics of combat aside displays than its philosophy or the cause it espouses.

Even so, the order finds itself often at odds as mages tend to support the sides that reflect their own cultural or moral upbringing, sometimes putting them at odds

with their superiors in the order. Some of the order's Adamant Sages believe that the fragmenting of the Arrow according to Sleeper loyalties spells the end of the order's effectiveness within the society of Pentacle mages. Other Sages maintain that such loyalties are temporary, as they have always been, and that the heart of the order's philosophy is conflict: understanding it, mastering it, using it and expressing its uses in the Supernal Realm.

The wars of the late 20th century — Vietnam, the Gulf War, the ongoing civil strife in Rwanda, Uganda, Central America, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland and others — have changed the face of warfare, creating something even more barbaric than the wars fought by the people labeled “barbarians” by historians. For many Arrow mages, what passes for war is almost unrecognizable. Those Arrows who choose to take part in the conflicts occurring around the globe usually do so with the intent of trying to reintroduce old concepts such as honor, respect for a worthy enemy and protection of civilians on both sides.

Ongoing Concerns

The order's highest levels of leadership have identified major areas of concern with regard to the future of the Adamantine Arrow. One of the highest priorities for the order is the timely identification of mages suitable for the Arrow. Once a mage has been recruited, proper training and philosophical orientation become necessary to point him in the right direction.

- Recruitment is a critical concern within the order. Because of the Arrows' nature as warrior-mages with a duty to protect their fellow Pentacle mages — a mandate that holds as strongly today as it did in Atlantis, the order seeks to identify as quickly as possible any newly Awakened mage whose talents and inclinations might qualify him for initiation into the Adamantine Arrow.

Given the possibility, the order would rather recruit from followers of the Obrimos, Thyrsus or Moros Paths, recognizing in all of these some aspect of the warrior, from the Obrimos's likelihood for providing military leaders and Thyrsus's primal instinct for survival to the Moros willingness to battle to the death when necessary. At one time, Arrows would have competed fiercely with some of the other orders for particularly strong new mages; now their concern is more with keeping the Awakened from falling into the hands of the Seers of the Throne or the Banishers. The

Exarchs' lackeys already take too many brilliant new mages away and reshape them to their own purposes, while others experience catastrophic accidents, often resulting in their deaths and usually in their loss of magical ability as a result of coming to the attention of the Banishers before a Pentacle mage can spirit the new mage away.

Because of this danger, many Adamantine Arrow recruiters also point mage candidates unsuitable to their own order in the direction of other Pentacle orders in the interests of preserving Atlantean magic in the Fallen World and strengthening the forces that oppose the widening of the Abyss.

- Training occupies a position every bit as crucial as recruitment for today's Arrow mages. Combat has evolved into an entire genre of interaction. Physical combat runs the gamut from primitive brawling to highly sophisticated schools of martial arts, including those that incorporate magic in their routines. Weapons have advanced from bludgeoning clubs and sticks to swords and Tasers, while missile weapons have progressed from bows and spears or javelins to automatic rifles and stinger missiles. Add siege weaponry, artillery, demolitions work, airborne missiles and nuclear weapons (not to mention weapons of mass destruction and biochemical warfare), and the sheer amount of information required to be a “complete” warrior can be staggering.

While the Arrow maintains that some weapons are less preferable to use than others — those that stray from the principle of one-on-one combat, for example — the order accedes to the exigencies of practicality. These forms of weapons exist, and Arrow mages must master them, at least in theory, as well as they comprehend their arcane talents.

Arrow mages may receive some training in modern weaponry through carefully monitored terms of military service. Some cabals of Arrows exist within various branches of the armed forces of most countries, usually operating as discrete “special forces” operations. Some Arrow cabals serve as police SWAT teams while others exercise their training in the field as bounty hunters, though often such cabals consist of a mixture of Arrows and Guardians for more covert operations.

- Spiritual Altruism remains an abiding concern for the order. Although the heresy of the Free Companies has existed for centuries, the proliferation and popularization of mercenaries and “mercenary chic” has made it imperative for the order to ensure that up-and-coming mages do not fall prey to the allure

of murder for money or hiring out for war. To this end, the order maintains several hidden sanctuaries throughout the world in such isolated places as the Himalayas, the Canadian northwestern wilderness, the Brazilian rainforests and several off-the-map privately owned islands. Here, new mages who need "moral reinforcement" or spiritual immersion can receive intensive training and instruction in the philosophy of the order as well as the physical discipline and willpower that create consummate warriors and mages. Many veterans of the order elect to go to one of these places periodically for a brief retreat or an extended sabbatical in order to refresh their minds and bodies and remember what the order stands for.

Target: The World

The political climate changes almost daily, and mages of the Adamantine Arrow, by its nature, must respond to those changes to remain current and safeguard the Sleepers as well as perform the Arrows' responsibilities of the order in their particular part of the world.

Africa

The volatile politics of Africa have necessitated a flexible Arrow presence. The deserts of northern Africa remain the seat of many covert, privately funded military and terrorist encampments. Likewise, the Arrow maintains its own desert enclaves, magically hidden from detection by normal electronic or other technological means. From relatively cosmopolitan countries such as Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia, where tourism and the oil industry have invaded the cultural life, to the more isolated desert areas, where nomadic tribes still live as they did centuries ago, the character of this region demands a careful, cautious approach. While magic may, at best, evoke notions of the Arabian Nights and the romantic tales of *jinn* and flying carpets, the reality of magic, particularly in regions where religious fundamentalism carries a great deal of weight, is looked upon with the same opprobrium and horror as witchcraft in medieval Europe.

The political and cultural upheavals throughout the rest of Africa keep the Arrow on crisis alert. The violence in Rwanda, the Sudan and other hot spots calls for intervention by the Arrow to alleviate suffering by non-combatants where the order can, though frequently such actions are impossible to carry out, and a careful neutrality to avoid discovery by those who would either use or destroy the order.

In a similar fashion, some Arrow mages have come to the assistance of countries of southern Africa as they make the transition from apartheid and achieve a new political balance. Again, the primary concern is to maintain the order's integrity regardless of the political climate. But personal concerns also take their toll and often require action from mages whose Sleeper families are caught up in the political maelstrom.

North America

The United States, Canada and Mexico present temptations and opportunities for the order to recruit, train and prosper. Although potentially the freest political structure within which to live, the United States also has its hotbeds of religious fundamentalism and political conservatism, which force mages of any order to maintain a low profile. In some cases, Arrow mages have infiltrated military and paramilitary organizations associated with some extremist groups to keep tabs on their development and alert the Arrow to any threats that may arise. In some cases, Arrow mages find themselves working closely with mages of other orders to keep the various Consilii throughout the country up to date. Order mages in Canada share many of the same concerns but also take advantage of the parts of Canada still undeveloped as locations for hidden headquarters and training facilities.

The situation for order mages in Mexico is a little more fluid. In many ways, Mexico resembles its northern neighbors. In the Yucatan, however, and in Mexico City itself, where remnants of the ancient Mayan and Aztec civilizations are trying to maintain a cultural and sometimes political independence from the overall Hispanic culture, order mages of native descent sometimes find themselves involved, in spite of their better judgment, in conflicts with the Mexican army or with the bandit groups that still remain active in the highlands.

Central and South America

Although many countries in South and Central America either have or have had military regimes in control of political power, the order in these regions has attempted to remain out of the limelight lest any hint of magic in connection with military operations bring down backlash from an angry and unforgiving Sleeper population. The Catholic Church remains strong in South and Central America, and the memory of religious persecution of witches still burns in the minds of many mages who have studied their history. Unfortunately, this is also an area where a number of



Free Companies have found refuge and opportunity, hiring out to the highest political aspirant or local drug lord.

Some of the order's most secret places, however, lie deep within the jungles of Central America and the rainforest of the Amazon. Here, where obscure and sometimes undiscovered native tribes accept the existence of a magical universe without question, the order's mages find a great deal of freedom to hone their magical skills without worrying overmuch about Paradox.

terrorist hands or currently occupy the warehouses of international arms dealers, the order has its own stockpiles of weapons — some marked for eventual use in an ultimate war against the Seers of the Throne and some marked for perpetual oblivion.

The Far East is perhaps the most problematic region. Some of the most ancient martial arts originated in China, Japan, Korea and other countries on Asia's Pacific coast and western mountains, and the Arrow sees a mystical significance to these developments. When coupled with a deep spiritual connection

Asia

As in most global "hot spots," the order treads with care in the Middle East. Arrow mages would find it too easy to dictate the outcome of many of the struggles in that part of the world should they decide to use their magic. As it is, the order contents itself with a moderate level of infiltration so that the mages can be aware of the latest developments. More than one cabal has split apart because of partisan loyalties in this area of religious conflict and ancient rivalries. In the deserts of Arabia, the order maintains an oasis retreat where it breeds horses of Arabian and Berber stock and trains mages in ancient forms of mounted ranged combat.

The former Soviet Union kept a strong military, and the order in that part of the world took advantage of the military's presence for the order's own covert training, though the perils of discovery were terrible to contemplate. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, a number of weapons have gone missing, notably military rifles and some tactical nuclear arms. Though the world fears that these may have fallen into

that united mind and body in one fluid expression of martial philosophy, the methods of combat in this part of the world most closely expressed the original Atlantean tenor of mystical and physical struggle. With the arrival of communism in China and much of Southeast Asia, many in the military sought to overthrow the non-materialistic aspects of combat, relying on a martial and military regimen that did not admit to a spiritual underpinning. Nevertheless, the philosophies behind the Asian schools of martial arts survived and today enjoy a greater freedom of expression. The mountains of the Himalayas and the vast wildernesses of Mongolia and Siberia harbor enclaves of order mages and a number of training schools, while the ever-growing cities breed Arrows weaned on a more direct and modern school of conflict. Rumors persist that a gulag of sorts maintained by the order in Siberia serves as a prison and re-education center for captured Seers and Banishers.

Australia

From their first arrival in the Fallen World, a few order mages have had a presence in Australia. The Arrows of the aboriginal peoples remained hidden until well after the Europeans came in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Now the order has taken advantage of the excellent military forces of Australia and New Zealand and have insinuated themselves into these organizations just as they have in armies all over the world. Again, the Arrows attempt not to direct the future of these lands but to keep apprised of developments on the political and military fronts as they occur.

Using points along the Great Barrier Reef and elsewhere on the coasts of Australia, order mages experienced in aquatic maneuvering have been conducting searches for remnants of other "lost" continents said to exist simultaneously with Atlantis but otherwise unknown to Atlantean civilization. The relative proximity to the Marianas Trench and the deepest known point in the world has given some thought that an opening to the Abyss itself lies somewhere within its depths and that Abyssal creatures have been known to come through from time to time. The order has assigned itself the duty to keep watch on that part of the ocean in case the Arrows should need to defend the Fallen World from a concerted intrusion of things from "beyond."

Europe

The densely populated nations of Europe, on the one hand, have little room for "hidden" schools of martial magic. However, many European countries have a greater respect for individual privacy and have less invasive forms of government than countries elsewhere in the world. Secret or private "clubs" that are actually headquarters for cabals of order mages occupy ancient castles in Germany and Austria, rustic chalets in the Swiss Alps, lodge-houses in the fjords of Scandinavia villas in rural parts of Spain and France, England, Ireland and Scotland.

Here, too, the Talons clash more frequently with Seers and Banishers under the cover of civil unrest or outbreaks of international terror. Much of the order's ancient history since the mages' exile to the Fallen World has taken place in Europe, so the Arrows have a vested interest in retaining their presence in this part of the world. Rumors of Atlantean artifacts, some of which were allegedly weapons belonging to the order in Atlantis, have kept many cabals focused on the Alps and the Ural mountain ranges, searching for caves in which these items might be hidden.

Recruitment is heavy in Europe, where many Awakened young people fall into the category of angry, unemployable and potentially dangerous segments of the population. The order tries to be the first to give them an outlet for their anger and a way to harness their tremendous energy toward the goals of the Adamantine Arrow.

The Island Worlds

In addition to the islands of the Caribbean and the South Pacific, many other, nameless islands dot the oceans, discoverable only by those who are looking for them. The Adamantine Arrow finds that these islands provide the order with perfect locations for various order facilities, such as training camps, retreats, retirement enclaves and other purposes. One island, located somewhere in the general region of the Philippines, reportedly houses the families of the highest-ranking mages in the order. Here, these families, many of whom are unAwakened, can live in safety without fear of being used as hostages for the coercion of their mage members or made into targets

in the ongoing war between Atlantean mages and the forces of the Exarchs.

Antarctica

Under the guise of an Australian scientific research team measuring the rate of Antarctic melt and its effect on the penguin population, the order maintains a semi-permanent base at the southern tip of the world. Here, the Arrows provide intense training in extreme survival conditions as well as advanced magical rites. Here, too, the order searches for a possible site where the Gauntlet is thinnest and where the Supernal World actually comes close to the Fallen World. The order has been planning another

attempt at rebuilding Atlantis and is considering the Antarctic continent as one of the purest spots in the world, the least affected by the contamination of the Fallen.

Concern is growing, however, about the alarming rate of ice melt that is threatening the integrity of the continent itself. The rate seems to be going further past modern science's ability to explain the phenomenon. Some mages of the order believe that a spy or infiltrator has managed to leak the order's secret presence to the Seers of the Throne and that this group is actually contributing to the swift erosion of the Antarctic continental shelf and the breaking up of the continent itself.





CHAPTER TWO: SOWN FROM THE DRAGON'S TALONS

They called her the Ax. That was because they were afraid to mispronounce Anacaona de Xaragua's shadow name. It was useful, their fear. They also called her the Hierarch's whore, but never in her presence. Again: fear. Without it, her duties would have been far more difficult. It made life lonely, but she loved Boston enough to give up friends for the fear.

She eased back in her chair. The three mages standing across from her flinched, but relaxed again when all she did was point to the computer, scanner and big, leather-bound books at the other end of the room.

She smiled a bit. "High resolution, *oui*? Must take a long time. I can't see how you could possibly scan those all and get them back to where you took them from before the Mysterium notices."

"We're not stealing 'em — how is this a crime?" His name was Opensource or one of those other stupid Libertine names. He was obviously the leader. She inhaled, exhaled and decided that a strategy called "Severing the Snake's Head" would do.

When she didn't respond right away, Opensource cleared his throat and said, "Right. So what are we talking about if we don't just run 'em back, Ax? You got deputies waiting outside?"

"No, it's just me. I don't want them to spread rumors about your thieving, in case it creates... unrest. Your friends will return the grimoires within the hour."

"No, I won't." He went for the gun in his waistband, but of course she'd woken it up and made it hate its owner. Hate was an easy emotion for guns. Amateurs ignore barrel position when they draw, so naturally, the gun went off while he was sliding it past his belt — he'd pointed it at his own belly.

He screamed. Glancing past him, she could see the wide-eyed cringing that came when you broke the enemy's spirit. She'd hurt the leader — severed the snake's head. He crumpled; his shirt turned pink and wet.

"I said your friends would." She stood. "I'll get you medical attention, of course."

Opensource's friends ran the books back to the Mysterium Library as quietly as they'd taken them, because they were afraid.

*If we do not fear death, then what is there to fear about the enemy?
So when we see the enemy, whether he is many or few,
we must act as though he is bread that can satisfy our hunger,
and immediately swallow him.*

— Mao Zedong, *Basic Tactics*

The universe is designed to destroy enlightenment. It's a weapon, forged from Sleepers' souls and aimed at anyone who'd rebel against the Exarchs. The universe is an invader, conquering the anti-being of the Abyss with every atom. The Abyss marshals armies in the void and tosses them at reality's borders.

There is no great union, no mystical whole to which all things belong. Everything crashes against the barriers imposed by nature, hungry for realms beyond its ken. Unity is conquest. Enlightenment is an empire forged from the joining of peoples and powers, but it is never, ever, freely given.

This is the way of the cosmos, and it carries with it a terrible danger, for there is no predestined hope, no guarantee that virtuous men and women will attain the thrones of the Fallen World, much less claim the palaces of the gods from the Exarchs. The rightness of a cause does not guarantee its success, so the righteous need champions: soldiers, insurgents and even orators dedicated to humanity's side in the war for Creation. These warriors are one order: the Adamantine Arrow.

The Adamantine Arrow is more than the army of Atlantis. Members never forget that they are mages: scholars of the Mysteries, dedicated to uncovering truth. Theirs is not an office of unthinking service, but a society where every "grunt" must think like a general, ethicist and sage. And like all mages, every Arrow knows that he is no pawn to be lightly moved into battle for the sake of petty Consilium politics, but a paragon of human potential — *arête* — that burns with Supernal fire.

The Adamant Way

It's a hand clasping a thunderbolt, breaking cosmic forces to an Arrow's desire. That's the central metaphor of the Adamant Way. The universe is a weapon; a mage's trained hand grasps it and uses it to enforce

her will — or else the thunder turns against her. The Way is a philosophy of action, meant to inspire and instruct Arrows in their duties, but never at the expense of occult insight. Thus, the Adamant Way not only details the nature of service in the Arrow but ties service to greater mystical principles. The ideal warrior is a mirror of the Supernal World: his best qualities flow from its limitless potential.

The Adamant Way begins with the Hand. Each "finger" (normally called a *Phalanx* when referring to Arrow philosophy) reveals some truth about the nature of magic and conflict. This makes the Phalanges broad concepts with much room for debate. The order encourages this; it's fitting that the metaphysical truths of conflict should provoke conflict themselves. The Way lends itself interpretation, but also to a certain amount of dogmatism within each school. This is one aspect of the paradox that drives the order: a fierce individualism that can transform itself into fanatical unity in times of need. This, too, follows the metaphor of the Hand, where every finger moves from its own gestures into a grip capable of bringing a tool or weapon to bear.

Adamant Sages have written the Way down in every language, and have used paintings, sculptures, tapestries, poetry and war dances when writing was nonexistent or insufficient. There are hundreds of versions of the Adamant Way, ranging from short verses to thick volumes of densely written, formal philosophy. In some cases, versions include works known to Sleepers. Chinese texts often include Sunzi's *Ping Fa* (Art of War); other versions incorporate mundane military tactics from the period of writing. One Indian text instructs the reader on the proper use of war elephants, and then uses the lesson as a metaphor for restless souls.

In the West, cloistered Mysterium allies synthesized ancient Chaldean, Greek and Latin versions into a standard text in the 12th century. The Arrows don't

consider this text to be as authoritative as they once did, and constantly search for older versions. It should be noted, however, that the order doesn't spend *too* much time hunting down old scrolls, lest it interfere with the order's duty to protect other mages.

The First Phalanx: Existence Is War

Conflict defines the cosmos. This is as true for stars and planets as it is for the human soul. Every aspect of existence can be rendered down to a battle between opposing forces. Arrows often use the language of Taoism or pre-Socratic philosophy to define the subtler aspects of the First Phalanx, but none of these belief systems cleave to the metaphor of warfare as much as the order's doctrine. Martial artists often explain their practices in terms of metaphysical forces, but the Adamantine Arrow explores this from the other direction. Warfare is a lens that clarifies the truths of magic, metaphysics and natural law.

It would be a mistake to assume that the order views the cosmos as a clash of brute forces. Strategies that yield to force and deceive the enemy apply to material and psychic energies. Thyrus Arrows believe that even inanimate objects have a secret intelligence that pursues strategies designed to express and propagate their essences. The oceans want to inundate the world, but the land defies the oceans. The Abyss throws its legions against all worlds, but the cosmos defends itself, breeding natural laws and enlightened people able to hold back the tide.

Adamantine Arrows study all phenomena as forms of conflict. Arrows try to avoid letting this model blind them to the whole truth, but there are times when the order ascribes intelligent aggression to things that are really the result of mere chance. Critics say this fosters paranoia in the order, but a loyal Arrow would retort that for the Awakened, paranoia is rarely unjustified. The magical universe is full of enemies capable of attacking through twists of fate and other secret maneuvers.

Corollary: Opposition Defines Power

Arrows examine the secret world by defining forces in opposition and examining the ways in which they oppose, destroy and control one another. The order believes that nature consists of these intricate relationships: of powers balanced so as to avoid utter destruction. To manipulate a thing, strengthen or

weaken its opponents and let the subject's aggressive impulses react.

To a mage seeking physical perfection, her body is an ally, but her mind — the thing that obeys exhaustion, succumbs to illness and shies away from exercises — is the enemy. One mage might design a spell to enhance physical performance by limiting the mind to primal, instinctual functions, giving her animalistic cunning and athletic talent. Another Arrow might define the external world as the body's opponent, because the external world is the source of everything that stands in the path of improvement. That Arrow's magic frees his body from the full effects of gravity, friction and inertia. Both mages' bodies get stronger and faster, able to grow into the space left behind by an "enemy's" weakness.

Corollary: Unopposed Power Destroys Itself

Unopposed, power expands to the point of its own exhaustion. That's why the maxim "Existence Is War" is more than a dismal form of metaphysics. Without opposition, every force destroys itself. A fire dies once it has consumed all of its fuel. Men and women die from diseases of excess: too much food, too many drugs or other easy pleasures. A warrior without a battle to fight trades his true craft for useless forms and ceremonies. And if the Supernal Realms ever grew too close to the Fallen World, their divine powers would consume and transform everything. All mages dream of the day the Abyss no longer separates the realms, but few want to bring the True Fae or Archangels to the fragile, Fallen Earth.

Tension between cosmic forces drives creation because nature permits few things to meet their ultimate extent and sputter out. Conflict contains power short of the point of self-destruction and forces power to refine itself. Heat thrives in a dense coal, hard-won pleasures are the most satisfying and the best soldiers are veterans.

Corollary: Power Obeys Strategy

Existence Is War, but that war is maximally efficient. All conflict seeks out a state of elegance, where all sides expend the least energy to the most effect. An Arrow always searches for this elegant state in a conflict, to either bring it about or break it to his advantage. This is the meaning of strategy.

This has several implications. First of all, conflicting forces may actually be allied on a grander scale. Their most efficient state of conflict actually protects them

against another threat. Rival cabals scheme against each other, but the creative powers they marshal for this purpose makes them a stronger collective threat to the Exarchs. In ecologies, predator and prey develop opposing strategies, but when one becomes too competent, it ultimately suffers. Predators starve without their prey; prey species suffer overpopulation and disease.

Furthermore, power responds best to strategies that allow it to express itself, even to its own detriment. Judo and aikido masters use this principle in their arts, redirecting an opponent's force to throw and grapple him. Spells that redirect the laws of the Fallen World are more efficient than those that crush natural laws under raw Supernal power.

The Second Phalanx: Enlightenment Is Honor

To an Arrow, honor is more than a personal bond. An oath is a covenant with the universe, in which a mage vows not only to act in a certain way but to express some greater principle with her words and deeds. An oath is a formal expression of her relationship with the cosmos, carving her soul into the shape that fits tightly between the magical and mundane worlds.

Arrow oaths are the stuff of legends: myths of mages who returned from the grave to fulfill a promise or destroyed kingdoms to serve the whims of uncaring masters. These vows also have an important place in Awakened society. Other mages rely on the order's promises to preserve the peace. Arrows reassure the other orders that the Adamantine Arrow won't use its might against them.

Arrows take their honor very seriously, but are not as fond of swearing oaths as outsiders might think. Despite the fame accorded Arrow oaths, order mages avoid making trivial promises or entangling themselves in legalese. Arrows don't like complicated oaths, but recognize their role in the Lex Magica, where they enforce codes of behavior between rivals. Order mages don't make too many promises when it comes to their everyday lives, either. They lead violent, disciplined lives. Marriages, 9-to-5 jobs and contracts get in the way of their magical obligations and dilute the power of their promises. Why would a warrior-mage, whose word can rouse terrible forces, waste time as an office temp? There are exceptions, of course. Order mages who fall in love frequently exchange fierce oaths to protect and serve their loved ones. On the other hand,

some mages are so averse to making unimportant promises that they reject permanent housing, drivers' licenses, mundane paper trails and committed relationships. They usually take to the road, offering help to anyone they think is worthy of a promise in exchange for Mana, room and board.

Corollary: Promise Only What You Would Have Others Promise in Your Place

It is wrong to swear an oath for selfish reasons. A mage's honor isn't a shield for his ego. It's a statement about what the world *should* be. Arrow oaths should set an example for how all mages should behave, but there's an important qualifier: oaths should set an example for what anyone should do *if* he took the Arrow's place. Unfortunately, this lends itself to quite a bit of abuse. The lover with an oath of vengeance could be too blinded by grief and passion to consider the wider implications of the vow. An Arrow who promises to serve his Consilium might be too naïve to notice corruption.

An Arrow's honor represents a collection of lessons learned about the soul, magic and the world. Order mages swear oaths to entrench a particular important (and often painful) message. An experienced Arrow's history of oaths is often a clue to how he's lived and the mistakes he'd made. When Arrows lose a fight due to poor intelligence, they vow to study future enemies closely. After wasting time with elaborate, indirect strategies, Arrows promise to lead the next attack.

Corollary: Word and Soul Must Agree

Arrows prefer simple oaths. Oaths are not contracts but a way to express a spiritual commitment. Words cannot define every aspect of a spiritual vow. Instead, an Arrow has to struggle with his promises, examining how his actions serve the spirit of the oath. Conveniently, this also gives him a certain amount of flexibility when it comes to interpreting his promises — but not too much. He must cleave to his original intentions, even if it means twisting his words to fit them.

Even so, order mages can't get too creative with their promises without undercutting their social position and the Adamantine Arrow's collective prestige. The whole point of an oath is to express convictions, so if the message gets too distorted, it isn't fulfilling its purpose. Arrows walk a fine line between adhering to the true vows in their hearts and obeying the words that tell others what they've promised. Some Arrows

say stupid things (“You’ll never get this grimoire unless one of us is dead”) that don’t reflect their true intent (“This grimoire must never fall into the hands of the Seers of the Throne”). This forces Arrows to use tortured explanations (such as when the Seer the Arrow threatened defects—and needs the grimoire to defeat his former allies) when their words fail, causing a great loss of honor. The Arrow’s words lose value; compatriots cast doubt on his sincerity and wisdom.

Corollary: Honor Is Your True Name

The occult significance of a mage’s honor is that it lays out her soul’s secret pattern. A mage who’s fond of technological metaphors might say that an Arrow’s honor is the “source code” of her being. Honor should inspire everything she does. The ideal warrior-mage contemplates her oaths and duties constantly, even while she walks alone, through ordinary trials and chores. Some Arrows consequently incorporate their training into everything they do. They are always alert to danger and try to perform every task with the discipline they’d apply to marksmanship or unarmed

combat. Others strip their lives of “distractions,” including casual friends, sex and recreation.

It’s easy to use these principles to justify a self-centered sense of honor that affirms personal ambitions above all. The Hand helps mitigate the danger of moral decline. The Supernal Is the Self, so a mage’s honor should reflect his vision of an ideal world. Service Is Mastery, so the Arrow’s honor is offered up as the tool of an enlightened society.

The Third Phalanx: Adaptability Is Strength

If war is the cosmic metaphor, then it stands to reason that a true warrior masters many fields—even all of them. An Adamantine Arrow mage constantly trains, expanding his abilities as broadly as possible. A true Arrow never reaches a point when he says, “I am a master,” or “I know everything I need to know.” Lessons about warfare exist everywhere. Animal behavior, physics and theology all inspire useful insights when



a warrior studies with the right attitude. The ideal warrior is a polymath, able to connect the lessons of disparate disciplines into a broad way of looking at the world. When he wrestles with an enemy, his medical studies help him twist and break joints. When he runs a business, he applies military strategy to personnel and resource management.

Self-knowledge is a priority. If a warrior doesn't know his own strengths and weaknesses, he has no chance of defeating an enemy. If he doesn't understand his own biases, his prejudices will blunt his creativity and blind him to important information. Physical training is far and away the order's favorite way to study the Self. Raw physical adversity unleashes primal emotions. Martial artists need to overcome the fear of being struck; weightlifters need to eliminate doubts that keep them from making the heaviest lifts. Bruises, muscles burning with lactic acid, gasping lungs and stiff joints — all of these challenge the mind as much as the body. After all, a mortal body has a simple solution for these problems: *Stop. Rest. Avoid the pain.* Instinctive fear and laziness inspire hundreds of arguments that it's time to listen to the body, but the Arrow stands firm.

Meditation is also popular. It's a basic spiritual practice that virtually all mages are familiar with. Arrows prefer to meditate while they work and move, adding a little stillness to the whirlwind of everyday life. This puts the mind on guard; every stray thought is noted, examined and allowed to drift away.

Corollary: Do Not Have Preferences

This Phalanx is perhaps the most difficult one for the order, as it demands constant study and the willingness to cast away preferences for the sake of the warrior ideal. A strategic genius needs to step into the ring, leaving maps and calculations for bruises and bloody hands. His training partner might be in her element, but she, too, has to leave her area of expertise to learn mathematics, history or anything else that expands her perspective.

An Arrow should be able to learn any skill the situation dictates, and should always fill gaps in her knowledge. It doesn't matter if she's dyslexic, is math-phobic, has a glass jaw or if Forces is her inferior Arcanum. Disability, weakness and fear are never reasons to avoid a field. They're challenges — and a warrior lives to overcome them.

The order understands that each Talon has particular gifts and challenges to overcome. Diversity

is *not* weakness, but is cherished as a way to form specialized cadres at need — a group manifestation of adaptability. Nevertheless, individuals should not lean on their special talents to justify their place in the order. In the Adamantine Arrow, every soldier should be a potential general, and every boardroom strategist should be a competent grunt.

Corollary: Die Every Day

Arrows should be ready to die at all times. "Die today" is a samurai maxim frequently quoted by order mages. They should not necessarily live in the moment, but should be ready to transform themselves to meet every moment as it comes. An Arrow should be ready to move to another continent, change her name (or even her apparent sex and ethnicity), take a new job or destroy her old workplace — whatever's necessary to do her duty. This is a form of metaphorical death, in which she "kills" her old identity to invent herself anew. This doesn't mean that Arrows adopt new identities with the intensity of a Guardian of the Veil, though. While the order does have its spies, what happens more often is that the Arrow decides to recreate herself to perform a particular task. Deception's less important than efficiency.

Mages of the order also try to eliminate habits that enemies might exploit. If a Talon's knife fighting or gunplay obeys a certain rhythm, she intentionally trains against it. If she notices herself relying on a few rote spells, she'll avoid them for a time and master new spells. Of course, nothing prevents a mage from *pretending* to have vulnerable habits, or sticking to a favored practice until it stops being the best method. These are effective ways to give an enemy false confidence.

Corollary: Employ Magic Strategically

Given intense training, fanatical motivation and magical power, any Awakened cabal can pull off operations that would impress a SEAL team or Spartan phalanx. The order expects Arrows to be that skilled *without* magic — and with it, they should be strong enough to rout armies and terrify gods. Without ordinary skills, this is impossible. Magic should never compensate for incompetence. The order's duties include a number of petty tasks that should almost never require spells. Too many mages rely on magic to survive in the wilderness or treat minor wounds. Casting spells to satisfy trifling needs exposes an Arrow to supernatural detection and unanticipated sides effects. Paradoxes, curious spirits and rival mages are all threats that answer an unnecessary spell. Sorcery

might be the profound core of existence, but even the core of a thing is only a part of it.

The Adamantine Arrow believes that magic should either grant truly supernatural powers (flight, spirit communication and so on) or enhance non-magical excellence. The latter is a pillar of Arrow strategy; it lets the order's soldiers boost formidable skills to superhuman degrees. But if the task requires only normal ability, there's no reason to invoke the Supernal Realms.

The Fourth Phalanx: The Supernal Is the Self

War and defense aren't the Adamantine Arrow's sole concern. Every order has a philosophy about the nature of mages and magic: the premise for everything they do. In the Adamantine Arrow's case, the Fourth Phalanx provides this basic metaphysical doctrine.

Mages are living reflections of the true world. That's why the order fights for them. Every Awakened soul contains a universe: Supernal power that can impose the truth on a degenerate world.

The Fourth Phalanx is the basis of much of the order's occult practice. Arrow martial arts, yoga and *qigong* are based on the idea that the body ought to reflect cosmic principles. Blood and breath obey the same cycles as fires, storms and cosmic epochs. War dances retell creation myths. These practices unite the rest of the Hand into a system that guides warriors' spiritual journeys. An Arrow studies war to understand the cosmos — and the cosmos, to understand war. As his knowledge grows, he becomes the universe's mirror, able to adapt to any situation by understanding it. The Western order calls this quality *arête*.

But *arête* is more than raw excellence. *Arête* grows out of a deep passion for the *rightness* of things. This moral position hasn't been handed down by any god or philosopher. It's implicit in the natural order. Lies are wrong because the universal Lie causes suffering. Murder is wrong because it ends a person's spiritual evolution. The Abyss is evil because it threatens the ground of all goodness: existence. An Arrow with *arête* upholds natural justice. Her mind, body and spirit exemplify what's possible in a finer world. Her soul is the seed of a universe free from suffering.

Nevertheless, Arrows lie and kill, even though natural morality condemns these actions. The order embraces this contradiction. Arrows believe it's wrong

to kill in self-defense — but it's *worse* to do nothing. One sin can never forgive another, but there are times when a warrior needs to be sinful, lest he allow something more terrible to occur.

Natural Rights

Adamantine Arrows believe that human beings have inherent, natural rights, but are greatly divided over what this means. Some Arrows are radical Social Darwinists: you have the right to anything you can take and defend. Others believe that individual rights are paramount and must be defended from all aggression or that individual rights must be balanced against the needs of the community.

The mainstream position of the order argues for individual freedom tempered by responsibility. Duty is also an essential part of being human. The order frowns on egregious attempts to grab power from others, but also believes that your ability to protect your rights should increase in proportion to the rights you actually claim. Study magic, but avoid the lore of the Abyss, because it's antisocial. Respect the sanctum of another mage, but test him if he expands his territory *too* much.

Corollary: Self-purification Is Essential

A mage's mind, body and spirit create a microcosm that symbolizes the way the world *should* be. Arrows should always strive to act with moral purity. They right wrongs and avoid immoral acts to keep the universe of the Self unsullied. Unfortunately, warrior-mages have duties that might force them to sin. Murder, deception and callousness are never forgiven simply because they served a greater purpose. Immoral acts still sicken an Arrow's soul. Sin is the Abyss of a warrior's personal universe.

Therefore, Arrows regularly purify themselves with special rituals and duties. In Western societies, order mages often confess their sins and perform charitable acts. In some cases, the mages confess to the same priests and confidantes as Sleepers do, but the mages carefully word their stories to preserve Awakened secrets. Arrows perform charitable deeds to compensate for personal impurities. One Arrow provides for families of almost everyone he's ever killed. Another

pours money into urban renewal after destroying a vampire who fed on the poor but used his powers to keep the community crime-free.

There are more esoteric purification practices, designed to burn the “wrongness” out of a mage’s spirit. These include fasting, intense exercise, hermitage and painful ordeals. To some Arrows, suicide is the ultimate form of self-purification, offering truly broken souls a chance to renew themselves with a good death.

Corollary: The Body Is Sacred

The Adamantine Arrow’s membership includes the fittest humans alive. Despite what envious outsiders say, magic isn’t the primary reason why Arrows have strong, tough, quick bodies. Order mages simply work harder; they run, pump iron, wrestle and swim. They shock their bodies by constantly altering their exercise routines. Hand doctrine drives this intense commitment because an Arrow’s body is part of her personal microcosm. The body’s flaws become the microcosm’s flaws. And, practically speaking, fit mages are better fighters. Arrows use magic to get momentary bursts of strength and speed and to improve ordinary workouts and eliminate “imperfections,” but don’t respect mages who rely on the Arts for basic physical competence. An order mage doesn’t use Life instead of doing pushups, but does use Life to ensure that he recovers from training faster, avoids injuries and eliminates hereditary illness.

In certain times and places, this doctrine was used to justify barbaric practices. Arrows barred admission to mages with certain “imperfections” ranging from deformities to specific eye and skin colors. A few tyrants even applied these criteria to Sleepers, forcing racist and eugenic practices upon subject populations. Superstitions held that a sufficiently “imperfect” body held a corrupt microcosm that needed to be eliminated. Few modern Arrows believe these sorts of things, and those who do are usually ostracized from the order.

Corollary: The Mind, Body and Soul Battle Eternally

The quest for self-perfection never ends. Even the best of all possible worlds boils with strife. Even mages who perfect the worlds within them only internalize the struggle. The body distracts the



mind. The mind reduces spiritual insights to mere facts. The soul tempts a mage to look inward, away from the body's needs.

This isn't the only type of tension among the mind, body and soul — and those divisions aren't the only ones Arrows use to study internal conflict. Some Arrows identify personal traits with certain Supernal Realms, so that one might have a flighty "Arcadian attitude" that struggles against grounded, "Stygian" goals. Talons never try to eliminate internal conflict. Doubt, pain and confusion have their uses. The goal is to accept spiritual turmoil with equanimity. Training and meditation keep turmoil from distracting them, but teach Arrows where their conflicts lie — and how they, too, can be forged into excellent weapons. Fear begets caution; anger drives action. Used in moderation, internal conflict is a warrior-mage's spiritual arsenal.

The Fifth Phalanx: Service Is Mastery

A true warrior has no ambitions — only duties. She pursues justice and destroys evil with no thought for her own desires, unless they push her to excellence. Sometimes she assembles a sworn war band to hunt the enemy. Sometimes she defends a narrow pass alone, throwing her life away for a promise. Sometimes, she even kills the man who occupies a throne she swore to serve. Outsiders say that Talons are slaves to duty, but the order wouldn't have it any other way. Duty inspires action. Action creates power.

Mages scheme and duel for political offices, wealth and artifacts, all because they imagine some kind of endpoint where they're safe, wealthy and enlightened. Hierarchs clutch their positions and mystagogues catalog more books than anyone could ever read, and believe that they are powerful.

They're fools. Power exists only when it is used. The Adamantine Arrow knows this and believes itself to be the strongest order. The Arrows' power doesn't just flow from the barrel of a gun (or blade or staff), but from the fact that they're relied on to provide safety and stability: the attributes that mages need to survive, much less have cabals, Consilii, laws and customs. The order follows a doctrine of action, even when standing guard for an established Consilium. The Arrow's patrols, oaths and campaigns set the shape of Awakened culture. When an Arrow says, "I will protect you" to a mage, it makes a statement about

the degree to which to the order values that person. The recipient of the vow gains confidence; his peers recognize that he's someone to respect or aid if they want to benefit from similar vows. Everyone knows that Arrows keep their word.

The order defends mages so that they'll bring the world closer to the Supernal Realms. With Arrows guarding mages, they can study ways to liberate the Fallen World. This ideal has been called "the Peace of the Great Work." Arrows protect people who serve the Peace, but the Peace is more important than any individual. Hierarchs, Masters and even cabal-mates are means to this end. The order doesn't believe that any one mage will usher in a new age of enlightenment. The social order promotes collective study and spiritual progress. Mages who don't fear their neighbors share what the mages have learned and unite to defeat enemies. One day, mages will open the Supernal gates, but without cooperation, it's every sorcerer for himself. Progress is impossible.

Arrow guardianship herds people into their posts, where they serve as figureheads, administrators and counselors, but the order discourages its own from seeking offices for themselves. The offices *are* important as fixed points of an organizational doctrine, but warrior-mages are more interested in guiding the Peace than attaching themselves to its manifestations. A few customs lay down exceptions, and of course, there are always Talons with political ambitions who want to protect mages by ruling them. Traditionally, Sentinels are the Arrow's way of protecting society without alienating it. Councilors add their voices to collective decisions. To serve the Peace, the order needs to reassure its charges that it is a part of it, not a rogue body that answers to no one.

Corollary: Serve Mandates, Not Individuals

Arrows often take oaths to serve specific mages, but when it comes to Consilium positions, a warrior-mage usually promises to serve the office, not the person. If her liege betrays his office, the Arrow should be the first person to remove him. Adamant Sages have written treatises about what constitutes an ideal ruler, and how lieges may stray before they no longer merit protection. For the most part, only other Sages, deeply conflicted Arrows and mages from other orders who want to know how much flexibility they have under Arrow protection study the texts. Modern Arrows usually rely on personal ethics and the community's opinions. Precedents and theories are useful, but an

Arrow's oath relies on personal honor, and personal honor should settle any conflicts.

In some ways, order ideology is similar to the Confucian "Mandate of Heaven." If mages abuse their powers, they're not serving the Peace or representing the finest in humanity. Most Arrows believe that a mage's relationship with Sleepers is a key indicator of his ethical fitness. Mages should be spiritual guides and advisors, not abusers.

Arrow guardianship isn't limited to Consilium officials. Talons often prefer less-ambitious, compassionate mages, and watch over them as vigorously as they would a visiting Herald. Plus, Arrows protect friends and lovers without reservation, even if, according to a strict interpretation of the doctrine, Arrows should show loyalty only to the ideal that each person embodies.

Corollary: A Throne Is a Warrior's Prison

Political responsibilities encourage spiritual stasis. They consume a significant amount of a mage's time without inspiring training and study. The office of Hierarch definitely has this effect. Who can perfect their marksmanship, logic or small unit tactics when they're busy dealing with argumentative cabals, tedious ambassadors and treacherous Councilors? A few warrior-mages believe that any formal position is a kind of prison, but this isn't the majority view. Arrows have been Sentinels since time out of memory, and the order usually contributes one or two people to the Ruling Council to keep a hand in local affairs. Arrows treat these more as intelligence-gathering assignments than administrative positions, but they need to deal with territorial squabbles and favor tradition as much as anyone else.

The order's always assured mages that it would rather serve than rule, but there have been so many ironfisted "advisors" throughout history that few believe that the order wouldn't seize power if the opportunity arose. Adamant-Sage-led governments have usually demonstrated a great deal of success against enemies, but usually go on to oppress their constituents — according to outsiders. The order looks at these same governments and laments that local mages weren't disciplined enough to follow the Sages' advice. The mages weren't being "oppressed." They were just too weak to live up to Arrow standards.

Corollary: Revolutions Are Creative

The order doesn't admit it publicly, but its elders believe that the Free Council's rise was a great boon to

the Awakened. The Council's chaotic, unreliable and venal, but it injected vitality into a Diamond that was brittle with generations of unchallenged customs and government by caste. The old orders rebuilt themselves into relevant organizations or made themselves targets for Council "liberation." The Adamantine Arrow doesn't approve of Libertines per se, but they confirm its belief in the creative power of revolutions.

In any political system, conflict is inevitable — and so is collapse. The trick to surviving revolutions is to adapt while maintaining continuity with the past. The Astral Reaches are filled with the memetic graves of occult lodges, fading in the twilight of Awakened memory. Some were elder traditions whose membership dwindled over generations. Others tried to break with the past, flared into prominence and sputtered out. They lost a historical essence and, thus, lost the interest of the Wise.

The Consilium system will eventually die; the cabals' little wars will grow and tear apart the occult culture. When that happens, the Adamantine Arrow will back the most virtuous alternative. The order will look past leaders and demagogues to average adherents, to see if they will continue the Peace and make the Fallen World a better place. The new system will be a stronger, purer society, tempered by war but committed to harmony.

What Warriors Do

The order expects intense discipline, but believes that members should be able to impose it from within. Mages who need constant supervision and correction are fringe members, unlikely to rise through the ranks. Some rebellious Talons are excellent fighters, strategists and occultists. The order prefers a rule of discipline, but doesn't reject exceptions out of hand. Rogues and loners strike new ground for the Arrow. They invent odd new rites and revolutionary training methods. If they're loyal, they bring their discoveries back to the order.

Even if a mage isn't suitable for mainstream duties, the Adamantine Arrow expects her to contribute. If she doesn't bring anything useful back to the fold, she hasn't earned her apprenticeship. If she doesn't answer the call in an emergency, she's irresponsible, even treacherous. Other Arrows won't teach her rites or include her in future gatherings.

Lone wolves sometimes attract their own apprentices and split from the main line of the order. If they're successful, they found new Legacies and factions.

Otherwise, they wither away — and, if necessary, other Arrows will end the experiment before it endangers others.

Ideals also give way to practical considerations. Adamantine Arrows should have brilliant, knowledgeable minds in agile, strong, well-trained bodies. Many do, but there are always people who are lousy shots but amazing tacticians. There are incredible martial artists who can't escape the conceptual limits of hand-to-hand combat and born leaders who don't have a head for strategy. Drafted mages often flout the order's high standards, but Thunderbolt Guardians and First Talons often shore up these deficiencies with harsh, comprehensive training.

Arête

Arête is the old Greek term for excellence.

The word comes from the same root as the war god Ares. The origin is a warning: without discipline, excellence is a destructive force. *Arête* entails living up to one's true purpose in life, without compromise or weakness. An Arrow with true *arête* is the Fourth Phalanx personified. He possesses mental, physical and spiritual abilities worthy of the Supernal Realms. This perfection is not omnipotence — even virtuous humans are mortal.

Arête isn't Supernal ascension. Until the worlds are united again, no Arrow should dream of escaping earthly burdens. As long as a mage or Sleeper remains in the world-prison, there are souls to protect and oaths to swear.

The Total Warrior

The U.S. Marines say, "Every Marine is a rifleman." The order agrees with this sort of thinking. The Adamantine Arrow would add, "Every rifleman is a logistics expert, and every logistics expert is a philosopher — and every philosopher is a rifleman." Arrows recognize differences in ability, but don't think that's any excuse to focus on one skill to the exclusion of others. Adaptability Is Strength — and it's practical, too. There just aren't enough mages to support a highly specialized infrastructure. During an attack, no Arrow can avoid the line of fire — or the planning session that outlined it.

You Don't Need Kung Fu

This section is lengthy and has a lot of game systems, but don't believe that this detail means that your character *has* to learn Fighting Styles. First of all, **World of Darkness** combat Merits are *not* a prerequisite for a martial arts background. They represent a focus on a specialized subset of fighting. The Brawl and Weaponry Skills represent general training just fine.

Furthermore, the reality is that even though the order idealizes warrior-scholars, the fact of the matter is that not everyone is cut out for toe-to-toe combat. So-called marginal fighters are still valuable members of the order. Game theorists, scientists and historians are as useful as gunmen and brawlers. The order wants every member to challenge herself in all directions, but not to the point where she ignores obvious talents. Many Arrows undergo basic physical training and then devote themselves to intellectual and spiritual pursuits. The order prefers tough-as-nails polymaths, but that doesn't mean the order always get them.

Exoteric Martial Arts

Adamantine Arrows are famous for their raw fighting ability — prowess that might be magically enhanced, but is based on a solid core of disciplined training. There are many, many legends about the order's martial arts. Some include fragmentary descriptions of Atlantean methods. They claim that all fighting systems date back to an ur-tradition whose practitioners channeled Supernal energies through their bodies.

If there ever was a primordial fighting art, it's been lost for millennia. There might be an unbroken line of transmission somewhere, but even if the techniques are genuine, there's no evidence connecting them to the Awakened City. Therefore, Adamantine Arrows don't have a single martial art to learn — they have lots. It's more accurate to say that the order follows a consistent *tradition* of training. Arrows learn effective skills, research their occult elements and train to meet a common goal. It doesn't matter whether they start with Japanese *koryu bugei*, modern mixed martial arts or military hand-to-hand training. They refine these skills to

the point where they will stand up to anything offered by their peers.

There are three things a novice should understand when she steps into an Arrow gym (or *dojo* or *kwoon*):

Training is brutal. Arrows learn by doing. They master fighting skills by actually fighting. While some practices use soft movements and prearranged drills, the order believes that training should mirror life itself. Life is messy, and moments of true grace are rare and hard-won. Once an Arrow learns a basic technique, she practices by applying it in live, unrehearsed combat as often as possible.

“Full contact” barely scratches the surface in Arrow schools. Talons are expected to use Life magic and their own Mana to recover from injuries that would end a normal fighter’s career. A Sleeper slowly grinds a joint lock to make his partner submit, but an Arrow breaks the bone and continues combat. The trainer always warns students how intense a particular session will be, but anything not specified by the sparse rules is permitted.

Training uses whatever works. The order doesn’t dwell on theories about how a technique *might* have a certain effect or a how certain throw *could* be executed more efficiently. What living, resistant training doesn’t teach, magic will. An apprentice of Forces easily understands the patterns of kinetic energy in a technique, and anyone with an understanding of Life understands the effects of a strike, down to the smallest burst vein or frayed nerve.

Adaptability Is Strength, so instead of collecting a fighting method under a detailed theoretical base, the order incorporates anything that works, without bias, and looks for the principles that string the methods all together *after* live testing.

Training searches for the primal form. As the order’s fortunes rise and fall, new martial lineages swell with new students, and old ones die when something better comes along or teachers die in the line of duty. The youngest school is probably being born now; the oldest (China’s secretive *Jingangzhang* or “Diamond Thunder Palm”) has lasted for more than a thousand years. Every school understands that it could fall tomorrow. Most will overturn their theories when they encounter superior techniques.

Still, the order has adopted common standards based on hard-won conclusions about the nature of personal combat. Schools recognize that wrestling is a cultural universal: a basic, instinctive fighting method. After that, the order believes it’s wise to familiarize oneself

with stones, clubs and knives: the most primitive, easily available weapons.

After that, training proceeds to the earliest military weapons: the sword, bow and spear. The sword symbolizes strategy and command because the sword is a weapon specifically designed to kill humans. It stands for premeditated, “civilized” violence. The spear represents organization on the field, between warriors who have to move between tight phalanxes and bloody, running brawls.

The bow represents the order itself, and instruction in the bow includes secret mystery teachings.

Martial Curriculum

The Adamantine Arrow’s core martial arts training include the following Fighting Style Merits: Fighting Style: Archery (see **World of Darkness: Armory**, pp. 208–209), Fencing (represents general sword skills; see **World of Darkness: Armory**, pp. 210–211), Fighting Style: Filipino Martial Arts (represents general stickfighting; see **World of Darkness: Armory**, pp. 211–212), Fighting Style: Grappling (see below), Fighting Style: Kung Fu (represents general unarmed striking; see **the World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 111–112) Fighting Style: Sojutsu/Jukendo (see below), Fighting Style: Spetznaz Knife Fighting (represents general knife skills; see **World of Darkness: Armory**, pp. 213) and Fighting Style: Staff Fighting (as an adjunct to spear skills; see **World of Darkness: Armory**, pp. 213–214). An Arrow in good standing can find teachers for the first dot in all of these Merits, but teachers who’ve mastered even a majority of this curriculum are exceedingly rare. In addition, individual schools teach additional Merits that cover certain types of combat, ancient and modern weapons.

The following Fighting Style Merits fill in areas of the order’s training. Just as all Fighting Styles, each dot grants access to a special maneuver, and characters learn the maneuvers (while players purchase the dots) in the listed order.

Fighting Style: Grappling (● to ●●●●●)

Prerequisites: Strength ●●, Dexterity ●●●, Stamina ●●● and Brawl ●●

Effect: Your character has trained in a form of submission grappling, such as judo, old-school catch-as-catch-can wrestling (Olympic-style wrestlers learn the first two maneuvers) or Brazilian *jiu-jitsu*. He uses leverage and positioning to out-grapple opponents.

Sprawl (●): Your character knows how to “sprawl” and sink his weight to avoid being overpowered in a

grapple. Subtract the *higher* of Strength +1 or Dexterity +1 from dice pools to overpower him in a grapple. This doesn't apply to the initial hold, but subsequent attacks from the grip.

Takedown/Throw (••): Your character knows how to rapidly close with your enemy and take him to the ground. In lieu of securing a grappling hold, your character can immediately render the opponent prone (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 157 and 164). Furthermore, if he takes an opponent down this way, he can choose whether or not to go prone with the target. Mixed martial arts fighters take a crouching (but still standing) position from and deliver vicious beatings with their hands — a technique called “ground and pound.”

Chokehold (•••): Your character can efficiently choke enemies by cutting off blood flow to their brains. If he overpowers an opponent in a grapple, he can start the choke. The choke inflicts a cumulative –1 die penalty to the opponent's actions for each turn the choke is maintained. The victim falls unconscious if he endures a choking attack for a number of consecutive turns equal to his Stamina. Your character can continue choking an unconscious victim. This inflicts lethal damage equal to the attacker's Strength + Brawl successes every turn.

Heart-Rending Kata

Spear fighting is normally of limited use in the modern world, but mages often deal with threats that require archaic techniques. The Great Thrust maneuver is a case in point. In addition to the above benefits, if the attacker scores five successes when employing the maneuver *and* is aiming for a vampire's heart (suffering standard penalties for doing so), the weapon's shaft — not just the metal tip — transfixes the vampire's heart. If the weapon has a wooden shaft, this successfully stakes the vampire.

The order catalogs unusual situations such as these and even develops specific techniques for them. These normally don't grant special benefits unless a practitioner undergoes intense training. They do represent one of the “hands-on” ways that Arrows learn the Occult Skill, but only a few teachers specialize in the Heart-Rending Kata, Beast-Crippling Silver Sickle or the (incredibly obscure) Statue-Shattering Grasp.

Chokeholds don't work on opponents who don't need to breathe.

Submission Hold (••••): Opponents caught in your joint locks can't escape without injuring themselves. If your character scores more successes than his opponent's Size in an immobilization attempt, the victim can't attempt any physical action — including breaking free — without suffering a point of lethal damage. This penalty lasts from the moment of immobilization to end of the next turn.

Furthermore, your character can always choose to inflict one point of lethal damage whenever he damages an opponent with an overpowering roll. The character's first Strength + Brawl success inflicts a point of lethal damage; subsequent successes inflict bashing damage.

Submission holds don't work on creatures that don't have bones.

*Fighting Style: Sojutsu/Yukendo
(Spear/Bayonet Combat) (• to •••••)*

Prerequisite: Strength •••, Dexterity •• and Weaponry •••

Effect: Your character knows how to use a spear in close combat. *Sojutsu* (often incorrectly called *yarijutsu*) is the Japanese form of the style. These skills also apply to using a rifle with a fixed bayonet (called *jukendo* in Japan). Thus, characters might learn this fighting style in a modern military force or a martial arts school. Martial artists often learn this fighting style alongside Fighting Style: Staff Fighting (see **World of Darkness: Armory**, pp. 213–214).

A character using this fighting style must use his weapon with both hands to take advantage of its maneuvers.

Warding Stance (•): The basic advantage of a spear or fixed bayonet is its length. Trained fighters learn to keep the tip of the weapon pointed forward, constantly threatening incoming attackers. Thus, this maneuver lets a practitioner attack first whenever an opponent using a smaller-Size melee weapon attacks from the front.

Thrust (••): The character knows how to deliver precise, powerful thrusting blows. His spear or bayonet gains the 9 again quality. If the spear or fixed bayonet already has this quality, he gains no further benefit.

Block and Strike (•••): Your character can deflect incoming attacks with the haft or stock of his weapon and swiftly strike back. When using this maneuver, your character gains +2 to his Defense for the turn,



but any attack he makes suffers a -2 penalty. Unlike similar maneuvers (such as Two-Weapon Fighting's Deflect and Thrust maneuver), the character can move freely while using the technique.

Great Thrust (••••): The character lunges forward, putting his entire body behind a powerful thrust. If he employs an All Out Attack (see *the World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 157), he adds a number of dice equal to his lower of his Strength or Weaponry Skill instead of the standard two dice. **Drawback:** If the attack inflicts at least as much lethal damage as the opponent's Size, the character lodges the weapon deep in his target's body. Dislodging the weapon requires an additional Strength + Weaponry roll, but automatically inflicts a point of lethal damage.

Modern Combat

Arrows keep old fighting arts alive, but not at the expense of modern tactics. Virtually every member knows basic marksmanship. Most dedicated bodyguards and Banner Wardens own a gun and practice

shooting with as much dedication as they do wrestling and melee weapons. Firearms training can't be as intense as unarmed combat, because it's just too easy to die in live fire exercises. Instead, trainers ramp up mental stress and attention to detail so that novices treat their guns with respect, but can still use them without hesitating.

Firearms training is less intuitive than hand-to-hand combat. A rough-and-tumble sparring session might end with an Arrow taking a fist to the chin — not a bullet. A gun is a machine with its own “life” of chemical reactions and moving parts. It takes more effort to make a gun a true extension of one's body without skilled instruction. Firearms training also involves at least two distinct modes: the stillness of a sharpshooter and the reflexive, rapid responses of a close-range combat shooter. Fighting Style: Sniping and Fighting Style: Combat Marksmanship from *World of Darkness: Armory* represent special training in these fundamental styles.

Adamantine Arrows search for deep patterns in modern tactics. Ancient armies once clashed in the

open, but modern forces scatter and hide, avoiding enemies that can kill from afar. Firearms training teaches an Arrow about combat as a holistic discipline, where his physical stress and fear merge with a deep awareness of the land. The mage learns small unit tactics, orienteering and camouflage along with a better aim.

Most caucuses expect Arrows to be familiar with bolt-action rifles and semiautomatic pistols, and most are encouraged to train with local military and police-issued weapons. In Arrow marksmanship, the goal is to develop a type of awareness that spontaneously changes to suit the situation. A well-trained warrior-mage can quietly put a round through a man's head at a great distance, or strike in a split second amidst noise, dust and bullets screaming by her ears.

Gun Control

Order mages appreciate the virtues of a well-crafted firearm, but they know how easy it is to magically wreck them, too.

Guns trained on sorcerers tend to jam, explode or fall apart. Over the past 70-odd years, the trend has been to decorate and enchant personal firearms to the point where they act as artful badges of office.

Some caucuses discourage this because it isn't very subtle. Protective spells often require ornamentation in the form of etched runes and magical materials.

Arrows who don't invest in quality make do with quantity: lots of trashy guns that they can dump and replace on a moment's notice.

Everybody laughs at the warrior with the cheap Tec-9 until enemy sorcery ruins their weapons. After that, the Arrow just yanks out another — and another — until the job's done.

Besides, with the kinds of threats they face, it's sometimes better to pour as many rounds into the target as possible instead of shooting for vital areas. Bullets in the face can kill people but only annoy werewolves.

Esoteric Martial Arts: The Adamantine Hand

Arrows who pass through the gauntlet of physical training are ready to learn the order's secret arts. Some of these methods are so old that Adamant Sages believe

these secret arts are fragments of Atlantean arts, but others claim that the secret arts are only a few centuries old. Together, they are the Adamantine Hand.

A warrior's training begins when he starts to understand the universal principles, emotions and symbols behind the physical arts. This is another reason why the order avoids doctrinaire teachings. A Talon should know the arts from personal experience instead of parroting a Master or battle-grimoire. Without set doctrines, a student can't fake his way to the higher teachings. If he discovers that martial arts have hidden, occult principles by himself, a Thunderbolt Guardian will teach the student advanced techniques. The Adamantine Hand is a "graduate school" art, building on exoteric techniques.

The Guardian teaches postures and meditations that must be reproduced *exactly*; the old fluidity of physical combat gives way to technical precision. Some systems have long forms with more than a thousand postures, but others repeat five to 10 over and over again. Every posture supposedly resembles an Atlantean rune. The mage *becomes* the rune with his movements and channels whatever it represents. There are allegedly forms for every sign and sigil, but no Arrow knows them all. Legends say that the Arrow who masters every form becomes a divine being, like one of the Oracles. As it stands, even a prodigy is lucky to learn a handful. Most Arrows dedicate themselves to a single Arcanum's techniques.

The central principle of the Adamantine Hand is self-conquest. The mage becomes a perfect symbol so that his body matches his soul's bond to the Supernal Realms. Every new technique makes the link stronger, via the principle of sympathy. He perfects the universe within, bringing the broken worlds closer together.

Fighting Style: Adamantine Hand (● to ●●●●●)

Prerequisites: Five dots of Fighting Style Merits (at least one of which must have ●● ranks), Awakened, Arcanum ● (see below), Adamantine Arrow Status ●●

Effect: Your character has learned to manipulate magical energies with physical techniques, above and beyond rote mudras. You must purchase this Fighting Style separately for each Arcanum (so there is the Death Hand, the Hand of Space and so on). Your character must have one more dot in the associated Arcanum than the dots of the maneuver you wish him to learn.

Just as other Fighting styles, you must purchase each maneuver in order. This rule applies, separately, to each style. For example, a character with Adamantine Hand: Forces ••• and Adamantine Hand: Life • can progress to Adamantine Hand: Forces •••• or Adamantine Hand: Life •• — not •••.

The names below are often used in old texts, but every school has a unique, cryptic name for each technique.

Thunder (•): Your character can sense the weak points in Shielding Practice spells without even using magic. Her psychic senses intuitively seek out flaws in these defenses, and she knows how to physically slip through them. If an opponent employs a Shielding spell using the Fighting Style's Arcanum, reduce the spell's effect by one point against the character's spells, Brawl strikes or Weaponry attacks. **Drawback:** The character must make physical contact with a hand or held weapon, even when casting a spell, in order to benefit from this maneuver.

Diamond (••): Your character can alter her Shielding spells if they belong to the Fighting Style's Arcanum. She dodges away from weak points in her shield and concentrates its strength in a reduced area. She can increase the strength of her shield by one point against one oncoming attack per turn, but suffers a one-point reduction in shield strength against all other attacks in that turn. She can improve or degrade the shield against different attacks or opponents on each turn.

If your character learns the third rank of the Fighting Style's Arcanum, she can change the adjustment to +2/-2 if she wishes. She can apply this benefit to advanced spells that protect others, but only if she's adjacent to the individual or group she's protecting. **Drawback:** Using this maneuver costs one point of Willpower per scene.

Star (•••): Your character may cast a spell from the Fighting Style's Arcanum and perform a physical action in the same turn. The spellcasting roll suffers a -1 die penalty. **Drawback:** This maneuver costs one point of Willpower per turn. Your character may not combine this maneuver with other abilities that grant multiple actions.

Blood (••••): Your character can sacrifice her own life force to enhance a spell from the Fighting Style's Arcanum. She can choose to suffer as many points of aggravated damage as her Resolve. Each point of damage coverts into a bonus die on her spellcasting for that turn. She can also choose to make the damage

resistant to magical and Mana-based healing to give the spellcasting roll the 9-again quality. **Drawback:** This maneuver costs one point of Willpower per use.

Abyss (•••••): Your character hones the bond between her soul and body to such an extent that she can channel Supernal energies physically, without tempting of the Abyss. She does not suffer Paradoxes when she casts spells using the Fighting Style's Arcanum if she channels them through physical contact. In combat, she must successfully initiate a grapple to use this maneuver on a moving target.

Adamantine Hand and the Law of Embodiment

The Star technique of Adamantine Hand doesn't let mages cast a rote learned with the Law of Embodiment (see **Tome of the Mysteries**, p. 77) and an additional spell in the same turn. Only one spell is permitted. The Star technique does, however, let an Adamantine Arrow take two physical actions: one ordinary action on his normal Initiative and one Embodied spell at the very end of the turn (as specified by the rules for Embodiment).

The Arrow can use this benefit only if the Embodied rote belongs to the same Arcanum as the mage's Adamantine Hand training. She also has to pay the normal experience cost for the Embodied Merit and rote.

Adamantine Arrows who've studied both techniques are extremely potent unarmed fighters within a very narrow range: a few rotes in a specific Arcanum. It takes extreme study — practice that might be better spending broadening one's skills. Consequently, the order believes that making an excessive effort to combine these techniques is a bit selfish. Arrows who know the secret are usually either very brash or accomplished enough in other fields to be beyond reproach.

Training the Mind

The Adamantine Arrow isn't in the business of churning out unthinkingly loyal foot soldiers. The order's small numbers make this impractical, and besides, mages have a strong appreciation for independent thinking. The order's culture depends on self-discipline and a strong belief in the order's mission. There are times when the order needs to "draft" apprentices and

save the intricacies of warrior wisdom for another day, but that day *always* comes. The order is nothing but thorough when it comes to encouraging the highest standards. Once the order's dealt with immediate survival, it's time for new Talons go hit the books. Adaptability Is Strength, but it also requires intelligence. An Arrow who's skilled in a dozen martial arts and can shoot everything from a derringer to a rocket launcher is much less useful than one who knows *when* to use each skill, when to ask for help or when to do nothing at all.

Contrary to popular stereotype, not every sorcerer learns the art from heavy grimoires and complex formulae. Many mages don't get an education until well past Awakening. The longer they wait, the more of a disadvantage they have. Occultists love their books, codes and formulae — and their business scams, tenured professorships and obscure corporate offices. Awakening supercharges the intuition, true, and teaches mages secret, profound truths, but mages can't apply these truths in a vacuum.

This isn't the only reason the order demands educated thinkers. Occult knowledge decodes sorcery but doesn't tell mages when or why to cast spells. Talons study the Fallen World to learn how to best apply Supernal power.

An informed strategy increases an Arrow's magical power without resorting to special rituals, gory sacrifices or involved rituals. A psychologist uses his field to enhance Mind spells. He turns a sedate family man into a brave soldier by appealing to his values and prejudices. The psychologist's untrained counterpart chooses the wrong subjects and wears their wills down with raw magical power, getting a few dazed, stupid servants for her trouble.

Arrows study science, liberal arts, trades and professions to understand how magic affects different aspects of the Fallen World — and when spells aren't even necessary. The First Phalanx encourages Arrows to constantly think of how to use their knowledge. Existence Is War, so every new field brings its own insights to the order's business.

Learning the Ways of All Professions

The legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi told his followers to study outside the martial arts. Musashi became a skilled painter and calligrapher. He claimed that students could apply these traits to swordsmanship — and that a swordsman could apply his art to mass strategy. He said, "Just one man can beat ten,

one hundred can beat a thousand and a thousand can beat ten thousand."

When it comes to intellectual pursuits, then, Arrows are generalists — or at least, that's the ideal. The romantic notion of a secret army in which every warrior might be a general, an advisor to the Hierarchy or a tactical genius gives way to the fact that real people have special talents and passions. Most caucuses compensate by dividing specialties amongst members, learning as much about a field as possible and then teaching it to the rest of the group. Not every Arrow is a doctor, but if the local caucus has one, every member eventually acquires basic medical training. This is easy enough when it comes to medicine, military history and other topics that people traditionally associate with soldiers, but it's a harder sell when it comes to sculpture or business management. Nevertheless, the order expects knowledgeable Arrows to teach their skills to comrades and learn from them in turn. Refusing to do so is considered to be a dereliction of duty.

Intelligence and Strategic Wisdom

An Arrow with a broad education uses it to assess an enemy's possible tactics, resources and weaknesses. This is the foundation of operational intelligence, but not its flowering. Knowing is not enough — an Arrow must act.

The order says, "Power obeys strategy." To develop efficient strategies, Arrows routinely go on intelligence-gathering missions. Arrows aren't above eavesdropping, bribery, theft and a bullet in the back. The order prefers to blend its own knowledge with the fruits of research and espionage whenever possible. Without intelligence, elegant strategy is impossible; the battle turns into an inefficient quagmire. Uninformed warriors rely on a chaotic morass of half-baked orders and snap judgments. They argue in the field and, in extreme cases, even turn on one another.

The Adamantine Arrow avoids this situation whenever possible — and tries to impose it on enemies. The order uses member education to create numerous false fronts, misdirecting opponents as to the real aims and extent of a given operation. A skilled businessman starts a busy-looking outfit that looks like a money-laundering nexus, while the real action takes place in a nondescript warehouse. Arrow biologists falsify reports about cryptids to keep Seers of the Throne from capturing them. Individual expertise inspires a tactic, but broad, shared knowledge gives groups the competence to cooperate on an operation.

Arrow and Veil

The Adamantine Arrow's espionage skills, while formidable, aren't quite at the level of the Guardians of the Veil. Obviously, the Guardians' purpose is to spy and deceive, while for the warrior order, espionage is only one way to maximize efficiency. Arrow intelligence-gathering is usually tied to a particular objective, while the Guardians of the Veil are *always* listening, sifting through information for important events. Arrows value honesty, and try to lie only when it serves a specific purpose. Guardians lie all the time, often for no other purpose than to practice lying.

They say that in the days of Atlantis, the Dragon's Talons had no spies, because the Eyes performed that task for the Talons. Each aspect of the Dragon contributed to the whole. In the Fallen Age, the orders band together, but never completely rely on one another, so each order directs similar, but separate operations — to a point. Aspects of the old alliance still thrive. Guardians of the Veil perform spying missions for Arrows, still, and in return, ask Arrows to destroy threats when they're too potent to be solved with misdirection alone.

Leadership

Physical and intellectual ability are assets, but leadership is what allows the order to function collectively and make its mark on Awakened culture. The order understands the appeal of the wandering *ronin*, beholden to nothing but the Art and personal excellence, but pragmatism is more important than personal desires.

Leading cadres of people so independent that they've rebelled against the universe itself is a challenging prospect, to say the least. Arrow leaders appeal to a shared passion when they can, because a mage who serves involuntarily is a liability. He doesn't do his part with vigor or creativity.

A good leader is a symbol of the desires and objectives of the group. She searches for the group's collective drive and defines it with her words and actions. An Arrow proverb says, "There is only one warrior, even in a thousand bodies. The general knows his name." Senior Arrows are often highly charismatic, if somewhat

alienating, to anyone who doesn't share the order's preoccupation with conflict. Adamant Sages and First Talons aren't big on flattery or sentimental interests beyond what's needed to whip a group of mages into

Whom Arrows Lead

In most situations, the order is a passive political actor. Arrow oaths and statements let local mages know where the order stands on a number of issues, and their fighting ability makes it clear that they can back up their opinions with force, if necessary. But when a Consilium enters a dangerous phase in its history, Arrows are ready to organize the defense. The order prefers to use its own people as much as possible, but there are times when the threat is just too great or a situation requires the expertise of another order.

Adamant Sages and First Talons are the backbone of any organized effort to militarize mages. These Arrows provide a core network and enough training to bring non-Arrows up to speed on what they need to do. Unsurprisingly, warrior-mages encounter a great deal of resistance from the independent-minded Wise, who don't like to put their safety in the hands of anyone other than cabal-mates.

The order assuages fears of tyranny by dividing responsibilities according to outsiders' skills. Guardians of the Veil gather intelligence, mystagogues perform relevant research — even Libertines help by keeping an ear to the ground in the mundane world.

Silver Ladder mages deal with budgets, bankrolls and general political issues, but for the most part, the Arrow finds them a bit less useful. Théarchs love to lead, but when it's time to hone a Consilium into a fighting force, they have to step aside. It's no surprise that members of the Silver Ladder usually resist militarization the most.

When necessary, Adamant Sages set limits on their own authority, including a timetable to reject or redefine the arrangement. Of course, they never *volunteer* to do this. As a result, some Consilii have been on a war footing for decades. But, for the most part, mages want militarization to be a temporary state of affairs. The Adamantine Arrow chooses to permanently stand on guard, so let it — and let other mages pursue their studies in peace.

fighting form. An Adamant Sage's words can inspire unstoppable fury and determination, but abstract social issues — the politics of peace — are not their forte.

These principles express themselves according to the prevailing culture and the needs of the mission. All Arrows should be prepared to lead, even if some are better at it than others.

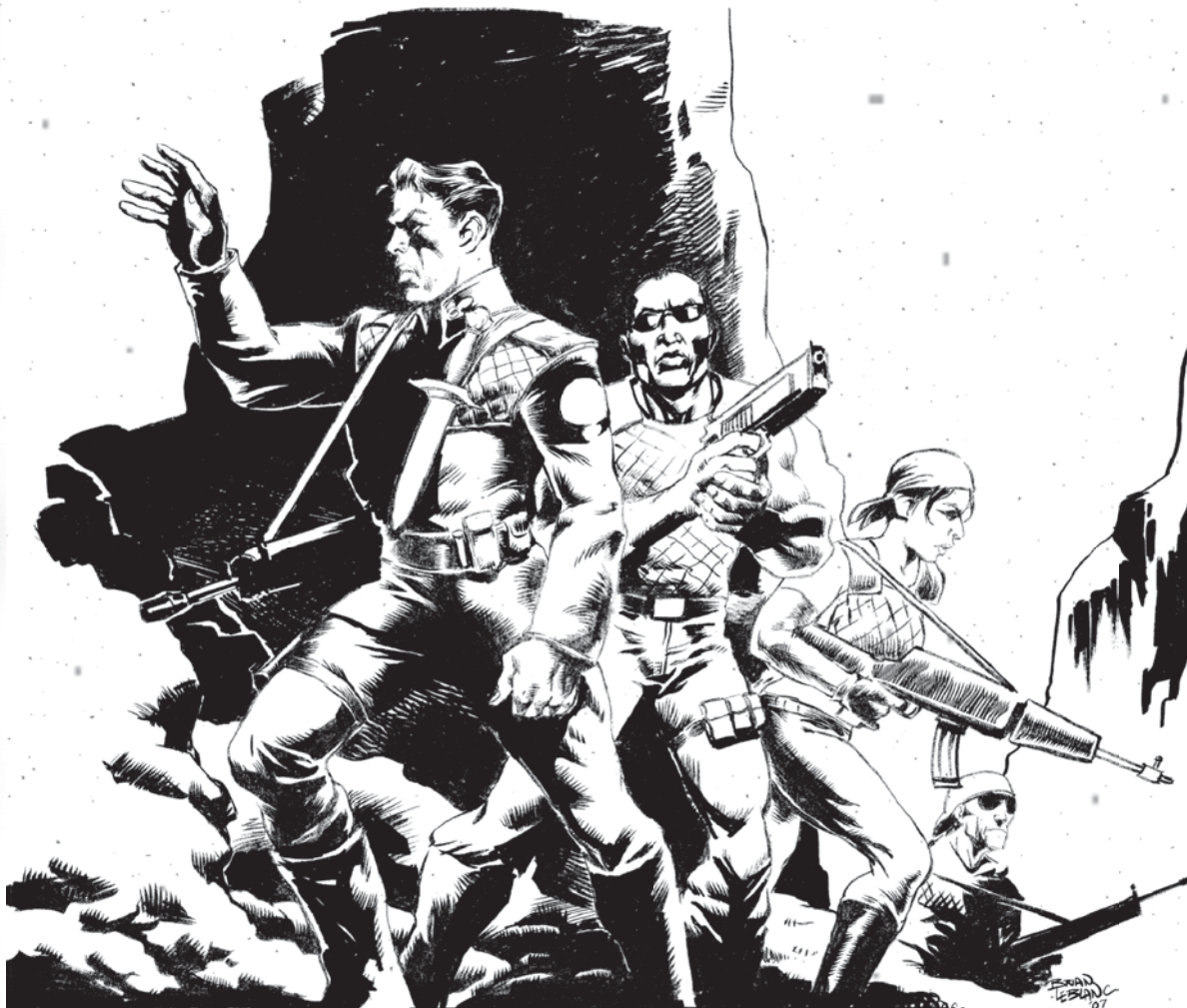
Liege and Vassal

Feudal leadership styles are very common. Most mages value oaths; Arrows define themselves with oaths. In many Consilii, oaths of mutual service are the building blocks of common defense. Cabals vow to come to each other's aid in any number of situations. In such cases, an Arrow who wants to be an effective leader either weaves herself into the web of obligations with her own oaths or offers to organize the efforts of disparate, oath-linked cabals in a time of crisis. Skilled Adamant Sages vow to act as the Ruling Council's generals but also appeal directly to local cabals, offering them a better way to array their forces in troubled times.

Feudal leadership is a combination of law and personality. Mages take formal oaths very seriously, so unless a Consilium is utterly corrupt, oaths form primary chains of command. After that, coordinated efforts are a significant challenge. If two groups don't have some specific agreement to work together, chances are that they won't unless the Arrow convinces them that it's in their mutual interest.

Military Leadership

Many Arrows have military or police backgrounds; this style of leadership comes naturally to them. Where feudal leadership concerns politics and personalities, military rule relies on technical knowledge and logical organization. It's an efficient way to run a war or protective mission, but it relies on people who will do what they're told. Mages are not these kinds of people. A few Consilii are entirely militarized (including some that exist entirely within large modern militaries), but these are rare exceptions to a rule where eccentric, unpredictable sorcerers dominate.



Arrows using military forms start at the top, where members of the Ruling Council and other influential Awakened throw their weight behind restructuring affairs. Once an Arrow gathers political clout, she can draw up an order of battle and general operational orders. With this structure in place, an Arrow with administrative skills can accomplish incredible things, directing dozens of mages in well-coordinated patrols.

War Bands

Arrows from traditional cultures don't always want to bother with politics or policies. They want skilled, motivated people they can trust. They form a ceremonial bond with these mages, creating a war band.

Most war bands are tightly-knit cabals dedicated to martial pursuits, but there are a few that cut across cabal lines. There is no formal leadership, but members respect the eldest, most experienced members. Deep camaraderie defines a war band. Members stand for each other above all else and learn each other's special strengths and weaknesses.

War bands are highly effective fighting forces, but they don't organize in large numbers. It's possible to gather multiple bands for a single purpose by using kinship and apprenticeship ties, but mass strategy is difficult to implement. Each war band has its own way of fighting that works best for that particular war band, but different war bands don't complement each other with much more than raw numbers.

Cells

Not every Arrow comes from a culture with a large, industrialized military, but that doesn't mean that such Arrows have never encountered one. The order is very familiar with the principles of insurgencies (what modern think tanks call "asymmetric warfare"). Cells rely on the support of ordinary people. Each cell limits contact with others, so that, if captured, members can give away only one or two other groups. This makes it difficult to carry out highly organized operations. Each cell needs to scrounge and improvise its way to success.

This style appeals to mages, who already govern themselves in something similar to a cell structure. They're used to hiding in the general population and directing their own affairs. Where necessary, Arrows help cabals understand the virtues of limiting the flow of information between groups. They establish communication "trees" and use them to send information about key threats, targets and times.

Arrows plan cell-structure operations against entrenched threats, or when an enemy compromises the Consilium itself. There have even been times when the order rejects the authority of the local Ruling Council and establishes an insurgency to topple the official regime.

Cultural Friction

Every Arrow has a favored leadership or organizational style, brought on by his upbringing and training. When warrior-mages with different opinions work together, clashing values can interfere with effective actions. Arrows disagree on theoretical, practical and ethical grounds. Mages from contemporary Western military backgrounds typically despise attacks on noncombatants, but believe that even the best-planned operations might catch innocents in the crossfire. A hardened insurgent believes that the enemy gains strength from the surrounding culture, so sabotage and even terrorism might be fair tactics. The former mages believe the latter are murdering scum; the latter accuse the former of sanitizing innocent deaths as mere administrative errors.

Before you go transplanting the opinions of real-world soldiers and insurgents on different Arrows, though, remember that Arrows all have the same broad objectives and few of the political motives of real-world counterparts. Awakened society has a basic respect for free expression and personal empowerment, because these are prerequisites for occult training. Individuals use their magic to further particular national and religious interests, but these are marginal concerns compared to the order's mission.

Constant Challenge

Training is not enough. Truth is in the testing. The Adamantine Arrow produces voluminous theory about magic and conflict, but supports a stance only after using it and ironing out the weaknesses. If a tactic doesn't succeed against other Arrows, what chance does it have in the field? If a warrior-mage can't defeat friends, how can she stand against enemies?

Success is important, but it isn't the only measure of a mage. Everybody has off days and bad luck. Even

the best Arrows lose sparring matches and strategy games. Arrows with skill deficits occasionally ride a fluke to victory, too. The order looks for patterns of success and failure and distrusts anything that looks too good to be true. Mages who always win simply haven't found the right challenge. They grow arrogant and lazy until canny foes, hungry to win, take them down. Arrows say, "Stronger in a narrow defeat, weaker in an easy victory."

The Order of Challenges

Arrows settle disputes through direct conflict. These duels test physical, mental or occult ability, or a combination of all three.

Crossing swords with a rival, by itself, proves nothing. Luck exerts too strong an influence on single challenges. Duels also take time to arrange, diverting mages from their assigned duties and, in some cases, involve real risks. Broken bones, burns, abject poverty and suicidal shame can all follow a high-stakes challenge. Duels might threaten discipline in the ranks, too. If a lowly Banner Warden were allowed to routinely challenge her First Talon, she'd distract him from his duties. This also protects the lower mage from being sent to her doom by a superior who wants to avoid dueling.

These are a few of the reasons why order mages need to earn their duels. The order of challenges is simple: *No member of the Adamantine Arrow may challenge a superior unless he overcomes the superior's designated seconds.* This applies to legally binding duels as well as more informal disputes. Casual fistfights are forbidden, as are games of strategy where Arrows wager on the results.

In game terms, an Adamantine Arrow member must defeat one other Arrow for every dot by which her final opponent's order Status exceeds her own. This is a minimum; the higher-Status opponent can demand that his challenger fight even more mages. Fortunately, there are two limits on the custom. First, no Arrow ever has to fight on behalf of another. If an insufficient number of mages are willing to defend the honor of a high-ranking Arrow, he has to accept the challenge earlier than normal. Situations such as this are rare and cause a great loss of face for the higher-ranked party. Second, an Arrow more highly ranked than the highest-ranked participant can judge the challenger worthy to face his higher-ranked opponent, regardless of the customary number of challenges.

The challenger chooses the type of duel when it comes to fighting seconds, but the second is under no

obligation to accept risks beyond moderate injury and embarrassment. The challenger's privilege ends once he meets his eventual opponent. Her opponent chooses the type of contest, but the challenger determines the stakes. Physical combat is the most common form of duel, but chess, debates, scavenger hunts and footraces have all been used.

Outside of training, Arrows fight each other for all kinds of reasons. Personal honor tops the list. If one warrior-mage accuses another of being less than honorable, those are fighting words. The aggrieved party is practically obligated to fight his way to vindication. Otherwise, Arrows duel for the same reasons as anyone else: wealth, love and egotism. Some duels are somewhat friendlier. A challenger might simply demand that her opponent recognize the challenger's skill.

Duels between Arrows are as binding as other Awakened duels, but there are a few exceptions to the rules presented in **Mage: The Awakening** and the **Tome of the Mysteries**. The most important difference is that opponents *are* allowed to fight over the same matter again. Popular custom requires combatants to wait at least a year and a day before returning to the matter. Arrow duels also involve less legalese. Flowery oaths and promises are unnecessary. Order mages trust each other's basic sense of honor, so one should just state the grievance, intent and stakes, and then get to it.

The order is divided about the worth of the Duel Arcane. Many Arrows think of it as a way for mages to posture without learning anything useful. The Duel Arcane permits combat in a completely contrived environment, bereft of the risks and chaos of real fighting. The method has its defenders, though, who think that it's a fine arena to test combatants' will and creativity. Regardless of opinion, Arrows don't use the Duel Arcane very often. They prefer contests that apply to the wider world.

The Games

Arrows routinely challenge each other to hone their abilities. While sparring matches, examinations and debates are all part of routine training, there are times when the order holds formal contests, with winners, losers and "official" standings. These events bring in Arrows from far-flung locations to meet and compete.

The order of challenges applies, albeit differently from when disputed between members. Order Status doesn't count. Instead, mages are matched according to relative skill. If an Arrow defeats an opponent of roughly equal skill, she can move up the ladder to bigger challenges.

After assimilating centuries of different names and customs, the modern order just calls these events "the Games." The Great Games (see sidebar) attract Arrows from around the world, but most Games involve only two or three caucuses and a few itinerants, engaged in a handful of informal contests.

The hosting caucus chooses the events. Tradition dictates the inclusion of a hand-to-hand combat event, a strategy game and a debate. Hosts let taste and local custom pick the rest. In Marseilles, the local Games resemble a medieval tournament, complete with jousting and a general melee. Other Games have been inspired by football, Aztec "flower wars," Classical Olympics and modern military war games. Serious injuries are common, but deaths are rare.

The Warrior's Journey

Musha shugyo is the Japanese name for the custom of wandering in search of greater skill. The order accepts the practice as long as a warrior has no obligations

tying her to a particular place or would otherwise interfere with a pure quest for martial enlightenment. These conditions limit the number of wandering Arrows, but about half of the order will take to the road at some point during their lives. Various traditions call them black knights, *shugyosha* or *youxia*. Most Talons get through this stage after completing their apprenticeships, travel for a year or less and return to their own Consilii.

A few Arrows never come back. Some devote themselves to personal perfection at the expense of other duties. Sometimes they've shamed themselves and use the road for penance and anonymity. The order doesn't like this, but sometimes itinerants return with life-saving magical secrets and superlative fighting skills. Unless the wanderer is a real prodigy, the order doesn't give him much respect. He's a rogue element who usually contributes nothing to the order, occasionally makes trouble in settled Consilii and rarely enters the fray.



Great Games

The Great Games are the most popular events of their kind. They rise and fall with the fortunes of their hosts, but there are usually two or three a decade. Each Great Game gets its reputation from Arrows who visit to test their abilities. A respected Adamant Sage might be there to provide some coaching, or the hosting caucus might have inherited (or revived) a famous Games tradition.

The current Great Games include the following:

Kongoyumiji Enbu: In Kyoto, the Kongoyumi sect hosts competitions related to classical Japanese arts. These include horse archery (*kyubajutsu*), Go, calligraphy, unarmed combat and weapons. The Kongoyumi maintains that the Games are merely a demonstration (*enbu*), but the headmaster of the sect sends examples of his signature calligraphy only to the best participants. The Enbu is about 300 years old, but only reached Great Game status about a century ago, when the sect allowed foreign entrants.

The Fourth Pythian Games: The Pythian Games are in the midst of their third known revival. Greek Arrows claim that their history stretches back all the way to Atlantis, though. They count the original, ancient Greek games as the first resurgence of the tradition. After declining along with Classical Hellenic culture, the Games were revived in the 13th and 17th centuries, and lasted for about a century apiece.

The modern Pythian Games are a response to Sleepers reviving the Delphic Games in Greece. (The Delphic and Pythian Games are two different names for the same ancient event, but Arrows have always called them the Pythian Games). The modern Games combine ancient and contemporary sports. The organizers dedicate the games to Apollo in the ancient tradition.

Unlike other Great Games, the Pythian Games accept all orders, making this event the closest thing to a "Awakened Olympics." Now that the Delphi Consilium has organized 2000 and 2004 Games, the Delphi Consilium plans to hold them every four years.

Committee for Special Research (КОМИТЕТ ПО СПЕЦИАЛЬНОМУ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЮ): Once the premiere Great Game for Soviet bloc Arrows, the KCH was organized in 1955, when the order subverted the military wing of Russian psychic research. Warsaw Pact Arrows challenged each other in exercises that were supposed to test the applicability of psychic research to warfare. The Committee submitted false but vaguely promising results to secure funding and facilities. Nowadays, the St. Petersburg Psychodrome holds Games whose unique events focus on remote viewing, mind control and simulated warfare.

Most wandering warriors are more dangerous to the order than its enemies, even when the warriors are only traveling temporarily. The purpose of a warrior's journey is to encounter new challenges, and if a wanderer can't find them, she'll make them. She badgers reputable Arrows into dueling or enters Games as a wild card.

Wanderers have a reputation for favoring lethal contests. Cynics say that this is because they think others' lives are as worthless as their own, but philosophers among the wanderers say that dealing in life and death whenever possible is the ultimate expression of the "Die every day" maxim.

Oaths

An Arrow's oath is more than a superficial promise. The warrior reshapes his innermost being to serve a vow. This is the meaning of "Honor is your true name."

A Talon with a powerful oath isn't the person she was before she took the vow. The oath shapes every thought and act. This doesn't mean that Arrows don't struggle with their promises. In fact, the order expects them to. The internal battle refines a mage's spirit, shaping her into a superior martial sorcerer.

Oaths are not contracts. They don't involve complicated language. Arrows don't build in clever loopholes that let them violate the spirit of a vow. An oath's true intent means everything; the words are a way of sharing an oath with the world, and are not the oath's essence. On the other hand, some oaths don't always mean what outsiders think they do.

The most common example is when a warrior-mage vows to serve the Hierarch or Ruling Council. Inexperienced officials assume that this means that the Arrow will serve their personal needs, but in most cases, the Arrow intends to serve the office, not the mage. In fact, a Hierarch's Arrow vassal might even depose her, reasoning that her "master" is no longer



Hierarch “in spirit.” This generally happens long after local consensus has turned against the Hierarch, however, so a thoughtful leader can see the “betrayal”

coming. Then again, Hierarchs who get deposed by their defenders aren’t necessarily the most thoughtful leaders around.

The Spirit of the Oath

Okay, you’ve read that Arrows don’t use precise language and always aim to satisfy the spirit of an oath. That sounds great in the setting, but what does it mean to players? How do you determine whether or not an Arrow’s broken her vow?

The solution is pretty simple, as long as you trust your group. If the Storyteller believes that an Arrow broke an oath, he should ask her, point blank: “Does that match the spirit of your oath?” If the answer seems contrived, open discussion to the rest of the group until you reach consensus. Make sure that you explicitly state the intent of the oath. A poor answer might be a bad excuse from a player who should know better, but it might also be a nervous response from somebody who doesn’t like to be put on the spot. On the other hand, some clever answers are *also* contrivances — just good ones. Cleverness isn’t the point of an oath. It’s all about sincerity.

If you can’t get a speedy answer from group consensus, then it’s time to use the Storyteller’s discretion or vote. At this point, some might object on the basis that it’s the player’s business whether or not her character’s broken her oath, but in point of fact, it *isn’t*. Arrows’ oaths are very personal things, but they are meant to strengthen their ties to the outside world. The Arrow is saying, “This is my connection to the world around me.” So even though the Arrow makes the choice, the world holds him to his standards.

Oaths and Oaths

Strong Arrow oaths have supernatural consequences. These effects are not magical, in the sense that they do not employ the Arcanum and don't attract Paradoxes. Whether or not the oaths channel the Supernal Realms is a matter of opinion. The order believes that by adhering to strong ideals, a mage creates a strong sympathy with the idealized world of magic. Outsiders who've studied Arrow Oathbinding (see below) believe that the practice is much like taking on a Legacy, where the mage reshapes her soul to unlock hidden supernatural potential. Regardless of the cause, nothing that affects Awakened magic can influence Oathbinding.

Don't confuse being Oathbound with the magical oaths sworn and manipulated via the Fate Arcanum. Arrows swear Fate Oaths to help the Supernal Realms guide them through important missions. The "gods" watch the Arrows' backs and correct them when they stray. (See "Testifying to the Gods," **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 154.) Oathbinding emanates from the Arrow herself, not a higher power.

Not every Arrow chooses to be Oathbound. The Arrows don't let people off the hook for breaking mundane promises, either. Oathbinding represents especially intense vows. Think of it as the difference between "I promise" and "I *am* this promise."

Merit: Oathbound (● to ●●●●●)

Prerequisites: Awakened, Adamantine Arrow Member

Effect: Your character can make a vow so powerful that it has supernatural consequences. She makes the vow more important than herself, down to her most trivial or powerful personal desires. Her oaths influence all of her thoughts and actions. Some Arrows discover inner peace in service, but most battle with their vows.

This Merit does not represent a specific oath. Instead, this Merit measures the mage's psychic capacity for keeping oaths. Arrows train to increase this by meditating, practicing ascetic discipline and the studying the order's secret philosophical texts. Each dot in the Merit provides the capacity to retain (or "bind") one point's worth of oaths. The Arrow can fill some or all of her capacity with one especially intense oath or a number of minor ones, as long as their point values don't exceed her total Oathbound Merit dots.

Calculate the cost of the oath by adding its binding

strength to the listed additional costs. Oaths have an effect based on their binding strength alone; do not count additional costs.

Drawbacks: If the character binds an oath during the chronicle, doing so requires one point of Mana (regardless of the oath's point total) and 16 hours of secluded, uninterrupted study and meditation. A new character can fill her capacity at no cost, but doesn't have to. In the latter case, the mage is assumed to have bound these oaths before play began.

Bound oaths are public matters. Order mages do make secret vows from time to time, but they aren't covered by this Merit. The Arrow has 24 hours after taking the oath to tell others about it. The Arrow cannot ask or imply that witnesses should keep the oath a secret. If the Arrow doesn't meet these conditions, the oath doesn't bind to her soul, and she loses it.

Arrows lose bound oaths in one of three ways: completion, rejection or violation.

- Completing the oath occurs whenever the oath's conditions can no longer apply. Her liege dies, for example, or she completes a quest. The oath is no longer relevant, and dissolves at no penalty to the mage. Arrows can also specify that an oath end after a preset time (such as a year and a day) or event, but must include such conditions when they publicly declare their oaths.

- The mage can reject the oath, but it isn't easy. This requires 16 hours of uninterrupted contemplation and one point of Mana *per binding point* of the oath. The Arrow finalizes the rejection by spending a Willpower point and informing others that she's rejected her oath.

- Violating a bound oath can have devastating effects. The Arrow immediately loses a point of Willpower and suffers a point of resistant lethal damage. This happens every 24 hours until the mage has lost Willpower points and suffered lethal damage equal to the oath's binding point total +1. The mage looks weak and sick. Violating an oath is also a tremendous dishonor. The order lives and dies on its word. If a mage makes that meaningless, she endangers her comrades.

The other effects of oaths are detailed below.

Oaths of Allegiance

The Arrow promises to serve an individual or a formal office (Hierarchy, Councilor, an undead Prince or a mundane mayor) in a specified capacity. The Arrow must inform her liege of this service.

Binding: The mage's player can spend points of binding strength to do one of the following things. Each point can:

- Reduce the penalty for casting sympathetic magic on the liege by 2.
- Add a die to the liege's pool when he attempts a task that the Arrow is skilled at. The Arrow can't add more dice than her own dots in the relevant skill and must be within sensory range of the liege.
- Add a die to the Arrow's pool when she is consciously acting on behalf of the liege.

A player can spend one, some or all of your points on a single benefit as a reflexive action. The player's character recovers binding points at the beginning of the next game session.

Duration: The designated liege can release an Arrow from his oath at any time, but must specifically refer to the Arrow's oath of service. The Arrow does not have to accept release from service. Otherwise, the oath ends when it is completed, rejected or violated.

Additional Costs: *Type of Service:* Arrow promises personal nonviolent service only (two points); Arrow promises to risk her life, but only as a last resort (one point); Arrow vows to live or die at the liege's whim (0 points). *Liege Type:* Arrow serves the ideal of an office (two points); Arrow serves the current office holder only (one point); Arrow serves an office, regardless of who occupies it, or a specific individual, regardless of office (0 points).

Oath Flaws

An Arrow's player can devote 0 points to the oath's binding. This adds an additional point to the oath's cost and does not provide binding benefits. Instead, it acts as a Character Flaw (see **the World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 217–219). If the oath hinders the character during the course of a game session, the Storyteller can award an additional experience point at the end of that chapter. The character can have only one Oath Flaw at a time.

If the oath doesn't interfere with the character's actions or actually helps them, the player doesn't get the award. The drawbacks for rejecting an oath don't count as a hindrance, but the penalties for violating one do.

Violation: An Arrow violates this oath by refusing to serve the liege or intentionally sabotaging her own service. The Arrow can disobey the liege if she feels it's in his best interest, unless she gave him the power of life and death over her. (Incidentally, this last condition sometimes inspires warrior-mages to commit suicide to protest their masters' actions.)

The Arrow is also counted as having broken her vow if her liege dies by violence or treachery unless she's sworn to uphold an office, regardless of who holds it. In that case, she breaks her vow if the office itself is destroyed or rendered meaningless.

Example: *I, Anacaona de Xaragua, swear to defend the Nemean from all threats, political and personal, for as long as he is Hierarch of Boston, at the cost of my life, if necessary.* (She'll risk her life as a last resort and serves the current officeholder only.)

Oaths of Principle

The mage vows to serve a large organization or ideal by performing particular services. One Arrow patrols the city for the Consilium; another protects children from supernatural threats. A third mage vows to oppose the ideology of the Free Council in the political sphere. They all follow oaths of principle. The Arrow must identify the organization or ideology she serves as well as the services she expects to render. These services are minimums. A mage who promises to counsel troubled youth doesn't need to go out of her way to protect them from harm, but if she sees a young person in danger she must intervene.

Binding: The mage's player can spend points of binding strength to do one of the following things. Each point can:

- Recover a point of Mana that she's spent serving her oath by casting spells, healing herself and so on.
- Provide the benefits of Occultation (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 86) for a scene. She can't spend more than three points on this ability, and it doesn't stack with the Occultation Merit. The Arrow identifies with her task so strongly that she submerges her spirit within it.
- Cancel out penalties to Attribute + Skill or Attribute + Attribute rolls made for the sake of the oath. This cannot provide a net bonus to the base dice pool.

The player can spend one, some or all of your points on a single benefit as a reflexive action. The player's character recovers binding points at the beginning of the next game session.

Duration: This oath lasts until it is completed, rejected or violated, as usual.

Additional Costs: *Frequency of Service:* Occasional (Storyteller's discretion, but never every game session; two points); Regular (every game session; one point); Constant (the focus of activity in almost every game session; 0 points). *Intensity of Service:* Primarily time and unskilled labor (two points); difficult activities that require dice rolls (one point); dangerous activities, including combat (0 points).

Violation: A mage violates this oath when she avoids serving the principle or intentionally sabotages her own efforts. Otherwise, only total failure (the Arrow's patrol misses spirits that kill virtually every area mage) or a notable pattern of failure (Tremere liches consume the souls of all children in a family or area) counts as a violation.

Example: *Your family will never suffer poverty or violence while I yet live.* (For a family of everyday Sleepers, this entails regular, unskilled service. Families with supernatural ties and active enemies make this vow

Questing Oaths

In a Questing Oath, the mage vows to complete a particular task. In ancient times, Arrows vowed to slay a monster or destroy an enemy temple. Modern quests take Arrows in search of artifacts, grimoires and most often, revenge.

For the purposes of the oath, the quest must have a measurable, attainable objective, whether it's to improve a skill, find an object or kill an enemy.

The first example (improving a skill) is an extraordinarily common Quest Flaw. It doesn't provide any direct benefits unless the Arrow's intense training interferes with other objectives.

Binding: The mage's player can spend points of binding strength to do one of the following things. Each point can:

- Cancel out penalties to instant spells cast for the sake of the quest on a one-for-one basis.



- Convert one point of lethal damage to one point of bashing damage from injuries sustained in pursuit of the quest.

- Spend one point to eliminate wound penalties and the effects of being knocked out, stunned or incapacitated. The expenditure removes all such penalties immediately and for the turn after they take effect. To nullify a stun, knockout or incapacitation result, the Arrow's player must spend the point as soon as the Storyteller announces the effect. Otherwise, the stunned or unconscious character wouldn't be able to react.

The player can spend one, some, or all of your points on a single benefit as a reflexive action. The player's character recovers binding points at the beginning of the next game session.

Duration: Arrows *cannot* reject or violate this oath. They can only complete it. Thus, taking on a quest is a significant burden that occupies a mage's Oath-binding capacity until the oath is either successful or irrelevant.

Additional Costs: *Difficulty:* If she takes the time, success is assured (three points); success involves a bit of skill, luck or injury (two points); success involves significant skill and risk (one point); the mage is likely to fail or die (0 points).

Violation: The Arrow can't violate this oath. If he doesn't complete his quest, the oath takes up Oath-binding capacity that can't be used for anything else.

Example: *I'm going to kill you and your entire cabal.* (Against a cabal with members as powerful as the Arrow, the mage is likely to die before completing his vow.)

Schisms and Heresies

The order's focus on conflict naturally leads to competing philosophies, splinter sects and even organized, intra-order violence. Duels and the Games divert most conflicts into safer forms, but at certain times, the order approves of occasional "civil wars." Pent-up sectarian hatred interferes with the order's work. Enemy Arrows won't cooperate and slowly bleed each other to death with reciprocal dueling. It's better to get down to a decisive battle that will prove one party stronger. Of course, this assumes that each faction will employ intelligent strategy and, in the end, that victors take former enemies into the fold.

But there's conflict, and there's *heresy*. Order mages might fight over other philosophies, but they almost all agree on what's beyond the pale. The Adamantine Arrow recognizes three basic heresies. In the 1886, the Al-Ghayba of Istanbul called them the "Three Zaqquq," referring to the fruits of hell in Islam. Commentators say that his phrasing also alludes to the "Three Poisons" of Buddhism, so that each error can be associated with one of them: ignorance, hatred and greed. An Adamant Sage of considerable wisdom, Al-Ghayba was familiar with spiritual teachings from numerous cultures and excelled at drawing parallels between them. Thus, he is a major source of modern moral doctrine.

Absolute Pacifism

Uncompromising pacifism is the most forgivable error. It's not necessarily immoral, but pacifism is basically incompatible with being an Arrow. Opinions differ about the wisdom of pacifism in general. Some Arrows believe pacifism weakens Awakened society. Others think pacifists are moral anchors for everyone else. They represent the best effects of the Peace. But when it comes to the Arrow's needs, pacifists are useless. They bleed the order's morale and betray its mission. The Adamantine Arrow doesn't *love* violence, but the order needs mages who won't hesitate to fight.

Refusing to employ violence on absolute principle (not because the mage has a better strategy) is a crime against the order. If an Arrow insists on promoting such views within the order, the penalty is death. The offender endangers order strategy and morale. Fortunately, Arrows who won't kill have another option: they can leave.

The Vidanti

The Adamantine Arrow has rituals for members who lose their fighting spirit. They become the Vidanti ("those who are to be shunned"). The specifics vary from culture to culture. The following example hails from 16th-century England and is still used, though the language has changed with time.

A Vidantus is no longer a member of the order. Furthermore, she vows not to join *any* order, and not work against the Diamond orders. Arrows should shun Vidanti so that they will not join the Vidanti's dishonor or despair. Most importantly, a Vidantus cannot, under any circumstances, counsel any Arrow to follow the Vidantus's path. Vidantus status is

Vidantus Rite

This is the Lesser Rite of the Vidantus, used when the order is absorbed with war. Although the rite is derived from the customs of the Secret Order of Saint George, it should be noted that although that body did not accept women, adaptations may be made for women without harming the essence of the Rite.

Two Brothers escort the Vidantus and force him to one knee before the Adamant Sage. The Vidantus's cloak should be torn, as if in mourning.

Adamant Sage: Your Brothers have heard you wailing in the night, within the barracks and even beyond the battlements. With duty and love they bring you before me. Where is your sword?

Vidantus: (*Displays empty scabbard*). Buried, my lord, in hallowed ground. A knight has died. God has lifted the first flame of his soul to the Mysteries. A mere shell remains.

Adamant Sage: What was the Brother's name?

Vidantus: (*The Vidantus says his own name.*)

Adamant Sage: Then these Brothers are mistaken, but rightly so, for you might be twin to the dead. What is your name?

Vidantus: I am Vidantus: a shade, wanderer, watcher who mourns for all Brothers. I am a shadow cast by the Dragon, initiated into the Mystery but cast from the Diamond Gate.

Adamant Sage: You are no Brother. This is the cloak of a dead man. (*The Adamant Sage removes the Vidantus's cloak by tearing it into two pieces. He hands each piece to one of the Brother escorts.*) Anoint these in myrrh and burn them, so that our lost Brother will never be without proof of his arms and eternal allegiance.

Left Brother: (*Gestures to the Vidantus*) What of this man?

Adamant Sage: Take him to the burying ground, that he might contemplate the glorious dead. (*To Right Brother*). If he returns, slay him.

The Adamant Sage strikes both cheeks with the back of his palm, with a gentleness that would be insulting to one of the True Order. The Brothers carry the Vidantus to the order's burying ground or, if no such ground exists, to the edge of the order's holdings.

irreversible. If a mage wants to change her mind, she's failed both the order and her own moral resolve and is a useless person.

Despite these steep restrictions, Vidanti are actually quite common. In some regions, it's traditional for aged or severely injured Arrows to turn Vidantus. They often have their own cloisters and societies. Other caucuses levy Vidantus as punishment for cowardice. But most often, Arrows become Vidanti because their ability to fight has been seared away by traumatic experience. Understand that while not all Arrows deal with brutality regularly, many do, to a degree that's extreme even when compared to modern soldiers. Warrior-mages either kill people up close or through sympathetic spells — magic that strengthens the bond between assassin and target. Arrows fight monsters, ghosts and people who've been hideously altered by supernatural forces.

Mages can use Mind spells to compensate for the trauma, but this leads to a moral paradox. Using magic

to keep from feeling emotions human beings naturally feel is functionally equivalent to being a psychopath — and it's immoral to *choose* to be a psychopath.

Therefore, most Vidanti are deeply troubled people — and considerably more experienced than the average Arrow. Despite their status, the advice to shun them is not an absolute rule; young Talons seek Vidanti out for magical tutelage and other instruction. Caucuses often turn a blind eye to this as long as the student keeps the association quiet and never, *ever* heeds or requests moral advice from his teacher.

Amoral Warfare

Arrows devote themselves to understanding conflict, so there's always a danger that one makes conflict an end instead of a means. The order exists to protect mages and uphold justice. The order's moral doctrines aren't set in stone, but the Adamantine Arrow still

expects mages to *have* morals. True warriors put others ahead of themselves. They never act out of purely selfish motives. Even itinerant duelists serve the Adamantine Arrow by challenging its members and making them stronger.

The order has drifted into clearly unethical waters from time to time. Desperation and collective rage inspire acts to shame Arrows for years—even generations. But a functioning caucus rights itself, does penance for its crimes and subjects itself to swift, decisive justice.

Sometimes, Arrows break. They fall from the path and advocate extreme tactics as a matter of course. Atrocities cut quick, easy paths to victory — at first. Terror tactics work well, until enemies grow accustomed to such tactics. Early successes make it easy to make the same decision again. Plus, of course, there's a dark satisfaction to be had in dehumanizing one's enemies. Some Arrows are so tightly wound over years of discipline that any form of catharsis is a pleasure. Unfortunately, without morals, there's no *reason* to fight — or at least, no reason that the Adamantine Arrow would ever accept.

Once that catharsis or another wholly selfish benefit becomes a warrior-mage's prime motivation, she's no longer an Arrow. But proving that isn't easy.

The Downside of Honor

You've probably noticed by now that the order doesn't have a universal code of ethics. This is intentional, and it's a problem. The Adamantine Arrow puts great faith in its Talons. They are honorable people — as individuals. Arrows are, by and large, decent people. They have the same basic values as the Sleepers around the mages, though they don't tolerate as much self-deception or backsliding.

Unfortunately, individual honor breaks down in groups. Caucuses and cabals usually reach consensus on basic ethical issues, but when ethics become laws, they call personal honor into question. The order won't do that.

Pragmatism also plays a part. The order fears that if Arrows were to meet en masse and lay down absolute codes of behavior, enemies would use them against Talons. Enemies would employ human shields, psychically mutilated children and other horrors. This already happens too often for comfort. The Adamantine Arrow doesn't want to drive its enemies to even more extreme behavior.

As a result, it's hard to pin down exactly what the order *won't* do. Most Arrows abhor torture — until

they can't think of another way to extract information while the clock is ticking. They would never harm a child — unless it could save dozens of others. *Individuals* have firm convictions, but groups are riddled with exceptions.

The entire order agrees on one thing: it's wrong to use violence for selfish reasons. Thankfully, the most violently corrupt members of the order usually commit this crime, because even though the Adamantine Arrow doesn't have a set code, human nature rarely allows brutality and selflessness to thrive in the same person.

The Free Companies

Arrows who abandon a moral compass construct various excuses: philosophies, manifestos, emergency directives and other tricks designed to reconcile their fallen state with their pasts. These rarely blossom into full-blown conspiracies, and even then, members must survive each other's machinations to create an enduring tradition. Mercenary mages come and go, but only the Free Companies have ever managed to last.

The Free Companies began with Erebus and Walpurga: two First Talons who met in Milan in 1499. Each mage led companies of young Arrows and Swiss mercenaries. Each had been ordered to their duties by their respective Adamant Sages. Walpurga came to topple Milan's Consilium; Erebus was its defender.

The Talons met and agreed to a truce. They decided that there was no particular moral argument for or against the taking of Milan, and that given the ethical vacuity of their masters, there was no reason not to go into business for themselves. They brought their Awakened commands with them, but dismissed their Swiss auxiliaries in favor of less scrupulous *landsknechts*.

Two years later, they tore a bloody trail through Italy, sometimes fighting the Cambrai and sometimes the Venetians, depending on the gold, Mana and lore people were willing to pay. The two worked for Sleepers and mages alike, gaining fame in both societies. For a time, it was even fashionable for rebellious young mages to cheer the exploits of "The Free Company of Miraculous Knights." They laid bare the arbitrary rivalries that riddled the Awakened, for the very Consilii who condemned them often paid their fee when enemies shook the walls. The Free Company bought its fame with blood — its own, and that of its enemies. Erebus and Walpurga experimented with new rituals that stole power from the death and terror of

battle. They had no love for the Abyss, but at times, bent its creatures to their service.

Two hundred years later, as withered archmages, blood and death consumed their very lives, for their life-extension magic depended on it. The Italian Wars were gone; the Free Company was more of a criminal conspiracy than a band of "miraculous knights." Finally, in 1714, three Turkish Thunderbolt Guardians entered Venice by stealth and put both founders to the sword.

This didn't kill the Free Company but splintered it into four cabals, each claiming the mantle of the faction. Five years later, three of the four exterminated the last, declared a truce and decided that each would be its own Free Company: a conspiracy of mercenaries and criminals devoted to self-enrichment at any cost. They drafted the Articles of the Free Companies to cement the agreement, lest one betray the others to the Adamantine Arrow.

Similar to the Mafia, the Free Companies pretend to a rich tradition of freedom-fighting and liberty, but spend most of their time enriching themselves with crime. As befits their origins, Free Companies excel at brutal violence. They run private military companies that hire themselves out to dictators and supplement occupying armies with corrupt security contractors. Free Companies run drug cartels, human-trafficking groups and weapons-smuggling rings.

They are always recruiting. They can vault a young mage into an opulent lifestyle in exchange for relatively minor services such as scrying, healing and oath magic. They back up material temptations with their ideology, which claims that the Atlantean orders are hypocritical, domineering and self-serving, while the Companies allow members to truly explore their Awakenings.

In fact, each Company enforces strict discipline within its ranks, where the strongest sorcerers command inferiors



on a whim. Most members are still former Arrows, because they prefer disciplined soldiers above all others.

In the centuries since the Free Companies' founding, there have been as many as seven and as few as two Free Companies. There have been offshoots, revivals, pretenders and conglomerates, but they all respect the principle that Free Companies do not betray each other. There have been occasional "misunderstandings" between factions. They generally try to stay as far away from each other as possible. There are currently three stable, successful organizations:

52 Brothers: The 52s are the world's most exclusive prison gang. In 1968, leader John Welsh surprised fellow mages when, after being convicted for armed

robbery, he decided to actually serve his time instead of making the easy escape his budding Awakening allowed. What they didn't know was that Welsh had originally Awakened in prison. He went back to find people like himself. He caught a few inmates during their own Awakenings, took them under his wing and united them into an effective organization.

In the United States, the 52 Brothers still regard the prison system as their exclusive preserve. They deny outsiders access to it as much as possible, to better recruit from the United States' massive inmate population. Outside the system, the 52s use extortion and bribery to divert money away from rehabilitation and toward huge, densely populated penitentiaries. From there, they take a piece of construction, management and government budgets. Mundane prison gangs defer to the 52s and give them part of the smuggling business on the inside. And when those gang members get out, they give the 52s a cut of any business on the outside, too. Welsh stays on the outside now, but encourages his underlings to "tour" prison every few years. Magic and corruption make it easy for these inmates to enter and leave at will.

The Garduna: The Garduna is one of the original Free Companies, dating back to the Articles. The faction vanished for the first half of the 20th century and it's not clear whether or not the sect's returned or mages are reviving the storied name. The modern Garduna is an extremely secretive organization. It recruits new members by observing Arrows who are ruthless and selfish enough to do its work. Agents don't reveal their allegiance until the prospect is completely enmeshed in Garduna schemes.

The group's involved in plenty of ordinary crime, but it specializes in stealing grimoires and occult artifacts. The Garduna sell the stolen objects to discreet buyers for money, Mana and favors. There's a persistent rumor that the Garduna's leaders aren't former Adamantine Arrow mages at all, but Guardians of the Veil who've taken over the faction to increase their order's power at the expense of the Arrow. The order knows that the Garduna uses quasi-religious rites to induct members, along with an array of secret signs, code words and telepathic techniques. But for all their subtlety, they show their hands as warriors from time to time in spectacular raids. In Budapest and Quebec City, the Garduna put entire Consilii to the sword for no other reason than to pick the bones of sorcerers for magical valuables. The Garduna didn't claim the territory afterward; the Garduna left the cities empty, until cautious Awakened settled them once more.

Articles of the Free Companies

Each Free Company signed the Articles below, but since then, each one has added commentaries and addenda, outlining their distinct philosophies. For the most part, it's a sham. Aside from directives against being "enslaved" to morals or betraying the Companies, each cabal runs itself like a typical organized crime group.

We, the Enlightened of the Free Companies, believe in no lords but our hearts. No Master, Hierarch or God commands us. Let nothing stand in the way of worldly pleasures and true enlightenment, for we declare:

- I: That we obey no law except for freely negotiated contracts between the Company and its clients, and the brotherhood of the Companies themselves.*
- II: That no night-creature, magus or ignorant Man shall divert our aims or presume upon our freedom, be it through words, deeds or pernicious philosophies of self-enslavement.*
- III: That we will pay traitors and enemies in the lead coin of death itself, should they presume upon our liberty or set Company against Company.*
- IV: That no Company shall accept contract against another.*
- V: That no Free Companion shall endanger his companions with mercy at the expense of victory, peace at the expense of preparedness or doubt at the expense of a liberated will.*

Saikashu: The Saikashu pretend to be descended from a group of Buddhist irregular riflemen who defended temples during Japan's civil war period. This is a lie; the modern group is 22 years old and is run by a mix of mages who support Japanese fascist movements and the survivors of a now-defunct Russian Free Company. The Saikashu specializes in smuggling, racketeering import/export fraud and human trafficking. Rumor has it that the group knows a way to permanently enslave mages and that it has even bought and sold Awakened captives.

Treachery

It's the highest crime. Al-Ghayba equated treachery with hatred, for even though a mage might turn for wealth and influence, no amount of greed can set an Arrow against her order unless it's leavened with sheer malice. She might hate the order, certain people within it or even herself, but the wrath is there, so strong that it corrupts any oath or friendship.

Traitors deserve death — at least. Arrows relax their moral scruples where turncoats are concerned, subjecting them to the most horrific punishments vengeful wizards can devise. Every order hates traitors, but the Adamantine Arrow holds incomparable venom for this highest crime.

Care must be taken to separate this kind of treason from other forms of betrayal. Abandoning the order breaks a mage's sacred oath, but unless he does so in order to harm the Adamantine Arrow, while leaving the order might be a serious moral error, it can be forgiven. Pacifists are liabilities, but they don't intend harm to the order. Selfish soldiers put their interests ahead of the Arrow's, but they don't give aid to its enemies. In most cases, even the Free Companies are not as despised as the traitors Al-Ghayba wrote about. The Free Companies are mercenary renegades, but again, they only become the lowest of the low when they oppose the order.

The Four Treasons

Al-Ghayba identified four kinds of treachery:

Pacts with the Abyss: Regardless of the intent, any pact with the Abyss or its slaves is treason. Arrows should know better than to strike deals with Scelesti or Abyssal abominations, so Al-Ghayba said that such acts constitute depraved indifference. This is the order's orthodox position, but some radical Arrows have held otherwise on the rationale that depriving oneself of

a weapon in all situations interferes with the order's ability to act in severe emergencies.

Aiding the Exarchs against the Awakened: Arrows who aid the Seers of the Throne and Exarchs' cults against other mages injure the order's honor and defile their own enlightenment. This opinion doesn't apply to alliances against Banishers, Scelesti, Tremere and general supernatural threats. Al-Ghayba said that even these agreements were unwise, but might be justified.

Aiding others against the Adamantine Arrow: If an Arrow helps his order's enemies harm his comrades, he's a traitor. Rogue Arrows should note that when it comes to treachery, former Arrows are *never* released from their obligations. Even recognized Vidanti can be punished for betraying their former brothers, but Free Company mages are the ones who cross the line the most. When Garduna mages killed Arrows in Budapest and Quebec City, the Garduna's dishonor deepened into full-blown treason.

Individual acts against the order: The order encourages rivalries and even approves of moderate, internecine violence, but if a Talon uses deceptive means to kill or seriously harm a comrade, she's a traitor. Fistfights are one thing; poisoning and bullets from a thousand yards are something else entirely.

The Hunt

The Hunt is a cabal of former Arrows who've dedicated themselves to stalking, killing and *eating* their former companions. Three years ago, the cabal ranged up and down the New England coast. They escorted traveling mages, investigated strange phenomena and reinforced Arrow caucuses that needed them.

Hunt mages spent a great deal of time by themselves, so nobody commented on one lengthy absence they spent traveling through rural Massachusetts. When they got back, they were stronger than ever, shaming Boston's Arrows at archery, fencing and rhetoric. (They avoided unarmed combat despite reputed expertise, possibly to hide the physical signs reported by their first victim.) Outside the Games, the cabal kept to itself, even ignoring a request to attend the Ruling Council. After the Games, the cabal vanished — and so did one other visiting Arrow, a mage by the name of Kalkin.

A week later, Kalkin's cabal visited Boston in search of their missing friend. With help from local mages, they found his flensed bones, ripped clothes and PDA. The PDA told the story of Kalkin's murder. Shortly after the

Boston Games, the Hunt drove him off the road and calmly told him that they were going to track and eat him unless he escaped in three days. The Hunt used magic to keep him isolated and on the run. Once Kalkin realized that he couldn't reach the outside world, he took quick notes on the PDA, using his time to describe the threat. This has proved useful, but not decisively so, because the Hunt is still at large, and suspected in the deaths of three more Arrows along the East Coast.

Kalkin said that members of the Hunt never spoke

to each other, but when they were in earshot, would call out to him. The mages told him that they would devour him to make themselves stronger, and to get the best effect, they wished to take their meals from the finest warriors available. He also wrote that they appeared to suffer from some kind of illness, noting shrunken gums, open sores and bite marks. At one point, Kalkin was able to talk back from a position of safety (he was apparently up a tall cliff, behind excellent cover), and recorded this brief exchange:

KALKIN: You're insane.

MIZONG (HUNT): Maybe, but I feel good. Now that we've devoted ourselves to pure self-improvement, there's no limit to what we can do. But we need you, Kalkin. We need your flesh to guarantee our ascension.

KALKIN: Who told you this? Scelesti? Spirits?

MORGANNA (HUNT): We stumbled over the technique. That's all it is, you know? Just like calculus, an elbow strike or a rote. We found the cult —

(Muffled voices.)

MIZONG (HUNT): Best not let him know the whole thing, in case he somehow gets through the wards. All you need to know is that we discovered the formula to render power from your meat all mixed up with Abyssal religious trash. Now we wouldn't touch that normally, but the cult we got it from weren't happy to see us, right? Then Lupe died, we were hiding with his body in some shitty hunting shack while they were scouring with these dogs — well, not quite *dogs*. Backed against the wall, so we tried it out. It works. It saved us. It makes us fucking gods, for as long as we eat.

(Sound of gunshots. Thumping noises and screaming.)

KALKIN: I knew you were talking your ass off for a reason. HEY BITCH! YOU LIKE THE BULLET IN THE FACE OR THE FALL BETTER?

(Groans.)

MORGANNA (HUNT): See Em-Zee? I told you he wouldn't be distracted that way. He's clever. Tasty clever.

The Order of Battle

Is an Adamantine Arrow caucus a martial arts school? A police squad or paramilitary unit? An Arrow caucus can have aspects of all of these and more, or adapt itself to specific tasks. The order believes caucuses should have solid leadership but fluid organization. When it comes to training, the caucus should take

on the properties of a gymnasium or school, where mages cluster under the direction of Arrows with special skills. When it's time to keep the peace, the caucus looks a lot like a police service. Arrows patrol and investigate the area, keeping superiors in the loop about new developments. When the Consilium hurtles

The Master of the Hunt

The Hunt's story alludes to the Prince of One Hundred Thousand Leaves, an Abyssal threat from **Boston Unveiled**. In addition, **World of Darkness: Antagonists** describes the Hunger: a condition that affects cannibals. You don't need either book to run the Hunt, though. Not every cannibal contracts the Hunger, and the Prince isn't the only cannibal patron in the region.

If you want an "official" origin, you can assume that the cabal met the Prince's cult and after a desperate escape from their headquarters, learned a way to draw power from the dead by eating them. The cabal is addicted to the power of human flesh and wants to eat only the strongest prey — and that means Adamantine Arrows. In addition, the cabal seems to need to capture prey who *know* they're being hunted, but this might just be a collective derangement of some kind. Again, this is only a *suggested* default for something that's been deliberately left open for *you* to settle in your own chronicle.

into war, military structures come into effect. These are all group applications of the Third Phalanx. To prevail, a caucus adapts.

Similar to individuals, caucuses have particular preferences and traditions. Doctrine says that Arrows should be endlessly adaptable, but organizations breed stasis. This isn't always a bad thing, because traditions strengthen esprit de corps. Specialties serve the greater order when it needs to call on particular skills. A caucus's favorite organizational style (see "Leadership," p. 56) influences everything the caucus does. Nevertheless, the order discourages habit at the expense of effectiveness. An ancient caucus of Thai warrior-priests spends its days performing centuries-old rituals, but they're expected to burn their robes and sell their temple whenever duty demands it.

Cabal Versus Caucus

Most Arrow caucuses have members from several cabals. An all-Arrow cabal is entirely a part of its caucus. When the order is weak and divided, the caucus might be a cabal that includes every Arrow in the area. Ideally, the caucus includes every Arrow mage in the Consilium, but this isn't always true. Strong

personalities create groups that follow incompatible interpretations of the Adamant Way. Masters keep their deliberations apart from neophytes and issue orders to a "lesser" caucus of front-line warrior-mages.

Arrows who belong to multi-order cabals are expected to put the caucus before their cabal-mates, but in practice, wise caucuses do their best to avoid sparking conflicts of interest. An Arrow who spends time with mages from other orders is a valuable asset. He can keep the order informed about the broad political situation, serve as a go-between or act as a sub-commander when the order needs to militarize the entire Consilium.

Creating the Caucus

In a typical **Mage** game, players and Storytellers will create caucuses in three ways. The Storyteller might design one whole cloth, the players' Arrow characters form the caucus themselves or players' Arrows join a caucus of Storyteller controlled characters. If your chronicle revolves around the Adamantine Arrow, consider a fourth method: create the caucus collaboratively. The players and Storyteller discuss what kind of chronicle they want and design the caucus that will make it happen.

No matter who's responsible for caucus design, filling in the following details will help you better define the caucus. You don't have to go in a particular order, but you should be aware that each detail affects the others. A caucus's history influences its specialty — or the specialty implies something about its history. Don't just fill in the blanks; build relationships between details to give the caucus verisimilitude.

Age, Culture and History

Every caucus has a history, even if it's as simple as, "In 2007, a group of Adamantine Arrows were convicted by the Chicago Ruling Council of a crime they didn't commit." Some caucuses have lasted for generations. Members train new Arrows to learn caucus traditions and duties, passing on the torch of a distinct occult tradition.

Culture is intimately entwined with history. Older caucuses tend to interpret the central myths of Awakened civilization in idiosyncratic ways. The modern orders are as much a product of their age as of ancient times and represent a rough consensus formed by the colonial legacy and global communications. Younger caucuses either hew closer to common doctrines or invent entirely new ways of looking at Awakening, magic and the secret history of the world.



You can generally put a caucus's history in one of five categories:

Fresh: These are first-generation caucuses. Arrows usually create fresh caucuses when the mages settle an area for the first time, or after a long absence. In rare cases, other Arrows live in the area, but they don't want to associate with newcomers.

If the chronicle's focused on the Adamantine Arrow, this type of caucus will be common. The players' mages form it, and in the absence of other orders, the caucus probably does double duty as their cabal. If there are other Adamantine Arrows around, you need to explain why they don't have a caucus of their own, or if they do, why the players' mages can't join. Old grudges, terrible secrets or conservative xenophobia could all contribute.

Recent: This category includes established first-generation caucuses: groups of veterans who've worked together long enough to have certain routines. These caucuses are very common. Most use typical terminology and traditions. A minority have formed to study Arrow magic from a new perspective. These radical caucuses

might be splinters or even enemies of older groups. Such caucuses tend to be extreme; they'll either refuse to admit newcomers or vigorously recruit them.

Modern: Modern caucuses are less than a century old at the outside; most have been around less than 50 years. They came into existence after the establishment of "traditional" Awakened customs, including the legendry, law and traditions that most mages recognize. Along with Recent caucuses, Modern groups are the most common, at least in the Western world. Modern caucuses have a modest lineage; some or all of the members are second-generation or later successors. Remaining first-generation members tend to be leaders or senior advisors.

Modern caucuses have their own resources and contingency plans, including safe houses, defined political agendas and well-organized operations. Second- and later-generation members tend to be very loyal to the caucus but, as replacements and apprentices of the founders, might not get along personally. The founders brought the caucus together with a shared drive that's often missing in successors.

Elder: Elder caucuses are at least a century old; many are even older, though caucuses that have been around for more than 200 or 300 years are few and far between, with 200 being the cutoff point in Australia, New Zealand and the Americas. All Elder caucuses have a clear grasp of their own histories. Members can name founders, list the fates of successors and recount major events.

Joining an Elder caucus isn't necessarily hard to do, but rising through the ranks is. Most Elder caucuses are conservative, with specific customs that govern status and advancement. Their traditions don't always mesh with cultural norms, either. Elder caucuses have their own stories about the history of magic and unique names for spells, Arcana and Supernal classifications. In Guatemala, an old caucus practices magic and warrior ways through Mayan traditions. In Seattle, immigrants from India bring their caucus with them, drawing inspiration from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Members know all about the modern Atlantean mythos and easily translate between it and their own traditions. They usually have considerable resources, including sanctums, grimoires and considerable influence in Sleeper affairs.

Ancient: Ancient caucuses are so old that their histories begin with myths. Most lose sight of the confirmed past after about 500 years, though a few have fragmented records that are 1,000 to 2,000 years old. But if you believe their myths, many of them are far older. They claim descent from a band of Atlantean warriors or the Yellow Emperor, for example.

All known Ancient caucuses are the prime political actors in their Consilii. All defend areas that have been inhabited by humans for thousands of years. Most are the de facto rulers of local Awakened. Even if the Ancient caucuses don't participate in politics, surrounding sorcerers set policies designed to avoid the caucuses' anger. Ancient caucuses promulgate complex worldviews that are only loosely connected to mainstream Atlantean scholarship. They have public histories and doctrines, as well as secrets that are reserved for the highest of the high. Similar to Elder caucuses, Ancients hand out station according to hoary custom. Advancement depends on omens and prophecies as well as raw ability.

Agenda and Specialty

The order wants all caucuses to be ready for anything, but each has special talents, interests and needs. When skilled gunfighters gather, their caucus refines occult marksmanship to a high degree.

Don't make the caucus focus a straitjacket. Arrows never forget the Third Phalanx; they expect to confront problems outside their primary fields. Remember that every member has skills apart from the collective's best talents. Arrows believe in bringing diverse abilities to a problem and consciously gear their training to compensate for their individual and collective shortcomings. There's no such thing as a completely balanced caucus, but it's hard to find problems that the caucus either can't tackle itself or hasn't forged an alliance with mages who can.

In part, caucuses define themselves based on the needs of the community. A demon-hunting caucus won't stay that way if demons consistently fail to show up. This doesn't mean that the order ignores anything it can't detect, but if the Consilium doesn't need it, the caucus won't devote as much attention to it. If the caucus doesn't put a high priority on something but still identifies it as something to be concerned about, the caucus will contact cabals that specialize in the matter. Arrow members of these cabals keep their caucus informed about what transpires, so that when demons *do* visit, an Arrow from a demon-hunting cabal immediately relays this information to his comrades. If the situation changes, so does the caucus's agenda.

You might classify their tendencies using the categories below. Some caucuses fit into two of three categories equally well, and all contain facets of every category.

Belligerent: These caucuses put military duties first. Members operate according to a well-defined chain of command. If they aren't actually fighting, they devote time to tactical exercises and contingency plans. Historically, military caucuses aren't much trusted by outsiders because they have a (somewhat warranted) reputation for triggering conflicts in peacetime. All of their training and thinking build pressure to actually *execute* some of these plans. Fortunately, a caucus normally takes a strong Belligerent posture only when it's actually required. Otherwise, the caucus usually switches to a Protective focus.

Training: The caucus is based in a training hall: a *dojo*, gym, cloister or shooting range where Arrows perfect physical and supernatural combat. Leaders are martial arts teachers and occult scholars. They usually leave the order's work to individual members. Instead of structured operations, the caucus ensures that every Arrow is skilled enough to fight alone or support less competent members of the cabal. The oldest teach specific martial art styles or "schools" of related rites, and a few even pass on unique Legacies.

Political: This caucus spends most of its time pressuring the Consilium to support Adamantine Arrow interests. Political caucuses generally lobby for cooperation on mutual defense (under Arrow guidance, of course) and latitude from the other orders when Arrow duties offend their sensibilities. Political caucuses expect members to represent the order in the best light possible. Ironically, this means that political Arrows are often even more committed to their oaths than others. Senior members constantly remind Arrows that their promises carry the weight of the order.

Protective: Protective agendas are the most common. All caucuses are committed to defending the Awakened. If they weren't, they'd be ignoring the purpose of the order. Protective caucuses routinely organize patrols, investigations and policies designed to protect their Consilii. Most Arrows usually do their duty individually, but this caucus expects them to keep each other informed about their activities. Most model their operations on police work. Arrows pursue formal investigations and submit the results to superiors. In some Consilii, every Arrow even has a partner, but most caucuses expect mages to seek help from their own cabals.

Strategic: Strategic caucuses leave action to the individual. They meet to plan operations and advise other mages. Strategic caucuses study threats and approach them from every conceivable angle so that the caucuses are never at a loss for how to act. Strategists share the results with other mages whenever possible to give every sorcerer a plan to follow in the event of an emergency. Most such caucuses have a political aspect; they want the Ruling Council to implement their recommendations on a wide scale. To plan effectively, members concentrate on intellectual fields. They tend to be a bit more bookish than other Arrows and often have strong ties to the local Mysterium.

Seniority

Powerful mages usually run older caucuses, but this isn't a hard-and-fast rule. Given the right situation, a sorcerer fresh out of apprenticeship could lead one of the oldest lineages. Age doesn't earn power — only work does. There are plenty of aged, mediocre sorcerers. They've been around for a while, but they just aren't ambitious enough to seize greater power. Battle-hardened Arrows also retire, follow their work to new cities or die in the field. These situations catapult young visitors into positions of influence.

If the chronicle starts with younger mages and makes them the most numerous Arrows in the area, the caucus

will obviously skew to less experience. The caucus's agenda also affects the quality of leadership. Belligerent caucuses tend to have younger leaders thanks to repeated casualties and youthful impetuosity.

If the caucus is mostly populated by Storyteller characters, leadership seniority will influence the composition of the entire group. Some mages will be others' apprentices, training partners — even blood relatives. For now, though, decide on how experienced your most powerful, active caucus members are.

Novice: The most powerful mages in the caucus are about as powerful as new **Mage** characters. This happens when the Adamantine Arrow's resettling an area, or if elder Arrows have somehow dropped out of the picture. The caucus can expect to be pushed around a bit by other orders. The caucus members are weak; their credibility is questionable. This won't be the case if all of the local mages are "pioneers," settling the area for the first time. In *that* case, the inexperienced caucus needs to deal with the challenges of an area the Awakened know little or nothing about. There's plenty of danger, but also opportunities to spin victory into political capital.

Competent: Competent leaders are usually first- or second-degree Adepts — and not "one-trick wizards" who concentrate on a single Arcanum at the expense of all others. Competent leaders have a bit of experience under their belts: enough of a history to take credit for some minor successes, but they've probably made minor enemies as well. This level of competence is common in smaller cities and rural areas. Life runs at a slower pace there; mages either take a leisurely approach to their studies or follow their ambitions to big cities or weird places. Of course, sparsely populated regions also hide powerful supernatural threats.

Veteran: Most major cities' reigning Arrows are second- or even third-degree Adepts. Occasionally, a specialized Master holds the reins. Barring a crisis, the caucus directs a well-established arm of the order. Outsiders have a good grasp of its policies and key figures. Newcomers can learn much from local mages. There's enough room to rise through the ranks, though at this level, minor conflicts often pit individual Arrows against each other.

Senior: Senior caucuses have one or two well-rounded Masters. A host of lesser mages covers virtually every area of expertise. There's usually a streak of conservatism here. Smart, strong don't want to mess with a winning formula. New members shake up the establishment, reminding the caucus that the order values adaptability. If an emergency arises

that the caucus's jaded leaders don't know anything about, it's up to junior members to investigate and warn their colleagues.

Powerful: A prodigal firebrand or elder wizard surpasses his brethren. He's a Master of multiple Arcana and might even investigate the higher Mysteries — though archmastery is dangerous enough to keep most of them at the threshold, lest they call down the horrors that guard the gates of high magic. This doesn't make of the caucus any stronger than Veteran or Senior equivalents. The leader has edged through a natural bottleneck in competence that all Awakened face; death, supernatural enemies and eroding Wisdom discourage most mages from soaring to the higher realms of the Art. The caucus might be a cult, devoted to its enlightened leader. If the leader's an old Arrow, he could be looking for a successor. Established members don't necessarily fit his criteria, but a new warrior-mage could well be worthy of his secrets.

Diplomacy and Politics

The last major category describes the caucus's relationship with the rest of the Consilium. When you map this out for your chronicle, think about how difficult it would be to alter this relationship over the course of the story. Awakened politics are dynamic; mages change over time. They start families, grow old and have life-changing experiences that affect their political relationships. Older Consilii tend to be a bit more static. Early political arrangements solidify into traditions over time. In some cities, the highest-ranking Arrow always swears fealty to the Hierarchy. In others, a historical crisis made the caucus a strong generalissimo's office, able to command other mages without question. But the more extreme the tradition, the more fragile it is. Mages constantly question the world around them. The political situation is no different.

For the most part, the following categories are snapshots of where the caucus stands when you first introduce it to the story. No political arrangement is truly set in stone. Even oaths need to contend with reality.

Aloof: An Aloof caucus is a passive patsy of the political process. This caucus influences events through forbearance. This is a rare stance for an Arrow caucus, because the order values action over posturing. Nevertheless, these caucuses can influence the Consilium by acting outside of its auspices. Aloof groups don't ask permission or seek consensus before they strike. When they break up fights, hunt down rogues or investigate trouble, Aloof caucuses might make a

statement about the issues they think the Consilium should pay a little more attention to. Other orders either listen and react or fall under the steamroller when the caucus puts them in its sights.

Dictatorial: This caucus doesn't have to include the Hierarchy, but if it doesn't, its leader is someone the Hierarchy obeys. Dictatorial caucuses get this status through cold political maneuvers or by grabbing power in a crisis. They solve the immediate problem, but hang on to their privileges by declaring a permanent "state of emergency." These caucuses tend to form in Consilii with extraordinarily violent histories. Arrows weather the storm better than other mages. In some cases, Arrows end up with the balance of power because they're the only viable political force left.

Interdependent: The caucus defers to multi-order cooperation. Arrows come to the table bearing the agendas of their mixed cabals. The Adamantine Arrow might be alone in this because it's been subdued by other orders, or this state of affairs might be the way the whole Consilium works. In some places, your order matters far less than your immediate friends and enemies.

Magisterial: In this situation, the order wields near-absolute power, but only in situations that are popularly thought to be "Arrow business." Many Consilii use this system. Arrows have supreme authority in defense, thearchs assume responsibility for management and economics, Guardians of the Veil gather all intelligence and mystagogues act as researchers and advisors. (And the Free Council gets whatever the other orders aren't paying attention to.) Orders clash over the limits of their purviews, but when something is clearly a defense matter, the Adamantine Arrow reigns supreme.

Subservient: Thanks to broad oaths, incompetence or bad luck, the local Arrows serve another order, the Ruling Council or a certain cabal. If the Arrow's recently fallen from a more powerful state, rivals often use the opportunity to humiliate warrior-mages, sending them on menial, meaningless missions. More conciliatory relationships direct the caucus to perform tasks that might vault it back to glory. Then again, there are places where the order has never been very strong, or local customs put it under firm external authority. Not every society holds its warriors in high esteem. Some believe that warriors need to be controlled, lest they turn against the people they're supposed to protect.

Titles and Duties

Ancient texts ascribe all kinds of structures to the old Ungula Draconis. For the order, these sources are like medieval lists of angels and demons: lengthy, detailed and, for the most part, drawn from the writers' imaginations and wishful thoughts. These texts usually reflect whatever the writer thought was an elder, "high culture." In the Dark Ages, warrior monks were sure that the Talons of the Dragon were structured like Roman legions. In the 19th century, everyone *knew* the Atlantean army had knights and squires. In the same period, Japanese mages imagined the Talons governing themselves like *Ikkō-ikki* warrior monks.

Nowadays, most Arrows accept the fact that nobody will ever know the true organization of the ancient order. There are only fragments left, but they give the Adamantine Arrow the structure it needs to prevail. Perhaps the following titles are inventions of the Fallen age. Maybe they've been radically changed from their Atlantean origins. It doesn't matter; the order adapts and abides.

The modern Adamantine Arrow is a meritocracy — mostly. Personal politics matter. Pragmatic Arrows believe that gathering support and currying favor are strategies that deserve the same rewards as heroism, intelligence and fighting ability. There are five universally accepted titles, but their precise names might change from place to place. Arrows don't usually have to ascend to a higher rank when their reputations grow. There are battle-hardened Talons who never want to abandon their basic duties. Higher-ranked (but lower-Status) Arrows might be able to order these veteran Talons around in theory, but the reality is that lower-Status Arrows only approve the veteran's preferred plan. There are occasions when the worthiest Arrows must take up a new office. Somebody needs to captain a cabal or advise the Hierarchy, and even though Arrows of any rank can do so in an unofficial capacity, it's often important to speak with the weight of tradition. Formal rank also makes it easy for other Arrows to find the right warrior for the job.

Talon (Status 0)

Arrows who survive apprenticeship become Talons. This is the fundamental rank of the order. Talons serve the order, protect mages and uphold justice. Talons are also expected to present the best side of the order to other mages and keep their vows at all times. The doctrine behind Talon status is, "No Talon is alone." The order needs front-line soldiers to be ready for anything, but understands they're

human beings first. They need comrades and leaders to share their wisdom and resolve. The ideal Talon bonds with his cabal and obeys his superiors. He doesn't rush into the fray alone unless it's absolutely necessary. He's humble and looks to other Arrows for guidance.

Banner Warden (Status ●)

All Arrows protect their cabals, but a few want to make it their full-time pursuit. This is a privilege, not a right. If a Talon performs general duties well, she can claim the Banner Warden's title. She accepts challenges on behalf of her cabal and puts its safety before everything else. When a warrior-mage becomes a Banner Warden, the order lessens her general duties, allowing her time and energy to focus on her charges. The order doesn't indulge this sort of thing lightly, which is another reason why Talons have to prove themselves dutiful Arrows before they become Banner Wardens. They need to subdue their egos as well, because their status takes the form of service. A Banner Warden should never be more than the second in command to the cabal's leader. Many use Oathbinding (see p. 61) to further formalize their position.

According to tradition, the Banner Warden always carries her cabal's arms, whether they're Atlantean runes, the heraldry of the modern Pentacle (see **Sanctum and Sigil** for modern symbols) or the carved bones, geometric designs or totems of other cultures. The doctrine is, "The Banner Is the Warden's Honor." If she lets the cabal's arms fall into enemy hands, she's dishonored herself. She should always carry the cabal's signs on her person unless she's naked or dead. In most cases, this takes the form of a piece of jewelry, tattoo, patch or an item of clothing.

First Talon (Status ●●)

First Talon is "officer" status in the order. First Talons aren't always former Banner Wardens. A Talon who stands out from the pack can step right into the rank. He needs to know how to plan and lead, but more than that, he takes responsibility for the mages under his command. That "command" is fluidly defined, based on the local situation and the First Talon's preferences. A higher-ranked Arrow sometimes formalizes the command structure, but more often, the First Talon announces his position, explains the situation and commandeers the mages he needs. First Talons should recruit Banner Wardens last so as to keep them focused on their cabals, but in emergencies, expediency defeats these considerations. The doctrine is, "You are a soul in many bodies. Do not defile any part of your soul."



First Talons with a higher than minimum Status are sometimes given additional ranks, but this only takes place in very large or formal caucuses, where every mage needs a specific place in the hierarchy. When you witness Arrows with ranks such as Dragon's Bow or *Okuden Kiyoshi*, you're hearing examples of these secondary ranks. The order doesn't have any consensus about these titles, however; they're specific to various traditions and caucuses.

The order doesn't have a separate "officer corps." Every mage starts as a simple Talon and rises through the ranks. In practice, some apprentices are groomed for command, especially if their teachers are highly ranked. This doesn't happen in most caucuses, but it isn't unheard of, either.

Thunderbolt Guardian (Status ●●●)

Preparation is the key to victory, so the order enshrines this principle in the rank of Thunderbolt Guardian.

Thunderbolt Guardians are teachers and counselors, versed in several useful fields. The most famous Thunderbolt Guardians are those who teach the Adamantine Fist, but martial arts masters aren't the only ones to hold this rank. Scientists, actors, engineers and other experts qualify. They share their skills and offer tactical advice from the perspectives of their fields.

Thunderbolt Guardians also personally apply their abilities to operations. If Talons are grunts and cops, Thunderbolt Guardians are Special Forces and SWAT. Don't take the military/police analogy too far, though; missions require bond traders and archaeologists, too. Thunderbolt Guardians come to the fore whenever the order needs special skills.

Skill alone doesn't confer this title. Thunderbolt Guardians need to know how to apply their specialties magically. As a result, they're the order's chief rote researchers. Each Guardian focuses on rites that harness the Guardian's best talents. Furthermore, just as Banner Wardens, Thunderbolt Guardians trade flexibility for focus, so the order only recognizes experts who know

how to develop their abilities without losing sight of the Adamantine Arrow's overall goals. Theory matters only when it leads to effective action.

Adamant Sage (Status ●●●●+)

In a better world, a true Adamant Sage would head every caucus, but the position has some strict requirements. Ancient texts and legends from the dawn of the Fallen World list the requirements. An Adamant Sage should be a second-degree Master or better. Her mundane skills rank her among the best thinkers and artisans of her time, and she's a skilled strategist and commander. Claiming the mantle of an Atlantean general is no easy task.

Consequently, most Adamant Sages are not "true" examples of the title. They're the most accomplished Arrows in the caucus, but most are first-degree Masters or hold Adept rank in multiple Arcana. They have formidable talents, but fall short of the warrior-poet-philosopher ideal.

An Adamant Sage leads the caucus and advises the Hierarchy. Most Ruling Councils listen to the Sage when it comes to violent threats, but are more skeptical about pronouncements on more nuanced issues. A clever Adamant Sage takes advantage of this by playing the fool around politics, allowing rivals to grow lazy and overconfident. The order prefers actions to words, but that doesn't mean the order doesn't know how to deal with Consilium politics.

Aside from quiet strategy, Adamant Sages are the best at marshalling raw force: the threat of violence so extreme that it forces a change in the status quo. Critics might call this crude, but the fact is that mages are sometimes too subtle for their own good. They weave schemes into the mix that slow down the Consilium's ability to act. Adamant Sages hold the blade that cuts through the Gordian knot of intrigue.

Path Roles

To the order, sorcery is not a road, but an ocean. A Talon starts in safe harbors, following the familiar shoreline of his soul before he heads into stranger currents. The secret leagues of his spirit stretch in every direction. Nobody ventures far without a sound vehicle, even if it's just a healthy body, determined mind and a small shard of magic. If a mage were to set out with nothing but the will to become a warrior-polymath, she would fail.

No mage ever learned the great secrets without a strong foundation. That means a Path and Watchtower. The order encourages mages to use their soul-borne preferences as part of a team, finding wholeness in the group. Eventually, a Talon should learn the ways of all Watchtowers, but she always relies on that foundation.

Arrow Path roles emphasize a mage's ability to serve the order, but don't curtail personal exploration. The more enlightened the Arrow, the more she should be able to do, adopting new professions and strategies to better protect the Awakened. The roles listed below are usually informal; Arrows don't often call themselves capital-E Executives or Strategic Prophets. Some older caucuses codify these roles, however, so that there's always a Shadow Warden to watch the spirits or a Living Cenotaph to honor the dead.

Acanthus

Acanthus Arrows are known for adopting the wandering life. They use their Arts to arrive where they're most needed, do what needs to be done and move on. Warrior-mages who stick to a Consilium specialize in unconventional solutions. They're lone warriors who bring chaos to the enemy.

Duelist: This Arrow is usually a wanderer, but if she settles down, she's often a Banner Warden. She specializes in individual combat. In a team, she heads for the enemy leader, holding him off alone. Her lucky shots and distractions keep him from directing subordinates. When it comes to formal duels, she behaves outrageously, arriving late and insisting on strange conditions and locations. Fate and Time reveal the perfect times and places to secure victory. Her demeanor makes it difficult for others to separate real tactics from eccentric preferences.

Eclectic Warrior: Eclectic Warriors use magic to improve themselves. They don't like orthodox teachings, preferring to pick and choose the lessons they feel will make them better Arrows. Time and Fate provide insights into patterns of conflict, teaching the Arrow when words are better than knives and knives are better than guns. She follows her fate to the best teachers, learning without committing to a particular doctrine. These freestyle martial artists, maverick leaders and rogue scientists solve problems with unconventional but efficient techniques.

Saboteur: This mage doesn't bother with bombs where a well-placed screwdriver would do. Magic shows her a system's weak points. In an office, she notices

inefficiencies such as lost mail and broken equipment. In a fight, she seeks out holes in the enemy's formation. In all cases, she aggravates problems, so that small flaws destroy entire organizations. The classic saboteur works with machines, but Acanthus can home in on virtually any form of discord.

Scout: Acanthus Scouts follow their intuition to find threats, and use immaculate luck and timing to do a bit of damage, escape and get back to their allies. The Acanthus specializes in avoiding contact with the enemy. She can measure openings in a defense perimeter down to the second and always seems to find the right path through hostile territory. If these opportunities don't exist, she creates them, distorting sentinels' timing and hindering their movements with ill luck.

Strategic Prophet: According to order lore, it's the duty of aged or injured Acanthus to explore the future for their fellow warriors. Nowadays, young Talons also take an interest in oracular duties, but for the most part, the tradition holds. These Arrows aren't the best fighters, but they're still geniuses at divining threats and opportunities. Omens and visionary Time spells map out the future, letting the order know when to best tighten their guard. The Acanthus looks at destinies and possible futures as elements of a grand strategy. She sees occult and historical forces clashing through the ages and follows them to key points where a lone cabal — even a foretold chosen one — might change the Fallen World.

Mastigos

Mastigos are the most pragmatic Arrows. They look beyond politeness and deception to uncover the real people underneath. In Pandemonium, illusions and organizations break down into vortices of raw want, free from physical limits. Once a mage experiences the amoral passions locked within the noblest people, she tends to take a cynical view of human nature. This tempts Mastigos to ignore ethical constraints, but makes them skilled negotiators and organizers.

Analyst: Mastigos Analysts examine the local situation on two fronts: actions and motives. Space gives them the ability to examine enemies and allies from afar; Mind lets them see what people hope to accomplish when they act, or what they *would* do if they had the freedom to do as they pleased. The Analyst tells trusted Arrows about prominent figures' desires and events that threaten the Consilium's peace. Skilled Analysts come into the field to offer difficult people alternatives to destructive actions. If one cabal scouts another's territory for Mana, the Mastigos tells its leader

where they might find uncontested Hallows. If the Hierarchy is lonely, he finds her a suitable companion before her pain sparks rash decisions.

Divine Archer: Mastigos are the order's best archers and gunslingers. In myth and history, Talon archers slew enemy nobles from the backs of chariots, horses and elephants. Modern Arrows prefer firearms, but tap into the same techniques. Space-enhanced gunplay removes difficulties such as wind, movement and even intervening walls. Space also tells a gunfighter his exact position relative to other shooters. He dances around bullets with enough skill to make it all look like film choreography. Even Mind magic serves him here. Fear is his servant, not his master. He dispatches enemies with icy detachment and can terrorize foes by just drawing his weapon.

Executive: In any army, corporation or cult, leadership takes two forms. There are people who take a global view, contributing big ideas and general objectives. Mastigos excel at the other kind of management. They carry the big plans out, breaking them down into specific actions, dedicated teams and resource requirements. Path members understand how human nature affects the group and identify the best people for particular tasks. Brave mages go to the front of a conflict; smart, timid Arrows deal with logistics and communication. A Mastigos executive knows exactly what's happening below him. He roots out treacherous elements and instantly understands how successful his operations are. Thanks to Space magic, he's never far from the center of the action. And when it comes time to report to a Hierarchy, Adamant Sage or other global thinker, the Executive knows exactly what to say to keep "idea people" from meddling.

Interrogator: The order doesn't have a universal policy about how to interrogate enemies. Attitudes usually follow the prevailing Sleeper culture. In the United States, that means torture isn't the first choice, but it happens when interrogators are desperate, angry or bigoted against their prisoners. Mastigos Interrogators usually employ purely psychological means to lower resistance to Mind spells. Mastigos mages know that torture usually exists to satisfy the torturer, not extract useful information, but if they look at it in a cold-blooded fashion, torture can also destroy enemy morale.

Game Theorist: Game Theorists break human actions down into sets of rational decisions based on what each actor expects from the outcome. They examine the objective value of these decisions, whether outcomes create genuine winners and losers and the paradoxes that arise from certain situations. Mastigos

Theorists create their games out of situations that occur in the Awakened world. They use Space to study the situations at a distance, reduce them to thought experiments, test various scenarios and examine how they stack up to the real world. Mastigos specialize in identifying situations where rational self-interest breaks down. Where Sleepers find paradoxes, Arrows find confusion that they exploit with Mind magic. Telepathy and divination break the rules of classic scenarios such as the Prisoner's Dilemma.

Moros

Stygian Arrows concentrate on money, death and material needs. Their magic suits such functions, but don't underestimate the importance of the classic Moros attitude. They know that life and wealth are fleeting. Moros don't expect things and people to endure. They have talent for estimating costs and casualties.

Armorer: These Arrows emulate the divine smiths such as Goibniu, Wayland and Vulcan. These days, Armorers make guns more often than swords. Commanding steel to double its strength is an old Armorer's

spell, but variants that affect Kevlar and ceramic plate are just as popular. Death also has a place in the smith's craft. Some Arrow blades can kill an enemy by stabbing his shadow. Death-armor corrodes weapons and saps force from attacks. Most Armorers are one part scientist, one part anvil-striking smith and one part soldier. The best arms are more than the products of theory and craft. They're born of artisans who've held a sword, worn a helmet and fired a gun in battle.

Assassin: To the order, murder is just another tactic. There is no romance or grace about it. A knife enters the man and leaves a corpse. Matter ensures that a Stygian mage always has a bribe for the guards or a way through a strong door. Death turns gunshot wounds into apparent heart attacks and cloaks the deed in shadows. Moros can interrogate targets after the act, from beyond the grave. They tend to have detached, laconic natures, making them ideal for this kind of work.

Financier: Moros are excellent at salvage operations and mining. Even the oceans have ghosts, and they know where the vaults lie within their sunken graves. Gold and gems sing in the earth, showing



Matter mages where to dig. When the order needs a lot of money and doesn't want to bother with the entanglements of alchemy or risky Fate manipulation, the Arrow turns to Moros mages. They know how to manage this wealth, too. Many specialize in commodity trading, prospecting and salvage expeditions, winning wealth from the earth without employing wholesale transmutation. Of course, mined gold can sometimes act as a "seed" for alchemically created gold, multiplying the mage's bounty.

Historian or Archeologist: All Arrows study history, but Moros magic wrings new secrets from old artifacts and tombs. Order Historians study conflicts from all times and places. A Moros learns about trench warfare by talking to the ghosts of Flanders and Verdun. When a Moros examines an arrowhead, he can examine the smallest scuffs and marks — even disturbances on the molecular level — and from them, learn about the people who used it. In the field, Moros put their lessons to good use, finding ancient solutions to modern problems. Many are "participant-historians" — they experiment with living and acting like someone from their chosen period.

Living Cenotaph: So-called Living Cenotaphs honor the order's dead. Each one learns everything he can about a fallen Arrow. If the Arrow has a ghost, the Living Cenotaph seeks communion with it. If she left behind weapons, he studies and reproduces them. Some might think that there's little value in such dedication to the dead, but Living Cenotaphs believe that their work keeps an implicit promise to all warrior-mages. The Adamantine Arrow asks members for the utmost dedication; the order's living cenotaphs know that when Talons fight, their zeal is partly fueled by the desire to attain immortality for their deeds. These Moros ensure that a dead Arrow's legend lives on — that the order will honor her memory just as she honored them with service.

Obrimos

The Obrimos and the Adamantine Arrow fit like hand and glove. The Golden Key manifests for mages who display supreme faith and discipline. Many join the order to serve something transcendent; God, great Mahatmas and supreme dharms guide these mages through the moral labyrinth of conflict. Of course, it helps that Obrimos have potent magic at their command. Raging Forces and subtle Prime serve direct and indirect tactics. Over time, a skilled mage learns to play with the assumptions of both Arcana, so that the elements assail enemies in secret and surprising ways, while pure Mana fuels an unstoppable holy fire.

Force Multiplier: Obrimos use magic to increase allies' effectiveness in the field. Comrades' bullets punch through armor. Enemies' blades turn aside for them, and the ambient energies of the battlefield always shift to their advantage. Streetlights go dim to hide the cabal's movements, or flare to blind the enemy. Against Obrimos stereotypes, a Force Multiplier avoids blatant magic, but her squad often indulges in spectacular displays of power. She channels them enough Mana to cast vulgar spells more freely.

Internal Martial Artist: Obrimos Martial Artists usually follow so-called internal methods that rely on controlling hidden energy, not brute strength. They obey the tai chi principle of repulsing a thousand pounds of force with four ounces of pressure. Elementary Forces teaches them to quickly and perfectly sense the kinetic energy of an attack. But the internal approach also includes powerful strikes, delivered to gaps in the enemy's defense. The Obrimos uses magic to focus the energy of an innocuous movement into a surprisingly destructive blow. Esoteric skills such as moving enemies at a distance and manipulating spiritual power (whether you call it Mana or *qi*) are other common abilities.

Living Weapon: For every surprisingly sneaky Obrimos Talon, there's a mage who fits the popular image. The Living Weapon raises the elements to destroy all threats. She conjures sheets of flame and Aeolian winds, cages of lighting and shields spun from sunlight. Prime fuels these vulgar displays; the churning Mana within her gives her an aggressive, vivacious attitude, prone to rage and joy when Forces rip the enemy to pieces. Some Living Weapons form special cabals and cults. These believe that magic should be a flame that consumes error and deception. They scour old grimoires for the ultimate destructive spells and dream of touching a purifying brand to the tapestry of the world.

Tactical Illusionist: This mage specializes in Prime illusions. Many follow creeds that say that the Fallen World is merely an especially compelling illusion, so adding to it with Prime phantasms is no great feat. Forces can also misdirect enemies by bending light and sound to the Obrimos's will. After a successful deception, the mage or her allies can move in and finish the job. Arrows who love illusion point out that while it lacks the material punch of more violent magic, it often does the job in ways that are less likely to cost lives. Deception prepares the enemy for defeat without harming him.

Storm Herald: Similar to Sleepers, mages talk about the weather all the time, but unlike Sleepers, a few mages can actually do something about it. The Adamantine Arrow has studied countless battles and disasters and knows the

value of weather control. It's difficult magic; most requires at least Adept ranking in Forces. Lesser Storm Heralds excel at simple but important spells to keep rain, humidity or desert heat at bay in the middle of a mission. Urbane mages scoff at these talents, but just as all experienced military organizations, the order knows that the environment can be as dangerous as the enemy.

Thysrus

Shamans know that war is alive. Spirits of battle and protection follow the Arrow's tracks, basking in the power of conflict. Thysrus listen to their wisdom, but set themselves apart from the Shadow's passions. Collectively, spirits know all the lore of peacekeeping and war, but as individuals, they're too single-minded to understand things beyond their specific dominion. A Thysrus seeks the great secrets, where all principles connect, to flow from tactic to tactic. Great shamans are fluid in mind and body; they adopt toughness, speed or beauty at need. They call the spirits of war when war comes, and peace when it ends, and avoid enslaving themselves to either.

Captain of Spirits: Thysrus never walk alone. They know the names of Shadow predators, creatures of violence and rage, or spirits that love peace and kept promises. Captains of Spirits call their allies cautiously. It isn't that spirits are particularly disloyal (unless, of course, they're spirits of treachery), but their thoughts are too strange and focused to easily predict. The Shaman appeals to a spirit's nature first, employing it when the resonance of a situation suits it. In emergencies, these negotiations give way to outright commands. The Thysrus binds his "soldiers" with spells and threats. Even then, Shamans make sure that the spirits have something to gain from their service. If a Thysrus defeats his enemies at the price of more enemies, then he never achieved victory in the first place.

External Martial Artist: No other Watchtower imparts athletic prowess like the Stone Book. Pain is the Thysrus's friend; he never shies from the demands of physical training. Thysrus master "external" martial arts easily. A skilled Thysrus warrior is stronger, tougher and more agile than any other human being. His understanding translates into medical skill as well; he sets bones as easily as he breaks them. When you hear of a martial art based on the movements of animals, chances are that, long ago, a Thysrus based its original, secret teachings on the ways of animal spirits, or on his experiences in an animal shape. Although actual martial-arts shapechanging is rare these days, Western Thysrus still use body-shifting "warp-spasms" in close combat.

Insurgent: In occupied territory, a Shaman blends in. He wears an innocent face and spies on his enemies with the help of the spirits. He changes shape to avoid capture or flees through the Shadow. Magic isn't the only thing that helps a Thysrus with this role. Most Shamans live close to the community. They're respected figures who earn the protection of people the Thysrus heal and counsel. Thysrus also inherit tribal ideologies that put their own people above everything else. When it comes to defending the tribe, no sacrifice is too great.

Pathfinder: Thysrus Arrows are excellent scouts and trackers. In urban Consilii, mages often forget about the wilderness, but magic lingers there. Fugitives run to forest sanctums, and lost cities rise from distant sands. Refugees and guerillas camp in remote places. If they threaten the Awakened, someone needs to root them out. Thysrus guide other Arrows through difficult terrain, keeping them to a safe path in the midst of hostile spirits and wilderness hazards. In some cases, Thysrus missions resemble those of Sleeper Special Forces. The mages reconnoiter, break through wards, map the area and magically mark the target for a future attack. Mastigos and Obrimos Talons who know how to kill from afar use Pathfinders as "guidance systems."

Shadow Warden: Even though mages are their own worst enemies, you can't underestimate the dangers of renegade spirits and twisted places of power. Shadow Wardens watch for dangerous spirits who meddle in material affairs. Sometimes, the Shadow changes in ways that herald a major threat. A shift in the local resonance attracts dark spirits, but the real danger is the phenomenon itself. It might foreshadow Abyssal incursions, enemy sorcery or zealous werewolves. Shadow Wardens cross paths with werewolves more than any other type of Arrow, but while they have superficially similar agendas, the details create a vast moral gulf between the two groups. Werewolves believe that the material world needs taming, too, and might unleash predators upon a Shaman's protectorate. Thysrus can be cruel, but they're still human; they rarely betray their species.

Rites and Ceremonies

Just as other mages, members of the Adamantine Arrow combine Atlantean legendry with better-known cultural traditions. Some offshoots of the order are so immersed in their own cultures that they don't admit any link to the mainstream order, but in the modern era, this is rare. Mages live in the same wired, global culture as everyone

else, so even the most heterodox sects usually recognize a common bond. They all protect the Mysteries with vigilance, honor and, if necessary, refined violence.

Ancient battle ceremonies, training methods and meditations pass from Arrow to Arrow. Over the ages, they mix with regional cultures, forming ceremonial traditions. The Watchtowers guide Talons past corrupted teachings and show them how warrior ways resonate with the Supernal World. Every Path contains a quest, an honor code and a secret strategy. The order combines worldly traditions with Supernal inspiration to develop unique oblations. Remember that as **Mage** specifies, the character must perform the oblation at a Hallow.

Ceremonial traditions confer other benefits: unique rites, Legacies and magical techniques. Of note here are rote factors: techniques and conditions that can increase a spell's power. Rote factors were first introduced in **Tome of the Mysteries**, but they use a system simple enough to repeat here. A rote factor is a circumstantial dice bonus that applies to a specific rote. The mage must know the rote and, furthermore, must have learned it from a tradition that teaches factors as a part of the rote. When the traditions below have suggested rote factors, it's up to the Storyteller to determine which factors apply to which rites, as rote factors are "hard coded" into individual rites. No more than two factors should apply at a time, and no single factor should add more than three dice.

The following traditions and oblations are not hard-and-fast categories. A Talon who does double duty as a karate sensei and a beat cop doesn't have to choose between affiliations. Her background determines the kinds of rites she studies and their possible rote factors. She performs oblations that fit her complete background. In **Mage: The Awakening**, oblations are ways for your character to develop a distinctive magical style, so don't be overly concerned about "balanced" oblations. The required Hallow, not the oblations themselves, provides game balance.

Common Oblations

No matter their backgrounds, all trained Arrows know the following oblations. Perhaps these methods date back to Atlantis, or maybe they're part of some universal warrior way that's inscribed within the human soul.

Games and Sports: Arrows who compete with worthy opponents in a sacred place draw closer to the Supernal Realms. Competition puts the study of conflict into practice — and all conflict has a greater significance. Personal conflict reflects the interplay of cosmic forces,

giving the mage an intuitive glimpse of greater truths. Sparring sessions and debates are the most common ways to harness a Hallow in this fashion, but any serious game will do if participants play with a strong spiritual commitment. Touch football probably doesn't cut it, but a sumo match or chess game might.

Purification: Merely claiming that the ends justify the means is not the Adamant Way. A Talon must never kill or harm others in a way that devalues life, but sometimes she *must* do these things, lest other lives suffer. Purification rituals resolve the contradiction. The Arrow admits that in harming another, she's committed an offense against the natural order. She purifies her soul with a symbolic cleansing. Purification oblations include ritual bathing, self-inflicted pain, altar offerings and fasting. Most caucuses regularly practice a small set of purification rituals based on local customs and convenience.

Swearing an Oath: Swearing an oath before one's peers in a Hallow earns an Adamantine Arrow Mana, even if the oath has other benefits. (It doesn't need to use Oathbinding or Fate magic, but even if the oath does, it still provides the benefit.) The ritual doesn't work if her thoughts wander while she's speaking. Alternately, the mage can write the oath down and display it at the Hallow. Arrows commonly write their vows in poetry or use calligraphy, so that the act of writing is a form of meditation. A few Arrows even express their oaths in drawings, paintings and sculptures.

Training: Different traditions teach the spiritual significance of training, but even the youngest Talons can invigorate themselves by practicing under a qualified teacher. The teacher obviously needs to be better than the learner at a given skill, spell or Arcanum. Furthermore, Arrows train to better serve others; an abstract love of learning is secondary. Training counts as an oblation only if the warrior-mage learns for the sake of duty.

Community Traditions

Without camaraderie, a warrior is lost. Even itinerants need the Adamantine Arrow. They shelter her, tolerate her challenges and listen to the teachings she brings back from the road. Outside of this minority, the role of the team is obvious. Oaths, chains of command, cabal symbolism and caucus culture all influence a Talon's occult techniques. Most importantly, they link magic to obligations. Every spell becomes an expression of her purpose in life, strengthening her commitment to the order.

Arrows use the following communities to refine their mystical methods. A knowledgeable member of the

order can discover a warrior-mage's sect by watching him cast a distinctive spell using the tradition's rote factors, or performing one of its signature oblations.

Martial Arts Schools

The Adamantine Arrow *dojo*, fencing *salle* or *wuguan* is a famous tradition. Outside of martial arts, the order also runs bodyguard academies, elite security training schools and revolutionary cadres that teach the so-called People's War. An innocuous gun club or firearms safety course could conceal a cabal or caucus from this tradition. In all cases, the group needs to teach more than a collection of ordinary fighting techniques if the school wants to engender a unique magical style.

The school must have a specific theory of magic that links its mundane methods (instinctive shooting, *kenjutsu* or grappling, for instance) to Supernal symbols. A punch has to be *more* than a fist smacking an enemy. It should describe a host of magical operations. A Chinese martial artist might say the punch flows from focused intent to create *fajin* power that shoots through bones and tendons. She uses that theory to increase her strength beyond what musculature and even perfect technique allow.

The school also needs special customs. Blood oaths, belt rankings and uniforms are examples. Without them, even a school of hardened Talons is an alliance of convenience, not a true teaching brotherhood. Some schools are secret societies with political aims in the Fallen World or monasteries where members govern their souls with physical discipline.

Oblations: Practicing a martial arts or fitness routine taught by the school; teaching a class; taking a test for a license or rank; meditating on the grounds of the school; performing a ritual in honor of a master teacher, patron deity or school religion; studying a manual specific to the school.

Rote Factors: Using the school's favored weapon as part of a rote mudra (+1); casting on school grounds (+1); successfully using one of the school's techniques (specific to the rote) in combat on the previous turn (+1); spending a full turn (or for an extended spell, twice the usual time) performing a martial arts routine for no other reason than to focus the mind (+2).

Spiritual Knighthood

Templars, Hospitallers and bands of *ronin* are examples of spiritual knighthoods ("knighthood" is used loosely here to describe organized groups of pre-modern warriors). The Adamantine Arrow believes that Sleepers form these groups because something deep within a committed soldier

reminds him of the order — that long ago, men and women took up swords to defend the only worthy realm in the world. Arrows have always dwelled within these fellowships, living as lowly foot soldiers or wealthy grandmasters according to their spiritual needs and the order's will. Most of these groups have died out or mutated into something quite different from their original forms, but when the order takes an interest, the ancient sects endure. A handful of Arrows in France, Spain and Scotland legitimately claim descent from the Knights Templar. (See **Magical Traditions** to learn the special benefits they claim from their heritage.) There are even older examples. Mastigos keep the warrior cult of Mithras alive in the catacombs of Istanbul.

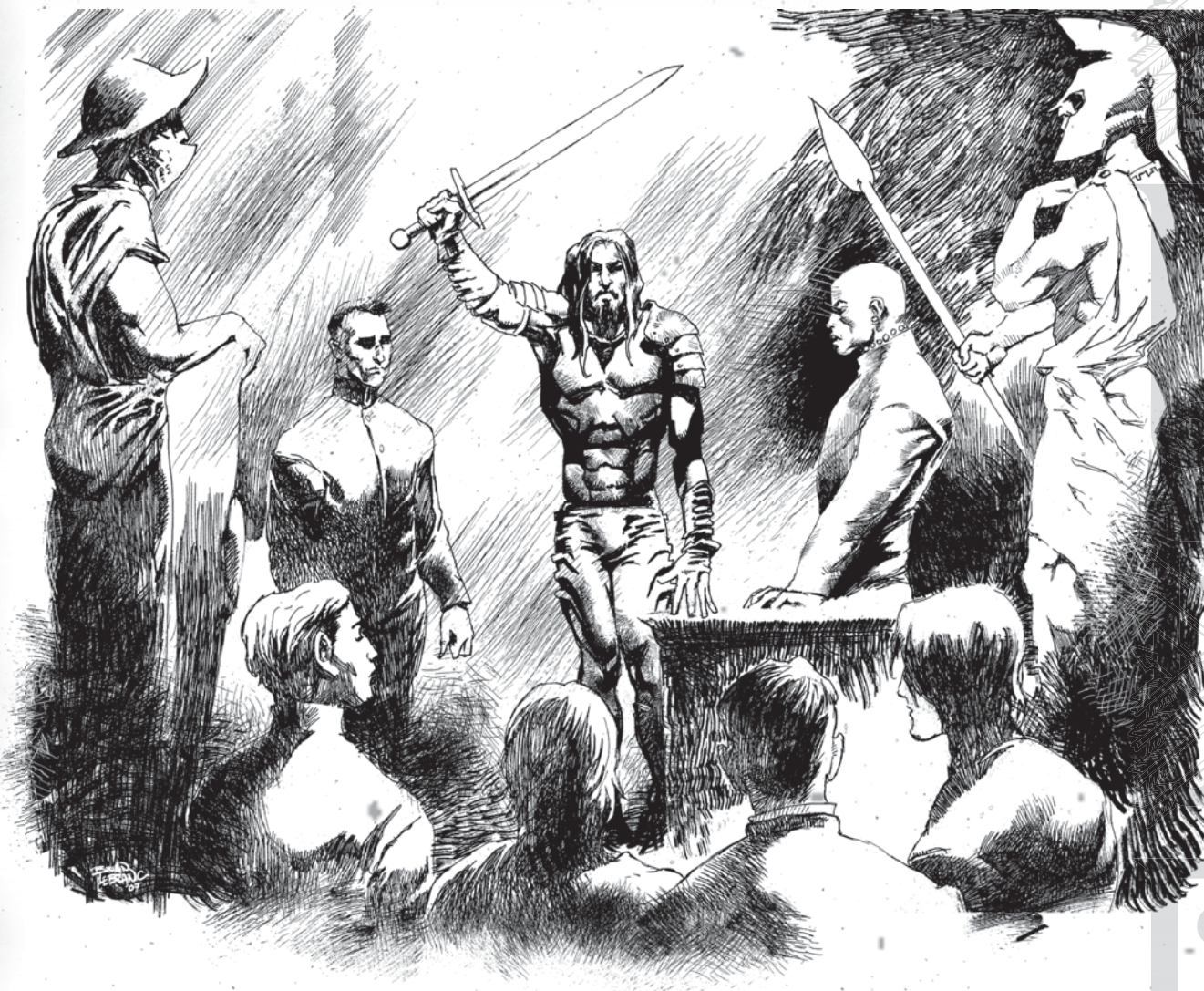
Other spiritual knighthoods are reconstructions or wholesale inventions. There are Arthurian cabals, devoted to guarding the Atlantean Camelot. They rub shoulders with Tibetan warrior-priests who guard the secret gates of Shambhala. Some fellowships methodically revive ancient ideas; others grow from the charisma of a single Master. What they have in common are elaborate initiation ceremonies, ranks, ritual dress, ceremonial weapons and complex mythologies whose full secrets are only known to a select inner circle. Many spiritual knighthoods have a periphery of followers: members of a cult, lodge or New Age movement who know enough about the group to find common cause, but not so much that they could betray the sorcerers at the core.

Oblations: Meditation or prayer within the sect's temple; attending a knighthood function in full ceremonial garb; performing a religious sacrament (communion, sacrifice, etc.) practiced by the fellowship.

Rote Factors: Openly wearing the sign of the fellowship or its ceremonial weapon (+1); casting upon another member of the group (+1); using knighthood symbolism or mythology (+1; myth or symbol is specific to the rote); casting a destructive spell on a traitor who was part of the group (+2); casting a spell as part of the group's initiation ritual (+2).

Tribal Initiation

Not every mage believes in a prehistoric high culture. The path of progress does not inevitably lead to the city. Arrows who follow primitive philosophies are usually skeptical of so-called Atlantean ruins, noting that the label's been applied to artifacts and sites with so little in common that the term has almost no objective merit. In search of humanity's core warrior teachings, they reject ancient and modern military models. Instead, they look to tribal societies, where the roles of hunter and warrior are intertwined. Arrows who grew up in



tribal groups often stick to their native traditions and keep the authentic rites of these sects.

Warrior initiations bring Arrows together by using a combination of mythology and practical training. There are no elaborate degrees; a warrior who knows how to fight and how to tell the tales is a full member. He needs to prove his worth, however. Walkabouts, vision quests and lone survival challenges are common. Some bands just ask members to contribute to the well-being of the tribe or tease them with friendly hazing.

Initiated bands respect age and accomplishment, but not in the distant, officious manner of a literate society. Respect is a variant of friendship: a deep sense of trust that overrides personal ego. Tribal Arrows keep their myths and some of their teachings secret. Oral tradition preserves the band's legendry and methods, including rites, oblations and techniques, but also practical wisdom about hunting, fighting and getting along with others.

Oblations: Telling a band story to assembled members; bringing home food together; sharing a meal; initiating a new member; performing a ceremony (dance, storytelling, etc.) for the tribe.

Rote Factors: In band/tribal territory (+1); using a medicine bag, talisman or other tribal power object (+1); protecting a member of the tribe (+1); protecting a member of the band (+2); emulating the actions of a mythic figure from initiation stories (+3; a specific situation for each rote).

Special Forces

There are nearly a million and a half active-duty personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces — enough to support mages in their midst. It's not just conceivable that the Adamantine Arrow would have members in the ranks but a near certainty. An Arrow's Special Forces magical style harnesses technical skill, high

technology, the chain of command and patriotic fervor to enhance the style's magical abilities.

Modern military service around the world includes special traditions. Arrows in the military study these as seriously as they would ancient myths. They draw occult techniques from cutting-edge operational doctrine, since the "cutting edge" is often unconsciously drawn from ancient methods. Technology takes the place of long-forgotten magic. Modern armies require highly trained soldiers; they use academic tests, psychological exams and physical training to perfect them for duty. Not only do Arrows easily meet these standards, but the mages can take them to the next level, creating a supernaturally effective fighting force.

Arrows are often a force within a force: a team that gets results on the fringes of official sanctioning. There aren't enough Arrows to staff a 40-strong SEAL team, but they might be the senior members of a single platoon. Sorcerers are capable of taking more "fluid" assignments. They change their faces, alter relevant records and move from service to service. Arrows sometimes do this for the order, but even though they're mages, they rarely treat military service like a "cover." They've vowed to serve their country and take that as seriously as any other oath. They bend the rules of decorum, but usually it's for the sake of Sleeper operations. This is a necessity when soldiers stumble upon supernatural danger. In the wilderness or the remnants of ancient cities, monsters and curses await unlucky platoons.

Oblations: Completing a training exercise; directing enlisted Sleepers; marching in an exhibition drill; entering a Hollow that was occupied by enemy forces (by the standards of the mage's military service); honoring the war dead at a monument.

Rote Factors: Casting in uniform (+1, exact uniform by rote); mage or target on military base (of the military service of the mages who designed the rote; +1); using assigned service weapon or gear (+1; exact specifications depend on rote); spell enhanced authority or leadership of ranking officer (+2); spell used against officially designated enemy (+2).

Police

Occult policing is a new tradition, but it's growing fast for two reasons. First of all, many Talons come from law enforcement backgrounds. They've always believed that their profession has a spiritual dimension. The public puts its trust in the officer, giving her lethal weapons and extraordinary powers to serve society. Secondly, law enforcement has evolved as a cultural institution to the point where law enforcement has its own mythology. To

radicals, police represent the oppressive power of the state. In fiction, they're the justice system's conscience, moderating blind judgments with their moral discretion.

Some Arrows believe that the modern concept of the peace officer has evolved to the point where it reflects the Awakened City. Modern police follow customs that well up from the collective unconscious, capturing the spirit of an ancient utopia's protectors. Warrior-mages study the symbols that lie beneath Fallen, ephemeral shells. Warrants, weapons and uniforms are the trappings of an eternal office.

While military mages can band together in the same unit, Arrows with law enforcement roles rarely work together in groups of more than two. Jurisdictional borders prevent the order from concentrating its strength in a particular department. There are rumors that the Adamantine Arrow has a cabal in the FBI, however, and these larger groups might form in other national police services.

Oblations: Profiling, forensics or other investigation work; studying the law; writing a police report (or a report in its style); conducting an interrogation.

Rote Factors: Casting in uniform (+1); displaying a badge (+1); executing a warrant (+1); using modern CSI/investigation technology (+1, exact method depends on rote); target has committed a crime by

Back to the Magic

Modern traditions make it easy for Arrow players to ignore the fact that they're mages and not "super cops." To a certain extent, this is plausible. Order mages often believe that magic emerges from personal excellence. A Talon soldier's magic is simply the result of being so skilled and dedicated that his actions reflect a Supernal ideal. He embodies the "Platonic form" of the soldier. He's the avatar of a modern war god or guardian spirit.

Nevertheless, every tradition should be grounded in actual occult techniques. We've left these vague because every chronicle treats magic a bit differently. You might leave the esoteric elements in the background, or the players might write their own small treatises about their characters' magical theories.

Just remember that it's there. In an occult cop's hands, a warrant isn't just a prop — it symbolizes the authority of the first human society, filtered through history into its current form. In essence, he casts spells that build on the first great spells of Atlantis.

Sleeper standards (+1, but never beneficial rites); target is mage's assigned partner (+2).

Mythic Traditions

Religions, myths and superstitions all contain fragments of the secret truth: Supernal nature, falling to Earth like sparse, life-giving rain. The five Supernal Realms inspire artists, storytellers, historians, mystics and madmen. Subtle emanations flow into their dreams. Their works and utterances combine ancient lore with distortions and outright inventions.

Atlantis and its offshoots left clues about the true world, providing material building blocks for the myths. The Adamantine Arrow studies legends about warriors, self-perfection and honor, searching for Supernal natural laws in old epics, theological systems and spiritual visions.

Mythic traditions link Fallen legends and beliefs to the Supernal World. Warrior religions, philosophies and rituals contain just enough truth to help warrior-mages channel supernatural power. Furthermore, consider so-called protosciences that rely on mysticism as well as observation. Ancient warriors used astrology to plan their battles and meridians of internal energy to deliver death blows. Supernal magic abides within these antique arts. For more information on the relationship between the Supernal Realms and Fallen belief systems, see "Occult Correspondences" on p. 35 of **Mage: The Awakening**.

The following traditions don't have set oblations or rote factors. Real-world mythology is just too vast a subject to boil down to narrow motifs. Instead, Storytellers should research legends and belief systems and base oblations and rites on their practices. **Magical Traditions** contains several examples to follow, along with rules for mages who totally immerse themselves in cultural magic. **Tome of the Mysteries** has step-by-step instructions on how to customize individuals and groups to follow variant mythologies that encompass real faiths and legends and how the interpret or reject orthodox Atlantean theories. Remember that this section contains only a fraction of the possible correspondences.

The Aether

The Aether is a realm of unbridled energy: storms, pillars of fire and seas of boiling Mana. An Arrow imposes his discipline, separating strands of power into coherent forms. Sometimes he gives fire, thunder and Mana names and faces; sometimes he treats them as aspects of his own body, to be shaped by yogic postures and fighting forms. A few Obrimos treat the Aether as the caress of God,

and summon its aspects with fearful prayers. The realm's resonant mythologies include the following:

Father Thunder: Ancient Indo-European and Semitic gods rule the violent skies. Springing from the root *Dyēus*, Zeus, Tyr and Dagda represent the Sky Father, who rules the daytime skies. *Perkunos* becomes Thor, Vedic Parjanya and Gaulish Taranis: lords of storms and punishment. These gods are alternately confident patriarchs and furious destroyers. Anu and Ea also have useful rites. The order invokes these deities to combine destructive power with rightful authority. Finally, some monotheistic mages believe in a wrathful God whose works resemble those of Father Thunder.

Internal Energy: Indian *prana* and Chinese *qi* are two examples of the doctrine of subtle energy. Arrows use these theories to channel Mana through their bodies. Yoga, *qigong* exercises, Chinese internal alchemy and Galenic humors manipulate the Aether's balance within a person or place. Material manifestations are a high art. They're the product of careful *feng shui* or concentrated yogic enlightenment. The guru inspires visions and brings about miracles, wading through fire and floating in the air. The Perfected Adept Legacy (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 349–351) represents extreme dedication to these philosophies. (Perfected Adept *chi* is just a different spelling of *qi*.)

Angels and Demons: God gives His angels flaming swords — and demons punish the damned with hell-fire. The Aether responds to these legends, rewarding the devout and diabolical alike. Arrows who believe themselves modern crusaders or jihadi use sincere prayer. More points of view treat angels and demons as intelligent cosmic patterns that can be manipulated by mages who know the proper signs and seals. In Buddhist traditions, local demons serve the enlightened. These "dharma protectors" were fierce, evil beings before they found refuge in the Awakened One's teachings.

Arcadia

This is the Realm of Faerie, where witches foretell a warrior's doom on the roadside and kingdoms fall because of a foolish kiss. Enlightened minds transcend time and karma; all others fall into the lockstep of destiny. Some traditions provide paths to lead Arrows out of ignorance, to master their strange fates.

Hidden Kingdoms: Camelot, Shambhala and Prester John's kingdom have special protectors: enlightened knights and warrior-mystics who band together to serve a bastion of righteousness. Some of these realms existed in the old legends; others tell of a realm hidden beneath the clouds in a secret corner of the world. And many leg-

ends say that the old and hidden kingdoms will return in humanity's darkest hour. Are secret kingdoms reflections of Atlantis, or prophecies of its return? An Acanthus who studies the cyclical nature of time might say "both." The Otherworld hides them and waits for destiny to call them back. Arthur will come forth from Avalon; the Ríghen King will ride his army from the gates of Shambhala to conquer ignorance. Arthurian lore and Tibetan mysticism are two ways to explore these legends.

The Reclusive Sage: "When the student is ready, the master will appear." Multiple traditions say that when a warrior has trained long and hard, an enlightened being will arrive to impart the great secrets. To prepare, a student read omens, subjects himself to ascetic disciplines and cuts away the things that attach him to the world. Is the mystery teacher a disguised god, like Odin? A Taoist recluse? An Oracle of the Watchtower? In Asia, goblin swordsmen and fighting animals inspired mountain-dwelling warriors. Wandering Arrows study these myths intently. They stick to the road, pausing only to interpret signs relevant to their divination systems. To find the sage, one must live like the sage, cutting away burdensome attachments to better sense the flow of Fate. Taoists call this *wu wei*.

The Wild Hunt: Warrior faeries and horned gods lead the Wild Hunt from Arcadia, warning of a doom to come—or serving it to foreordained victims. Various myths put Gwynn ap Nudd, Herne the Hunter, Odin or even Arthur at its head, leading hunting dogs with the authority of the horned crown. Ancient Gauls and Germans performed Wild Hunt rituals and even used it as a military tactic. Some painted their bodies and weapons black to stalk enemy camps, and were possessed by the Hunt's wolves or "hell-hounds." Talons call the Wild Hunt to throw chaos into enemy. Modern manifestations of the Hunt use Fate to make opponents collide angry mobs, traffic accidents and feral animals. Conversely, an Arrow might look at such accidents as manifestations of the Hunt and use cold iron and mistletoe to drive it away.

Pandemonium

Pandemonium teaches the order lessons in thought and distance. A *kenjutsu* master knows that an inch is the difference between life and death. A strategist knows that hearts and minds ultimately win all wars. Pandemonium is a realm of warring wills and passions: proof that Existence Is War and that thought shapes reality. Fear makes a small opponent look like a giant. Loyalty turns a general into a god. In Pandemonium, biases turn real. To employ its powers, Arrows need to master their emotions. They must inhabit the objective eye of Pandemonium's storm. With a clear mind, they bring the realm to the

Fallen World and enmesh enemies in their own prejudices. The following legends help them do it:

Love and War: Pandemonium responds to passion. When war takes its birth from a mix of wrath and love, the realm stirs. In the *Iliad* and *Mahabharata*, lovers and kings draw the gods themselves into their strife. In early Arthurian tales, Mordred and Arthur are unrelated enemy kings—and rivals for Guinevere. Effective rituals remind the gods of their old rivalries and bring forth the emotions of ancient heroes. These stories can calm inflamed hearts, too. Krishna comforts Arjuna, telling him to find solace in resolute duty, and the hate of Achilles warns Arrows that there's a limit to even righteous anger.

Occult Strategy: Ancient Indian, Chinese and Japanese methods combine metaphysics with strategy. Generals divide terrain into elemental types; they consult the stars or I Ching to plan offensives. Surviving *ninjutsu* manuals teach assassins to disguise themselves according to defined human archetypes. Special mudras and *kuji-kiri* positions summon mental attributes. Once a strategist or scout identifies the ruling elements and stars of a situation, she manipulates it at will. Some Arrows use the five elements of Chinese metaphysics: metal, wood, fire, water and earth (see **Magical Traditions** for more detail on their Awakened use). Others use Classical elements (including the fifth "ether," "void" or "quintessence" element) or Asian and Western astrology.

War and Wisdom: There are two war gods. The Greeks called the lord of untamed violence Ares. Selfish and skilled, he was the patron of the Spartans, whose ruthless ferocity still inspires a mix of admiration and disgust. Athena represented the values of her own city, devoted to wise force. Athens was still amoral, but in its love for strategy it celebrated clever victories over raw bloodshed. These gods represent the militant side Pandemonium's duality. As they struggle, so do the intellectual and passionate sides of every Talon. Arrows should honor strategy, but never at the expense of pure excellence.

The Primal Wild

This is a realm of predator and prey, where all things hew to their natural purpose. Arrows believe that excellence is this natural state. The Fallen World's pollution, diseased societies and dulled emotions bar people from physical, mental and spiritual excellence. If pure spirits returned to the world, they would teach humanity the capabilities they've overlooked: thoughts and feelings that everyone yearns for, but few are allowed to fully experience. In the Primal Wild, emotions aren't liabilities, but connect people to basic survival drives. Anger is a red haze that drives humans and animals to survive.

Hunger and satiation, lust and fear — all are powerful and purposeful, supported by an ecology that doesn't separate beasts from spirits. To hunt, fight, run and live are all-consuming pursuits, each as complex as a book of runes but as instinctive as drawing breath. A wise Talon balances the Primal Wild's lessons with the order's ethos, lest she abandon her duties for the elegance of pure survival. Mythic touchstones include the following:

Legendary Wrath: Battle-madness is a feature of several traditions. Norse berserkers dedicated themselves to Odin and wore wolf and bear skins into the fray. Some say that berserkers made these animals their totems, and some berserkers were said to be “evening-wolves,” or shapechangers. Cu Chulainn's battle frenzy supposedly made him a huge, physically twisted killer. Arrows see links between these stories and the “Gothic Dance” of the Varangian Guard, where Constantinople's Norse used animal skins and masks in ritual battle maneuvers. Arrows likewise use ceremonial dress along with meditation, drugs and raw anger to attain a battle-mad state. Most are skilled enough to “ride the wave” of anger, but some spirits of frenzy are strong enough to break Arrow discipline.

Physical Arts: “Animal” forms of kung fu and external martial arts feats come with occult prescriptions. Martial arts masters are said to toughen their hands with herbal medicines, katas and secret exercises, striking hot sand a thousand times until their fists can punch through steel. In Japan, famous martial artists take to the mountains to learn from nature. They say that the *kami* teach them while the elements batter away weakness. Some animal styles include shamanic elements. Practitioners channel the animal's spirit to overcome human doubts. Where Sleepers use weapons to duplicate fangs and claws, mages grow them from their own bodies.

Totems: In the lodge or the bush, warrior-shamans encounter spirit teachers and allies. Traditional totems protect a family or society. Arrow cabals choose their totems after meeting them in rituals, or take one member's ancestral spirit as their own. In modern times, personal totems are also popular, though more traditional Arrows might scoff if a young Talon talks about his “power animal.” Arrows honor their totems with prayers, offerings, small altars and medicine bags.

Stygia

To the order, Stygia isn't a silent mausoleum, but a final redoubt, where warriors from all eras prepare for the last battle of the Fallen Age. Legends say that the order's virtuous dead train together in a great iron hall,

mastering every weapon that has been or ever will be made. Dead Masters compose secret treatises, waiting for worthy descendants to share them with. Hammers ring in this Last Fortress, beating into shape weapon of inestimable power. When the honored dead think the time is right, they send them to the Fallen World. Destiny and guardians ghosts guide them into the right hands. Death is not the end — it's the greatest duty of all.

Living Arrows help the dead with the following traditions:

Apocalypse: Eschatology is a common field of study for Arrows, and more than a few believe that the world will end sooner rather than later. Militant sorcerers who believe in the End Times make their allies a bit nervous, so adherents don't discuss it much in public. Even Talons who don't want to hasten the cosmic cycle put great stock in gods and faiths that postulate a final battle, or promise that the Fallen Age's end is inevitable. Thor is popular in this context, wielding the hammer that destroys evil at Ragnarok. Durga slays the demons who threaten all existence, and as the last Avatar, Vishnu leads the charge to the end of a corrupt age. Christians draw upon the Apocalypse of Saint John — and Satanists do, too, though the latter isn't a very common Arrow faith at all.

Divine Ancestors: The Adamantine Arrow honors its dead with monuments, histories and prayers, but some mages go farther, incorporating their forebears into spells. There are many traditions to choose from. In Asia and Africa, ancestral shrines watch over businesses, schools and households. Ancestors report Arrows' behavior to greater gods or render judgments themselves. Proper offerings and devotion (and sometimes, blatant bribes) ensure merciful verdicts. Others visualize the order's fallen soldiers feasting in Valhalla. Warrior-mages chant runes and sound horns to summon the glorious dead. In traditions all over the world, ancestors defend people against ordinary threats and enemy magic.

Forge Gods: Hephaestus, Wayland, Goibniu, even the Yellow Emperor — these are the smiths of Stygia, who craft sacred weapons for humans and gods alike. Arrow artisans honor these gods with traditional rituals. Some Arrows personally emulate particular gods. An Arrow wears a god's symbols and uses his tools, all to channel divine artisanship through direct sympathy. This is a popular choice for injured warriors because in many traditions, the smithing god has a deformity or wound, such as Hephaestus's clubfoot. In a few situations, mages channel the forge god through outright possession. Haiti's Ogun manifests this way.



CHAPTER THREE: AMONG WARRIORS

Panting, Rowan approached his mentor. "There. How was that?"

The older mage sighed. "I'm sorry, Rowan, but you failed."

Rowan gaped. "How the hell did I fail? I stopped the guy. You said 'find the violation of the law and stop it.' I found the guy, and I stopped him. The police are going to find him passed out with the stuff —"

"Stop talking, Rowan." The younger mage closed his mouth and snapped to attention. At least he was obedient. "Which laws matter most?"

"Those that protect the people, rather than serve the lawmakers."

"What do you do when more than one law is being broken?"

Rowan's eyes flicked upward just a bit, but his mentor didn't notice. Rowan gave an exasperated sigh. "Enforce the law that protects people."

"Yes." He stepped past Rowan and looked over his balcony at the street below. The little girl was still lost. The man was still sitting on his porch, his wife's blood drying on his knuckles. The teenaged boy was still sitting on the bus stop bench, clutching the pistol in his jacket, trying to make up his mind.

"The law you enforced protects us, in a roundabout and abstract way. What you did might stop a Sleeper from growing suspicious. But there are people down there suffering, Rowan, and you could have helped them without them ever knowing you existed. Certainly without them knowing you're Awakened." He turned back to his pupil, who had a look of pained realization now. *That's good, at least,* thought the mentor.

"You can try again in a month, Rowan."

Rowan left his mentor's flat. A moment later, the mentor saw him crouched down, talking to the little girl.

The mentor smiled. *Knew I picked a good one.*

*To me it is like the pretty, blue robin's egg.
Inside it is soft and gooey but someday it will grow into something wonderful.
But the egg cannot survive without its hard blue shell.
Police officers, soldiers, and other warriors are like that shell,
and someday the civilization they protect will grow into something wonderful.
For now, though, they need warriors to protect them from the predators.*
— David Grossman, Ltc. (Ret.), "On Sheep, Wolves and Sheepdogs"

Other orders of mages might contain layers upon layers of secrecy, filled with codes, passwords and precepts so arcane that only a dedicated student who did little else with his time could find his way to the center.

The Adamantine Arrow wants none of that. Yes, it has its secret societies, but most of them recruit by invitation only. That frees up the members of the order proper to *act*, rather than spend time preening or studying constantly. And action — service — is the watchword of the order.

This chapter discusses how a mage progresses within the order itself (though not the various factions and Legacies of the order, which receive attention in Chapter Four). This chapter also examines how the Arrow deals with Sleepers, the other orders of the Pentacle and the strange denizens of the World of Darkness.

Idealism Versus Reality

The following chapter talks about the Adamantine Arrow in general terms, and it is important to remember that the Arrow varies considerably from place to place. A practice that is in place in one Consilium might be unheard of elsewhere. While the generalities hold true more often than not, the players and the Storyteller should be wary of painting every member of the Arrow as a gentle, enlightened warrior. Just as many Sleepers in the world disregard the philosophies that they supposedly hold when it is expedient, or when overcome by emotion, or when they receive a better offer and so forth, the mages of the Talon of the Dragon sometimes lose sight of the Adamant Way.

This chapter includes many concrete examples of Adamantine Arrow mages and how they relate to the concepts discussed herein. The examples are meant to help you apply the teachings of the Arrow to your chronicle, whether that application comes in the form

of player-controlled characters or supporting cast. The examples aren't meant, however, to fully define the Arrow for you — that's really your affair.

Initiation and Recruitment

The Adamantine Arrow accepts applicants at any point during their development as mages, whether or not the applicants are already members of other orders. That doesn't mean that all such applicants become members of the order, just that the *Ungula Draconis* is willing to entertain entreaties from them. The Arrow is accommodating to prospective members, but they make one thing clear upfront: getting in isn't easy. Staying in isn't, either (more on maintenance of good standing in the Arrow can be found later in this chapter).

Mages-to-Be

No mage, no matter how well schooled in the divinatory arts, knows for certain who will Awaken and who won't. Mages can make predictions, of course, based on family history, personal experience and the magic patterns of the world, but the fact is that Awakening seems to be a matter of split-second opportunity. A person in the right situation might have a shot at glimpsing the Supernal Realms, and some people have that shot don't take it. The Arrow feels that perhaps not everyone *should* take it. Not everyone should Awaken.

This is a point of contention in the order, as some Arrow mages feel that to take the position that there are people who should remain Asleep and powerless their whole lives is just a bit fascist. Other mages, perhaps more realistically, point to Banishers, the Mad and those mages who aren't exactly *evil* but use their arts in a profoundly selfish or destructive way. Where do ethics come from? The question is interesting, but

a quick look around the world tells any honest person that wherever they come from, some folks missed out. Should those people whose ethical development is stunted be granted the same chance to Awaken as more socially adept citizens? What should the yardstick be? And, furthermore, can Awakenings be influenced to any meaningful degree, anyway?

The Adamantine Arrow feels that yes, Awakenings *can* be influenced, but not directly brought on. A person can be put into a situation in which he has a choice: Awaken or remain Asleep. It might be possible to force these moments by arranging appropriate situations (which the Awakening Gambit Legacy attempts to do; see p. 151), but the main body of the Adamantine Arrow feels that trying to force an Awakening would be unethical and artificial. Rather, when considering mages-to-be, the Arrow looks for situations likely to produce mages, rather than people likely to become mages.

The Mysterium, the Free Council and the Silver Ladder have conducted studies and polls designed to identify triggers for Awakening, and the Adamantine Arrow is happy to avail itself of that data when performing the order's own investigations and operations. According to most of these studies, Awakenings most often come about in the following situations:

- **Personal Crisis:** Divorce, loss of a loved one, foreclosure of a mortgage, even a crisis of faith often precede an Awakening.

- **Violence:** Many mages visit the Supernal Realms as a response to (or in the midst of) a violent encounter.

- **The Supernatural:** A woman who is attacked by a vampire might respond by calling down fire. A man who hears the howling of werewolves might suddenly see them through a scrying window. But the touch of the supernatural need not be so overt to trigger an Awakening. A glimpse of a ghost, a brief glance at a mage changing water to smoke, anything that arouses a Sleeper's soul from the Lie can be enough.

- **Family History:** As much as it baffles mages who take an interest in genetics, the Awakening *does* seem to run in families, as evidenced by the *Proximi* who sometimes serve the orders. Is it the Awakening itself that follows a family line, or some other factor that simply makes the Awakening more likely? Mages aren't sure, but they do keep their eyes on the appropriate families.

- **Call to Action:** A hero is someone who acts for the greater good, despite personal risk. The term has

lost most of its meaning through ubiquity, but the Adamantine Arrow recognizes that in situations where heroism is called for, the hero might rise up to the Supernal. The order is forced to note, though, that failure to act — paralysis, indecision, even cowardice — can also precede an Awakening.

Given these triggers, the Adamantine Arrow pays attention. When a riot breaks out, Arrows monitor the police scanners (sometimes with devices, sometimes magically), looking for reports that have no mundane explanations or for reports of people who are shell-shocked or comatose. Usually, such people are just wounded, but sometimes their souls are temporarily gone, winging their way to the Supernal Realm of their choice. Some Arrow mages frequent cop or fireman bars, listening for stories that might lead to new mages (or other matters relevant to the order). Hospitals, of course, are also good hunting grounds for nascent mages.

Although Arrows pay attention to any events that could potentially trigger Awakenings, they put a much higher priority on those born of conflict, violence and heroism. The reason for this is probably obvious — the mages that such events produce, if any, will be a natural fit for the order. It's important to note that while the Arrow would rather have people who evince bravery and fortitude in the face of danger, Arrows recognize that some people curl up and cower when horror strikes. That's nothing to do with the person's *capacity* for action, but more to do with what he's been trained to do. Modern society teaches most of us that if we stay quiet and unobtrusive, someone will rescue us, and the mages of the Arrow know that it takes a truly exceptional person to overcome that instinct (especially in absence of other training). Therefore, when heroes rise, the Arrow seeks to make contact *whether or not* those heroes Awaken. Sleepers can be exceptional, too, and might well have something to teach the mages of the Adamantine Arrow.

Recruitment Tactic: Vulture Cabals

Some cities make a practice of having one or two cabals, sometimes purely Arrow but usually with a mix of orders, watch the Sleeper communities specifically for signs of Awakenings. The reason for this is partially to keep an eye out for new mages, of course, but also to observe trends in Awakening itself — any pattern, even a localized one, tells the Consilium something about what effect the Supernal has upon the Fallen (and thus, potentially, some insight into the Oracles or the Exarchs).

These cabals are meant to be scholars and counselors, and often that's the case. In some cities, though, the cabals also take the opportunity to loot and rob where crisis strikes, using magic to cover their tracks. Thus, cabals who observe Sleeper crisis points have earned the unfortunate nickname "vulture cabals" in some areas.

Newly Awakened

If the Adamantine Arrow is a mage's first contact — that is, the Arrow finds the newly Awakened person and has to instruct him in the finer points of mage society from the ground up, the order's policy is to try to avoid directly influencing his choice of allegiance. In reality, of course, it all comes down to the mage in question. Some prospects are just too skilled or capable to pass up, while others the Arrow would rather see become someone else's problem. Even the most ethical Arrow mentor might find himself making things just a *bit* easier on a pupil he'd like to hang on to... but then again, some Arrows make things more difficult for a promising recruit, seeking to test her mettle.

Not everyone responds to the Awakening the same way, of course, and one of the things that the Arrow always assesses new recruits for is the potential to become Banishers, go mad or otherwise lose control of or reject their power. Any of the Supernal Realms can produce nightmarish Awakenings, and so a bit of apprehension after an Awakening is natural. Some Awakenings result in the mages coming to feel that they have been granted the power to rewrite the world as is their wont, and the Arrow generally takes such mages down a peg (if possible, using no magic at all), just to force them into some perspective. A mage who comes through the Awakening more or less unfazed is a large red flag for the Arrow — the Awakening is an experience without comparison in a normal person's life, and if *that* doesn't change a person, that person is already damaged. The Arrow has occasionally seen religious fanatics Awaken and refuse to see the Supernal Realms in any context other than that of their faith, or serial killers, con men or other predators Awaken and have their egocentric and solipsistic outlooks confirmed. The Arrow doesn't necessarily put these people down like rabid dogs, but the order does tag them magically and keep a close eye on them. If the other orders in the local Consilium are trustworthy, the Arrow informs them about the potential problem.

He Needed Killing

Imagine if you could touch a person and look into his future. Imagine if you could know, with, let's say, 85% certainty, that this person would kill or seriously injure another with malice aforethought sometime in the not-too-distant future. Now imagine that, upon realizing that, you had the power to slightly alter that person's musculature, sealing his vocal folds and making him suffocate without leaving a mark on his body or harming anyone else.

These are the kinds of ethical dilemmas that the mages of the Adamantine Arrow face. There is no one answer, no order-wide policy, on what to do if someone's fate is to maim or kill. All of the obvious arguments — does that make the mage no better than the killer? Does it fall within the Arrow's assumed responsibility of guardianship? Can the killer-to-be really be judged on something he hasn't done yet? — must be considered, and sometimes there isn't enough time to consider them properly. Whatever decision the Arrow makes, he must live with it... and, potentially, justify it.

New mages tend to fall in with a cabal (or sometimes a solitary mage) and learn the basics about Awakened society — the Consilium, the *Lex Magica*, the cabal/order structure and so on. A mage in this position doesn't really have a title. "Apprentice" sends the wrong message, since the fledgling isn't formally apprenticed to anyone. "Apostate" has other connotations (specifically, a mage who knows about the orders but hasn't joined one, for whatever reason). If the new mage is learning from an Arrow cabal, he is often called a rookie or rook ("novice," in more formal cabals).

Arrow cabals teach their rookies about magic and the responsibilities it entails, first and foremost. Cabals teach meditation (not every mage comes through a period of training with the Arrow with the Meditative Mind Merit, but many do) and impulse control, since an untrained mage might cast spells without realizing it. Cabals don't teach High Speech or rites until they are sure that the rookie understands exactly what he's capable of doing if he starts throwing spells around with no temperance, and to that end, Arrow mentors, once they ascertain a new mage's Path, try to test the

limits of what the rookie can accomplish. A Moros mage who is capable of casting a Perfecting Matter spell but only a Knowing or Unveiling spell in Death is a very different kind of Necromancer than one who can cast Ruling spells in either Arcanum with equal proficiency. The Arrow, similar to the other orders, employs tests of magical skill that allow the order to place a new recruit on the Apprentice/Initiate/Disciple/Adept/Master continuum, though these ranks aren't formally attached to a mage until he either joins an order or officially refuses to do so.

The Arrow observes a pronounced break between mages who are training to join the order and rookies. Rookies are, again, not permitted access to Arrow rites or any other training reserved for members or prospective members of the order. Rookies are, however, free to visit with other mages and cabals (some of whom *do* teach rites as a kind of carrot to lure the mage to their own orders) and to go about their mundane lives. Many Arrow cabals assign a Mastigos (or another mage proficient at scrying) to check in on the rookie periodically, just to make sure he isn't getting into trouble. In those rare instances that a cabal is looking after more than one rookie at a time, an Arrow mage might be assigned this task full-time.

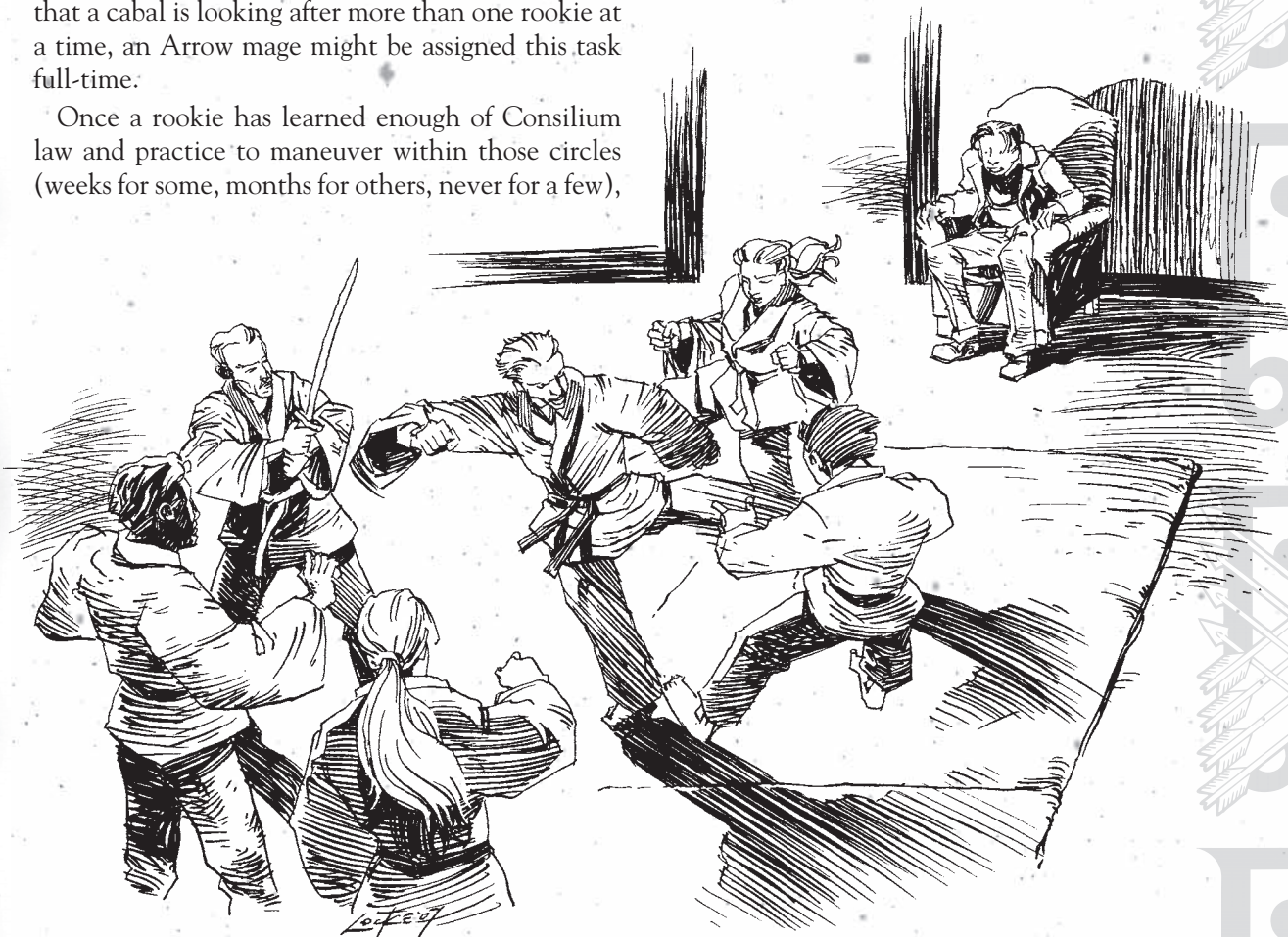
Once a rookie has learned enough of Consilium law and practice to maneuver within those circles (weeks for some, months for others, never for a few),

the Arrow cabal presents the rookie to the Consilium. This "ceremony" is usually informal and takes only a few moments — the new mage thanks the cabal for educating him, states his shadow name for the Consilium and then sits down. Different Consilii have different standards for what happens next; some allow new mages to express an intent to join a given order, while others simply place the new mage with a cabal based on need and location.

If the new mage does wish to join the Adamantine Arrow, whether he makes that decision during the period of education or after his presentation, he becomes a prospect (see below).

Recruitment Tactic: Display of Power

People who know how to fight fascinate us. Martial artists, boxers and others who can obviously protect themselves spark feelings of awe and perhaps a bit of jealousy in folks who haven't had such training. So while the Arrow doesn't come and say, "Join us and we'll teach you magical kung fu," a cabal instructing a new mage might well bring him around to their sanctum and have him watch them train. The



implication is clear — “As part of the Arrow, this is what you learn.”

Of course, making it appear easy would be misleading and ultimately detrimental to the order. No one gets any points for quantity of recruits, and so when showing off for the new mages it's important to demonstrate how hard the Path really is. But if the new mage is courted by, say, the Mysterium as well as the Arrow, and his image of the former is reading books all night while his image of the latter is *dodging bullets*, well....

Prospects

A mage who wishes to join the Adamantine Arrow and is not currently a member of another order must make his intentions known to the ranking member of the order in the Consilium. At that point, the mage is a “prospect.” Some mages remain prospects for a matter of minutes — the ranking Arrow member considers the applicant and rejects him immediately. This is unusual, though, and it implies either that the Arrow superior is biased against the prospect or that the prospect has committed some heinous and unforgivable crime that the Arrow cannot overlook. More often, the mage is admitted as a prospect and initiation begins.

Initiation into the Adamantine Arrow has five stages: Petition, Evaluation, Tempering, Battle and Reception.

Petition Stage

From the moment that a mage declares his intent to join the order until the moment that the Arrow agrees to an Evaluation, the mage is in the Petition stage. As mentioned, this is usually fairly brief. Mages aren't common anyway, and so the Arrow can't afford to reject prospects out of hand without some compelling reason (or deep bias). Sometimes, though, the Arrow superior takes a little longer to make the decision. He might ask for a demonstration of the mage's ability, whether through a sparring match, the Duel Arcane, casting of a particular spell or Practice or a test of knowledge. A test of knowledge usually demands information about the history and present state of the area in which the mages live, and has more to do with making sure that the Arrow is paying attention to the world around him than actually testing factual knowledge. Sometimes the Arrow superior defers on making the decision for a short time (one week is generally the maximum), and a young

mage or cabal is assigned to watch the prospect 24 hours a day without him noticing. The Arrow isn't interested in discovering prurient details; the order simply wants to know about the mage's routine. Does he drive around with the windows up and the music loud, or does he listen to what's happening outside his car? Does he greet people on the street or ignore them? What spells does he cast in the morning before going out? Does he have “street eyes,” or can an armed man just walk right up to him?

Some cabals, either out of zealotry or boredom, test prospects in this stage, casting spells at them to see if they notice or sending spirits or ghosts to bedevil the prospects in small ways. The Arrow frowns upon this practice, because the point of this observation period is to see what kind of person the mage is *in absence* of external forces. Plus, such activities can and do quickly get out of hand.

Evaluation Stage

Once a prospect passes the Petition stage, he undergoes an Evaluation. This stage is usually completed within three days, and seldom goes longer than a week. The Evaluation is exactly that — a series of tests designed to give the Adamantine Arrow as complete a picture as possible of this mage and what he brings to the order. What exactly is involved in an Evaluation varies from Consilium to Consilium, but the following areas are common:

- **Magical Prowess:** The prospect is required to demonstrate the most complex spells he knows, the spells that he feels are his strongest, and then is asked to experiment, pushing his own limits. Some testers even ask prospects to cast spells using Arcana that they have never used before, calling down the laws of their respective Supernal Realms in new ways.

- **Physical Fitness:** Not every member of the Arrow is an athlete, but members of the order are expected to stay in good shape. How much this is enforced varies, but a prospect's fitness is always checked during the Evaluation. A Thyrus mage typically performs a Knowing Life spell for this evaluation, though some Consilii like to do things the old-fashioned way — the prospect must run a mile in a certain time, perform a given number of pull-ups or demonstrate some other feat of physical prowess.

- **Strategy:** Sometimes it's as simple as a game of chess; other times the mage is given a complex logistical problem to solve and a time limit. Not every mage is a tactician, but prospects with a knack for strategy

need to be identified early so they can be trained in coupling magic with lateral thinking.

- **Combat:** A mage rarely comes to the Arrow with no fighting skills whatsoever. Most have studied martial arts to some small degree and/or have learned the basics of firearms. Combat testing is something the Arrow takes seriously, and hand-to-hand combat is sometimes tested in “real” situations — the prospect is attacked by masked assailants and must defend himself as best he can, using magic, weapons or whatever else he can think of (naturally, a mage with some proficiency in the Life Arcanum is nearby to heal anyone who is injured).

- **Personal History:** The Arrow recognizes that what a person did pre-Awakening isn’t necessarily indicative of what he will do as a mage, but the order also has a deeply ingrained attitude that the leopard doesn’t often change his spots. Background accounts for some things — a mage who grew up in gang culture probably has different things to answer for than someone who grew up in the suburbs, but then, if the former gang member killed someone, it tends to mean something different from the suburbanite doing the same thing. A specially trained interviewer (typically a Warlock) performs this portion of the Evaluation, and lying during the interview is a good way to bring the initiation to an abrupt end.

- **Ethics:** Unfortunately, there is no objective measure of ethical rectitude, even for mages. Yes, spells such as “Soul Marks” give Arrows a rough idea who they’re getting, but standards vary from place to place, and morality is such a nebulous concept that the order is forced to rely on the gut instinct of those performing the Evaluation. Fortunately, these evaluators are usually practiced and perceptive, but even so, they are sometimes wrong. Ethical Evaluations often take the form of hypothetical situations.

Prospects aren’t normally rejected during the Evaluation stage, but some become discouraged and quit when they discover that they don’t have many of the skills that the Arrow is testing them for. The order regretfully lets these mages go, as they don’t have the tenacity to undergo the rest of the initiation. An especially promising prospect (or one with a close friend in the Arrow) might be told the truth — the Evaluation isn’t a “weeding-out” procedure. Except for discovery of extreme moral failings on the part of the prospect during this phase, there is no way to flunk out. The Arrow is simply noting which skills need to be remediated, so that the order can effectively train the prospect during the Tempering stage.

Tempering Stage

The Tempering stage teaches prospects to be strong, but more to the point, it teaches them to be well-rounded. Any areas of deficiency noted during the Evaluation stage of initiation are given precedence, but all Arrows are trained in magic, Consilium lore, self-defense, diplomacy, strategy, leadership and ethics.

The forms that this instruction takes are many and varied. Every Arrow mentor (variously called “sensei,” “sufi,” “teacher” or “instructor”) has her own methods of training recruits, and a prospect often trains under several different mages over the course of the Tempering stage. Indeed, in cities where the Arrow is well represented, a prospect might spend a week or two receiving instruction about the *Lex Magica* and other Consilium procedures from one cabal, then transfer to another for combat training. If multiple prospects enter the Tempering stage at the same time, they are almost always trained together, to get them used to working with other mages.

During this phase, prospects *might* be taught a few order rites, but this depends on the policies of the local Arrow. High Speech, though, is always taught at this stage. The Arrow usually learns which order-specific Legacies are represented within the Consilium, and, depending on the preferences of these mages, might apprentice under the practitioners for a brief time.

Mages at the Tempering stage are usually allowed (indeed, encouraged) to maintain their mundane lives. Most Arrow cabals feel that the ability to exist within the Fallen World is important, for practical purposes (being a professional mage isn’t usually a well-paying job), and because remaining connected to Sleepers helps the mage stay humble. In an order in which service is so important, a certain degree of humility is crucial, and if the mage spends all of his time around the Awakened, it becomes easy for him to look down on Sleepers.

In contrast, though, some Arrow cabals feel that completing the Tempering stage is more important than spending time in the Fallen World. After all, the mage has had his entire life pre-Awakening to mingle with Sleepers, but now it’s time to go to work. These cabals take the Arrow away from his mundane life (and usually help him arrange excuses for his absence so that his family or coworkers don’t report him missing), and complete the training quickly.

In the Tempering stage, the mage is expected to strive to overcome whatever deficiencies the Evaluation identified, and a big part of that is self-awareness.

He must come to accept his weak points before he can improve them, and this is easier for some mages (and some weaknesses) than others. Mages who don't fight well usually have no problem recognizing that and improving it, but people don't take well to being told that they have impaired ethics. It's possible to wash out at this stage, but it's still mostly voluntary. A mage who is told that he must improve in an area that he thinks is sufficient might have so much trouble putting aside his ego that he leaves the training. A mage who is instructed to get into shape might find the physical demands too taxing. But, as with Evaluation, only in truly outré cases are prospects expelled.

Character Creation and Tempering

So why don't Arrow mages get more dots at character creation to represent all this "rigorous training"?

A "baseline" mage character is assumed to have completed the initiation for whatever order he belongs to, and all five of the orders have their own forms of initiation that are just as stringent as the Arrow's (if not in the same way). When distributing your character's Attributes, Skills and Merits, you may feel free to use the initiation as the reason to assign a given trait. You might stipulate, for instance, that your character was always squeamish about pain before her Awakening, but during the Tempering stage of her initiation into the Arrow she was taught techniques to help ignore physical pain and keep her wits about her. This might translate into the Iron Stamina Merit, or a higher-than-average Composure rating.

Game traits are not an accurate representation of everything a character has experienced in her life; they can't hope to be. You can help the dots make more sense by considering why a character has any particular Skill, Merit or Specialty, and "I learned it during my initiation" is a superb way to detail that part of the character's history.

The Tempering stage ends when the character's mentor or mentors feel that he is ready to undergo his final tests. Typically, the Tempering stage takes between four and six months, but can take as much as a year (if the mage is maintaining a mundane existence as well) or as little as two months (if all the character does is train).

Battle Stage

The Battle stage is meant to hammer home one of the central tenets of the Arrow — Existence Is War. In this phase, the character is expected to put to use everything he has learned during the Tempering stage. The Battle stage is continuous from the time the Tempering stage ends until a specific, pre-arranged signal is given. This signal is always explained to the mage at the outset of Battle in great detail. The character's mentor might explain that the Battle stage ends when she hands the prospect a certain ring and says, "Welcome to the Ungula Draconis." During the Battle stage, the mentor might approach the character and hand him a different ring (perhaps one that looks much like the real one but can be authenticated with a simple Unveiling spell) or say, "Welcome to the Adamantine Arrow." The lesson is clear — pay attention. In war, lapses in attention are deadly.

During the Battle stage, the prospect is taught Adamantine Arrow rites. Sometimes he is allowed to choose the rites that he learns, sometimes he learns what his mentor thinks he should know. Mentors often teach rites that require talents that the prospect doesn't really possess (that is, Skills the character has few or no dots in) in order to encourage his development, but normally mentors play to their students' strengths.

Also during this stage, prospects are loaned out to other cabals (usually non-Arrow) for assistance with whatever affairs the cabals are looking into. Sometimes the prospect is being tested for compatibility with these mages, and can expect to join their cabal after the Reception stage. In other instances, the cabal simply needs someone with skills that the prospect has shown, and the prospect needs some real-world experience. In either case, the cabal will certainly report back to the prospect's mentor and give a full accounting of the prospect's behavior.

The Arrow looks for as many ways to test a prospect's mettle as possible during the Battle stage. By the end of this stage, the mage has probably fought the Duel Arcane, faced down a human assailant (or a group of them), had to outsmart an opponent, had to end a conflict without violence and had to make a moral decision in a split second. It's not essential that the prospect "win" every fight. It is essential that he recognize which fights he must win and which he can afford to lose.

In Battle, there are no second chances. If a prospect fails, he is sent back into the Tempering stage for at

least a month. If he fails in a show of cowardice or cruelty, he is probably expelled outright. “Failure” implies some action on the part of the mage, of course, and it requires that the mage had enough knowledge to correctly make the decision. A prospect who surrenders when a lone thug puts a gun to his head is probably going back into Tempering for remediation of combat and crisis management skills, since every Arrow is taught how to handle this sort of situation. A prospect who faces a supernatural creature that none of the other mages in the city has ever seen before receives more leniency, even if he makes a decision that turns out to be wrong in the long run (if he panics or freezes up, however, he’ll probably still require more Tempering — the mages of the Arrow need to be prepared for new horrors).

The Battle stage can last as long as several months, but it’s usually concluded in three very intense weeks (unless the mage is sent back into Tempering, of course). When the Arrow mages of the city are convinced that this prospect has endured Battle well and is ready to become a true member of the order, the mentor enacts the previously detailed event, and the prospect prepares for the Reception stage.

Reception Stage

This stage is brief, usually just one night. At a meeting of all of the Arrow mages in the city, the prospect is granted some token of the Arrow — a medallion, a ring, a tattoo, a brand or simply a solemn handshake. He then states his shadow name for the other members to hear, and is formally welcomed into the order. He meets all of the other members of the Arrow belonging to that Consilium, and if no arrangements have been made for the new member to join a cabal, they are typically made at this point. From that moment on, the mage belongs to the Adamantine Arrow.

In game terms, he might have a single dot of Status (and is thus a neophyte — see p. 108). Some mages remain at this stage, while others rise within the order’s hierarchy. The initiation, however, is over.

Recruitment Tactic: Sleeper Protection

Most mages have Sleeper family or friends, and newly Awakened mages being courted by the orders are often concerned about what will happen to their Sleeper loved ones while they away for weeks at a time for training. In many areas, the Adamantine Arrow sets up a cabal for the express purpose of protecting these Sleepers, but not just for mages being trained

or initiated by the Arrow. Rather, recognizing that they are best suited for the job of guardianship, the Adamantine Arrow takes on the role of watching over all of the Sleepers connected to all of the mages currently undergoing initiation into the Consilium’s orders.

This might seem like a daunting task, but at any given time, only a few mages will be undergoing initiation. It’s still difficult (especially if a mage has a large family), but with the right spells, it’s not impossible, and the mages who take on this sort of work find it very rewarding. This kind of service sends exactly the right message about the Arrow to nascent mages — and that’s not entirely accidental.

Members of Other Orders

The choice of order isn’t necessarily permanent. A mage who Awakens in a Consilium without representation from one or more of the orders might settle, and then find his true calling later. This causes problems, of course. No order likes to lose members, and in some areas the orders exist more in a state of rivalry than cooperation, but with the possible exception of the Guardians of the Veil, none of the five orders presumes to forbid someone from leaving.

The Adamantine Arrow recognizes that a mage might choose an order without really thinking it through, especially if the mage is seduced by a charming mentor. The order’s position on accepting converts is favorable, but the Arrow treats such converts little differently from unaffiliated mages who wish to join. The Arrow puts them through the same five-stage initiation, and in fact may make the tests even harder because the prospect probably has enough experience with magic to require more of a challenge. A few changes and additions to the format exist, though.

During the Evaluation stage, the mage is always asked why he wants to leave his previous order. “Not wanting to discuss it” is not acceptable. At least one member of the Arrow must know the whole story, and if the mage is still too raw to discuss it, maybe he should take a few months as an apostate to think it through? Mages performing this assessment watch carefully for a few red flags. First, if they feel that the mage is trying to enter the Arrow to act as a spy, they note this, but prospective spies are almost always accepted into the next stage. The feeling is that anyone who isn’t completely committed will drop out during the Tempering, and the Arrow makes the Tempering stage especially brutal for mages the order believes (or

knows) are infiltrators. The Arrow also watches such mages around the clock; spies from the other orders are rare, and so a mole is more likely to be a Seer of the Throne. Since the recruit isn't necessarily taught any rites during the Tempering stage, a spy wouldn't learn anything that he couldn't learn through careful outside observation anyway. The Arrow finds that by treating spies as the order does other recruits, the Arrow can confuse them. More than one spy has confessed to the Arrow during the Tempering phase, leaving behind the Seers and joining the *Ungula Draconis*.

The other red flag is what some members of the Arrow call "sinking ship syndrome." If other mages have left the same order or the same cabal recently, the Arrow is obligated to look into the matter more deeply. If the prospect is the third member of the Silver Ladder to try to defect to the Arrow (or to another order, which requires the Arrow to keep abreast of such things) inside of a year, there is clearly something going on in the local chapter of the Silver Ladder and that something probably merits investigation. The mage who is trying to join the Arrow might not know the particulars of why things are changing in his former order, but he can probably shed some light. And it might be that he doesn't necessarily want to join the Adamantine Arrow or leave his own order, but just wants out of a bad situation. It's important for the evaluator to figure this out early, because taking someone through the initiation stages who doesn't really want to join is a monumental waste of time.

If a mage really does want to join and isn't leaving his order because of a greater problem, the Arrow begins the Tempering stage as usual. Someone in the Arrow also contacts the mage's previous order, if possible, and tries to verify his story (normally with as much tact as possible, but not all members of the Arrow swear by tact). What happens then depends very much on the politics in a given Consilium. If the Arrow enjoys good relations with other orders, some arrangement is made so that the defecting mage can retain some degree of goodwill from his original order (this assumes that the situation that caused him to leave didn't leave everyone bitter on its own; mages aren't immune from things such as sexual indiscretion, betrayal of trust and simple personality conflict). If the prospect succeeds in the Battle stage, a member of his old order is generally present at his Reception to formally release him from any lingering oaths and acknowledge him as a new member of the Adamantine Arrow. Of course, it's not unknown for the original order to send a young, green recruit with no status in

the order whatsoever to attend this function as a kind of subtle nose-thumbing at the defector.

Theoretically, a convert is treated no differently from any other member of the Arrow, but in practice a certain amount of hazing goes on. Mages of the Arrow are of course suspicious of a mage who left an order, but mages of other orders would probably feel the same way.

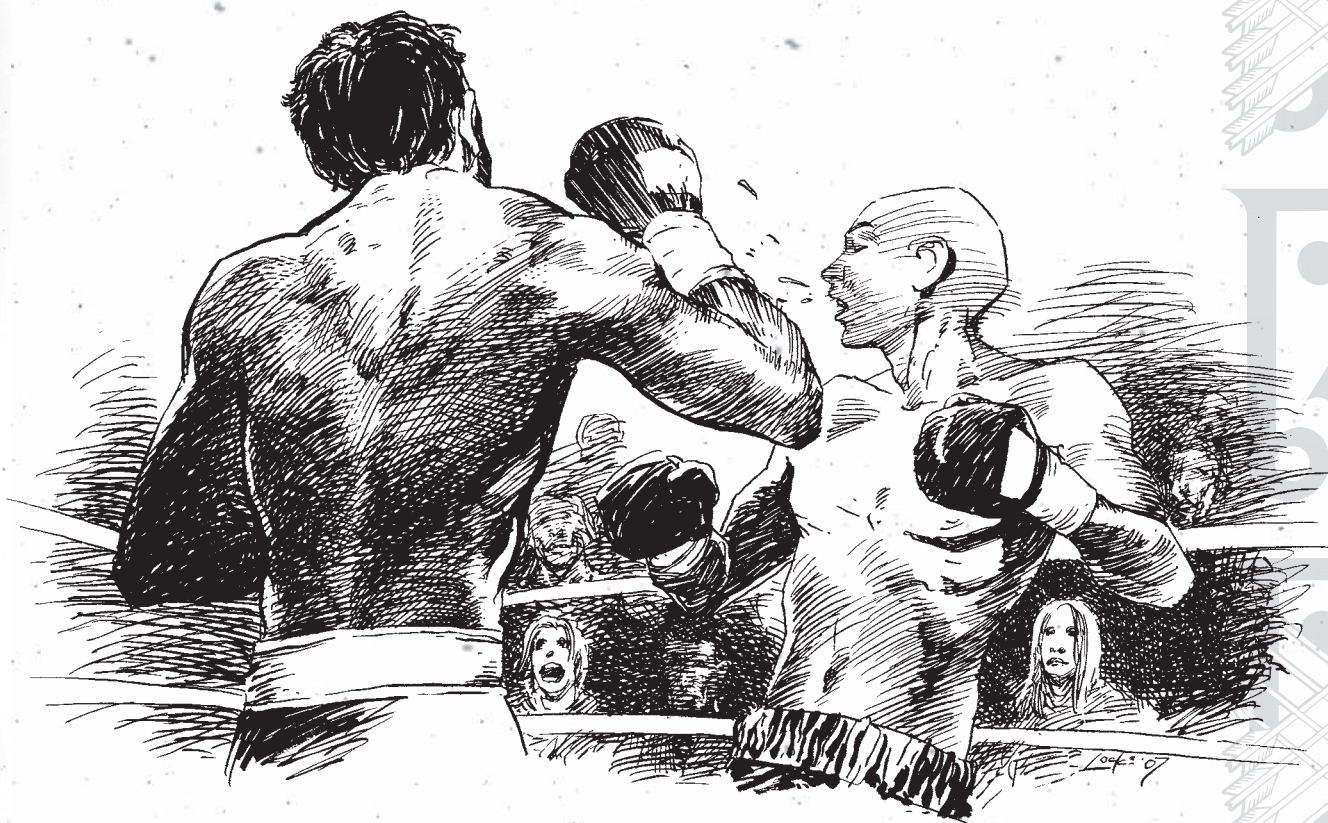
Wayward Arrows

This all begs the question: what about members of the Arrow who leave to join other orders? The Arrow views such mages unfavorably, because they have violated oaths to their order and probably their cabal as well. But, on the other hand, the Arrow also advocates being ready to die for one's duty at any time, so the order can usually appreciate feeling it necessary to completely reinvent oneself in order to discharge that duty. The only time, though, leaving the Arrow is really condoned is if a mage's continued presence would endanger the members of the order.

Example: Kali, a Moros of the Adamantine Arrow, becomes a bit too enamored of her necromantic powers. She garners a reputation for raising the bodies of the dead as zombies and revenants, and ugly rumors start to circulate about where she gets those bodies ("Where'd the bodies come from, Kali?" creeps into local mage parlance as a phrase expressing suspicion and disbelief). Finally recognizing this, and seeing that she has made powerful enemies who might endanger her friends, she arranges her own death and reinvents herself as a mage of the Mysterium. In such an instance, the Arrow might well approve and even assist in the process.

Recruitment Tactic: Tournaments

Mages are just as competitive as other people, and so a good match and a cheering crowd are welcome among the Awakened. The Adamantine Arrow sometimes hosts tournaments, in cities where the order has the resources to do so. These tournaments vary greatly in their form and purpose. Some are underground, full-contact boxing matches, where mages place bets on which combatant will fall unconscious first and Moros cast spells to prevent clothes from getting bloodstained in close quarters. Others are formalized



expressions of the Duel Arcane, with complex rules of propriety and challenge. The Arrow shies away from overt duels of magic for public tournaments, because of the risk of Paradox and because the order would rather incorporate some test of martial skill. Sometimes, though, the Arrow hosts contests of pure athletic skill. Races through the city, sometimes over rooftops parkour-style, are also possible.

Whatever the form the tournament takes, the Arrow invites any mage in the city (and sometimes Sleepwalkers) to qualify and compete. The point isn't winning, at least not in spirit. The point is competition, excellence and challenge. Plus, though the Arrow never admits to it, hosting tournaments like this injects a sense that being a mage conveys benefits, that mages have an identity and a culture that goes beyond magic, and that being a mage can be *fun*. The Arrow finds that the best time to host such tournaments is when there are mages in the city who haven't chosen an order but are trying to make a decision.

Special Circumstances

Sometimes, the Arrow must increase its active membership quickly. This is usually a response to an external (or internal) threat to the Consilium, something that requires not just skill but numbers.

Mages wage war in much the same way that Sleeper gangs or the Mafia does — out of sight of the general population, in quick, violent skirmishes. Thus, attrition rates can be high, and the cost of getting caught can be a mage's freedom (provided he can't find a way to escape the Sleeper justice system).

Some cabals call in others from different Consilii, but this is rare even in the service-oriented Arrow. Calling in help from another Consilium not only sends the message that the Talon of the Dragon in a given area has somehow been blunted but also leaves the lending Consilium without its own defenders. Instead, the Arrow would rather recruit from within the Consilium, and this leads to a practice known as "Seconding."

When a mage is Seconded to the Adamantine Arrow, he remains a member of his original order (if any), but agrees, usually by swearing a mystical oath, to uphold the tenets of Arrow. The mage also agrees to obey whoever the ranking Arrow mage of the area is, or, alternately, whoever is in charge of managing the current crisis. The Seconded mage is expected to use his skills, magical and mundane, for the good of the Consilium, and is expected *not* to complain about it or to take time out to attend to functions related to his original order. Obviously, some cooperation

from the mage's order is necessary, especially for the Guardians of the Veil (who are probably the mages most commonly Seconded). If the mage's order won't agree, the Seconding can't take place. In fact, in many Consilii it's more important that the mage's order agrees to the Seconding than for the mage himself to agree, although obviously if the mage *doesn't* agree it would be unethical for either side to force him.

During the period of Seconding, the mage may be taught rites that are specific to the Adamantine Arrow, since he is functionally a member of the order. These rites enjoy the benefits the order Specialties of Athletics, Medicine and Intimidation, rather than the benefits of whatever Specialties the mage's original order uses. For instance, if a Free Council mage is Seconded to the Arrow and learns the "Bolster the Company" rite (see p. 155 of **Mage: The Awakening**), he does *not* receive the benefit of his order Specialty in Persuasion, even though the rite's dice pool uses that Skill, because he is learning the Arrow version of the rite. If, however, he were to learn "Fist of Heaven" (p. 176, **Mage: The Awakening**), he would receive the benefit of the Arrow's rite Specialty in Athletics, even though he is not truly an Arrow.

It surprises many mages that the Arrow is willing to teach these "temps" the order's rite secrets (and indeed, some Arrow mages don't agree with the practice). The wise among the Arrow, though, see this practice as truly emblematic of the order. Secrets are, at the end of the day, divisive, and what the Arrow strives for isn't division. If a rite would help to end a dangerous conflict and serve the Consilium, then the Arrow is willing to let some of the order's techniques trickle out. Besides, since all of the orders have their own rite versions of most of the intuitive applications of the Arcana, the Arrow isn't so much revealing a secret as teaching an alternative. Seconded mages *do* find, however, that they can't teach their newfound rites to other mages, Arrow or otherwise, because the Seconded mages haven't had the proper training to do so.

Non-Arrow mages are sometimes Seconded to the Arrow in times of relative peace, too. If another order feels that it needs a member to be competent in combat, the order might arrange for that member to be Seconded to the Arrow to undergo training. This period of Seconding can last longer than one necessitated by a crisis but also allows the recruit some time to attend to his "normal" life. The Arrow encourages this practice, because it allows the order to learn about the other orders' philosophies (and, more importantly,

the places where those philosophies conflict with the Arrow's), and to inject a bit of the Arrow's own understanding into another order. Seconded mages are sometimes required by their original orders to swear oaths stating that they will not "defect" to the Arrow, but even so, Seconded mages do sometimes leave their parent orders and join the *Ungula Draconis* (see above).

Recruitment Tactic: The Draft

It's not a law that is cited frequently, but it's part of the *Lex Magica* in many Consilii. The Adamantine Arrow has the right, in times of dire threat to the lives of the Consilium's constituent mages, to compel the service of mages who either possess skills useful to ending the threat (combat, medical, occult knowledge, etc.) and/or have attained a rank of at least Adept in one or more Arcana. Such mages are considered to be members of the Arrow until the threat is defeated, and are expected to take orders from the ranking member of the order during that time.

How this works in practice depends very much on the nature of the "dire threat" and the nature of the Consilium. In large cities, for instance, there may be enough mages that it's hard to make the case that any one particular enemy constitutes a dire threat to the whole Consilium. Also, the Arrow isn't really equipped to enforce this law (especially not while dealing with whatever emergency necessitated activating it). The Draft is usually regarded as a way to let the other orders know how serious a threat really is — if the Arrow is instituting the Draft in modern times, then something is killing mages and the Arrow doesn't believe it can stop the killing by itself.

During times of Draft, apostates are actually given preferential treatment when it comes to learning rites and receiving training. The thinking here is that such mages are behind the curve, as it were, since they don't get this kind of instruction normally, while order mages do. Also, if apostate mages are given the opportunity to see how the Arrow treats its own, they might petition for membership themselves.

Storytelling Initiation

How, as players, can you make the initiation into part of your chronicle? After all, by the time a chronicle starts, the characters have already been through the initiation (in whatever orders they chose). Following are some suggestions for using the initiation in a chronicle. These suggestions aren't meant solely

for the Storyteller. If a player is taking the role of an Adamantine Arrow mage who rises in Status, she might well want to put forth the idea of hosting a tournament or conducting an Evaluation.

Obviously, if the troupe is just starting a **Mage** chronicle and one or more of the players wish to take the roles of Arrow characters, the full initiation process becomes a viable story. The Storyteller might design everyone's Tempering and Battle, but that's a lot of work, particularly if all of the characters are prospects. Instead, it might be interesting to have the players submit suggestions for challenges that might come up during the initiation, either for their own characters or for the others.

Playing through the initiation has the advantage of getting the characters heavily involved with the Arrow from the ground up. Since prospects are often loaned out to other orders toward the end of the Battle stage, the Storyteller has the chance to place characters from the Arrow with characters from other orders (who are probably going through initiations of their own). Remember, too, that all of the procedures and rules outlined here for the progression of initiation don't take into account the personal agendas and feelings of the mages involved. Whom a prospect is placed with, how challenging the Tempering or Battle and what lessons he's effectively giving a "pass" on depend very much on who's making the decisions. In one city, the ranking Arrow might be a hard-nosed, ex-military fellow who believes that the Tempering stage should be comparable to boot camp. In another, the ranking Arrow might be a skilled strategist and tactician who feels that physical prowess is good but ultimately secondary to magical and intellectual skill. Those views will certainly shape what a mage goes through, and thus will shape any story involving the initiation.

If the troupe chooses to play through the initiation phases, one thing the player or players should consider is rites. Every **Mage** character starts with six dots of rites, and normally the player can choose from any spell that his character can cast to learn as a rite. But if the mage is a prospect, he is limited to what the other members of the Arrow can teach him. This is another opportunity to flesh out the order in the chronicle's setting. Does the local Arrow have a *dojo* full of wall hangings that contain the secrets to various combative rites? Is there one member of the Arrow, now crippled from a disastrous battle, whose role in the order is cataloging and teaching rites? Does the local Arrow have "reciprocity" with the

order in neighboring cities, allowing a greater body of knowledge but forcing prospects to travel in order to learn them (which opens up even more story possibilities)?

Likewise, does the local Arrow require all new mages to learn at least one Knowing or Unveiling spell, just to make sure they have some observational magic that they can do well? Storytellers, beware of forcing players to purchase certain rites. Some spells just aren't as advantageous to learn as rites as others, and nothing says that good roleplaying is synonymous with not taking advantage of your character's traits (indeed, since most people play to their strengths, it makes more sense to take rites that incorporate the character's Skills). But setting certain limits — knowing at least one combat-oriented rite, for instance — is perfectly reasonable and helps to cement the role of the order in the character's life.

Storytellers, if you decide that the Arrow's body of knowledge where rites are concerned is limited — perhaps the order suffered great losses in a recent catastrophe and only a few members have anything appropriate to teach — you might allow players to save their free rite slots until such time as they can make better use of the slots. For instance, a character might learn only three dots' worth of rites, but the player keeps the other three until the character meets another Arrow mage who can instruct her. You might even allow the player to convert the rite dots into experience points, since the cost is uniform (two points per dot); the character doesn't start with as many rites, but is improved in other areas.

Chain of Command

The Adamantine Arrow varies from Consilium to Consilium in how rigidly the order defines its power structure. In some locales, generally in areas where the Pentacle has many powerful enemies, the Arrow is military in its chain of command, and mages within the Arrow follow orders from those with higher Status with the same loyalty that a soldier would. In places where threat is less common, the rule of law is more lax, but the mages are still expected to respect those of higher status in the order. Consilii with more Arrow mages also tend to be more hierarchical. If the only Arrow mages in town all belong to the same cabal, a natural pecking order emerges, but "Order Status" doesn't mean as much, except when requesting help from outside the Consilium.

Players and Status

As a player, it's easy to think of a mage's involvement with his order as somehow artificial, since there is no easy analog in the player's real life. We can draw parallels, of course, comparing membership in the Adamantine Arrow to belonging to a gang, or the police force, or the military and so on, but even examples like these only give the player something to compare the order to if he has experience with those examples.

Instead, we recommend the following three points in order to help players get into the mindset of a mage belonging to the Arrow:

- **Self-identity:** A mage cannot be other than a mage. Any mage can sense the supernatural in his immediate area, and in the World of Darkness, a day probably doesn't go by that a mage doesn't get *some* inkling of the unseen around him. All that means is that other mages are the character's colleagues — the mage self-identifies *as* a mage. Belonging to that subset is thus important, and sometimes the price of keeping that subset is playing by the rules (which, in turn, involving observing the Consilium's rules of status).

Storytellers, threatening players with consequences should their characters disobey the Consilium's laws doesn't tend to work well. Those consequences should be in place for actual violations of the *Lex Magica*, certainly, but what keeps the characters from simply dropping the Consilium from their lives and becoming solitaires? Shared threat is powerful, but it only goes so far. The players need to feel that the characters are part of a greater society and that society is important to who those characters are. That means that the quirks that make mage society what it is — shadow names, forums, caucuses, the mentor-pupil relationship, tournaments (see p. 102), ongoing training (see below) — the supporting cast should take these things seriously, even if they would seem strange to someone outside the society. They are there for a reason, and characters shouldn't expect to be able to dabble in the Consilium, showing up when they feel like it.

(On the other hand, suppose the characters decide they've had enough of the way a particular Consilium does things and they want to go someplace else, maybe even find a city without much of a mage presence and start their own? What customs do they take with them? How does their own society evolve as other mages arrive?)

- **Define the Arrow:** Self-identifying as a member of the Arrow is much easier if what being "a member

of the Arrow" is well-defined. Players, give your Storyteller suggestions on how the Arrow should function in the Consilium, what elements of the order you'd like to see present and any ideas you have for what's going on behind the scenes. Storytellers, *use* those suggestions, and twist them as necessary to make the chronicle come alive. Figure out the history of the order in the area. Decide what buildings are Arrow sanctums. There is no reason that a bar couldn't become an Arrow hangout in the same way that cop bars or biker bars form (and what effect might the constant presence of so many mages have on this establishment?). But if that's the case, then you need to figure out what this bar is like, what the décor is like and why the bar is the way it is. Decide who the movers-and-shakers in the town are and *why*. Figure out their weaknesses and their blind spots. Maybe the ranking Arrow just doesn't believe in werewolves, and reports of people turning into wolves are dismissed — must just be a Thyrsus who's gone crazy.

One of the best ways to make your local definition of the Arrow come into focus, by the way, is to give the players something to compare it to. A story set in a nearby Consilium, where the characters can experience an alternate take on their order, should highlight the ways in which their own is unique.

- **Character Goals:** A policeman might be content to walk the beat for the rest of his life, or he might want to become a detective or an officer. A doctor might remain a GP, or he might want to work for the CDC. Likewise, an Arrow mage might be comfortable pouring his energy into his cabal, or he might want to someday be a leader in his order (or become a leader at the Consilium level, which is a different thing). Figure out what your character's goals are for his magical career. Does your character have his eye on a particular Legacy? If so, how did he learn about it? Does he want to be the coordinator of Tempering or Evaluations? Why? Does he regret joining the Arrow, but feel determined to stick with it out of honor? What might he do to make things more tolerable (and why the regret, anyway)? Obviously, these goals can and probably will change, but you should definitely consider them, and let the Storyteller know so that she can work appropriate hooks into the chronicle.

Gaining Status

Every Arrow is expected to follow the Adamant Way and to live by the tenets of the order. Being a good member of the order requires little more than

keeping to the order's philosophies. Being an *exceptional* member of the order — the sort of mage who advances in status and eventually takes a position of leadership — requires much more.

Advancement within the Adamantine Arrow requires action. Service, as far as the order is concerned, isn't simply a matter of following orders. A mage who does only the bare minimum asked of him, or who focuses more on his mundane life than his life among the Wise, isn't likely to advance within the order. Note, though, that such mages aren't necessarily looked down on within the Arrow. A mage who does only what is asked of him is doing what is asked, after all, and that's worth something. It just doesn't recommend him for leadership.

Mages who advance within the Arrow look for opportunities to prove themselves. This can be accomplished in many different ways, some more appropriate to a given Consilium than others. The following are some broad methods for gaining status within the order:

- **Protection of Sleepers:** Sleepers are largely incapable of protecting themselves from the supernatural. That doesn't make them weak; it just makes them Sleepers. The Arrow isn't interested in protecting people from mundane threats, and Arrow mages doesn't patrol the streets at night saving people from being mugged (though if they *see* someone being mugged, they probably do intervene). It's not unheard of, however, for Arrow mages to keep watch over areas that have high incidences of violent crime, looking for supernatural interference or parasitism. The Arrow is interested in any supernatural occurrence or phenomenon that has the potential to harm Sleepers. This last condition is crucial, and the definition of "harming" Sleepers is fluid and subject to interpretation. The threat must be serious, ongoing and not self-correcting. Vampires, for instance, have their own fairly inscrutable society, and the Arrow knows that much. The Arrow also knows that vampires do occasionally kill people. That doesn't mean, though, that Arrow mages kill vampires on sight. Doing so would invite serious retribution against the local Consilium, and so the Arrows only get involved if they perceive an ongoing threat (and even then, they're likely to find and dispose of the vampire in question, rather than just declaring war). Identifying and eliminating unique threats to the Sleepers in the area is a mandate for the Arrow, and a mage who grows proficient at it gains his fellows' respect.

Of course, the old saying goes that teaching a man to fish is better than bringing him a fish dinner. Some

Arrows feel that teaching Sleepers to protect themselves is much better than trying to save them. These mages host workshops and training classes, teaching Sleepers how to defend themselves from attackers, but more importantly, how to handle crises. Even a well-trained Sleeper is no match for a crazed werewolf, but if he has been trained in keeping his head, he might at least be able to escape alive. Not only is this practice prestigious for Arrow mages, but it also allows them to watch for potential mages among the Sleeping masses.

Mages who gain most of their Status in recognition of Sleeper protection might become Sentinels within a Consilium, but just as often they don't take enough of an interest in Consilium matters to gain a rank.

- **Inter-order Cooperation:** The Free Council is unfocused, the Mysterium is tight-lipped, the Silver Ladder is haughty and the Guardians are just plain inscrutable. But all of the orders have much to contribute to a smooth Consilium, and if the orders are at odds, the Consilium's functionality grinds to a halt. The Silver Ladder is the order probably best suited to leadership, but the Adamantine Arrow has become practiced over the years in making sure that even when two leaders are deadlocked, the wheels keep turning. If an order must compromise for things to move forward, it's usually the Arrow. The order has its share of diplomats, social "warriors" who know how to offer concessions and, if necessary, make threats to foster inter-order cooperation.

Other mages, performing a similar function, act as go-betweens for the cabals of the Consilium. They keep tabs on the membership of the cabals and their magical ranks, as well as the general content areas of their libraries. Although the Mysterium often maintains this kind of data as well, the intent is different. The Mysterium wants to know who's in the city for academic purposes. The Arrow wants to know just in case people start dying, so the order can draw quick conclusions and prevent it from getting out of hand.

Arrows who gain status for fostering cooperation among the orders (or cabals) of a Consilium might become Heralds, or eventually Councilors. Such Arrows also tend to coordinate loaning out new Arrows to other orders and always have a hand in hosting tournaments.

- **Threat Identification:** An ounce of prevention, of course, is worth a pound of cure. If a mage can figure out where a threat is likely to come from and get a cabal ready to investigate and, if necessary, deal

with the threat *before* mages start showing up dead and missing organs, or stray dogs start chewing their way into houses and attacking people or the shadows under the Mare Street Bridge start leaking bile (and so on), that mage is going to be spoken of favorably around the Consilium. Mages who specialize in threat identification are tacticians and diagnosticians, practiced at recognizing the difference between a freak occurrence and a pattern. These mages maintain libraries and work closely with other mages who do so, cataloging their findings against the day that it becomes necessary to identify a similar instance. Mages who do this sort of work well get second and third opinions, seek out colleagues who might have more experience and ask them for thoughts, and worry more about what damage a creature might do than who gets to name it. Not all Arrows have such reasonable attitudes, sadly.

A mage who gains a reputation as a threat assessor almost invariably becomes a Sentinel, and even if he doesn't accept the position, he probably stays in close contact with those who do. Within the Arrow, these mages make superb interrogators and are often consulted for the Evaluation portion of a prospect's initiation.

- **Martial Prowess:** Few mages advance in the Adamantine Arrow without becoming skilled in the deadly arts. Whether it's kung fu, gunplay, boxing, fencing or combative magic, the Arrow expects its members to know how to handle themselves in a fight. In fact, maintaining one's combat skills is one of the basic expectations in the order, and if the Arrow leadership in a Consilium hears that a mage isn't pulling his own weight in combat, the order might demand he return to training for a while.

Truly exceptional combatants, though, wind up doing the training. Such mages might wind up as Sentinels, Councilors or other positions in the Consilium, but just as often, they take on positions of leadership within the order.

Rank and Recognition

There are three rough levels of status in the Adamantine Arrow, measured in terms of game mechanic by the Order Status Merit and in terms of the order itself by the accomplishments and prestige of the mage in question. "Experience" by itself (that is, years spent in the Arrow) counts for something, but not much. The Arrow knows that a mage could find a niche and stay in it, never really developing or contributing much to

the order. Such mages don't advance within the order, no matter how many years they've put in.

The titles for the levels of status within the Arrow can vary from those listed on p. 78 by Consilium. In some areas, the Arrow recognizes many more gradations in their ranks, going so far as to adopt a series of promotions to quantify the position that mages hold within the order. This is only the case in Consilii with very large Arrow presences, however. In a city with only a cabal or two to represent the order, the pecking order is probably well-defined, but status is measured in broader terms. Some examples of the specific titles for each level of status are provided in the sections below.

Neophyte (Status 0 to ●)

A mage with no or little (one-dot) Status in the order, but who has been received into it, is often called a neophyte or a Talon. Such Arrows normally have access to any resources that an Arrow cabal commands, be the Libraries, Halls or sanctums, provided that they wish to use these resources in pursuit of their own magical or martial studies or in service to the order or the Consilium. The Arrow feels that providing only experienced mages with access to such benefits fosters a desire to advance for the wrong reasons. And, besides, life in the Arrow shouldn't get easier the longer one remains with the order. Existence Is War, and war doesn't get easier, only more trying.

In practice, a neophyte Arrow would do well to check with a superior before taking Mana from a Hall or trying to borrow of book of rites from a Library. Yes, it's all for the order, but resources are scarce, and the order would like to know what its newest members are doing, just to make sure they're doing it well.

Neophytes serve the order as foot soldiers, spies and, as much as it might irk them, pawns. A mage with limited experience doesn't know that he's being used, and that makes him useful. A mage who has been a member of the order long enough to know that he might be given an assignment with a secondary agenda that he's not privy to still knows that the secondary agenda exists, and among the Wise, that's too much to give away. True naiveté is rare and somewhat dear to the order, because it allows deception.

The Arrow isn't predisposed toward deception, of course. Yes, Arrows do a bit of espionage, but they recognize that the Guardians of the Veil are far superior in this regard. Instead, Arrow "spying" tends to be observation and protection from afar, and so

neophytes who are sent on missions with “need-to-know” information aren’t told why they’re protecting a given person. This is partly to instill a sense of loyalty, and partly because knowing the particulars behind a beneficiary of the Arrow’s guardianship might foster emotion, making it harder to do the job. Mostly, though, neophytes aren’t told all of the details because their superiors don’t feel it necessary. A neophyte who asks too many questions can expect to get removed from this kind of work and given something else to do.

Neophyte Arrows are often the first line of defense (or offense) against a new threat. Mages of any skill are superb information-gatherers, and the Arrow feels that sending mages of relative inexperience to investigate a new threat results in fewer preconceived notions getting in the way. Consider: A rash of murders takes place in the city, and the victims are found with their necks chewed open and most of their blood missing. An older mage might see “vampire” and be unable to shift that viewpoint, thus missing vital clues. A younger mage without the “benefit” of experience takes the facts at face value, and realizes that although the victims’ blood is missing from the bodies, so are their teeth and larynxes.

Truth be told, though, neophyte Arrows are often sent as backup to members of other orders. While all mages are perceptive, the Mysterium trains their personnel in data collection and analysis. The Arrow’s role is, not surprisingly, often a defensive one. The young Arrow probably isn’t called upon to recognize the clues of a murder scene so much as to watch the surrounding area and make sure that the murderer doesn’t return to catch the investigators unawares. As mentioned previously, Arrows are often loaned out to non-Arrow cabals as muscle during the Battle stage of initiation. If the Arrow is found to be a good fit for the cabal, he might well join it. If he does, he can expect to have the same role within the cabal that he played during his initiation — protect his fellow mages in the event of violence. This role probably changes as time passes, and indeed, the Arrow has noticed that in mixed cabals, an Arrow who isn’t the leader is almost invariably the second-in-command.

In terms of combat, neophyte Arrows tend to be generalists. They might show a preference for one style of fighting over another (and certainly have more proficiency in Brawl, Firearms or Weaponry rather than all three), but they are expected to know at least the basics of fighting no matter what the situation. An Arrow might not be a crack shot, but he should

be able to pick up a gun, check to see if it’s loaded, take off the safety and, if necessary, fire it within a few seconds. Likewise, if an Arrow enters a room, he should be able to tell without using magic who is likely to be the biggest threat if violence should ensue, and formulate a strategy for dealing with that person. True skill in battle comes with experience, but tactics, awareness and muscle memory can be learned — so Talons must learn.

A “generation” of Arrows, that is, the members of the order initiated within a few years of each other, tend to form communities. The order encourages this, to the point of training these “communities” together. Since mages don’t enter the order on anything resembling a regular schedule, the camaraderie that would form naturally amongst a college class or a military unit must be encouraged more forcefully. A neophyte might be given the job of checking up on all of the other neophytes (or, indeed, all of the other Arrows) in a Consilium, ostensibly because the order’s hierarchy wants to know if anything is wrong, but in actuality so that he will get to know his fellow neophytes.

Going In

“OK, they’re still human and Priest says they’re not possessed. What’s that leave?”

“Wait, let me talk this through. Shut up a sec. OK, we know they’re strong — that one guy took that door off the hinges. We know that they don’t feel pain, or they work through it well, so there’s no point in kneecapping. Shit. What about cutting off airflow?”

“Right, sorry. OK. They stick to the dark, but they don’t burn or scream in light. They still bleed. And we’ve gotten more reports every night from this area. So maybe they’re infectious? We know they grab people, but we’re getting missing persons reports, not homicide reports, from that Proximus down the precinct. They grab people, infect them... figure on, what, about a dozen, then? Shit.”

“Any of you guys ever fight something like this before?”

Relations with Famuli: The relationship between a Talon and a famulus is probably best compared to the relationship between a private and his sergeant, or perhaps a beat cop and a detective. Yes, a certain amount of disdain might exist, especially if a famulus

abuses his authority, but the truth is that a famulus has more expertise and thus needs the Talon to do the legwork. That can mean collection of information, running interference, interviewing witnesses to an incident (“interview” is a loose term; mages who have good social skills might literally ask questions, but sometimes use of Time or Mind magic is easier) or acting as a sparring partner.

The Adamantine Arrow is not the military, however, and Arrows aren’t cops. The order is, at least ideally, a meritocracy, and that means that a Talon’s ideas and input should be carefully considered. Most of the time, a famulus does the consideration, and the ultimate decision is whether to recognize a Talon formally (thus granting an increase in rank) or pass that recommendation along to a magister, or to offer correction and feedback. Not every Arrow is so scrupulous, though, and it does sometimes happen that a neophyte must challenge a famulus for stealing his ideas or taking credit for his work. While in other orders, the onus might be on the younger mage to prove this, the Arrow typically investigates the matter to see if either party is truly lying. If it’s just a misunderstanding, no harm done, and both parties usually forgive and forget. If one of the mages is truly trying to deceive the order, though, the penalties are harsher, but certainly harsher for the younger mage.

Relations with Magisters: Talons might see and interact with magisters during their initiations and when receiving honors or at order caucuses. Otherwise, most of their interaction is likely to be with famuli (but, as always, this depends on the order’s representation in a given locale). A Talon might be made an assistant to a magister, though, tasked with bookkeeping, organization and other administrative tasks. Magister mages don’t need bodyguards, for the most part, but it’s not unknown for an Adamant Sage to take an assistant with skill in Arcana that she doesn’t possess. For instance, a high-ranking Acanthus might take an Obrimos assistant precisely because the Obrimos can wield the Arcanum of Forces (which the Trickster, of course, finds difficult, it being her Inferior Arcanum).

Talons are not generally permitted to challenge magisters directly, though exceptions can be made if the Talon is not a neophyte but an experienced mage who just hasn’t garnered much recognition within the order. Normally, though, neophyte mages are required to take challenges through famuli or other neophytes before confronting more powerful mages. A Talon who challenges a magister either has an ax to grind or is trying to prove something.

If the former, he should probably discuss the matter with an immediate superior rather than take direct action (unless the problem extends throughout the order’s leadership, in which case propriety probably isn’t a concern). If the latter, he should wait for the next tournament and try to prove himself there, or just do his job and do it well.

Alternate Titles: Novice, rookie, private, squire, recruit, cadet, Talon, Banner Warden.

Example: A young Mastigos Awakens after a harrowing walk through the city, in which he can sense the thoughts of every parasite and predator. He joins the Adamantine Arrow because he can’t shut out the horrible things he felt during his Awakening — the knowledge that these creatures are here, waiting to pick the bones of humanity. The Mastigos calls himself “Poison” among the Awakened. He has little use for mythology or spiritual nomenclature. He just wants to kill vermin.

During his early months with the order, he gains a bit of recognition as a bloodhound for creatures and beings who wish to harm humanity (including Sleepers with less-than-pure motives). He gains a dot of Status, becoming a Talon, and he is “loaned” to a cabal investigating what seems to be a cult in the ghetto of the city. During this investigation, he shoots and kills a man infected with a strange disease that affects consciousness and motivations. Poison begins to wonder about his calling — if motives are so easily influenced, can those with impure motives really be called vermin? In any event, killing isn’t as easy to deal with as he thought. Previously a marksman, he begins learning the finer points of non-lethal combat (see “Fighting Style: Grappling,” p. 50).

Famulus (Status ●●)

As mentioned on p. 78, Arrows at this rank are often referred to as “First Talons.” In Awakened society, mages of comparable status are generally called famuli, and so this title is just as applicable to a member of the Arrow.

Famuli of the Adamantine Arrow form the backbone of the order. Rising higher in Status than First Talon requires a great deal of dedication to or ambition for the order itself, and Arrows have other concerns splitting their attention — Sleeper relations, protecting the Consilium, their cabals, their pupils, their mentors and so on. An Arrow might comfortably remain within his duties as a First Talon his entire Awakened life, and suffer no stigma from his order because of it.

And what are those duties? Famuli in the Arrow are the ground-level decision-makers. While any Arrow who is confronted with a problem or a crisis is expected at least to know what he must do in order to make a decision (which might be “call for help”), the famuli are expected to be able to make such decisions right away. They *can* go further up the chain of command if need be, but it’s not entirely uncommon for the higher-level leadership of the Arrow to be difficult to reach quickly and to be engrossed in other important matters. The famulus, therefore, must be able to quickly assess a situation and decide on a course of action, and then direct whatever Talons might be at hand to that course.

A great deal of a First Talon’s job, then, is interpretation of information. A neophyte shows a famulus photographs of a creature that she encountered the night before, and the First Talon now must take those photos (plus any other information the Talon collected) and try to come up with a plan. That plan might just be to wait and see — not every strange creature is dangerous. But the price of caution can be paid in blood and souls, and so the Arrow isn’t inclined to be hesitant. A First Talon in a position like this can choose to take the matter to the Consilium (especially the Sentinels), or can try to let the order handle it. If the Sentinels *are* Arrows, of course, the decision is a little easier, but there are some matters that just don’t merit whipping the Consilium into a frenzy. The famulus must be able to discern this kind of situation. Many First Talons maintain contacts with famuli of other orders, in the interest of gathering intelligence quickly. The Arrow has to be able to trust his contacts, of course, and it behooves him to know the cabals of the Consilium and what they specialize in. If a local Silver Ladder cabal has, in the past, forged relationships with the pack of werewolves living on the outskirts of the city, a problem that looks shapeshifter-related might merit a call to that cabal before the famulus has someone start making silver bullets.

That means, though, that the First Talon assumes a great deal of responsibility, especially considering his comparatively low rank in the order. Also, remember that the Status Merit, when applied to an order, doesn’t necessarily mean anything for the Consilium. The fact that the Adamantine Arrow trusts a given mage with life-or-death decisions doesn’t mean that he has any authority over other, non-Arrow mages, and First Talons sometimes forget that, especially in the chaos of an emergency. Fortunately, a leader is a

leader, and if a famulus takes charge, even a Councilor is often willing to follow the famulus’s lead. After the dust has settled and credit (or blame) is being assessed, though, that Councilor might try to work things to her own advantage, sometimes to the detriment of the lower-ranked Arrow. This is one of the potential pitfalls of dedication to one’s order.

A famulus engaged in espionage tends to be better suited to counter-intelligence than direct spying. The mage might be a spy-smasher or a point of contact or support for a Talon engaged in espionage (or a higher-ranked Arrow who has made a career of such activities), but First Talons are normally recognized enough in the local Consilium to make deception, at least where other mages are involved, a dicey situation. That said, a famulus usually handles at least some aspects of the Evaluation when new potential Arrows are about (see p. 98), precisely because a famulus can apply his own experiences as a Talon to the practice of ferreting out double agents.

When a “community” of neophytes grows older and more experienced, they see a split in their ranks. Some Talons enjoy their work and remain at their level of status within the order; others grow in importance to the Consilium, perhaps becoming Sentinels. Those Arrows who become First Talons, though, don’t necessarily feel a sense of bonding with each other based solely on rank and order. That is, if two famuli of the Adamantine Arrow feel a kinship, there is almost assuredly something behind that kinship other than simple rank and station. A battle that they shared, a secret that they hide, a pupil they’ve trained or a master they studied under — something bonds First Talons beyond status. Membership and service to the Arrow are enough to induce them to fight alongside one another, of course. Friendship must run a little deeper.

In combat, famuli have usually settled on a style that suits them. That style might be as broad as preferring bare fists to weapons, or as specific as shunning all guns but a Colt .45 Peacemaker. Of course, they retain the flexibility that they learned in their time as neophytes, but famuli have learned what works well for them and devoted attention to perfecting that style. Officially, famuli (and all Arrows) are usually required to learn and practice styles of fighting other than their preferred ones, but vanity and complacency sometimes rear their ugly heads, even in the Arrow. A mage who takes pride in being a master swordsman might let his firearms training slide, and that means that when his sword is broken and his comrade passes

him a pistol, that Arrow not going to be as effective. The Arrow recognizes, though, that “as effective” is a relative term — an Arrow with minimal training but proficiency in magic is still deadlier than almost any Sleeper.

Call to Arms

“You feel up to this? OK. Go around the back. Watch the shadows. These guys like to hide in corners and then jump out at you. Remember, they’re really just people. They’re made of meat, so if you get cornered, double-tap to the chest and one round in the head.

That’ll put ‘em down sure enough.

“Don’t bother looking for minds. I know you can do it, but it’s not going to make a difference. Their consciousnesses are so far buried that you’d barely get any advance warning.

Look for movement. Look to Space. You’re good at that, right?

“OK. Done talking. Take your safety off and go. Watch your target, watch your backdrop and don’t shoot unless you know it’s one of them.”

Relations with Neophytes: Famuli are the instructors (while magisters are the teachers; that distinction is explored anon). A First Talon looks at a Talon as a soldier or a recruit, someone who is competent and skillful but probably doesn’t have the theoretical knowledge or the practical experience to do everything that the famulus can. This is true often enough to be useful, though it’s worth remembering that the “Talon” and “First Talon” distinction is based on status within the order, not specifically on experience as a mage. Therefore, a Talon might actually be older and more knowledgeable than his “superior,” and a wise First Talon recognizes where a lower-ranked mage’s expertise outstrips his own. Not all First Talons are so wise, of course, and some famuli feel that a bit of “hazing” or dominance to show the neophytes who’s in charge is advisable.

First Talons have to be ready, though, for the call that none of them want to get. If a Talon is in trouble, fighting something that he can’t handle, a First Talon has to be ready to bail him out, to bring reinforcements or, if necessary, to notify his next of kin, his cabal, his place of business and anyone else who might need to know. This is difficult, as a mage’s mundane life might have no context for the famulus, but the Arrow

considers it important for a mage’s comrades-in-arms to let his loved ones know when he has fallen. This is one task that a famulus doesn’t delegate.

Relations with Magisters: The magister is the commanding officer to the First Talon. The First Talon is therefore responsible for preparing briefs for the higher-ranked mages, keeping them informed about matters that might otherwise pass beneath their radar, and (though no one really likes to talk about this part) making sure that they aren’t succumbing to hubris. The Arrow knows well the temptation of power, and when one’s magical training focuses on combat, that power *must* be kept in perspective. A famulus, therefore, is responsible for quietly humanizing the higher echelons, making sure they spend time away from Awakened society, and that they remember the philosophies on which the Arrow is based. The famulus watches the magister for signs that he is forgetting his own lessons.

Famuli are allowed to challenge magisters for advancement or for grievances, and so one of the functions that a First Talon might undertake is facilitating that sort of challenge. In especially bitter or important challenges, a First Talon might be brought in from another cabal (or even another Consilium) to ensure impartiality. Famuli are sometimes given this task when magisters fight amongst themselves, too.

Alternate Titles: Sergeant, proven, *soldatas*, officer, knight, warrior.

Example: Poison has continued working closely with the cabal that he was loaned out to a Talon, but has become known in the Arrow’s circles as well. He is still regarded as a good sleuth, but he is also known as something of an authority as to whether a given target is redeemable or not. He’s not entirely comfortable with that job, but he recognizes that he’s a pretty good judge of whether a person’s mind and soul have been supernaturally altered and whether that alteration is permanent. He changes his shadow name to Dex (a pronunciation of “Dx,” the medical abbreviation for “diagnosis”).

Other Talons start asking him for pointers in resonance and Mind Sight analysis. He gains another dot in Order Status, and becomes a First Talon. Other Arrows of comparable status recognize him as their equal, and he becomes an instructor. He doesn’t know enough magical theory to teach anything too in-depth, but his lessons are good for young mages, especially those just developing their skill in the Mind Arcanum. Dex finds that he prefers teaching



to fieldwork — although he is a skilled combatant, he doesn't enjoy "real" violence. He understands pain and fear too well (since he usually winds up analyzing a target's mental state) to be entirely comfortable inflicting them.

Magister (Status ●●●●)

An Arrow who gains enough status to be called a "magister" is truly a force to be reckoned with, but magical prowess and skill in combat do not a magister make. *All* Arrows are assumed to possess those traits. Rather, a magister (sometimes called an Adamant Sage within the order) is expected to possess knowledge and understanding of conflict itself that transcend simply trading of blows and bullets. He is expected to know why and how two sides formed, what they fight over and, perhaps most important, what it would take to *end* the conflict. This analysis of conflict (not necessarily combat) is what allows the Adamant Sage to be a leader in an order full of warriors, to direct the lower-ranked Arrows into service that will best

serve the Consilium and to know how and where to expend the order's resources.

Adamant Sages are the generals of the order's hierarchy. Thus, they stay aware of Consilium dynamics even if they don't take an active leadership role in the Consilium. They know what conflicts exist at the levels of Councilor, Sentinel and even intercabal squabbles. While current conflicts are more relevant than historical ones (which tend to be the province of the Mysterium more than the Arrow), an Adamant Sage must know how a conflict started. He recognizes, though, that the reasons a conflict started might have nothing at all to do with why it continues on — in war, the past is important, but the present is relevant.

A city's conflicts extend beyond the Wise, of course. An Adamant Sage knows the major sources of conflicts in the local Sleeper society (in fact, if a magister starts to ignore these conflicts, it's often a warning sign that he's beginning to slip). If the area boasts a known presence from other supernatural societies, the magister might try to remain as informed as pos-

sible. Arrows are wary, though, of getting involved with wars that don't concern them — they wouldn't want vampires or werewolves taking a hand in their conflicts, after all. It's enough to know that, for instance, werewolves live in the area and that they seem to have hostile factions without knowing the names of the packs involved.

An Adamant Sage is responsible for defense plans for the mages of the city (not necessarily protecting the Consilium, though, as that's the Sentinels' job). A magister runs through scenarios in his mind and in discussion with other Arrows. What happens if the gang war flares into a riot? What if the hurricane season is worse this year than last year? What happens if the economy crashes, as it has been threatening to do, leaving hundreds out of work? Any situation that might cause conflict probably merits some consideration. If a threat looms large, showing real and palpable evidence that it's about to become a reality, the magister (often working in concert with other Arrows or with the members of his cabal) draws up recommendations for the mages of the city. For the Arrows, of course, these "recommendations" are more like "orders," and they involve being stationed at locales that will see the conflict first.

One of the most important conflicts that an Adamant Sage is responsible for monitoring, of course, is the conflict against the Exarchs. Seeing what events happen through the natural course of time and what events are machinations of the Exarchs and their Seer minions is difficult and paranoia-inducing, but important for the magisters of the Arrow to pursue. The Exarchs are subtle, and therefore a sudden, strange event is less likely to be an Exarch ploy than something that the Sage almost misses entirely. This conflict, in fact, is one of the principle reasons for the order's insistence on keeping in contact with the Fallen World (that and mental health, of course). If the magister does not keep a thumb on the pulse of the Sleeper community, how can he know when something manipulates it? If all he knows is magic and the Supernal, how can he hope to match wits with enemies who move in the Fallen World so effortlessly? Some magisters lose sleep and sanity, wondering what seemingly random event might actually presage an Exarch campaign, might be a feint or a double-bluff or might be exactly what it appears.

Within the order, magisters earn the title. They are usually teachers rather than instructors — they

school famuli and neophytes in theory, rites and knowledge, while it usually falls to the First Talons to teach the practical applications. That doesn't mean, of course, that a magister is a stuffy professor or a pure theoretician. The information that an Adamant Sage teaches is tested in the field time and again. The Arrow knows that a particular spell works well in a particular circumstance, and while the famulus teaches the spell and its best uses, the magister teaches *why* the spell works. The underlying intent, of course, is to encourage the Arrows to use the theory to develop their own best practices. How a magister chooses to teach, of course, varies considerably. One might lecture, while another procures dead bodies for a practical lesson in combat (aided by the "Quicken Corpse" spell). Another teaches his students on a rooftop, to aid their ability to shut out distraction.

If a Consilium goes to war, the Adamant Sage might fall into one of two roles (possibly both, depending on the nature of the conflict). He might be a tactician and general, coordinating the movements of the Arrow cabals (and other mages who might be Seconded; see p. 103), staying out of direct action unless his skills are sorely needed. Alternatively, he might be

Battle Stress

"You killed someone tonight. It was battle, and in battle, that happens. But it's not the same, I know. When it's training, you're casting spells on sparring partners, pulling your punches, firing blanks, whatever. And then you're out in the world, and all your control and precision go away, and it's just a series of shots, blood, and you're the one standing.

"And that feels pretty good. You were laughing when we picked you up, and now you feel like shit because someone died and you laughed. Doesn't help that the guy who died was infected with that shadow disease. You're asking yourself: What if we could've cured him? What if I could've shut him down with magic? Why'd I laugh?

"Son, I've been there. I'm not going to say it gets easier, but I will say that you learn why that laughter comes. It's not about the guy who died. It's about the guy who lived — you. You're allowed to feel happy that you lived through it. That's the right response."

a warlord, directing events from the front lines, using his own magic and combative talents to win the day. Which role he plays — or, more accurately, to what degree he plays both roles — depends on the mage in question and the type of conflict, as well as what kind of support the Consilium can offer. If the Arrow is the only line of defense for the Consilium, the Adamant Sage is probably a warlord more than a general, because the Awakened need all the firepower they can get. If the Consilium has a dedicated cabal of Sentinels and other capable mages ready to fight on the Consilium's behalf, the Adamant Sage can probably afford to take a more behind-the-scenes role. And, of course, if the Adamant Sage is skilled in the Arcanum of Space, he can fulfill both roles, possibly at the same time.

The magister is a spiritual leader as much as a martial one. Rather, in the Adamantine Arrow, the order for which Existence Is War, the martial and the spiritual merge by default. A magister colors his philosophical teachings with his own thoughts on battle and the rules of engagement. Far from providing lofty, inaccessible advice to the younger members of the order, the Adamant Sage acts as a counselor to mages coping with the stresses of being an Arrow.

One of the most important facets of the magister in the Arrow, though, is leading by example. An Adamant Sage is supposed to embody the Adamant Way, and show what all members of the order can become, given time and practice. This means that the derogatory notions of the magister — the senile old man, the out-of-touch mentor, the narcissistic politician, the incompetent nepotism beneficiary — should not apply to the Arrow. Of course, the ideal falls short of the reality, but the order works toward true meritocracy and generally leaves few loopholes for truly incompetent people to slip through. And, after all, if a mage without the real skills of a magister manages to cheat the system and become regarded as an Adamant Sage, then he did *something* well. This kind of backhanded conflict resolution isn't what the Arrow usually looks for, but the order can't deny the utility of consummate political animals, either.

Relationships with Neophytes: The relationship between a magister and neophyte might be simply a business arrangement, or the magister might take the term literally and teach the Talon. Some indirect instruction is inevitable, of course, but wise Arrows find that taking a few hours a week to teach their assistants is a good idea. First, it removes the air of aloofness and

allows them to interact with their young order-mates. Second, if a neophyte is getting instruction directly, he's less likely to go poking into books containing magic he's got no business attempting.

As the above sidebar might indicate, one of the common points of interaction between Adamant Sage and Talon is helping the younger mage cope with violence. While many Arrows were accustomed to fighting before they came to the order, not all were, and it happens frequently that a mage has a harder time coping with the transition from theoretical to actual violence. A magister can often help to put that in perspective, sometimes just by offering a shoulder to cry on and a sympathetic ear. While First Talons could (and sometimes do) take on this role, magisters are more often the ones who counsel the younger members, for two reasons. First, their experience benefits them — they have seen enough to identify with the neophytes who have trouble coping with blood on their hands, and can recognize normal post-traumatic stress versus a lingering magical or supernatural effect. Second, dealing with this highly human response to violence keeps them human, and keeps them humble. No matter how many battles a magister sees, every battle is someone's first, and every death causes a grave impact. An Adamant Sage who has seen scores of people die violently becomes desensitized, and dealing with the aftermath of combat helps mitigate this somewhat.

Relationships with Famuli: Just as neophytes are expected to obey famuli without argument, famuli take their marching orders from the Adamant Sages. A First Talon might not always agree with what his superior has to say, but implicit in the oaths to the Adamantine Arrow is the trust that the magister is doing the right thing, is competent and has the order's best interests at heart. If a famulus refuses to obey an order, he had better have a good reason for it (and even with good reason, disobedience can come back to bite him). Magisters view First Talons as their lieutenants, their mouthpieces among the troops. They know, too, that it's generally not going to be an Adamant Sage fighting Banishers in the back alleys of the city alongside the Talons — the First Talons and the Thunderbolt Guardians (see p. 79) have that honor.

A certain amount of envy and even resentment, then, can bubble up between magister and famulus. If the First Talon doesn't see the Adamant Sage working, creating strategies and taking the information

that the rank-and-file bring to manage the order's conflicts, he can grow bitter at the "old man resting on his laurels." If an Adamant Sage spends too long away from the proverbial trenches, he can forget exactly what it's like to be in mortal peril and envy the more visceral (and seemingly simpler) challenges of the First Talon. The Arrow has safeguards built in against this kind of emotion, as has been discussed, but those safeguards depend on everyone doing his job. If that doesn't happen, the Arrow begins to warp and crack, and so it falls to the mages of the order to watch out for each other.

Alternate Titles: General, *capi*, don, boss, chief, *sensei*, master.

Example: Over the years, the mage who started out as a cocksure Warlock called "Poison" has become a fixture in the Consilium and in the local Adamantine Arrow. Dex receives calls every day from mages of all orders (but mostly the Arrow) who have seen something strange and want to know how to proceed. Dex prefers the tactical aspects of being an Arrow, but he also likes being able to direct the movements of the order as it allows him to test his diagnostic theories. His Order Status now qualifies him as an Adamant Sage, and he nominates several other Arrow mages from around the Consilium (mostly Talons, but a few First Talons) to be his eyes and ears in places he doesn't get to very often. The "Oculi Dex," as they're jocularly known, know a series of rites that Dex himself designed for analyzing thought and motivational patterns, and these help the Arrow to trace hostility back to a source and treat it.

In his heart, Dex worries that he's grown too far away from the physical, martial side of the Arrow. He stays in shape and spars with younger Arrows frequently (usually by wrestling or training with chain weapons), but his skill with firearms has degraded over the years. He takes time out of his schedule to counsel young Arrows who are coping with the stress of combat for the first time, and, though he tells no one of it, makes a weekly visit to the grave of the man he killed, back in that shadowed alley so many years ago.

Intra-order Relations

When two Arrows from different Consilii meet and discerning their relative rank within the order becomes an issue, they might default to their expertise in the Arcana (that is, an Adept submits to a Master and so on). Since magical expertise says compara-

tively little about a mage's experience, though, a preferable method is some kind of contest. The form that this contest takes depends very much on the mages and their surroundings — if they have the time and resources, a quick sparring match, either with magic or fists, is a good way to establish pecking order. Even an arm-wrestling match will suffice, though. The form of the contest isn't as important as the contest itself, allowing the Arrows to "go to war" and decide this way who is the superior and who is the servant.

Note that if status is established this way, it's subject to verification from a higher authority. Someone who outranks both characters can clarify or decide the issue, and both mages are expected to abide that decision. It can happen that a more powerful and experienced mage loses a contest to a younger or greener one, if he happens to get the breaks or the contest plays to his strengths more than the elder's. To outsiders, this seems frustratingly arbitrary and flawed, but one must remember the Arrow's thoughts about service. The chance to step into a secondary role, even for a while, is an enlightening one (as is the chance to become a leader for a while).

In any case, the "contest" method of establishing authority assumes that the mages have time to undertake it. If there are more pressing matters at hand, the usual course of action is to assume equality and to try to complement each other's actions as much as possible. It should become apparent who should lead and who should follow.

Those We Protect

The Fallen World is the Arrow's battleground. War might yet rage in the Supernal Realms, but the order knows little of it. Here in the world beyond the Abyss, though, the *Ungula Draconis* fights to protect their fellow mages and, more importantly, the un-Awakened masses.

The Guardians of the Veil might concern themselves with protect Sleepers from *knowing* about magic, but the Adamantine Arrow place more emphasis on protecting them from *dying* because of it. Magic attracts attention — from mages, from other supernatural beings, from spirits and from Paradox. Sleepers die easily, and putting them in harm's way is counter to the Adamant Way (and an act of hubris, of course).

The Arrow has varying attitudes on Sleepers and what role they should play in Awakened circles. These

attitudes necessarily color the order's methods when dealing with the un-Awakened.

One Death Is Too Many

Many Arrows feel that their Awakened state and training as warriors give them the responsibility to protect Sleepers from threats. Some Arrows feel that "threats" should be restricted to "supernatural threats." That is, a Sleeper who is mugged by another Sleeper isn't having a problem that necessarily requires a mage — a right-thinking Sleeper would do the trick just fine. But a Sleeper accosted by a vampire cannot think to fight off said bloodsucker by herself (and if she can, she might well be of use to the Arrow in some capacity!). Other Arrows feel that this is too fine a hair to split. If a Sleeper has the responsibility to help another Sleeper, why does a mage not have the same responsibility? It seems elitist to suggest that there are purely Sleeper crises, or that the Awakened are somehow above matters that don't involve magic. Widening the gap between mage and Sleeper, some Arrows feel, widens the Abyss. Philosophy aside, some mages opine that the "not my problem" defense for inaction is dangerous in and of itself.

Mages who take this position tend to have high Wisdom ratings, and refuse to kill Sleepers unless there is no other choice (and there's *always* another choice, especially when magic is involved). These mages think of themselves as Awakened human beings, rather than simply as "Awakened," which makes them largely the same as un-Awakened human beings (and these mages often eschew the word "Sleeper"). Interestingly, some such mages are more willing to use violence against other mages, and if an Arrow becomes a Banisher, he might well have held this sort of attitude first.

Example: The Guiding Hands Cabal

The Guiding Hands cabal died because of its convictions. Based in northern Kentucky, this cabal believed that Sleepers needed to be protected when necessary but educated when possible. The cabal's leader, a Mastigos named Helen (who refused to take a shadow name), pointed to the widespread knowledge of certain supernatural remedies — silver against werewolves, a vampire's allergy to sunlight and so forth — as evidence that Sleepers could learn and apply Supernal knowledge to their lives. She was also insistent that the members of the cabal maintain their

mundane lives. One night, however, a Sleeper whom the cabal was trying to protect laid them low, setting fire to his house as hideous spirits closed in. Helen was the only survivor, and she left the Arrow shortly thereafter. She still believes, though, in the Guiding Hands' principles, and works closely with her city's Arrow contingent to advance that agenda.

Acceptable Losses

The Fallen World is a dangerous place, even before the considering the supernatural. People are going to get hurt, people are going to die and the Awakened are sometimes — often — in a position to determine who. The Adamantine Arrow, by dint of its mandate to service and warriorship, finds itself in that position more often than other mages. That means that every Arrow has to play God sometime.

Rather than shirk that responsibility, or pretend that it's possible to save everyone, some Arrows teach their pupils to make life-and-death decisions well. The criteria for the decisions vary, but generally, the Arrows are told to protect Sleepers first, because mages should be able to protect themselves (or, failing that, heal themselves to some degree). The bottom line is that some Sleeper casualties are acceptable, particularly if the Sleepers in question are members of professions that put themselves at risk, such as firefighters, police and paramedics.

It rankles some Arrows that they should put greater priority on the lives of "civilians" than on Sleepers who, similar to mages, choose lives of service. But it only makes sense — a firefighter has chosen to put his life on the line for other people. If an Arrow uses his magic to protect the firefighter at the expense of the people that the firefighter was trying to protect, the mage has gone against his own ethic as a member of the Adamantine Arrow.

Most Arrow mages are told that some level of casualty is acceptable, especially when other supernatural beings or phenomena are involved. The notion that the Arrow is to save everyone and there can be no allowance for extenuating circumstances is farcical, and perhaps a bit hubristic — even mages don't have that kind of power.

Example: The Hearing

A Consilium in Canada convenes a special tribunal whenever Sleepers die during a conflict in which mages are involved. This includes an otherwise mundane altercation if one of the Awakened happens



to participate — even a bar fight in which someone gets stabbed merits a Hearing if a mage was present (though such Hearings are usually brief). The Hearing meets to determine if the Sleeper's death (or Sleepers' deaths) was (were) the fault of the mage, if the mage could have prevented it (them) and (if the mage himself was directly and intentionally responsible for the death) if the killing (or killings) was (were) justified. Mages who refuse to submit to the Hearing find their names and faces showing up on terror watch lists and wanted posters.

The Hearing employs investigative tactics both mundane and magical to determine "what really happened." Most of the time, a Postcognition spell tells the tribunal what it wants to know, but sometimes more investigation is needed, and the Consilium can assign one of the Arrow cabals in the area to pursue the matter to its conclusion. The mage "on trial" isn't placed under any kind of restriction unless there is some evidence that he willfully caused the death of an innocent person, in which case he is restricted to

the sanctum used by the tribunal. One of the three tribunal members is chosen by the Hierarchy, one is elected yearly by the mages of the Consilium and the third seat belongs to the highest-ranking Arrow in the city.

Protect Our Own First

Occasionally, the Arrow teaches a harsher procedure to its recruits: protect the Arrow, *then* worry about others. This attitude is rare, and is clearly at odds with the order's core philosophies. Thus, it's usually only seen in one of two circumstances.

First, the Arrow might be compromised or corrupted. It happens, just not often. Usually this means that a mage of questionable morality managed to get himself into a position of high status, either in the order itself or in the Consilium. In either case, this mage now directs Arrow policy in the area, and if that mage's idea of "Existence Is War" translates to "Sleepers are on their own," such an attitude can pervade the

order in the space of a few years. This typically lasts only until someone more right-thinking comes into power, but given that mages sometimes live beyond a normal human lifespan, and that, of course, the mage's teachings might become the standard for the area, such ideas can linger.

The second instance in which the "Arrows-first" attitude arises is one in which the Consilium is under constant threat and the Arrows are not numerous. In the Fallen World, a Consilium doesn't boast a large number of *mag*es, much less mages of a particular order, and so the Arrow is seldom really numerous. Situations in which the Consilium is in constant danger are more rare. If a Consilium is involved in a protracted battle with a superior opponent, and that opponent appears to be winning, the Arrow might adopt a "no unnecessary risk" policy. In this case, Sleeper fatalities are considered acceptable losses if protecting them would compromise the safety of the Consilium or put mages in mortal peril.

The "usual" state of conflict between the Pentacle and the Throne doesn't merit this attitude by itself. For the Arrow to allow Sleepers to die, it must truly feel that the cost of protecting them is too great to pay.

Example:

The Consilium of Oakland, California

In Oakland, Arrow mages receive "acceptable loss" as their first lesson. The rules are simple — the Adamantine Arrow is your family, your gang, your blood and your calling, and you *cannot* allow another Arrow to perish if you can prevent it. Sleepers and even other mages don't measure up to Arrows in terms of priority. The recruit who balks is usually rejected, and so the Arrow has a reputation of being insular and even selfish in the area. But the Oakland Adamantine Arrow has a reason for this policy.

Decades ago, a Thyrus of the Arrow bound a spirit into the foundation of a building in downtown Oakland. That spirit was a powerful earth elemental, worming its way through the asphalt and cement of the city to find a fault line below. Had the spirit reached the fault, the elemental would have triggered an earthquake powerful enough to level the city. The Thyrus passed along the rituals to maintain the wards on the spirit, a complex magical *mélange* of Life, Spirit, Prime, Time, Space and Matter. The wards have to be maintained on a precise schedule, though not all require complex

spells (some are as simple as Compelling, others require Weaving or even Making practices). After an Arrow completes his initiation in Oakland, he is given a spell for which he is responsible. As he grows in Status and magical power, more spells are added to his list.

This is why the Arrow in Oakland looks after its own first — if they don't, the whole city might be forfeit. Of course, no living Arrow has even seen the spirit, or talked to the mage who bound it. And so some young Arrows ask if this policy is necessary, or if it's just "the way it's always been around here?"

Fend for Yourself

Finally, in some areas, the Arrow doesn't even *have* a standing policy on protection of Sleepers. The rule of the area is simple: don't die. Individual mages are at their own discretion as to what to do when Sleepers are threatened. This attitude typically only shows up when no Consilium as such exists at all; the only mages in the area are a loose collection of solitaires or small cabals *and* a persistent threat exists.

Obviously, this is a rare instance. Even if an Arrow mage or cabal found itself in such a position, it wouldn't necessarily default to a policy of self-protection. Indeed, unless the Arrow had some reason to ensure its own survival (besides the obvious instinct to do so, of course), the Arrows would probably adopt a policy closer to the "Sleepers First" attitude discussed above.

Example: The Untold Stories Cabal

Cleveland, Ohio, doesn't have a Consilium. The city did once — within the last decade, even, and the Consilii of Cincinnati and of Erie, Pennsylvania, have sent emissaries to look into what happened, but have come up empty. At least one cabal remains in the area, though. In one of the southwest suburbs, the Untold Stories cabal makes its home.

The cabal is mixed, Mysterium and Adamantine Arrow. The Arrow members have quietly agreed to each other that their priorities if placed in mortal danger are: protect any nearby innocents (Awakened or not), protect their cabal members, protect each other. The cabal itself is focused on unlocking the secrets of the former Consilium and learning exactly what happened, but the Arrow members agree that they can't really claim to be Talons if they are completely self-interested in crises.

Sleepers as Adversaries

The Adamantine Arrow has one very important maxim when it comes to Sleepers: don't underestimate them. A Sleeper with a knife or a gun is deadly, even if the mage could, theoretically, turn that blade into rubber or the bullets into water. A Sleeper with a badge has the legal right to arrest a mage, no matter if the mage could teleport away. A Sleeper with a half-dozen friends behind him demands respect, even if the mage could set them chasing a magically created phantom. All of those solutions depend on the mage successfully casting the spell, and doing it *before* the bullet slams into his chest, the cuffs go on or he winds up on the curb with boots pounding on his face. That isn't always the way of it.

Arrow mages are taught conflict *avoidance* as well as resolution. Not getting into a fight is preferable to winning one, if the mage can arrange it. Combat rites are common in the Arrow because when offensive magic is necessary, it's important to cast it fast, but defensive and avoidance rites are just as common (or more so) because they enable the mage to take action and dodge Paradox more effectively.

Sleepers in Power

The example of the cop trying to arrest the mage, above, brings up an important point. Yes, there are police officers and other officials in the Arrow's ranks, but they aren't exactly common, and mages are subject to their local laws like anyone else. Mages have ways to avoid arrest, but the Arrow asks, *should* they? Does having the capacity to avoid a criminal charge necessarily mean that the mage has the right to do so? Cynical mages point to the corruption that power brings at any level of government, and answer yes: the law applies only to those who cannot avoid it. More ethical mages state that breaking the law is breaking the law, and a mage bears the guilt for it if he does so. *Realistic* mages feel that while breaking the law and dodging the consequences magically might be acts of hubris, a mage might be called upon to break a law in pursuit of his duties to the order, and turning himself in or staying at a crime scene to face the music might require answering questions that he cannot answer without revealing the Awakened society to a world that doesn't want to know about it.

The solution, then, is either to avoid breaking the law either magically or otherwise, or to draw a dis-

inction between legality and morality. A mage might break the law in letter, but uphold its spirit.

The Citizens of the Supernal

One cabal of Arrows takes the debate on mages and legality in a different direction. These mages claim that their Awakenings tie them to the Supernal Realms, making them citizens of those places rather than the Fallen World. Therefore, they are not beholden to the laws of Sleepers, but consider the *Lex Magica* to be their judicial body.

For practical purposes, this doesn't make too much difference. Many of the most important laws that Sleeper law covers also exist under Consilium law (murder, assault, etc.). But stealing from Sleepers, breaking and entering and other such crimes that aren't specifically covered under their Consilium's bylaws — the Citizens feel that those laws don't apply to them. The rest of the Consilium views these mages as dangerous and arrogant... but they aren't breaking any laws, at least not as far as the Consilium is concerned.

Different Battlefields

This section examines the Adamantine Arrow as a force in the Consilium, in the World of Darkness and in your chronicle. Most of this section assumes that someone in your troupe is playing an Arrow mage, but if the Storyteller is making use of the Arrow as supporting cast, this section will help with portrayal of the order.

The Arrow in the Consilium

Arrow mages can fulfill any position in a Consilium, but the way in which they do so might differ from the style of other mages. Below, the common Consilium positions as described on pp. 55–56 of **Mage: The Awakening** are discussed from the position of the Arrow, beginning with the most likely stations in which to find members of the *Ungula Draconis*.

Sentinels: In the Consilium, the Sentinels are almost always Arrows, or at least the majority are. Sentinels are normally tasked with protecting the Consilium and making war, when necessary, on the Consilium's enemies, and so the Arrow is uniquely

suit to the role. In fact, if the Sentinels of an area are *not* Arrows, it usually indicates some political upheaval driving a wedge between the Arrow and whatever order currently controls the Consilium. Worth noting, of course, is that fact that the Arrow probably still works to protect the Consilium anyway, but the order just doesn't enjoy the full backing of the *Lex Magica*.

How Sentinels are chosen varies from place to place. Below are a few possibilities:

- The Hierarchy chooses the Sentinels. When a Sentinel dies or retires, or when a new Hierarchy is chosen, the Hierarchy might have a competition to determine who is most worthy of the position.
- Members of the Hierarchy's cabal become the new Sentinels whenever a new Hierarchy is chosen.
- The Adamant Sage of the city (whoever is the highest-ranked Arrow) chooses the Sentinels, dismissing or appointing new ones whenever he sees fit.
- All Arrow mages must serve a term of duty as a Sentinel, usually one year. This does not necessarily have to be the year following their initiation, but it usually is, as this allows them to learn the city before getting too deeply involved with their own cabals.
- The Councilors choose Sentinels, with input from the Hierarchy and the Arrow's leadership. Arrow mages do not have the right to refuse the position, though mages from other orders do.

Herald: An extremely service-oriented position, the station of Herald very often goes to an Arrow. A Herald has to be a good traveler, capable of self-protection and highly loyal to his Consilium. If the Consilium is in a particularly dangerous area, or if it is large enough to require multiple Heralds, the position might be split. A mage capable of extremely quick (or instantaneous) travel might handle emergencies, while a mage skilled in defensive combat might transport larger cargo (or people). Arrows taking the position of Herald generally swear an oath to protect their charges, be it information or passengers. An Arrow acting as ambassador to another Consilium is likely to be fully loyal to his own Consilium but also a politician capable of holding his own in a strange environment. A Consilium should be mindful, though, of the message it sends to employ an Arrow as a diplomat. Arrows are known warriors, and to send one as an emissary might convey a hostile, or at least militant, attitude. Sometimes, though, that's exactly the message that *must* be sent.

Provost: Most Councilors, of course, choose Provosts from their own orders, but when a mage chooses a Provost from a different order it's generally from the Arrow. This is because Arrow mages are known to be loyal, and often thought to be largely devoid of greater political ambition (not always true, but not entirely inaccurate). A non-Arrow mage who chooses an Arrow Provost is likely to elicit an Oath of Allegiance (see p. 63) from that mage.

In the position of Provost, an Arrow mage almost always takes on the role of bodyguard as well. True, Councilors are generally capable of protecting themselves, but using magic for combat takes training and study, and not all Councilors have undertaken (or are willing to undertake) such training. Thus, a Provost who has attained only the rank of Disciple in his Arcana might act as protector for a Master mage, simply because that Disciple knows how to fight as well as how to cast spells.

Beyond the position of combat, Arrow Provosts act as messengers, assistants and enforcers. This, of course, is one more reason for a non-Arrow Councilor to choose an Arrow Provost. If "enforcing" the Councilor's orders requires violence or the threat of violence, an Arrow is probably the best choice. Likewise, if the Councilor wishes to project an air of menace to the Consilium, having a Thunderbolt Guardian as his Provost goes a long way.

Councilor: As noted on p. 55 of *Mage: The Awakening*, there are many different ways to choose Councilors. One representative from each order is possible, as is a representative from the most important cabals in the area. Thus, it's not entirely uncommon that one of the Councilors in a Consilium is an Arrow, but it's not necessarily the case that the Consilium will include an Arrow as a matter of course. In some Consilii, Arrows refuse Councilor status, preferring to rise no higher in the city's power structure than the post of Sentinel or Provost, citing the desire to remain as neutral as possible in Consilium politics. In others, the Arrow Councilor runs the Sentinels and is responsible for the city's magical security (and thus is probably also the Adamant Sage).

Arrow Councilors aren't necessarily on the Consilium to represent their order — if the Councilors are chosen based on Path, an Acanthus Arrow member is assumed to represent the Watchtower of the Lunnargent Thorn rather than the *Ungula Draconis*. In truth, though, an Arrow can't let go of his training

and is likely to evaluate situations as a warrior. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it might lead to the Councilor developing a reputation as a war-monger or as seeing threats around every corner (depending on that Arrow's approach).

Hierarchy: If the Adamantine Arrow ascends to the Hierarchy of a city, it usually means something is very wrong. The Adamantine Arrow responds to threats, and expressly feels that conflict is the soul of the universe. Having someone like that in power means either that conflict is present or it will be soon.

While the ethos of the order might ordinarily prevent Arrows from taking power, there are differing interpretations. In particular, some Arrows feel that the Fallen World is a constant battleground between the Throne and the Pentacle, and thus, any leader must be a warlord. Some simply feel that they are best suited to lead, or view the battle of politics as one more conflict. In general, though, Arrow Hierarchs are rare, and a Consilium with such a leader is likely to be either extremely well-defended or in a constant state of emergency.

The Lex Magica

Strictly speaking, the *Lex Magica* is the means by which the Awakened govern the use of magic. Therefore, non-magical behavior doesn't apply to the law and cannot be prosecuted as such. In practice, many Consilii count anything that has the potential to affect the Consilium as a potential breach of the *Lex Magica*, whether the offending mage actually cast a spell or not.

No one order is charged with enforcing the law—it's a Consilium matter. In fact, without a Consilium, the *Lex Magica* has no meaning. In a city without a Consilium, invoking the law doesn't receive much respect because the mage doing the invoking has no higher body to appeal to. Within a Consilium, the Adamantine Arrow isn't generally called upon for interpretation of the law or other matters of precedent and jurisprudence. The Silver Ladder and the Mysterium are better suited to such issues. Likewise, while any mage might witness another violating the *Lex Magica* and bring the matter to the Consilium's attention, the Arrow isn't a police force (though the Guardians of the Veil do sometimes take on this role). No, the Arrow's involvement with the law usually entails punishment and rehabilitation.

Minor infractions of the law are usually punished with reprimands, and many mages view this as a

joke. A dressing-down, by itself, carries no threat and has no teeth. The Consilium might conduct this reprimand in public, and this adds shame to the mix, but the real punishment for an infraction of the rules lies in what one's order might do. For the *Ungula Draconis*, a "reprimand" might involve a month of service to a given mage, or, for serious violations (or repeat offenders), a beating. If there is any doubt about a mage's guilt from the Arrow's point of view (obviously there is none from the Consilium's, or punishment wouldn't be an issue), he is allowed to defend himself. Otherwise he is tied up and whipped, or expected to stand stock still and take repeated blows to the legs and back. He is allowed to magically heal himself if he has the capacity (or allowing someone else to do it, if not), but not until the punishment is over.

Sometimes, the Arrow is called upon to give this treatment to a mage of another order, especially if that mage's order doesn't have a strong presence in the Consilium. The reason for this is twofold. The threat of being beaten by the order of mages known to be the hands-down best at violence is a good motivator for not violating the law (or at least not getting caught). Also, the Arrow is known not to relish this responsibility. Arrows will take on the job, but not enjoy it, and the mage delivering the beating is stone-faced, detached and even bored-looking (that doesn't mean the mage doesn't feel conflicted, saddened, righteous or even aroused by what he's doing, just that he hides it). "Nothing personal" is the operative phrase, here, and that allows the mage being punished to work with the Arrow without resentment, ideally.

Breaking the rules of the *Lex Magica* may also result in imprisonment for serious offenses. If this happens, the Arrow is usually charged with enforcing it. The mage is confined to a particular place. Sometimes, he is placed under "house arrest" and is not allowed to leave his sanctum (or the Consilium's). Sometimes he is placed in solitary confinement, in a room created by magic with no doors or windows. A Master of Time can place the mage in a Faerie Glade where a minute in normal time means a month to him, while a Master of Space can create a personal oubliette. Sometimes, the jailors are more subtle, and simply arrange for the mage to be put in a real jail for a short amount of time, magically altering paperwork and subverting the bureaucratic process. Arranging this kind of incarceration for a mage, however, is extremely difficult no matter

what form it takes. Even an Apprentice probably has magical means of escape, and Disciples and Adepts are often kept only at their own sufferance. Where it becomes necessary to hold an unwilling mage, the Consilium employs the Arrow as guards and (if necessary) trackers.

The Mobile Jail

The Atlanta Consilium takes the *Lex Magica* very seriously. In the 1960s, when the civil rights movement caused such upheaval among the Sleepers, mages were often tempted to step in and change the minds of politicians for the greater good (whatever "greater good" meant to the mage in question). The Adamant Sage at the time, a powerful Moros artificer named Stefano, created a mobile jail cell for mages out of a prison bus he purchased from the city.

The bus still exists, but hasn't been used in years. At one time, as many as five mages were incarcerated in it, and during that time, the bus was kept constantly moving. The bus has wards built into its very frame, such that to Mage Sight the bus doesn't even exist. Spells cast on the bus typically fizzle out, and even then a persistent Prime spell works to counter them. The present Hierarchy of Atlanta knows that the bus exists, and is quite happy to threaten young mages with "a week around the perimeter" (a reference to I-285, the highway that surrounds the greater Atlanta area). Even he doesn't know, though, if the bus is still in good working order.

The Adamantine Arrow generally obeys the *Lex Magica*, but is not as fanatical as the Guardians of the Veil. In particular, where a Guardian might be willing to let someone perish in order to keep the Mysteries a secret, an Arrow mage would be more likely to use vulgar magic and take the risk that someday in the future a spell might be harder for a Master to cast. The Arrow understands the notion of magic growing hard to use if the un-Awakened learn about it, but Arrows don't believe that people have to die in order to protect those secrets. That does sometimes lead to Arrow mages being reprimanded (or beaten) for violating the law, but most of the time, an Arrow is comfortable with that trade. At the same time, though, the Talons are taught during their initiations

how to protect others without revealing what they are, whether by absorbing Paradox in their own bodies or thinking ahead to mitigate it (that is, spending Mana), or simply using covert magic. An Arrow punished for using vulgar magic is always made to understand that his actions, not their results, were wrong.

The Free Council

The Libertines don't always appreciate the Arrow's commitment to service and loyalty, but they almost invariably appreciate the protection that the Arrow offers. The Free Council is the youngest order, and to the Arrows, it shows. When the Libertines talk about freedom to make their own choices, what the Arrows hear is "freedom to shirk responsibility." When the Libertines talk about Awakening the masses, what the Arrows hear is "sticking it to the Silver Ladder."

That doesn't mean that the orders hate each other, just that the Arrow tends to consider the Free Council somewhat naïve. Since the Arrow has a degree of transparency to its initiation procedures, though, the Free Council doesn't have room to talk about "brainwashing," and doing so just tends to make the Libertines look foolish (when they say it about the Guardians, though, the Arrows don't always disagree).

Arrow-Council relations in a given Consilium depend on how well established the Free Council is and whether it respects and recognizes what the Arrow does. If the pervading attitude among the Libertines is that of a cocksure college boy making fun of the soldier, the Free Council can expect, at the least, some disappointed sighs and uncomfortable silences. The Arrow also might put *slightly* less priority into protecting Council members and sanctums, should the need arise, but not too much. Lots of people hate cops until they need one.

The Guardians of the Veil

The Arrow finds the Guardians troubling. Some very disturbing rumors come from the order. Some mages claim that the Guardians *require* their recruits to commit murder at least once during the initiation process, but since they remain so secretive about the whole affair, it's hard to know for sure. The Adamantine Arrow recognizes the need for what the Guardians do. Despite what the Free Council might want to believe, mass Awakening just isn't possible at the moment (and if people tend to Awaken during crises, what kind of cataclysm would it take to trigger Awakenings on a grand scale?), and Sleepers should

be steered away from occult truths for their own protection. Where the Arrow finds itself in a moral quandary is with the notion that Sleepers might have to die or lose their minds to keep magic a secret — if some Sleepers are strong enough to see and remember the truth, surely they'd be better off working *with* the Awakened community?

The relations between the Guardians and the Arrow in a given locale depend entirely on how much the Guardians tell the other orders and how involved the Guardians are in Consilium politics. If they are too secretive, the Arrows cannot trust the Guardians, and might even begin to treat them as a threat.

The Mysterium

The Arrow and the Mysterium tend to work well together. The Mysterium, over time, has collected and analyzed so much data that the Arrow often only has to ask a local Censor for information on a threat to discover that, yes, something like this *has* happened before. Just the knowledge that precedent exists can be a huge sigh of relief, and the Mysterium's focus on finding patterns in the World of Darkness makes this order a superb complement to the *Ungula Draconis*.

If a large point of contention exists between the orders, it might be that the Mysterium doesn't always want magical items released into circulation, even among the usually responsible Arrow mages. Some items — some information, even — are dangerous, and sometimes that danger isn't apparent right away. An Arrow who wants to try out an Artifact weapon might need to justify to the Mysterium why he needs the Artifact, and that can cause some conflict.

In any given Consilium, relations between the Arrow and the Mysterium depend on how secretive and selective the Mysterium is about its information. The more access the Arrow has and the more helpful the Mysterium is when gathering knowledge, the warmer the orders are with each other. Generally, there isn't a great deal of rancor between them.

The Silver Ladder

The ideal is not always the reality. The Arrows know that. They also know that the Silver Ladder is not just a collection of impotent bureaucrats (not usually, at least) but the inheritors of the principles of Atlantis. Ancient oaths impel the Arrow to serve and protect the Silver Ladder, and to help Ladder mages heal the wound of Quiescence.

Of course, sometimes the Silver Ladder doesn't make that easy. Hierarchs and Councilors sometimes forget that the Arrow isn't an army or a police force, and try to order the Talons around. Yes, the Talons are used to taking orders, but they don't do so blindly and they don't do so from a *théarch* just because she is a *théarch*. If the Arrow suspects that the Silver Ladder leadership in a Consilium (because generally, that's where the leadership comes from) is not working toward the greater good of both Sleepers and the Awakened, it might be time for that leadership to be replaced.

The relations between the *Ungula Draconis* and the *Vox Draconis* in a given area depend on whether the Silver Ladder treats the Arrow as a valued part of the Consilium, or as a pack of trained hounds. Looking at Arrow mages as animals is bound to backfire sooner or later, as is using the Arrow to clean up the Silver Ladder's messes. In that sort of instance, the Arrow might surprise everyone by refusing to follow orders, collectively telling the Silver Ladder to see to its own affairs for a while.

Apostates

Arrows can respect a mage who hasn't chosen an order. For all the Arrow's focus on loyalty and service, Talons give neither blindly, and a mage who chooses to be his own master doesn't immediately earn the Arrow's scorn. Neither, though, does she earn the Arrow's *trust*, but if an apostate belongs to a cabal, that goes a long way toward mitigating any unease the Arrow might have about her.

The Arrow doesn't seek to woo apostates as a matter of course, but if the mage is clearly looking for an order and seems to be of the right temperament, the Arrow might extend an invitation to begin the initiation process (see p. 94). If the apostate was expelled from another order, however, the Arrow almost never does so. Choosing carefully is one thing, but failing one's order is another.

The Arrow in the Cabal

A cabal composed of Adamantine Arrow mages functions very differently from a cabal that *includes* Arrows. This section discusses that difference.

All-Arrow Cabals

An all-Arrow cabal is, of necessity, involved in the workings of the order within the Consilium. Such cabals have their themes, sigils and reasons for being

just as any cabal does, but on top of all that, the cabal must be representative of the *Ungula Draconis*. That usually means regular meetings with the Sentinels (the cabal might even *be* the Sentinels) to discuss threats to the city, as well as meetings with the Adamant Sage to discuss what the Arrow must be looking out for or doing in the area. Such a cabal is probably equipped to handle initiation and training of new Arrows, and might, depending on the cabal's proclivities and status, host tournaments or Great Games (see p. 61). In short, the loyalty of an all-Arrow cabal is to the order, because cabal members probably help to *define* the order.

Sample Cabal: Guardian Angels

The largest cabal in the city, the Angels count 10 mages and at least 15 Proximi in their membership. They are oathbound to remain neutral in political matters, but are considered the second authority (after the Sentinels) on the Consilium's security and safety. All Arrows in the city receive their training with the Angels, and members of the order from outside the city who wish to make a home there receive a brief evaluation (sometimes a mere formality, sometimes an in-depth investigation, depending on who will speak for the new mage). When a new cabal forms in the city, the Angels offer one of their own members to the cabal. In this way, the Angels keep a voice in all of the cabals in the city and keep their own numbers manageable.

Cabals with Arrow Members

A cabal in which the Arrow represents a minority of the members is probably well-protected. Arrows in such situations usually (though not always) become the *de facto* wartime leaders — in a fight, everyone looks to the fighter. These Arrows might be willing to teach the other members how to fight, but they usually wait until they are asked.

Interestingly, Arrows are often the moral center of the cabal as well. The Arrow expects a Talon out among other mages to put the order's best foot forward, and that usually means behaving in a manner consistent with the Adamant Way, avoiding hubris and being of service. Of course, this assumes that the Arrow didn't join the cabal because there were no other options. If the mage has little support from the order, he might not feel as obliged to live up to the order's expectations. An Arrow in this kind of situation can quickly become a thug, especially if that's how he is treated.

If a cabal includes more than one Arrow but they are still a minority, they usually look out for each other, in the sense that they protect one another and in the sense that they keep an eye on one another for breaches of the Adamant Way and acts of hubris. The Adamantine Arrow trains its mages to have some respect and desire for authority and strictures, and so having some accountability helps to keep them honest. That isn't to say that a mage without an authority figure becomes a brute inevitably, but holding oneself to a higher standard is easier with some basis for comparison.

Sample Cabal: The Green Hollow

This Glasgow-based cabal is composed largely of Free Council mages, and the focus of the cabal is helping residents of the city (natives, that is) reconnect with their heritage, hopefully while uncovering some of the arcane secrets of the area. The leader of the cabal was delighted when his younger sister Awakened, but quite surprised when she went to be trained with the Adamantine Arrow. Taking the shadow name "Kiss" (after "Glasgow Kiss," slang for a headbutt), she joined her brother's cabal. The Green Hollow, initially resistant, finds that having a younger mage helps them in their goal to connect the present with the past. Moreover, having Kiss around is helpful when they need to win a drinking contest or display martial prowess. Kiss, however, is loyal to her brother before the cabal, and the Arrow on roughly equal footing with her brother.

The Arrow on Its Own

A mage who travels to an unfamiliar area would do well to learn ahead of time what the Consilium, if any, is like in his destination. It isn't always necessary to make contact with the local mages, but if a given city is a protracted and bloody battleground between Awakened factions, the traveler should at least know to be cautious. Arrows who go traveling (assuming they aren't traveling on official business) might lay low as a general practice, to avoid stepping on anyone's toes in the new area and to avoid presenting a target. In the event that they have the opportunity to protect someone who needs it, however, they usually take the risk — ignoring the suffering of the weak means ignoring a chance for righteous conflict. Of course, if the Arrow's general view is self-protection, he probably won't bother (but this attitude isn't really consistent with the order's teachings).

Arrows who travel to new areas normally attempt to abide by local laws and Consilium policies... if the Arrows know them. If they don't, the Arrows default to the Adamant Way, *not* to the laws of their own Consilium. This is because Consilium laws vary, but the bylaws of the order (ostensibly) do not. This usually becomes a learning experience in exactly how differently the Arrows of different Consilii can interpret the Adamant Way.

The strategies that the Arrow teaches its members for day-to-day survival apply just as much or more in strange turf as in a mage's home city. Thus, Arrows are cautious, watchful and ready when they travel. A native mage seeking to make contact with an Arrow would be well-advised to approach cautiously, for if he simply makes his presence known, an Arrow might react defensively. This might seem paranoid, but mages have enemies, and many don't need much of a window to kill or control one of the Awakened. The Arrow who responds with force is usually not doing any permanent harm (not that this is always a consolation to a local who just wanted to say hello).

The Arrow in the World of Darkness

The Awakened sometimes say that Sleepers reject magic, but this is a slightly arrogant statement on their part. Sleeping minds reject the *Supernal*, and thus reject the sort of magic that mages perform. But there are other forms of magic in the World of Darkness. Corpses rise to feed on the blood of the living. Men change into feral beasts beneath the full moon. The spirits of the dead linger, and these are the most easily understood of the ephemeral beings. The Adamantine Arrow sees its share of out-and-out strangeness, even by Awakened standards, and Arrows must be prepared for battle with any of these strange beings.

That doesn't mean, though, that a mage is incapable of interacting with a supernatural being in a non-violent manner. An Arrow and a vampire might come to an understanding about what kinds of Sleepers are fair game for prey. A Talon and a werewolf might meet while pursuing the same Spirit-Claimed killer. Nothing in the Adamant Way says that its practitioners need to put to the sword every monster in the Fallen World, and a mage who takes that agenda is, frankly speaking, more Banisher than Arrow.

But it is very much in keeping with the Adamant Way to consider, when talking to a vampire, *how* one might fight it, should the need arise. After all, one particular vampire on one particular night is a decent enough fellow. A different vampire three years from now might be a rabid killer, and the mage may well regret not taking the opportunity to probe a little deeper when he had the chance. Therefore, Adamantine Arrow libraries that concern other supernatural beings might ask the question, "Can I kill it, or will it kill me?"

The sections that follow discuss the Adamantine Arrow's relations with the supernatural denizens of the Fallen World. Please note that these are generalities, simple statements about how an Arrow might interact with a vampire (werewolf, ghost, etc.). If such a creature shows up in your chronicle, don't feel that your Arrow character has to respond a certain way just because "the book says so." Instead, consider that your character might have been given advice similar to what's presented here, and let that color his reactions.

Vampires

Every culture on Earth has a legend about reanimated corpses. Most cultures also have some kind of monster that sucks the blood of the living; often these myths intersect. To the Arrow, that screams "Supernal truth." But what is that truth? What are vampires to the Supernal? Are they some sort of demon-spawn, meant to give the Arrow something to test their mettle against? Are they a manifestation of Stygia, or, as some Arrows suggest in hushed tones, actually a breed of mage that Awakened to the Abyssal reflection of Stygia?

Relations between the Arrow and the undead tend to be chilly. No matter how pleasant a vampire seems (and many seem *very* pleasant), the fact remains that they subsist on living blood and that blood has to come from somewhere. Some cabals have learned that the vampires have a society that seems at least as complex as that of the Awakened, but getting too far involved in that sort of society seems like a bad idea — who knows how it might change a mage? Some Arrows find vampires fascinating, wondering about the potential of eternity to remain young and strong and to hone one's skills. Other mages point out that this sort of power *always* comes with a catch. Always.

Popular Myths: It's not unreasonable to assume that an Arrow mage knows the same kind of mythol-

ogy about vampires that anyone on the street would, maybe a little more, since Arrows have reasons to study the subject. But the body of literature on the subject is staggering, and it varies greatly from culture to culture. Western vampires are notable for their allergy to sunlight, their weakness to wooden stakes and their ability to change forms. Eastern vampires are strange creatures indeed — the Malaysian *lang-suir* had whip-like tendrils in a hole in the base of its skull from which to suck blood, while Chinese vampires had to stop and count spilled rice. A mage using mundane sources to research vampires is in for an extremely long night, and he might not find a single thing of use.

Practical Reality: The truth is, all varieties of vampire probably exist in some form or another, but the modern Western idea of the vampire popularized in *Dracula*, *Camilla* and the films of the 20th century (*Near Dark*, *Lost Boys*, any of the film versions of *Dracula*) come pretty close to the mark. Why? Has humanity started to catch on in the last 200 years? It makes sense — technology is moving faster than the supernatural can keep pace, and so the bloodsuckers

are having a harder time staying hidden. Plus, the Arrow does admit to *occasionally* coaching a few select people in the fine arts of destroying vampires, just to keep things fair.

Arrow mages who have to go up against vampires are usually told to cover exposed skin, as one bite can end the battle. A stake through the heart is useful, but generally more trouble than it's worth to arrange. Fire works better, though it's easy to let it get out of control. Bullets don't do much at all. Hacking a vampire into pieces with a bladed weapon seems to be the best and most easily accessible method of fighting the undead for most Arrows.

Sample Ally: Garrett was a horse thief back in the day ("in the day," here, being in the late 19th century) and aside from upgrading to motorcycles and cars, he hasn't changed much. He's got some scruples, though — he never picks a fight with a man who offers him a smoke or a drink, he never raises a hand to a lady and he never steals from the same person twice. Garrett bumps into your character outside a biker bar (what your character is doing there is up to you) and mistakes you for someone else. Turns



out Garrett knew your great-great-grandfather “back in the day,” and Garrett and your relative took an oath to one another. That oath is still active (as any mage with Fate can confirm), and so you have unfinished business with Garrett. If your troupe has access to **Vampire: The Requiem**, Garrett is an unaligned Gangrel.

Sample Foe: She was on every billboard in the city for about three weeks. She was the missing persons case of the year — a college coed, the daughter of a city councilman, abducted from her home. The Arrow didn’t get involved because there was nothing supernatural about the case, and frankly they had other matters to worry about. Now, though, that kidnap victim is back — but she is one of the undead. She was taken by a powerful vampire lord, and she blames the Adamantine Arrow (and specifically your cabal) for not saving her. She’s gone missing again, but this time the vampires of the city are looking for her, and they’ve got their eyes on you. Why does the victim blame your cabal? How did she learn about the Arrow to begin with? And did your order really shirk a responsibility in not looking more deeply into her kidnapping? If your troupe has access to **Vampire: The Requiem**, the vampire sect involved is probably, but not necessarily, Invictus. The victim might be of any clan, but Ventrue (for their mental instability) or Mekhet (for their penchant for remaining hidden) are good choices.

Werewolves

Legends of shapeshifters have been with humanity since before the Fall. And no wonder — any mage with a good enough command of Life can take the form of an animal, and indeed, that leads some short-sighted mages to conclude that a “werewolf” is nothing but a Shaman who got lost in his own spell. This view is completely false, though. Werewolves are a breed apart, half-flesh and half-spirit, and they confound mages a bit. They are clearly a proud race and have their own history and culture, but sometimes that culture involves kidnapping and eating people. Other times, it seems to involve protecting them, and sometimes they protect a seemingly irrelevant patch of land.

The Arrow has determined that werewolves run in packs, which is intuitive enough, and that they are territorial and volatile. They seem concerned with spiritual matters, though, and that makes

the Thyrsus of the Arrow interested and edgy. Are werewolves preparing for war with the spirit world? Sometimes they seem to be, but other times they work to appease powerful beings. Are their concerns, then, religious in nature? What are the odd silver markings that Shamans see burned into werewolves’ flesh when looking upon them with Second Sight?

An Arrow cabal and a werewolf pack might come to a grudging warriors’ respect, *provided* that they aren’t stepping on each other’s toes. If that’s the case, the mages can look forward to being hunted, and there is no better hunter than a werewolf. Better to come to some kind of accord and then keep some distance between the cabal and the beasts.

Popular Myths: Shapeshifter legend is as broad as vampire legend. Are shapeshifters gods? Faerie creatures? Sorcerers who sold their soul to the Devil? Just when a Talon thinks he has a bead on these creatures, he hears a story from another mage that seems to offer evidence to a competing hypothesis.

One of the main questions that the Arrow has about werewolves, of course, is whether they can spread their condition through a bite. Common sense says no; if they could, there would be a lot more of them. And yet, almost every well-established Consilium has stories of a Sleeper being chased down and bitten and his very Pattern changing right then and there to that of a werewolf. Mages who have been bitten, though no such mage has ever Changed, an extremely disturbing fact. Once bitten, a mage immediately develops a strong but one-sided sympathetic connection to the werewolf that bit him. That is, the werewolf seems to have sympathetic connection to (and thus an advantage over) the mage, but the mage reaps no knowledge or benefit. This connection can be stripped away like any other, but the fact that a single bite is enough to create it makes the Arrow think that it must have some greater significance.

Practical Reality: Silver kills werewolves, and it does so quickly. An Adept or Master of Matter, then, is deadly to a werewolf, with enough time to cast a few spells. Otherwise, silver is expensive and hard to work into a weapon, and alloys don’t really seem to do the trick. What the connection between silver and werewolves means, the Arrow doesn’t know, though Arrow mages do note the mythological connection between the moon and both silver and lycanthropes (again, though,

widespread knowledge of this latter connection is comparatively new — what sources of knowledge does the Fallen World have? Oracles? Exarchs?).

Aside from silver, Arrows have found that once a werewolf changes shape, wounds inflicted on this new form carry over to the less-sturdy human form. Throwing massive amounts of punishment at a “hybrid” form, therefore, can force a werewolf to flee or die when she changes back, but that assumes that werewolf doesn’t tear the mage’s throat out in the interim.

Sample Ally: Your cabal has been noticing a weird influxes of cryptids, lately. They’ve been boiling up from the sewers or subways (if your city has them), and attacking homeless folks and other loners. You’ve killed a few and warded a few more, but you haven’t found a source yet. But last night, while you were finishing off a particularly unpleasant creature, the werewolves arrived. The pack claims that it’s been working on this problem for a while, but admits it’s getting out of control. Their methods are different from yours, but their priority — find the creature spawning these cryptids and kill it — is very much in line with what your cabal is hoping to do. What can your two groups do to complement each other? And how will the fact that werewolves don’t hold human life in the same regard as you harm your efforts? If your troupe has access to **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, this pack is composed of Blood Talons. The creature doing the spawning might be a spirit of fecundity, or simply some monster from a dark corner of the world that even the Awakened don’t have a name for.

Sample Foe: A young Thyrsus Talon stumbled upon what she thought was a Hallow, and found a werewolf there, performing some kind of oblation. The two of them, after a period of wariness, wound up becoming lovers. Now the Talon is pregnant, and having trouble reaching the father of her unborn child. This is because the werewolf belonged to a tribe that has very strict rules about siring children, and he paid for violating those rules with his life. The werewolves will be coming for the mage and her baby as soon as the baby is born, but for now, they are learning her routines, following her and removing any means of aid. These shapeshifters might be stepping into a battle they will regret, but that will be small consolation to the many people the werewolves will kill in pursuit of one love child. If your troupe has access to **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, these werewolves are Ivory Claws, and might be able to call in support from the other Pure Tribes.

Ghosts, Spirits and the Shadow Realm

If an Arrow has any lingering notions that ghosts don’t exist, they usually get quashed during the initiation process. The spirits of the dead do linger, and in fact, the Arrow is called upon to deal with them occasionally. A ghost might be capable of possessing the living or hurling heavy objects about telekinetically, and the mages of the Arrow (the Moros especially) can bring their magical training to bear on such foes. The unquiet souls of the dead are, if terrifying in their own right, at least understandable, for every Sleeper culture provides a context for them.

Spirits, on the other hand, are a bit harder to comprehend. Thyrsus mages, of course, have an easier time of it, but a recently Awakened mage of any Path has a hard time understanding that everything in the world, even concepts, have spirits. The idea might sound alien, even silly, to these mages... until a spirit of apathy grows powerful enough to remove a person’s basic survival instincts or until a rat-spirit claims a Sleeper, altering his body and soul. Spirits have their own ecology, and part of that ecology seems to be a desire to enter the physical world. Arrows deal with incursions from the Shadow as these mages deal with anything else — carefully and defensively. The almost infinite variety of threats from the spirit world means that the Arrow must expect the unexpected, especially in an area where the veil between worlds is known to be thin.

Entering the Shadow World is possible, especially for a mage with some expertise in the Spirit Arcanum. But doing so should be seen as a foray into hostile territory. The mage is outnumbered and cannot trust anything that he sees. The Arrow does not undertake journeys into the Shadow for simply academic purposes. A life has to be at stake before Arrows cross the barrier between the physical and the Shadow.

Popular Myths: An iron nail or a cross can ward off ghosts, but is this something intrinsic to the metal or the symbol, or simply focus given to the will of user? The Arrow isn’t sure, and placing faith in a tactic just because it seems to work isn’t a good strategy. Ghost stories almost always focus on who the shade was in his mortal life, and the Arrow teaches its recruits much the same thing — every ghost was once a mortal, so learn about the mortal and you learn about the ghost.

Spirits, again, are more of a problem. Many cultures do teach animism, but the vague notion that

“everything has a spirit” doesn’t prepare a mage for the reality of the spirit of a swarm of bees. Among Consilii, spirits sometimes develop a reputation as the default cause of any supernatural problem than can’t otherwise be identified (“Blood seeping from cars as they drive down Midpark? Must be a blood-spirit.”). While this might sound flippant, this sort of “joke” actually underscores exactly how little mages know about spirits and how truly in the dark they are about the ephemeral beings. A mage might have a library with 1,000 pages of notes on spirits, but that means he is well-informed about those spirits *only*. Billions more wait in the spaces between worlds.

Practical Reality: Every Arrow cabal should include a Thyrsus, or at the very least, a mage who is at least an Apprentice of Spirit. That way, if a supernatural matter requires some diagnosis, someone in the cabal can cast use Mage Sight through the Spirit Arcanum, analyze the surrounding area as far as taint from the Shadow goes, and perhaps cast the “Read Spirit” spell (see p. 188) if a hostile being shows itself.

Fighting spirits is a matter of having superior intelligence. That is, a mage should know what kind of fight he’s walking into *before* the spirit drains his blood from across the room. The fact that only a small subset of mages are truly effective against spirits concerns the Arrow, and in areas where spiritual incursions are common, the order adds training in the Spirit Arcanum to the basic roster of skills. Yes, this is easier for some mages than others, but that’s not the point. In an area where a particular type of enemy abounds, it’s crucial to know how to fight that enemy.

Ghosts are easier to deal with than spirits, because once a mage discerns a ghost’s anchors the work is all but done. Still, the Arrow’s policy when dealing with ghosts varies from place to place. Some Consilii feel that human souls shouldn’t linger, and that destroying their anchors merely eases them on their way. Others feel that ghosts should be allowed to remain in the Fallen World as long as they aren’t hostile to Sleepers. The larger question of whether a ghost that is perpetuating a “haunting” is hostile to Sleepers is a matter of some debate among mages, in and out of the Arrow. Does such behavior constitute concern for (if not a violation of) the *Lex Magica*? There is no one standard answer, but the Arrow tends to equate “hostile” with “actively harming or attempting to harm.”

A lesser known, but much more troubling, reality as far as ghosts are concerned is that of ghost mages (see

p. 327, **Mage: The Awakening**). The Arrow is aware that ghosts retain some of their desires and knowledge from life, and ghost mages retain their use of magic, to some degree. While the Arrow is less concerned with a deceased mage revealing secrets of the order than, say, the Guardians might be, the Arrow does worry about a combat-trained mage focusing all of his rage, or all of his protective instincts, on a target that doesn’t deserve it.

Sample Ally: A spirit of battle latches onto your character and follows him around. As your character engages in honorable fights during his training (or during the normal course of being a mage), the spirit absorbs the Essence thus created and becomes a spirit associated with *honorable* fighting, instead of just violence. This allows the spirit to help your character to stay wise and ethical even when in battle... but Heaven help him if he loses Wisdom during a fight. The spirit’s standards are *far* higher than would be reasonable.

Sample Foe: The old Adamant Sage died in a fire, and there was some talk at the time that it might have been arson. But no one had an obvious motive — the old guy was strict and paranoid, but not universally hated or anything — and some Postcognition spells didn’t reveal anything. Now, though, he’s been tormenting non-Arrow mages in the city, disrupting caucuses and hurling accusations at respected members of the Consilium. He was always paranoid, but as popular wisdom states, that doesn’t mean no one was out to get him. One thing of particular concern, though, is how mobile he seems to be. Can he possibly be anchored to *every Arrow in the Consilium*?

Prometheans

It is possible for a human being to be so obsessed with creation that he breathes life into a corpse. It happens, sometimes, that a golem created of mud, rock and human corpses gains a soul and becomes a man. Many cultures have legends of inanimate matter learning to walk, and those legends have filtered down into questions about artificial intelligence and robotics in the modern era.

The mages of the Adamantine Arrow, though, trust their instincts about potential foes, and when faced with the creatures sometimes called the Created or Prometheans, those instincts warn of danger. Arrows feel anger, hatred, jealousy or fear, and they react to those feelings with magic and hostility. Usually, they never know why they felt this way, for very little information exists on these beings.

Popular Myths: If an Arrow has heard of a Promethean, it's most likely as a unique instance. Few mages are even aware that these creatures exist, and fewer still are aware that Prometheans can create more like themselves. A mage fighting one might note similarities to Dr. Frankenstein's Monster or to the Golem of Prague, and thus direct his study that way, but isn't likely to find anything of broad use.

Practical Reality: As powerful as the Created are, a cabal of mages can probably destroy one, if they are at all capable. Fire makes the process quicker, but as noted above, fire is difficult to control (without magic, of course). The biggest problem with fighting Prometheans is that they don't always stay dead, but there's no easy way for a mage to know that. An Arrow or Arrow cabal who faces off against one of the Created is likely to be taking everything at face value, including the strange compulsion to kill, capture or *hurt* this strange creature. Such cruelty is out of character for mage Arrows, and will certainly merit self-reflection later, but the mage will not find any outside influence for it.

The reason for this snap judgment on the mages' part, by the way, is an effect called *Disquiet*. The Created engender this effect in Sleepers and mages alike, but *Disquiet* is a natural human response to the Promethean's very existence, *not* an outside force influencing the victim's emotions. A strong-willed person can resist it for a time, but assume that within a scene, any human being starts to become fascinated by and then obsessed with the Promethean. Extended game systems for this effect are, of course, available in **Promethean: The Created**, but *Disquiet* works fairly well from a purely narrative standpoint, too.

Sample Ally: Your cabal starts receiving letters, revealing hints and clues to problems they've been having. Using Space magic to find the source of these letters leads only to a dark room, but the letters warn the characters, "Don't go looking for me. I don't want to stay in the dark forever." They are signed "Eurydice." If the characters merely follow this mysterious patron's advice, they can find resources they would never have seen and defeat foes they could never have touched. If they trace the letters, they find a beautiful woman, sitting alone in the dark. She weeps as the characters approach, and they feel *Disquiet* start to build. If your troupe has access to **Promethean: The Created**, Eurydice is a Galateid, pursuing the Refinement of Copper.

Sample Foe: A stranger approaches the cabal and immediately sets them on edge. He seems dangerous,

and he's definitely armed. He wants the characters to kill him, but doesn't say so right away. Instead, he makes veiled threats, because he knows that sooner or later *Disquiet* will kick and they'll attack him (his *Disquiet* just seems to make folks homicidal, at least toward him). He had a vision that told him that when he dies, he'll go to "the River" and get his mortal soul, but he doesn't feel right dying without a fair fight. The mages might be able to appreciate that sentiment, but this Promethean has been around for two centuries and is a deadly combatant. If the mages choose to engage him, one or more of them might just see this "River" first. If your troupe has access to **Promethean: The Created**, this character is an Osiran, pursuing the Refinement of Iron.

Changelings

The Good Folk lurk in doorways, shadows and mirrors, and they take people away every day. Only the Acanthus might have an inkling about what happens to these slaves, and even this is a half-remembered feeling from their Awakenings in Arcadia. Sometimes those slaves escape, changed by their servitude, and return to the world of humanity to try to pick up the pieces of their lives.

Changelings, similar to mages, have their own society, and while the two might meet occasionally, they don't compete for space or resources very often. An Arrow might become involved in a struggle between two opposing factions among the fae, but it's more likely that he'll mistake a changeling for a Spirit-Ridden human or a fellow mage, at least without deep scrutiny. If a mage ever finds out what happened to a changeling, though, he might well be outraged — how long has this been going on? What gives the "Others" the right to grab people for slaves and replace them with sociopathic duplicates?

As it happens, it's been going on forever, and as for what gives the Others the right... *something* does, because they keep doing it. An Arrow who wants to take on this injustice is probably going to die at the end of a Fae lord's blade, but that might not stop the mage. Arrow libraries contain stories of mages who have followed the Fae through gateways and never been heard from again. Faeries, whatever else they might be, are out of the purview of the Fallen World and the Supernal Realms, and that limits what the Arrow can do about them.

Popular Myth: Stories about faerie abduction go back centuries, but most Arrows are surprised to find out that it still goes on. As with vampires, the body

of lore is so large that recognizing something that the mage saw as fae-related is difficult, if he's just going by Sleeper occultism. As it happens, though, iron is often mentioned as a bane to faeries, and once again, popular mythology has something useful to contribute.

Practical Reality: The nuances of changeling society are typically a mystery to the Arrow, but mages are good at finding out more than they should. A mage dealing with fae discovers very quickly that they put great deal of stock in oaths, which resonates with the Arrow. This actually means that the Adamantine Arrow can deal with changelings without too much rancor, since they are both bound by their words. Beware, though: changelings have a tendency to honor the letter of the agreement more than the spirit.

Iron, though deadly to changelings, has to be worked in the right way, and most Arrows don't have the resources or the know-how to do it. Attempts at transmuting normal bullets to pure iron don't seem to achieve much of an effect (but then, normal bullets don't exactly bounce off changelings anyway).

Sample Ally: You're not sure how the Arrow got hooked up with him — maybe from another order, maybe he was an ally of the late Adamant Sage. He goes by the name Mr. Bufo, and he's a poison expert. He sells antidotes to any existing poison, natural or magical, and given time, he can cook up cures for disease, too. He demands payment in the form of money, but sometimes he asks for strange items to trade. The weirdest one so far was "Three hairs from *that lady's* head," while Bufo indicated a woman sitting across the street in a café. If you ask him why he needs weird stuff like that, he mumbles something about not asking questions at the Market. If your troupe has access to **Changeling: The Lost**, Mr. Bufo is a Beast of the Venombite kith (poisonous toad, specifically), and might belong to either the Autumn or Summer Court.

Sample Foe: One of your cabal-mates is attacked, out of nowhere, by a man wielding a club. The man escapes after causing some injury to the mage, and of course, the cabal probably goes looking for him. But scrying for the man causes a weird double-vision effect, as if he's in two places at once. There's a good reason for this — he's not really a man. He's a *fetch*, the faerie-crafted duplicate left behind in place of a stolen person. This particular fetch knows that the person he replaced (now a changeling) is gunning for him, and is trying to trick the mages into taking care of this problem for him. That does leave the question of how he knew to attack a mage... but

maybe he didn't. Maybe he just got lucky. Fetches are mechanically similar to normal humans; they do sometimes have special powers, but if you don't have access to **Changeling: The Lost**, a Fate or Time spell at the one- or two-dot level would work fairly well, as would the Death spells dealing with shadows.

Arrows as Antagonists

How might the Adamantine Arrow work in an adversarial role to a troupe's cabal? If a cabal finds itself fighting the Adamantine Arrow, something has gone very wrong along the way. As we come to the end of this chapter, we'll take a moment to consider this possibility.

First, consider what grievance the Arrow has with the cabal. Is it just with one character? Perhaps a member of the cabal committed a blood sacrifice for Mana, and word of it got back to the Arrow. This isn't enough for the Talons to come howling for the character's head on a spike, but it's a serious enough issue that they'll probably want an explanation (and wish to make sure that the cabal knows about what their compatriot has been up to).

The conflict might be with the cabal as a whole, though. If the cabal did something to step on the order's toes, overstepping its authority and status within the Consilium, it's more likely to be a Consilium representative (possibly the Herald or a Sentinel) who takes them to task over it. But if the characters are responsible for a threat to the Consilium arising, they can expect the Arrow to at least question them.

The only time that the Arrow is likely to take direct, physical action against a mage (or a cabal) is if the order feels that the cabal represents an immediate and dire threat to the Consilium or the Sleepers in its area. The Arrow doesn't generally take a simple accusation as proof, and so if the cabal has enemies trying to incite the Arrow to violence, those enemies had better make the frame job look convincing (which they might be able to do, of course). Over matters that don't involve life, death and souls, the Arrow is more likely to use the Duel Arcane to resolve its differences.

When the Arrow Grows Warped

What happens, though, if the Arrow is the threat to the Consilium? It's not impossible for the Adamant Sage in a given Consilium to become corrupt, either with power or greed or in a more literal sense (such as becoming a Scelestus). It wouldn't be easy for all

of the Arrows in a Consilium to fall victim to the same corruption, but a single cabal might — and suppose that cabal's members just happen to be the Sentinels? Now the safety of the Consilium is in the hands of mages with a sinister agenda, and maybe your cabal (which might contain the only non-corrupted members of the order left) is the only one that knows about it.

Corruption within the Arrow is dangerous precisely because there aren't many safeguards against it. Everyone watches the Guardians because they're known to be sinister and sneaky. Everyone watches the Silver

Ladder because they're the leaders, and power always corrupts. The Free Council has yet to truly prove itself, and the Mysterium, well, they collect all of that forbidden data — who knows what they might unearth? But the Arrow is straight and forthright, honoring its oaths and protecting other mages. Even detractors don't usually question the order's rectitude. So how long could a cabal of, say, careful ritual killers in the Arrow, go on doing their black deeds without anyone noticing? How deep could the rot penetrate before someone thinks to cut it out?





CHAPTER FOUR: FACTIONS AND LEGACIES

FIRST I was afraid of death. I had trouble falling asleep at night, wondering if this would be the time that oblivion wouldn't end, that the dark would simply win. It wasn't a terribly rational fear, but it was real, and it lasted long enough to mark me.

Then I was afraid of pain. I knew that I wasn't likely to die, but surviving in the wrong circumstances... that seemed worse. What if an accident maimed me? Even if I eventually healed, the pain was terrifying. It was an insidious fear, and it got to me socially as well. I feared rejection and betrayal. I was afraid of making myself vulnerable, and suffering for it. That, too, I overcame, though it was harder.

Then I was afraid of failure. Even if death was inevitable, and even a chance to rest — even if pain was a temporary thing, or even as they say, “the feeling of weakness leaving your body” — I was afraid that I would fail in the end. That I could suffer and die, and it would be for nothing.

I'm not afraid of anything anymore. Come pain, come death, it won't be for nothing. Even if I suffer and fall, I will succeed. The only thing mortal about me is my fears.

Remember upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all.

— Alexander the Great

Factions

While the Adamantine Arrow is, in many ways, the army of the Diamond Orders, the order is far more a collection of affiliated militias than a single, unified military. From among the multitudes of local units of Arrows, however, a few broad generalities emerge—certain overarching philosophies of martial service. Needless to say, adherents to these differing ethics don't always see eye-to-eye, though they (usually) manage to keep their conflicts civil, and relegated to the realm of heated debate.

Since time immemorial, Arrows have disputed the value of these differing perspectives. Some assert that any form of divisiveness of purpose is an intolerable

liability, while others maintain that diversity of perspective allows for a degree of adaptability that would be unavailable to an order with perfectly uniform beliefs. Each side is, of course, correct, in its own way, and the discussion continues, as it has for centuries, with no real promise of resolution. Thus, some faction members push to make their way of doing things the standard for the Adamantine Arrow, while others embrace the distinctions between the sub-groups, more than happy to have someone to occasionally turn to with a decidedly different opinion on the Arrow's role in Awakened society.

THE BLACK TOWER

I've given my oath. There's nothing more to discuss, now.

Among the most prized of the relics of the Adamantine Arrow are fragments of tablets detailing what some believe to have been the academy in which the craft of the Dragon's Talon was taught. Carved of black basalt, the spire reached high above most of the other structures on the island of Atlantis, granting a view of every harbor and every major thoroughfare. Scores of willworkers were sworn to defend the tower to the final breath and to preserve it against all enemies, this bastion of last resort. In the end, though, it was no foreign conqueror that laid low the great empire of the Awakened, but rather the arrogance of a handful of its high priests and princes. Their oath unfulfilled, many Talons sunk below the waves on that doomful day. Never again, the survivors promised—never again would they fail in the causes to which they had sworn their lives.

Today, the inheritors of that renewed vow name themselves for the structure in which they believe that the army of Atlantis was once trained: the Black Tower. Their causes are many, but all are crusaders in the service of the Awakened.

Beliefs of the Black Tower

In addition to the general beliefs of the Adamantine Arrow, the mages of the Black Tower hold to a few axioms unique to their sub-faction of the order.

Devotion to a Worthy Cause Hones the Spirit

By adopting and living for—and dying for, if necessary—a worthwhile cause, an Arrow puts aside the self in the name of the greater good. By annihilating the ego, the devotee of the Black Tower becomes a

living extension of the Adamantine Arrow's creed of service. Anyone can fight for herself, but it takes a better, stronger soul to fight for a higher purpose than personal gratification. Some fight in the name of faith, others for nations (or Consilii) and still others for more specific or esoteric reasons, but each of the Arrows of the Black Tower recognizes and embraces an individual "flag" for which he would lay down his life.

The Fulfillment of an Oath Strengthens the Supernal

Arrows of the Black Tower expressly believe that seeing a mystically sanctified oath out to its conclusion expands the power of the Supernal and gives it increased influence in the Fallen World. Conversely, forsaking such an oath robs the Supernal of its influence in the Fallen World and fortifies the Abyss, a lifeless realm wrought of betrayal and failed promises. Some go so far as to say that the completion of even non-magical oaths, sworn with sincere and undying devotion (whether by Awakened or even Sleepers), betters this world in a real, if not easily quantifiable, way. Certainly, such vows have empowered even ordinary people to do impossible things, such as the soldier who promises his tearful little girl that he'll come home to her, no matter what, and who walks through hellfire and certain death to keep his word to the daughter he loves more than life itself.

Just and righteous oaths fulfilled in honor brighten this world, even if only in a small way and for a handful of people. Such oaths demonstrate a significant facet of that which is best in the Adamantine Arrow: the flawless dedication of a crusader to her cause and to all those served by its protection and advancement. Seeing oaths through to their conclusion, despite hardship and suffering, exalts the soul of the Arrow and so helps to make her a better vessel for the perfected majesty of the Supernal.

The Black Tower in Power

In Consilii in which Arrows of the Black Tower hold sway, Supernally-sanctified oaths become the norm for most stations of service, and the life of the Consilium may well come to revolve around the specific charge to which the Black Tower mages have devoted their lives. This may be a site, or a group or even a concept. Depending upon the cause to which the Arrows are

sworn, life within the Consilium may be quite simple and easy, or it could be harsh and oppressive.

In some cases, the power of the Black Tower may not immediately be obvious. Some charges require a greater degree of discretion — even secrecy — than others. In these cases, the Arrows of the Black Tower may effectively govern a Consilium, while allowing the perception of other controlling interests. Occasionally, even the puppet rulers come to believe that they are truly in charge. While the earnest devotion to a worthy cause betters the soul, the Black Tower's mages reason, it is far better, and far wiser, to uphold one's duty in silence when openly acknowledging it must necessarily lead to the compromise of one's charge.

Regardless of the manner in which Arrows of the Black Tower go about preserving and protecting their causes, they tend to be among the most vigorous favor-brokers of the order. They make deals as needed with members of other orders to advance the cause. In many cases, so long as the objective in question doesn't imperil those orders or their membership, the other willworkers are all too happy to have the Adamantine Arrow in their debt.

Of course, all of this is predicated upon the notion of a locally unified Black Tower, in which all involved are devoted to the same cause, or at least not mutually contradictory causes. In the event of Black Tower Arrows devoted to incompatible causes, the result is almost always continual ideological conflict and, often, more significant displays of displeasure, unless the feuding factions are taken in hand by a strong and capable leader and forced to either find a compromise or else accept their differences.

The Black Tower and the Veil

In almost all cases, the Black Tower's causes are either greatly benefited by the preservation of the Veil (for those specific to the Awakened world) or else do not interact with it on an appreciable level (for those devoted to a religion, a state or some other concern of the Sleeping world.) Thus, the Black Tower tends to staunchly uphold the Veil. Indeed, some Arrows of the Black Tower — though the degree to which this devotion is appreciated by the Guardians of the Veil varies from place to place, Arrow to Arrow, and Guardian to Guardian — make defense of the Veil, in a literal, martial fashion, the focus of their dedication.



Stereotypes

The Council of Dragons: Strategy is important, but not so important as a steadfast spirit of service.

The Crucible: Fighting for your own glory is just that, no matter how you choose to dress it up.

Appearance: Adherents of the Black Tower don't subscribe to any overarching mode of dress as a faction. When a number of those bound to the same cause gather together, however, whether as a cabal, a Consilium or something else, they might end up adopting a common uniform, or even just a common motif, such as an identifying pin or tattoo. Aside from that, some Black Tower Arrows come off as the archetypal haggard and threadbare long-suffering crusaders, while others (perhaps initially better off, or else devoted to more potentially lucrative causes) dress in finer fashions.

Sanctum: Some sanctums of the Black Tower are the Awakened equivalent of fortified monasteries, while others are lavish estates, outfitted with all of the

best modern comforts. The qualities of a Black Tower Arrow's sanctum depend largely upon her means and the cause to which she has given her loyalty. Some such Arrows forsake worldly goods and live lives of hardship and privation in the name of their duties, while others devote themselves to objectives that require (or at least allow) more lavish accommodations. In any case, any Arrow of the Black Tower worth her salt has a space set aside for contemplation of her purpose, and perhaps some form of physical representation thereof.

Background: Members of the Black Tower are drawn from all of the same walks of life and callings that create the staunchest sorts of crusaders: soldiering, police work, health care, activism, secret societies and the clergy are just some of the potential avenues by which willworkers come into the Black Tower's fold. Especially common within this faction are those whose duties required sacred oaths of them — whether in the course of induction or else in the course of their work — and who took such promises resolutely to heart.

Organization: The crusaders of the Black Tower may or may not be tightly organized in any given loca-

tion. Some causes call for Arrows scattered across the world, meeting only by chance and exchanging a few words upon lonely roads before going their separate ways, while others require a rigid military hierarchy. Whatever the case, a willworker of the Black Tower will adapt to the situation and find the best possible command structure for the particular needs of her sworn cause, drawing other like-minded Arrows together, if possible and if necessary.

When strong, central leadership is called for, Arrows of this faction tend to form structures similar to knight-hoods or other such semi-sacred militant organizations. The invocation of spiritual authority

appeals to the Black Tower's aesthetic now, as surely as it did in the wake of Atlantis' Fall, and serves to drive home the significance of a given cause. Unfortunately, while this tendency can shore up the spirits of those Arrows who make use of it, it also occasionally results in the sorts of abject zealotry that lead to tyranny and atrocity.

Concepts: Eco-terrorist, errant champion for whom there is no rest, holy warrior, partisan revolutionary, proselytizing firebrand, quietly devout sage, tired old soldier, wealthy crusader who fights with the check-book and the sword, would-be Atlantean paladin

THE COUNCIL OF DRAGONS

It's quite clear that the Seers of the Throne have only appeared to withdraw from the Magnolia Hill area — look at these recent reports.

It is no wonder that the emblem of lost Atlantis was the dragon. The dragon soars high and sees all. The dragon is as wise as it is powerful. The dragon speaks only rarely, but its commandments are heeded whenever it gives them voice. The dragon abides patiently but, when its fury is roused, the dragon is great and awful to behold. Since the time of the Fall, there have been those warriors among the Awakened who have aspired to embody the many virtues of the Emperor of Beasts. In the Adamantine Arrow, these mages call themselves the Council of Dragons, and they are the order's tacticians and philosopher-generals.

Beliefs of the Council of Dragons

Outside of the general beliefs and practices of the Adamantine Arrow as a whole, the Council of Dragons subscribes to a few unique notions of its own.

There Exists a Second Wisdom

The Path of Wisdom, as the Awakened are instructed in it, is the practice of knowing what is right and acting upon that knowledge. By the reckoning of the Council of Dragons, however, there exists another sort of wisdom: the knowing of what is *true* and the power to act upon *that* knowledge. "Right" and "true" are often at odds, and the latter needs be just as closely observed in the command tent as the former. A skilled and worthy general does not seek to substitute the ideal in place of

the real, whether upon the field or even just in his own mind. Some such Arrows say that Wisdom is found in understanding of the Supernal, while wisdom is found in understanding of the Fallen.

To assume that all combatants are moral people, committed to the use of force only when needed, and then only as much force as is required, is false. To act upon such a falsehood is irresponsible and certain to be to the detriment of those under one's command. While the Arrow must hold herself to a higher standard of conduct, whether as a soldier or as a commander, she must also recognize that no such scruples exist among many of her foes, and that those who march on her orders will suffer for it if she permits herself to believe otherwise. Sometimes, a general must reconcile within herself both morality and expediency.

A True Warrior Is a Philosopher

Ethics are not instinctual, but must instead be taught and, further, explored and questioned. In becoming a philosopher, a warrior resolves to do more than merely assume that he betters the world: he asks himself *how* he does so and how he might further improve upon his efforts. By discussing these axioms with other warrior-philosophers, he exchanges ideas, learning and educating at the same time, and laying the foundation for tomorrow's rules of war. As the Arrows of the Council of Dragons see things, such

introspection and discourse are basic obligations of the Adamantine Arrow, as the lore of battle is art and science, and must be studied with appropriate discernment and reverence.

Many Arrows of the Council of Dragons keep journals regarding their thoughts, their tactics and their experiences. Similar to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* or Miyamoto Musashi's *Book of Five Rings*, these texts are intended to encapsulate the Arrow's beliefs on the nature of conflict and one's place within it. Some of these books have become standard reference within the order, though many are simply handed down from Master to Apprentice, and the strategies and philosophies therein studied and expanded upon from one generation to the next. A small number of these collections have been passed down over the course of centuries, and a very few Arrows claim to have bodies of knowledge at their disposal dating back a millennium or more.

The Council of Dragons in Power

Wherever the Council of Dragons holds power, a movement toward military organization and critical, strategic thinking takes root. This particular sub-fac-

tion of the Adamantine Arrow is built upon a tactical, long-view approach to Awakened existence. Even those from orders specifically without any kind of militaristic mandate (essentially, everyone other than perhaps the Guardians of the Veil) end up within some manner of command hierarchy, even if doing so means shoehorning them into place. Interestingly, while a Consilium dominated by the Council of Dragons tends to establish a command structure within which all local Awakened can function, the group only rarely puts one of its own in charge of said structure, well aware of the possibility of any military government easily succumbing to the lure of tyranny.

Of course, if the control of the Council of Dragons neither benefits by nor strictly requires obvious governance, then any structure implemented by such Arrows will almost invariably be subtle and understated. It takes more effort to rule overtly than to guide, even with a strong hand, from behind the scenes, and the energy and resources expended in maintaining public glory could be better used to shore up defenses, train new warriors and otherwise keep everything moving smoothly and efficiently. While the Council of Dragons certainly has its share of would-be generalissimos



and grandmasters, these willworkers tend to be the exception to the norm, specifically on account of the many strategic complications commonly inherent to an openly military government, if nothing else.

In places where the Council of Dragons simply has great influence, rather than outright control, the defenses of the Consilium (such as its Sentinels) are still usually arranged in the most effective possible configuration, as well as being strongly supported and well-equipped. These Arrows are often in favor of a “Consilium military budget” that is not only expansive but also thoughtfully spent. When forced to work with less than they’d like — a situation that crops up more regularly than Council of Dragons Arrows would like — they commonly still manage to do good things with what they’re given.

The Council of Dragons and the Veil

Military thinking, especially in modern times, greatly benefits from a certain sense of subtlety and tact. Add to this the fact that Paradox is believed to be the result of a widening of the Abyss — the single greatest threat to the existence of the Awakened — and there arises a powerful commitment to the secrecy of magic on the part of the Council of Dragons. While there are times during which the Veil must be strained for the sake of successfully completing an operation, only under the direst of circumstances should the Veil be broken, and then only to the exact degree required before immediately being repaired by whatever means are prudent and necessary. Anything less is negligence on the part of the Adamantine Arrow.

Arrows of the Council of Dragons often pride themselves on an ability to solve problems in unexpected ways. In situations in which a less imaginative willworker might reflexively resort to vulgar magic, such an Arrow tends to look for a covert or (preferably) even non-magical solution. And, yes, there are certainly mages of the Council of Dragons who seek that “better answer” for the sake of pride in their own cleverness, rather than an active devotion to the tenets of Wisdom, but so long as the Veil is maintained, most members of the sub-faction tend to turn a blind eye to the smaller hubris.

Appearance: While mages of the Council of Dragons tend to be hierarchical thinkers, their appearance only rarely reflects that unity of purpose. These mages are often (means permitting) well dressed, but they usually eschew the styles common to a Sleeper military.

Stereotypes

The Black Tower: Zeal swings its blade with a stout arm, but often lacks the wisdom needed to conserve its strength for the waning hours of the battle.

The Crucible: With a dozen of them at my command, there’d be no stronghold that I couldn’t breach.

The Awakened mind does not require a uniform to create a sense of camaraderie and community. Instead, such willworkers dress in whatever is most appropriate to the task at hand: camouflage and armor for a wilderness combat situation, for example, or a stylish suit for making an important presentation before the Council and the Hierarchy.

Sanctum: The sanctum of a member of the Council of Dragons is almost always neat and defensible. Other considerations are, of course, significant, but none so much so as those two. An Arrow might have a vast library of military science and history, while another prefers an extremely minimalist, almost ascetic approach to her living space.

Background: While it would seem intuitive for many mages of the Council of Dragons to be drawn out of military service (especially from among officers), the fact of the matter is that such people are no likelier to Awaken than others. Instead, those who are solid planners, drawn to hierarchy and not averse to using their talents for military applications, tend to form the largest bloc of willworkers committed to the goals and beliefs of the Council of Dragons.

Organization: Arrows of the Council of Dragons are probably the most rigidly organized members of the order. As strategists, they realize that an effective military requires a clear chain of command. Adamant Sages and Banner Wardens are relatively common in this sub-faction, as are those Arrows who hold Consilium offices. When the order’s numbers will support it, willworkers in the Council of Dragons advocate a strong military hierarchy, with specialized duties and clearly delineated branches of service.

Concepts: Consilium quartermaster, obsessive military theorist, power behind the throne, reluctant strategic prodigy, right hand to an older and more experienced Arrow, tranquil philosopher, undisputed expert on Scelesti tactics, well-armed Herald

THE CRUCIBLE

There's no time to wait for reinforcements. Our Hierarch is in there with those Banishers, and we need to get her out now. Who's with me?

Battle hardens the body, and by honing the body through conflict, one necessarily improves the mind and the spirit. At least, so goes the philosophy of perfection through combat that knows itself as the Crucible. Members of this faction tend to see the Adamantine Arrow's mandate as one of direct conflict: fighting in the trenches, as it were, and leading by example and inspiration. To these willworkers, an Arrow has no business at the back of the engagement, moving troops with the same detachment exercised in playing a game of chess — instead, she should be at the vanguard of the assault, bloodied but unbowed, shouting back to those behind her, "Brothers! Follow me to glory!" The way of the Crucible is the way of the hero.

But "hero" hasn't always had the same connotations as we associate with it in modern times. In ancient days, the days in which the Adamantine Arrow first took shape, a "hero" was merely a person of great power and a willingness to use it, often to ends as flawed as they were noble. While mages of the Crucible aspire to better and more selfless objectives than those pursued by, say, a Gilgamesh or an Achilles, those who understand these mages best often give them a wide berth in time of conflict, as they tend to be driven far more by passion than reason, for good and for ill. They are the shining icons of the order, embodying within them and illuminating for others the greatness of the warrior, so that all might strive to obtain that greatness for themselves, and so become strong, capable, honorable and fearless.

Adherents to the Crucible tend to be among the most idealistic of Arrows, preferring sincere action — even in failure — to prolonged introspection. Rugged and rough-hewn honesty is among their most treasured trademarks. True warriors, they say, have nothing to hide. This isn't to say that they are *incapable* of strategic thinking or deep reflection, but instead that, given the option, an Arrow of the Crucible would much rather be upon the field, putting his life on the line for those weaker than himself and demonstrating to all that the Dragon's Talon is sharp and brilliant, still, its magnificence undimmed by time.

Beliefs of the Crucible

Beyond those beliefs common to the entirety of the Adamantine Arrow, mages of the Crucible subscribe to certain ideals more specific to its ethic of reckless heroism.

Heroism Is a Mandate from the Supernal

Acts of *true* heroism reflect that which is best in the human soul, the vessel of the Supernal within the Fallen World. When we look upon the works of heroes, we are inspired and feel something wonderful stirring within our spirits. To the Arrows of the Crucible, that feeling is the whisper of the Realms Supernal, calling out to the soul, across the vast darkness of the Abyss, encouraging people to become more than they now are — becoming the greater selves that they are capable of creating.

Ultimately, Crucible Arrows don't just want to be heroes, themselves; they want to inspire others to embrace the path of the hero. *True* service is measured not just in what does for others, but also in what one teaches them to do for themselves. By living a life of worthy deeds, the Arrow instills in his fellow Awakened the fervent desire to reach with courage and conviction toward the Supernal, because only the darkest and most cowardly of hearts remains unmoved in the face of greatness.

The Best Defense Is a Good Offense

Crucible Arrows are, by and large, incapable of coexisting with that which they consider to constitute a threat to those they've sworn to protect. While the Council of Dragons is usually able to adopt the long view of things and suffer the continued existence of enemies for the sake of tactical advantage, the Crucible sees only a foe to be destroyed. While the Black Tower embraces its crusades with zeal, that fervor is tempered with wisdom and, often, more than a little realism, whereas the Crucible would sooner act with foolhardy righteousness than patient moral correctness. Thus, the Arrows of this faction are *extremely* proactive in their never-ending quest to defend the

heirs to Atlantis. Crucible Arrows go on the offensive to strike at Seer pylons and Scelestus cults — rather than waiting for the war to arrive on the Consilium's doorstep, these mages bring it to the enemy's.

The Crucible in Power

As far as organization goes, one thing can be said with certainty about the mages of the Crucible: reckless valor often makes for poor planning skills. When a mage of the Crucible finds herself in a position of respect and authority, it is often on account of a cult of personality, drawing others to her side out of admiration and loyalty, rather than recognition of the *practical* skills that make for a good leader. But, similar to many career heroes, Arrows of the Crucible don't often make good leaders in the long term: their decisions are more influenced by passion than reflection, and they eventually begin to chafe under the yoke of others' expectations. This isn't to say that willworkers of the Crucible don't enjoy recognition — most do. For the most part, however, they would rather inspire than govern.

Only under the rarest of circumstances would the Crucible, as a movement within the Adamantine Arrow, assume power within a Consilium. Not only would the egos of many heroes be set in opposition to one another (resulting in the scale of calamity that would make for a fine Greek epic or Norse saga), but many members of the Crucible are scarcely capable of managing the small details of their own lives, let alone those of an entire community of Awakened. Among the consequences of being larger than life are the tendencies to forget the little bureaucratic annoyances and to butt heads with others who share a similar worldview. These factors conspire to make most members of the Crucible terrible large-scale leaders, even if such an Arrow is a fantastic small-unit leader or even just the intrepid hero around whom others rally.

The Crucible and the Veil

Officially, the Crucible is as devoted to the Veil as any other group within the Adamantine Arrow or, indeed, within the mainstream society of the Awakened. Unfortunately, however, mages of the Crucible sometimes become overeager in the titanic conflicts in which they immerse themselves, and accidents do occasionally happen. Some particularly passionate (or simply shortsighted) willworkers have been known

to fail to notice breaches of the Veil in the heat of battle, making the Crucible, overall, largely unpopular with the Guardians.

Older, or perhaps just wiser, mages of the Crucible are mindful of the Awakened tradition of secrecy, though, and take pains to balance the urge to heroism with respect for the Veil. Sometimes, a violation of the Veil cannot be avoided, but a *real* hero cleans up her mistakes, rather than waiting for others to do so. Thus, the more responsible Arrows of the Crucible often end up developing certain skills and magical proficiencies useful in reasserting normalcy after the smoke clears and the dust settles, abilities that they must sometimes put to use fixing the Veil in the wake of other Crucible mages, so as to preserve what good name the group has left regarding the Veil.

Stereotypes

The Black Tower: Boon companions when your causes and theirs align, and righteous pains in the ass when they don't.

The Council of Dragons: Some stay in the command tent out of wisdom and others out of cowardice, but I pity them all, as they'll never truly understand the passion and fury of battle.

Appearance: Mages of the Crucible tend to be distinctive. Even if a given willworker's mode of dress doesn't stand out, he often exudes a certain air of power, greatness or the sort of resolute fearlessness that others admire. Such Arrows hold their heads high, even when battered and bloody. They tend to be among the best-armed examples of a well-armed order, and many won't go anywhere without at least a few weapons and some manner of protective gear at hand — one never knows when a seemingly calm situation will erupt into violent conflict, after all. Willworkers of the Crucible often wear their scars and old war wounds as badges of honor, and many can recount the story behind each one.

Sanctum: Many Arrows of the Crucible don't have sanctums of their own, relying instead upon the charity and hospitality of those whom they aid. Others, however, exercise a bit more pragmatism in their lives, and find a place to call home. Crucible Arrows often like to have a place to display mementos of their battles, but not a few of them



prefer a strong defense to either space or neatness. Some Crucible mages end up living in sanctums that look like stereotypical “bachelor pads,” complete with day-old pizza on the counter, unwashed clothes in the corner and one too many six packs in the fridge.

Background: Awakened from all walks of life are drawn to the glamorous life of the hero. Some sign on with the Crucible for all the wrong reasons, and some of those actually manage to thrive within. The majority of the mages in the Crucible, however, *do* start out with their hearts at least mostly in the right place. Many who survive this tumultuous lifestyle are worn down and get jaded with the years, but it’s a strong drive toward individual greatness and the power to inspire others toward it that brings them to the Crucible in the first place. Some do so to live up to a heroic legacy, while others find that it just comes naturally, and still others take to the life out of a desire to rise above an unexceptional past.

Organization: In most cases, the Crucible has trouble organizing anything larger than the small-unit level. On that scale, however, Crucible Arrows can make for phenomenal combat forces. Of course, “combat forces” are exactly what squads of Crucible willworkers are, and they don’t often do well in peacetime, as alliances and even friendships are strained by impatience and flaring tempers. Wide-scale organization within the Crucible itself is almost nonexistent, though members of other Adamantine Arrow sub-factions can often get warriors of the Crucible to fit into a bigger structure, provided the other sub-factions know how best to use said Crucible Arrow — how best to provide her with the challenges for which her soul clamors.

Concepts: Boisterous champion, cultural hero, doomed warrior, glory hound, grim veteran of a hundred battlefields, idealistic Arrow just starting out, nomadic gunslinger, off-white knight

Cults

The Black Tower: The Hand of Fate

Arrows of the Black Tower subscribe to many different causes, ranging from humble to epic, simple to esoteric. For the willworkers of the Hand of Fate, the cause is defense of an invaluable resource. Somewhere along the eastern seaboard of the United States, in an undisclosed location, a small and well-concealed ruin is believed to date back to the time of the Atlantean exodus and within this remote and hidden temple lies a “pool of visions,” in which those gifted with a sense for destiny might receive particularly clear glimpses of futures yet to come, as well as a deep, mystic awareness as to how best to influence the skein of fate so as to bring about the most favorable potentialities.

Unfortunately, this temple does not admit the sons and daughters of the Dragon’s Talon. In fact, the Hand of Fate’s research seems to indicate that only the théarchs of the Silver Ladder and the willworkers numbering themselves among the Seers of the Throne might access this ancient holding. Thus, members of the Hand of Fate act as stewards over the temple, defending the site against detection and invasion, and protecting those mages of the Silver Ladder who must come and go from the place during the course of receiving its gift of visions. Of course, the Hand of Fate is quite discerning in which members of the Silver Ladder are permitted access to this ancient treasure, and has had cause, over the years, to deal with threats originating from within and without the Atlantean Diamond.

Few outside of the Hand of Fate and its affiliated théarchs are presently aware of the faction’s existence, which is how all involved prefer things to be. Still, secrets are not easily kept — especially among the Awakened — and these stalwart defenders must occasionally cross swords with Seers of the Throne, strange spirits, nightmarish cryptids and, every so often, overly curious mystagogues or intrusive Guardians of the Veil. Just as any good Arrows, the members of the Hand of Fate believe in preemptive defensive measures, however, so the cult’s adherents aren’t just warrior-monks watching over a lost temple: they’re also out in the Fallen World, researching and addressing threats before they arise. In fact, usually only the elders of the faction confine themselves to

the temple and its immediate environs, acting as the final line of defense.

History

It was sometime between the years of 1720 and 1725 that the errant Adamantine Arrow cabal known as the Foederati stumbled upon the location of the previously unknown and presumably Atlantean ruin that houses the temple of visions. The records involving the discovery itself have been left deliberately vague, so as to confound would-be treasure-seekers of the other orders. While various references have been made to the ruin, no proper title for it has ever been uncovered and neither has one been attributed to it: another misdirection on the part of the Foederati — like most good Arrows, the members of the cabal understood that an objective without a name becomes more difficult to pinpoint.

It appears that the Foederati were allowed into the temple, once and only once, though the records of their experiences within are nonexistent, or perhaps merely locked away and counted among the deepest mysteries of the cult. Whatever the case, the Foederati emerged with a renewed sense of purpose, thereafter committed to the protection of the site against what the cabal’s members knew would be the inevitable assault of those motivated by selfish greed. Within a few years, the cabal, now calling itself the Hand of Fate, had made contact with two théarchs possessed of the necessary Arcana to make use of the temple, considered by the unanimous decision of the cabal’s membership to be sufficiently trustworthy. Both accepted the Hand of Fate’s offer, and became the first oracles of the temple in this age of the world, in time passing on their secrets to apprentices who continued the work of interpreting the visions revealed by the ruin.

In time, most of the Hands of Fate took on students of their own and, over the course of generations, the cabal grew too large and unwieldy to remain a single entity, instead fracturing into two affiliated cabals, and then three and, around 1965, four. Rather than attributing distinct duties to these cabals, the cult has opted to train *all* of them in the wide variety of tasks necessary to the preservation of the temple and its secrecy, so that the fall of one cabal does not needlessly compromise the faction’s mandate. Somewhere along the line, the title taken on by the Foederati instead became synonymous with the cult itself, and each of its four splinter cabals adopted a new title of its own, none of which make reference, however obliquely, to the Hand of Fate’s charge.

Philosophy

The nameless temple must be protected, as must the mages of the Silver Ladder who are capable of receiving the omens that the temple bestows. The Seers of the Throne know of the ruin, as do other enemies, and all must be barred from entering within. Custom has made the predictions of the oracles of the temple out to be more or less inviolate — though this tradition has been challenged on occasion, those instances are the exceptions that define the rule. The power to know and influence the future is perhaps the greatest weapon that the heirs to Atlantis might wield, and it is a tactical advantage that must never be yielded to the Adamantine Arrow's foes, no matter the cost of holding it.

In this sense, the Hand of Fate has become something like a monastic order, sworn to the defense of a site too sacred even for its members to enter. A mystique surrounds the ruin and the théarchs who are allowed to enter it, and members of the cult die in the defense of a place within which they have never once set foot. Some of the rare few who know anything of the cult and its mission liken them to the guardsmen once stationed outside of such sites as the Forbidden City in China: charged with the protection of a sacred location that they might never enter. The mages of the Hand of Fate, for their part, don't often consider the parallels, and those who do take no issue with them. It takes a phenomenal degree of discipline to defend what one shall never set eyes upon, after all.

Organization

The four cabals of the Hand of Fate are subdivided into four different sorts of offices intended to maximize each group's ability to serve as a fully functional protection system for the nameless temple, if the need should arise. As not even one cabal of the cult has met with total obliteration between the founding of the faction and modern times, however, the efficacy of the structure is yet to be truly tested.

Abbot

Each of the leaders of the four cabals that comprise the Hand of Fate is known as Abbot, followed by the mage's shadow name, while within the compound that houses the nameless temple. Outside that area, each is addressed by a title more common within the Awakened community (such as Banner Warden or Sentinel), so as to preserve the secrecy of the ruin and the cult's self-appointed mission. The Abbots

only rarely leave the area of the temple, and each is a potent willworker, collectively constituting a powerful inner perimeter of defense.

Templar

The standard soldiers of the cult, Templars act as members of the Adamantine Arrow in the wider world of the Awakened, as well as attending protective duties at the nameless temple on a regular basis. Each of the cabals of the Hand of Fate has at least two Templars among its numbers.

Scout

An intelligence specialist of the Hand of Fate, primarily concerned with maintaining the veil of misdirection that conceals the faction's charges, as well as vigilance for any threats to that secrecy. Every cabal of the cult contains at least one Scout.

Anchorite

Not all of the four cabals of the Hand of Fate have an Anchorite, whose duty it is to remain on site at the temple's location at all times, within plain view of the ruin. This is seen as the harshest obligation of the faction, and those who submit to it are viewed with admiration and pity, for they forsake a worldly life in the pursuit of the cult's sacred duty.

Appearance: The members of the Hand of Fate tend to dress in a fairly nondescript fashion when out and about in the world, though some have taken to attiring in garb reminiscent of holy people or even ascetics while in the vicinity of the nameless temple.

Sanctum: In addition to the location of the nameless temple itself — a powerful sanctum in its own right — the four cabals of the cult each maintain a private sanctum. All are close by the ruin, and all tend toward a certain simple, spartan aesthetic.

Background: New members of the Hand of Fate are recruited from among the most trustworthy Apprentices of existing members. Those chosen are steadfastly loyal, and possessed of an unbending sense of discipline and the ability to keep a secret, on pain of death. Other than that, there are no requirements.

Acanthus and Moros tend to be more common within the Hand of Fate than members of other Paths, though this may simply be a matter of coincidence.

Concepts: Destiny's fanatic, reluctant hermit, staunch defender

Quote: *On my life, you will go no further. What lies beyond is not for your eyes.*

The Council of Dragons: The Adamant Crown

A faction of the Council of Dragons maintains that the proper place for a master strategist and warrior-philosopher is that of leader, or even ruler. The Silver Ladder, these generals of the so-called Adamant Crown contend, is meant to be an order of priests and spiritualists, preserving and interpreting the ancient law, while the business of governance should be left to those who have (and will continue to) let blood in the name of lost Atlantis. After all, one who has not suffered upon the battlefield and borne the weight of the warrior's burden — that of wielding the slayer's weapon and witnessing with one's own eyes the deaths of those under one's command — cannot possibly be fit to preside over those that have.

Needless to say, this cult of the Council of Dragons, with its nigh-heretical teachings, is a secretive one. The Silver Ladder resents this would-be usurpation of its traditional rights of leadership, while the Guardians look askance at any soldier who would set herself upon a throne. Thus, the members of the Adamant Crown move in silence, quietly arranging matters so as to increase the reliance of others upon the Adamantine Arrow and, correspondingly, to augment the powers and resources made available to the order. When the time is right, such Arrows reason, the Adamant Crown need only be ready, willing and able to step forward and assume the mantle of command, and others, long conditioned by conflict and a need for strong leadership, will gladly accept rule by the warrior caste.

Detractors of the Adamant Crown see little difference between its willworkers and those of the Seers of the Throne, save perhaps for a greater degree of martial skill and somewhat less subtlety in the scope of their ambitions. For their part, many mages of the Adamant Crown see something to admire in the Seers — for their honest admission of the will to power, if nothing else. Still, the faction's members believe that Wisdom must temper their ascent to control over the Awakened, lest hubris tempt them to follow the path of the Exarchs. Of course, those outside of the Adamant Crown contend that there is no way, at all, to claim dominion by the sword, however it is that one wishes to dress up the prospect and file down its rough and ugly edges, and *not* succumb to the godlike arrogance of Atlantis's unwitting destroyers.

History

The oldest documents of the Adamant Crown indicate that similar movements have come and gone over the ages: in Sparta, the Qin Empire, Imperial Rome, the Carolingian Empire and elsewhere. Some members of the faction claim, therefore, that their fellowship dates back to remotest antiquity. Others, perhaps more pragmatic, attribute the creation of the modern incarnation of the Adamant Crown's philosophy to the works of Apollonius, who, despite his antiquated shadow name, was an Obrimos Arrow living in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Caught up in the imperialist fervor of his times, Apollonius spoke at length of both the basic obligation and fundamental right of the warrior class to govern those who knew nothing of armed conflict. "Peace is made by the sword," Apollonius wrote, "and, thus, it is apparent that only men of the sword can justly reign over the peace that their toil creates."

By the time he was killed (through what the Adamant Crown's sparse surviving chronicles of those times allege was an alliance of desperation between the Guardians of the Veil and the Seers of the Throne), Apollonius had brought five Consilii together under his bloodstained banner, ruling over them as "Arch-Hierarch," with each of the five directly presided over by one of his disciples, sworn in fealty to his cause. The faction's texts record that this was a glorious time, a time of hope, which might have led to a reunification of the Awakened. Other histories, locked away in Mysterium Athenaea, tell a different tale. They speak of oppression and fear, and the iron fist of a tyrant who won his throne at the end of a blade and knew no other way to hold onto it once it was his. Somewhere, locked in a vault in rural England, the Guardians of the Veil still have Apollonius's thaumium diadem, adorned with five rubies of surpassing beauty and brilliance, still encrusted with blood from the blow that killed him.

Of Apollonius's followers, only a handful survived, fleeing England for other parts of the Fallen World. They brought their beliefs with them, however, and took pains to stay in contact with one another, slowly rebuilding. While they have never again managed to recapture the age of the founder's greatness, they have slowly made strides toward resurrecting and magnifying the splendor of Apollonius's Awakened empire — however brief and fleeting it might have been — this time, they believe, to stand in glory for an age.

Philosophy

Wisdom grants understanding, but power makes manifest the Wisdom of the individual and, thus, proves self-justifying. Without the ability to exercise one's will over others, just as one does upon the Fallen World through magic, one is capable only of ruminating upon theory, rather than actively putting one's beliefs into practice. Thus, the unwillingness to seize power can be accurately considered a form of laziness and self-indulgence. A *real* Arrow does not flinch from the cost of bettering the world, even if doing so means embracing a road of hardship and the scorn of others. In the end, the unification of the Awakened and their subsequent return to the greatness of old will vindicate the Adamant Crown.

Of course, the Awakened are, by definition, willful people, not apt to easily submit to rule. This is as it should be. Only the strongest and worthiest will realize within themselves the power necessary to bring order and rightful governance to the heirs to Atlantis. Thus, those that stand in the path of the Adamant Crown are not to be despised, but instead appreciated for their convictions and the ways in which they test Apollonius' disciples, acting as the crucible in which a true sorcerer-king will be forged. When an Awakened empire arises once more, the best of the survivors of such resistance movements will be offered the opportunity to serve with honor the throne that their actions have helped to create.

Organization

In modern times, the members of the cult stay in touch through correspondence, using means magical and mundane to connect with others who trace their allegiance back to the few surviving protégés of Apollonius. Most use code names that are passed down from mentor to student, fearful of the consequences of premature discovery by outsiders. Only those close to claiming control over a Consilium or other significant resource typically feel comfortable enough in their power to cast aside the veil of secrecy that protects them, but enough disasters have befallen such mages as to make even the most openly powerful think twice before revealing themselves to their fellow willworkers.

There are no titles or official duties within the Adamant Crown, as the deliberately scattered nature of the faction makes such distinctions impractical at best. Truth be told, the likelihood that the cult would be able to agree upon a single tyrant to govern over

all of them should they ever fulfill their self-appointed task of unifying an Awakened empire is slim. Without the intervention of an extremely powerful and charismatic leader to assert control, the entire endeavor would almost certainly collapse in Duels Arcane and other contests of magical might, as well as outright armed conflicts, single combat and clashes between small units of mages. The fact of the matter is that the Adamant Crown is already all but dead and dust, but its adherents, each a would-be king, cannot see for their pride that a scattered collective of hopeful conquerors will almost certainly never manage to replicate Apollonius's terrible magnificence, on however inconsequential a scale.

Appearance: Members of the Adamant Crown usually dress well, with a tendency toward regal, vaguely antiquated styles in official Awakened (or Adamantine Arrow) gatherings, though this is a custom, rather than a fast rule.

Sanctum: The mages favor sanctums in which they are surrounded by trophies of their military triumphs, as well as imagery of successful (and heroic) conquerors, from antiquity and from the modern era.

Background: The Adamant Crown appeals to those that are most strongly devoted to the notion of a functional military dictatorship. Career soldiers of an extremist bent can often be swayed to the faction's cause — especially those from a military upbringing. Conversely, those with no military background, but who fancy themselves “warrior-kings” of the Awakened, can be seduced by the Adamant Crown's rhetoric.

Warlocks and Theurgists are the mages likeliest to answer the call of the Adamant Crown, as its message of strength and dominance most thoroughly appeals to the sons and daughters of the Iron Gauntlet and the Golden Key.

Concepts: Armchair tactician, conquering hero, scion of an Awakened bloodline

Quote: *Wisdom without strength and organization is meaningless.*

The Crucible: The Arisen

The Arisen is a group within the Crucible specifically devoted to the idea of a glorious end and the immortality of the hero. The Arisen appeals especially to Arrows of primal sensibilities, those who seek to emulate the magnificent deeds of a Gilgamesh or an Achilles, understanding that greatness is possible only because of the promise of mortality. When someone perishes in

a manner that moves and inspires, legends are handed down through the generations, and children grow up aspiring to such heights of heroism. Just as any other hero, an Arrow is defined, first and foremost, by the quality of her character in meeting her end.

Even some members of the Crucible tend to think of the Arisen as semi-suicidal madmen, prematurely enamored of the tales that others will tell of them in ages to come. For their part, the Arisen scoff at the very notion. They do not long to die, after all — rather, they simply do not *fear* death, and that is a critical distinction. If the objective of the mages of the Crucible is to inspire others with worthy deeds, then it behooves them to set a sterling example of the final test of courage and the manner in which a proper Arrow greets that singular and most significant of moments. Thus, while other Arrows might shake their heads at the overly conspicuous gallantry of the Arisen, they also cannot deny the shudder that races down the spine as one of them charges into the fray, against Seers of the Throne, the Mad, an acamoth or some forgotten god of the ancient world, and cries out, “Victory or death!”

History

None of the Arisen are really certain when it was that the cult’s philosophy of heroic self-sacrifice was officially codified into some manner of coherent belief system. Some point to the fearless warrior ethics of certain ancient cultures, but these are really just suppositions. Ultimately, the few surviving elders of the Arisen assert, what matters is that the tales of the heroes to which the faction’s members compare themselves survive still, centuries and even millennia later, long after flesh has rotted and bones have gone to dust in the ruins of tombs swallowed by time. Thus, it can be said that the history of the Arisen is the history of the hero — of the very notion of laying down one’s life for something greater and more meaningful than oneself, and earning eternal life thereby.

The chronicles of the Arisen as a faction of the Adamantine Arrow date back to the benighted years not long after the collapse of Rome. A handful of texts from that time still exist, as do tapestries, statuary and other records, some of them magical, but most the product of more ordinary sorts of artifice. The ideal of martyrdom for one’s beliefs was strongly ingrained in the European psyche at this time: the product of the inexorable expansion of Christianity. However, it was in Persian soil that the principles of the Arisen seemed to have first taken root. Under the powerful,

centrist régime of the latter years of the Sassanids, many of those who Awakened had grown up in a militant Zoroastrian empire that emphasized duty and glorified the souls of the righteous. Adding to that the far older beliefs of the Babylonians and, especially, the Sumerians, as well as the Hellenic influences on Persia and certain unspecified Awakened writings now lost to history, an ethic of dauntless and foolhardy heroism arose within the region’s Adamantine Arrow. This movement spread inexorably outward, carried upon the lips of mages awestruck by the great feats that they had witnessed at the hands of these death-defying willworkers.

The tales that were told and retold made the Arisen out to be very nearly demigods, and while some denied such accolades, others accepted them, feeling that this was, indeed, the very purpose of the movement: to kindle in others the drive toward greatness by embodying the loftiest heights that the Awakened might reach. In the end, the more selfless of the Arisen died out unsung, while those who were happy to celebrate the praises of their fellow mages (while, they hoped, simultaneously engendering in them the desire to realize similar accomplishments of their own) came to dominate the cult. Religious and civic duty fell by the wayside, and the mandate of the Arisen became one of the fatal destiny of the hero and the immortality that comes of embracing that doom without hesitation or regret. In time, the faction grew and insinuated itself into the warrior codes of many lands and eras, cultivating Arrows whose only fear was the ignominy of spending the last days of their twilight years upon a peaceful deathbed.

Philosophy

Most people die unknown and unmourned by the wider world. Even notable individuals are usually forgotten by the time a few years have gone by. Truly remarkable people might be recognized decades or even centuries after being laid in the earth. But the mightiest of legendary heroes are remembered in song and story *forever*. Furthermore, an overwhelming number of these heroes perished in battle, facing overwhelming odds, curses that promised destruction or powers with which no human being might cross swords and live. And the heroes fought these battles precisely because they *were* heroes worthy of everlasting glory, and even in a jaded and selfish world, these stories move people to tears, stir the imagination and, just sometimes, inspire the sort of courage that gives rise to another deserving of such immortality.

It is not enough merely to stand up and be counted among those who demonstrate the virtue of the hero by lives lived well; the Arrow must die with the same greatness with which she lives, else the most important message of her life — that valor lives forever — is lost. By meeting death with honor, dignity and unyielding resolve, the Arisen secure their place within the Supernal, ascending to join those who have perished in righteous service, with purity in their hearts.

Organization

While members of this cult usually adhere to whatever the dominant local structure of the Adamantine Arrow might be, they organize themselves somewhat differently in all matters internal. The hierarchy of the Arisen is more one of recognition and respect than of authority.

Hero

The youth of the Arisen are simply called Heroes, though this is in the ancient sense of one who rises above human limitation and weakness through a combination of cosmic favor and the will to greatness. Heroes can be unruly and tend to be wildly passionate, as befits those who feel that they must live today, for they will surely die tomorrow.

Eidolon

From the Greek for “image” or “representation,” the word is the root of the modern term, idol. Eidolons of the Arisen are the champions who have faced down death repeatedly and survived to tell the tale. These are the seasoned warriors of the cult, having survived engagements that should have killed them, and who are yet still hale and hardy. Sometimes, Eidolons are known to lead Heroes into battle — occasionally appearing inexplicably when needed most — particularly when hope is lost and defeat seems inevitable.

Divus

A living legend among the Arisen, a Divus (“Divine One”) is a treasured resource, sought out for his

wisdom and knowledge, for he has seen things literally unfathomable to those without the benefit of his experiences. These magnificent warriors are sometimes pitied in their waning days, for the misfortune of having outlived the fullness of youth.

Appearance: The Arisen tend to attire in whatever manner best supports the individual legend that the Arrow seeks to embody, redefine or create. While the Arisen respect the Veil as much as any right-thinking mage, these willworkers have a flair for the dramatic, and don’t hesitate to attract attention when doing so might provide a rallying point or example for others.

Sanctum: Some Arisen eschew sanctums almost completely, living as wanderers in the traditions of old, while others go in for elaborate living accommodations and ritual spaces. Any Arisen who has a place to hang his hat, however, has a special space set aside for his arms and armor, if any, as these are the tools of his trade.

Background: Those who are inspired early in life by the grand tales of heroism can be drawn to the romance of this faction. Likewise, those who witness great heroics around the time of (or even during) their Awakenings sometimes find places among the Arisen. Also, those whose lives before the journey to the Supernal were trite and largely insignificant might struggle against an ignoble past by embracing the inevitability of death and resolving to make of that death a thing of legend.

Moros and Thyrsus are among the willworkers most commonly drawn to the way of the Arisen, as are no few Obrimos. These Paths speak most thoroughly to the cult’s drive toward pure self-sacrifice in the name of a greater good.

Concepts: Dauntless folklorist, grizzled veteran, young paragon

Quote: *Fear is death. Glory lasts forever.*

THE AWAKENING GAMBIT

You'll thank me someday.

The Acanthus of the Adamantine Arrow are tacticians first and last, a natural extension of their prowess with analyzing probability and causality. Thus, they know that mages are in a treacherous position by dint of their numbers. The Awakened are rare, and it's only because of their penchant for remaining hidden (and their power, obviously) that they survive. But what happens when the Seers of the Throne or Banishers, or some more esoteric enemy, attack and kill the Wise of a given area? The survivors have no way to shore up their numbers. They can't make more mages.

The mages of the Awakening Gambit beg to differ. By analysis and careful manipulation, they say, it is possible to arrange a scenario in which a person must either Awaken or perish. These "Kingmakers" step in only if the target seems to be leaning more toward the "perish" option, but otherwise they welcome a new mage, a mage who is already suited by the circumstances of his Awakening to join the Arrow.

Obviously, this position is controversial. Manipulating a mortal's fate this way can legitimately be viewed as a violation of the *Lex Magica*, and certainly as an act of hubris. Also, some mages see the Gambit's strategy as trying to "cheat the system," arranging false crises so that a mage's soul is tricked into waking up. What kinds of mages are created from such situations, they wonder? Are these mages dishonest, perhaps with a penchant for underhanded manipulation themselves? Are the Kingmakers, in fact, making more mages *like them*?

Other mages, though, see the Kingmakers' actions as perfectly viable. The Fallen World isn't a product of magic, after all; it's a product of the war between the Exarchs and the Oracles. Clearly, laws for Awakening exist, so why not exploit them? The concern isn't one of ethics, but of efficacy — do the Gambit's tactics work?

Whether or not they do (see the sidebar), the Awakening Gambit Legacy is tolerated and not viewed as left-handed for two reasons. First, the Kingmakers are planners and logicians without peer — they have to be, to do what they do — and that's good for the order. Second, the Kingmakers have a reputation within the order as being good judges of

character and highly moral in their own right (with respect to matters other than arranging people's fates like pawns on a chessboard, that is). If the Gambit has an agenda beyond their stated one, they hide it extremely well.

So, Does It Work?

The data are inconclusive. It *might* work. Mages do seem to arise from the situations that the Gambit creates. But even then, are the Kingmakers putting people in situations in which they Awaken, or just choosing people who would have Awakened anyway and acting as the catalyst? Since conclusive data on the number of people who Awaken and under what circumstances aren't really available, it's hard to say if the Kingmakers' actions really have the effect they want.

For purposes of your chronicle, the Storyteller doesn't necessarily need to decide whether the Kingmakers' methods work *consistently*. All she needs to decide is whether they work in any particular instance. The players — and their characters — can draw their own conclusions from there.

The World as a Chessboard

The Awakening Gambit takes much of its inspiration, even its name, from the game of chess. Almost all members of the Legacy are avid players (and many also partake of other strategy games, such as Go and mah jong). In chess, the "gambit" is an opening strategy, one that usually involves a sacrifice for better position. The Kingmakers see what they do as a sacrifice — they are giving up their own time, their resources and, in some cases, their Wisdom (depending on their methods) for the chance to bring new mages into the fold.

Chess terminology permeates the Legacy, and the extended metaphor serves as the method for teaching new members. To the Gambit, the ability to keep a given strategy in mind while also looking after a score of pieces is paramount, because it is with just such

complicated stratagems that they seek to Awaken new mages.

The Making of Kings

How do the Kingmakers go about arranging Awakenings? The process is a difficult one, and it's by no means something the Kingmakers do constantly. They recognize that manipulating Destiny this way is dangerous, and so it's usually only something they attempt when the numbers of mages in the area have fallen for some reason, or when the Arrow is expecting trouble in the near future. But the Gambit mages (sometimes in conjunction with Mysterium or Guardian cabals) keep tabs on Sleepers who would make good mages, and create several scenarios in which the Kingmakers *could* arrange an Middlegame (see below) should it become necessary.

The Kingmakers structure their scenarios on the game of chess. In the Opening, the Kingmakers choose their target and learn everything they can about her. Each Kingmaker has his own criteria for choosing, rejecting or accepting a potential mage. Some Kingmakers assume that people with families make the best mages, while other Kingmakers won't even consider Sleepers with such firmly established ties to the mundane world. A Gambit mage might delve into a Sleeper's family tree, looking for mages, while another looks only at her immediate circle of family and friends, searching for hints of the supernatural.

A crucial part of the Opening is exposure to magic. It's a violation of the *Lex Magica*, yes, but the Gambit considers it paramount to test the target's reaction to vulgar magic. The Kingmaker usually brings another member of the Legacy (or his cabal, if the members are sympathetic) to keep things from getting out of control, and chooses a vulgar spell that's obviously magical but that isn't going to kill anyone if it misfires (unless the Kingmaker is cocksure, which happens). The usual response is Disbelief, and the Gambit doesn't consider anything wrong with that. Sometimes, though, a target meets vulgar magic with a different reaction — anger, curiosity, fear — and holds on to that feeling even after the memory has faded. Occasionally, the target seems to “feel” the magic coming before the spell goes off (in game terms, the mortal has the Unseen Sense Merit). Any abnormality is note and interpreted, but whether it cements the decision to continue the Gambit or is viewed as a “deal-breaker” depends on the mage in question.

Once the mage feels that he has enough information on the target (which can take months or more),

he makes a decision: to press on with the Gambit, to reject the Sleeper outright or to “shelve” the Sleeper against a time when she might be more suitable to the Gambit (or the Gambit has need of her).

If the mage decides to press on, the Gambit enters the Middlegame. In this stage, the Kingmaker crafts a scenario precisely designed to play to the person's strengths and weaknesses in an attempt to back the target into a corner. The target, ideally, has only two choices: Awaken or die.

The Middlegame always involves some crisis, but the varieties are limitless. Some Kingmakers prefer to isolate their targets, because it's easier to arrange things without too many other conflicting factors. Others feel that having large numbers of Sleepers around makes for more powerful and capable mages should the Awakening “take.” The Awakening Gambit views Sleepers involved in a target's Middlegame as “pawns.” Sleepwalkers are called “bishops” or “rooks” depending on what role they are to play, while mages (or other supernatural beings) who are unaware of what's going on are called “knights.” A mage (or, potentially, another supernatural being) who is aware of the Kingmaker's plan and is willingly helping is a “queen.” The “king,” of course, is the target herself. These terms are just shorthand that the Kingmakers use when setting up the scenario. Once the mage figures out exactly what role a given “piece” needs to play, he refers to her by a name rather than the title.

The Middlegame is planned as meticulously as possible, leaving as little to chance as the Kingmaker can manage. Mages with proficiency in Mind as well as Fate often do a “dry run” in their own dreams, trying to account for the variables of the situation and identify any variables that they are missing. In the end, though, it's impossible to take everything into account, and so expecting the unexpected is crucial to the Kingmakers' work.

One facet of the Gambit that the mage *always* spends time on is the Failsafe. The Failsafe is the mage's strategy for extraction — saving the Sleeper's life should she fail to Awaken or otherwise save herself. This might involve setting up a portal with the Space Arcanum or preparing a powerful healing spell (or both), depending on the capabilities of the mage and what he expects to happen.

Before putting the Middlegame into effect, the Kingmaker and any knowing allies he enlists spend time in meditation before beginning. This meditation is meant to put the Kingmaker's intentions in the right place, and hopefully ensure that they will have

the purity of heart to see it through (see p. 51 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for more on meditation and its game effects). When the Middlegame begins, the rest is in the target's hands. The resolution — the Endgame — is one of three possibilities.

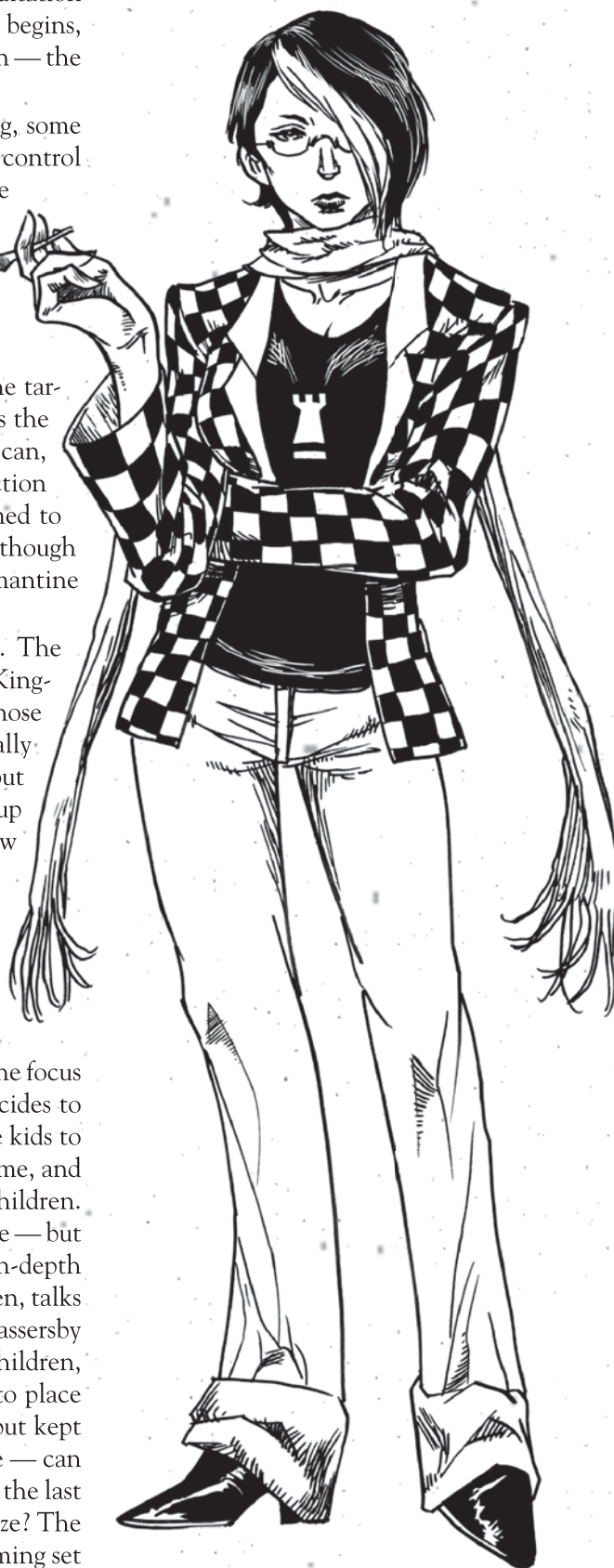
The simplest is that something goes wrong, some unforeseen occurrence that the mage cannot control or mitigate. The mage aborts and takes the Middlegame back to the drawing board (and always spends time in deep analysis to make sure that whatever interfered wasn't the result of someone else, such as the Seers of the Throne, taking a hand).

The desirable outcome, of course, is for the target to Awaken. In this case, the mage allows the target to handle as much of the crisis as she can, but does step in to prevent death and destruction as necessary. The new mage is then welcomed to the Awakened community, and is expected (though not technically required) to join the Adamantine Arrow.

Finally, the target might fail to Awaken. The Failsafe is put into effect, and hopefully the Kingmaker saves the Sleeper's life and the lives of those around her. The target is watched sporadically afterwards, in case she should Awaken later, but for the most part, the experience is chalked up to learning, and the Kingmaker looks for a new potential mage.

Examples

A single father of two comes to the attention of a Kingmaker, who feels that despite his heavy responsibilities (or rather, because of them) he would make a good recruit. Since the focus of his life is his children, the Kingmaker decides to use them in the Middlegame. He entices the kids to get on the wrong bus one day on the way home, and watches the man's panic as he can't find his children. He does the sensible thing — notify the police — but that's not enough for him. He starts an in-depth search of the area where his kids were last seen, talks to people, pays for information from some passersby and works his way closer to his kids. The children, meanwhile, have been shunted from place to place all day courtesy of the Kingmaker's magic (but kept safe all the while). The Middlegame is a race — can the man get his kids back before they step off the last bus, miles away from anywhere they recognize? The father finds himself wandering amidst a gleaming set of iron towers, but can see the threads that lead him



directly through the maze to what he loves most, his family. He Awakens as a Mastigos, and the Kingmaker is there to welcome the new mage.

An EMT has been taking note of odd emergencies in the city for some time, but does not realize they are largely the result of extended conflict between warring Awakened factions. The Kingmakers, hurting from a recent assault from the Seers of the Throne, decide to try to Awaken her. Calling upon intelligence about the Seers, the Kingmakers arrange to attack a lone (but powerful) enemy, and influence a Sleeper witness to call for an ambulance. The EMT arrives and witnesses the Kingmaker and the Seer casting spells, but is unable to resist the Disbelief—instead, she “merely” does her job, patching up the wounded. She demonstrates courage in the face of danger but does not Awaken. The Kingmakers might consider making an ally of her in another capacity, but they write off this Middlegame as a failure.

A Sleeper occultist has amassed a collection of magical tomes, and has cross-referenced the information there well enough to see some Supernal correspondences. The Kingmakers figure that it's only a matter of time until he Awakens anyway, and decide to give him a boost. They arrange for him to be invited to an auction at which several rare books are being sold, one of which is a “plant,” created by an allied cabal and containing dangerous spirit-summoning spells. When the auctioneer opens the book, the spirits are released and run amok (but are not powerful enough to do anything but frighten people). The occultist hides under a table, whimpering, and the Kingmakers put the Failsafe into effect — speaking a trigger phrase, they banish the spirits and wait for Disbelief to kick in. They might later “liberate” a few of the occult books from this man's collection, since he's obviously not going to be using them anytime soon.

The Gambit and Wisdom

The Awakening Gambit does not, in itself, cause degeneration. What a given Kingmaker *does* during the Gambit, though, very well might. If anyone dies, a degeneration check is required as though the mage had used magic to kill a human being, regardless of how the victim actually died. Mentally coercing pawns and other “pieces” for the Middlegame might cause degeneration, depending on how the mage goes about it.

Parent Path: Acanthus

Nickname: Kingmakers

Orders: The Awakening Gambit is exclusively Adamantine Arrow, but the other orders might become involved with the Gambit occasionally. The Mysterium regards the Gambit as a fascinating experiment, and potentially enlightening about the nature of the Awakening. Therefore, Mysterium mages often wind up as queens or rooks in the Gambit's endeavors, provided they are allowed the chance to interview any successfully Awakened targets.

The Silver Ladder and the Free Council, perhaps surprisingly, have similar reactions to the Gambit. Namely, they either applaud the Legacy's efforts in trying to codify the Awakening, or they damn the Kingmakers as meddlers and manipulators. Often, whichever attitude one order takes, the other order takes the opposite.

The Guardians of the Veil, of course, take an extremely dim view of the Awakening Gambit. People Awaken when they are meant to, and forcing the issue doesn't lead to anything but risk for all involved. It is rumored, though, that the Guardians teach an analogous Legacy to their own Tricksters, and that their gambits are subtle enough to put those of the Arrow to shame. Indeed, Arrows of the Legacy sometimes joke that the whole Awakening Gambit is merely part of a larger Middlegame dreamed up by the Guardians.

Appearance: Kingmakers are meticulous and precise in their plans, and this tends to leak through into their everyday bearing. A Kingmaker dresses for the occasion and is willing to sacrifice personal style to blend in (if that's what's appropriate). Just as most Arrows, members of the Gambit are usually physically fit and combat-capable.

Background: It takes a certain kind of Acanthus to join the Adamantine Arrow in the first place — the “flighty Trickster” is probably not well suited to be a Talon. The Acanthus who go on to the Gambit tend to worry about the numbers of the Awakened and are frustrated by the inability to decide who becomes a mage. This isn't necessarily out of egomania; more than one Kingmaker has made a friend of a courageous, honest and forthright Sleeper and wished desperately to be able to bring him into the fold as one of the Wise, for his own benefit and that of the Consilium.

Young and inexperienced mages aren't usually told about the Gambit, and even if they learn about it, they aren't usually afforded the chance to join. Aside from the fairly stringent magical requirements (see “Attainments”), the kind of work that the Kingmakers do is based on life experience and, more specifically,

life experience as a mage. Until an Arrow has a few years with a cabal under her belt, dealing directly with other mages and seeing the kinds of qualities that go into being successful among the Awakened, she probably has no business with the Gambit.

Organization: Not every Consilium boasts the presence of the Kingmakers, but those that do tend to have more than one. The Middlegame is much easier to arrange and execute with assistance, and so when a Kingmaker takes a pupil, she usually does so with the assumption that the pupil is going to stay in the area and help her. It's also not uncommon for Kingmakers to receive requests from nearby cities (and "nearby" is relative) to come and assist with a Gambit, so the Legacy's members keep informal contact with each other.

All Kingmakers are expected to be active members of the Adamantine Arrow. Loners and curmudgeons need not apply — the Awakening Gambit isn't necessarily friendly, but it is social. Teachers and pupils often live together during the initial training sessions, and even after the pupil has officially joined the Legacy, his lessons in evaluating Sleepers and constructing the Middlegame continue. The Legacy is therefore a tight-knit fraternity (one of the reasons that it survives despite concerns about its ethics and efficacy).

Suggested Oblations: Meditation, conversation with strangers, volunteering one's time to a worthy cause, teaching others, organizing a meeting of mages (caucus, forum, tournament), presiding over the Duel Arcane, planning the Middlegame, people-watching.

Concepts: Chess coach, computer programmer, social worker, internal affairs detective, military recruiter, head hunter, bartender, cab driver, drug dealer, Consilium Herald, symphony conductor

Attainments

The Attainments of the Awakening Gambit are designed to aid in performing the Middlegame. A Kingmaker can embark upon the Gambit regardless of his advancement within the Legacy, but truly powerful members can play the city around them like a harp while orchestrating their Gambits.

First Attainment: En Passant

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Fate 2, Mind 2 (primary), Time 2, Empathy 2

A pawn, in chess, can move two spaces on its first move. This is called moving *en passant* or "in passing."

A given pawn can do this only on its first move, and the move places it in danger.

Mages, Acanthus especially, have a kind of *en passant* move for their magic — the conditional trigger. By hanging a spell and attaching a trigger to it, a mage can "store" a spell for a given period of time (this is described on p. 150 and p. 260 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Mages of the Awakening Gambit can more easily "hang" spells, which is quite useful for situations such as the Middlegame when casting spells quickly becomes paramount.

A Kingmaker can hang a number of spells equal to his Gnosis. The player suffers no dice penalty when casting these spells and no Mana is required beyond what the spells in question would normally cost, but the spells remain in place for four hours only. The Kingmaker's Mind magic allows a split in concentration that permits these spells to be cast, then "forgotten" until they are needed. These spells do not count against the mage's total of active spells, and they do not count for purposes of Spell Tolerance (see p. 75 and p. 128, respectively, of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Second Attainment: Mysterious Rook

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

In chess, a "mysterious rook" move is a move with the rook that seems to have no immediate purpose but that discourages an opponent from taking a given action or begins a much more subtle plan of attack. The Awakening Gambit's second Attainment allows the mage to instill feelings and compulsions in others with a glance, useful for discouraging unwanted attention or steering pawns in the proper direction. The Attainment is similar to the Mind spell "Emotional Urging," but is more potent.

The player spends a point of Mana. The mage need only be able to see the target. The emotion that the mage attempts to inflict must make some logical sense given the scenario. During a bank robbery, a mage would not be able to use this Attainment to instill feelings of deep love and commitment from a teller to the thief (unless the mage happens to know that this particular teller *has* the predilection for such feelings — and the Kingmakers do indeed take the time to learn as much as they can about potential bystanders to the Middlegame, for precisely this reason). If the target is a Sleeper *and* the mage is not attempting to influence behavior directly, no dice roll is required. What effect this has on the target's behavior is largely a matter for

the Storyteller (probably with input from the player), but the Kingmakers usually use this Attainment to clear away uninvolved parties or to nudge pawns in the appropriate directions. A sudden compulsion to get a cheeseburger can make a pawn turn left (toward the restaurant) at the corner, instead of right, and that might make all the difference.

When this Attainment is used against mages or other supernatural beings, or when the mage tries to influence behavior more directly, the player must roll Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind (minus the target's Resolve + Gnosis). If this roll succeeds, the mage can implant a single, one-phrase suggestion (for a Sleeper) or affect the target's emotions as described above (for supernatural beings). The point of Mana is still required, however.

Optional Arcanum: Time 3

A Kingmaker who is also a Disciple of Time has some recourse even if something goes wrong during the Middlegame. This effect is similar to the Time 3 spell "Shifting Sands," and allows the mage to rewind time back to his last action. From there, the mage can take a different action and hopefully avoid whatever unpleasantness time has in store for him (but all else being equal, the other people involved still take the same actions, so he needs to make his action count). The player simply spends a point of Mana to activate the effect. Using this Attainment more than once on the same action (that is, rewinding time more than once trying to get the desired result) is possible, but expensive — the Mana cost increases by 1 each time. The second time the mage rewinds time for the same action, it costs two Mana, then three and so on.

Third Attainment: Grandmaster's View

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Mind 4

Sometimes it's impossible for even the careful Kingmakers to keep track of everything they need to during a Middlegame. The most powerful, however, seem to be working on dozens of possibilities at once, keeping multiple dangers from becoming catastrophes and waiting for the perfect moment to begin the Endgame. Grandmaster's View allows this kind of precision.

This Attainment is somewhat similar to the Mind 4 spell "Supreme Augmentation" (p. 216 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but it does not by itself allow the mage to raise Attributes. Instead, it provides a kind of mental simulator, allowing the mage to consider the ramifications of his actions before he takes them.

In game terms, the mage is always considered to have the highest initiative in a conflict, his Defense does not decrease due to attacks from multiple opponents (see p. 156 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) and he applies his Defense against all ranged attacks.

Outside combat, though, the mage can also take advantage of the Attainment. He can take up to four non-Physical actions in a single turn. For instance, he can try to remember a fact, plan a route through the city, read a book and listen for an approaching car at the same time. He must be physically capable of performing both actions at once — that is, if he's already explaining a concept to someone, he can't be simultaneously trying to persuade someone else to help him. If the mage is called upon to take a Physical action, he cannot make use of this facet of the Attainment during that turn, however.

Optional Arcanum: Time 4

If the Kingmaker is also an Adept of Time, he can move from simulating the future to experiencing it — up to a point. The player spends one point of Mana and rolls Intelligence + Wits + Time. If this roll succeeds, the mage chooses a number of actions equal to his Time dots, and can try them out in succession. This Attainment works in or out of combat, but determining causality is more difficult the more time elapses from his action. Also, keeping control of the time stream grows progressively difficult. For every action the mage undertakes, the player must roll Resolve + Composure. If this roll succeeds, the mage maintains control and can simply observe what future this action leads to. If this roll fails, though, the mage's focus slips, and the action he's currently view actually happens, becoming reality. The mage can try to pull it back using the second Attainment's optional Arcanum power, but doing so requires a roll of Manipulation + Wits with a negative modifier equal to the number of actions that the mage has already viewed.

Example: A Middlegame has become rather more violent than Fisher was expecting. The target is surrounded by thugs, several of whom are pawns of a local vampire lord, and Fisher knows that if he doesn't step in, his target is going to die. Fisher activates his Attainment and chooses four actions (since Fisher is an Adept of Time). For the first possibility, Fisher casts Chronos's Curse on the thugs, hoping to slow them enough for his target to escape. The player makes the roll for the spell, Paradox and all, and it turns out that this spell fails — obviously that's not a good option. The player rolls Resolve + Composure and succeeds, so Fisher can continue looking.

For the second possibility, Fisher shoots one of the thugs in the leg and yells for the others to stand down. This requires an Intimidation roll, which Fisher's player succeeds in making — the thugs back off, but don't leave. Better, but still not ideal. The player rolls Resolve + Composure, and succeeds again.

For the third potential action, Fisher turns to his expertise in Mind, and tries to mentally control the thugs. He succeeds in doing so and orders them to flee the area, though

one of them manages to shake off the spell before he gets too far away. The player rolls Resolve + Composure, but fails the roll — Fisher's focus slips, and this action is the one that he truly takes. Unless Fisher wishes to activate the Time version of the Mysterious Rook Attainment (see above), he'll have to deal with the remaining thug. If Fisher does wish to do this, his player will need to roll Manipulation + Wits with a -3 modifier (since Fisher viewed three possible futures) for the Attainment to work.

BROTHERHOOD OF THE DEMON WIND

You are fast, but not fast enough;
skilled, but not skilled enough.
Pray to your gods. Your time has come.

It begins in the early 17th century, with a masterless man:

His birth name has been lost to history and he is now known only by his shadow name, Hagetaka ("Vulture.") The circumstances of his life before the Awakening are lost to history, though his writings obliquely suggest that he became a bandit and assassin after his lord was slain through treachery. Interestingly, Hagetaka never writes of his Awakening, and makes many assumptions about the reader's understanding of the events of his life before his lord's murder. Most modern *onikaze* swordsmen consider this assumption of familiarity to be subtle Mastigos underhandedness at work, and some wonder if there really ever *was* an Awakened fallen samurai who went by the moniker "Hagetaka."

Whatever the case, the Legacy's texts tell of Hagetaka's aimless wanderings, of a lack of focus and discipline and the elusive sense that something moved just beyond the brigand's perceptions. Balancing serene meditations with a life of violent crime, Hagetaka eventually came to a "place of visions," whereupon he experienced within a deep trance a sort of communion with what he called "the restless ghost of a great dragon of the western seas." The substance of his exchange with this "dragon" is recorded only as a series of 98 mutually-contradictory koans (36 of which have never been satisfactorily deciphered by

any practitioner of the Legacy), but he came away with two things: the desire to offer the Adamantine Arrow the benefit of his experiences as a man of honor and a man without, and an awareness of what he called the *onikaze*: the "demon wind," which transcended space and time.

The writings of Hagetaka thereafter chronicle his self-appointed quest to assemble those that might apprehend the vision revealed to him by the dragon. He fought many great warriors and conversed with many sages of martial philosophy, converted no few to his cause. All of these, Hagetaka eventually brought to an isolated and abandoned temple somewhere in the mountains. The place lay in ruins, and the first *onikaze* swordsman made his disciples work to restore it, forbidding them the use of their magics and instead commanding them to work with their own hands and minds, even as he imparted upon them — some nine students in all — the secrets of the demon wind. The morning after they had finally completed the years-long work of restoring the temple, Hagetaka's students awoke to discover their master gone, with *kanji* inscribed into the cobbles of the courtyard: "These are merely stones, and the wind ceases its motion for no man. Your hands, your wills, your selves: you need nothing more."

To a man, Hagetaka's students left behind the product of their long labors, going out into the

world to put into practice the training that they had been given. Some become great heroes and others, villains, but all took on students of their own, and, in time, the Wave-men as a whole were gradually adopted into the Adamantine Arrow, leaving only a scattered few to carry the philosophy in other directions. Legends tell that the Wave-men periodically gathered at Hagetaka's temple thereafter, to address matters of great importance to the entire Legacy, but the records of such gatherings are few and considered by most to be largely apocryphal. In modern times, the location of the temple — if, indeed, it ever truly existed at all — is lost to the Brotherhood, and most agree that such is for the best. While reverence for the past can be a source of strength and wisdom, it is also attachment, and the way of the Wave-man denies such fetters. As Hagetaka himself said, "These are merely stones..."

Spreading across the world at the forefront of the wind from which they take their name, the warriors of the *onikaze* are wanderers, fighting for the causes that appeal to them or sometimes just those that pay. Some embrace the romance of the samurai and defend the weak and downtrodden, setting their blades against wickedness and tyranny. Others, perhaps more practical, sell their services — either as swordsmen or as teachers of the martial arts — to those who can afford them. A rare few even manage to carve out places for themselves and obtain positions of power and respect in established Consilii. Most, however, spend at least some part of their lives as lonely pilgrims, moving from place to place, upon *musha shugyo*, in an endless pursuit of the perfection of the blade.

Interestingly, while the Wave-men have always been relatively few, their numbers have survived the trials of time relatively undiminished by various wars and calamities. The very wanderlust that motivates their many quests and keeps them scattered has served to protect them from ordeals that might have grievously wounded or even exterminated a more close-knit Legacy. Thus, while they shall forever remain but few, it is likely that the swordsmen of the *onikaze* will always be out there, in one way or another.

Parent Path or Order: Mastigos or Adamantine Arrow

Nickname: Wave-men

Appearance: While the image of the street samurai is a perennial favorite among fans of *anime* — in Japan



and in the West — most *onikaze* swordsmen eschew such trappings, preferring a more practical aesthetic. Since the majority of Wave-men barely manage to get by, their clothing tends to be sturdy and utilitarian; one never knows when a chance to replace a damaged garment will present itself. Denim jeans, heavy boots, leather coats and the like are among the more common wardrobe choices for Brothers of the Demon Wind, as these articles stand up well to a variety of environments and can last for years, if properly cared for. Body decoration, of whatever sort, is frowned upon, and hair tends to either be close-cropped, or even shaved or else worn long, sometimes in elaborate tails, braids or buns.

Every warrior of the *onikaze* owns a *daisho*, the paired long and short swords of the samurai. These weapons are treated with the utmost reverence, for they are a reflection of the mage's honor and the vessel of his spirit. The various components that comprise the matched set of *katana* and *wakazashi* may be austere or elaborate in design, as befits the personality of their wielder (or that of the mentor who handed them down.) Most Wave-men carry these weapons at any formal Awakened function, and some with especially refined powers of misdirection or occlusion are known to carry them at all times.

Background: Wave-men are drawn from the ranks of the most skilled swordsmen that prospective *onikaze* mentors can find. Some look for philosophical warriors and others for obsessive perfectionists, but there are some who will settle for a bullying thug whose only skill of note is the ability to kill three men in as many seconds with a sword. Discipline, such would-be teachers reason, can be taught with time and harsh lessons, while the art of the blade is a study of an entire lifetime. Of note is the fact that many Wave-men flatly refuse to adopt women into the Legacy. To these sorts, the study of *kenjutsu* is men's work, not to be entrusted to a woman. This attitude is gradually subsiding with time, though particularly old (or especially hidebound) *onikaze* swordsmen look upon female practitioners of the Legacy with attitudes ranging from outrage to disgust to outright anger (sometimes expressed with drawn swords.) Even many of the more progressive Wave-men still find themselves looking twice upon first meeting a female Disciple of the Demon Wind — out of unfamiliarity with the notion, if nothing else.

Organization: Given the nature of the Brotherhood, warriors of the Demon Wind have no organization greater than that encompassed by the bond between mentor and student. Anything more would be impractical at best. That said, the master-apprentice bond is

often a powerful one for the swordsmen of the *onikaze*. In some cases, this relationship is one of antagonism, as the teacher attempts to spur the student onward to excellence through an adversarial stance. Other masters adopt a paternal (or, rarely, maternal) method, acting the part of a stern but caring parent. However they do it, though, the master is urged, by his training and by his peers, to instill in the student a sense of self-reliance and adaptability. Indeed, many warriors of the *onikaze* go years or even decades without setting eyes on another of their Legacy, for the Demon Wind scatters them far and wide, so that their blades might be brought to bear where they are needed most.

Suggested Oblations: Admiring beauty in a reserved and respectful manner, creating art (especially spontaneous and/or minimalist works), meditating, persevering through adversity (such as illness or a grievous wound) without using magic or accepting aid, practicing combat forms, reading or writing martial philosophy, ritually maintaining one's weapons and armor.

Concepts: Hot-headed maverick with something to prove, serene killer, thug with a heart of gold, jaded swordfighter, sage of the blade, wandering mercenary

Attainments

By harnessing the Demon Wind, the *onikaze* warrior learns to draw the edge of his blade along the unseen currents of space and time that move throughout and, indeed, transcend the Fallen World. One with the serenity of battle, the swordsman's will becomes the stoutest of armor and a killing weapon, defending from harm and enabling him to lay low his enemies.

First Attainment: Yanagiri Kaze

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Space 1, Time 2 (primary), Weaponry 2, Quick Draw (Weaponry)

An admonition to follow the path of least resistance, the Legacy's first Attainment opens the swordsman to the subtle currents of the Demon Wind. He permanently benefits from an effect mimicking the Time 2 "Temporal Dodge" spell, providing points of armor equal to his dots in the Time Arcanum. Further, as a reflexive action, he may make use of exceptional perception that replicates the Space 1 "Omnivision" spell, lasting until he chooses to deactivate the ability.

Second Attainment: Tazeiri Buzei

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Time 3

With a literal meaning of "few against many," the second Attainment of the *onikaze* swordsman enables him to move

through battle as a blur of motion, scarcely perceived by lesser warriors until they fall beneath his blade. As a reflexive action, the Wave-man may spend a point of Mana to make use of an effect identical to the Time 3 "Acceleration" spell until the beginning of her next action.

Optional Arcanum: Space 3

His blade riding the vanguard of the Demon Wind, the swordsman strikes through intervening space, overcoming his enemy's guard, no matter how she might attempt to defend herself. The willworker may use an effect identical to the "Ranged Blow" spell, though it is a reflexive action to do so, with no roll involved. The mage must still spend a point of Mana with each strike, however.

Third Attainment: Akuma no Ken

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Time 4

Freed from the shackles of time by his mastery of the Demon Wind, the Wave-man now directs its course,

and its bite is as one with the edge of his blade. The mage may use an effect similar to the Time 4 "Present as Past" spell, including its Mana cost, save that he may only target a single individual with the effect. The willworker rolls Wits + Occult + Time versus his target's Composure + Gnosis. By spending a point of Willpower, the mage may activate this Attainment as a reflexive action.

Optional Arcanum: Space 4

By skipping off the weave of space, the Wave-man's movements become utterly unpredictable. The mage spends a point of Mana as an instant action and may teleport anywhere within visual range (including anyplace that he can see through the use of his first Attainment) with an effect similar to the Space 4 spell "Teleportation." If the mage must, for any reason, test against an effect intended to bar his passage (such as a ban or ward), he is considered to have successes equal to his dots in the Space Arcanum.

DEVOURERS OF THE FLESH

(Left-Handed Legacy)

Run, slave of the Exarchs — tonight, you are prey.

So many modern Awakened choose to see the Atlantean Dragon as a symbol of nobility and honor, a creature of elevated principles, paragon of a grand civilization. But the truth of the matter is that the dragon is, at its core, a symbol of rage and terror. Indeed, in many ancient cultures, "dragon" is essentially synonymous with "monster" or "devil," the embodiment of a savage and primordial hatred and hunger. So it is with those who walk the path of the Devourer, consuming the enemies of lost Atlantis and supping upon their power in the name of a greater good. But men are not meant to be as dragons, and so these practitioners of a law as timeless as it is inhuman have strayed far from the path of Wisdom, battenning them upon hubris as surely as if it were the sweetest of marrow.

The Devourers of the Flesh are keepers of an old Legacy, one that they believe to date back to the time before the Fall. While there exists no evidence to support such claims, there certainly is something primal and ancient in their hunger for the flesh, the atavistic urge toward a longing (or perhaps a need)

forbidden by civilized traditions and Supernal commandments. Perhaps this age-old practice is reflected in many of the world's cannibalistic warrior cultures, whose beliefs are echoed and magnified in the brutal Devourers: in a very real way consuming the enemy's heart to take his strengths into oneself.

The practitioners of this Legacy claim to have been advance scouts and shock troops for Atlantis, going among the enemy's ranks and sowing the sort of terror that arises only from finding the half-eaten carcasses of one's people strewn between trees and over stones, glyphs of ill-omen painted in their congealing blood. While other Awakened who hear of this tale dismiss it as the self-serving propaganda of a fellowship of anthropophagic monstrosities, the Devourers wonder at the naiveté of those who can earnestly believe any truly great and powerful civilization of remote and ancient times to have balked at such practices in a world in which people were not so thoroughly conditioned to fear their own instincts. By stealing the power of Atlantis's enemies of old, the Devourers say, their spiritual forebears performed a service as vital as

and, ultimately, far more natural than that practiced by the priests who read the stars or the scholars who kept the cavernous libraries of the island empire.

The so-called Cannibals (a title to which the Legacy's practitioners attach no sense of shame) consider themselves to be inheritors of a purer ethic than is found in the modern world. Just as every predator in nature hunts that which best sustains the predator and helps it to grow strong, so, too, do the Devourers allege that they consume the prey who empowers and uplifts them. Naturally, those who interact in any way with Awakened (or even just Sleeper) society must invariably attempt to conceal their practices, but this becomes increasingly difficult for most Devourers as time passes, Wisdom withers and dies and the willworker asks himself why it is that he hides his splendor from lesser beasts. Beyond such a point, these mages are already too far gone to salvage (if, indeed, one can consider redemption to be possible in the first place for a person who incorporates the consumption of his own kind into his very soul), and must be destroyed for the good of their world. Of course, some manage to escape, fleeing into the wilds — or perhaps just the most savage depths of the urban wilderness — there to perpetuate their philosophy of hunger.

Long considered to be a blight upon the otherwise upright reputation of the Adamantine Arrow, the Devourers of the Flesh have managed, nevertheless, to persist for at least centuries (and, quite possibly, far longer) without being utterly stamped out. The Legacy is laid low in one place, only to emerge elsewhere later, proving as persistent and resilient as the predators from which it derives its ghastly mandate. And, despite the reflexive fear and hatred of their fellow Arrows, Cannibals in the order continue to take their oaths to the Adamantine Arrow quite seriously. Indeed, many see themselves as the only *true* champions of the Adamantine Arrow's cause, imitating the dragon of old and consuming the power of Atlantis's enemies by fang and claw. Devourers don't tend to be impressive strategists, but they are certainly terrifying to behold on the battlefield, with the eldest and most potent dominating the engagement, lips and chins slick with hot blood, and the trophies of scores of kills dangling from hair, flesh and hand-sewn clothing alike.

Parent Path or Order: Thyrsus or Adamantine Arrow

Nickname: Cannibals

Appearance: Devourers of the Flesh tend to either grow neglectful of their outward appearance — something of a manifestation of their rejection of social

mores — or else take on a deliberately primordial, primitive seeming: simple tattoos and ritual scarification, filing down the teeth to points, wearing only furs and leathers, weaving bits of human bone into a long, matted tangle of hair. A few break these stereotypes, but the degeneration of Wisdom that goes hand-in-hand with the Cannibals' philosophy often outwardly expresses itself as a denial of contemporary human dress and custom. Paradox Brands tends to be common among Cannibals, and they usually take on animalistic features: all the better with which to hunt and consume their prey.

Background: There are, seemingly, no common factors that draw Cannibals together. Perhaps, in older days, the cannibalistic societies of the world produced such willworkers on some kind of consistent basis, but that age is now gone. Instead, Devourers now seek to pass on their secrets to those who don't fit in, who feel an irresistible predatory urge and an abject sense of superiority when grouped in among the human herd. In the modern world, this is often the exact same sort of mindset that distinguishes the most wildly disturbed serial murderers.

Organization: The loose organization of the Devourers of the Flesh can be seen as something similar to that found in a primitive warrior cult. Older predators are to be respected for their power and experience, while the younger are esteemed for their drive and vitality. There exists a sense of kinship between Cannibals, bonds of brotherhood forged by a shared sin. The end result is a tapestry of relationships that mirrors a family, a tribe and a pack as one. While Devourers may occasionally enjoy a shared hunt, however, only rarely do they run together for any length of time. When they do, they tend to form small, tight-knit cabals that leave death — and perhaps a new convert or two — in their wake, before either disbanding or else being put down. Rumors persist, though, of a handful of Cannibal cabals that thrive in the isolated parts of the Fallen World, the sorts of places in which conflict and hard living make for particularly strong specimens, and where no one thinks twice when people go missing and never turn up again.

Suggested Oblations: Making fetishes (of the non-magical variety) out of the parts of particularly worthy prey, preparing human flesh (whether live or dead) for consumption, ritually fasting, running with or watching over an animal that is eating or has eaten human flesh, studying the masses for extended periods in the pursuit of a worthy hunt, studying or replicating the specific practices or exploits of other

Cannibals (either modern or ancient).

Concepts: Over-the-edge modern primitive, isolated survivalist nut, dragon in human skin, totemic serial killer, wolf amongst sheep, self-loathing recovering Cannibal

Attainments

The Attainments of the Devourers of the Flesh revolve entirely around their endless feast. Through these powers, they consume and assimilate into themselves the strength of their prey and conceal the evidence of their grisly repast. Cannibals believe that they empower their spirits through the exercise of these abilities, while others see only the degradation of the soul through the embrace of terrible savagery.

First Attainment: Mask the Hunger

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Death 2 (primary), Life 1, Survival 2

The first thing that Devourers learn is how to conceal the marks of their feasting. The mage may, at will, create an effect identical to the Death 2 "Corpse Mask," with a permanent

Duration and an effective Potency equal to her dots in Death. This Attainment may not make the corpse appear to possess more or less mass than the corpse truly has. Thus, the Cannibal might make a body that was picked clean appear to have been consumed by wild animals, or burnt to nothing more than ashes and bones, but cannot make it look as though the person simply died of a heart attack. Note that the willworker may use this Attainment on *any* corpse, and not merely on one that she has, in whole or in part, consumed. The mage also permanently benefits from the Life 1 "Healer's Trance," with automatic successes equal to her dots in Life, enabling her to discern the fitness of potential prey.

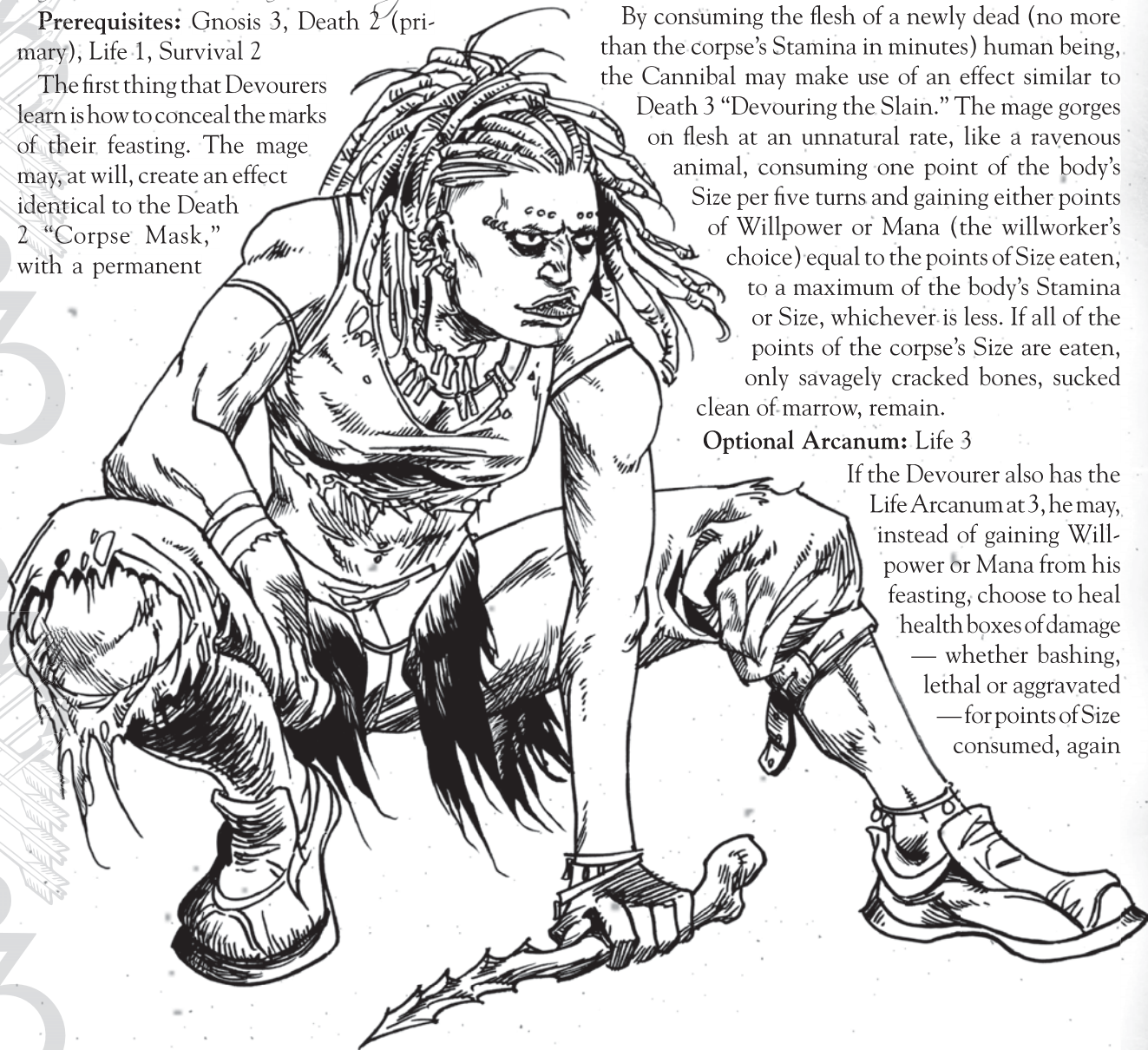
Second Attainment: Life Feeds on Life

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Death 3

By consuming the flesh of a newly dead (no more than the corpse's Stamina in minutes) human being, the Cannibal may make use of an effect similar to Death 3 "Devouring the Slain." The mage gorges on flesh at an unnatural rate, like a ravenous animal, consuming one point of the body's Size per five turns and gaining either points of Willpower or Mana (the willworker's choice) equal to the points of Size eaten, to a maximum of the body's Stamina or Size, whichever is less. If all of the points of the corpse's Size are eaten, only savagely cracked bones, sucked clean of marrow, remain.

Optional Arcanum: Life 3

If the Devourer also has the Life Arcanum at 3, he may, instead of gaining Willpower or Mana from his feasting, choose to heal health boxes of damage — whether bashing, lethal or aggravated — for points of Size consumed, again



on a one-for-one basis (and again out to a maximum of the corpse's Stamina or Size, whichever is less.)

Third Attainment: The Sweetest Savor

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Death 4

After establishing a grapple on a foe, the Cannibal may make an attack similar to Death 4 "Rotting Flesh" (attacking with Strength + Brawl + Death – the target's Defense), though the outward manifestation of this attack is a savage bite, rending and swallowing flesh, rather than rot and decay. The mage may treat each health box of damage inflicted by this attack as a point of Size consumed for the purposes of the Legacy's other Attainments. At Death 4, this damage is lethal. At Death 5, the willworker may spend a point of Mana to upgrade the damage to aggravated. Note that this Attainment does not require a grapple in the case of a completely immobilized foe or a willing victim (in which case, the target's Defense does not apply.)

Optional Arcanum: Life 4

By feeding on a body (whether dead or, per the former half of this Attainment, still living), the Cannibal steals her enemy's strength and grows powerful by it. For each point of a human body's Size that she consumes (subject to the Stamina limitations of the previous Attainment, in the case of dead bodies), the mage may add one dot to either her Strength or Stamina Attributes for an hour, per Life 4 "Supreme Honing," out to a maximum of the willworker's dots in Life in both Attributes simultaneously — even if she eats again before the hour is up, the mage may not increase those Attributes by more than her dots in Life, total. In the event of a "feast" of multiple bodies, the period of augmentation begins from the time that the willworker finishes gorging. While this Attainment is active, any spell used by the mage to augment with magic an Attribute boosted by the Attainment has a maximum Duration of a single turn.



CHAPTER FIVE: MAGIC

Time.

The eternal hangs in the moment. All days are this day, the day of glory.

Spirit.

All things awaken to behold me on the Brilliant Road. My companions are a thousandfold; my truest friends are my sword and my shield.

Space.

The army's front line is only as wide as the mountain pass. All conflict is drawn down to the point where I stand.

Prima.

My power is both within and without. The prima materia waits only for my hand to draw it from its sheath.

Mind.

My consciousness is a weapon, hard as steel, raised in readiness. I am awake.

Matter.

The bullets are as the earth beneath my feet. The steel is as the sash around my waist.

Life.

My heartbeat is the drum. My breath is the battle cry. My body is the instrument of my glory.

Forces.

My brother is thunder; my sister is fire. I find the way by walking in their footsteps.

Fate.

This is but one more step upon the Adamant Way. The destiny that awaits me is the one I have earned.

Death.

The end is the beginning. I am prepared.

O Partha, happy are the kshatriyas to whom such fighting opportunities come unsought, opening for them the doors of the heavenly planets.

— The Bhagavad Gita

Magical Methods

The mystic techniques employed by the willworkers of the Adamantine Arrow are age-old, befitting the heirs to the military of Atlantis, and forever changing, in accordance with the precept that “Adaptability Is Strength.”

Tactics

The use of Awakened magic is really nothing more than the interface of the human will with Supernal power. There’s more to it than that, of course, but that’s the gist of it, meaning that there are infinite potential variations upon innumerable themes when it comes to the exact ways in which magic can be used. The Adamantine Arrow, as an order of soldiers, has devoted considerable time and research to the specific applications of magic within the Fallen World. One never knows, after all, when it is that the difference between victory and defeat is to be found in applying a yet-unexplored strategy to time-tested varieties of willwork.

Note that, while this section breaks down tricks and tactics by Arcana, Arrows aren’t likely to apply those specific distinctions to their spellcasting when the lead is flying and the Adamant Sage is barking orders that can scarcely be heard over the howling of the spirits. Rather, the mages of the Adamantine Arrow will employ whatever strategy works best at the moment — if that means that a tactic usually best suited to the Death Arcanum gets used with Forces, then so be it. Necessity is the mother of invention, after all.

Death

Arrow tactics for the Death Arcanum often revolve around reconnaissance (sending ghosts to spy on enemy holdings, for example), the creation of shock troops (conjuring up zombies or even revenants) and raw offensive power (destroying the equipment and

even the living bodies of one’s foes). Of course, these are only the most elementary applications of the Arcanum. More refined sensibilities and more seasoned strategists give rise to a far more complex playbook when it comes to the Death Arcanum: knowing the manner in which a given creature died or shaping a piece of ectoplasmic equipment can be just as vital to the possibility of success, if not more so, than Death’s more obvious effects.

Fate

With a very few exceptions (such as the spell “Swarm of Locusts”), Fate is a supplementary Arcanum. Fate’s effects may be overt or subtle, but they are almost always invisible and generally work to augment other avenues of action, rather than constituting such avenues unto themselves. In the Adamantine Arrow, Fate is very much a tactician’s Arcanum, as well as one popular with support troops. Magnifying others’ chances for success (or failure), creating wild improbabilities in the favor of one’s own side of the confrontation and levying curses upon one’s foes are just some of the strategic applications of Fate. In the long term, Fate can realign the nuances of lengthy conflicts, for instance, or guarantee the acquisition of needed supplies or armaments.

Forces

Crude or unimaginative Arrows often perceive the Forces Arcanum as a good substitute for a gun, and little else. This wildly diverse Arcanum can be used for a host of military applications, however, on and off the field: invisibility, flight, rapid movement and the transmission and receipt (and interception) of signals, for example. Even a power as seemingly innocuous as the ability to manipulate the intensity of light, heat or sound can be deployed to devastating

effect against one's enemies, when the circumstances are right. Changing just one word whispered between one's enemies can bring their entire operation crashing down — the wise warrior doesn't dispatch an army when a single well-placed shot will do.

Life

For the Adamantine Arrow, the Life Arcanum in many ways represents the dichotomy of war itself: Life is the Arcanum of the fighter, who augments her body and crafts of it a living weapon, as well as the Arcanum of the healer, who mends what the cruelty of battle has torn asunder. In addition to the most basic abilities of the Life Arcanum to heal or harm, Arrows skilled in the arts of Life can adapt to hostile environments, bodily weaken their foes and even exert rough control over the instincts and actions of others. One should never underestimate the power inherent in a spell that allows a mage to breathe underwater and survive at crushing oceanic depths, for instance, or one that manipulates the fight-or-flight response in the midst of combat.

Matter

Matter is an Arcanum highly useful in and out of battle. Fantastic (and brutally effective) weapons can be crafted by one skilled in the studies of Matter, as can nigh-impervious armor and fortifications that are all but impregnable. In the heat of combat, an Arrow might harden his own armaments or dull the edge of his enemy's (figuratively, in the case of a foe armed with, say, a shotgun). By transmuting solid stone into mud, the Arrow alters the complexion of the field and can assert advantage through the element of surprise. And, by turning the air around her into carbon monoxide, she not only forces the enemy into a struggle for his very life but also robs him of the comfortable illusion of certain seemingly immutable constants.

Mind

The Mind Arcanum may well be the most versatile of Arcana. With training in the arts of Mind, an Arrow can augment her abilities as a strategist, or her powers of inspiration. She can telepathically contact those under her command and strike at the very thoughts of her enemies. A subtle emotional nudge heartens soldiers ready to give up the fight, while a spell intended to translate any language renders a rival army's secret code useless. With the proper application of psychic force, allies can be turned against one another, opposing commanders made to forget their battle plans (or

else compelled to remember dangerously inaccurate ones) or an enemy mage even made to cast his spells to the Arrow's benefit.

Prime

In warfare, the ability to control the flow of resources is critical. The Prime Arcanum is, in a very real way, the best and most direct method of controlling the resource of magic. Wise strategists use this Arcanum to stockpile tass, sniff out Hallows, enchant items for later usage and discern the presence of various sorts of magical phenomena. In the midst of combat, Arrows use Prime to scour their foes with celestial flames, unmake hostile magics as they are cast, fabricate phantasms with which to confound enemy forces, and dissolve — or steal — opponents' stores of Mana. The Prime Arcanum is worthwhile for its supplementary effects alone, such as Unseen Spy or Controlled Dispellation.

Space

With the powers of the Space Arcanum at his command, an Arrow can monitor remote situations, keeping an eye on all corners of the field or gathering necessary intelligence before planning a strike. Likewise, he can move troops instantaneously from one location to another, altering the complexion of an engagement without having to bow to the constraints of place and distance. The power to create or destroy the threads of sympathy is staggering in a martial engagement, as is the ability to supplement normal spells with the option of casting at sympathetic range. For those truly advanced in their knowledge of the Space Arcanum, there exist certain highly devastating options, such as the "Worlds Collide" spell. While often a highly vulgar Arcanum (a factor that wise Arrows figure into their calculations), Space is also an extremely flexible one.

Spirit

If there exists any Arcanum more versatile than Mind, it would be Spirit. Arrows use this Arcanum to move in unseen worlds, to awaken the dormant consciousnesses within their weapons and armor, to detect the presence of the otherworldly and to bargain with inhuman entities. That latter application of the Spirit Arcanum — the ability to barter with, coax, compel or even enslave spirits to one's cause — is staggering in its scope. Spirit Influences alone can have a massive, yet subtle impact upon the pace of any engagement, as well as upon the nuances of less

overt conflicts, or even just long-term defensive and preparatory strategies. Many mages lack the means to adequately defend against the Numina of hostile spirits, so the well-prepared Arrow shores up her own guard against the Shadow Realm, while directing such primal powers against her enemies.

Time

The Adamantine Arrow's strategies for using the Time Arcanum come in one of two varieties: extremely covert and exceedingly blatant. Perfect timing and gentle tugs on the weave of time can shift the odds of success in one's favor, sometimes significantly, while the ability to unchain oneself from the ticks of the clock and to move between instants as easily as one walks between places can occasionally wrest victory from the jaws of defeat. Cunning warriors send forward in time the resources that they'll need later (after having discerned their specific and inevitable "hours of need" with other Time Arcanum spells), ensuring that the well won't run dry at an inopportune moment. Others step out of the flow of time to reassess tactics when things have gone to hell, or adjust their own past experiences to gain the benefit of training that they never truly received.

Rote Specialties

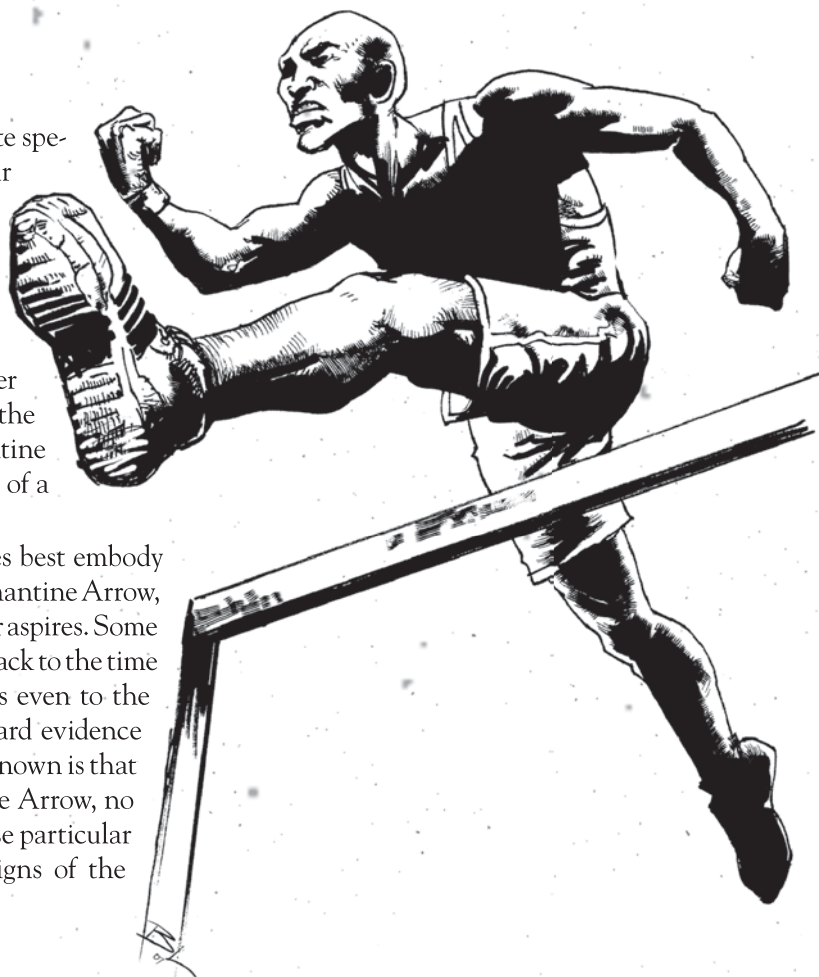
Every order has its reasons for the rote specialties that it embraces, the particular Skills that best express and uphold that order's mission within the Pentacle of modern Awakened society. While the Guardians of the Veil, for example, favor secrecy, deception and observation, and the Silver Ladder makes use of powers of persuasion and the ability to lead effectively, the Adamantine Arrow's rote specialties seem like a bit of a "grab bag" of Skills.

In reality, these three rote specialties best embody the particular warrior ethic of the Adamantine Arrow, illustrating the ideals to which the order aspires. Some say that these specific techniques date back to the time of the Atlantean Diaspora, or perhaps even to the original Dragon's Talon, though no hard evidence exists to support such claims. What is known is that every recorded rote of the Adamantine Arrow, no matter its antiquity, making use of these particular skill sets, demonstrates the telltale signs of the order's signature style.

Athletics

For an order devoted to war, the pursuit of honing the body is an important one. Betterment of the physical form necessarily contributes to one's fitness as a warrior. It is not a substitute for other avenues of personal improvement, but can be supplementary to most of them. Many forms of meditation are predicated upon different sorts of physical exertion, for instance, and many of history's most successful warrior philosophies have stressed the development of the body as a required part of the path to individual perfection.

Athletics is a Skill of cooperation and competition — of group effort and personal excellence — both of which Arrows need to be capable of exercising. Athletics is the Skill of the team player, doing her part to enhance the overall ability of the collective, making it greater than the sum of its part. It is also the Skill of the solitary competitor, pitting himself against all other comers, or else the records of those who have come before or even just his own previous best efforts. Athletics is representative of attunement to the nuances of one's own form, a necessary knowledge for the enlightened soldier.



The Adamantine Arrow makes use of Athletics as one of the order's rote specialties because such magics are those of the body — of strong, precise and decisive action. The Supernal will is made manifest within flesh and bone through these sorts of rites, as the Awakened consciousness acts upon the visceral self.

Intimidation

There exists a fine line between exhibiting a forceful will in time of need and being a bully. In the ideal, the Adamantine Arrow is a fellowship of right-minded Awakened, proud and honorable, who need not stoop to such tactics as intimidation in order to properly execute their duties. The reality, however, falls a little short of the ideal, and the fact of the matter is that Arrows must occasionally impose their wills upon others through means mundane and unsubtle. Certainly, frightening another into compliance with a course of action is often preferable to killing her because she won't go along with the plan, and fear is simply another weapon for the cunning soldier to employ upon the battlefield.

Many warrior cultures reflect a great deal upon the indomitable spirit and its ability to shake — or even break — the resolve of lesser men. A powerful Intimidation Skill need not even be representative of a conscious effort to terrify others, but can instead be the product of a resolute and dauntless will, able to be imposed upon others when necessary. Some people possess such a forceful presence as to inspire fear in those who oppose them, as surely as they inspire confidence in those that follow them. Many of history's greatest Arrows were just such people, so strong in spirit that to defy them was almost unthinkable. Whereas Athletics makes the martial will manifest within the physical self, Intimidation makes the martial will manifest within the social structures in which one is enmeshed.

Medicine

The Medicine Skill is perhaps the oddest choice for an order devoted to the arts of battle. It is the duty of the enlightened warrior not only to sunder, however, but also to mend. Destruction is easy and healing, difficult. The Adamantine Arrow firmly propounds the creed that one must not bring pain and suffering without also possessing the knowledge and the power necessary to amend the hurts that one has given. Further, Arrows are members of an elite warrior society, and every Arrow is brother or sister to every other. Who would not take the time and study the knowledge needed to heal his sister when she is wounded? What soldier of conscience would not, if

she could, learn how best to preserve the lives of the civilians in her charge?

The Adamantine Arrow is a fellowship founded in lofty ideals, and the power of the warrior to heal — and not merely to kill — is one of the loftiest. By embodying this notion, each Arrow shows that the art of war only *seems* to be one of destruction. When set to its noblest purpose, the lore of conflict is a mandate of betterment for one's society and those that comprise it. Similar to the surgeon who cuts away the infection to preserve the uncorrupted flesh, the Arrow causes harm to the intended end of healing his world. The Medicine Skill enables the Arrow to enact this grand obligation on the scale of individual lives, thus proving that the *true* warrior knows not only how to inflict hurts but also how to undo them.

Beyond such ennobling concerns, of course, there exists the far more practical element of being able to stitch up cuts, splint broken limbs and surgically extract bullets from life-threatening wounds. The development of the magical arts that support and are supported by these abilities is, in that sense, just an outgrowth of arts that are highly utilitarian for those that put their lives on the line on a regular basis.

Rote Mudras

Ritual gestures intended to focus the will within the Fallen World, the nuances of an order's mudras define and are defined by the subtleties of that order's philosophies. For the Adamantine Arrow, mudras are often focused upon martial matters, or other powerful, deliberate expressions of will or force. Some also find their roots in the ideal of the unshakeable, mirroring the Adamantine Arrow's unswerving devotion to its sacred duty.

Arrows tend to eschew frivolity in their mudras, preferring clear, decisive action to finger-wagging hocus-pocus. This is not to say that Arrows cannot exercise great complexity and layered meaning within their mudras, but rather that willworkers of the Adamantine Arrow favor conservation of motion in such gestures: however it is that an Arrow moves her fingers in the execution of a mudra, one can be certain of her sincere confidence that every such movement is absolutely necessary. On the battlefield, one has no time for petty feats of prestidigitation.

Very old or traditionalistic Arrows still employ the mudras of ancient times, though the order as a whole has been moving away from this tendency as the years roll on. Conspicuous occult gestures attract the

wrong sorts of attention much of the time, and the idea of balling up a fist and drawing it back as though to throw a punch comes a lot more naturally to many Arrows than does an intricate pattern of interwoven fingers, intended to symbolize the opposition of forces. Performed properly, many of the Adamantine Arrow's rote mudras can double as actions useful in the heat of combat, and every good soldier embraces the utility of a multipurpose tool. This is not, however, to say that the order's mudras are always particularly subtle — while they can incorporate mundane sorts of activities, they are often blatant in their motions.

Death

Arrows make use of mudras that either hearken to the warrior's role as a bringer of death or else demonstrate a reverence for death, whether of an ally or an honored enemy: moving through katas specifically intended to train in killing blows, folding a flag as though to place it upon a casket or folding a dead body's arms and closing its eyes. Also common are the salute to the fallen and clutching a weapon to one's chest in both hands, as though in a warrior's burial.

Examples: "This series of strikes is intended to paralyze the heart and stop the flow of blood to the brain, like so." (slowly demonstrates the appropriate pattern of strikes) Stepping to one side and mimicking the movement of bringing a blade down across the neck, as though in the coup de grâce upon a defeated foe.

Fate

The Adamantine Arrow's Fate mudras play to one of two notions: the first, that the tides of battle are fickle and require a watchful eye, and the second, that a soldier makes his own luck. Thus, an Arrow might cup her hand across her forehead, just over her eyes, as if to block out the sun while scanning the horizon, or tap the fingers of one hand against her thumb in succession, as though gesturing in time to the counting out of facts and figures in her head. Conversely, she might hold, rub or otherwise manually interact with a lucky charm of some sort or instrument of chance, or imitate the motions of doing so: shaking one's balled-up fist and then flicking the wrist and opening the hand, as though rolling dice, or flicking one's thumb, as if to flip a coin.

Examples: "The advent of the spyglass made more accurate assessments of the conditions of the battlefield no more difficult than this." (mimics the motion of extending a telescoping glass) Taking out on its

chain around one's neck and rubbing the bullet that crumpled on one's breast pocket flask.

Forces

The Adamantine Arrow's Forces Arcanum mudras suggest the influence of powerful destructive forces upon the battlefield: throwing a grenade, the wave of concussion from an explosion, the undulation of a raging fire. Also, gestures indicative of other useful ideas or practices for soldiers involving force or energy, great or small: placing the forefinger to the lips as though to call for silence, or mimicking the movements of crushing out a lit cigarette (always wise when snipers are about).

Examples: "Damn, that's loud!" (cups hands over ears, as if to block out all sound) Extending the thumb and forefinger and then simultaneously angling down the thumb and tilting the hand up, as though it were a firing revolver.

Life

In making use of the Life Arcanum, Arrows employ mudras that echo great health or the development of the body: lifting something heavy, executing several graceful martial arts maneuvers in rapid succession, performing a number of push-ups. Conversely, an Arrow might mimic the motions of bandaging a wound, or replicate the behaviors of an animal (especially a fierce, predatory or physically powerful one) — such as curling one's hand into a claw-like shape or drawing the hand past the mouth as though licking it clean of blood.

Examples: "You should see her work out, sometime; that woman is strong." (curling one hand into a fist and making a muscle) Splaying the fingers, one hand atop the other, palms facing inward, and then drawing them together, fingers interlocked, like the jaws of a carnivore closing shut.

Matter

The inert substances of the world are anything but to the warrior; the battlefield is alive with flying shrapnel and bullets, while the cover of a brick wall means the difference between life and death, and clean, pure water quenches thirst and cleanses wounds. Arrow mudras for the Arcanum of Matter demonstrate the soldier's reliance upon the objects of his craft, as well as his identification with the solid, enduring substances of the Fallen World: imitating the grip of hands upon a weapon's haft, holding one fist up as though gripping

a shield in a defensive position, steeping one's fingers together in the rough shape of a mountain.

Examples: "About halfway through the first century AD, the Roman *pugio* underwent an alteration in its design, sometimes making for a slightly narrower blade." (using the thumb and forefinger to trace the shape of the blade in the air) Touching the thumbs and forefingers together, the remaining fingers curled up, palms facing toward the chest, to make the shape of a diamond.

Mind

The Adamantine Arrow's Mind Arcanum mudras convey the significance of a well-developed mind to the profession of soldier: tapping a finger to one temple as if to indicate intelligence, weaving a complex pattern in the air with one's fingers, tracing out the lines of a piece of architecture vital to a given operation. Conversely, an Arrow's Mind Arcanum mudra might evoke the idea of single-mindedness: moving the finger in a straight line in the direction of one's objective, for instance.

Examples: "Give me a little while; I need to consider all of the variables before we move ahead with anything." (resting the chin in the hand, as though in deep thought) Fanning out all of the fingers and placing the fingertips to both hands to the sides of the head, while staring intently at one's target.

Prime

Prime is the Arcanum of the substance of magic itself. "Prime" also refers to the notion of the first, the best or the most choice of things. Thus, the Adamantine Arrow's rote mudras for the Prime Arcanum tend to reflect these things: a single upraised index finger, hands uplifted as though to exalt something of great value, drawing together of cupped hands over the heart as

though to indicate devotion toward something precious, for example. Some also reflect the all-pervasive state of magic, such as drawing one's hands outward from center, along the horizon.

Examples: "When the attack comes, it will come from all sides." (sweeping each hand outward in a broad arc) Closing a hand slowly and delicately, as though to hold something valuable, and then drawing it close to oneself.

Space

Knowing the complexion of the field, literally or figuratively, is vital to the Adamantine Arrow's duty.

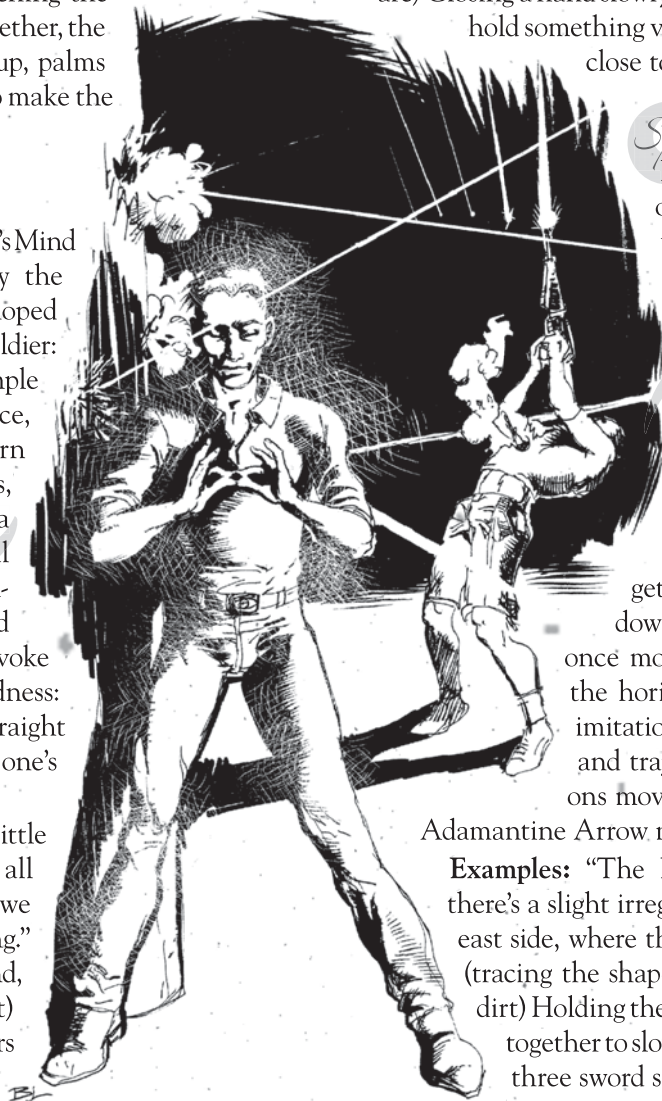
Space Arcanum mudras for the order play to the strategic importance of understanding the lay of the land: tracing out a rough map on the palm of one's hand with a forefinger, touching both forefingers together and then drawing each down in a semicircle to touch once more, tracing the contours of the horizon with a fingertip. Also, imitations of the lines and angles and trajectories upon which weapons move find their way into use as

Adamantine Arrow mudras for Space.

Examples: "The lot isn't quite rectangular: there's a slight irregularity down on the southeast side, where the property abuts the river." (tracing the shape of the plot of land in the dirt) Holding the middle finger and forefinger together to slowly move through the arcs of three sword strikes in a single form.

Spirit

The Spirit Arcanum is that of the invisible world and its denizens. The Adamantine Arrow's rote mudras for such magic focus upon the inscrutable nature of the Shadow Realm and the nature of its inhabitants: placing one hand, palm flat, across the eyes, for instance. Also, an Arrow's mudra might involve gestures appropriate to her culture for invoking the blessings of powerful gods or another such otherworldly entity (or, perhaps, just deflecting negative attention from such a being.) When dealing with the spirits *inside*



things — especially her arms and armor — an Arrow might instead lay a loving caress upon the object in question, or pat it gently, as one does the shoulder of an old friend.

Examples: “Oh, me and Emmy Lou have been together for a long time. Best damn rifle I ever owned.” (running one finger slowly and appreciatively down the rifle’s barrel) Drawing both hands, cupped, up to a point several inches in front of the eyes.

Time

The Time mudras of the Adamantine Arrow reflect the importance of timing — in patience and in swiftness — to the order’s work: checking a watch, bringing the fingertips together in a serene meditative posture, rotating the wrist rapidly with the hand flattened out (as though encouraging someone to hurry up) or folding down one’s fingers toward the palm, one at a time, as if in a countdown.

Examples: “This attack has to go like clockwork, with each team moving at precisely the right time: one, two, three.” (indicating each count by extending a finger, from the forefinger down to the ring finger) Crossing the forefingers in an “X” and then moving one downward by a slight increment every second, as though with the movements of the second hand of a clock.

Magical Tools

Mages of the Adamantine Arrow use a number of magical tools to mitigate the ravages of Paradox when invoking magics that challenge the laws of the Fallen World. These instruments, like most employed by the order, are intended to be multipurpose implements.

First and foremost, the Adamantine Arrow makes use of weapons as magical tools. From the simplest wooden club or stone dagger to the most elaborate Damascus steel sword or cutting-edge firearm, any sort of weapon will do. The martial focus of the Adamantine Arrow gives its members a powerful bond with the tools of war, and such mages can exploit that connection to stay (or at least partially divert) the crushing grip of Paradox. A weapon might be used as the focus of a mudra, especially if the willworker executes a kata or other such ritualized form with it.

Just as the Adamantine Arrow makes use of weaponry in the order’s magical workings, so, too, does the order employ armor and other protective gear. Whether an antique cuirass passed down for centuries from teacher to student, a thoroughly modern suit of

Kevlar and ceramic body armor or a spiked buckler hastily commandeered from an armory, any piece of equipment intended for defending a warrior from harm can be used by an Arrow to guard against the harsh consequences of vulgar magic. Mudras involving protective items might include symbolically ducking behind a shield or going through the motions of properly donning a suit of armor.

Rank insignia or other indicators of military position, or even just military service, can be used by an Arrow as magical tools. The Arrows of some Consilii adopt common identifiers (perhaps an arm band or set of dog tags, for example), and the local membership of the order can use such markers to lessen the blow of Paradox. These sorts of tools remind the Arrow that he is but a fraction of a greater whole, a team that is greater than the sum of its parts. Mudras involving rank insignia and the like may call attention to the object, through a gesture or ritual appropriate to the item in question.

A memento of home and hearth, or else some other object that reminds an Arrow of why she fights, can serve as a ritual tool for a member of the order. Perhaps it is a photograph of the little sister that the mage must now avoid because of her Awakened life, or maybe it is the lucky coin of the mentor who died saving her life. Such items reaffirm the Arrow’s resolve and challenge her to stand up for what she believes in. The potential mudras involving such objects are many and varied, though most either call attention to the item or conceal it from harm and/or notice.

Sacraments

In addition to the generalized Arcana tools for ritual spellcasting (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 90), mages of the Adamantine Arrow make use of a few instruments unique to their order for forging a meaningful tie to the Supernal. Most of these are the tools of the professional warrior, and the most potent can convey a +1 equipment bonus to ritual spellcasting.

Death: Breaking a weapon of execution or one specifically employed by a soldier, or burning the shroud lain upon the body of a fallen warrior. The sidearm carried by the Arrow’s grandfather (a World War II veteran) or the body bag in which a young Arrow was placed before being laid to rest (+1).

Fate: Destroying a soldier’s good luck charm or a random piece of shrapnel that killed a guerilla fighter. The metal pocket flask that deflected a Scelestus assassin’s blade in the heat of battle or a set of bone dice carried by a Roman legionnaire (+1).

Forces: Breaking a round of incendiary ammunition or an old drill sergeant's whistle. Setting off an explosive device made with parts from every major conflict of the past century or crushing the radio used to call in the air support that decisively won a significant battle (+1).

Life: Snapping a bow made entirely from wood or horn, sinew and natural resin or ingesting the flesh of an animal believed to bestow strength or other qualities beneficial to the warrior. The pelt of a lioness slain by a Sleeper with nothing more than a hunting knife or a hallucinogenic herbal draught made by the last shaman of an isolated and dying warrior tribe (+1).

Matter: Melting down the head of a blacksmith's hammer or breaking a fortified wall. Breaking an Artifact weapon or a brick from the walls of Troy (+1).

Mind: Destroying a code-breaking computer or tearing up a soldier's private journal. An orichalcum circlet or the original handwritten scroll of an ancient Arrow's wartime strategies (+1).

Prime: Pouring pure water out of a canteen or breaking a phantasmal weapon. Destroying the skull of a powerful and long-dead mage, or obliterating an Imbued Item with magic (+1).

Space: Burning a stack of documents detailing troop placement, supply routes and the like or smashing a compass. One of Napoleon Bonaparte's battle maps or the sextant used to navigate a fleet of ships to victory in a critical naval engagement (+1).

Spirit: Destroying a piece of soldiering equipment that once had an awakened spirit or making a burnt offering to a powerful god or spirit associated with war. Ephemeral ichor upon the blade of a sword used to wound an acamoth or a suit of fetish armor (+1).

Time: Disassembling a timer for a charge of plastic explosive or ripping up a calendar page from a month with a holiday that specifically commemorates a battle or other expressly military subject matter. The crude shard of stone with which a prisoner of war marked the passage of years or the pocket watch carried by a famous general (+1).

Death Spells

Corpse Flesh (Death ●●● + Life ●●●)

Many philosophies throughout time have espoused the notion that life is pain and death brings surcease. Some Awakened could not agree more. This spell deadens the body's pain responses and terminates

circulation and respiration without deleterious effects, as well as bestowing one or two other interesting advantages.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

Upon successfully casting this spell, and for the remainder of the scene, the mage no longer suffers wound penalties, does not need to breathe and does not begin to bleed to death when all of his Health boxes are filled with lethal damage (see "Incapacitation" in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 143–144). Likewise, he does not register as a living pattern to sensory magics (though Life Arcanum spells can still affect him and he doesn't count as a walking corpse for the purposes of the Death Arcanum), and perhaps most spectacularly, he can reattach severed pieces of his body with Life Arcanum healing (at the appropriate level for the type of damage sustained in losing the limb, or whatever other part was removed), so long as it is done before this spell's Duration expires.

Adamantine Arrow Spell: Reaper's Aegis

Dice Pool: Resolve + Medicine + Death

Arrows die, so that others need not. This rote is just another way of accepting that heavy cost — one that an individual Arrow might just walk away from intact.

Self-Repairing Zombie
(Death ●●● + Matter ●●●)

While the use of the dead on the battlefields of the Awakened is frowned upon by many, Necromancers of the Stygian Path still hold these arts to be among their inherent blessings as willworkers. And a tool is only as useful as its present condition allows it to be, but the middle of combat is a bad time to have to take valuable time out to mend a battered zombie. Thus, enterprising Moros strive to think of new and better ways in which to allow animated corpses to mend their own injuries.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana per zombie

When cast upon a zombie, this spell enables the zombie to feed upon other dead flesh to mend its injuries

directly mend them with magic every time they're badly damaged.

Shadow-Forged (Death ●●● + Matter ●●●)

Acolytes of Death learn how to draw the shadows around them to conceal themselves from view. With deeper knowledge of the Arcanum, a Disciple of Death and Matter can draw the shadows down and weave them into sturdy, useful shapes such as swords, knives or simple tools.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

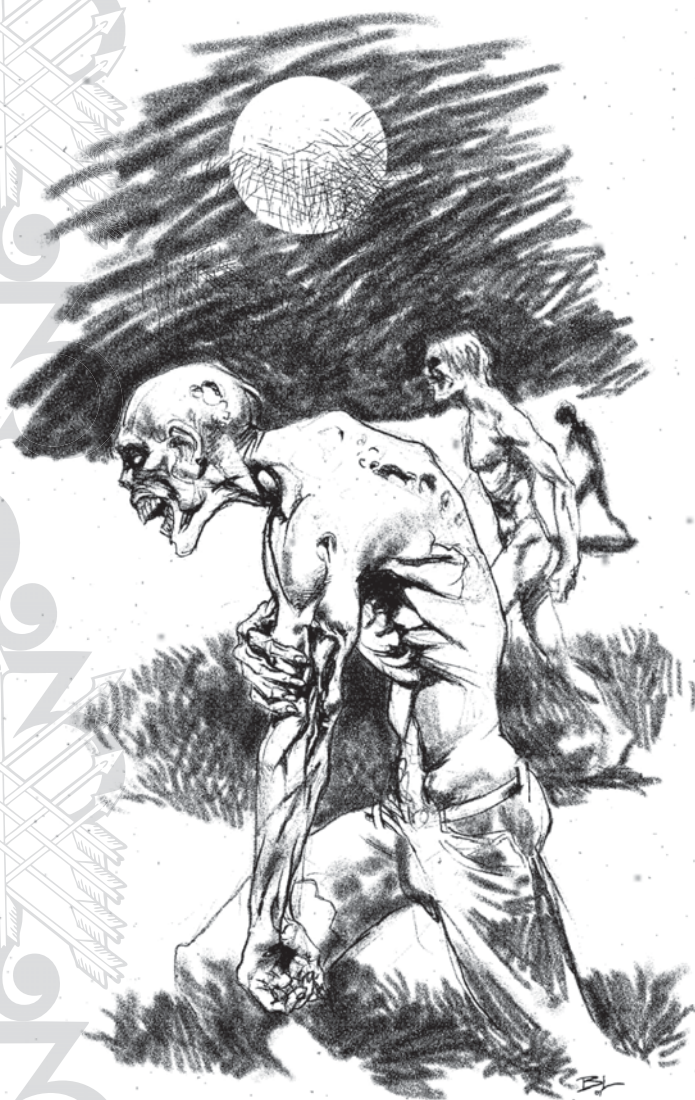
Shadows pool around the mage and congeal into the desired form visualized in the Imago. With a single success, the shadows may be shaped into any Size 3 or smaller simple object (no moving parts). Durability for the shaped object is equal to twice the number of successes gained on the casting roll. Additionally, any weapon or tool formed by this spell gains a +2 equipment bonus (see p. 139 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Bright light or scant shadow may have adverse effects on the Durability and Structure of the object shaped. The Storyteller may penalize the casting roll up to -3 when the spell is cast in an area with a shortage of shadows (see "Shadow Sculpting" on p. 135 of **Mage: The Awakening** for information about the quality of existing shadows). Likewise, exposing a Shadow-Forged object to bright light can degrade that object's Structure. For every round the object is illuminated by lighting conditions brighter than those in which it was formed, roll five dice of damage against the object (see p. 135 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for more information on damaging objects). A "Shadow-Forged" object reduced to zero Structure is considered unraveled, and the object vanishes.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Shadow Breastwork

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts + Death

The warrior-mages of the Adamantine Arrow don't usually lack for weapons or equipment, so they put this rote to a different use. When cast, "Shadow Breastwork" forms a wall of solid shadow in front of the Arrow that may be used as cover. The basic wall formed, with a single success on the casting roll, is a three-foot by three-foot square of Durability 2 that appears membrane thick. A mage may increase the

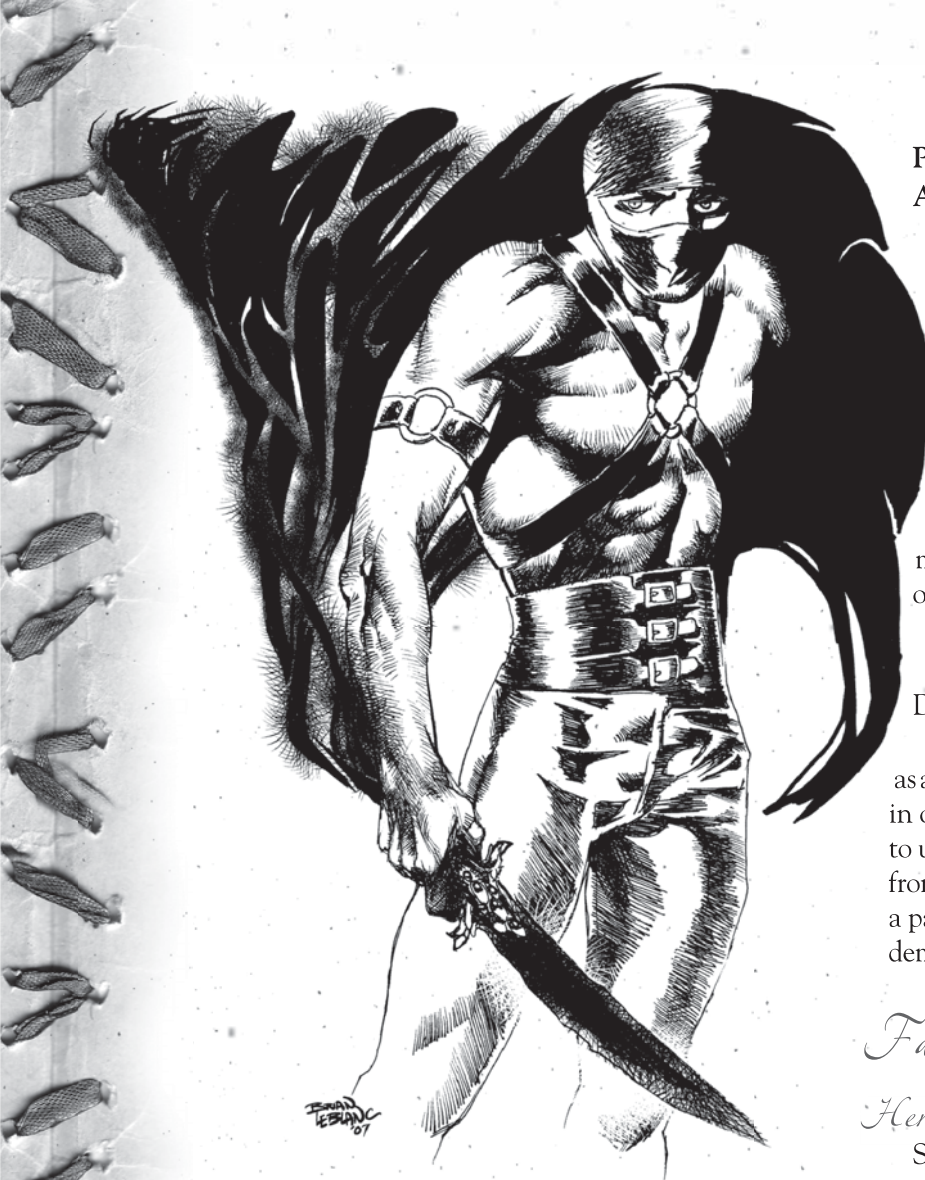


and creates in it a compulsion to do so when reduced below a certain number of health boxes (determined by the caster). When reduced below this level and presented with *any* source of dead flesh, the zombie will feed, consuming one level of the corpse's Size over the course of five turns and regaining one health box, until such time as the zombie is restored to at least the appropriate level of health programmed into the zombie by the caster. Note that the zombie can only be magically compelled to seek out alternate sources of sustenance by an effect that exceeds the Potency of this spell, though the zombie *will* break off from feeding to defend itself from harm.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Mend the Corpse-Slave

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Death

In ancient days, the dead were more commonly employed as weapons by a minority of the willworkers of the Adamantine Arrow. While the practice has fallen out of use in most corners of the world, it still sees enough action to warrant means to repair the tireless and unfeeling soldiers without having to



Durability of the wall by 2 or the length of the wall by three feet (maximum of 12 feet long) for each additional success beyond the first. A mage with four successes on the casting roll (for example) could create a six-foot-long, Durability 6 wall. Regardless of length, the wall continues in a straight line. If the wall intersects with a solid object, the wall ends at that object, and any additional length is lost.

Bright light brought to bear on the wall for more than one turn will degrade the wall in the same way a "Shadow-Forged" object is degraded by being exposed to light.

Cloak of Decay (Death ●●●● + Fate ●●)

As "Destroy Object" (see p. 139 of *Mage: The Awakening*), except the mage surrounds himself with a field of entropy that acts to continually weaken melee weapons used to assault him. Each attack, successful or not, wears at weapons until attackers find their swords shattered, their knives dulled and their spears broken.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

Each time the mage is attacked with a melee weapon (including improvised melee weapons), roll dice of damage equal to spell Potency against that weapon. Even entering the area created by *Cloak of Decay* can cause damage to weaponry. A damage roll is made against an attacker's weapon even if the attack misses. This spell has no effect on ranged weapons or on any type of bare-fisted Brawling attack.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Entropic Armor

Dice Pool: Resolve + Crafts or Science + Death

Application of strategy in battle is just as important as application of force. Many warriors train extensively in one area of combat and, if denied the opportunity to use that training, are quickly defeated. When confronted with an opponent who shows expertise with a particular weapon, use of this spell can disarm and demoralize them.

Fate Spells

Heroic Effort (Fate ●●)

Sometimes, a person just has to give a desperate situation her all. Usually, it's not enough to make a difference, but sometimes — just sometimes — she manages to pull off the one-in-a-million stunt that saves the day. Of course, those with the power to manipulate the odds are often a little less hesitant about jumping into such "hopeless situations."

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

After successfully casting this spell, the mage treats the next chance roll she is called upon to make (see the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 125) during the spell's Duration as having a die pool of one. This means that the willworker can succeed on a roll of eight through 10 (and benefit from such advantages as 8- or 9-again) and cannot dramatically fail the roll in question. Upon so modifying such a chance roll, the spell automatically expires, and the mage may not choose whether or not to apply the spell's effects to a given chance roll.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Better Lucky Than Good

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Fate

John O'Dale, an Acanthus Arrow of some small fame among the Consilii scattered across the English countryside, was, among other things, an inveterate gambler. He loved to take all manner of ridiculous wagers to perform insanely improbable deeds — preferably for considerable sums of money. While many of those who bet against him knew that he used magic to transform abject impossibilities into fighting chances, he was always entertaining enough about it and such a good sport on the frequent occasions upon which he still managed to fall short that no one complained much about it.

Tangle the Threads
(Fate ●●● + Mind ●● + Prime ●●)

Likely, the single most common application of the ability to magically tamper with the skein of destiny is to be found upon the battlefield. Ricocheting bullets “coincidentally” strike their intended targets, while enemies slip on patches of ice, and someone “just happened” to have left something leaning against the alley wall that can be used as a weapon. When these powers are used to one’s benefit, they are great boons. When used by the enemy, however, these powers constitute an unacceptable liability. This spell was created to level the playing field somewhat in just that respect.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Each success assigned to this spell’s Potency increases by one the number of successes required to manipulate the caster’s destiny with the Fate Arcanum — the tides of fortune that surround her are simply too convoluted to easily navigate, full of conflicting emotions and compulsions, and occluded by random patches of magical concealment. Note, however, that other Fate magics in the area work normally, including those that might indirectly target the caster, such as being caught within the area of a “Swarm of Locusts” spell. This spell effectively defends the caster against certain Fate-based effects that are “under the radar” of the Unfettered Fate 4 effect, such as Monkey’s Paw and Alter Oaths.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Blinding the Three Sisters

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Fate

An Arrow can truly depend upon only one sort of luck: the luck *she* creates. Every soldier knows

that reducing the potential number of uncontrolled variables upon the field is a good way to increase the odds for victory. Of course, this rote also makes it more difficult for allies to tweak destiny in her favor, but all of that is probably best handled before the engagement, anyway.

Fortify Oath (Prime ...)

The Adamantine Arrow makes frequent use of Supernal oaths in the course of its work. Some Arrows, however, are loath to undertake magically-binding vows, well aware of the ease with which willworkers skilled in the nuances of destiny can manipulate the terms of such promises. By adding Prime 3 to the casting of an oath *willingly sworn*, however, an Arrow can enhance the power of said oath, making it more difficult to tamper with.

Each participant in the oath (including the caster herself, if she is to be bound by it) may spend points of Mana (out to their respective maximums in a single turn), to increase the effective Potency of the spell solely for the purposes of determining the difficulty of tampering with the spell in any manner other than dispelling it.

Example: *Antonia sanctifies (with Fate 4) her cabal’s oath to defend their Adamant Sage against all harm in an upcoming clash with the Seers of the Throne, and garners three successes in the casting. Antonia, with her Gnosis 3, spends three points of Mana in the casting, while the other members of the cabal spend their respective maximums, as well (three, two and two). If another willworker wishes to dispel the oath, he need only defeat a three-success spell. If, however, he wishes to mystically alter the parameters of the oath, he must overcome what is for such purposes effectively a 13-success spell.*

Some Arrows hold this lore as proprietary to their order, while others believe that spreading this knowledge only encourages the honorable tradition of having oaths witnessed and sanctified in the sight of the Supernal. Adherents to the two schools of thought occasionally engage in debate — or more spirited forms of disagreement — over the matter.

Note that this effect cannot be added to any oath mystically compelled or otherwise sworn unwillingly.

Fortune's Fool (Fate ●●●●)

It is said that fortune favors the bold. Unfortunately for the bold, accidents still happen. With this spell, the mage learns to store misfortune and inflict it upon others, turning accident into opportunity.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Transitory (one turn)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

During a chapter, whenever the mage fails a roll, the mage may reflexively store that failure for later use. The mage may store a total number of failures equal to her Resolve, but only “natural” failures may be stored. Players may not choose to fail a roll in order to store it. The mage releases a failure by selecting a target and casting the spell. With a single success on the casting roll, the next action taken by that target fails automatically. Once a stored failure is spent, that failure is subtracted from the total. At the end of the chapter, any unused failures are lost.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Sorrows Shared

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Fate

A good warrior finds a way to turn misfortune to his favor. The Adamantine Arrow developed this rote to transform missed opportunities into weapons to loose on their foes. Proper use of this rote requires some foresight. It does no good to inflict failure on an enemy just to see that failure manifest itself in a minor way.

Forces Spells

Modulate Frequency (Forces ●● + Fate ●)

While it's virtually impossible to completely prevent enemies from intercepting transmissions between allies, a measure of security is often necessary when sharing information over the airwaves. By means of this spell, willworkers can speak more freely, comfortable in the increased safety of their communications.

Practice: Veiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

By casting this spell on audio- and/or video-transmitting devices — or without them, if all of the mages

involved are capable of using magic to transmit and receive such signals — a willworker can cause all transmissions to modulate frequency randomly but consistently. In other words: all transmitters, whether devices or spells, within the desired “network” modulate frequency at precisely the same rate, making it extremely difficult for an outsider to spy on the exchange.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Elusive Transmission

Dice Pool: Wits + Science + Forces

In 1974, an Arrow calling himself Arclight developed this rote as a better means of coordinating between strike teams. Modern Arrows have taken his work and expanded upon it, enabling secure transmissions with cell phones, video equipment and words spoken into the wind by mages who can hijack radio waves for personal communication.

Nullify Combustion (Forces ●● + Death ●●)

Fire has been an instrument of battle for nearly as long as people have engaged in organized conflict. It is said by some that ancient Atlantis itself made use of great mystic siege engines, churning out hellish flames and spewing them upon the forces of enemy nations. Thus, it is unsurprising that magics have been developed to quell such flames before ever they're ignited.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert (but potentially subject to Disbelief if witnessed by Sleepers)

Cost: None

Within this spell's area of effect, the process of combustion simply cannot be initiated. Bullets cannot be fired, cars do not start and matches will not light. Magics that create combustion subtract the Potency of this spell from their casting rolls, to a minimum of zero. Note that a magically enhanced gun or car, for instance, employs ordinary (non-magical) combustion, unless specifically noted otherwise. Any ongoing process of combustion that enters the spell's area of effect continues as normal (so a torch wouldn't go out and a car wouldn't stall out) — only the initiation of the process is suppressed.

With Forces 3, the mage can also cause existing sources of combustion to die out. In the case of magical effects, this spell's Potency is subtracted from the Potency of the effect in question. If the combustion effect is reduced to zero Potency, the source goes out.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Thwarting Prometheus

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult or Science + Forces

A wandering Arrow calling himself Gregory Saint — a devout adherent of the way of the sword — developed this rote in the mid-1950s, to rob gunfighters of the advantage of what he called their “coward’s toys.” The sentiment wasn’t particularly popular in many quarters of the order, but the rote definitely was, and came into use for a wide variety of purposes, only one of which is denying an enemy recourse to the use of firearms.

Cutting Scream (Forces ●●●)

The mage focuses the sound of his voice to damage and deafen a single opponent within range of touch.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant and aimed

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

Each success on the casting roll inflicts one point of bashing Health damage.

With Forces 4, damage dealt may be improved to lethal, or by spending one Mana with Forces 5, damage dealt may be improved to aggravated. This spell is treated as a ranged attack, fired at melee range, allowing the target their normal Defense. The volume of the sonic attack is loud enough to temporarily deafen opponents. For each point of damage taken, the target is deafened for one turn, but is allowed a reflexive Stamina check to reduce the number of turns deafened by one per success. Deafened mages gain no bonus to spell casting from chanting in High Speech.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Battle Cry

Dice Pool: Stamina + Expression + Forces

Arrows who prefer to get up close and personal in combat favor this rote. The close range blast of sound is difficult to avoid and deals satisfactory damage. The secondary deafening effect is also useful in reducing the ability of multiple opponents to coordinate their attacks.

Empowered Voice (Forces ●●●)

There’s a time for words, and a time for action. With this spell, a mage can move from one scenario to the other instantly, as her voice is transformed from a tool of communication into a potent weapon. A single syllable uttered by the mage is magically amplified, creating a thunderous shockwave to sweep aside any who would stand in her way.

Practice: Weaving

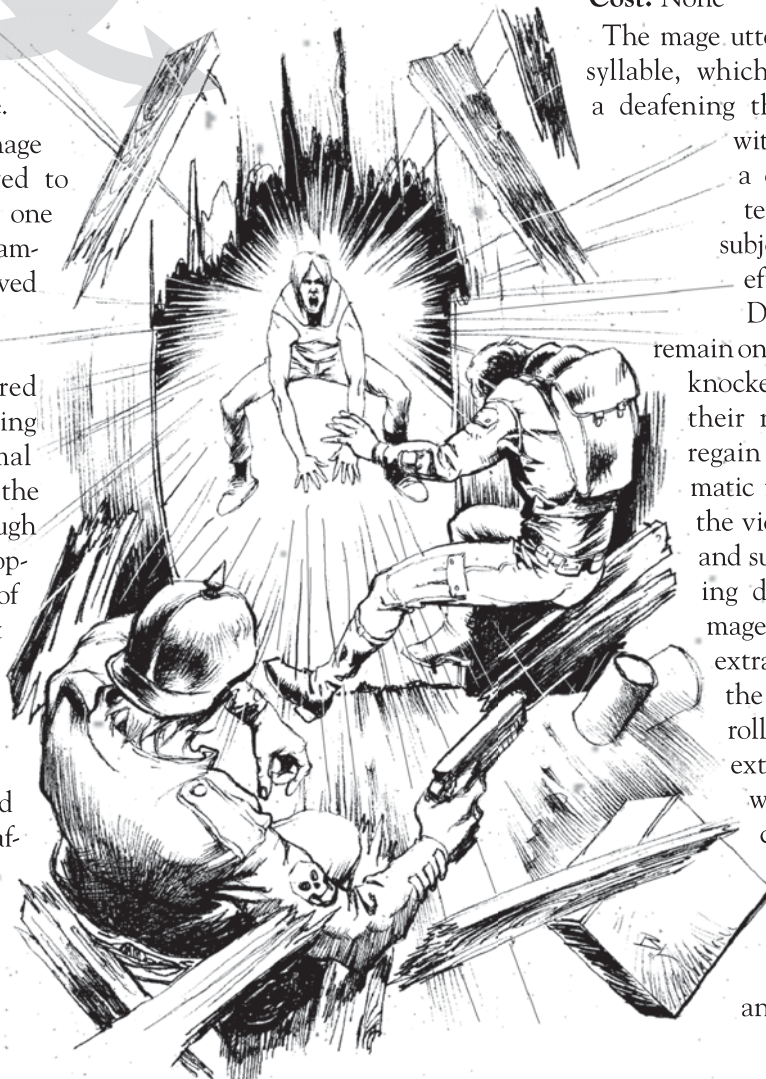
Action: Instant and contested

Duration: Transitory

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage utters any brief word or syllable, which instantly becomes a deafening thunderclap. Anyone within the affected area, a one-yard radius centered on the mage, is subject to a Knockdown effect: they must roll Dexterity + Athletics to remain on their feet. Characters knocked to the ground lose their next action as they regain their footing. Dramatic failure indicates that the victim takes a hard fall and suffers a point of bashing damage as well. The mage may use the spell’s extra successes to contest the targets’ Knockdown rolls, or may use them to extend the area of effect, with each extra success doubling the area (a two-yard radius with two successes, a four-yard radius with three successes and so on). She must ap-



ply that choice to all targets, though: her success either makes the sound louder, or makes it travel farther.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Thunderword

Dice Pool: Presence + Athletics + Forces

“Speak loudly and carry a big stick” is a philosophy many Arrow mages can relate to. Knowing this rote allows the voice to *become* the stick... or at least buy some time for the mage bring a bigger stick to bear.

Gravity Shift (Forces ●●●●)

Sometimes the path a mage needs to follow becomes blocked or impassable. No matter — with this spell, the caster isn’t limited to walking on the ground. He can amble up the side of a wall or stride across a ceiling, avoiding obstructions that would slow the passage of earthbound travelers.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

With each success, the mage can shift the direction of gravity upon his person by 45 degrees. Thus, one success allows him to scale a vertical wall with mild effort, as if it were a steep incline; two successes allows him to walk straight up it as if it was flat ground. Four successes are needed to walk on a ceiling (after walking up the wall to reach it). From the mage’s perspective, “down” always feels as if it’s beneath his feet, and everything he carries or holds behaves accordingly. He could even pour himself a glass of water while standing on the ceiling, and the water would fall into his glass instead of spilling onto the floor. Once he lets go of something—including another person, if he’s carrying someone—that item or person is affected by gravity normally. Note that the mage need not be in motion for the spell to function; he could choose to sit on a ceiling like a spider while guarding a room, for example.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Human Fly

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Forces

With this rote, no wall is too high to climb. Floor-level traps or alarm systems can be bypassed; rooftops, tree-tops and even mountaintops are simple to reach.

Firebolt (Forces ●●●●)

One of the signature spells of the battle-minded Obrimos, this magic allows a willworker to project a lancing gout of flame from his fingertips toward a target at range.



Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana (optional for aggravated damage)

Each success assigned to the Potency of this spell inflicts one Health box of lethal damage to the target, who is allowed to apply her Defense against the attack. With Forces 5, the caster can spend a point of Mana to make this spell inflict aggravated damage. Note that flammable objects in the target’s vicinity are apt to be set ablaze by this attack.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Sword of Michael

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics + Forces

While some Arrows prefer lightning and others sonic bursts, the simple fact of the matter is that more supernatural weirdness appears to be harmed in a meaningful way by fire than by any other natural form of energy. This rote, probably older than the order itself, capitalizes upon that truth.

Kinetic Ripple (Forces ●●●●)

The mage lashes out with her magic, harming anyone near her with a shimmering wave of force. Those nearest the mage suffer the most damage, as the wave of force quickly decreases in ferocity the further the wave spreads. The visible effects from this spell on a body are misleading. Serious internal damage can be caused while leaving only bruises.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant; subtract target's Stamina

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

This spell causes damage based on target proximity from point of origin (the caster). All targets within a one-yard radius of the mage suffer one point of lethal Health damage per success on the casting roll. All targets outside the one-yard radius, but within three yards of the mage, suffer one point of bashing Health damage per success on the casting roll. Damage dealt is considered Resistant Damage (see p. 124 of **Mage: The Awakening**), and in the case of multiple targets, subtract the highest Stamina present from the casting roll. It is possible to exclude friendly targets from Kinetic Ripple by including Fate 2 in the spellcasting (see p. 154 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Break the Line

Dice Pool: Stamina + Athletics + Forces

The Adamantine Arrow uses this spell to disrupt enemy lines and to scatter clumped groups. Multiple Arrows with knowledge of this spell, working as a group, can quickly clear an area with successive pulses of damaging energy.

Life Spells

Feral Reflex (Life ●●● + Mind ●●●●)

Many animals move with adroitness and surety that far outstrip that common to humans. Replicating these natural instincts for grace, a mage acquires a heightened ability to evade his enemies' blows in battle.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

For the duration of this spell, the caster uses the greater of his Dexterity or Wits to calculate his De-

fense, like an animal (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 202).

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Savage Dance

Dice Pool: Wits + Animal Ken + Life

Deciphering only with great difficulty the secrets of the mind, the Thyrsus Arrow, Artemis, developed this rote centuries ago by way of imitating the profound agility of the wolf, the stag and the great cat in time of battle.

Gaia's Hold (Life ●●●)

The mage calls upon flora to slow and entangle her target. Grass grows and knots around the target's feet, tree branches catch and snag at clothing and limbs, and vines spiral and twist around the target in an ever tightening grasp.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant and Contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

This rote functions properly only in areas with abundant plant life. Areas with less than optimum conditions impose a penalty on the casting roll from -1 (mild drought) to -5 (near desert). If no flora exists in the area, the spell will simply not function.

Each success on the casting roll reduces the target's Speed by 2. When this spell is cast as an extended spell, the flora slowing the target continues to creep up his body attempting to hold him in place. Treat this as a Grapple attack (see p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) with total successes on the extended roll acting as the Strength of the attack. If the target breaks the grapple, all successes are lost. If the total number of successes to grapple the target is ever greater than twice his Size, the target is considered Immobilized (see p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Casting Gaia's Hold as an extended spell costs one Mana.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Cage the Rabbit

Dice Pool: Wits + Science + Life

Many people would rather flee than submit themselves to the proper authority of an Arrow fulfilling his oath. This rote was developed to slow a running target as well as for those occasions when an Arrow needs to bring his target back alive.

Accelerate Healing (Life ●●●●)

Heroic legends are rife with tales of warriors who kept fighting long after sustaining injuries that should

have killed any human being. Emulating these great figures of myth, some Arrows will themselves to mend in seconds injuries that might otherwise take months to heal.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: Special (see below)

After casting this spell, the Arrow may, for the remainder of the scene, reflexively spend points of Mana on a one-for-one basis to heal levels of bashing or lethal damage, though bashing damage must be healed in preference to lethal if the mage is currently suffering from both, as the body attempts to cope with less elaborate hurts before tackling deeper wounds. The willworker is limited by the amount of Mana he might normally spend in a turn — including those points of Mana spent for other reasons, such as in the casting of spells — according to his Gnosis. This spell is subject to Disbelief and Unraveling (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 274) if used to heal lethal damage in front of Sleepers, and has no effect at all on aggravated damage.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Pain Is an Illusion

Dice Pool: Stamina + Medicine + Life

During the course of his work, an Arrow is called upon to place himself directly in the path of harm, often with little time to step back and receive restorative spells. But a dead Arrow is of no help to anyone, and so he must find ways of enduring all that his sacred task throws in his path. This rote is one answer to that quandary.

Matter Spells

Breach Point (Matter ● + Death ● + Space ●)

By means of this spell, a mage discerns the hidden vulnerabilities in any form of cover behind which her enemies might hide during the heat of battle. There is a significant difference, after all, between shooting through all of the moving parts inside a car door, and shooting through nothing more than a thin sheet of metal on one side, a bit of plastic on the other and nothing but empty air in between.

Practice: Unveiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Each success of Potency assigned to this spell counts as an extra success of damage, solely for the purposes of overcoming the Durability of a piece of cover (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 162–163), making it that much easier for the willworker to cause harm to the target behind said cover with a ranged attack. Note that this cannot cause the attack afforded by successfully breaching the cover to benefit from more dice that would have been rolled were the cover not there in the first place.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Nowhere to Hide

Dice Pool: Wits + Athletics + Matter

No barrier can ward away the weapons and offensive magics of a dedicated Arrow. This rote enables such a mage to penetrate even the most stalwart defenses, striking at the enemies of the Pentacle, no matter how or where they might try to hide from the perils of battle.

Weaponize Object (Matter ●●)

With this spell, the mage can fortify a mundane item, allowing it to be wielded as an effective hand-held weapon despite its flaws. By force of will, he sharpens the object's edges, shifts its balance or toughens its exterior just enough to make it serviceable for combat.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Though the object displays no visible change, the object's composition is altered so that the mage can use it as a weapon without suffering the usual –1 penalty imposed on attacks made with improvised weapons. Furthermore, the object's Damage is calculated by the higher of its Durability or Size, rather than the lower. Almost any object could be used for this purpose, as long as the mage can pick the object up and move it (the mage's Strength must exceed the weapon's Size rating, or he'll suffer a –1 penalty on attacks).

Adamantine Arrow Rote: The Weapon at Hand

Dice Pool: Resolve + Crafts + Matter

An Arrow who uses this rote is guaranteed an arsenal wherever he goes: a broom handle becomes a quarterstaff, a letter opener becomes a dagger, a length of clothesline becomes a whip.

Acidic Spatter (Matter ●●● + Life ●●)

Whenever the skin of the mage is pierced, the spray of blood is transmuted mid-flight into a mild acid that deals Continuous Damage (see p. 167 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) to anyone the acid touches. The acid created by this spell isn't powerful enough to threaten a well-armored opponent, but it can turn the tables in a fight with an unarmored foe.

Practice: Fraying

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage casts this spell on himself in preparation for combat. Normal Duration for the spell is one scene, but by spending one Mana during the casting, the Duration may be extended to last one day. Damage caused by the spatter is bashing Health damage that deals continuous damage for two turns before the blood reverts to its natural form. The Continuous Damage is equal to the amount of lethal Health damage (suffered by the caster) minus 1 to anyone in a 180-degree arc from point of impact. Successive turns of spatter may stack or overlap. Damage from the spatter is dangerous only to flesh, and may be mitigated by armor, but not Defense. Blood spatter transmuted by this spell causes no damage to the caster.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Blood Vengeance

Dice Pool: Stamina + Medicine + Matter

From ancient Atlantis to the modern day, the Adamantine Arrow has been asked to shed its blood for others. In time, the Arrows learned to turn their blood into a weapon. Adamantine Arrow scholars claim they can trace use of this rote to the days when the Arrows led the forces of Atlantis in battle against poorly armored enemies of the Awakened City. The rote is still useful today against violent shapechangers, combative familiars and other aggressive denizens of the world unseen by Sleepers.

Fold Object (Matter ●●●●, Space ●●●)

This spell changes a three-dimensional object into a two-dimensional one. Its weight stays the same, but its volume is reduced accordingly, allowing it to be folded like paper.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage essentially shunts most of the object's mass into an extra-dimensional space, turning the object into a silhouette of itself. Though the object loses neither weight nor Structure points, the object's physical properties are altered, making it bendable and foldable. For each success, the mage can affect five cubic feet of solid matter. The mage can reflexively restore the object to its full volume at any time. The affected item returns to its full volume instantly when the spell expires; anyone standing nearby may be subject to Knockdown (see "Knockdown," p. 168 in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Pack Up Your Troubles

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Matter

It's said that this rote was created by an Arrow master who liked his apprentices to stow their gear as efficiently as possible. It's not only a way to fit lots of gear in a small space, it enables Arrows who need to appear unarmed to pack a hidden weapon or two... just in case.

Mind Spells

Eagle-Eye View (Mind ●● + Space ●●)

Since the first human climbed a tree to get a better view of a fight, warriors have known that the best place to observe a battle is from above. Mortals must rely on helicopters, spy satellites and drones for this kind of intelligence. Knowledge gained from these sources is valuable, but that value is decreased by the time lapse between when a scouting unit reports the situation and when that information is relayed to combatants on the ground. Mages are not bound by such conventions. This spell allows the caster to gain an overhead perspective of a fight, granting her valuable tactical information she can process in real-time as the battle unfolds.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

For each success accumulated on the casting roll, the mage gains a +1 to his Initiative.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Battlefield Tactician

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics + Mind

The version of this rote developed by the Adamantine Arrow varies slightly in its approach. Rather

than seeking an overhead view of the combat, the mage fixes and tracks the position of combatants in his mind. The Arrows prefer this approach in small battles where an overhead view may not be as useful as knowing where each target is, where they were and what they've done.

Phantom Thoughts (Mind ●●)

Sometimes it's better to allow another mage a glimpse into your mind rather than block him completely. A closed mind causes more suspicion than an open mind that reveals only what you choose.

Practice: Veiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

With a single success on the casting roll, the mage may add a layer of conscious thought over her own. This layer contains information chosen by the mage during the casting. Repeated attempts to read a mind protected by this layer of false thoughts may reveal the shallowness of thinking. Suspicious mages may roll Resolve + Composure minus the Potency of the Still Waters casting, to confirm the mind they are attempting to read has been altered.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Disinformation

Dice Pool: Resolve + Subterfuge + Mind

Members of the Adamantine Arrow use this spell to sow false information about their practices, tactics and suspicions among their enemies. Tricking an enemy into believing false information can create a large advantage in battle, whether that battle is physical or political in nature.

Kinesthesia (Mind ●●● + Space ● + Time ●)

A solid plan is a good thing to have, but the wise combatant counts on things going to hell just as soon as the plan comes into contact with reality. Often, willworkers find themselves forced to contend with less-than-ideal circumstances, taxing reflexes and adaptability beyond their limits. When such circumstances occur, the well-prepared individual is often the victorious one.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

For the Duration of this spell, the mage's Defense is not reduced by multiple attackers (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 155–156), and she disregards one point of any environmental penalties to her actions per point of Potency assigned to the spell. Furthermore, the mage need not check to overcome or avoid simple hindrances on the field, such as dodging around the protruding root of a tree or vaulting up a slight incline to obtain a better position — she is assumed to have the necessary grace, awareness and multitasking abilities to automatically do so.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: One with Emptiness

Dice Pool: Composure + Athletics + Mind

Yao Tzu was, in his youth, infamous for starting brawls with the local toughs wherever he wandered, so as to demonstrate the power of his many martial arts techniques. Sometime around the start of the 13th century, however, as he was transitioning out of youth and into a more respectable age, he compiled his philosophies and the fundamentals of his spells in seven scrolls, which he gifted to the Awakened caretakers of the monastery upon the doorstep of which he was left as an infant. The monastery, unfortunately, was destroyed sometime in the late 17th century, but one of Yao Tzu's scrolls survived — the one illuminating the secrets of this highly prized rote.

Defer Conscience (Mind ●●● + Time ●●●)

War is an ugly thing — it places soldiers in difficult circumstances, forcing them to choose between morality and duty. Arrows are no strangers to this hard choice, and there comes a time when all must decide to put their principles on the line for the sake of protecting those weaker than themselves. At such times, it is important to be able to act with conviction and urgency, unimpeded by the inner struggles inherent to questionable deeds.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

After successfully casting this spell, the Arrow defers any roll for degeneration (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 91–94) until the *end* of the current scene, at which time she rolls for the single most heinous sin — as determined by the tenets of Wisdom — that she committed while under the ef-

fects of the spell for which she would normally have to roll, given her current Wisdom score. If the mage degenerates in Wisdom, she still rolls as normal to resist gaining a derangement.

Note that, while this spell's Duration may be increased, this simply extends the length of time during which the mage benefits from its effects. She still checks for degeneration at the end of every scene during which she took actions that call for such.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Heart of Stone

Dice Pool: Resolve + Intimidation + Mind

The warrior's burden is a heavy one, and she occasionally must undertake inhumane acts to protect those in her charge. None are certain when this magic was first developed by the Dragon's Talon, though no Arrow questions its usefulness. A soldier must remain steadfast and unmoved in the face of inflicting hurts from which lesser men flinch, after all, and the Arrow must be capable of enacting her duty without complaint or the hesitation born of inner turmoil.

Skeptic (Mind) (●●●●)

This spell acts on the minds of Sleepers, making them less likely to believe an anomalous event can be explained rationally. Used cautiously, this spell has the potential to cause an enemy mage to be the source of his own undoing. The Guardians of the Veil greatly disapprove of this application of magic, and upon hearing of the use of it, are likely to go to great lengths to... dissuade an encore performance.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

This spell affects the mind of a target Sleeper within sensory range. Any roll for Paradox in the presence of the targeted Sleeper gains the 9-again quality (re-roll results of 9 and 10). In addition, any covert spell the Storyteller rules improbable is considered vulgar.

The Storyteller may call for a degeneration roll for overuse of this spell.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Pride Goeth

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult + Mind

When forced to battle another mage in front of Sleeper witnesses, the Adepts of Mind among the Arrows combine this spell with their more mundane combat skills. If a mage is foolish or desperate enough to cast vulgar spells during the battle, the Arrow can

watch with satisfaction as the backlash from that mage's spells turn the fight against him.

Prime Spells

False Signature
(Prime ●●● + conjunctive Arcanum)

The mage combines Prime 2 into her spell to alter the mystical appearance of the spell. The ability to change the signature of a spell, making it appear to originate from a different Arcanum, can give the caster a psychological edge during magical combat. A Forces rote cast with the arcane signature of Time can make an opponent second guess the mage's abilities and can act as a foil to countermagic (see p. 122 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Mages using Mage Sight are allowed a reflexive Wits + Occult roll to notice the true nature of a spell's Arcanum. Targets suffer a -1 penalty to this roll per point of Potency of the altered spell.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Feint

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Prime

Many mages have been wrong-footed by an Arrow through use of this spell. Some mages, anticipating a direct attack, see what they expect to see and are surprised when a Forces spell has a more subtle effect. Use of this rote can also conceal order-specific mystical secrets. It's hard to copy a rote when a mage can't be sure about the Arcanum involved.

Bodyguard's Blessing (Prime ●●●●)

The mark of a dedicated bodyguard has always been the willingness to take a bullet (or arrow or sword in earlier times) for the people placed under the bodyguard's protection. This spell allows the mage to redirect a magical attack from its intended target to the mage.

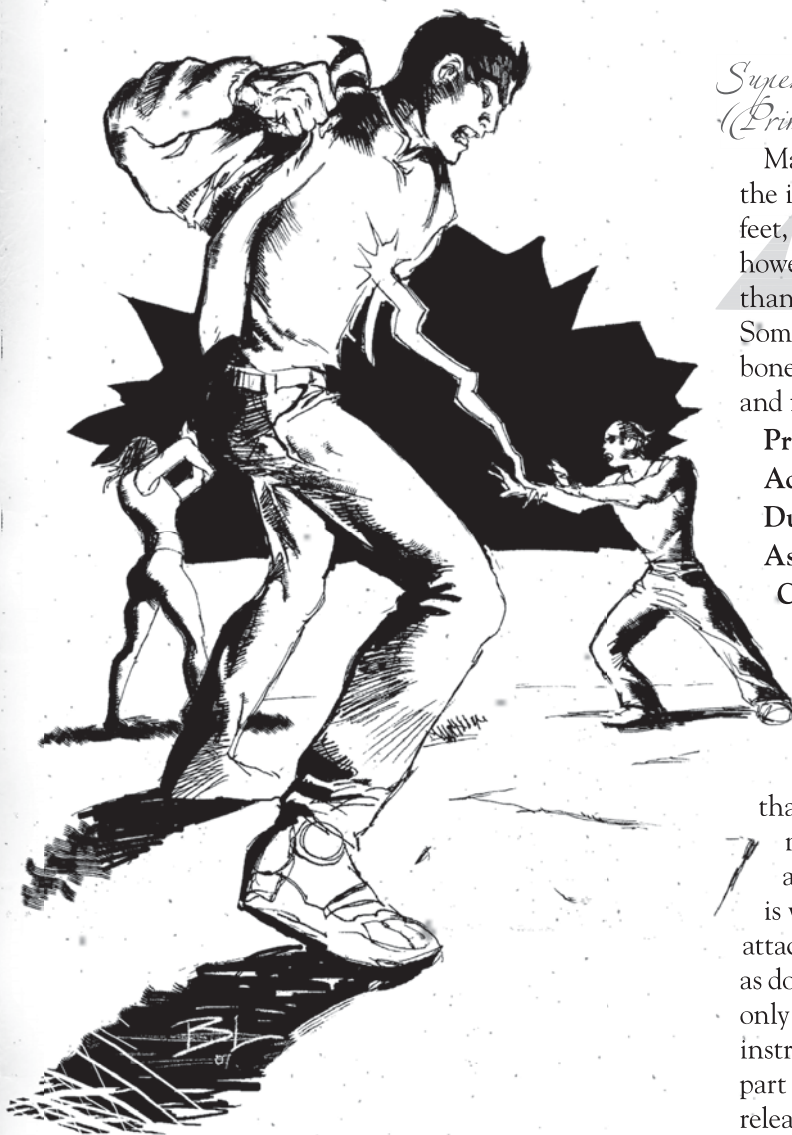
Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant and resisted; target rolls Resolve + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Transitory (one turn)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana



On the turn after this spell is cast, the next spell cast by the target is redirected to strike the caster of this spell. The mage may redirect any one spell with a Potency no higher than the number of successes gained on the casting roll.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Lightning Rod

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Prime

The tactical implications of this spell were not lost on the Arrows. Although they sometimes act in the capacity of bodyguards, the Arrows saw an opportunity to steal Shielding and healing spells from enemy mages. Timing, as well as a working knowledge of their opponent, is essential when applying the rote in this fashion. The Arrow must be able to predict how much damage their opponent is willing to take before resorting to a hasty healing or Shielding spell with a low enough Potency to be redirected.

Supernal Augmentation

(*Prime* ●●●● + *Life* ●●●● or *Matter* ●●●●)

Martial artists have demonstrated through the ages the incredible potential of ordinary weapons: hands, feet, swords, axes and bows, for example. Sometimes, however, an Arrow requires recourse to force greater than that which her armaments will normally allow. Sometimes, she needs to destroy creatures of flesh and bone (or other, less natural organisms) with rapidity and finality, and elegance be damned.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana per strike

After casting this spell on either her own body (with Life) or her weapon (with Matter), the Arrow may reflexively spend a point of Mana when making an attack to cause *that single attack* to inflict aggravated damage if successful, rather than bashing or lethal. Note that the willworker must spend this point of Mana before making the attack, and if the strike misses, the point of Mana is wasted. This spell in no way otherwise alters the attack made — equipment bonuses remain the same, as do a weapon's other qualities, if any. This spell may only be used to augment a ranged attack if the actual instrument of harm is in direct contact with some part of the willworker's body *immediately* before being released (a throwing knife or arrow, for instance, but not a bullet).

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Sword of Ruin

Dice Pool: Strength + Intimidation + Prime

Grim necessities give rise to terrible weapons. The Arrow recognizes this unfortunate reality, and this rote is seen by many as more of a burden to bear than a resource to be cherished.

Space Spells

Track (Projectile)

(*Space* ●●, or *Space* ●● + *Time* ●●)

The mage gains the ability to determine the exact trajectory of any small, moving object that passes near him. All he needs is one point on the object's path, and he can extrapolate where the object came from, where it went and every point in between.

Practice: Unveiling

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Once the spell is active, any object that's thrown, fired, dropped or otherwise propelled within the mage's sensory range is subject to the spell. Usually this means small objects, but it could even be used to trace the path of, say, a boulder lobbed at the unlucky mage from a catapult. To determine an object's path, he must have knowledge of where it was at some point during its course. A brief glimpse of the object as it whizzed past is sufficient; alternately, if he can see the object where it landed, he can extrapolate its path back to its origin even if he never saw the object in motion. By adding Time 2 to the casting, the mage can discern the trail of projectiles that moved through an area before he cast the spell. He'll still need some point along its path to work with; usually this means starting at the object's final resting place and working backwards. The spell can recreate the trail of objects that bounced or ricocheted during their travel, but can't track an entity that moves under its own power.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: From Bowstring to Target

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Space

This versatile rote can aid a warrior's mission in dozens of ways. The rote can tell him if his shot hit the target, or how far off his aim was. The rote can reveal where a sniper is concealed, or make it easier to retrieve a dropped piece of equipment. Some Arrow mages use the conjunctive form of the spell to examine and understand the angles and firing patterns of a complicated gun battle.

Interpose (Space ●●●)

During the course of defending those weaker than themselves, warriors are occasionally required to put their own bodies in harm's way, so as to spare others pain and suffering that they are ill-equipped to endure. This sacrifice is among the noblest undertaken by the career combatant, for it demonstrates the sense of love and duty that she feels toward her people.

Practice: Shielding

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Transitory

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

Upon successfully casting this spell (which need not be cast on the mage's Initiative, but which *does*

use up her action for the turn), the mage may interpose herself between any person within a number of yards equal to her Speed and an incoming attack aimed at that person. The attack is resolved against the caster, and successes on the attack roll are applied to the caster, rather than the intended target. Immediately after the attack is resolved, the caster is automatically returned to her original position, now suffering from whatever injuries she might have sustained.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Taking a Bullet

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics + Space

In the mid-18th century, a Seer of the Throne infiltrator attempted to assassinate the Hierarch of the Consilium of Königsberg with a poisoned stiletto in open court. Konrad Torvald, the Consilium's Adamant Sage, intercepted the blow, apparently by way of a spell improvised as the weapon's envenomed tip closed on the Hierarch's heart. Although Torvald died, he did so in the execution of his duties and was buried with a hero's honors. Afterward, other Arrows studied and dissected the magics their fallen brother had employed and this rote has gradually come into use as a part of the Adamantine Arrow's repertoire of bodyguarding techniques.

Repel (Space ●●● + conjunctive Arcanum)

Similar to the "Ban" spell (see p. 237 of **Mage: The Awakening**) except the mage creates a small area that moves with the caster in which the specified phenomenon may not enter.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage combines this spell with an Arcanum of appropriate level to control the phenomenon she wishes to ban (for example, Matter 2 for vapors and liquids, or Forces 3 for electricity). As long as the mage concentrates on the spell, the target of the "Repel" rote may not enter a one-yard radius "bubble" around the caster. This rote was designed to provide temporary relief from a simple phenomenon (such as falling rock, fire or hail). Choosing a more complex phenomenon (cars, bears, your creepy Uncle Jimmy) can impose up to a -3 penalty to the casting roll depending on specificity of the target phenomenon. Uncle Jimmy is pretty specific and would result in a -1 penalty, while

choosing cars is a broader category resulting in a -3 penalty. Repel will protect you from only one type of phenomenon at a time.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Mantlet

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult + Space

Members of the Adamantine Arrow frequently use this spell as a means of safely advancing while under fire from mundane ranged weaponry. Bullets, arrows and rocks are easily deflected by this spell as the warrior advances on foot. Captured enemies have been reported as saying they found it disheartening to fire a full clip from an automatic weapon at a target with no effect.

Phased Strike
(Space ●●●●●+
Matter ●●●●●,
or ●●●●●)

Armor of one sort or another is likely almost as old as the human desire to harm one another with weaponry. Indeed, some forms of armor are so effective that they force innovations in the science of armed aggression. Arrows have long contended with various sorts of physical protection, and worked at means of circumventing them. While this spell requires a considerable degree of Awakened prowess, Phased Strike ranks among the more elegant solutions to the age-old problem.

Practice: Unmaking

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana per strike

Upon casting this spell, the Arrow is capable of simply disregarding an enemy's physical armor (that is, armor not granted by a spell of the Practice of

Shielding or other directly supernatural form of protection, upon which this spell has no effect), irrespective of its type, provided he himself is wielding a weapon made of inert matter — the weapon simply passes through the armor as though it wasn't there. This is *not* an armor-piercing effect. If

both the weapon and the armor in question are made of mundane, non-precious materials,

Matter 3 is used in the casting of the spell. If the weapon and/or armor in question are made of mundane

precious materials, Matter

4 is instead used. And, if

the weapon and/or armor

in question are made of

extraordinary materials,

Matter 5 is used.

Note that, for the purposes of this

spell, a suit of armor that is also an

Enhanced or Imbued Item defaults

to whatever sort of material of

which it is actually composed, while an

Artifact — being of Supernal origin

— counts as extraordinary material.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Subtle Blade

Dice Pool: Strength + Weaponry + Space

The story is told among the mages of the Adamantine Arrow that the old master, Kamimori, asked of his two youthful apprentices

how it is that the indomitable will overcomes

the impenetrable guard. Fifty years later,

they returned to him with their responses.

No records now exist regarding the reply of

Kusanagi, a Perfected Adept and the elder of

the two. As for Tsukiyomi, the *onikaze* swordsman,

this rote was his answer.

Spirit Spells

Cowing the Spirit (Spirit ●●)

A spirit resides within most things, animate or inanimate, most of which sleep soundly, only vaguely understanding what transpires around them. With rudimentary training in the mystic arts of the Shadow, a willworker can encourage such an entity to stir for just a moment, aiding in the task for which the instrument that houses the spirit was crafted. With slightly greater skill, one might frighten such a spirit away from its appointed duty, turning an otherwise trustworthy piece of equipment astray.

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant

Duration: Transitory

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Each success of Potency assigned to this spell reduces an item's equipment bonus by one, to a minimum of zero. All other qualities of the item, however, remain unaffected.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Turning Aside the Shadow

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Spirit

When confronted by this rote, even the stoutest of blades and most accurate of guns fail. Willworkers of the Adamantine Arrow also use this magic to foil items of a less martial nature, aware that Existence Is War, and that all conflicts — regardless of their nature — are battlefields of a sort: lock picks, first aid kits, computers or any other sort of mundane equipment can be rendered virtually useless.

Read Spirit (Spirit ●●)

Every spirit has a ban that prohibits the spirit from certain types of behavior or activities (see p. 320 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Often the key to dealing with a difficult spirit is to find out what its ban is; but attempting to ascertain a spirit's ban isn't without drawbacks. Most spirits are very sensitive about their bans, and are likely to react negatively if they sense a mage snooping around trying to ferret out their secrets.

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resistance reflexively

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

As spirits become more powerful, their bans become more complex and difficult to read. When a mage attempts Read Spirit, the Potency of the casting must exceed the Rank of the spirit in order for any useful information to be learned. Conversely, the more Potent the spell, the more likely it is the spirit will notice the casting. If the spell reaches Potency 3 or more, the spirit is allowed a reflexive Finesse roll, requiring a simple success to sense the attempt to read it. A spirit's reaction to such an intrusive act varies from spirit to spirit, but is unlikely to be viewed in a positive manner.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Sense Ban

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Spirit

Enemies of spirit can rarely be defeated by spell or blade alone. Simply disincorporating a spirit doesn't guarantee that it won't return. The surest weapon against a spirit is knowledge of its ban. With knowledge of a ban, the mage gains strength in either combating or negotiating with the spirit. Members of the Adamantine Arrow who regularly employ this rote believe it's better to bargain with an angry spirit than go unarmed into a potentially dangerous situation.

Spirit Steed (Spirit ●●● or Spirit ●●● + Space ●● + Fate ●●)

This spell enables a mage to form a pact with a spirit, similar to that created by the Spirit 3 spell "Familiar Pact," but more limited in scope. In this case, a large (Size 7) spirit agrees to serve as the mage's steed for the Duration of the spell, bearing her wherever she needs to go.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended; see below for target number

Duration: Prolonged

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

Before casting this spell, the mage must locate or summon an appropriate Twilight spirit, and she must be able to see, touch and communicate with it (usually through the use of other Spirit spells). In most cases, the mage will require a spirit that can manifest in an embodied form to perform its service (typically as a horse, though a camel, a dolphin or even a motorcycle might be more appropriate in some cases). To acquire the service of an embodied spirit, the mage must achieve four successes. If there's no need for the spirit to be capable of manifesting — if, for instance, the mage is capable of assuming a Twilight state — the target number is reduced to three. Embodied spirits will not lose Essence during the Duration of the spell; they typically move at a speed appropriate for their form, but are not limited by fatigue, hunger, fear of predators, etc. The speed of a spirit in Twilight will depend on its type; see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 317–318. A wise mage carefully considers the type of spirit she needs when making her initial search or summons, knowing that the more specific traits she seeks, the harder it may be to find a suitable steed. A spirit that serves once may tell the mage its name, if it's been well treated and/or rewarded, making it easier to find for future castings of this spell.

The spell can be cast in conjunction with Fate 2 and Space 2, in which case the spirit's service is deferred

until some specific circumstance occurs — typically, when the mage calls out for the spirit — at which point it will arrive on the scene within one turn. This enables the caster to make a quick getaway without needing an extended casing.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Sleipnir's Get

Dice Pool: Manipulate + Socialize + Spirit

Some of the order's tall tales and legends describe bold warriors who travel into battle on the back of fantastic spiritual allies. Daring rescues, challenging quests or fast exits are all made easier with the help of this rote.

Time Spells

Rapid Fire (Time ●●● + Forces ●● + Life ●● + Matter ●●)

Put simply, the ability to empty more lead into an enemy is almost always preferable to less. But not everyone has access to automatic weaponry or, for that matter, the training or even the desire to make use of such instruments. This is a spell for those who wish to employ the axiom that “too much is never enough,” without having to tote submachine guns everywhere they go.

Practice: Weaving

Action: Instant

Duration: Transitory

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana per attack

Upon successfully casting this spell, the mage may make use of the various autofire options (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 160–161), with any sort of ranged weapon (not a ranged spell, but only a ranged *weapon* — even an enchanted one); even those that do not normally allow for such. In fact, the mage *can*, if he so wishes, use autofire with weapons that aren't even firearms (and using another Skill, such as Athletics, if appropriate), such as bows or throwing hatchets. The mage's hands move in a blur almost too swift to follow, and the projectiles fly faster than wind resistance and the constraints of physics should allow. Note that the mage must release three projectiles (from a single weapon, in the case of guns, bows, slings and the like) to use the first stage of autofire, 10 for the second stage and 20 for the third (meaning that the constraint of how many projectiles he has on hand may limit his options). Also note that a character with the Gunslinger Merit may use autofire with both of

his pistols while under the effects of this spell if he so wishes, provided that he has the Mana to spend on both attacks.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Pissing Metal

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics + Time

No one is really sure where this rote came from, or who it was that first conceived of it. Some Arrows who are tight with certain mystagogues claim that sparse records exist of an Atlantean diaspora-era archer named Sharmach-il having bent the tides of time to cast dozens of arrows at his enemies in the blink of an eye. Others say that the rote has its origins in a 19th-century Arrow by the shadow name of Six-Gun Kate. Still others maintain that it was a veteran of the Second World War, simply called Sarge, who invented the rote. In the end, though, while they might dispute the circumstances of its genesis, few argue with the magic's effectiveness.

Duplicate (Time ●●●●●)

The mage prepares Time to repeat itself, allowing him to duplicate the results of a single action as if he had performed that action exactly the same way two times.

Practice: Making

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana during casting; 1 Mana on activation

The mage casts the spell on himself, storing it for later use (this storage counts against the mage's Spell Tolerance). Casting the spell requires the expenditure of one Mana and a single success on the casting roll. This spell may have its Duration increased to one day by spending an additional Mana during the casting. Only one instance of Duplicate may exist on a mage at any time.

Activating the stored spell is a reflexive action that costs one Mana. Once the spell is active, the next instant action performed by the mage will be doubled as though the mage had performed the action twice. Any expenditure required by the repeated action *must* be paid for twice, and any penalties accrued by that action will be inflicted twice.

Example: An Adamantine Arrow decides to attack his enemy with the “Telekinetic Strike” rote (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 170) and double the effectiveness of the spell by activating Duplicate. The Arrow gains four successes on his casting roll for Telekinetic Strike and succeeds at the aiming check to hit his target. In the

span of one turn, the Arrow's target receives eight levels of bashing damage from the duplicated "Telekinetic Strike" spell. If the Arrow had decided to change the damage to lethal, he would have been required to spend three Mana this turn (one for each casting of Telekinetic Strike and one Mana for activating Duplicate). The total number of Paradox dice rolled for the doubled casting of Telekinetic Strike would be a minimum of three (Gnosis 3 required to spend three Mana a turn generates a base pool of two dice, plus an additional die from the successive casting of a vulgar spell in the same scene).

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Multiplicity

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult + Time

The origins of this rote are dubious at best. Legend states this rote was developed by a warrior-mage Exarch shortly before his ascension to the Realms Supernal via the Celestial Ladder. Regardless of the rote's origin, the obvious advantages of this spell led to its further development by the Adamantine Arrow. The ability to increase damage done versus time spent is of interest to any warrior.

Artifacts and Relics of the Dragon's Talon

Myth and legend overflow with the stories of arms, armor and other iconic objects borne by the great heroes of yore, and the legendry of the Adamantine Arrow is no different. It is a high honor to be entrusted with such an item, whether of Supernal artifice or the result of modern Awakened craft.

It is not, officially, the practice of the Adamantine Arrow as a whole to divvy up enchanted objects by their distinctions as Artifact, Imbued Item and the like. Instead, the party line is that the order tends to view *all* such ensorcelled items as resources of inherent value equal to the sum of their magics and their mundane capabilities. This is, however, the theory and not quite the practice. It is simply inaccurate to say that no sort of prestige is conferred within the order upon one who wields a prized Artifact — just as part of Arthur's glory came from drawing Excalibur from the stone, so, too, do potent armaments of the ancient days serve to bestow a certain sense of gravity upon their owners. Despite their best intentions to the contrary, many Arrows tend to be people of epic sensibilities, and there is a marked difference between a spear wrought of Arcadian silver and a Special Forces knife enchanted by one's mentor. But

whether one carries a sword forged two weeks ago or one shaped by the hands of Masamune is far less relevant than what one *does* with the weapon when the battle is joined. Arrows must balance their veneration for the magnificence of their paragons of old with a sense of practicality for the true capabilities of the weapons they carry, the protections that they wear and the other devices intended to aid Arrows in their appointed duties.

The Adamantine Arrow makes no claim to great stockpiles of mystic weapons or the like. While it is true that some potent items are protected, and even hidden, this is, first and foremost, because of their potential usefulness and the fact that a wise warrior never reveals what is in her hand until she is poised to seize the greatest possible advantage. These armaments are meant to be *used*, and the willworkers of the Adamantine Arrow do not — for the most part, anyway — hesitate to place these weapons upon the field when necessary. While this has resulted more than once in the destruction of a valuable resource, Arrows know that it is better by far to sacrifice a precious relic and win the field than to hoard the weapon in silence and fail in one's oaths to defend the Awakened of the other four orders. More contentious is the loss of such objects to enemy forces by way of theft, but most Arrows would rather lose a thing and save a *person*, as opposed to the other way around.

Arrows are sometimes known to take especially perilous Artifacts and other such enchanted objects away from other Awakened, even members of other orders — particularly if those items have martial applications. Such Arrows reason that weapons are better served in the hands of soldiers, who understand their usage and the terrible price that comes with taking up arms in the course of Awakened service. Naturally, there are those members of the order who attempt to thinly disguise their avarice behind a veneer of "warrior's privilege," but many of the Arrows who claim such treasures from others sincerely *do* believe that powerful armaments rightly belong to the heirs of the Dragon's Talon, by virtue of heritage and expertise. After all, one doesn't allow a civilian to own a tank: he has neither earned the right to do so nor received the training necessary to do so safely, and there are certainly mystic relics out there more potentially dangerous than any tank.

An Arrow entrusted with an enchanted item of whatever sort is typically expected to keep it clean and in good working order, such that it remains perfectly

functional and might be displayed with pride. She is tasked with considering all of its possible combat applications and reporting on these developments to superiors within the order. Of course, exceptions to these generalities exist, such as items claimed in secrecy or those that must not, for security purposes, be openly known to exist, but the default assumption within the Adamantine Arrow is that a member of the order will maintain her enchanted items with the same sort of care and precision that modern soldiers are expected to demonstrate toward their weapons and other gear.

*The Adamant Banner (Artifact
Enhanced Item)* ●●●●●●

Durability 7, Size 5, Structure 12

Mana Capacity: Maximum 12

Believed to be a relic of the Dragon's Talon itself, the Adamant Banner is a long, rectangular war banner, torn and tattered, muddled and bloodstained. It was once white, with the glyph of the Dragon's Talon blazoned upon it in blood-red thread. The sigil remains as dark and vibrant as the day it was sewn, though the white cloth around the sigil is a patchwork of a wide variety of overlapping shades of off-white, brown and gray stains. The Banner is said to be watched over by an extremely formidable cabal of Masters, all former Adamant Sages, who are sworn to defend the Artifact against all of the Adamantine Arrow's enemies, even at the cost of their own lives. One — or perhaps a recent predecessor — enchanted the ancient and fraying Artifact so as to keep it from further harm.

When raised on high, atop a banner pole, to a height of no less than 15 feet (necessitating the full carrying capacity of any save the strongest mage), the Adamant Banner provides the following benefits to all those willingly under the command of a righteous Arrow: Life 3 "Honing the Form" for Stamina and Mind 2 "Emotional Urging," creating feelings of confidence, heroism and the rightfulness of one's cause. Of course, what constitutes a "righteous Arrow" (by the estimation of the Adamant Banner's creators, anyway) is uncertain, and treatises have been written within the order upon the subject. During some battles at which the Banner was unveiled by hated generals fighting for unpopular causes, its magics spurred those under the Adamantine Arrow's command to victory, while well-loved commanders in the pursuit of what all involved believe to be a

A Hero's Burial

Despite the order's drive to put aside sentimentality in the face of unpleasant realities, the Adamantine Arrow is an idealistic warrior culture, and there is a certain romance to that. When an Arrow falls in the fullness of his glory, surrounded by enemies and having almost single-handedly saved the Consilium, many of his fellow Arrows desire to give him something more than a modest plot in the local burial yard. Indeed, if it can all be afforded by the local Adamantine Arrow, such heroes are often interred with honor, occasionally with their enchanted items. Some Arrows' spiritual beliefs say that these objects will symbolically aid the soul of the fallen in its journey back toward the Supernal, while others simply believe that there is a certain sort of poetry to dying with sword in hand and then being laid to rest with that old friend by one's side.

Strange quirks of fortune have sometimes led a young Arrow to such a tomb in her hour of need — even one lost to antiquity, now remembered by no living willworker. Such a discovery is often hailed within the Adamantine Arrow as the mark of a heroic destiny, and the tacit passing on of the item in question on the part of the departed Arrow to a worthy heir. While it is true that there are those senior Arrows who, for whatever reason (be it the inability to get over the death of a beloved friend, a near-religious esteem for the deceased Arrow or even simple greed) will take away (and perhaps try to keep) the object, many older members of the order respect this unspoken rule as something similar to the execution of a posthumous "will." Finding such an item, however, usually conveys with it an expectation of greatness in keeping with the legend of the one originally lain to rest with it.

just cause occasionally found that its magics could not be invoked.

Several legends surround the Adamant Banner and its future role in the order, as well as in the wider destiny of the Awakened as a whole. Some Arrows believe that the Banner will serve as the rallying point for the heirs to Atlantis during some apocalyptic battle, while others maintain that the Banner will show the



way back to the Supernal, and still others cleave to different tales of the ultimate fate of the Banner and those who march under it.

The Aegis (Artifact ●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 3, Structure 8

Mana Capacity: Maximum 11

Crafted in a concave circular shape, of what appears to be a pearlescent silver-white metal of unknown nature and rimmed in glyphs of a lost dialect of the High Speech, the so-called Aegis is a shield of presumably Atlantean origin. The inner straps of the shield are of a thick black substance that looks like leather and feels like rough silk. No scratch mars the Artifact's surface, despite millennia of use. As last anyone knew, the Aegis was held in a Consilium politically

dominated by the Adamantine Arrow, somewhere in Macedonia, though no word of the Aegis has been heard in over a century.

When taken in hand by a mage and held in a manner proper for a shield (in this case, a shield strikingly similar in design to the aspis of the Greek hoplites), the Aegis grants the contingent Prime 4 effect "Supernal Dispellation," activated by hostile incoming magic. The spell in question must, in whole or in part, *directly* target the shield's wielder: a mystic psychic compulsion for the wielder to drop her weapons in the heat of battle counts, as does a burst of flame that will engulf the wielder and three other people, but a boulder created out of thin air over the wielder's head will not be dispelled.

Black Beauty (Artifact, ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 7, Structure 11

Mana Capacity: Maximum 13

This Artifact appears to be a vintage 1928-era Indian Scout motorcycle, painted black instead of the model's traditional red, somewhat dinged and dented but seemingly in good condition. Firing the motorcycle's engine and taking it for a spin will quickly reveal that the bike is in fact in perfect working order, and that it's as fast almost any contemporary cycle could hope to be (Acceleration 44, Safe Speed 117, Max Speed 279, Handling 5). But the Beauty's true magic lies in the three Spirit spells that the motorcycle hosts. While sitting on the bike, the rider can choose to activate Spirit 1 "Spirit Tongue," allowing communication with any spirit in sensory range. Secondly, bike and rider are protected by a persistent "Numinous Shield" (Spirit 3). Finally, Black Beauty is imbued with the "Road Master" spell (Spirit 4), allowing the cycle and its rider to cross the Gauntlet and enter the Shadow Realm (spend 1 Mana, roll Gnosis + Spirit 3, modified by the local Gauntlet strength). Black Beauty was reportedly first ridden by an Arrow mage in North Africa in 1931, allowing him to escape pursuit by a trio of Scelesti and then return with spiritual allies. Other stories describe how the Beauty helped mages pursue enemies into the Shadow Realm, acquire and deliver critical knowledge provided by spirits or undertake epic quests across the Gauntlet. Such tales always being with the bike appearing unbidden to a mage in need, and end with the rider going on one last journey from which he never returns.

Bottled Aether (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: 12

This Artifact was created in the Realm of Aether, capturing a portion of the eternal storms of that Supernal Realm within a crystal bottle. The Artifact shines with constant electric flashes from inside the bottle and carries with it the faint smell of ozone. Bottled Aether is activated by spending one Mana and opening the bottle. With a successful Gnosis + Forces roll by the user, the Artifact reproduces the Forces 4 spell “Change Weather” (see p. 172 of **Mage: The Awakening**) to call forth a thunderstorm. During the storm, the mage may activate the second power of the Artifact by holding it aloft and rolling Gnosis + Forces to simulate the Forces 3 spell “Call Lightning” (see p. 168 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The owner of Bottled Aether may also use the “Call Lightning” power of the Artifact during a normal thunderstorm, but must spend one Mana to do so.

The Adamantine Arrow likes to use Artifacts such as Bottled Aether when they need to make a statement. Sometimes just defeating an enemy isn't enough. Showcasing the power of the order reminds the Awakened community it isn't a good idea to cross the Arrows.

Clockwork Heart (Artifact ●●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 1, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: Maximum 12

The fall of a true hero is always a terrible loss for the world. The lore of the Adamantine Arrow tells of many such crushing blows, and the tearful goodbyes offered to those who died glorious and noble deaths. But, for some, death was not the end. Indeed, a rare few were gifted — or perhaps cursed — with another chance at life.

The Clockwork Heart takes the shape of its namesake, looking every bit like a mechanical human heart crafted of steel, brass, gold, silver, copper and glass. Every minuscule mechanism moves perpetually according to a design as ancient as it is unfathomable by modern science or willwork. If installed within the chest of a person dead for no more than a number of minutes equal to his Stamina (requiring his own heart to be replaced), the Clockwork Heart “restarts” the body without deleterious consequences and the individual benefits from a persistent Life 5 “Regeneration” effect.

So long as the Heart remains installed in its host, he cannot truly age or die, due to supplementary Master-level Death Arcanum magics: the body can “perish,” only to get back up again when the ongoing process of regeneration first restores a single box of Health.

Two downsides, one obvious and one less so, accompany the Heart. The first, and more apparent of the two, is that *the recipient of the Heart cannot die* while it remains within him. No matter what kind of suffering he might endure, he will “die,” only to get back up — quite possibly in time for further torment, unless someone thinks to (or wishes to) remove the Artifact from his body. Secondly, the great heroes that the Adamantine Arrow has saved from death with this Artifact tend to fall into ignominy and even disgrace after receiving this new lease on life. Fate Arcanum perceptions reveal no particular “curse” on the Artifact, but the fact remains that records are sparse regarding any Arrows who go on to do anything worthwhile after being restored to life by this strange device, and presumably, these diminished paragons find a way to end their meandering existences, or else have them ended by circumstance. Presently, the location of the Clockwork Heart is unknown, though it was last believed to be in France during the Second World War.

The Dragon's Eye (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 0, Structure 5)

This small, perfectly spherical stone shifts in color between the deepest shades of green, blue and purple, depending upon how the light strikes it, and seems to catch and hold any light shed upon the stone for just an instant longer than it should. When placed within the empty eye socket of a willworker, the stone bonds with living tissues, becoming, effectively, a new eye for the mage.

The host of the Dragon's Eye benefits from a persistent “Sharpshooter's Eye” effect (both the Life and Matter variants), for as long as the stone is grafted within the mage's eye socket. The willworker can “lock on” to just about anything within his field of vision, though he remains blind in one eye (the Dragon's Eye, to be precise) to any phenomenon governed by the Arcanum of Forces. Effectively, he can perceive the way in which those energies interact with the organic and inorganic patterns around him, but must look through his other, natural, eye in order to actually see them.

The Dragon's Eye may or may not be owned at present by an Arrow operating out of Tokyo. Some suspect

that the stone he possesses is a fraud, however, and that the Artifact is instead currently the property of a Seer of the Throne elsewhere in the world.

Ferryman's Flask (Artifact ●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: 11

It is said among some Arrows that this Artifact made the rounds through the order as a simple flask for mundane spirits for quite some time: some accounts say that decades passed with the Ferryman's Flask handed down from mentor to student, while others say that it was centuries. Whatever the case, it is uncertain as to who first thought to place sanctified oil within the Flask, or why. Regardless, though, it was at this time that the Flask's true abilities manifested. Since that time, the plain round Flask, seemingly crafted of bronze and inlaid with elaborate geometric patterns of ivory, has been seen in the hands of a number of different Arrows, all of whom had interaction, at one point or another, with the unquiet dead.

When filled with fragrant oil of a type suitable for anointing a holy person — or the sacred dead — the Flask's owner can pour out some of the oil on his hands to benefit from a contingent Death 2 "Touch of the Grave" effect, enabling him to interact with objects in Twilight. One Arrow is said to have scaled a spectral ladder to safety through the use of the Ferryman's Flask, while another used it to draw a knife out of the ghostly realm with which to defend herself from a Tremere lich intent on harvesting her soul. As to the current whereabouts of the Flask, few can speak with certainty, though rumor places it somewhere in the general area of Louisiana, or perhaps in New England.

Gabriel's Horn (Artifact, ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 1, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: Maximum 12

Some say this Stygian Artifact — a simple brass bugle coated with a patina of dirt and grime — is not meant to be used until an apocalyptic final clash between good and evil, when the Horn's power will be magnified to call forth an entire army of walking corpses. Until then, each sounding of the Horn activates its imbued "Quicken Corpse" spell (Death 3). One success on a roll of Gnosis + Death 3 allows a single corpse to be animated; the user may apply extra success to strengthen his control over the zombie, or spend them to raise the

creature's Physical traits on a one-for-one basis. For an Arrow in desperate need of foot soldiers or cannon fodder, this ability makes the Horn useful enough. However, loremasters of the order know that the Horn has another feature. Playing the proper sequence of notes will activate the Death 5 spell "Summon the Dead," allowing the user to call forth a ghost from the Underworld. The musical sequence required is a closely held secret among the Arrows, who prefer to reserve for themselves the capability of consulting with their most renowned long-dead warriors and heroes.

Gravity Well (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: Maximum 11

This Artifact takes the form of a simple black marble that is much heavier than it looks. Mage Sight reveals the magic of Forces and echoes of Stygia in its dark



sheen. The Gravity Well simulates a localized, reverse version of the Forces 5 spell “Control Gravity” (see p. 176 of **Mage: The Awakening**). To activate the Artifact, the user must hold it, point at a target and spend one Mana. For one turn, the indicated target becomes the new source of gravity for anything within a two-yard radius for each success on a Gnosis + Forces roll. Objects (or people) can damage the target by “falling” on it (see p. 138 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Cautious users of Gravity Well will make sure to place themselves and their friends out of potential range. Adamantine Arrow owners of this Artifact have delighted in using this power against enemies who attempt to hide in places such as auto repair shops, or conceal themselves behind heavy, but mobile, objects.

The Hound's Manacle (Artifact ●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 1, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: Maximum 11

“Live to fight another day” — words of wisdom from those experienced in the arts of war. However, it is often the duty of the soldier to ensure that the enemy *does not* survive the engagement, no matter how she might try to flee the field. The Hound's Manacle, of which six are still known to exist, is an Artifact specifically designed to thwart at least one avenue of a fleeing foe's escape. By rapping any metal object three times against the surface of the Hound's Manacle in rapid succession, its wearer can activate a Space 2 “Follow Through” effect, targeting any recent spatial distortion, such as those left behind by teleporting mages.

The six Hound's Manacles in the Fallen World have been deliberately scattered amongst different Arrows. There were once nine of the Artifacts, but strangely coordinated Seer of the Throne attacks in the late 1980s resulted in the destruction of three of them. The motivation for the attacks was never discovered, and none of the Seer agents were captured. The Manacles — the extant ones and the destroyed ones — are all identical in appearance: a simple band of what appears to be hinged rough iron, which clamps into place on a mage's wrist with two simple catches that are, nevertheless, quite secure when snapped into place.

Perpetual Motion Machine (Artifact ●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: 11

The Perpetual Motion Machine is a sphere about the size of a tennis ball, cut from onyx with silver inlaid

Atlantean runes covering the surface. Studies of the Artifact suggest that it was made by the Atlantean exiles shortly after the First Mage War. The Pockets of Time created by the Artifact would have served the Talons of the Dragon well in their battle for survival after exile.

When activated by spending one Mana, the Artifact rises from its owner's hand and floats in mid-air, spinning at a high rate of speed. Once active, the Artifact reproduces a modified version of the Time 4 spell “Temporal Pocket” (see p. 265 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Each success on a Gnosis + Time roll equals one turn in the Pocket for the single turn that passes outside the Pocket (maximum of five turns). For example, with four successes on the Gnosis + Time roll, the user spends four turns inside the Pocket for the one turn that passes outside the Pocket.

While the user is under the effect of the spell, the sphere seems to spin very slowly, picking up speed as the Duration of the spell nears its end.

Queen Sorra's Jewelry (Artifact ●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: Maximum 12

There are six known pieces of Queen Sorra's Jewelry, each an Artifact in its own right, but only by using two or more pieces in conjunction does a mage gain any great benefit from owning one. Each piece of the Jewelry is made from gold with an opal setting and is simple, yet elegant, in design. Known pieces of the set include a pair of small hoop earrings, a necklace, a pair of rings and a barrette. Awakened scholars who have studied the Jewelry suspect they were crafted in Arcadia, but have been unable to find any mention of a Queen Sorra in various histories or grimoires to explain the name of the set. Some of these scholars theorize that Queen Sorra may not have been a mortal, Sleeper or Awakened ruler, but rather one of the mysterious inhabitants of Arcadia itself. These scholars also believe the Jewelry might manifest completely different powers in the Realm of Enchantments.

When two or more allied mages wearing pieces of Queen Sorra's Jewelry cast spells within sensory range of each other, any spell cast with an area effect gains the Fate 2 effect “Target Exemption” (see p. 154 of **Mage: The Awakening**) with relation to an ally also wearing a piece of the set. Spells affected by the Jewelry do not count as Combined Spells, and they do not suffer the -2 penalty for exempting a specific target. Jewelry owners may choose not to exempt themselves from an

area effect spell (cast by a similarly equipped ally) as a reflexive action by spending one Mana.

Example: Three Jewelry-owning cabal members are fighting multiple enemies in a small room. One of the cabal mages casts the spell "Control Gravity" (see p. 176 of **Mage: The Awakening**) and gains four successes on his casting roll. Normally, anyone caught within a eight-yard radius would be subject to the effects of the spell, but since all the mages present are wearing pieces of Queen Sorra's Jewelry, none of the mage's friends are affected, only his enemies.

The benefits for an Adamantine Arrow strike team wearing pieces of Queen Sorra's Jewelry are obvious. The mages needn't worry about harming their fellow Arrows with area effect spells, granting the team a wider variety of options.

Quicksilver Spear (Artifact ●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 4, Structure 9

Mana Capacity: Maximum 13

This Artifact is a silver spear, with thorn-like protrusions near the tip, which appears to have been made from the branch of a silver tree. Each time the Spear is used to kill an enemy in single combat, a new thorn appears near the tip.

Believed to have been made in Arcadia, the Spear carries the magic of Time and grants its wielder a persistent effect of +3 Defense, +2 Initiative and doubles his base Speed. Due to the thorns near the tip, wounds caused by the Spear (a 3L weapon) are exceptionally painful, and tend to bleed longer than normal. For every wound taken from the Spear, the target must make a reflexive Stamina roll. If no successes are gained on the roll, the target suffers two bashing levels of continual damage (see p. 167 the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) for three turns.

Rumors about the Spear whisper that if it is ever used in an act of treachery, a thorn vanishes from the Artifact, imbedding itself in its wielder's flesh. The wound caused by the thorn never heals, and the unworthy owner soon sickens and suffers a slow death by blood loss.

The Quicksilver Spear is an Artifact kept by the Adamantine Arrow, and is loaned out to the order's bravest and most loyal members. Many oaths have been sworn on the haft of the Spear, and it is a matter of pride to the order that more thorns have appeared than have vanished while the Spear has been in their possession.

Rays of Dawn (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 7)

Mana Capacity: Maximum 11

Wrought of dozens of thin layers of ivory-white wood and gray-black horn, and carved with whirling patterns of surpassing complexity and beauty, Rays of Dawn is a large recurve longbow. It has been strung and restrung over the years, though the bow itself, and not its string, is what is of value to the Adamantine Arrow. The Artifact was stolen only recently from its owner, an Arrow in California, and her entire cabal murdered by what was believed to be Scelesti and their demonic servants. The current whereabouts of Rays of Dawn is unknown.

When drawn, the bow automatically expends a point of Mana in the creation of a shaft of solid sunlight (decidedly a vulgar spell effect). When loosed, this beam of light inflicts aggravated damage on anything successfully struck by it (requiring a Dexterity + Firearms or Athletics roll, as normal). The bow has an equipment bonus of +4 and ranges of 50/100/200.

Shadow and Light (Artifact ●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 4, Structure 9

Mana Capacity: Maximum 13

Some weapons are too awful to be loosed freely upon the battlefield: too grim and nightmarish to have a place within the armory of the upright warrior. Shadow and Light is just such an instrument, believed to have been torn from the heart of some hell alien. According to the Adamantine Arrow's lore, the Artifact has been wielded by some of the most despicable villains in the order's long history. At present, Shadow and Light is believed to be locked in a vault in a fortified Mysterium Athenaeum somewhere in the Swiss Alps, though that may simply be misdirection on the part of the Arrows who know of the weapon's existence.

In appearance, Shadow and Light is a long, slender-bladed sword of an unknown whitish-gold metal. It reflects everything with a perfect metallic sheen, though those who look deeply into their reflections note that the eyes of the mirrored images appear dead and soulless. Shadow and Light's blade curves lightly, to a delicate point, and its hilt is wrapped in matte black wire, while the pommel is small and spherical and of the same substance as the blade. There is no guard.

Upon successfully striking a subject, Shadow and Light automatically activates a contingent effect similar to Devouring the Living, though it works on spirits and ghosts, *as well as* living things. In the case of ephemeral beings, each level of damage inflicted by the Artifact's effect destroys a point of the entity's Essence *in addition* to inflicting further damage to its Corpus. Shadow and Light inflicts aggravated damage and conveys an equipment bonus of +5. The wielder of the weapon decides whether to draw Willpower or Mana with each strike. Note that the use of Shadow and Light can easily constitute a sin against the tenets of Wisdom. When the weapon's powers are successfully used, a cacophony of unearthly screams emanates from the Artifact.

Shard of the Mountain (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 4, Structure 9

Mana Capacity: Maximum 11

This great ax appears to be crudely carved from a single piece of some kind of iridescent stone of pale pink and deep indigo, flecked with ample veins of sparkling white. The ax is massive and heavy (requiring a Strength of at least 5 to properly wield), and its edge is as keen as that of a newly-chipped sliver of obsidian. The weapon was believed lost in battle somewhere in southwestern Asia, or perhaps in the Indian subcontinent, though rumors of its reemergence in the industrialized West have circulated among some younger Arrows, as (semi-)reliable accounts of its appearance are whispered between willworkers.

The Shard of the Mountain has but a single known power, though that in and of itself is incredibly potent. By intoning the name of one's enemy (real name, shadow name or any other moniker by which the individual identifies herself) when swinging the axe at her, its wielder can activate a contingent Fate 5 "Forge Doom" effect, naming the Shard of the Mountain as her doom. Each such attack requires the expenditure of a point of Mana.

It is worth noting that no one who ever possessed this Artifact died of natural causes, and almost all perished within a few years of acquiring it. While indisputably a magnificent weapon, the use of the Shard of the Mountain obviously attracts all the wrong sort of attention from the foes of the Adamantine Arrow, and there are those older Arrows who wonder if it might not be better were the stories to be lies, and the Artifact be well and truly lost.

The Star of Athichi (Artifact ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 9, Size 1, Structure 10

Mana Capacity: Maximum 16

This Artifact is a nine-pointed star made from what appears to be old, pitted iron. About the size of an soda can, the Star has a cylindrical opening in its base to allow it to act as the headpiece to a staff. The Star emits a low humming noise and is deathly cold when touched with bare skin. If tapped with a hammer, the Star makes a dull ringing sound, indicating the Star is hollow.

The Star is a soul stone (see p. 277 of **Mage: The Awakening**) supposedly made by a Moros mage from ancient Atlantis with the shadow name of Athichi. The stories about Athichi, supplied by the Mysterium, say he was a powerful and arrogant mage. Athichi enchanted his soul stone with powerful spells, allowing him to increase his mystical energies by simply planting his staff in the ground and activating its power.

Although Athichi had pulled the soul stone from the essence of his own being, he was unwilling to allow it to limit his potential, so he devised a method of powering the stone without having to sacrifice his magical energy. Athichi wove a version of the "Soul Jar" rote (see p. 137 of **Mage: The Awakening**) into the Star that allowed him to reclaim his essence from the soul stone by using the energy from stolen souls to power the Artifact. To his delight, Athichi discovered the more souls he fed into the Star the more powerful it became, allowing him access to more powerful magic than he had ever wielded before. The accumulated energy of the souls devoured developed into new powers for the Artifact, including, the stories say, the power of immortality.

As the power and pride of Atlantis grew, so grew the power and pride of immortal Athichi. Students came to study and learn from the great mage, and with them, Athichi formed his first cabal. All was well until rumors about the true source of his power began to plague Athichi. Eventually, Athichi found himself confronted by angry mages who called for his execution or exile from the Awakened City. Having no intention of giving up either his life or his citizenship, Athichi and his dark cabal worked behind the scenes, ramping up the level of tension between the faction of mages calling for balance and the faction of mages who saw themselves becoming as gods. When war finally exploded across Atlantis, Athichi and his

cabal stood among the victorious mages, free to work their powerful magic without interference.

The remaining mages of Atlantis turned their minds as one toward the heavens, and cast a terrible spell that tore a direct path to the Realms Supernal. Among the first to climb the Celestial Ladder was mighty Athichi, and he fed the Star with energies stolen from the powerful beings defeated by the mages as they stormed the Supernal. For a time, the mages ruled the world from on high, realizing their dreams of godhood. But mortal man was never intended for such heights, and soon reality began to distort and crack. As the world began to spiral toward chaos and destruction, the exiled mages banded together and attacked Atlantis, climbing the Celestial Ladder to assault the Celestial mages on their stolen thrones.

Adamantine Arrow legend states that Athichi fought against this incursion, staff in hand, with the Star radiating a dull black light, until a heroic member of the Ungula Draconis managed to wrench the Star from Athichi's staff and fling the Star back to Earth. Howling in fury, Athichi destroyed the brave Talon and was preparing to summon the Star back to him when the Celestial Ladder exploded, severing the Supernal from the mortal world.

Where the Star came to rest in the Fallen world is unknown, but rumors about its reappearance first surfaced in eastern Asia around the year 547 BC in the Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great. Unconfirmed sightings of the Star have continued throughout history with the last report placing it in East Berlin, just before the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.

Unsurprisingly, the Seers of the Throne chase rumors about the Star with a fanatical intensity. Regardless of the powers the Star might possess, if the Star is truly the soul stone of an Exarch, the Seers might be able to use its inherent sympathetic qualities to communicate directly with their masters in the Supernal Realms.

The Adamantine Arrow seeks the Star out of a sense of responsibility to the brave warrior who managed to wrestle it from Athichi's grasp. Many senior members of the order also feel that the Star would best serve the Awakened by its destruction, or failing that, by hiding it away from the Seers forever.

By spending one Mana and placing the Star (or the butt of a staff with the Star as its headpiece) in direct contact with the ground (or floor, indoors) the owner may create a temporary Demesne (equivalent in size to a one soul stone Demesne) as an instant action, with no roll necessary. When the Artifact is removed

from the temporary Demesne, that area immediately returns to normal. The Star may also function as a Soul Jar for souls that have been removed from their bodies via the "Sever the Sleeping Soul" spell (see p. 141 of **Mage: The Awakening**), and unlike a normal Soul Jar, the Star can contain as many souls as its owner wishes.

Once a soul has been stored in the Star, the Artifact may consume that soul to provide necromantic energy for a variety of effects. Each time the Star eats a soul, it shines with a sickly black light and radiates a feeling of indescribable loss. Consuming a soul is considered an instant action for the Star (not the owner), and the Star retains energy generated from devoured souls for a scene. The knowledge of most of the uses for energy generated by consumed souls has been lost, but the known uses are as follows. The Star may use the energy of a devoured soul to replenish five Mana to either its owner or to itself, heal its owner of five points of bashing damage, three points of lethal damage or one point of aggravated Health damage or add +3 dice bonus to any Death rote cast by its owner. Any of the above effects may be performed as a reflexive action, and effects are allowed to stack (a mage with, say, the energy from four souls in the Star could heal three aggravated wounds and restore five Mana to his pool).

Study of the Star may lead to discovery of additional abilities, but there is a price to be paid for such knowledge. The Artifact, though powerful, is an inanimate thing that never devours a soul unless instructed to. Souls stored in the Star may, in fact, be released to return to their bodies. Instructing the Artifact to consume a soul is an act of hubris that requires a degeneration roll. Such callous use of a human soul will eventually drive all but the most evil individuals insane.

Imbued Items

In general, there's nothing to identify a given Imbued Item as "belonging to" the Adamantine Arrow, or to any other order for that matter. But there are qualities that tend to crop up among objects created with one or other order in mind. Guardians of the Veil, for example, prefer that their magic items be nondescript or even a bit shabby-looking, all the better to disguise their true functions. For the Arrows, an Imbued Item is especially valued if it's made of sturdy, high-quality materials and can serve one or more mundane functions when its magic is not required. A mage who has to make a



Tasers act like stun guns with the bonus of being able to attack your target from a distance (usually about 15 feet). A Taser uses compressed gas cartridges to fire a pair of metal contact probes attached to wires, connected to the gun. The probes become embedded in the body, instantly inflicting approximately 50,000 volts of electricity through the target's nervous system. Just as stun guns, Tasers do not cause actual damage. The voltage that courses through a subject plays havoc with his body, causing intense pain and severe muscle contraction. The longer a Taser is allowed to conduct electricity to the target's body, the worse the stun effect becomes. To attack with a Taser, a *Dexterity + Firearms* roll is made with any physical armor worn by the target subtracted. Even a single success allows for contact and sends electricity into the subject's body. Every success gained on the roll counts as a -1 penalty

commando raid on an underwater castle or rescue an ally from a Seer stronghold wants to get as much use as possible from every piece of gear he carries. Another commonality among Imbued Items used by the Arrow mages is their names — or sometimes, the tendency of Arrows to shorten those names into acronyms. No doubt this is a habit carried over from the military culture from which many Arrow mages are drawn.

Adamantine Taser (●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: None

The Adamantine Arrow scrutinizes mundane weaponry innovations for adaptation to the order's arsenal. In this case, the Taser's mundane capabilities have been combined with magic to produce a potent weapon.

toward the target's next roll. If these successes exceed the target's Size, he is knocked unconscious. The target can attempt to pull the Taser probes away from his body with a *Strength + Brawl* roll. Success allows him to escape the contact probes. If a target is knocked unconscious, the Taser ceases to have any mechanical effect on the target (the Taser continues to cause pain and contraction, but does not prolong the duration of the victim's unconsciousness).

In addition to the above effects, an Adamantine Taser reproduces the Death 4 spell "Enervation." A successful attack with the Taser replaces the normal *Brawling* roll required for Enervation; during the mage's next turn, he can attempt to activate the item by rolling *Gnosis + Death* minus the target's Stamina. Each success reduces the target's Strength Attribute by 1 (maximum of -4 total). The mage may continue

to jolt his target with electricity while activating the Adamantine Taser.

All-Gas Grenade (●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: None

Arrows who made use of imbued equipment appreciate objects that are useful in a wide range of circumstances, which is one reason the All-Gas Grenade (AGG) is a favorite choice. The grenade-like item is imbued with the Matter 4 spell “Transmute Air,” giving the user an almost endless array of offensive options. Anything from smoke to tear gas to lethal vapors can be generated as needed. And, unlike a mundane grenade, the AGG can also be used in reverse, changing dangerous or debilitating gasses into ordinary air. Finally, because it doesn’t literally explode, the device can be reused. Roll Gnosis + Matter 4; one success transmutes five cubic yards of air, centered on the grenade. Each additional success doubles the volume, with two successes affecting 10 cubic yards, three successes affecting 20, etc. The AGG mimics an ordinary hand grenade in size, shape and weight, and its magic is triggered by similar ignition mechanism. This allows soldiers or others trained to use such items to implement the AGG with equal facility.

All-Terrain Mobile Energy Source (●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 3, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: None

Sooner or later, every soldier finds herself *somewhere* without heat, running water or electricity. While the All-Terrain Mobile Energy Source solves only the last of those three issues, a wise warrior can use it to address the former two, as well as a wide variety of other problems. This machine, which usually takes the form of a weird-looking generator in a solid metal casing, creates a persistent Prime 3 “Ley Lines” effect, allowing any sort of electrical device to be plugged into the Source, wherever that device might be, so long as the Source has enough time to reroute local ley lines to serve as a power source.

Back Box (●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: None

This item usually constructed as a small, flat storage box of hard, rubberized plastic that’s watertight when closed. As a way of keeping some gear protected and dry, it’s an effective if unremarkable device. But its

name hints at its magical property: if lost, the Back Box always comes back. The Box is imbued with the Fate 4 spell “Gift of Fortune,” which is triggered if the Box is separated from its owner without the owner’s consent. The Box’s return to its owner is an extended action; roll Fate 4, with each roll representing an hour of time. The Storyteller determines how many successes are needed for the Box to find its way back; one success might be enough for a Box that’s been dropped in the woods to be kicked into the owner’s campsite by a curious fox looking for food; three or four successes might be required for a Box taken from a captured mage to be accidentally dropped in his cell by an absent-minded guard. Arrows who use this item stock it with different mission-specific items. A scout traversing harsh terrain may store medical supplies, emergency rations or fire-starting equipment inside; a warrior in enemy territory might load the Box with a spare knife or gun, extra ammo, lock-picking equipment in case of capture or a cell phone to call for backup.

Band of Armored Thoughts (●●●)

Durability 2, Size 0, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

Often, the greatest asset a warrior has is her mind. The body can fail and the spirit can be wounded, but a sharp mind can overcome these shortcomings and salvage victory from the jaws of certain defeat. Matters are complicated, however, by powers of psychic intrusion, stealing the soldier’s thoughts or even perverting them to others’ ends. Thus, the Band of Armored Thoughts — a plain ring of silver or gold — that erects a Mind 2 “Mental Shield” when the Band’s command word (differing from ring to ring) is spoken aloud, however quietly.

Beast Mantle (●●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 4, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: None

This item invariably takes the form of a reinforced article of clothing intended to cover the better part of the body: a trench coat, thick coveralls, even a leather bodysuit. By performing a single, subtle gesture (attuned to a specific Beast Mantle), the wearer can activate a continent Life 3 “Transform Self” effect. Most mages tend to use this item to adopt simple animalistic features as needed, though some have also made use of the qualities of plants, fungi and other base life forms. Some mages have been known to enchant their Beast Mantles to serve as armor, as well.

New Enhanced Item Merit Rule: Armor

Mages might wish to transform wearable items, even those not normally suitable for protection, into pieces of armor. Every two dots assigned to the Enhanced Item Merit can provide one point of armor for an otherwise normal article of clothing, though the item's Durability must also be enhanced to a level at least equal to the number of dots of armor the object is to provide.

Example: *Mako acquires an Enchanted jumpsuit, intended to serve as a suit of armor. Her player purchases the item as a five-dot Enhanced Item, with four dots assigned to armor (for 2/2 armor) and one dot assigned to Durability (for +2 Durability). She could also buy the suit as a three-dot Enhanced Item – for 1/1 armor and +2 Durability – but she cannot buy more dots of armor for the item than she assigns bonus Durability to it. In other words, the item cannot be 1/1 or 2/2 armor with no added Durability.*

Because points of armor are not a "+1 (or greater) dice modifier" (per the Enhanced Item entry on p. 82 of **Mage: The Awakening**), this is the quality used to augment a regular suit of armor with the Enhanced Item Merit. Thus, a mage could have a 2/1 set of reinforced clothing if her player desired, or even a 5/6 suit of riot gear. Note, however, that the rule for increasing Durability still stands for enhancing a suit of armor.

Black Ribbon (●●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

Each time an Adamantine Arrow swears a magically binding oath, there is a possibility for that oath to become too great of a burden for the mage to bear. When every attempt to meet her oath with honor and pride has failed, or when an oath becomes twisted by its recipients, an Arrow will resort to severing that oath. Using a Black Ribbon is one method used by the order to sever such onerous oaths.

A Black Ribbon is crafted from a piece of black silk ribbon, usually six inches or so in length. The mage then inscribes the basic idea of the oath, or the name of the person or group, the oath was sworn to on the Ribbon in silver ink (mages with knowledge

of Atlantean Runes may instead inscribe the Ribbon with these mystic symbols). Once the preparation of a Black Ribbon is complete, the mage activates it by spending one Mana and cutting the Ribbon in half. This act simulates the Fate 4 spell "Sever Oaths" (see p. 158 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The mage rolls Gnosis + Fate (+1 if the mage used Atlantean Runes), and with a single success, the oath is ended.

No Arrow should take the breaking of an oath lightly. If the mage seems to be making too liberal use of Black Ribbons, or other oath-breaking techniques, he should expect serious consequences as the result of his perceived flippancy.

Cloak of Many Colors (●●●●●)

Durability varies, Size 1–3, Structure varies

Mana Capacity: None

Those Arrows who know of the existence of the Cloaks of Many Colors can all agree on one thing: never has such an item taken the shape of a cloak. These objects are tools of stealth and infiltration, designed to get soldiers into places that they might not otherwise be allowed. By performing a quick and simple action (drumming one's fingers on the object five times, whistling a few bars of an easy tune or something similar), the mage can activate a contingent Mind 2/Prime 2 effect mimicking "Alter Aura" and "Transform Aura" simultaneously, allowing him to change his apparent nature and emotional state.

Destiny's Quill (●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Before embarking on a potentially dangerous enterprise, Adamantine Arrow members will sometimes write an oath to fulfill their mission no matter the cost. Alternately, an Arrow entering into the service of another may pen a formal document declaring the privileges and responsibilities of her oath, for presentation to her master. In either case, the power of an Imbued Item, or of a spell, is frequently added to the power of the written word. Members of the Adamantine Arrow keep a variety of Imbued Items for this purpose, the most common of which is called Destiny's Quill.

Destiny's Quill begins to activate as the Quill is used to scribe the Arrow's oath. When the mage signs her name to the written oath she rolls Gnosis + Fate, requiring only a single success to complete the activation of the Fate 2 spell "Swearing an Oath" (see p. 153 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Failure to activate

Destiny's Quill with a signing is interpreted as a bad omen. The mage may continue on her current course, but nagging suspicions will likely lurk at the back of her mind.

A Destiny's Quill is traditionally made from the feather of a pheasant or peacock, personally plucked by the mage.

Endless Clip (●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: None

While action movies make it out to seem that guns only run out of ammunition at dramatically opportune moments, practiced gunfighters understand that a firearm running dry at a bad time is a sure way to get killed. Thus, mages of the Adamantine Arrow have Enchanted magazines for various firearms to apport bullets from a specially designated container, using simple Matter and Space magics, contingent upon the chambering of a new round. While the supply of bullets isn't truly "endless," as the item's name claims, a willworker can have literally hundreds of shots on hand when she needs them, without ever having to change magazines.

Flawless Barrel (●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: None

A Flawless Barrel replaces the normal barrel of a rifle with one that has been imbued with the Matter 3 spell "Repair Object" (see p. 199 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Normally, bullet striations (the marks left on a bullet by its passage through the barrel) help identify the gun the bullet was fired from. A bullet fired from a Flawless Barrel has bullet striations removed as the bullet leaves the weapon, via the "Repair Object" spell. The mage must speak a predetermined command word to activate a Flawless Barrel. Adamantine Arrow mages use items such as this one on the off-chance their activities come under investigation by Sleeper authorities.

Freeman's Collar (●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

Mana Capacity: None

Many have been the times in which enemies of the Adamantine Arrow have aspired to turn the tides of destiny against a given Arrow. The Freeman's Collar was designed specifically to defy such magics. This item — which most commonly takes the form of a

torque of steel or some other similarly resilient metal — imparts upon its wearer a contingent Fate 4 "Unbound" effect, triggered by any of the conditions that would ordinarily be countered by such.

Ghost Shirt (●●●●●)

Durability varies, Size 3–5, Structure varies

Mana Capacity: None

By enchanting a normal set of armor, whether modern or archaic, with Spirit Arcanum magics, a mage can defend herself against the denizens of the Shadow Realm. A Ghost Shirt is enchanted with a persistent Spirit 3 "Numinous Shield" effect. Some Arrows choose to bespell more innocuous articles of clothing, of course, though many of those that expect battle with spirits would rather have armor of a spiritual and a physical nature, just in case.

New Enhanced Item Merit Rule: Bulletproof

By assigning two points of the Enhanced Item Merit to an article of clothing not normally possessed of such, a player can bestow the "bulletproof" quality upon it (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 166). This quality does not invoke Paradox, but might result in Disbelief if the shot sustained should clearly have been fatal, or even particularly grievous.

Grim Specs (●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

Underestimating an enemy can be the last mistake a mage ever makes. Grim Specs use the Death 1 spell "Grim Sight" (see p. 134 of **Mage: The Awakening**) to assist their user in sizing up an opponent. Grim Specs are made from any type of mundane eyewear, and are activated by tapping the frame with a finger. Viewingsomeone through Grim Specs allows the user to measure the density of stains left by proximity to death on that person.

Improved Grip (●●●●●)

Durability varies, Size 1, Structure varies

Mana Capacity: None

Improved Grip is the name given to a specific type of enchantment woven into the grip or hilt of a weapon. The item is created by modifying the grip of a weapon with new materials that have been imbued with the

Life 3 spell “Hone the Form” (see p. 186 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Durability and Structure vary depending on what items are used in the construction of the Improved Grip (see “Objects,” p. 136 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Modifying a weapon to include an Improved Grip requires a successful Dexterity + Crafts roll.

Each time the weapon is grasped by the handle, Improved Grip activates. Users roll Gnosis + Life, with each success allowing them to temporarily increase a single Physical Attribute by one dot. Temporary Physical Attribute bonuses last for a scene, or until the weapon is released, whichever happens first.

Adamantine Arrow members enjoy the use of an Improved Grip because the effects don’t count against their Spell Tolerance until activated. Improved Grip also enables them to further customize their weaponry by adding separate enchantments to other parts of their weapons.

Insult to Injury (●●●●●)

Durability 3; Size 1 (usually), Structure 4 (usually)

Mana Capacity: None

These items almost always take the form of ordinary handguns. (Some mages prefer pistols, while others favor good, old-fashioned revolvers.) All, however, are enchanted with the contingent Time 4 effect “Chronos’s Curse,” triggered upon a given subject by successfully shooting her with the gun. These weapons help to prevent foes from escaping a confrontation, as well making them considerably less dangerous in a firefight and/or softening them up for close-range combatants.

Lucky Boots (●●●●●)

Size 2, Durability 3, Structure 6

Mana Capacity: None

This pair of combat boots would be favored by many Arrows even if the Boots weren’t magical, as they’re typically very well made and designed to keep a soldier’s feet dry, clean and protected in adverse terrain. But what makes the Lucky Boots even more useful is that they are imbued with the Fate 2 spell “Exceptional Luck.” A character wearing the Boots benefits from the 9-again quality (re-roll results of 9 and 10) when performing an action in which the boots might somehow influence the outcome. Climbing up a wall, crossing an ice-covered lake, avoiding a tripwire, even kicking in a door... somehow, the Boots seem to achieve just the right timing or placement to ensure

success. (Note that if a player’s dice pool is reduced to one, the 9-again rule does not come into effect: for a chance die, only a 10 is considered a success.) The character must be wearing both Boots for the spell’s power to manifest; should one of the pair be destroyed, the other is of no magical value.

Nightmask (●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

This mask is made from black leather with holes for the eyes, nose and mouth. When the user dons the Nightmask, it activates a combined effect of the Forces 1 “Influence Sound” and “Nighteyes” spells (see p. 163 of **Mage: The Awakening**) with a single success on a Gnosis + Forces roll. This is a persistent effect. All Stealth rolls gain a +2 dice bonus while wearing the Nightmask as the magic works to contain any sounds made by the user. Valued for scouting missions and covert activities, this simple item is a prized possession for nighttime work.

Omniscope (●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: None

Beyond even the most cutting-edge scopes known to Sleepers, the Omniscope enables an Arrow to aim true in even the most challenging of environments. This scope (which can be constructed to fit on any sort of firearm that will accommodate such a device), when looked through, allows its user to perceive the world through a persistent Forces 1 “Nightsight” effect.

Phantasmic Lantern (●●●●●)

Durability 5, Size 2, Structure 7

Mana Capacity: 11

This handy item encourages an Arrow to think creatively and helps him compensate when he has failed to think creatively enough to bring everything needed for a mission. A Phantasmic Lantern — or Phan-Lan, as some Arrows call it — is a small, handheld oil lantern that duplicates the Prime 3 spell “Phantasm” to weave solid illusions. To trigger the spell, the user must light the Lantern, expend one Mana and roll Gnosis plus Prime 3. Excess successes are added to a reflexive roll of Intelligence + an appropriate Skill (Crafts to create an object or Animal Ken to simulate a living thing, for example) to properly create the illusion. See the spell description for more detail. Illusory objects cannot exceed Size 5, and are

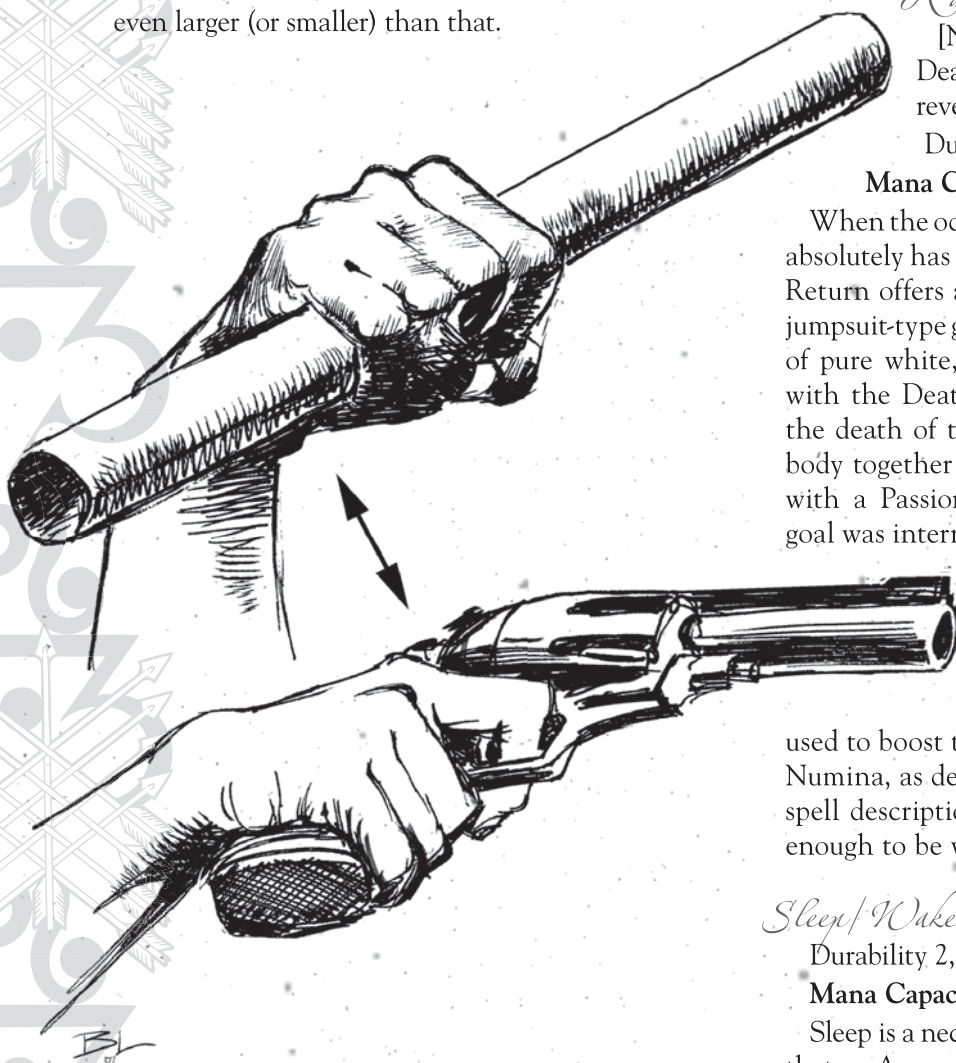
fragile (Durability 1). But there are still many ways for a mage to make use of them. Phantasmic cloth could still shield one from sun or rain. A phantasm bush might provide concealment; phantasmic grass might disguise a snare or trap; a phantasm guard could delay an attack, or even prompt the enemy to redirect an attack to a different area.

Portable Armory (●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: None

This item looks like a nondescript, heavy steel bar when not in use. By rapping the bar twice on a solid surface and speaking aloud the name of a given Size 2 weapon, however, the Portable Armory's owner can invoke a contingent Matter 4 "Reconfigure Object" effect that changes the bar into the requested weapon. Some Arrows make use of Size 1 or Size 3 Portable Armories, as well, and there exist tales of Armories even larger (or smaller) than that.



Portable Window (●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

A Portable Window resembles a one-foot-square thin rubber mat (similar to the kind found on car floors) that is easily rolled into a tight cylinder to be stowed away until needed. The user places the Portable Window on the surface of a building, or door, and activates the Window by whispering a command word. Once activated, the Portable Window reproduces the Matter 2 spell "Steel Windows" (see p. 197 of *Mage: The Awakening*) with a single success on a Gnosis + Matter roll. The spell turns the area covered (and the Portable Window) transparent for as long as the item is held against the surface. The transparency works both ways, so the user must be cautious if he doesn't wish to be spotted by people inside the place he is looking in on.

Raiment of Return (●●●●●●)

[Note: Though this has a Death 4 spell, Death 5 is required to turn a mage into a revenant; hence the six dots.]

Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 7

Mana Capacity: None

When the odds of survival are low but the mission absolutely has to go through, wearing a Raiment of Return offers a fallen warrior a second chance. A jumpsuit-type garment made of thin but sturdy cloth of pure white, the Raiment of Return is imbued with the Death 4 spell "Revenant." Triggered by the death of the wearer, the spell keeps soul and body together as a type of walking corpse, driven with a Passion to complete whatever important goal was interrupted by its death. The wearer must roll Gnosis + Death 5 as an extended, contested roll against his own Resolve (his soul reflexively recoils against the unnatural process). Additional successes can be used to boost the revenant's traits or grant it extra Numina, as determined by the Storyteller; see the spell description for details. The Raiment is thin enough to be worn under other clothing.

Sleep/Wake Watch (●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 0, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

Sleep is a necessity, but sometimes it's also a luxury that an Arrow can't afford. By wearing a Sleep/Wake

Watch (sometimes called a SLEWW), which is imbued with the Mind 3 spell “Sleep of the Just,” the Arrow can count on staying awake for as long as it takes. Alternately, she can use it to put her sleep time to good use by plotting strategy, drafting battle plans or performing other mental tasks in her dreams. The spell is triggered by turning the hands of one of the dials forward by eight hours (the other dial continues to keep accurate time, obviating the need for a practical-minded warrior to wear two watches). Roll Gnosis + Mind 3; each success allows the wearer to remain awake for 24 hours, or to sleep for up to 24 hours and make one mental-action task roll (the user still suffers penalties for lack of sleep; see the spell description for details).

Spatial Binoculars (●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Mana Capacity: None

These binoculars are enchanted with slightly modified version of the Space 2 spell “Scrying” (see p. 235 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Simply looking through them activates the Binoculars, allowing the mage to ignore objects blocking his line of sight by effectively looking behind the object. By using the Binoculars, the mage could, for example, ignore a building in his line of sight to see what was happening behind it. The Binoculars function only to allow their user to look around objects within sensory range, but the mundane aspect of the Binoculars allows the mage to double their normal ocular sensory range.

Tin Whistle (●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: None

Everyone knows about whistles only dogs can hear. These whistles make a noise only the dead can hear. The Tin Whistle simulates the Death 3 spell “Quicken Corpse” (see p. 140 of **Mage: The Awakening**). To activate the item, the user spends one Mana, blows the Whistle near a corpse and rolls Gnosis + Death. Only a single success is necessary to raise a zombie, but the total number of successes rolled also represents the Potency of the spell if another mage attempts to exert control over that zombie. Tin Whistles are usually constructed from the cheap plastic whistles sold at toy stores. Arrows have been known to use Tin Whistles to raise zombies to act as fodder.

TK Gloves (●●●●●●)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2

Mana Capacity: 11

This item was first created by an Arrow who favored melee weapons and was tired of his enemies always trying to engage him at a distance. Rather than stoop to carrying a firearm, he decided to imbue his gloves with the Forces 4 version of “Telekinetic Strike” (see p. 170 of **Mage: The Awakening**). After a few trial runs, the mage was pleased with his creation and passed the idea along to his order.

To activate the TK Gloves, the user must spend one Mana and aim a punch at a distant target. The user rolls Gnosis + Forces minus the Defense and/or armor of the target. Each success on the roll inflicts one level of lethal damage to the target.

Universal Toolkit (●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5

Mana Capacity: None

Adaptability Is Strength, or so goes the Adamantine Arrow’s old axiom. The Universal Toolkit may not actually be able to fix broken plumbing or be of much use in changing a tire, but the Toolkit certainly *does* provide an Arrow with a lot of options for adaptability. The item’s owner benefits from a contingent Matter 3 “Jury-Rig” spell that requires him to actually touch one or more of the tools in the kit (usually, the sorts of stuff that one finds in the average small toolbox) to the objects to be combined.

Cursed Items

Blårsemhel

Quote: (from wielder) **Incomprehensible growling and bellowing**

Background: Some time before the birth of Christ, a Northern European shaman sought to improve the power of his great ax by binding an anger-spirit into the head of the weapon. For weeks the shaman worked on the great ax, purifying and strengthening the material of the weapon. When his work was complete, the shaman summoned the warriors of his tribe and led them on a raid against a rival village, to soak the great ax in blood and the fury of battle. Calling on the spirits to witness the worthiness of his weapon, the shaman and his companions descended on the rival settlement, shouting battle cries and howling for the deaths of their enemies.

During the battle, the shaman felt the touch of the spirits upon him, urging him to greater acts of savagery and bloodshed. The red mist of the *berserkr* clouded the eyes of the shaman. Spirits of anger and violence rode his willing form, exalting in the slaughter. When the rage finally passed, the shaman found himself alone in the burning village, blood and viscera covering his body from head to toe, as though he had bathed in gore. The shaman stared around him in horror, transfixed by the torn and mutilated bodies of the victims to his blood rage. Nearby lay the body of a woman clutching the headless corpse of her infant child. Scattered near the woman were the ravaged corpses of his own kinsmen. Not one soul had been spared from his butchery.

Only after the shock of his actions began to fade did the shaman register his own injuries. Loops of intestines slid from a gash in his abdomen, tangling between his legs, and the broken haft of a spear protruded through his shoulder. A sudden burst of pain from his head dropped the shaman to his knees in a wave of dizziness. Tentatively, he reached around to touch the back of his skull. His questing fingers encountered a mass of broken bone and quivering flesh. Snatching his fingers away, the shaman realized he still held his great ax in his other hand. Though the handle was smeared and stained with filth, the head itself was completely clean, as though it had soaked up all the blood it had shed. It throbbed with a malicious, hungry energy.

The shaman hurled the weapon away from him, and as it left his grasp, he felt the world begin to dim. He died soon after, tears of anger and betrayal freezing on his cheeks.

Description: Blårsemhel is a well-made bronze great ax, with an oaken haft (obviously not the original). Though made of bronze, Blårsemhel's head features a distinct lack of chipping, or signs of wear of any kind, and is always razor sharp.

Storytelling Hints: Blårsemhel reveals nothing unusual when viewed with Mage Sight, but if the weapon is further investigated with the Spirit 2 spell "Spirit Tongue" (see p. 246 of *Mage: The Awakening*) the mage can see a powerful spirit slumbering in the head of the great ax. The power of the sacrifice made by the shaman who created Blårsemhel allowed a spirit of berserker rage to Claim (see p. 321 of *Mage*:

The Awakening) the great ax as though it were a living person. If Blårsemhel were to be destroyed, the spirit would be Disincorporated. Blårsemhel shares the same statistics as other great axes (see p. 170 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*) and is Durability 4, Size 4, Structure 10.

When the great ax isn't in active use, the spirit within hibernates to conserve its Essence until the weapon tastes blood. Even a drop of blood from a collector who has cut himself while cleaning Blårsemhel is enough to awaken the spirit. Once awake, the spirit will immediately begin to agitate the person holding the weapon into a murderous fury by using its Influence: Berserker Rage (see p. 318 of *Mage: The Awakening*). The spirit rolls Power + Finesse minus the target's Composure to Control the target. Each time Blårsemhel is used to inflict lethal damage, the berserker spirit gains one Essence.



While in a berserker rage provoked by the spirit, the wielder of Blårsemhel sees only red enemy shapes through the blood haze of his fury. The wielder will always attack the nearest enemy, and will continue to attack until that person is dead or dying. Force of will can impart a tiny amount of control over the rage. By spending one Willpower point, the wielder may redirect his attacks to the second nearest target. If all potential targets are killed, or if there are no immediate targets for his fury, the wielder will seek out additional opponents until the duration of the Control ends.

Player characters are likely to encounter Blårsemhel in the grip of an apparent madman, slaughtering anyone within reach, and shrugging off mortal injuries. Alternately, a player character might find Blårsemhel in the collection of a relative, hidden away in a tomb or in a museum storage basement.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 4

Willpower: 8

Essence: 20 (max 20)

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 10

Size: 6

Corpus: 10

Influence: Berserker Rage 4

Numina: Berserk Stamina, Berserk Strength

- **Berserk Stamina** (dice pool 9). With the expenditure of one Essence, the spirit infuses the body of the wielder with superhuman fortitude. The target feels no pain from wounds (suffering no wound penalties), never rolls Stamina to resist falling unconscious from Bashing damage and can only be killed by filling his Health track with aggravated damage. Further, each time the wielder takes aggravated wounds that would slay him, the spirit may spend one Essence to transfer that damage to its own Corpus. This effect lasts for one scene.

- **Berserk Strength** (dice pool 10). By spending one Essence, the spirit can raise the Strength of the person wielding Blårsemhel by one dot per success, to a maximum of Strength 5. This lasts for one scene.

Shackles of the Sleeper

Quote: Oh! You like my bracelets? No, I can't remember where I got them. Sorry. Gotta run!

Background: The Shackles of the Sleeper are something of an urban myth among the Awakened. Any sighting of them is always second- or third-hand (my friend's Mysterium buddy from England told him...). Given the powers associated with the Shackles, this isn't much of a surprise, and has, in fact, helped to spread the rumors that they are real. All the stories start the same way. A mage was browsing a flea market or pawnshop and found a pair of bracelets in with the other jewelry. The mage felt an overwhelming compulsion to buy the bracelets, and after making their purchase was never seen again. No one seems to know exactly what the bracelets look like, but theories abound as to their effects. One story suggests the bracelets are a Paradox manifestation that unravels the mage out of existence. Another theory claims the bracelets are ghostly fetters to a wandering specter that possesses the owner in its endless quest to return home, and whispered stories say the Seers of the Throne are looking for the bracelets because they draw their owner into the Supernal Realms.

Description: The Shackles of the Sleeper are made from the bones of an unknown creature. Carved into the bone of the bracelets are physical representations of the 10 Arcana. Five on the left bracelet (Death, Matter, Space, Time, Forces) and five on the right bracelet (Fate, Life, Mind, Prime, Spirit).

Storytelling Hints: The bracelets remain dormant when viewed by Sleepers, or mages in groups, going so far as to activate their Occultation 5 trait when viewed by a group of mages. Only when a solitary mage sees the Shackles do they become active. When a solitary mage notices the bracelets, they call out to the mage with the Mind 2 spell "Emotional Urging" (see p. 207 of **Mage: The Awakening**) to buy the Shackles and put them on. Once the mage has placed the Shackles of the Sleeper on his wrists, the mage becomes the target of a number of effects, all resolved as instant actions by the bracelets. Each Shackle may activate one power per turn by spending one Mana from their combined Mana Capacity pool. If the Shackles of the Sleeper expend all of their Mana without subduing the wearer, they fall inert. The bracelets regenerate Mana as an Artifact, at the rate of one Mana per day. The Shackles of the Sleeper have a casting dice pool of 10. Powers are listed below.

- **Shackle:** The bracelet casts the Matter 3 spell "Plasticity" (see p. 199 of **Mage: The Awakening**) to



mold themselves to the wrists of the mage, making them impossible to remove.

- **Drain:** The bracelet casts the Prime 5 spell “Siphon Mana” (see p. 231 of **Mage: The Awakening**) on the wearer, adding stolen Mana to the combined pool.

- **Sleeper:** The bracelet casts the Mind 4 spell “Breach the Vault of Memory” (see p. 215 of **Mage: The Awakening**) on the wearer, with the intent to force the mage to forget he Awakened, as well as all knowledge of his Awakened life.

- **Compel:** The bracelet casts the Fate 5 spell “Geas” (see p. 160 of **Mage: The Awakening**) on the wearer, commanding the mage to travel to... somewhere. See below.

The mage also immediately gains Occultation 5 (see p. 86 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Exactly where the Shackles of the Sleeper want the mage to travel to is left for the Storyteller to decide. Although this item is cursed, the end destination might be someplace that is advantageous to the mage. Or not. Possibilities include the lair of a Tremere lich, the ruins of an Atlantean settlement or even nowhere at all, just endless wandering.

While a mage is under control of the Shackles, the bracelets watch their wearer for signs of disobedience. If the mage attempts to contact other mages, or tries to tell someone of his plight, the bracelets go on the offensive, using their Sleeper power. After the initial struggle, the Shackles allow the mage to retain his own Mana, as long as he doesn't attempt to use magic in a manner that could be detrimental to the Shackles, or the Shackles' mission. If the mage struggles, the bracelets renew their Drain attacks to keep the wearer deprived of Mana.

The Shackles of the Sleeper are Durability 7, Size 1, Structure 10, with a Mana Capacity of 16.

APPENDIX: ALLIES AND ANTAGONISTS

In war, there are no unwounded soldiers.

— Jose Narosky

Every chronicle needs a good supporting cast. In the case of the Adamantine Arrow, the Storyteller characters who arise as part of that supporting cast may act in the role of logistics. They provide supplies and information for the never-ending war against the Exarchs and other foes. Sometimes the Storyteller characters may fight alongside the players' characters; sometimes the Storyteller characters just get the players' characters where they need to go. Storyteller characters aren't the stars of the war story — that's a role for the players' own characters. But they can make potent and interesting rivals, allies or outright antagonists as needed.

Non-combatants

Where the Adamantine Arrow is concerned, the label “non-combatants” is a bit misleading. Most of the archetypal characters below possess basic fighting ability. In an emergency, they'll fight beside more battle-focused characters. For the most part, players' mages aren't likely to encounter non-combatants in this capacity, so the following characters use the simplified format common to all **World of Darkness** games.

Arms Dealer

Quote: *Russian, limited issue. It was designed to replace the Dragunov but never went into service. It'll put a new asshole on a Chihuahua at a mile, or more if you're really good. And, Arrow to Arrow, I'll give you a good price.*

Background: Before he joined the Adamantine Arrow, the Arms Dealer was a nomadic crook. He started on cargo vessels, moving contraband from country to country with his luggage. Eventually, he paid off the captain and a few others, too, until he had a small fleet of ships that'd move certain containers without the owners asking too many questions. Then he made a miscalculation: he thought he could take his business to the next level without negotiating with other major players. He Awakened a year later, tied to a stake in Myanmar while a local drug lord pondered the slowest way to kill him for tripping over the man's territory.

After Pandemonium, it was easy to break his enemy's will, sift through his mind and learn the real currency of power. People need guns. They need them to start revolutions, quell them, steal local resources, defend them and fight wars — or whatever passes for them in a networked world where killer and victim serve the same global markets. The Adamantine Arrow was an early customer who could pay the Arms Dealer something nobody else could: a way to understand what he'd become and a way to make that mean something.

Description: He's a man in his early 30s wearing a cheap white suit and combat boots instead of wing-tips. He never knows when business will take him into jungle mud instead of a boardroom. He wears big aviator shades and a loose, narrow tie and carries a satellite phone with him everywhere he goes. A haggard look and graying, shaggy hair attest to

constant jet lag and hard living whenever he takes a break to drink. He talks fast; foul language comes naturally. Occasionally, he'll cut his hair short, wear something more refined and appear at a convention of "legitimate" arms traders. He knows that the legal and illegal halves of the business are just two sides of the same coin, with politics, not ethics, determining which side people end up on.

Storytelling Hints: Barely an Adamantine Arrow, the Arms Dealer keeps the order supplied with weapons of all kinds. He has a stronger moral sense now; he won't sell to anyone he thinks would arm children or kill innocent people. On the other hand, he can feel the violent impulses in people and knows that ethics is a fragile shield for humanity's selfish, belligerent urges. Sometimes, selling to the "right people" doesn't mean much in the grand scheme. He takes pride in filling difficult orders, especially when more uptight members of the order have to acknowledge his help.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

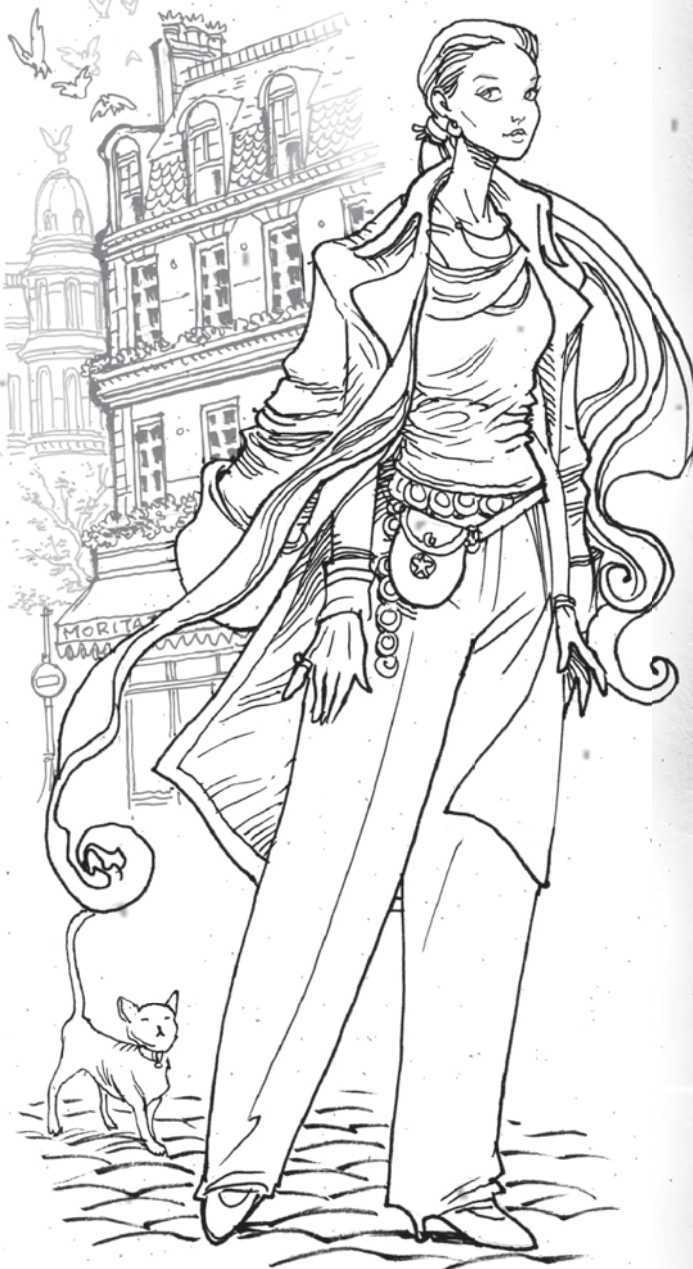
Global Connections (dice pool 6) — The Arms Dealer can usually find contacts in every part of the world. He meets them during the course of business or uses magic to find people with a stake in the arms trade. He can make himself understood on every continent, using his language skills, gestures and raw telepathy to communicate with the locals.

Smuggling (dice pool 10) — If he doesn't want something found, it won't get found. He can hide a knife on a plane or a barrel of rifles in a shipping container. Magic and experience let him track every shipment from minute to minute. He also knows about law enforcement organizations and tactics designed to capture him. They don't worry him much.

Weapons Knowledge (dice pool 8) — The Arms Dealer knows all about weapons. He moves small arms the most, but he also knows about explosives, military vehicles and even nuclear material (though when it comes to this, he uses his knowledge to avoid it as much as possible). His practical knowledge goes beyond the usual dross about muzzle velocity and theoretical stopping power. After all, he sells weapons to people who will actually use the weapons on each other, not at the range.

Chessmaster

Quote: Yes, it seems like we're at quite a disadvantage now. But when the enemy tries to make a move, they'll be



vulnerable to a little surprise a friend of mine set up for me in exchange for that map I had you retrieve last month.

Background: No Arrow can hope to survive if she doesn't learn to think ahead. But for the Chessmaster, strategy is a way of life, almost an obsession. She may have been a careful planner as a Sleeper, or perhaps her Awakening changed her from a free spirit into someone who doesn't order breakfast without thinking about lunch and dinner. Either way, her teachers recognized her aptitude and shaped her into a first-class strategist.

Description: The Chessmaster may be a seasoned elder, with a calm and dignified air and a tendency to listen more than talk. Or she could be a jittery wunderkind, constantly mumbling to herself as she works through a complex web of possibilities.

Storytelling Hints: Her ability to see several moves ahead of everyone else makes the Chessmaster a valuable ally. But her aid and advice always come at a price, sometimes named immediately, sometimes called in at a later (usually inconvenient) date. Acting as one of her pawns typically involves some mundane task that becomes more difficult and complex as it progresses. In the end, the characters may never learn why they had to track down an antique lost in an earthquake or plant a sapling in the middle of hostile werewolf territory.

Abilities:

Subterfuge (dice pool 5) — The Chessmaster is never obvious about her moves, and never accepts anyone else's intentions at face value.

Investigation (dice pool 4) — If she needs information to help her achieve a goal, she'll get it. If she needs to get something on you to help her achieve a goal, she'll get it.

Driver

Quote: *Sir, you'll find morphine in the medical kit. Blood products are provided in the fridge, to the left of the champagne. I suggest you wait until I lose these pursuers before commencing surgery.*

Background: She was a rarity in the security field, because even when she was on foot patrol at the mall, she treated her job like a true career. Comprehensive paperwork, reduced theft rates along her route and a few minor acts of heroism vaulted her from uniformed work to the close protection wing of the company. Her aloof attitude made her more suited to driving than following the elbows of VIPs. She was competent, but not too friendly. She Awakened in a company car. When a wounded stranger broke in and asked for her help, she immediately, uncharacteristically, trusted him. In her mystery play, she escorted him past accidents and pursuers to safety. He was a member of the Adamantine Arrow and soon enough, so was she. Now she specializes in taking mages and special cargo from Point A to Point B as quickly and safely, no matter the obstacle.

Description: She wears a dark, formal pantsuit and driving gloves. She never goes anywhere without a pistol in her shoulder-holster and a close-range Taser.

Her car's never far away. It's a huge black sedan with tinted windows. It's armored, with extensive medical gear, two spare shotguns and thanks to a bit of magic, license plates that nobody ever seems to be able to see or photograph clearly.

Storytelling Hints: The Driver's oaths revolve around her job. She transports the Hierarch's lunch with as much dedication as she would a critically wounded Arrow. The downside of her devotion is that she's doesn't have a very flexible outlook on life. She sticks to chauffeur's manners even when she's under fire and is never the first to come up with creative solutions, especially if they involve leaving the car.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Elite Driver (dice pool 10) — She knows all the tricks used by police, stunt drivers and security personnel to avoid accidents, lose pursuers and knock other cars off the road. Magical coincidences enhance her skills and let her bend physical laws. She can assess the condition of her vehicle by sound and handling alone, and knows how to make minor repairs. Finally, you'd be hard-pressed to find any paved road on Earth that she could get lost on.

Medic (dice pool 6) — The Driver's had to patch up wounded passengers on numerous occasions. She keeps the car stocked with enough gear to perform emergency surgery. Magic helps her stabilize patients, but for the most part, she relies on common emergency medicine.

Drill Instructor

Quote: *YOU are maggots with the souls of gods! I will TEACH you to evolve from your PATHETIC maggot-dom into your TRUE potential! You WILL become enlightened warrior-poets! When I am through with you, you'll be able to kill a man with an ARTFUL HAIKU, by making that motherfucker CONTEMPLATE blossoming persimmons instead of defending himself from your deadly goddamn hands! DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?*

Background: His father said the service would make a man out of him. It did, but not in the way dear old Dad thought. The future Drill Instructor was smart but uneducated. He'd spent his early teens abusing his body with booze, cigarettes and pills. Scrawny yet soft, he was the slowest runner in his platoon, the worst shot — only the IQ tests looked promising, and even then, he managed to bomb other tests that could have got him technical assignments. Basic was

hell, and as far as he was concerned, the Devil was the platoon drill instructor.

The man showered him with verbal abuse for every one of his frequent mistakes, encouraged bunkmates to mercilessly haze him — it was obvious that the DI wanted him to quit. This pushed all the wrong buttons, because even though he wasn't tough or disciplined, he *was* rebellious and disliked being "encouraged" to quit. Awakening swelled up gradually, finally flaring forth when the DI asked if a "flabby-assed chicken-shit" like him could meet even the lowest time on the assault course. He beat the best time instead — and after kicking the DI's ass and dragging him along, to boot.

Strangely enough, nobody remembered that — including the DI himself, who took credit for turning him around. He could go AWOL at will, until a couple of guys from SOCOM told him he was ready for a very special assignment.

Description: He has a variety of uniforms, all clean and pressed. You can see your face in his boots. They fit well enough to merely hint at the rippling muscles they contain. He's always clean-shaven, including his head. On duty, he stands straight and tall with a grim expression, but when he takes a rare break, he can be surprisingly easygoing.

Storytelling Hints: Characters meet the Drill Instructor when they want to make a connection in the military or when the Adamantine Arrow thinks they need a good asskicking to straighten them out. He's a detail-oriented taskmaster, but he remembers his own experience and takes care to help stragglers meet the order's standards. Just because *he* Awakened after harsh treatment doesn't mean that other people will grow the same way.

Path: Thyrsus

Abilities:

Peak Physical Condition (dice pool 9) — Intense exercise and a little magic give the drill instructor Olympic-level physical ability in multiple areas. DIs need to be able to do everything they demand out of recruits — a principle that breeds extreme prowess when the "recruits" are other mages.

Soldiering (dice pool 8) — The Drill Instructor has an encyclopedic knowledge of core military procedures, from field-stripping a service weapon to filing a grievance. His knowledge doesn't extend to specialized areas such as armor or electronic warfare, but when it comes to being a "grunt," there's nothing the DI doesn't know.

Choice of Assignments (dice pool 6) — Thanks to a combination of magic, the order's influence and an intimate knowledge of procedure, the Drill Instructor can move from post to post or even leave military duties with no consequences. This gives him the ability to train mages outside of the military or otherwise go where the order sends him.

Game Theorist

Quote: *We can talk in terms of abstract utility, but look at it this way: would you pick a plan with a 50% chance of killing everyone or a 100% chance of killing only half of you?*

Background: She was a gambler because it was easy. People talked about bluffs, lucky streaks and other garbage, when the truth was that only the math mattered. She taught poker and blackjack systems to other students at her university, and as a team, they cleaned up in Las Vegas and Atlantic City. She floated from casino to casino, continuing long after the rest of her team graduated and drifted away. She wandered into a mystery play where she learned to play the people as well as their games. She saw the pattern of casino alliances that determined who learned about problem players and when. Flaws in policies, shift rotations — they all unveiled themselves as she climbed light and steel to her Awakening and glanced out on Las Vegas's secret patterns. But when she climbed down, she learned that she'd won enough to attract local mages. Angry mages. Her newfound knowledge helped her escape and attracted the Adamantine Arrow.

Description: The Game Theorist looks like a typical postgraduate student. She dresses casually, with a hint of bohemian chic. She stands out from the crowd only because she's unusually fit and has an uncanny knack for saying the right things at the right time.

Storytelling Hints: This mage studies social relationships and probability. Thought experiments such as the Prisoner's Dilemma form the foundation of modern game theory and are used to plan everything from ad campaigns to nuclear defense strategy. Arrows use it to anticipate broad trends. Will the Seers of the Throne step up operations? Will local Libertines stay allied to the other orders? The Game Theorist specializes in the most abstract forms of strategy: thought experiments that render down scenarios into pure logic exercises. The Adamantine Arrow studies game theory to create basic templates for the order's operations, exploring best practices without having to water them down for politics. On the other hand, most Game Theorists are Mastigos

riages. They know that real people don't act out of pure rational self-interest and that reality messes up carefully designed models.

Path: Mastigos

Abilities:

Game Theory (dice pool 9) — The Game Theorist knows how to break down real-world situations into logic problems and identify the benefits and flaws of different decisions. In a war zone, she can calculate “acceptable losses.” She can see who's getting the better end of a contract.

Psychology (dice pool 8) — The Game Theorist's skills depend on understanding human motives. Utility (the abstract, self-defined measure of pleasure or benefit in philosophy) differs according to the person. Some people will put freedom before safety, while others throw their lives away for revenge. This Arrow studies people to understand what they value.

McDojo Operator

Quote: *The great thing about “black belt programs” is that most of these guys will never make it. I don't have to teach them, but I get their money anyway. If they don't have the will to stick it out, that's their fault.*

Background: He Awakened in Japan during his martial arts studies, back when he was bumming around the world on family money. He was an inattentive student who only earned high rank because of his athletic ability and his teacher's desire to turn the art into an international business. There was a big demand for authentic martial arts from the feudal period, so he wrote books first, then opened his own chain of schools. Even though his technique wasn't great, he could muddle through with instinctive magic.

One day, a muscular man showed up and demanded a challenge match. He figured this would be easy enough — in the early days, he beat better martial artists than him with a bit of Forces. He didn't count on someone who was a better fighter and an occultist. After breaking his arms and legs, the man introduced himself as a “Thunderbolt Guardian” and taught him about the Adamantine Arrow and Awakened society.

Nowadays, his business empire still has plenty of sketchy contracts and ineffective techniques, but really good students get invited to his “special team” and learn a working art. Naturally, the order gets half of his business income.

Description: His black martial arts uniform is covered in patches from dodgy organizations and corporate sponsors. He wears the red and black belt

reserved for grandmasters — a fact that annoys his estranged teacher in Japan. Adoring students haven't helped his fashion sense. With none to gainsay his choices, he has a bleached mullet and wears styles that are about a decade out of date.

Storytelling Hints: The McDojo Operator is a genuine martial arts expert now, but his business practices are designed to suck the maximum amount of money out of students in exchange for the least training possible. Sparring and conditioning are de-emphasized because they frighten away students. The master cares only about real prodigies and mages. He takes them under his wing and puts them through rigorous training. He serves the order when he finds newly Awakened mages and skilled retainers, but his most important role is financial. He bankrolls Arrow missions and owns plenty of *dojos* for errant Talons to hide in when they need to go to ground.

Path: Obrimos

Abilities:

Business Owner (dice pool 8) — The McDojo Operator lives up to his name by running two dozen franchises around the country and with a huge, gaudily decorated headquarters. His corporation collects franchise dues and belt testing fees, has a video-based distance learning program and offers expensive seminars with the master himself. He's a minor multimillionaire who shows no signs of losing money.

Martial Arts Instructor (dice pool 6) — He's an accomplished martial artist in a Japanese *koryu* (old-style martial art), but he's a better practitioner than teacher. When he's really interested in a student, he passes along knowledge using traditional rote methods and “sink or swim” sparring exercises.

Monster Hunter

Quote: *The corpse disappeared between noon and one, which rules out a vampire. And look at the door to the crypt; that latch is complicated, but it was opened from the inside without being broken. This is no ordinary zombie.*

Background: The Adamantine Arrow includes its share of thrill-junkies among its number, and for some the danger of stalking supernatural predators holds irresistible appeal. The Monster Hunter is no doubt sincere in her desire to protect the innocent from predation and terror, but the challenge and adrenaline rush of the hunt also feed her zeal.

Appearance: Knowing that her quarry may be hiding anywhere, the Monster Hunter is rarely without some



tools of her trade: a silver knife, a mirror, a kit bag stocked with wooden stakes and rare herbs. She wears subtle trophies of some of her victories: a tooth or claw hung on a chain, a ring carved of bone or horn.

Storytelling Hints: The Monster Hunter's reputation as a local expert on supernatural horrors may lead characters to approach her for guidance. At first she seems a helpful ally, until her enthusiasm and confidence lead the group into increasingly dangerous situations.

Abilities:

Occult (dice pool 4) — She knows her quarry well, though she sometimes forgets that there are few absolute truths when it comes to supernatural entities.

Stealth (shadowing, dice pool 4) — Whether tracking an undead monster or one of its minions, she makes certain her target remains unaware of her presence until it's too late.

Redeemed Killer

Quote: *You want that key? Go ahead and take it. It's not worth dying for. And I'm talking about you, not me.*

Background: Once he was a skilled warrior who neither reveled in killing nor flinched when a mission

required the taking of a life. Then something happened that overwhelmed his stoicism and shattered his worldview: a botched mission that required mass slaughter, perhaps, or an innocent life lost to his carelessness. First he wallowed in guilt and self-pity, forgoing all duties and discipline, then he vanished completely. Now he's back, and seems to have regained his center. But is he the warrior he used to be?

Description: The Redeemed Killer once favored gangsta or pseudo-military garb. But now his wardrobe is unremarkable, even bland. Close observation reveals clues to his violent past: small and large scars, a broken finger or nose that didn't heal exactly straight, haunted eyes that seem to always be scanning for enemies.

Storytelling Hints: The Redeemed Killer has made peace with his sins and is determined not to repeat them. He hasn't vowed never to kill again, but he will go to extraordinary means and make extreme sacrifices to avoid using lethal force, and urges others to do the same. Sometimes his capitulation to a weak foe or refusal to pick up a weapon makes him seem like a coward, or an unworthy ally. But he chooses his moment carefully, and when the time comes, his swift and decisive actions usually leave his enemies unarmed, unconscious or undone.

Abilities:

Empathy (dice pool 4) — Understanding the perspectives of others, even those of an enemy, is a cornerstone of the Killer's new philosophy.

Academics (religion, dice pool 4) — His quest for redemption has led the Killer to study a wide range of teachings on nonviolence.

Brawl (disarming techniques, dice pool 5) Still a formidable fighter, the Killer now focuses on methods for de-escalating potentially lethal combat.

Scornful Doctor

Quote: *Existence is war. Do you have to be such an idiot at choosing your battles?*

Background: The Scornful Doctor is a skilled healer who wishes his skills weren't in such high demand. While he acknowledges that violent conflict can be necessary to achieve a greater good, he doesn't hold much faith in the ability of most mages to tell the difference between worthy goals and selfish desires. He's seen so much spilled blood and treated enough fractured minds and souls to know that even the Arrow leadership isn't above using the tools of warfare for petty or personal gain. And he finds that it's usually the inexperienced and idealistic who get sacrificed in crusades launched by the unworthy.

Description: With a passion for healing and little interest in anything else, the Scornful Doctor is rarely seen without the garb and tools of his trade. He may be dressed in OR scrubs, an EMT uniform or even the accouterments of a priest, rabbi or other spiritual healer.

Storytelling Hints: Characters whose survival depends on immediate aid, or who can't be helped by mundane treatment, may call on the Doctor for help. If their injuries are the result of their own bad choices, the characters can expect treatment to be accompanied by a stinging rebuke, as well as a demand the mages address the repercussions triggered by their conflict. In return for his services, the Doctor may require his patients to assist him on a difficult quest for arcane healing knowledge. Some mages say they'd rather risk bleeding to death than listen to one of the Scornful Doctor's lectures. But others claim his outlook inspires them to find subtler solutions to problems that can't be solved through direct force.

Abilities:

Medicine (Surgery, Trauma Medicine, or Psychiatry, dice pool 5) — His opinions may put him at odds with conservative Arrow factions, but the Doctor's healing prowess is above reproach.

Oratory (Motivational Speeches, dice pool 3)

The strength of his convictions sometimes enables the Doctor to defuse hostilities or convince listeners to reconsider violent tactics.

Survivalist

Quote: *Want some beans? Not that can, this one. Those are the old beans, back from '99 when I thought the Eschaton was coming.*

Background: She was 15 when the Berlin Wall came down, but she wasn't going to let that blunt her precocious interest in bomb shelters, back issues of *Soldier of Fortune* and surplus rations. Anyone on the outside could see that it was a reaction to an unsettled life. Her mother picked up odd jobs from town to town, and her absent father was supposedly "away in the army." She Awakened after parting ways with her mother to live in a "citizens militia" compound. At that moment, she knew the *real* reason she'd always loved guns and survivalism was that she was a reincarnation of a first-generation Atlantean exile. She made a play for leadership of the compound, and things got ugly, leaving eight corpses and a couple of craters in the woods. This drew the attention of the order. It trained her and tried to make her less antisocial, but once she finished her apprenticeship, she built herself a new compound on the ruins of the old. Now she hosts Arrows who need to hide out. She's a bit crazed and apt to say wildly offensive things (her old associates were white supremacists and even though she isn't consciously racist, some of their attitudes rubbed off on her), but she takes her vow to guard visitors very seriously. She has a strong teenage son, a bunch of attack dogs and a magically enhanced knack for explosives.

Description: Dressed in a mix of greasy hoodies, military surplus and homespun sweaters, the Survivalist keeps her hair tied back and her eyes behind big black sunglasses. She's always armed with a .45 automatic and a big knife, and makes a habit of patrolling the compound with an AR-15. She speaks either in monosyllables or long, bizarre tirades, with nothing in between. Sometimes they're meant for the ghosts of the men she killed.

Storytelling Hints: She's heavily armed and dangerously eccentric, but she'll lay down her life for the order, even if she won't actually leave her compound. She's convinced that the Awakened are entering the last days and thinks they're fools for not preparing. Characters encounter her when they need to hide out or grab supplies. Her compound contains years

of hoarded objects, yielding everything from minor magical trinkets to lots and lots of tinned food.

Path: Moros

Abilities:

Secure the Perimeter (dice pool 8) — Between the ghosts, the dogs and her walks, not much can get by her. She easily detects trespassers and scares them away as fast as she can. If invaders ignore the haunting and get past the dogs, there are plenty of booby traps to catch them. If worst comes to worst, she'll shoot them and plant the bodies in her garden.

Blow Things Up (dice pool 8) — Matter spells and long practice give her the ability to scratch build bombs in a matter of minutes, though really big explosions require a bit more time. Even without magic, the compound has all the ingredients she needs to build crude bombs.

Jury Rig (dice pool 8) — The Survivalist believes that you can't rely on civilization to provide, so she's learned to fix her own plumbing, build her own shacks and keep her Jeep in working order. Magic helps her secure parts she'd normally have to order in.

Thug

Quote: *Not sure you want to answer my questions? Go ahead, think it over. You've got two minutes. And two eyes.*

Background: Dishing out bruises and broken bones is part and parcel of a warrior's work. But there are some Arrows who enjoy it a little too much. The Thug relishes combat not as a chance to test his skill or perfect his form, but for its opportunities to deal out pain. And if an opponent is too weak or inexperienced to put up much resistance, so much the better.

Description: Thugs who were bullies before they Awakened tend to have robust physiques that make it easy to throw their weight around. Those who developed a taste for cruelty after finding their Paths could look like anyone, except that their faces light up at the prospect of cracking heads.

Storytelling Hints: There are times when a blunt instrument is the right tool, so the order puts up with the Thug's brutishness while trying to guide him toward a more enlightened outlook. Nevertheless, the Thug knows that picking on the wrong victim will earn him a reprimand. So he waits for those moments when a bit of the rough stuff is called for, and gleefully acts with three times more force than necessary. As the



goals of the local caucus shift, the characters may find themselves on the receiving end of his brutality one day, and forced to work alongside him another.

Abilities:

Intimidation (dice pool 4) — Maybe it's the crazy look in his eyes, or that sadistic smile, but when he makes a threat, people believe him.

Weaponry (Improvised Weapon, dice pool 3) — Guns, knives and martial arts weapons are fine, but there's nothing as satisfying as smashing a guy's hand with a ball peen hammer.

Vidantus

Quote: No, no. If both of you can bilocate, then you don't need this formation. You can trap them in enfilade. It's different, killing with sorcery, but I suppose you'll find that out for yourselves.

Background: She Awakened young and ready to fight. Prodigies like her were rare even in the Adamantine Arrow. She could seamlessly weave together large-scale plans, magic and personal combat into one pervasive way to win. The order put Talons under her command and sent her on missions where her talents were the only thing that ensured survival, much less victory. She learned to stay on the move, following Adamant Sage commands. She stopped making friends, because anyone she knew would either die by her side or would be left behind when she moved on.

She can't pinpoint the exact cause of her decision to turn Vidantus. She'd seen a lot of people die, sure, but she didn't dream about it or anything. But one day, she picked up her gun to pack it for a new mission and thought, *The next person I'll shoot with this is me.* The feeling didn't go away, so she left her guns, her missions and her order behind. Her legendary strategies are well-known, and she even enjoys talking about them in the abstract, but she's vowed to never use them again.

Description: She dresses in subdued colors and her hair's shot through with gray, but scarred hands and a clear-eyed alertness hint at her old skills. She's thin and a bit soft from lost muscle tone because she doesn't follow her old regimen any more.

Storytelling Hints: This Vidantus is extremely knowledgeable. She'll help Arrows who ask, but never looks pleased about it. She's a pleasant woman who lives alone, in a small house, a few rusted knives and guns a testament to her former pursuits. She leads an ascetic life and meditates for a time before she answers any questions.

Path: Acanthus

Abilities:

Supernatural Lore (dice pool 8) — She's an accomplished Acanthus, but her understanding extends to other Watchtowers and

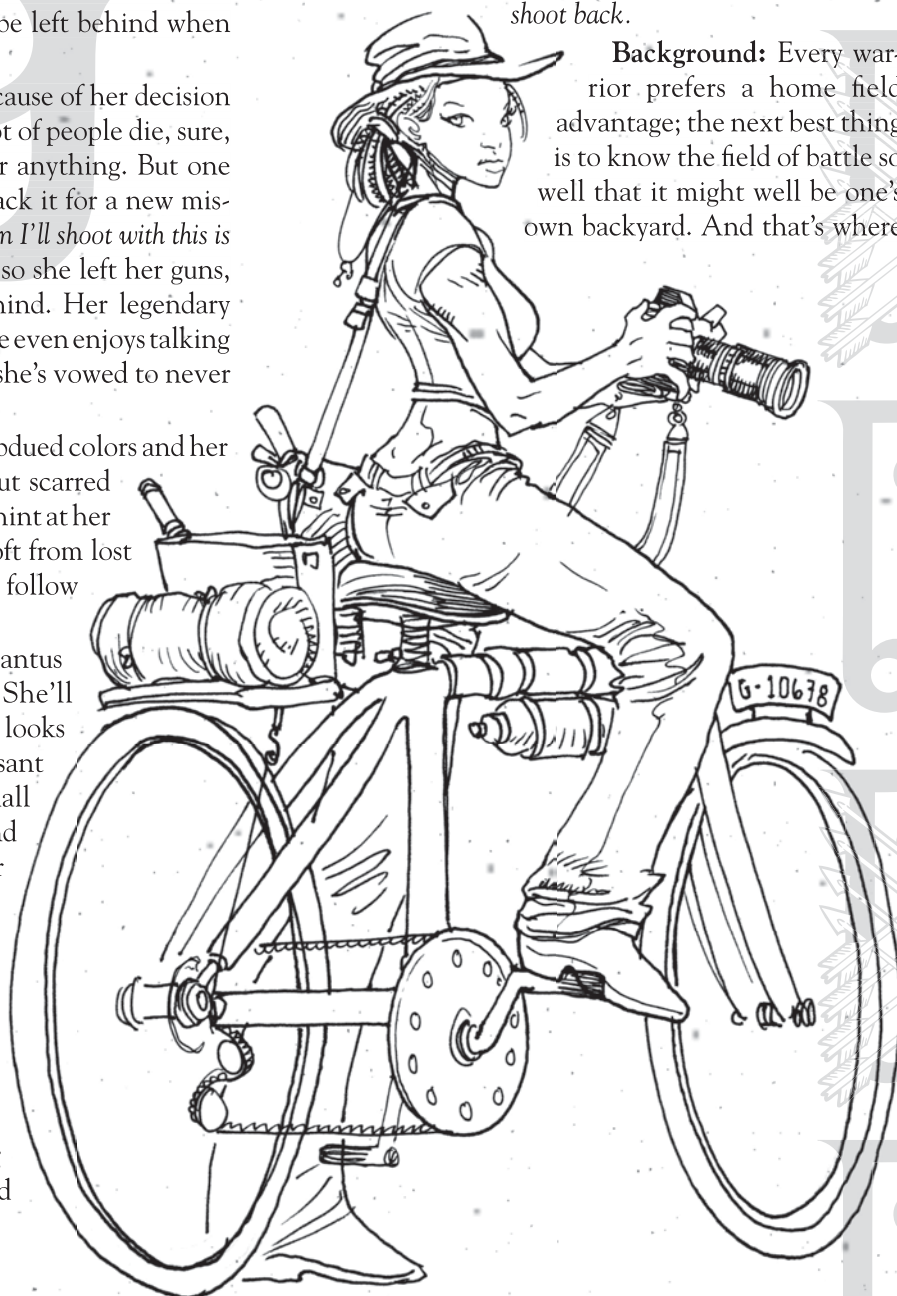
supernatural phenomena. She has a system for rating the threat level and tactics of various spells, entities and scenarios that's surprisingly accurate, even when non-Awakened beings come into the mix.

Strategy (dice pool 9) — The Vidantus is an excellent strategist. She can create a fully developed operations plan in little more than the time it takes to understand the players, stakes and acceptable risks — well, risks that would be acceptable to other Arrows, at least.

Wandering Scout

Quote: Hold your fire for thirteen minutes. Then the sun will be over the bridge, the light will hit those windows and the glare will make it harder for them to shoot back.

Background: Every warrior prefers a home field advantage; the next best thing is to know the field of battle so well that it might well be one's own backyard. And that's where



the Scout comes in. A trained observer and master infiltrator, she can get close enough to size up an antagonist's strengths and weaknesses, or to assess the tactical challenges of storming a vampire-infested nightclub or Banisher cult stronghold. Often her surveillance missions are combined with orders to sabotage or soften up a target.

Description: The Scout lives by the KISS mantra: Keep It Simple, Stupid. She travels light, relying on wits and personality and carrying simple equipment to help her gather the intel she needs: a notepad, a camera, topographic maps, cash for paying off informants. She dresses in durable, functional clothing suitable for her surroundings.

Storytelling Hints: The Wandering Scout prefers to stay on the move. If an assignment strands her in one place for a while, she may get bored and offer assistance to a local cabal in order to test or hone her skills (especially combat skills, which she doesn't get to exercise as often as other Arrow mages). If a cabal's sanctum is within the area she's scouting, she may trade for information — or decide to temporarily move the characters out of her way.

Abilities:

Survival (dice pool 5) — An extended stay in a remote or hostile environment is all part of the job for the Scout.

Streetwise (dice pool 5) — As at home in the 'hood as in the jungle, she can easily tap the resources of an urban setting to get the job done.

Stealth (dice pool 4) — Often the best way to observe is to remain unobserved.

Combatants

Recce Scout

Quote: *Of the five on the other side of the ridge, I figure three think they're on a hunting trip, but the other two never adjusted their sights before they left camp. Plus, the plants they step on turn all dead and brown about an hour later.*

Background: Robert Hope (don't call him Bob!) grew up in northern Ontario, dividing his time between bush parties and hunting until his 18th birthday. He was an expert outdoorsman, but didn't think much of it, since he was only a bit better than his friends. Given a choice between trapping, mining and the Canadian Forces, he chose the CF. Unfortunately that

was after September 11th, 2001, so he was destined to serve in Afghanistan. Two years later, a car bomb blew shrapnel into his spine and knocked him into a coma — and Awakening.

He returned to the living world four months later, but the time hadn't passed in a flash. He'd spent that time wandering the Thyrsus Watchtower, tracking animals, spirits and plants that represented parts of his broken body. He surprised everyone by waking up whole and able to walk; tests couldn't even find the shrapnel. They still discharged him, so he set off for home.

The order recruited him on his way back north. He wasn't eager to join at first. When he saw the horrors that stalked the Shadow, it turned his opinions around a bit, but he only became a true believer when he realized that evil spirits often *knew* he saw them. He decided he'd rather be a soldier again than a victim. Once he hit Talon rank, he finally got back to the bush, but this time, he was a scout for mages who needed to visit remote areas. He took his shadow name from his job.

Description: Recce's a stocky man. He's got short, powerful arms and legs, a bit of a gut, long, curly wiry hair, a bushy goatee and a practical style: flannel when it's cold, denim when it's warm. He carries a shotgun when he can get away with it. His movements don't betray his old wounds, but scars on his arms, legs and back do.

His nimbus is a white light with dark blue and green shapes, like the moon shining through a thick stand of trees.

Storytelling Hints: Recce's a plain-spoken man with an eye for detail. He doesn't make a big deal out of his survival skills and will make amazing observations about his surroundings in a deadpan, conversational tone. He's an easygoing guy who lets things slide — to a point. If somebody truly pisses him off, he'll either wander off (which can seriously affect unprepared mages in the wild) or smack the offender around. Recce can be very quiet on the trail, but he hates ambushes. That's fine for hunting deer, but it dishonors people. He'll never forget how an anonymous bomb nearly took his life. He won't have anything to do with that kind of "cowardice," but he won't stop Arrows who will.

Real Name: Robert Hope

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Adamantine Arrow

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3



Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Investigation (Wilderness) 3, Medicine 1, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 3, Survival (Woodland) 4, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Bears) 2, Intimidation 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Danger Sense (••), Direction Sense (•), Iron Stamina (•••), Resources (•)

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 7

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Sloth

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Gnosis: 1

Arcana: Life 2, Spirit 2, Fate 2

Rotes: Life — Self-Healing (••); Spirit — Exorcist's Eye (•), Coaxing the Spirits (•), Lesser Spirit Summons (••)

Mana/per turn: 10/1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool	Special
Hunting Knife	1(L)	1	5	
Shotgun	4(L)	2	8	9 again

Armor: 2 ("Organic Resilience," Death ••)

Mizong

Leader of the Hunt, Devourer of the Flesh

Quote: *You better run.*

Background: Tricky, fast and badass: Mizong (Mandarin for "Lost Track") wanted to be all that and more as soon as he hit puberty. He dropped out of high school to be a live-in disciple for a hung gar kung fu master, and then dropped out of Hung Gar to learn Muay Thai. He repeated the pattern for Brazilian jiu-jitsu, battōjutsu and kali. He was already a skilled, if obsessed, fighter when he Awakened. The Mysterium found him, but there was never any question about the order he would eventually join.

He didn't really want to broaden his horizons beyond the martial arts so he had a difficult apprenticeship, but his skills couldn't be denied. The order encouraged him to form the Hunt cabal and use his abilities to protect travelers. At the fringes of the order, he could hone his skills on genuine danger instead of stirring up trouble in a local caucus.

Somewhere, somehow, his cabal uncovered the secrets of the Devourers of the Flesh. There was no teacher. Instead, the Hunt pieced together soul-twisting customs from fragments of parchment and the mad ravings of enemy cannibals. It was Mizong's idea to adapt the rites when his companions determined that there was nothing *innately* Abyssal about them. The first feast saved their lives. The second was revenge, served against the cultists who'd attacked them.

They didn't have an excuse for the third.

Mizong now feels like he's shattered through a barrier to ultimate mastery. He's faster, stronger and thinks at a mile a minute, with a mania he can barely contain. He's always hungry, but he believes in discipline, so the Hunt will feast only on challenging targets, who are capable of testing the cabal close to the point of destruction. That will make them all stronger. But sometimes, he has unusual dreams and compulsions, as if cannibalism connected him to a subtle force. Visions encourage him to go to certain places and kill particular people. There's no pattern to it he can deduce and he doesn't sense any harm in it so far, but he keeps his dreams and urges a secret from the rest of the Hunt.

Description: Mizong's a whipcord-lean man with a shaved head and a bone needle through his septum. He wears big black boots, oversized cargo pants and a battered leather jacket. He doesn't wear a shirt on most days, so people can see his rock-hard physique — and puckered knife scars. He keeps a pair of pat-

tern-welded chef's cleavers in leather sheaths inside of his jacket. His overstated rivet head look might be cause for laughter if people didn't sense something "off" about him. He doesn't blink often enough, and his teeth are jagged, yellow and rotten. The skin on his hands is scaly, and his nails are black and cracked: physical signs of growing spiritual corruption. Half of it comes from deteriorating personal hygiene, but half comes from subtle magic, as his soul twists his body.

His nimbus is a pattern of rapidly twisting red slashes.

Storytelling Hints: Mizong is a straightforward combat challenge and an example of how far Arrows can fall when they concentrate solely on perfecting their personal combat skills. Visions he doesn't understand influence him, creating an opportunity for you to use Mizong to foreshadow other supernatural antagonists. Mizong may be obsessed with martial arts and personal strength, but he's quite adept at manipulating the situation to make those skills the deciding factor whenever he appears. He enlists other members of the Hunt to rain down wards and counterspells, or approaches Arrows under the guise of a "friendly sparring match."

Real Name: Chad Jones

Path: Obrimos (Devourer of the Flesh)



Order: (Former) Adamantine Arrow

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult (Martial Arts Esoterica) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Survival 3, Weaponry (Heavy Blades) 4

Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (False Identity) 3

Merits: Fast Reflexes (••), Fighting Finesse (Butterfly Sword/Cleaver), Fighting Style: Kung Fu (••••), Fighting Style: Grappling (••), Fighting Style: Two-Weapon Fighting (••)

Willpower: 5

Wisdom: 1 (Derangements: Megalomania, Fixation, Paranoia)

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 14

Health: 8

Gnosis: 3

Arcana: Death 2, Forces 3, Life 2, Prime 2

Notes: *Death* — Decay (••); *Forces* — Kinetic Blow (••), Personal Invisibility (••); *Life* — Body Control (••); *Prime* — Counterspell Prime (••)

Legacy Attainments: 1st: Mask the Hunger

Mana/per turn: 12/3

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool	Special
Cleaver 2(L)	2	12		9 again on attacks targeting specific body parts (as Kukri; see World of Darkness: Armory , pp. 22–24).

Armor: 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••), +1 versus bashing attacks (Kung Fu)

Pallas

Wandering Adamant Sage

Quote: Enemies surround you, but you're not trapped. You're fortified, concentrated and bound — like atoms of a brilliant diamond! The Ruling Council is dead. The libraries are ash and ruin. They stole, shattered and defiled everything we loved, but those were the very things that kept us apart. There no grimoires, territories or Hallows to fight over and so, you are no longer divided! Talon,



wing, eye, voice, and yes, even the Nameless creativity in the soul of the Dragon, all unite at last. This is not your darkest hour — it is the hour of the Dragon!

Background: She'd always loved fighting, even though it got her kicked out of half a dozen private schools. After the last one, her rich parents disowned her, so she drifted around Europe, following civil discontent as a way to express the anger that has always boiled within her. So in 1968, Katherine Garamond Awakened at the wrong end of a Paris cop's baton. She'd fallen in with the Situationist International and protests against the de Gaulle government, but to be honest, she was more interested in the fight than the issues.

She drifted through the radical community, working little miracles to earn her keep in the underground. It took a year for her to realize she was being watched. She assumed her parents had sent them, but after batting aside her weak magic and kidnapping her, they introduced her to the Adamantine Arrow. She formally took her apprenticeship at the Lion Gate

of Mycenae, became Pallas and never used her old name again.

Disguised as a man, she served in the French Foreign Legion. In an Asian body, she fought beside the Vietcong, and in another false identity, she treated the Americans she'd maimed in combat. In the Falklands, at West Point and even on Baltimore gang turf, she went undercover and studied battlefields, combatants, motives and strategies, searching for a common tread that would teach her about primal anger and violence, to understand the order's mission — and her own, buried rage — as best she could. She spent the first decade of her training studying how people fight, the second studying why and the third, formulating her own code of honor. In that last decade, she transformed from a lifelong student into a true defender of the order, earning a reputation for saving Arrows in grave situations.

In 1998 she said that she's completed her ethical studies. Then she disappeared for five years. When she returned, she spoke, moved and dressed differently. Some Talons said she'd gone to study under an archmage, but others believed that she'd gone to the Abyss to do battle with her own dark reflection. She spoke of "seeing a threshold, but refusing to cross it — until the perfect moment." Pallas accepted the title of Adamant Sage in 2003. Most Arrows believe she should have been named one as far back as the late '80s. Nobody doubts that she's a true Adamant Sage, worthy of the ancient title.

Description: Pallas is 58 years old but except for her flowing white hair, looks a vigorous 40, lean, bright-eyed and tall. She wears black, white and crimson — nothing else. Her standard outfit consists of a jacket with a Nehru collar, loose pants and scuffed, patched parade boots.

Pallas carries a spear with a silver blade called Mote: a five-dot Artifact and two-dot Enhanced Item that sears magical perceptions with intense Fate Resonance. Mote is the doom (see "Forge Doom," **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 159) of anyone with a Morality of 5 or less — or is the user's doom if it's used against anyone with a Morality of 8 or higher.

She has a nimbus of strange, moving shadows of runes that appear Atlantean, but defy translation. Strokes and shapes resemble symbols for "doom," "destiny" and "god," but with elaborations that indicate a modified meaning for each.

Storytelling Hints: Pallas is the Arrow's "white wizard" and one-woman cavalry. She appears when all hope is lost to lead mages to victory. Remember,

though, that she only comes to turn the tide in situations where even she could not prevail alone. She unites mages from all orders. Arrows are her natural lieutenants, but she treats all Awakened with respect if they follow the path of Wisdom. Her magic gives her the ability to arrive whenever she's truly needed or to direct players' mages to places they need to be. As an Acanthus Master, she's keenly aware of destiny and might be acting at the behest of a higher power.

Real Name: Katherine Garamond

Path: Acanthus

Order: Adamantine Arrow

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 6, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Strategy and Tactics) 5, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 4, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Drive 1, Brawl 3, Firearms 4, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Weaponry (Pole Arms) 5

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Spoken) 5, Intimidation 4, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Fighting Style: Adamantine Hand (Fate; ...) Fighting Style: Kung Fu (...), Fighting Style: Grappling (...) Fighting Style: Sojutsu (...), Status: Adamantine Arrow (...), Weaponry Dodge

Willpower: 9

Wisdom: 9

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 13

Health: 9

Gnosis: 6

Arcana: Fate 5, Life 4, Mind 2, Prime 3, Time 5

Rotes: *Fate* — The Perfect Moment (...), Sanctify Oaths (...), Forge Godsend (...); *Life* — Self-Purging (...), Honing the Form (...), Many Faces (...); *Mind* — Emotional Urging (...); *Prime* — Transform Aura (...); *Time* — Postcognition (...), Acceleration (...), Divination (...), Present as Past (...)

Mana/per turn: 15/6

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool	Special
Mote	4	4	14	Targetsuffers"Forge Doom" effect.

Armor: 5 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ...; using Adamantine Hand, Pallas can increase this to 7 against one attack, but this reduces the spell's protection to 2 versus all others), +1 versus bashing attacks (Kung Fu)

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