

LEGACIES

the Ancient



the World of Darkness

MAGE
THE AWAKENING

WELCOME TO OUT OF JOINT

A LGBT FRIENDLY CONVENTION

PROGRAM CONVENTION GUIDE ●●●

Shekhina decided she would never eat corn again. The thought of corn was now, after three days of driving through Indiana, inextricably mixed with the smell of cow shit. She lamented the loss of corn from her diet. Just as for any Midwestern girl, corn on the cob with enough butter and salt to kill a lesser mortal was a summertime staple. But the cow shit smell was a deal-breaker.

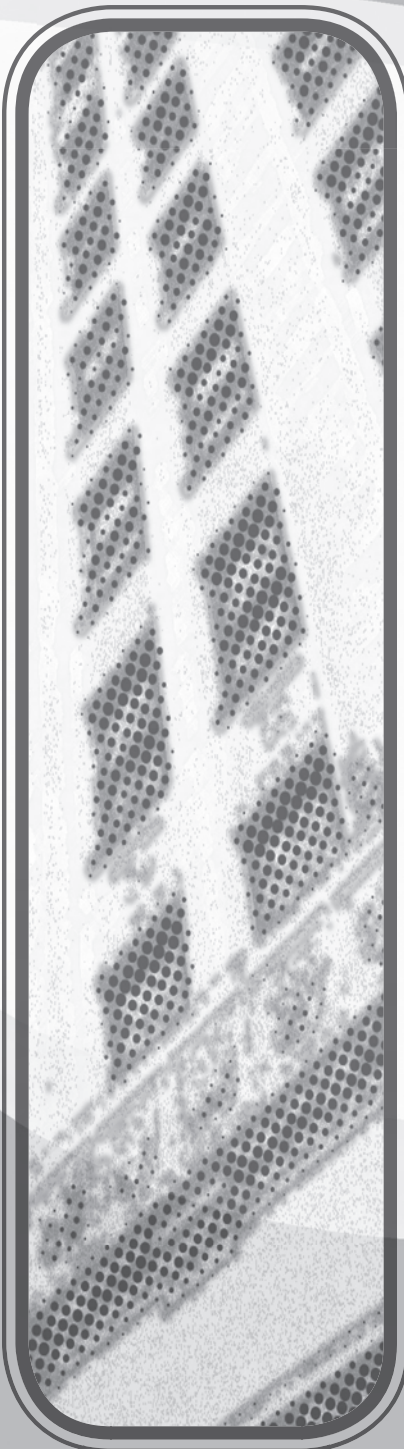
She adjusted her mirror and dropped her hand between the seats, reaching once again for the gearshift and starting for a second, and then remembering that she was driving a rental. Her own car was safe in a garage somewhere in Cleveland, looked after by a friend of her tutor. Francis had advised her to rent a car when going to a strange city for the first time. A rental car wouldn't have the same connections to her, and an enemy would find it harder to track her, should he get hold of her vehicle. Shekhina understood very little of magical sympathy, but she did trust Francis.

She sat up straighter, as she always did when she thought of him. She peered ahead into the setting sun, trying to find some hint, some vestige of the glory of the Aether in this Fallen World. She saw nothing, only streams of gas and color that lit up the Indiana sky. A Sleeper would have found the sunset beautiful, but Shekhina had seen *true* beauty. She licked her lips and glanced to the side of the road. Up ahead was a vegetable stand with a hand-painted sign declaring "WE HAVE FRESH CORN!!" The smell of cow shit filled her nostrils again, and her lips curled. The farmer was closing up the stand, and no one else was around.

Shekhina heard her mentor's voice advising patience, reminding her that choosing suitable subjects was crucial. She glanced back at the sun, trying to let the meager light fill her need to see glory, but she couldn't bear it. She spun the wheel and pulled into the gravel drive, stepped out of her car and stretched.

"Just closing up," she heard the man say, "but if you've got cash, I could sell you something." She walked over to him and looked down at the corn. The smell was still there. She tried to keep from making a face. She turned to him and tried, as usual, to think of an excuse to touch him so as to cast the spell. And as usual, she didn't have any ideas that didn't seem corny or obviously false. She simply leaned forward and put her small, pale hand on his massive, leathery paw.

He might have gasped as the spell took hold, but she couldn't hear over the horrible sucking sound as his soul moved slightly out of place. Her nimbus rose up, bright and beautiful, a glorious firebird longing to



fly over the fields and burn them to cinders. She stared into the gap between his soul and his body, and saw therein the Ones Before, the beauty and power of the true race of the Aether. This man, this simple farmer with tobacco under his lip and shit on his boots, contained within him the pattern to recreate the greatest power in history, if only Shekhina could see it, could remember it

And it was gone. The man staggered backward, a brown lump of slimy gunk dribbling from his mouth. "You . . ." She knew how he felt. She had been through it.

Shekhina shook her head. *Waste of time. He's the wrong kind of subject.* "You'll be fine. Just do what you do." She walked back to her car, and drove on toward Indianapolis.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION ●●●

"Did you feel that?" Vagus realized what a stupid question that was immediately after he said it. Of course she didn't feel it, she was a Sleeper. Fortunately, the situation was such that the question had another obvious context.

"Yeah," she whispered, and pulled him close. Vagus pulled his thoughts away from what he'd sensed and concentrated on her. They had started out on a blanket, but she had squirmed and bucked so much that they were on the bare earth now, black dirt staining their skin, cornstalks hovering over them like voyeurs. Vagus rolled over and pulled her on top of him again. Seeing her face and body framed by the setting sun would keep him in the moment. She sat back and pushed her hips down, driving him deeper into her, and leaned back, drinking in the sunlight, the air, the scent of earth.

Vagus reached up and ran his fingers over her nipples, wondering if she would giggle and recoil or revel in the sensation. She didn't moan or change her rhythm, but he felt her become wetter, and so he thrust upward, trying to make her gasp. She didn't — the experience was all too new, and she was trying to cope with the sensations too much to respond to any one. *And that was fine, thought the mage, that's what this trip is about, reveling in the new.*

He put his arms around her back and sat up, and then slid his hands under her to help her control her motion. She wrapped her arms around him and dug her nails in, but her nails were short, bitten, farm-girl nails, and Vagus barely noticed. She kissed his neck frantically, and started to buck her hips, so Vagus simply gripped her harder and tried to stay inside her. She had already come twice, but Vagus felt her climax beginning again, felt her breathing grow quick and frantic, and this time he decided to come with her.

He opened his eyes at the height of it, and over her shoulder, somewhere across the cornfield, he saw a pillar of fire rising up. His eyes widened in fear, but her eyes were shut tight, so he shut out the image, burying his face into her hair and letting himself come, giving himself over to her, taking her as his home, even for the briefest of moments.

When he opened his eyes again, the fire was gone. They fell to the ground, and the girl traced her fingers down his chest. He knew what was coming, and dreaded it.

"You sure we're safe?" she said.

For perhaps the thousandth time, Vagus wished he could tell a Sleeper the truth. "Yes, we're safe. I always take precautions." That line didn't work well on more citified girls, but this young woman — now less than an hour past her virginity — didn't question it. She nestled close to him.

"You want to come stay with me?"

Damn, he thought. "I can't. I have to get to Indy tonight." *Please don't ask why.*

"How come?" *Fuck.*

"I have to meet some people." That was as close to the truth as he could get. If she pressed, he would have to lie. Vagus hated lying. He held his breath, hoping she'd let it go, hoping this would be enough, that she wouldn't give in to her urge to try and keep him.

She didn't. They held each other for a long while, and then they rose, dressed and parted ways. She walked back toward her father's farm. Vagus watched her go, thinking about the impression they'd left on this part of the cornfield. Would another mage, someday, stop here and feel what they had done? Would that girl's children, should she ever have them, pause here without knowing why,

unconsciously feeling the moment their mother became a woman? Vagus shrugged. While he could have glimpsed it, the future was taboo to him, and he considered it a grievous slap in Fate's face to peek ahead more than a few seconds. He turned and walked toward the road.

He could get a ride into town if he nudged Fate a bit, but he decided to do it the old-fashioned way for a while. He started walking west, thumb outstretched when he saw cars, but not really caring if they stopped. He was thinking about the pillar of flame he'd seen. It was obviously someone's nimbus. Vagus supposed that people in rural Indiana had to Awaken, too, as amusing as he found that notion. But it wasn't the fact that someone was using magic here that bothered him. The magic had been bright fire and brilliant lights in the sky, but had carried the unmistakable chill of Death.



REGISTRATION FEES ●●●

John moved another foot forward in line. For perhaps the thousandth time that day, he wished he'd sent in the pre-registration form. At the time, he hadn't cared about the 10 dollars he'd have saved, but he hadn't realized the sheer number of people this event would attract. The line stretched out the door and down the sidewalk, and the people — almost all male — stood in the August sun, sweating, stinking, chatting and griping about not having pre-registered.

Feeling a buzz in his pocket, John pulled out his cell phone. The screen on the phone's face read, "new txt msg." He flipped the phone open, saw that the message was from his sister and closed the phone. She had sent him at least four messages a day since learning that he was going to the convention, all with some variation on "I'm praying for your soul!" or "Gays burn in hell!"

I'm not gay, he thought. *I just . . .* his gaze wandered to a group of men standing in a patch of shade. They all wore black T-shirts and were all muscular, their hair cut short and their skin a smooth bronze. John imagined them working outside, cutting lawns or painting houses or whatever they might have done to get those even colors, and his face flushed. He looked down at the heels of the woman standing in front of him, and moved another few steps as she did.

Aren't gay men supposed to be thin? he thought. *Aren't they clean and pretty and smart?* He knew that the gay culture in his hometown consisted only of the occasional scandal, like when the track coach at his high school supposedly got caught jerking off one of his students in his office. The notion of a culture in which men who wanted sex with other men could be visible, could be known for who they were, was not something John could wrap his mind around. He was still struggling with the "gay" part.

Another few feet. The woman in front of him was wearing a T-shirt with some kind of list on the back. John was pretty sure the top said "Top 10 Things" followed by something in a strange font, but he'd left his glasses in the car. He'd have to back up to read the shirt, and he didn't think that was advisable. The line had become a collective, a living organism, and it closed gaps as surely as a scab formed over a wound.

VALET PARKING ●●●

As Shekhina drove by the convention center, she gawked at the line. She was glad she'd sent her fee in early. Now her main concern was finding parking. Despite Francis insisting that she make this trip, he'd only advanced her enough to cover her hotel. She drummed her fingers on the steering wheel and tried not to think ill of him.

Francis was her teacher and her best friend. Why, then, did it feel like he wasn't expecting her to return from this trip? *That's ridiculous*, she thought, dry-mouthing two more aspirin. Driving always gave her a headache, and her moment of weakness with that farmer hadn't helped. *He's sending me here because he knows my research, and there will be a lot of—*

She had a hard time even thinking it. She wasn't sure why. She'd never really known one, much less interacted with one. Shekhina was forced to admit, if pressed, that her disdain for homosexuals might well stem from her upbringing. Not from her parents, of course — they were what Shekhina

liked to call the “tolerant ignorant,” people with no idea what their faith meant or its history and thus no idea what its moral requirements were. But Michigan, most of the Midwest, was still united in its discomfort over gays, university life aside. Shekhina remembered she had once returned to her car to find a young man applying a rainbow bumper sticker. She didn’t know if he’d meant to put it on his car or if he was just applying the stickers randomly, and she hadn’t bother to find out. Excited to find a test subject who was obviously passionate about his sexuality, she’d looked at his soul, and then watched as the man had wandered, dazed, into traffic. Idly, she wondered if he’d survived the collision.

Shekhina pulled into the Omni parking circle and took her overnight bag from the backseat. She didn’t have much money, but some luxuries she was willing to pay for. Valet parking was definitely one of them.

ACTIVITIES ●●●

Badge in hand, John collapsed on a bench outside the convention center. He’d been standing for just over three hours. The arches of his feet burned, his calves felt as though they’d give out if he took two more steps. He had been planning on catching a show in the movie room that night, but it was on the other end of the center, which was a good half-mile away. John wasn’t sure if he could make it.

The crack in his cell phone hadn’t stopped his sister from calling him. He’d actually answered once. The conversation had gone much as he’d thought it would. Pleasantries, and then the inevitable screaming. “You’re going to get AIDS! You’re going to *die* and go to *Hell*—”

He’d held the phone away from his ear, but she only ranted for a few more seconds before she hung up. Now, sitting on the bench rubbing his aching legs, John smiled. She couldn’t hurt him. She couldn’t hurt him unless she was willing to drive all the way out here and try to find him in this throng of people. He wouldn’t put it past her, but he still felt strong. John raised his head, took a deep breath and drew in the warm summer air.

John stood up and stretched, reached into his pocket and pulled out a crumpled, sweat-stained envelope. He opened it, pulled out the letter and reread what he’d written to himself. “John: Get laid at the convention. You have my permission. Love, John.”

He tucked the letter back in its envelope and started walking toward the movie room. *I can’t be the only gay guy here with a taste for anime*, he thought, smiling.

LOCAL EVENTS ●●●

Vagus offered the folks in the car gas money again, but they wouldn’t take it. He thanked them profusely, got out and waved as they drove on to their hotel. He leaned against the wall and snapped open his cigarette case. He allowed himself three cigarettes a day, and he was delighted to find that he still had one left. He rolled his own smokes, and part of his morning ritual was rolling and packing them. He’d gotten damned good at it over the years.

“Can I bum one of those?”

Never fails, thought Vagus. He sighed and looked over toward the voice. A slender young man in a loose blue shirt stood there, looking hungrily at the cigarette. “Yeah,” he said. “Just tobacco, though.”

“Oh, I know.” The man took the cig and lit it with a Zippo. Vagus cringed. His smokes were too well-made to be touched by butane flame. “What brings you?”

“Huh?”

“Here. What brings you? Just here for the con?”

Vagus peered at the man a bit more closely. He mentally formed the image of the man’s aura becoming visible, fading into view like the picture on an old TV set. And there it was — bright, shining colors, the red happiness over the smoke, the dark blue suspicion over meeting a stranger mage. *Must be a local*. “I’m not sure why I’m here, actually.”

The man rolled his eyes. “Let me guess. Trickster.”

Vagus wished he could take back the cigarette. “Call me Vagus.”

“Vegas? You a gambling man?”

Never heard that one before. “Not Vegas. Vagus. It’s Latin. It means ‘traveler.’”

"Hmm. Arthur." He cocked his head. "Isn't 'vagus' the name of a nerve?"

The Acanthus smiled. "Yep. Starts in the head and runs all through the body, bringing pleasure and new sensation." He stepped forward a little and dropped his gaze to the stranger's hips.

Arthur seemed to acknowledge the gesture, but didn't much appreciate it. He stepped back and spit. "Yeah, well, there's not much in the way of rules around here, not while there are this many people in town. Just don't do anything obvious or stupid, don't do anything to fuck with the con, and you'll be okay." He walked away hurriedly.

Vagus didn't respond. He was too busy trying to figure out why he'd approached Arthur that way. Vagus didn't go for guys.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS ●●●

Shekhina couldn't sleep. The notion that Francis was setting her up somehow had become an obsession. It would explain a lot. He'd been sending her out of town lately, which didn't make a lot of sense. There were plenty of gays right there at EMU. It was possible that he was embarking on his own research just at the moment and didn't want their combined activities to attract attention, but if that were the case, why not tell her?

She sat at the desk and made lists. She listed the number of times he'd smiled at her in the last month (lost count at 53). Number of times he'd hugged her (six). Number of times they'd fucked (four, ever — it generally wasn't that kind of relationship, but there were times when she needed to be with someone who *understood*). Number of times he'd given her magical instruction during the last month (two). Number of times he'd bought her dinner. Picked her up at school. Asked her about her day. Seemed sympathetic. Made eye contact.

This isn't healthy, some still-lucid part of her realized. She stretched her hand and heard the knuckles creak, and decided she should take a walk. She walked out into the hallway and heard the elevator doors open nearby. She was about to call out to hold it when she heard a woman start screaming.

"You're going to get AIDS! You're going to *die* and go to *Hell* and I'll be the one who has to talk at your *funeral*! And you know what I'll fucking say? I'll say my brother was a homo faggot who knew what he was getting into and you know what? *Fuck you, John!*"

The woman slumped against the wall clutching a cell phone and started crying. Shekhina stood in the doorway quivering with joy and anticipation. *Perfect. This must be why he sent me.*



MEETING AND GREET ●●●

Vagus was standing on the corner by the Omni Hotel, looking up at the windows, wishing he could fly. If he could fly, he would stare into every window until he found what he was looking for. He was still staring when the feeling hit him again — a brilliant flash of light and magic, followed by a cold chill and, this time, a sound of screams. "What the fuck?"

"What?"

Vagus turned and saw a man looking at him. The man looked about 20, and was a little too plump for the shirt he was wearing. He was squinting, and Vagus suspected that he must normally wear glasses. He carried a brown overnight bag similar to the one Vagus wore on his shoulders. "Sorry, not you," he glanced down at the man's badge, clipped to his belt, "John."

John walked over, cautiously. "You here for the con?"

"Not sure. You?"

The man smiled so shyly that Vagus almost blushed himself. "Kind of."

Vagus couldn't stop himself. He had been in this situation a thousand times, and this was the beginning. This was the electricity before the lightning, the charge between two people before true passion. He had never felt it with a man before, and he was amazed at how easy it was. He stepped closer and leaned close. "You're here for sex."

ROOM SERVICE ●●●

John's knees buckled. "Yeah, I am."
It can't possibly be this easy.

The man standing next to him was older, but he wasn't sure how much. His skin was tan, but it wasn't the smooth, even tan that he'd seen on the other men earlier. This tan was richer on the face and forearms, lighter underneath, and John realized that this man's tan was *real*. The man carried a leather rucksack and smelled somewhat like tobacco, but not the sickly, ashtray scent that his sister carried.

John meant to ask the man's name. Instead, he said, "I've got a room upstairs."

"Okay," said the man, and they walked into the hotel together.

CONCIERGE ●●●

"I can't tell you what room he's in." The man behind the counter was apologetic, but firm. Shekhina was growing impatient. Ellen, the gay's sister, was upstairs in Shekhina's room, curled up on the bed in tears. She hadn't taken well to the spell, but that was fine, because Shekhina didn't really need her. She'd simply assumed Ellen's face, hoping to talk the clerk into giving up her brother's room number. But now things were stalling.

"I told you, he's my brother. He needs his glasses. See?" Shekhina held up the thick glasses that Ellen had been carrying in her purse. "Can you just buzz his room, maybe? Tell him I'm here?"

The clerk smiled a false smile. "That, I can do." He punched a few numbers, and Shekhina concentrated, reading his muscle movements, the activity in his brain, the data his eyes collected. Room 1224. She started for the elevators. "Hey, don't you want to—"

"I just remembered his room number," she said. "Thanks for your help."

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES ●●●

The phone was ringing as John let them into the room. Vagus looked about lovingly. The room was still untouched, covers tucked in around the head of the bed, towels still on the rack. Only a suitcase on the floor gave any testimony to the room having a tenant. It was virginal, in a way, and that was perfect. *This is why I'm here*, he thought, and then creased his brow. He had the distinct feeling, just for a moment, that this *wasn't* why he was here. Then why?

John picked up the phone, then set it down, shrugging. "No one there. Probably my sister."

His tone made Vagus smirk. "You don't get along?"

John shook his head sadly. "Can we not talk about her?"

Vagus nodded, and walked toward him. Vagus reached up and pulled off John's hat and ran his hand through John's hair. The hand came back moist from sweat, and Vagus figured that he was pretty ripe from his day in the road, too. "Maybe we ought to shower."

He had meant separately, but John blushed, and said, "Okay, if that's what you want." And Vagus, never one to turn down happy circumstance, led his lover to the bathroom.

They undressed each other, Vagus gentle and deliberate, John stopping after every button and snap to look at Vagus for approval. They stood together in the garish white light, Vagus lean from the road and John round and sagging, and stared at the mirror. John looked at his body and Vagus saw the hate there, saw what must have been years of taunts and names, and put his hand over John's eyes. He kissed him on the back of the neck, and whispered something that he knew John wouldn't understand. One of the lightbulbs shuddered and died, and in the newly dimmed light, Vagus felt his lover relax.

They stepped into the shower and kissed. Vagus wondered if it had been three days or four since he last shaved, but John didn't seem to mind. John ran a hand down Vagus' side, and Vagus felt the grime of the road wiped away. He reached down and ran his fingertips over his lover's cock, and wondered if he should kneel down and suck it, or keep stroking. *When in doubt, do what you would like done to you*, he said, and kept kissing, keeping his grip firm around the shaft. He felt himself stiffening, and John reached forward and cupped his balls.

Vagus marveled again at how easy this was as he ran his tongue around John's ear. Vagus had only ever made out with a man once, and that had been years ago, before his Awakening. He'd

never felt the urge before, but this was natural, simple, and this *must be why I'm here*, he thought. John had crouched down and taken Vagus into his mouth. Vagus reached out to steady himself on the sides of the shower as John taught himself, working his mouth up and down, figuring out how deeply he could take Vagus.

This is not why you're here. Vagus' eyes snapped open and his body stiffened enough that John stopped and asked what was wrong. Vagus just shook his head and put his hand on John's cheek, and he opened his mouth to accept him again.

SURPRISE GUEST ●●●

Shekhina was standing outside the door, wondering how she might get in. Her magic didn't allow for manipulation of base matter or the vagaries of fate, and, therefore, locked doors were often a problem. She glanced around, but saw no one in the hall. She pressed her ear to the door and listened. The shower was running. *Perfect. Then he's alone.* This would be for the best. She would look past his soul, and he would have to change his ways, if he wanted to be whole again. No way could a gay realign his soul while still diddling men. Shekhina took a deep breath and called on her image, the vision of the Ones Before that sustained her. She felt herself grow strong, strong enough to rip the door from its hinges if she needed to. She pressed her shoulder against the door, whispered a phrase in High Speech, and scattered the sound of the breaking lock into a few faint creaks. She ducked into the room, and shut the now-broken door behind her.

There were a few bags on the floor, but other than that the room looked empty. Shekhina couldn't relate. She always unpacked everything she brought with her the minute she arrived. She hated empty drawers.

The water stopped. Shekhina moved into the room and stood by the bed, waiting for her subject.

EVENTS SCHEDULE ●●●

- 10 "It's okay, really," the man was saying, but John wasn't sure he believed it. It had been going so well, but then the man had just . . . stopped. John still wasn't sure what he'd done wrong. "I just need to get out, dry off and rest a little bit. I've been on the road — literally — all afternoon."
- 11 John wiped the steam from the mirror and took a towel from the rack. He must have looked upset, because the man stepped behind him and kissed the back of his neck again. John shut his eyes and moaned softly, feeling the man's cock rub against his buttocks. John licked his lips, thinking of the taste and the feel of it, and nodded. "Okay."
- 12 John stepped out of the bathroom, still dazed, towel over his shoulder, and flipped on a light. The last thing in the world he expected to see was Ellen.
- 1 He jumped back and clapped his hands over his crotch reflexively. "What the fuck are you doing here?"
- 2 The man came rushing out of the bathroom, tugging on his pants. John heard him mutter, "I fucking knew it" under his breath. Aloud, he said, "Who are you?"
- 3 John and Ellen both spoke at the same time. John said, "That's my sister." The woman said, "I'm Ellen."
- 4 The man looked dazed for a few seconds, and then looked at John. "That's not your sister," he said, with the voice of someone who knows his audience won't believe him.
- 5 "That's ridiculous," Ellen said, and John frowned. Something was wrong with her voice.
- 6 "You know it, John," said the man. "She's not. I can't explain it — God, I wish I could — but you need to go. Take your clothes, go and get hotel security. They can—"
- 7 He didn't finish. John only saw Ellen's hand lift and noticed she was palming a gold disc with a star on it. And then . . .
- 8 . . . John wasn't sure. He saw fire leap from the disc and strike the man, but nothing burned. He saw yellow-red flames spring up from Ellen, and suddenly she wasn't Ellen anymore, she was another woman, a woman with darker hair and paler skin. The man staggered, his chest scorched, and then launched himself at her, but she caught him by the throat and held him off the ground.
- 9 John ran. He pulled the towel around his waist as he ran, banging on doors, calling for security, but by the time he'd reached the end of the hall, he'd already forgotten the fire.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY ●●●

Vagus was hanging by his neck. The woman was gripping his throat with more strength than her body could possibly muster. "What . . . you . . ." he managed.

"Fuck you," she said, and the venom in her words hurt Vagus almost as much as the grip on his throat. "He got away."

She tossed him against a wall, and he fell to the floor. She started for the door. Vagus glanced at the bag that he'd dropped, and she tripped over it, crashing to the ground in a heap. Vagus jumped up, still gulping in pain, and drove his knees into her back. She pushed her palms against the floor and shoved backwards, throwing him into the air and across the table at the end of the room. He stood, trying to regain his balance, and she pointed the golden star at him again.

This is why you're here. He grabbed the ashtray off the table — was this a smoking room? The ashtray must have been left here by mistake — and flung it at her. The heavy glass disc struck her in the temple, and her arm jerked. The fire rushed out and struck the windows behind him, shattering them. Heavy sheets of glass fell, and Vagus felt something cold trace a path down his back and across his leg. He looked down to see a pool of blood spreading, and thought *that's growing way too fast.*

The woman stepped closer and seemed to have gotten taller. Vagus realized dimly that it was because he had collapsed.

CHECKING OUT

Shekhina was livid. Her temple ached. She knew this idiot had broken one of her ribs, and worst of all, her subject had escaped. She took a second to glance at the mage's wounds and guessed, with no small satisfaction, that he would bleed out in less than a minute.

She kicked him in the face, forgetting how strong she was. He spat out a tooth. *Oh, well, he'll be dead soon anyway.* "He got away," she repeated. "I hope you're happy."

He slumped backwards, slipping in his own blood. And then he smiled, and ran his fingers over his lips. "Yeah, I am," he murmured.

"What?" She knelt down close. If he still had the strength to attack, which she doubted, she'd see it coming a mile off.

"Happy," he said. "This is . . . why I'm here." He shut his eyes, took a deep breath and let it out. Shekhina felt his soul leave with it, and considered trying to catch it, but then she heard the sirens. It was time to go.

She gave herself a new face on the way down the stairs, one that she'd seen a few towns back. The police questioned her, but they had no reason to suspect her involvement. She didn't see John or his sister again. She guessed they were in a hospital, and that was fine. She started driving back that night, mentally preparing her report to Francis. She got halfway to the Ohio-Indiana border before she broke down and called him.

"It was a total waste of time," she said into the phone, hand clasped around the mouthpiece so tightly she could barely move her lips. "I didn't learn a thing."

A sigh. No response.

"Francis, I'm sorry, I just don't know what the point was. Why did you send me here?"

More silence, and then his voice, soft and sweet and so *sad* it nearly killed her. "You didn't —" He stopped, as though he was expecting her to know the question before it was asked. "I was hoping that you would learn something."

"What? Can you tell me? Do you want me to go back?" Shekhina was already making plans to find a hotel room, to find the other mage's body, anything, *anything* —

"No. Just come on back." He paused, and it sounded like he took a sip of something. *Mango Ceylon*, she thought, and could almost taste it herself. "It's too late now."

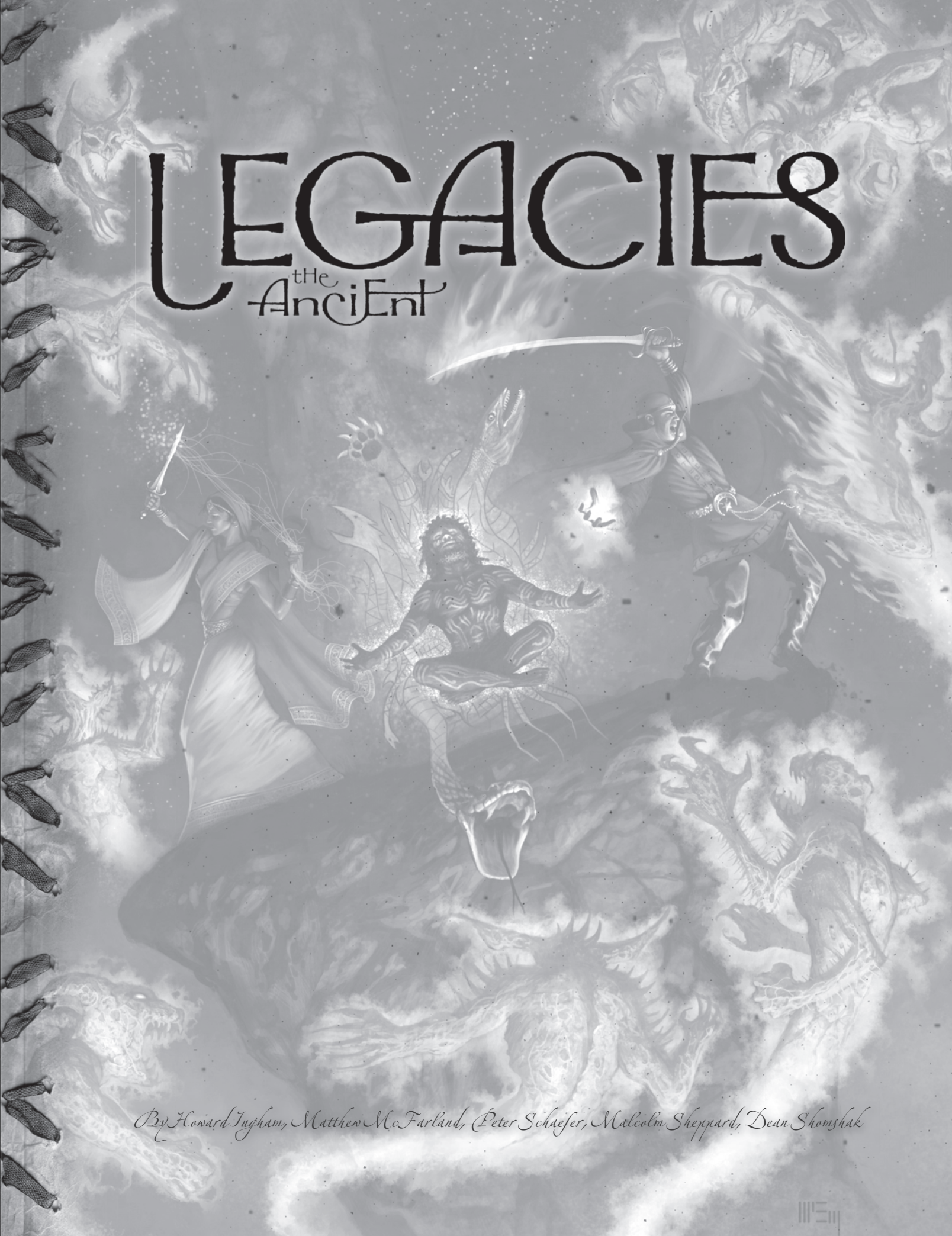
She stood holding the phone for a long moment, biting down on her tongue hard enough to draw blood, trying not to cry. Francis hung up without saying goodbye, and she knew he had never done that before. She staggered toward her car, feeling sick, feeling numb, dreading the long drive to Cleveland to get her car and then the long drive back to Michigan.

Shekhina looked out into the rest stop parking lot and saw two women standing under a tree. They were holding hands. As she watched, one of them, the younger, with short brown hair and even shorter fingernails, kissed the other on the cheek and walked off toward the bathroom. Shekhina stopped, then turned and followed her.

Maybe this one, she thought, mentally preparing the spell. *Maybe it's not too late.*

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By Howard Ingham, Matthew McFarland, Peter Schaefer, Malcolm Sheppard, Dean Shomshak



Credits

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COMING NEXT FOR MAGE

INTRUDERS: ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ABYSS



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LEGACIES™

the Ancient

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INTRODUCTION: LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY

*And always, they would be there:
unfree, untransformed, still seeking the ultimate deliverance,
still unforgiving of the angelic violation that had raped their spirits
and thrust their souls screaming into animal bodies.*

— William Irwin Thompson,
Islands Out of Time: A Memoir of the Last Days of Atlantis

Once a mage has come to understand the basic functions of his Awakened soul — that he can draw down Supernal laws to overcome the laws of the Fallen World through his understanding of the Arcana — and familiarized himself with the goals of whichever magical order he has joined (if any), he begins to wonder what comes next. For many, nothing is needed except further mastery of the Arcana and the rites of his order. For some, however, the soul is empty until it is shaped. The shaping of the soul is the next, greatest task to which an Awakened soul can commit.

And a commitment it is. Once undertaken, there is no going back. The soul retains the inscriptions the mage makes in it; they shall forever mark him. For this reason, a wise mage does not lightly choose the means by which he will forever mark his soul. While some do opt to go their own way, and experiment with their souls as the blank slate upon which they write whatever strikes their fancy, most turn to tradition, to the tried and true: to a Legacy.

The number of ways in which mages have shaped their souls throughout history is uncountable. Some methods are new, some old. And some are ancient. This book introduces some of the oldest, and some that are more recent attempts to claim ancient principles that have been lost.

These Legacies harken back to the times after the Fall of Atlantis, when mages were scattered and struggling to survive in far-flung places removed from their seat of civilization.

Some Legacies are perhaps even older, from before the dragons led humans to the lonely isle — from before traditional mage scholars even recognize the possibility of Awakenings. These Legacies represent discoveries mages made about the world with new eyes, unhindered by Atlantean creed and colored by the cultures and insights of Sleepers. Many Legacies have a tinge of the primordial about them, representing insights into the workings of the natural (and supernatural) world from outside of human culture — wisdom gleaned from “beyond the campfire.” These Legacies come from a time when mages literally wandered as exiles in the wilderness, forced to eke out a living in the world without the protection of their grand city and its advanced civilization.

Soul Work

Legacies II: The Ancient offers 13 new Legacies. Two are from the Left-Handed Path, and are probably unsuitable for play except as Storyteller characters.

The **Dreamspeakers** certainly seem to have the greatest claim to the most ancient of soulcrafting paths, being as they are found most frequently among indigenous peoples who still follow the old ways of their ancestors. In crafting their souls, they reach down (or inward?) to the Astral Planes, digging into the deepest strata to unearth the most ancient beings — the Dreamborn — who are said to have forged the world in the distant dawn of time. They largely ignore the Atlantean

heritage, and dare to reveal their powers to those Sleepers within their native cultures.

The **Elemental Masteries** are a shadow of the magical ways practiced by non-Atlanteans during the height of the island nation's reign. Although these practitioners are, for the most part, now well integrated into the Atlantean orders, they still hold to ideas born in cultures outside the Atlantean hegemony, including the need to live among and protect their Sleeper brethren. Each of these Legacies is based on a primal element, not just its material manifestations but also its symbolic meanings. To the practitioner of an Elemental Legacy, the two aspects — material and metaphorical — are not divided, but are one. The five Masteries are:

— **Tamers of the Cave**, who craft their souls in sympathy with the void, the element of ether, the raw nothingness. They have served as prophets and mystics throughout the ages, ever prepared to die the martyr's death so that others might be enlightened.

— **Tamers of Fire**, the passionate (and reckless) champions who have rallied armies to their causes. Throughout history, these mages have kept the fires of powerful ideals burning when others would abandon them for easier, if poorer, paths. In taming the "Fire," they tame both the flame that burns and the tumultuous tide of history.

— **Tamers of Rivers**, the healers and counselors, travelers and philosophers who bring compassion and succor to Sleepers, recognizing that the privilege of an Awakened soul does not obviate the need to minister to those who still Sleep. They flow from place to place, staunching the wounds of the world.

— **Tamers of Stone**, who do the hard work of building the edifices and monuments that last the ages. In working stone, they work their own souls to fine perfection. Closest to the "common" people, these "Craftsmen" have little time for the petty power plays of the elites, not when there is work to be done.

— **Tamers of Winds**, who seek to open the minds of Sleepers (and other mages) to the true. Facts often obscure what's really true, but the winds scour surface fads and reveal the true foundations. Those who let the winds scour their souls know the way to free others.

The **Forge Masters** believe that mages of their kind inspired the mythological motif of the crafter god, whether it be Greek Hephaistos or Yoruban Ogoun. These mages have always excelled in the crafting of enchanted items and especially the working of metals, including the secrets of the "perfected" metals of orichalcum, lunargent and others. Thus, other mages greatly respect the Forge Masters' lore — and are willing to pay good prices for its fruits.

The **Skalds** carry the banner of one of the world's oldest professions: the storyteller and songsmith. In the times after the Fall, the Skalds carried the collective memory of mage

culture in their oral tales and songs, until they could be recorded again in writing. Almost every Consilium welcomes a Skald and gives him a good place at their table . . . while also remaining wary of him, for a Skald's songs of mockery can ruin reputations across entire nations as the Skalds travel from one place to the next.

The **Sphinxes** don't pose riddles so much as solve them. The Sphinxes train their souls to travel down labyrinths of enigmas and twisting logic to find the center — the answer to a conundrum or mystery — while always knowing the way back no matter how many turns they take. The Sphinx sifts the patterns of Fate and sees the big picture, even if he doesn't always like what he sees.

The **Thread Cutters** know what destroyed Atlantis and aim to prevent it from happening again. To that end, they ascertain a person or institution's place in the great cycle, from Beginning to Being to Ending. If the first, they foster that person's growth. If the second, they help maintain stability. If the third, they ensure a timely end — even if they have to wield the knife themselves. Others despise the Thread Cutters, calling them assassins and hypocrites, but they know that someone's got to regulate destiny among mages who can so often thwart it.

The **Thrice-Great** watch the movements of the planets and stars and see in them the stately evolution of their own souls. As above, so below. While the rest of the world has forgotten these classic truths about the magical influence of stellar bodies, the Thrice-Great build alliances with planetary spirits. In so doing, they reconstruct the Celestial Ladder to the Supernal Realm of Aether.

The **Echo Walkers** have discovered how to perceive the Ones Before, the divine beings who once had sway over the world, and yearn for more glimpses of these shining exemplars. The problem is, the Echo Walkers have to stir a Sleeper's soul out of joint to gain such a view. The glimpse is brief, but the damage is lasting. The Echo Walkers tend to leave a trail of broken Sleepers behind them in their quest for divine communion.

The **Logophages** know that there are terrible secrets hidden in the world and that no matter how careful mages are to protect these secrets, they'll get out and damage others. The only way to truly protect a secret is to destroy it. The Logophage, or Secret Keeper as she calls herself, devours knowledge to save it, and gains a boost of power in the process. Of course, other mages hate Logophages with a passion — Supernal secrets are rare and precious, and represent a chance of escape from the Fallen prison. When they are destroyed for a short-lived power boost, other souls are denied this chance. Those who destroy secrets risk destruction themselves, from the hands of those they claim to be protecting.

DREAMSPEAKERS

The snake is in the tree. The snake is in your head.

The Dreamspeakers are eternal, but as new as the last dawn — an enduring Legacy that the so-called Primals say calls certain souls. That is why it exists in all times and places, adapting to the signs and legends of every society. Ironically, this has not given Legacy members a common purpose. In fact, they are some of the most fractious mages alive because they are devoted to their kin and community over other mages — including other Dreamspeakers.

The idea that magic is primarily a secret, intellectual practice is foreign to the mindset of the Legacy. Sleepers have known Primals for what they are ever since the first of them learned to communicate with the Dream. Dreamspeakers claim to have been the first mages and, among all others, closest to the original purpose of the Awakened. Other mages call the Dream “Astral Space,” and describe it as a place entirely separate from the rest of the universe: a kingdom of souls where powerful men and women can erect their own temples of fancy. Dreamspeakers believe this is an arrogant, ignorant and dangerous worldview.

According to the Legacy, the whole Dream was once an intrinsic part of human existence. Hunters couldn't kill their prey unless they knew its place in the Dream, and to learn anything, a respectful person needed to walk the Dream until they found a place where that lore played itself out in living myths. Most importantly, the Dream's inhabitants were the creators and rulers of the world. Long ago, they walked the physical world, living out epics that the Dreamspeakers preserve through their oral teachings. After a time, the Dreamborn grew bored or tired with creation. They retreated to the deep Dreamtime where they were born.

Mysterium anthropologists have their own theories about the Dreamspeakers, but Primals pay those mages little heed. Drawing from Sleeper theories, mystagogues believe that a Dreamspeaker learns to communicate with the deepest parts of her own consciousness. These regions are inextricably linked with the Astral Plane, extending beyond personal dreamscapes into the primordial symbols of human consciousness. Mystagogues believe that Dreamspeakers learn to extend the Awakening into the so-called primitive regions of the brain,

such as the limbic system. Dreamspeakers find this unlikely because, to them, the Dream existed before humanity. Human dreams reflect the Astral Dream, not the other way around.

Dreamspeakers believe that the potential to join their Legacy is almost always innate. Men or women with the fire of the Dream must join the Legacy or live in madness, unable to understand why they are plagued by visions and voices. Although some mages risk their sanity to open this potential within their souls, this is not seen as a particularly laudable thing. After all, every Dreamspeaker has a purpose outside of his own enlightenment.

Self-discovery isn't the point. Instead, a Dreamspeaker is conscious of a side of the universe that few people know of, and is obligated to act as a mediator between the Dream and the physical world. He teaches his people about the Dream, and they, in turn, ask him to represent them there. Legacy members rarely accept anyone who is unwilling to meet this obligation. In the past, they almost never accepted anyone who wasn't already destined to join them, but in the modern age, many Dreamspeakers have realized that they belong to a broader cultural movement that's in danger of being swept away by modern, materialistic values. That's why the Legacy has opened itself to initiates from the Free Council.

Dreamspeaker Shamanism

Dreamspeaking is not the only form of shamanism, and the Dreamspeakers know this. Primals believe that the term “shaman” denotes an arbitrary grouping of mages with little in common besides a place apart from the world's monolithic religious institutions. A few respect the term as far as it applies to anthropology, or as a description of the Thyrsus Path. In the latter context, Dreamspeakers know that many shamans focus on the Shadow Realm. Such mages believe that it represents the truth of a living universe, where every object has a corresponding spirit. Dreamspeakers agree that the world is alive and full of the diverse children of the Dreamborn, but hold that the Dreamborn themselves — not their raucous, competitive offspring — are the world's wisdom keepers.

Consequently, while Dreamspeakers are fully conversant in the Spirit Arcanum and the lore of the Shadow, they cultivate

a strictly utilitarian relationship with Shadow spirits. These spirits deserve respect, but not worship. Even though Shadow beings hold the essence of this world, they are locked into the roles that the Dreamborn made for them. But only the Dreamborn know *why* the universe is ordered as it is. Dreamspeakers respect the Dreamborn for this secret lore. Other shamanic ways are useful, but not as profound.

Dreamspeakers have few traditions in common, but one is that their Legacy is almost always the predestined vocation for a few, special individuals. People chosen by the Dream experience what the uninitiated might call a psychological breakdown. Future Dreamspeakers suffer “delusions” (actually secret knowledge) and “hallucinations” (visions of the Dream). A Legacy tutor teaches initiates to understand their experiences and use them as magical aids. Without a tutor, an initiate’s life usually falls apart, though there are rare stories about the Dreamborn themselves initiating mages.

The Dreamborn

The question of whether the Dreamborn have always existed, created themselves or are the offspring of an even more powerful order of beings is answered differently by the various Dreamspeaker groups. When Dreamspeakers from different cultures meet, they don’t consider the question to be very important. Instead, encountering the Dreamborn in the here and now and searching for the signs they left within the world form a shared focus. The nature of the Dreamborn isn’t really fit for cold analysis. They simply are, and by human reckoning, always have been the true parents of Creation.

The original Dreamborn dreamed the universe into existence in story cycles and poetry. When their task was complete, they withdrew into their own realms. In the Fallen age, they might be slumbering even more deeply than when they dreamed the world. Alternately, they may have “awakened” into a place where no shaman can go. There, beyond the deepest Dreamtime, they might be gathering the power to remake — or destroy — all the realms. Dreamspeakers versed in Atlantean traditions believe that the Supernal Realms are these deep dreams or forbidden places. Spells call the

Dreamborn into the world to unleash their creative powers. Dreamborn breathe, eat and excrete power, and have no more control over where it all goes than a person can command the location of every stray hair or footprint. This is why ignorant mages can steal some of this power, using it without honoring its source.

In legends, a few humans have become Dreamborn. The first man and woman are almost always thought to be among these legendary. So are powerful Dreamspeakers and heroes. The first person to make fire was probably one of the Dreamborn. Although great deeds vault a person into the ranks of the Dreamborn, these heroes are never envied. According to myth, most of them lived anguished lives. Elder Dreamborn hated those brave (or arrogant) enough to steal divine powers. Fire and the secrets of healing plants were holy secrets until ancient heroes uncovered them. These heroes won divinity inside the Dream, but not before suffering the wrath of the Dreamborn that made the world.

It’s also common for Dreamspeakers to become minor Dreamborn. These deified shamans watch over their own Lineages. A few modern Dreamspeakers also claim they’ve met historical figures in the deepest Dreamtime. These phan-



toms are common enough in the astral shallows, but finding them in the depths proves that they've become one with the great archetypes of Dream. Whether or not people such as Albert Einstein or Mao Zedong still live as Dreamborn is a controversial topic.

Who Are the Dreamborn?

As far as **Mage: The Awakening** is concerned, the Dreamborn are a class of intelligent, powerful astral spirits, but Dreamspeaker opinions vary on how to differentiate true Dreamborn from "ordinary" astral denizens. Most Primals believe that everything in the Astral Plane is of the Dreamborn, but only a few things *are* Dreamborn.

Dreamspeakers catalog the Dreamborn according to their own cultural traditions. Chinese Dreamspeakers remember *Pangu*, who turned his body into the world. Australians sometimes count the Rainbow Serpent as a member, while certain Japanese Primals recognize the *kami* that created their islands. Christians and some African Caribbean faithful might believe that angels and saints fill this role. Some Dreamspeakers do believe in a monotheistic God. If they don't count God's prophets, saints and holy men among the Dreamborn, these Dreamspeakers usually give God's envoys a place just below Dreamborn in the divine hierarchy. Such beliefs can often stretch religious dogma to the point of heresy.

The true forms of the Dreamborn are beyond game statistics, and the entities mages meet may only represent a temporary locus for a shard of their being, like a hand extended from the ocean's depths. In the Dreamtime, these "limbs" are still usually beyond game traits, but they can create sub-entities that have quantifiable restrictions. Destroying them does not affect the "core" Dreamborn.

Other mages think ancestors and other once-human Dreamborn are brought into existence by human desire, but Dreamspeakers usually believe that these ancestors entered the Dream because of their great deeds. Thus, they are not "astral reflections," but the same people they were in life. If the Dream-hero has a ghost counterpart, it is either an extension of the "true" astral Dreamborn or a shell left behind when the Dreamborn left the physical world.

Parent Path or Order: Thyrsus or Free Council

Nickname: Primals

Orders: Dreamspeakers are mostly indifferent to the orders, and for the most part, the orders return the favor. Only the

Free Council fully accepts the Legacy. Free Council mages are intrigued by the Dreamspeakers' claim to ancient, truly universal human magic. The order rarely demands anything from its Dreamspeaker members, leaving them to follow their own Paths and work within the communities they prefer. Some Libertines almost venerate the Legacy as free spirits who have never truly submitted to the Atlantean ideology. To these Libertines, the Dreamspeakers represent an unconquered, enduring magical tradition.

The Primals have always resisted the Lie, and in return, they have borne the brunt of oppression from urban religious movements and colonization. Libertines come into the Legacy looking for the "original magic," or to experience cultures they feel haven't been as tainted by colonizers and conquerors. Free Council Mastigos often join the Dreamspeakers to better explore their own, traumatic Awakenings. Some Mastigos slide right from the terror of the Mastigos Mystery Play to the Dreamspeaker initiation, suffering utter madness until they find the Dream.

Adamantine Arrows often find the Dream. The Primal way is filled with tales of violence, blood and magical oaths. Arrow Dreamspeakers channel warrior myths into reality, calling Dreamborn to possess them and drive them to excellence. As skilled healers, Dreamspeakers also provide support for Arrow war bands. Dreamspeakers who combine their unique skills with more straightforward martial abilities can quickly rise to the top of the order's political structure. These elder mages create warrior societies with their own rituals. A Primal usually inducts mages and Sleepers into such groups without prejudice. The Primal calling drives him to find members from outside Awakened society. If he is a warrior, then he's compelled to teach a warrior's lessons to all who require them.

A Guardian of the Veil who hears the Dream's call might suffer a crisis of faith. Guardians hide magic from Sleepers, but Dreamspeakers *share* magic. They counsel their communities about the role of the Dreamborn in their lives. Reconciling this duty with the Guardians' ethos requires careful judgment. Primals know that some secrets should stay buried, but not to the point of leaving Sleepers too ignorant to live in peace with them. As a compromise, Dreamspeakers can induct their communities into the Guardians' Labyrinth (see **Guardians of the Veil** and **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 46). Such Dreamspeakers teach their own tribes and families special initiation rites. These Dreamspeakers teach their followers to respect the Dream without revealing its most dangerous secrets.

Dreamspeakers have a chaotic relationship with the Mysterium. On one hand, the order respects enduring traditions, but there's a fine line between knowing the ancient ways and stealing from them. Many Dreamspeakers hail from cultures that have had their fill of priests, government officials and social scientists taking their artifacts and teachings. Nevertheless, Dreamspeakers are devoted to secret knowledge, too. A skilled Primal needs to know all the names and signs the Dream leaves in the world. Mystagogues who find their calling within the Legacy don't compromise their own ways of knowing for the sake of conventional academic biases. This turns out to be

extraordinarily useful. Once freed of these conventions, the Primal can interpret evidence in ways her colleagues might never consider.

The Legacy's relationship with the Silver Ladder is an odd case. No other order suits the Primals' social roles better, but the théarchs are obsessed with Atlantis — a place Primals consider to be little more than a waypoint in the Dream. Still, there are those who believe that the Dream must come back to an Awakened Nation. The Dreamspeakers never rejected Atlantis, but when it fell, it became another teaching tale. For this reason, Dreamspeaker théarchs are powerful community leaders who are especially devoted to social cohesion and moral lessons. If the Awakened Nation is to rise again, it mustn't turn into another tale of fools and power.

Finally, it should be noted that there are Dreamspeakers who are not a part of any order. These apostates hold to no higher organization than their own community. They respect their initiation Lineage and no other. As medicine workers for their people, they believe that the grandiose politics of the Awakened world are distractions. Some Dreamspeakers even believe that outsiders pollute the Dream and should not practice magic at all.

Appearance: Dreamspeakers prefer a practical style that favors their own cultural affiliations and personal Dreams. The stereotypical Primal has initiatory scars or tattoos, but these are merely symbols of his social ties. The Dreamspeaker values these, but not as much as the invisible mark of his calling. Still, the power of the Dream can leave many outward signs. Personal taboos can change a Dreamspeaker's body language and speech; he might avoid walking in a straight line or will never directly name a thing that figures strongly in his Dream.

Dreamspeakers often feel called to manipulate their gender identities by cross-dressing or affecting an androgynous style. A Dreamspeaker who is a skilled Life mage might use magic to change her sex. Because Dreamspeakers unlock the secrets of their own psyches, most learn to accept elements of their sexuality others might deny or ignore. Among other things, this means that Primals may play with gender as a form of magical symbolism, as a means of expressing their own sexual identities or both.

Sex and the Dream

Viewed through the Dream, the universe is essentially sexual, along a continuum ranging from human erotic impulses to the instincts of every animal. Dream binds consciousness and the physical world into an undifferentiated whole. This means that stars, wind and mountains don't grow and die through sterile scientific processes. The wind and stones were, in a spiritual sense, born in blood just as any animal. They mate and derive pleasure from sex, mixing every human passion with their other, inhuman needs.

Thus, sex is omnipresent; Dreamspeakers rarely have any squeamishness about their

sexual preferences or frank sexual discussion.

In fact, Legacy members traditionally take it upon themselves to share sexual wisdom with their societies, especially during rites of passage and marriages. The Dream is full of stories that double as creation myths and graphic sexual adventures. Some stories are even dirty jokes.

The Dream's sexuality includes abuse and love in every permutation, but that doesn't mean that all forms of sexual expression are permissible. Context and intent are all-important; the Dream does not judge sex, but knows that it can be a tool for good or evil. As Dreamspeakers tend to equate evil with social conflicts, this means that they disapprove of sexual expressions (speech and acts) that cause conflict. Communities guided by Dreamspeakers can be as reserved or open about sexuality as those that are not. Still, Dreamspeakers are more willing to have straightforward discussions about sex, so they often fill the role of a relationship counselor when asked — and a judge, when sexual expression causes another person to suffer.

Background: Dreamspeakers claim to represent the most primal tradition of magic. It existed before Atlantis and unless the Lie utterly crushes the human spirit, will survive after every other Legacy dies. The calling has always existed, but initiates must decide whether they are crazy or ready for the Dream.

This Legacy is less of a discipline than a calling. Most mages become Dreamspeakers because they feel as if they have no choice in the matter. They suffer what might be called a spiritual crisis, a psychotic break or both. Primals believe that it's a choice between initiation and madness. As such, members can come from virtually any background. Nevertheless, mages familiar with cultures that revere spiritual healing are more likely to find tutors.

Initiates who belong to such a traditional culture are among the most sincere guardians of their community's political autonomy and religious customs. After they experience the first throes of Awakening and "madness," their tutors tell them deep secrets. These include creation myths unknown to the uninitiated, the names and characteristics of the Dreamborn, and oral histories that include tales of hidden times and places. Outsiders who hear these stories might find Atlantis in the words and signs — but then again, they might not.

Outside of these communities, Dreamspeakers' backgrounds are often irrelevant to their current concerns. A successful lawyer Awakens. His Art leads to a string of legal victories — until the Dream calls. He abandons his successful practice for the wilderness 100 miles away from his office. A young woman's parents treat the Dream as if it were an illness. They institutionalize her, dimming the Dream with drugs until a tutor discovers her potential.

Organization: Communities determine how Dreamspeakers organize. A Primal learns the cultural signs of a community from his tutor, establishing a Lineage of common beliefs and practices. Dreamspeakers who share a tradition band together into medicine societies. These groups share secret signs. When members of a Dreamspeaker community encounter an unfamiliar mage, they subtly determine whether or not the outsider knows them. If she does, she is a possible ally, but if she doesn't, she might be a threat to the community. Dreamspeakers often shun or ward against these mages, even if the outsiders are other Dreamspeakers.

Still, there is a growing movement among Dreamspeakers from different backgrounds to ally based on their common values. This movement is a few centuries old; roughly half of the Legacy ascribes to it. The other half either is split between those who believe that they should integrate with the Pentacle orders and those who isolate themselves from outsiders completely. Isolationists are not always xenophobes, but believe that they must stand apart to preserve the purity of their traditions. It's a serious concern, because other mages have used medicine society secrets to pose as allies of a community. The problem has a parallel among Sleepers, where "White Shamans" profit from indigenous beliefs without giving anything back. Mages who infiltrate Dreamspeaker communities with similar strategies have been known to abuse the secrets of the Dreaming for their own benefit.

Suggested Oblations: Drumming or listening to drums and other rhythmic instruments. Dancing. Physical ordeals, such as suspension and controlled strangulation. Isolation in a sacred place.

Dreamspeakers also use specialized drugs. Anthropologists call these natural preparations entheogens (derived from the Greek for "god within"). The scientific community has only begun to categorize these drugs, since many of them are prepared from exotic plants. Medically, they are usually categorized as hallucinogens, even though the Dreamspeakers who use these drugs would not characterize states induced as unreal. In contemporary urban environments, Dreamspeakers make use of a number of more common legal and illegal drugs.

Concepts: Fringe anthropologist, psychologist, charismatic preacher, tribal healer, ecstatic oracle.

History

The Dreamspeakers have no founder and no common history. Instead, each tutor/initiate Lineage has stories that tell the Dreamspeakers why they have entered the Dream, where it will take them and what their responsibilities are. Some legends even say that the very first humans were Dreamspeakers. These humans understood their place in the Dream and talked to its denizens without the need for special rituals.

This is not to say that the Dreamspeakers know nothing about Atlantis. Thousands of legends talk about the Awakened Nation and the hubris that destroyed it. Dreamspeakers say that they existed before Atlantis and despite their indifference to the place, led the first mages there. Their stories describe

the rise of new sorcerers, each of whom held to some new, grandiose philosophy. Their ambitions exceeded the bounds of their own communities, so they warred with each other and with members of the Legacy. Dreamspeakers defended their communities ably until the Dream itself signaled a change.

The "dragons" that led the way to Atlantis were Dreamborn. Sorcerers outside of the Legacy couldn't understand their visions, but the Dreamspeakers could. Primals cemented the first alliance between the Legacy and outsiders because Primals divined the will and path of the Dreamborn. This assured the Dreamspeakers a distinct place in Atlantean society. A shadow of this role existed in later cultures. Japanese *miko* and the Delphic Oracle recall the role of Dreamspeakers in Atlantis. They relayed the Dream to priests and sorcerers who had lost touch with its primal nature.

In time, the lords of Atlantis forgot why they enshrined the Dreamspeakers. Primals relayed the warnings of the Dream without success, because the populace believed that the Dreamspeakers' utterances were nothing more than a ritual for the mad. When the Dream made it clear that Atlantis would fall and the people wouldn't listen, the Legacy abandoned the city.

Atlantis fell; the Dreamspeakers returned to smaller communities. They never rejected civilization, but did not think urban cultures were necessarily superior. Whenever they followed their people to lives in a city or nation, they found that these places repeated the folly of Atlantis. Once the people embraced abstract philosophies and distant gods, they stopped listening to the Dream.

This is why the Legacy's oldest Lineages exist among tribal communities. Such cultures never lost sight of the Dream. On the other hand, Dreamspeakers still dwell in the middle of urban life. The Dream calls to people no matter where they live. Isolated from the roots of Dreamspeaker cultural practices, these initiates justify their experiences within mainstream religions. Dreamspeakers find their way into Christian congregations and Buddhist temples. According to legend, a few Legacy mages can't trace their initiation back to a mortal tutor, leading some to speculate that ancestor spirits or even the Dream itself taught them. Modern Primals sometimes claim they were Dream-initiated in order to demand respect from their fellows, but to put it diplomatically, this is usually only true "from a certain point of view."

Unfortunately, the Legacy's universality contributed to a widening gulf between medicine workers who lived in small traditional communities and those who adopted burgeoning empires. Colonial civilization suppressed the eldest Dreamspeaker lines by destroying their cultures. Ironically, "civilized" Dreamspeakers were sometimes at the forefront of conversion and destruction efforts. In North America, aboriginal medicine workers and zealous Christian evangelists were the two most common pastimes of Dreamspeakers. To this day, elder medicine societies will rarely admit that they share a Legacy with the evangelists. The exceptions see organized religions as a place to divert would-be "White Shamans," so they can follow the Dream without stealing traditional lore.

Society and Culture

Dreamspeakers are cautious around outsiders. Most Dreamspeakers follow cultural traditions that warn them of the black magic and evil practices of foreign mages. Furthermore, Primals have seen that it is their fate to be marginalized within ambitious, expansionist cultures. This makes them reluctant to participate in modern Awakened society. On the other hand, the Legacy is not mired in the past, and individual members do join conventional cabals.

Most Primals assess outsiders based on how they treat the local community. Mages who harm and manipulate a Dreamspeaker's people are enemies to be driven off and killed. In this respect, the Legacy has no patience for Consilium dictates or the supposedly universal Lex Magica. A single incident can earn the longstanding enmity of a Dreamspeaker band.

On the other hand, not all Dreamspeakers are benign healers and counselors. A few prefer a more ambiguous role. Their charges know that they can harm or heal. Fearful communities learn to shower these Primals with gifts to avoid sickness and disasters. The Legacy sees no common ground between peaceful and threatening members; they kill and confound each other almost as often as they do outsiders.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Legacy is the way they skirt customs that require them to hide the Mysteries.

A Dreamspeaker's people usually know that he can perform miracles. This is, after all,



his purpose — the very reason the community supports him. This is the primary reason why so few Dreamspeakers join the Guardians of the Veil. However, Dreamspeakers almost never practice obvious magic in front of Sleepers. Dreamspeakers know that witnesses not only offend the Dream, but risk their own sanity when they see its unclad power.

A Dreamspeaker's community is so central to her existence that it bears some additional discussion. In most cases, the community has been served by Legacy members for as long the community has existed. There are specific rules within the society that govern how members treat the Dreamspeaker, including protocols of address, marriage (some communities give the Dreamspeaker preferential treatment; others forbid it) and who may succeed her.

Dreamspeakers can join the Legacy without finding a community to support them. In such cases, the Primal reaches out to find people who accept him, as there seems to be an instinctual need to become a part of a community. Some conservative societies may view him as a raving heretic; others accept his eccentric, influential presence. In the last century, it's often been the case that new Dreamspeakers choose a place in Awakened society, adopting a Consilium as their own community. Even so, a Dreamspeaker serves in his own way, and doesn't feel especially bound by political concerns.

Induction

It begins in anguish. The initiate suffers a mental breakdown characterized by hallucinations and extreme emotions. Most mages have already experienced an event like this during their Awakening, but for a potential Dreamspeaker, the breakdown runs even deeper. Other mages learn to accept and absorb the mad spark of Awakening. Dreamspeakers do not; the visions, symbols and strange encounters never stop for long. If a potential Dreamspeaker sees this as a disease, he may look to psychiatry and drugs, but they won't help. If he doesn't seek initiation, he may spiral into drug addiction, institutionalization or suicide. Some even accept that Awakening is a disease. They become Banishers.

More experienced mages can also suffer a Dreamspeaker's spiritual crisis. The crisis may take the form of persistent Paradoxes, derangements or traumatic Astral journeys. If they can find initiation, they learn to accept these afflictions

as parts of the Dream. Indeed, they may turn these experiences into lessons that strengthen the rest of their lives.

Finally, sometimes mages with stable psyches want to become Dreamspeakers. Such mages often believe that the Mysteries are overly intellectual, or have been obscured by politics and unnecessary rituals. Many Free Council members join the Legacy to sever all of their ties with the politics and myths of magic. They crave direct experience over study. They get what they wish for, but it doesn't come without a price. This form of initiation is the hardest of all, because the initiate's tutor must force open the gates of the Dream. This process can require physical ordeals, psychoactive drugs and extended Astral journeys.

Awakening Versus Initiation

The Dreamspeaker Legacy is a calling — one whose first stirrings might even be felt during Awakening. Still, it's important to differentiate between Awakening and initiation. Awakening to the imagery of traditional societies does not automatically earmark a character for Primal initiation.

It's ultimately up to the player to decide whether her character's Awakening foreshadows Dreamspeaker initiation. Even if it does, the character isn't a Dreamspeaker until she reaches Gnosis 3. At that point, the character pays the requisite experience-point toll listed on p. 344 in **Mage: The Awakening**.

A Dreamspeaker tutor is capable of distinguishing between mere madness and the call of the Dream. Sifting through visions and dreams, he discovers whether or not the initiate's distress is caused by her own mind or messages from the Dreamborn. If a tutor finds signs of the Dreamborn in a prospective initiate's thoughts, he knows that she's been chosen. The tutor intuitively compares these signs to his own initiation. During the last century, with so many Dreamspeaker communities recovering from colonial crimes, tutors sometimes found it necessary to search slums and hospitals for initiates. Traditional wisdom is in such short supply that many potential Dreamspeakers never identify the true source of their anguish. Tutors sometimes find it necessary to cure their charges of drug addictions, spring them from prisons and psychiatric hospitals, or extricating them from dangerous associations with drug dealers and abusive family members.

Who Is a Dreamspeaker?

All Dreamspeakers suffer psychological trauma as part of their initiation, but this doesn't mean that the Storyteller should inflict a nervous breakdown upon a character to force him into this Legacy. Joining the Legacy is not necessarily the character's choice, but it is *always* the player's choice. This means that the player and Storyteller should work out the

details of the initiation. Storytellers should indicate whether or not they'll allow the characters to join the Dreamspeakers, and players should discuss the way they'll portray the mages' first exposure to the Dream.

In game terms, a Dreamspeaker initiate always uses Arcane Experience to pay the first experience point stipend to his tutor. Here are some (but not all) of the ways in which he can acquire this Arcane Experience.

Astral Travel: An Astral journey that forces the mage to confront the deepest parts of his consciousness, or one that features the Dreamborn, can provide suitable Arcane Experience.

Derangements: Characters who explore the magical significance of a derangement gain Arcane Experience they can spend on becoming a Dreamspeaker, even if the derangement is cured (by raising Wisdom). Suggested methods include casting spells to satisfy the derangement's urges, examining spirits drawn by the resonance of the mage's psyche or even confronting spirits representing the derangement on the Astral Plane.

Paradoxes: Paradoxes that reflect the mage's psyche can provide the insight needed to join the Legacy. Manifestations often take their shapes from a mage's hopes and fears, while Branding can turn flaws in the mage's soul into visible physical afflictions.

Tutors: The process of finding and studying under a Legacy tutor is probably the easiest way to acquire the necessary Arcane Experience, but that doesn't mean it's *too* easy. Just meeting the tutor isn't enough; he has to set the mage to arduous tasks that force her to question assumptions about herself and the universe. Tutors have set initiates on dangerous treks through the wilderness or city's sewers. They've forced initiates to hunt powerful spirits and have demanded other intense, soul-testing activities.

Story Hooks — Faces of the Dream

• **Land Claim:** The players' mages acquire a Hallow a little *too* easily. When they set up defenses and other practical matters, they discover that the Hallow's site belongs to a Dreamspeaker's people. Colonist mages invaded the area long ago, seized the Hallow and traded it among themselves. Now that a Dreamspeaker has finally brought his people back to the stolen land, he wants it back — and he knows things about the mystic landscape that give him a decided advantage in any fight.

• **Mad Awakening:** A newly Awakened mage possesses the traits of a potential Dreamspeaker. For all intents and purposes he's insane, but once trained, he could direct his mad will to the Primal path. Unfortunately, he also has a powerful Destiny (including the Merit) and is surrounded by a prophecy that says he will call a "Great Beast." The Dreamspeakers want him, but the Scelesti want him even more because

they believe that the Beast may be one of their Abyssal lords. These are not the only groups eager to train the mad mage. Most mages are eager to take on such a talented apprentice, even if only to protect themselves from the fruits of a destiny brought to terrible fruition.

• **Out of the Deepest Dream:** One of the Dreamborn sends part of itself into the mind of a Dreamspeaker, but this is not enough; the Dreamborn must find its physical body, which long ago transformed into an ancient geographical feature. In the players' characters' home region. The possessed shaman lets it be known that the Dreamborn wants to re-dream its worldly creations, removing what it calls "flaws and rot." If it can do this, it will wipe out the characters' home. The Dreamborn believes that cities and people are of the "rot," and will tear them away with its full power. Fortunately, the Dreamborn has a few obscure weaknesses, but they can only be found within well-guarded oral traditions. The players' cabal must gain the respect of Dreamspeakers who know these secrets as well as enlist all the allies they can against such a powerful threat. And they need to work fast — if the shaman travels to a handful of key locations in the right order, the Dreamborn its command will claim its "flesh" once again.

Attainments

Dreamspeaker Attainments focus on understanding what most mages would call Astral Space. Dreamspeakers call it the Dream. They hold that it is not as disconnected from the physical world as most mages believe. Dreamspeakers say that at the dawn of time, people perceived Dream and physical reality simultaneously. They gave equal importance to both. Dreamspeakers regain this primordial human ability and learn to communicate with the Dream's denizens.

Dream Traditions

The Dreamspeakers are fragmented into many traditions. Each one is the fruit of a shamanist Lineage that may stretch eons into the past. Thus, similar to the Scelesti, Dreamspeakers from a common Lineage might develop their own, distinct Attainments.

The first Attainment of Dreamwalking is the core Primal power, but there are branches that teach their own, distinctive second and third Attainments. To design them, see the guidelines for Attainment design in **Mage: The Awakening** and **Legacies: The Sublime**.

1st: Dreamwalking

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Mind 2, Occult 2

The most fundamental Dreamspeaking art is the ability to easily sense and move through the Dream itself. Accordingly, this Attainment enables Dreamspeakers to enter a waking trance that lets them sense the Dream and ordinary reality simultaneously.

Dreamspeakers with this Attainment can enter Astral regions without losing sight of the world. In effect, the Meditation roll to initiate Astral travel becomes an instant action that the character's player may roll once per turn (rather than the usual 30 minutes per turn) until she reaches the desired Astral Plane. She does not need to be within a Demesne or Hollow to do this.

Once she reaches an Astral Plane, the Dreamspeaker can simultaneously perceive Astral and Material Realm phenomena; she can see and move through both regions at the same time. But aside from movement and perception, she must choose whether to act in one place or the other on any given turn. Phasing into one realm or the other (the Astral or the material) requires an instant action, after which she can act in that realm while continuing to perceive both realms. In all cases, however, her physical body remains in the Material Realm, and others in that realm can interact with her even if she is busy interacting with the Astral Plane. Witnesses who don't know what she's up to might believe her to be some sort of madwoman, pantomiming actions and speaking with non-existent beings.

If she is attacked by Astral beings while she is phased into that realm, she suffers Willpower damage per the normal rules for Astral combat. If she loses all her Willpower points, she instantly phases back into the material world and the Attainment's effects end; it cannot be reused until she regains at least one Willpower point.

Furthermore, Dreamspeakers find it easier to rise through Astral Space than other mages; add a Dreamspeaker's Mind dots to her extended action Meditation dice pool to attain Astral travel. This does not apply to instant action attempts at Astral travel involving this Attainment.

Dreamspeakers use Dreamwalking to travel to Astral regions that correspond with physical places. These realms have a sacred place in Dreamspeaker lore. Some have naturally evolved from the strong emotions surrounding a location. Others were constructed by Dreamspeakers or, in ancient days, by the Dreamborn themselves. These places serve as storehouses of secret knowledge that Dreamspeakers visit to help them solve particular problems.

New Merit: Dreamland (• to ••••)

Prerequisite: Awakened, Dreamspeaker Legacy

Effect: The mage may freely visit one or more locations in the Dreamtime. These Astral locations arise from the psychic resonance associated with a place.

Some Dreamspeakers say that the Dreamborn came to rest in such places, and that Dreamlands are the echoes of the Dreamborn's own fiftful dreams. Others say that ancestors won these places from the Dreamborn at the dawn of time, or that they merely arose after millennia of rites and initiations in the sacred place. Dreamspeakers can know multiple Dreamlands. Each one represents one Merit dot. A character does not require this Merit to reach a Dreamland, but he cannot access its wisdom without first purchasing this Merit.

Each Dreamland contains one dot of the Library background (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 85–86). This usually doesn't represent Astral books and scrolls, but visions of wise ancestors and Dreamborn who are willing to share their knowledge. This lore can often reveal histories — both mundane and supernatural — of the region that are otherwise unrecorded in any book or living memory.

Drawbacks: Dreamlands are at least 20 miles apart from one another. Each Dreamland's physical location also has one essential feature that, if destroyed or changed (by construction or landscaping, for example), cuts off access to the Dreamland until the problem is repaired.

2nd: Call Upon the Dreamborn

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

Dreamspeakers learn this Attainment from the Dreamborn. She must first reach the Dreamtime, accumulating 20 successes in meditation to get there — see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 284 — although she can use her Dreamwalking Attainment to shorten the time this takes. Once there, she acquires the wisdom of one of the Dreamborn. Henceforth, she may activate this Attainment to add her Mind dots to a single Social or Mental Attribute, as if employing Augment the Mind (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 210) for a scene. Different Dreamborn augment different Attributes, so the Dreamspeaker must choose which Attribute (and which Dreamborn she contacts) to augment before she embarks on her Astral journey.

She can later choose to revisit the Dreamtime and negotiate wisdom from a different Dreamborn, allowing her to choose a different Mental or Social Attribute to augment with this Attainment. She replaces her former choice with her new one. This transfer of wisdom costs her one Mana and one Willpower point.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 3

If the Dreamspeaker possesses the third rank of Spirit, the Dreamspeaker can instead ask the Dreamborn to come to the world. The Dreamspeaker must first visit the Dreamtime and establish a relationship with a Dreamborn. Henceforth, the

Dreamspeaker can use this Attainment to ask the Dreamborn to extend part of itself to a nearby object or location. The Dreamborn's visit acts as the "Rouse Spirit" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 251), except that it's more potent and shorter-lived. The Dreamborn only resides within an object or location for a single scene, but possesses Influence equal to the Dreamspeaker's Spirit dots.

As with Call Upon the Dreamborn, the Dreamspeaker can revisit the Dreamtime and negotiate with a different Dreamborn. The Dreamspeaker cannot use this Attainment with more than one Dreamborn at the same time, only the one the Dreamspeaker's currently negotiating with, and she must revisit the Dreamtime each time she wishes to rouse a different Dreamborn. Each such transfer costs her one Mana and one Willpower point.

Dreamspeakers use Call Upon the Dreamborn to augment their own perceptions when danger or sickness strikes their communities. Dreamspeakers often use the Attainment to augment Medicine or Occult rolls. If the Dreamspeaker is sufficiently skilled in the Spirit Arcanum, she uses a Dreamborn's Influence to create favorable conditions for healing or defense.

3rd: Dreamself

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Mind 4

As the Dreamspeaker learns to unite the Dream with the rest of the world, he discovers how to send his soul from the Dream to Twilight and back again. This ability resembles Psychic Projection (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 215–216), with a few important differences. The mage can also move his consciousness past Twilight and into Astral Space by using Dreamwalking's instant action Astral travel while in Twilight. He cannot, however, then "phase" between the Twilight state and Astral Space, maintaining perceptions in both places at once — once he reaches Astral Space, he's fully there.

Furthermore, the Dreamself is more vulnerable than the usual psychic projection; in Twilight, the Dreamspeaker can suffer from non-mental attacks, provided they are inflicted by other Twilight-dwellers. These inflict damage upon the Dreamspeaker's Willpower points. If the Dreamspeaker loses all of his Willpower points, he immediately snaps back to his body.

The Dreamspeaker rolls Resolve + Occult + Mind to use this Attainment. Unlike Psychic Projection, this power does not cost a point of Mana to use.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 4

If the Dreamspeaker possesses the fourth rank of Spirit, he can truly unite the diverse worlds of spirit, mind and flesh. His Dreamself can enter the Shadow by making an instant Resolve + Occult + Spirit roll, modified by the difficulty of the local Gauntlet. This is similar to the Mind 5 "Shadow Projection" spell, but with some severe limitations. The danger is that returning is difficult; a second roll is required to cross back over the Gauntlet. If the Attainment's activation duration of one scene expires while the mage is projected in the Shadow Realm, he loses one Willpower point. He continues to lose an additional point of Willpower per hour per dot of Spirit

(i.e., a mage with Spirit 3 would lose an additional point every four hours), so long as he remains there, although he can reactivate this Attainment to allow him to try and traverse the Gauntlet again. If he loses all his Willpower, he snaps back into his body in the Material Realm but falls into a deep sleep until one hour has passed per point of Willpower that was lost.

Dreamspeakers use this Attainment to travel throughout the Realms Invisible. They know how important it is to monitor these places for signs of trouble and that their inhabitants can be decisive allies or enemies. Of course, modern Dreamspeakers are no strangers to Awakened intrigue, and use the power to spy on enemies from Twilight or the Shadow, or waylay them with magic.

Sample Character

Vecu

Quote: “Wine brings madness. Madness brings witchcraft. Witchcraft brings the gods. Learn the divine madness bound in a single grape.”

Background: Everyone assumed that Martina Camillo had a nervous breakdown because her life changed too much, too fast. The Tuscany Camillos were known for their skill at a number of rural trades. They were smart people, but none were as smart as Martina. Prodigal test scores vaulted her from a village school to a series of universities. She was barely into her teens when she started on an academic career that would earn her five bachelor’s degrees and three PhDs. At age 23 she was living in New York, working on what would have been her fourth, when the gods she knew through anthropology, history and art leaped out of antiquity and struck her down.

The visions struck during a camping trip. While she walked, barefoot, for two weeks, she saw herself climbing a vast mountain, teeming with winged demons, where she ate wild grapes and olives to survive. To her, the journey took a lifetime and ended at a rough stone gate. She screamed her name into it. Vecu tells many other tales of those times, where she met horned lovers, gave birth and led inhuman creatures to war. She has yet to understand the entire experience.

After the gate, she saw where she was; on a rural road near the Canadian border. The all-encompassing vision was gone, but winged demons, voices and a sense of foreboding still invaded her waking life. She used magic to survive until she met Ted Fontaine, a Wendat (Huron) Dreamspeaker who recognized her calling and took her in.

She spent a year with Fontaine, learning to understand her Arts and first Attainment, but her tutor eventually stopped training her. Fontaine said that the ultimate teachings of his heritage weren’t for her. She needed to find her own



signs and masks for the Dreamborn. She returned home to Italy to soak up the teachings of the land, where she decrypted her visions using the lore of the Etruscans. Even though she learned much, Italy didn't feel like home any more. Her experiences forced her to think of things beyond the local people and mythology.

She came back to New York City and took up a teaching position at NYU, but her real concerns are for her neighborhood: a mix of students and new Americans who have opened their minds enough to accept that she has more to offer them than academic tutoring and common sense. She still sees the winged demons, along with other Dream-creatures suited to an environment full of concrete, electric lights and human aspirations. Now, almost as many people know Vecu the "healing woman" as Martina Camillo, PhD.

Description: Vecu dresses in conservative earth tones expected of a junior professor. They tend toward darker shades to contrast with the pale skin of her northern Italian heritage. Her background also provides long, black, curly hair and deep brown eyes. Now in her early 30s, she possesses a slim build, with wiry muscle beneath her heavy clothes. She prefers gold jewelry, including dangling earrings and a thick bracelet. Her hands and feet still have some light scars from the ordeal of Awakening.

Vecu's nimbus casts long shadows like wings. Her hands and feet have a bloody cast, and green swirls suggest vines growing along her body.

Storytelling Hints: Vecu is a bona fide genius and former child prodigy. Combined with her education (PhDs in anthropology, psychology and organic chemistry), she is able to use her intelligence to dissect, compare and interpret almost any belief system's historical, psychological and occult truths. She understands that anything she might say would be useful for some mages, but personally, she thinks of these things as superficial. Academic knowledge has always been easy for her to acquire, but her heart belongs to the Dream. She believes that direct experience is the only thing mages can trust to guide their spiritual development. This is what makes magic a risky thing. She will only share her opinion to a certain point; past that, she feels that people must look for themselves.

Accordingly, she appreciates actions much more than words. She doesn't care if mages talk about protecting Sleepers — just that the mages actually do so. She advises the Free Council and believes in that order's mission to democratize and humanize magic, but has no other use for Awakened politics. Just as most Dreamspeakers, she's dedicated to her community, but unlike many, they do not have a traditional place for her. Vecu knows it will take a few years before people instinctively trust her, but is willing to make the effort. She's not a violent person, but if her own people suffer, she's not above using subtle magic to bring ruin upon the perpetrators.

Vecu's magic and Dream visions draw upon Etruscan mythology. She uses many forms of divination to find her way through the Dream. To her, the Dreamborn are the gods and demons of her ancestors. She is, however, so skilled at broadening her perspective that she can interpret her visions in a form that's more palatable for her audience. Still, the throes of a trance

can crack her self-control, and she sometimes cries out the ancient names anyway.

Dedicated Magical Tools: Vecu usually dedicates eggs, a white clay saucer, a brazier (other forms of free-standing flame will do in a pinch) and a water-filled goblet. Vecu prefers to dedicate specific tools for a given spell instead of keeping a few general tools. Thus, she will not often have tools on hand if she does not expect to be casting spells.

Real Name: Martina Camillo

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Free Council

Legacy: Dreamspeaker

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Anthropology, Psychology) 5, Computer 3, Crafts 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 4, Occult (Greco-Roman) 5, Politics 2, Science (Chemistry) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 1, Firearms (Rifles) 1, Survival 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1

Merits: Allies (Local Community) 3, Common Sense, Dream 3, Eidetic Memory, Encyclopedic Knowledge, High Speech, Languages (English, French, Latin, Huron; Italian is native), Resources 2, Status (New York University) 3, Status (Free Council) 2

Willpower: 8

Wisdom: 7

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 8

Gnosis: 6

Arcana: Death 2, Fate 2, Life 4, Mind 4, Prime 1, Space 2, Spirit 4

Notes: *Death* — Soul Mark (•); *Fate* — Reading the Outmost Eddies (•), The Evil Eye (••); *Life* — Healer's Trance (•), Heal Flora and Fauna (••), Organic Resilience (••), Healing Heart (•••); *Mind* — Aura Perception (•), Emotional Urging (••), Augment the Mind (•••), Dream Traveler (••••); *Prime* — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (••); *Space* — Correspondence (•); *Spirit* — Spirit Tongue (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (••), Exorcism (•••), Restore Lost Soul (•••), Spirit Guardian (••••)

Legacy Attainment: 1st — Dreamwalking; 2nd — Call Upon the Dreamborn

Mana/per turn: 15/6

Armor: 4 ("Organic Resilience," Life ••)

Magic Shield: 2 ("Magic Shield," Prime ••)

ELEMENTAL MASTERIES

Atlantis fell, so the stories have it, and the Awakened spread out far and wide. The orders endured. The magical practices of Atlantis informed and gave rise to the magic of 100 cultures. Every nascent civilization owed, so they say, its magic – and maybe its science, laws, religion and cultural basis – to Atlantis.

This isn't the whole story. Even during Atlantis' heyday, people were Awakening elsewhere. The great mage-kings of Atlantis had little interest in seeking these people out – the Atlanteans reasoned that the non-Atlantean magic-workers were benighted savages, Awakened or not. As far as the Atlanteans knew, non-Atlanteans had no real concept of the *Ars Mysteriorum*, no way to better their understanding of what was happening to them and no organization to fall back on. So the Atlanteans ignored the non-Atlantean magic-workers.

By the time of the Fall and the diaspora, the mages of the mainlands had been practicing in their own way for centuries.

The Atlantean mages had formed into orders. They kept themselves separate from the Sleepers, remaining elitist groups. The mages of the other lands, however, had become part of their societies. In the way that their Sleeping friends and family had domesticated animals for the benefit of growing civilizations, these Tamers had domesticated the elements themselves, both the literal, physical elements that made the world, and the conceptual elements that the phenomena of the physical world symbolized. Everything, they realized, symbolizes something else. A mage who "tamed" fire tamed every kind of fire – the fire that warms and cooks and destroys, and the fire that drives reason and intuition and courage.

Through controlling these elements and crafting their souls along elemental lines, these Tamers had gained insights into the human soul and its links to the Supernal. Awakened they may have been, but they did not consider themselves separate from humanity. They were still human, and their gifts were gifts given by the gods for the benefit of human society.

They were the now dimly remembered heroes and gods of ancient myth.

Across the world, there were comparable mages, whose Awakening was part of their role in human society. In the very earliest civilizations of the West and the Middle East, these mages took on concrete roles.

The Tamers of Fire took the part of heroes and champions. They were sportsmen, warriors and leaders. The Tamers of Fire stood tall at the beginnings of the first empires, and rode at the head of the first conquering armies. These Tamers were the prototypes of Gilgamesh and Achilles.

The Tamers of Stone were there, helping humanity build the earliest cities in Mesopotamia and Egypt. These Tamers guided the peoples of the ancient lands in the skills of honest toil, of art and commerce.

The Tamers of Rivers, whose moods flowed and flooded like the ancient Nile, traveled widely, from tribe to tribe, from city to city. They promoted the arts of healing and childcare, and helped to spread the benefits of culture, teaching literacy, trade, diplomacy and the arts.

The Tamers of Winds gave their intellect to humanity. They were writers of laws and brokers of deals. Judges beyond compare, these Tamers used their magic to arbitrate and divine, to uncover the truth like the desert wind blasting sand from the rocks.

Rarest of them all, even then, were the Tamers of the Cave. Their element was the void, the non-substance of space and time, the nothing that holds everything together. They were the prophets, the martyrs and the mystics. Theirs was the message of hope and judgment. Some of them, it was said, had even conquered death, rising again to complete their work, or Ascending to the higher worlds, never to return.

The gradual, inexorable rise of the Quiescence hit them hard. Paradoxes and Disbelief began to disrupt the works of these non-Atlantean mages, including the Tamers, and, unlike the Atlantean exiles, the Tamers had no organizations of their own to turn to. Many tried to join with the Dragon Orders. The Tamers were hardly met with open arms: the Atlanteans at best, patronized the Tamers, treating them as savages and

peons. At worst, the Atlanteans killed the Tamers out of hand. Some Atlanteans were unable to believe that Awakened mages could exist outside of the Dragon Orders, and considered these strange, “uncivilized” miracle-workers to be spies, or worse.

Gradually, however, as Atlantis became more and more distant a memory and the first generations after Atlantis’ Fall died out, the Atlanteans’ relationship with the other Awakened magicians became less hostile. The mages of Atlantis and outside found their common ground in the struggle against the Quiescence and the Exarchs.

The non-Altantean mages never wholly managed to tow the party line. However, their original role in human society, so badly damaged by the Quiescence, developed and changed. Their magic stayed the same, but the methods they used to create it developed over time. Of all the traditional Legacies of the ancient world, the Tamers were among those that existed in a context, and were shaped by it, over thousands of years.

The tradition of the Tamers still crosses paths and orders today. It’s centered around the four most common groups, the Tamers of Fire, Tamers of Rivers, Tamers of Stone and Tamers of Winds. These four Legacies, as well as the other, less prominent groups of Tamers (such as the Tamers of the Cave), which yet lay claim to the tradition, took on this name: Elemental Masteries.

The Mark of Culture

The Elemental Masteries exist all over the world. They have always been part of the culture that produced them; that’s part of their methodology. The difference between the Tamers of modern times and their ancient counterparts is that there is no true role for the maker of magic in human society. The Quiescence has seen to that.

What they do is hide within roles that complement their magic. Once, a single Tamer would command the respect of an entire city or tribe, and direct its history accordingly. Now, just as other mages, they’re forced into secrecy, taking on roles that compliment their chosen element: doctors, soldiers, priests, soldiers, sportsmen, writers, artists and the like.

When using magic, they often work within the magical traditions of their cultures, although each Legacy uses its chosen element as part of the magic.

Their influence may be smaller, but they still work to touch lives. Tamers of Fire inspire and lead others to courage and excellence. These Tamers are the archenemies of apathy, the bringers of fire to the heart and steel to the backbone. Tamers of Stone work toward the creation of useful tools, vehicles and buildings. Architects, technological innovators and engineers, these “Craftsmasons” dream of making all technology, no matter how basic or complex, accessible to all. Tamers of Winds work as journalists, filmmakers and activists, promoting truth in all things. Tamers of Rivers work in the arts and medicine. They try to make life better. And the Tamers of the Cave, who look into the void every day and use it, are nothing if their work does not give hope.

Orders, Cabals and Signs

The Elemental Masteries are a distinct tradition. They exist in their own right, and can be found among members of all Paths and orders. Certain of the Elementalists’ Legacies are numerous among some orders more than others, but the loose confederacy that comes from joining the Tamers spreads across the areas of magical society.

Members of the Elemental Masteries often join together in cabals with other Tamers. Cabals wholly composed of Tamers are rare, particularly cabals representing all five Paths, but for centuries, tutors in each of the Elemental Masteries have encouraged their pupils to find other Tamers and to find common cause with them. As in any cabal, joining with others from different Paths and orders can prove a valuable learning experience, as well as a means of survival.

Traditionally, the practitioners of the Elemental Masteries were supposed to aid one another, regardless of any other affiliations. During the last 200 years, the commitment of the Tamers to each other has eroded to the point that although lip service is paid to the principle, there really isn’t any universally recognized obligation for the Tamers to offer help when asked. Still, given that most of the Tamers know how to recognize each other, there’s a good chance that two Tamers who meet for the first time will be well disposed, at least initially, in much the same way that two Englishmen who meet by chance in a foreign country will strike up some sort of friendly conversation. Even if they have nothing else in common, it’s a start.

Everything Is One

The ancients who founded the Elemental Legacies had a very different understanding of the way the universe works. To them, abstract concepts could not be divorced from material being. It wasn’t that elemental fire, for example, symbolized inspiration and courage. Fire literally *was* inspiration and courage. They were the same thing. If you saw a fire, you weren’t looking at an embodiment of courage and inspiration, anger and destruction, you were looking directly at those things. It wasn’t that elemental stone symbolized fertility, craftsmanship and creation. Stone *was* those things. The Elemental Legacies still teach this.

By extension, they say, all things were all other things. Everything is part of a vast unity, a totality. Everything, every person, animal, object, thought and concept is part of the whole.

Humans, as they are, can’t apprehend this. The best the Awakened can do is to attempt to perceive a part of the totality. To understand a greater part of the whole is to become a greater part of the whole. Instead of a fragment under the illusion it’s separate, the mage who makes a connection with one of the primal aspects of creation becomes more than human. For example, when a Tamer of Fire understands that inspiration and fire are literally the same thing, he theoretically becomes that little bit closer to understanding the unity of all things. More than this: in understanding this truth, in achieving a partial perception, he becomes his element. He molds his soul through his perception. His soul becomes fire. The elemental

fire becomes his soul. And as the fire is inspiration, he becomes inspiration. The Tamer of Fire would argue that the truth is, he always was these things — he just didn't know it.

This method of soulcrafting marks and changes an Elementalist. On gaining the first Attainment of an Elemental Legacy, a mage's nimbus changes to reflect the way in which he has become his element. For each Legacy, this change happens in its own way. The Tamer of Fire's nimbus blazes and burns and inspires and awes. A Tamer of Air's nimbus is cold, or creates a rushing wind. The nimbus carries with it a sense of clarity. A Tamer of Stone's nimbus has a feeling of solidity and life. Things seem to take on lives of their own when the Tamer of Stone's nimbus is visible.

To an outsider, the nimbus appears much more vibrant, more *elemental* than it might have done before. To a Tamer, the Elemental Mark on a nimbus marks one of their own.

The Five Masteries, and the Others

The five Elemental Masteries presented here work their magic within the context of several thousand years of history spent in Western Europe (and, hence, post-colonial America). The symbolism they use to describe themselves is very much borne out of a Western Tradition.

But it's just window dressing in the end. There are, for example, Tamers of Rivers who draw their symbolism and magical practices from Native American culture. There are

Tamers of Fire whose magic comes from the foundations of Chinese mysticism. There are Tamers of Winds among the tribal peoples of Central Africa, and Tamers of the Cave in Australia who still work with the shamanic practices of the Koori people.

Their powers are strikingly similar across the world; only the terms in which they express their magic differ from one culture's version of a Tamer to another.

They are not the only Tamers in existence; they're simply the best known, and, in the case of the Tamers of Fire, Rivers, Stone and Winds, the most common. There are others. Some are limited in geographical scope. Others may not be quite as old. But they *are* true Tamers, and although their powers might be esoteric in the extreme, they still recognize the same signs and same forms, and they still (mostly) bear an elemental mark on their nimbuses.

Among the mages of the Far East, there are still rare examples of Tamers of Trees and Tamers of Iron, for example. Although few mages have met a Tamer of Ice or a Tamer of Rain, a few of each still apparently practice their works in regions covered by the former USSR. More elusive still are the Tamers of Light, who manipulate the very light of the sun, somewhere in South America, and the Tamers of Sand, who still practice their crafts in the remotest corners of the Australian Outback.

Rumors still persist of (possibly Left-Handed) Tamers of Blood, but as far as most mages are concerned, if they ever existed, they're long gone now.



TAMERS OF THE CAVE

Where there's life, there's hope.
But then, where there's nothing, there's hope.

They say that if you stare into the void, the void stares right back out at you. That may be the case for some, but if it affects the Tamers of the Cave that way, it's hard to tell. Everything they do seems to be infused with a kind of infectious optimism. They bring hope and healing to the Sleepers around them.

It stands to reason. Unlike the other Elemental Masteries, whose chosen elemental forces are tangible and easily observable, the Tamers of the Cave master the void, the element of ether that scientists in previous centuries tried and failed to isolate.

If elemental ether was never found by Sleeper scientists, it's precisely because ether doesn't exist, by definition. Ether is the material of nothing, a non-substance that permeates and holds together the vast, empty void. Ether is the prime ingredient of ephemera, the not-living, nonexistent matter from which spirits and ghosts take their substance.

Similar to the other Elemental Masteries, the Tamers of the Cave become, in a way, their element. And they become a personification of the element's manifestation. To harness ether, then, to "tame the Cave" is to make *something* out of *nothing*. Using the principle of like attracting like, the Tamer of the Cave draws void from void, creating a conduit between his body and the great nothingness outside space. He brings forth from his mouth an etheric mirror, a shining, starry, semi-liquid substance made of raw void. In his hands, it's a malleable, versatile tool, and it forms the foundation of his magic, because, in effect he is the void. He is nothing and everything, all at once.

Manipulating — *becoming* — the material of spirits and ghosts gives the Tamers of the Cave a keen understanding of the life beyond. They might not necessarily know what's to come just yet, but armed with their knowledge of the void, they have a confidence that whatever comes after life, they can make something of it. The Tamers of the Cave have seen how everything comes from nothing, how there is a material existence permeated and held together by the substance of nothingness. They are the void. What have they to fear?

The void is also, in the thinking of the Tamers, contradiction. The void is hope and despair, faith and disbelief, all at

once. They become these things personified. They become contradiction. To "tame the Cave" is to make contradiction their reason for being. They challenge the social order in which they live. "The Cave" can be seen as a picture of the darkness in which so many people live, particularly the Sleepers. To tame that notional intellectual spiritual darkness is to challenge it, to show people to the exit of the cave. Some Tamers do it quietly, encouraging people to question themselves and the social order in which they find themselves over long and eventful lives. Other Tamers stand tall and become activists, making themselves nuisances, burning bright and paying the ultimate price that prophets and visionaries have done for thousands of years. They're not afraid of dying.

To the Tamers of the Cave, Death is not to be feared. It's a doorway, they say, through which we must all pass. Perhaps it means a transmigration of the soul. Perhaps it's just the simple continuation of matter and energy, dissipated into the rest of the universe. Perhaps Death really does mean an afterlife in some kind of perfect Heaven.

Many believe in some sort of God, or at the very least in some kind of theory that life endures in some way beyond death. To many Tamers of the Cave, the lack of evidence for any kind of transcendent intelligence is all the more reason for faith. Faith for them thrives in the absence of evidence; their magic proves that nothingness produces and creates. Is it so implausible that a creator may be found in the emptiness?

They consider their lives cheap compared to the lives of others, even Sleepers. These Tamers share the Elemental Masteries' philosophy — that their magic is there to benefit Sleeping humanity. As ones for whom death is not a thing to fear, the Tamers of the Cave are often not afraid to die for others, no matter how undeserving these others might be. There are stories of Tamers of the Cave whose sacrificial deaths were the magical tools to raise others from the dead, or even to bring about a single Awakening. There are stories of others who cheated death and rose again, before Ascending to higher states of being. They're just stories, of course, but the stories persist.

They're not all that helpful, these stories. These self-styled "Saints" have a reputation for throwing their lives away. It's not undeserved. The problem with a Saint is that it takes a certain kind of person to fill that role, and 99 times out of 100, that person

isn't going to be the kind of person the average individual wants to sit down and have a drink with. As Tamers of the Cave grow in power and knowledge, they sometimes develop odd personality traits and messiah complexes. A Tamer of the Cave becomes intense and driven. Many begin to gain delusions about what they are and what they're capable of. They become overconfident, unable to see that perhaps they are not quite the perfect Saints they should be. Possessed of a death wish, too many Tamers of the Cave sell their lives far too cheaply, achieving nothing, violating at the last the ethos of their Legacy. They die just for the sake of dying, fooling themselves that the miracles they seek to promote are going to happen anyway without any other action.

Tamers of the Cave are rare compared to the other Elemental Masteries, so rare that many mages outside of the Elemental Masteries don't even believe these Tamers still exist. They have always been few in number, but during the last couple of hundred years, their numbers have fallen further and their few practitioners have become less and less like the men and women who won the Saints their sobriquet.

The Tamers of the Cave have traditionally recruited among people of faith. The twilight of traditional faith and the rise of fundamentalism, with its demands for simple, black-and-white truths and its inability to comprehend paradox, have a lot to do with this. People have always been willing to die for their faith, but the noble scapegoat of times past has given way to the suicide bomber and the creationist. Some people fear that a new dark age of ignorance, bigotry and violence coming upon us. Too many of the Tamers of the Cave who work their magic today seem to be the vanguard of the fundamentalists, rather than those who should, by rights, be holding it back. A large proportion of a small Legacy seem to be too keen to sacrifice themselves without purpose and without finding others to take their place. The Tamers of the Cave are dying out. Maybe it's simply because their time has gone. Maybe the world has passed them by, and there is no real place for sacrifice in this world any more. Maybe there's no place for hope.

The Tamers of the Cave who yet endure still cling to their ideals. They still have a place, they say. They still have work to do. This is their hope. For many, hope is all they have.

Parent Path: Mastigos

Nickname: Saints. Sometimes Galileans or Socratics.

Orders: The Tamers of the Cave have traditionally been exceptionally open to recruiting apostates. The kind of religious misfits whom the Legacy attracts are often the ones who could never have fully bought into the orders, with their secret formulae and tortuous conspiracies. Still, members of the orders do join the Legacy. Members of the Adamantine Arrow, while no strangers to death, have always found it hard to get their heads around suffering and dying for another rather than fighting. Still, there are Arrows who have joined the Tamers of the Cave, particularly during the 21st century. Many of these Arrows are those whose idea of sacrifice involves strapping explosives to themselves and slaughtering innocents.

Many mages who belong to the Mysterium find the idea of learning the secrets of the void immensely attractive. The

Tamers of the Cave delve into the ultimate mystery, the fate of souls in the hereafter. It takes a selfish and reckless mage to want to find out the final secret to the extent that it doesn't matter if he doesn't come back to tell anyone else. There are many selfish and reckless mages.

The Guardians of the Veil have always held the Tamers of the Cave in suspicion. Guardians rarely become Saints, although, as is the case with the Arrows, a few have joined since the turn of the millennium. The Silver Ladder, on the other hand, has utopian ideals, even if the order doesn't live up to them, and the Tamers of the Cave find that many of the best and brightest of their Legacy have come from the Ladder.

The arrival of the Free Council changed many things. Its permissive, open nature meant that here was an order in which the misfits who would join the Tamers of the Cave could feel comfortable. Most of the Saints who come from an order nowadays come from the Free Council.

Appearance: It's impossible to categorize the Tamers of the Cave. They appear, for all the world, as if they're *ordinary*. They look just like anyone else at first glance, with their ordinary street clothes, their ordinary haircuts and their ordinary shoes. It's only when you speak to them that you see something of the Cave in them. There's a certain eloquence all of them have, a certain disturbing quality in their eyes and voices. They are attractive and frightening, compelling and infuriating.

The Elemental Mark they bear on their nimbus is just as strange. It often carries completely contradictory characteristics, all at the same time. It can be bright and shadowy, silent and deafeningly loud, a stillness in the midst of a tempest.

Background: Unlike the other Tamers, the Saints take their pupils from any walk of life. They come from any gender, any ethnic group and any social class. They can join the Legacy at any age.

Philosophically, the Tamers of the Cave often have some kind of faith, although it's rarely orthodox in form. A Christian Tamer of the Cave, for example, is much more likely to be a Gnostic than an orthodox Trinitarian. There are atheist Tamers of the Cave, although these too find it hard to be strictly materialist in the way they see the world.

Most Tamers of the Cave were altruistic in their attitude toward others, and optimistic in their outlook long before they joined the Legacy. Whatever they believe in, the Tamers of the Cave are, at least to begin with, psychologically robust individuals. They have to be the kind of people who can stare into the howling void and not just laugh, but to reach into it and to make something out of it. They have to be — or have to appear to be — the kind of people who can make something wonderful out of nothing at all. They're the kind of people who become nothing and everything all at once, and laugh at the prospect. Or they should be. A very few let the nothingness take over, becoming unable to apprehend and work with the paradox of existence. These Saints develop a death wish that transcends ideology.

It doesn't matter what they look like or where they come from; it doesn't matter if they're rich or poor, old or young. What matters is the soul within.

Organization: Similar to the other Elemental Masteries, the Tamers of the Cave work on the basis of a simple tutor-pupil relationship. Tutors usually don't go out of their way to look for pupils. If a Tamer of the Cave sees a mage on the Path of Scourging whose disposition might make a worthwhile Saint, he approaches her, explains who he is and explains to her that he'd like to take her on as a pupil. He's pretty open about it. He reasons that he has nothing to hide and if his potential pupil thinks that it's the right thing to do, notwithstanding the suffering to follow, she's probably going to work out.

It's more rare for a student to go seeking out a Tamer of the Cave so that he can be taught the ways of the Legacy, but it still happens sometimes.

Technically, a Tamer of the Cave is supposed to offer succor to practitioners of the other Elemental Masteries, should one of them approach her for aid. In real terms, there's no obligation on any Tamer of the Cave to fulfill this, although given their penchant for altruism, the Saints do, more often than not, give help when asked.

To the other Elemental Masteries, the Saints are an unknown quantity. They work well alongside all of the common Tamers in cabals, curbing the wild inspirational anger of the Tamers of Fire, tempering the cold judgment of the Tamers of Wind with compassion, showing the Tamers of Stone when their works are built on the sand and keeping the Tamers of Rivers grounded.

Suggested Oblations: Prayer or meditation in a lonely place, or a place where something terrible happened. Giving the contents of one's wallet to a homeless person. Spending a day fasting. Spending a day doing volunteer work in the community.

Concepts: Religious worker, hospice nurse, children's entertainer, human rights activist, self-harm survivor, inspirational schoolteacher, retail assistant, bereavement counselor, care worker, loving parent.

History and Culture

The Tamers began as part of human culture, and in the beginning took on roles that were very much part of society. The Tamers of the Cave cultivated the role of the outsider, the prophet. Although unfashionable now, it's a legitimate role. Plato's tutor and friend Socrates saw himself as a gadfly, a constant source of irritation to a complacent, monolithic society. He showed a new way of constant inquiry, constant self-examination. He pointed others on the path to finding wisdom.

Jesus Christ spoke out against the religious and social establishment of his day, and gave many new hope and a new way of living.

The role of the prophet is an ancient and honorable one. It doesn't change the fact that society's irritants, even though any healthy society should have them — *needs to have them* — suffer a terrible fate. Socrates and Jesus were killed by the establishments they challenged.

That was their purpose and their destiny: to challenge and question, and to die.

The Tamers of the Cave have fallen into that role for millennia, and for millennia, they've paid the price for it.

Thanks to the Quiescence, their role has shrunk. The Tamers of the Cave cannot be the open miracle-workers they once were, and they cannot take the role of leaders in mass movements. So, over the centuries, they've worked on a much smaller scale, either taking small parts in mass movements, or working to challenge individual lives, Sleeping and Awakened, one life at a time.

A Tamer of the Cave stood and died with the Diggers. The Radical Dissenters had a Tamer of the Cave among their number. There was a Tamer of the Cave in India following Gandhi, and a Tamer of the Cave in the civil rights struggle. Tamers of the Cave were there when the apartheid regime fell in South Africa. Tamers of the Cave were involved in the campaign for the abolition of slavery and the fight for women's emancipation. There was a Tamer of the Cave at Wounded Knee.

Sleepers led these movements, and Sleepers changed things, but Tamers of the Cave stood alongside the Sleepers, and often died alongside them. And why not? Just as all the Tamers, the Saints see the Sleepers as important enough to live among and fight for.

Symbolisms

The element of the void has no gender, either in form or aspect, and no associated astrological sign, instead drawing affinity with those born on the cusp between any two of the signs of the Western zodiac. The Tamers of the Cave often find numerical correspondences with the numbers *one* and *zero*, the numbers of creation and void, respectively.

In the Tarot, the Tamers of the Cave are represented in the Major Arcana by the Star, the 26th trump, which represents the void, but which is also the card of hope, and Hope is the Virtue to which the Tamers of the Cave most commonly connect themselves.

The Tamers of the Cave declare an affinity with the examples of Socrates and Jesus Christ. Stories that Jesus was in fact a Tamer of the Cave who had achieved the fourth Attainment of the Void circulate from time to time among the Saints, but there's no evidence to substantiate this. They draw modern symbolism from the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, neither of whom seem to have been mages of any kind. Having died, the *idea* of these two men now exists as a powerful symbol of change, struggle and sacrifice. Kurt Cobain — similar to Ian Curtis and Nick Drake — sometimes gets name-checked, even though his death came from self-loathing rather than any real prophetic urge. But then, maybe that's the point. Lenin, too, gets drafted as a prophetic archetype. He faded away rather than dying, but he had

that something that made him one of the great demagogues. At Lenin's behest, many people died and murdered for the cause. Was the cause just? Was all that death worth it? It depends on who you talk to.

The Allegory of the Cave

Imagine that everyone in the world has spent his entire life in a vast cave. There's an exit, but no one can see it, because everyone is chained down in such a way that he can only see the back of the cave. Now shadows of various objects and ideas are projected against the back of the cave by unseen jailers. Because the people trapped in the cave don't know any better, they think these shadows are in fact the real thing.

Someone's chains loosen. Maybe they break, maybe he figures out a way to escape. Blinking, he turns around and sees the sunlight. He covers his eyes and steps out of the cave into the outside world for the first time.

Gradually, he realizes that the cave wasn't even a fraction of the world — his jailers tricked him. He returns to the cave, and tries to tell the people in there what he's seen. He tries to get them out. Some of them don't believe him. Some of them think he's causing trouble. Maybe a few believe him and try to escape. Some even make it out and see the real world for themselves. But most stay in their chains, thinking that the cave is all there is.

Plato records Socrates as reckoning that this was what the world was like. The one who takes up philosophy and begins on the path of wisdom is like the one who gets out of the cave.

The Tamers of the Cave teach the same allegory, but they interpret it in a different light. To them, the cave with all the people chained up in it and forced to take a limited, shadow reality, that's still the world. But the unseen jailers are the Exarchs, whose will enforces the Quiescence, and the man who escapes his chains is one who Awakens to magic.

The reason the allegory is important to the Tamers of the Cave is because of the implications. They have to go back into the Cave, having seen the vastness of the Outside, because they need to try to free the Sleepers. Not all of them are going to listen, and of those who begin to question the world they live in, few will break their chains. But some, some are going to hear the word and break their chains. Some are going to Awaken. It's the ultimate contradiction. It's the ultimate expression of something inside every Sleeper that comes from nothing.

There's a dream that one of the Tamers of the Cave had, more than 2,000 years ago, that perhaps they could do it, perhaps they could Awaken the entire human race.

It's failed. Never many, the Tamers of the Cave are dwindling away to nothing now, and their grand enterprise seems to have got them nowhere. Even so, that's no reason to stop. Every human soul freed and Awakened is another spark of the Supernal, shining into the Fallen World.

Elemental Ether Versus Supernal Aether

The element of ether is not the same as the Aether that forms the substance of the Realm of Angels. Aether is transcendent and vital. It is the source of power for those who wield the Arcana of Forces and Prime. Aether bright. It shines and burns.

Ether, the element of void, on the other hand, is nothingness made into an evanescent material form. Although ether doesn't technically exist in any noticeable way without the magic of a Tamer of the Cave to draw the element forth from the void, ether is still an element, and still very much part of the Fallen World's fabric.

The Art of Dying

Over the centuries, Tamers of the Cave have given their lives for the people they meet. Some of the Tamers of the Cave have made their entire lives into passion plays. They live in order to die. The Tamer of the Cave's death can become a powerful sacrificial means of effecting change.

Tamers of the Cave don't set out to die, at least not to begin with. But it's their role, their place as prophet and outsider, to suffer, and many do, just by taking on the role. However, a Tamer who embarks upon the Calvary road soon realizes that she is going to die.

She surrounds herself with friends, perhaps even taking on some pupils. And then she contrives to place herself in a narrative — a passion play — of her own death. Her friends might not realize that it's happening, but she'll contrive it so that they fall into roles, too — Beloved Disciple, Right Hand, Loyal Doubter, Loose Cannon and, of course, Traitor. Enemies are easier to find. Guardians of the Veil, who would kill for their tradition. Seers of the Throne, whose entire ethos depends upon enforcing the Quiescence. Vampires, who would kill without the interference of some crusading miracle-worker. Sleeper authorities, legitimate and criminal, who see a charismatic activist as a threat.

If the Tamer of the Cave does everything right, she's going to suffer and die.

In this world, there are plenty of opportunities to die. A real-life passion play is remarkably easy to set up, and the play can really be the thing, even to the extent that the setting up of the play can overtake the whole point of dying in the first place.

It's true that some mages join the Legacy because of a death wish. They might not even know they have it. A mage might fool herself that she's got a cause to give herself to. In fact, she's just caught up with the glamour of dying young, of be-

ing halfway between St. Sebastian and Kurt Cobain.

The Saints' Attainments give them an intimate glimpse into the hazy state of existence called Twilight, where ghosts haunt the living and cling to anchors. Many mages, witnessing this place of lost shades, conclude that death is something to be avoided or controlled. Not so the Saints. They see past this image of trapped souls to something deeper. The ancient Tamers of the Cave did not believe, as the Atlanteans taught, that ghosts were empty shells of the living, capable of being manipulated like matter. The Tamers of the Cave taught that ghosts were shadows cast by departed souls—shadows that still had strong sympathetic ties to those souls. By freeing ghosts, the Saints freed souls.

This didn't mean they went around dissolving anchors — some souls *needed* the confinement that their ghostly shadows' suffered, so that the challenge of their continued existence could lead them to greater freedom once their ghosts resolved the issues that anchored them to the world. The Saints seek to challenge the dead as the Saint do the living, and free the dead only if they rise to the challenge. A few Tamers of the Cave have chosen to minister to the dead rather than the living, dying in sacrifice for those who have already passed that veil.

Atonement and Triumph

The real question is, what's the point? What does dying achieve that living and fighting can't? Why should someone die?

The answer is not a simple one, but it boils down to this: it's magic. Magic doesn't follow the rules of the Sleeping World. Magic doesn't bow to any human logic. Sometimes the cause of magic needs a sacrifice.

In a chronicle of magic and enlightenment, a perverse act such as putting oneself in the path of death at the point of climax could change *everything*. A sacrifice like this can bring



redemption. It can bring freedom. It can also be a crock, a pointless waste that achieves nothing except the consummation of a mage's death-urge. The journey toward a sacrificial death, then, is not to be embarked upon lightly. It's not a suicide, because the intention is to achieve something by it, and because there's always the tiny hope, even if it's unfounded, that death might not have to be the result of following this path.

And the achievement? The story goes that when a Tamer of the Cave dies, someone Awakens.

Maybe the void, as an elemental force tied to the Fallen World, gives up the mage's Awakened soul, bonding it with someone else. In the stories, that person is someone who knew the mage.

It doesn't have to be, of course. It could be a complete stranger, no more than someone who made eye contact moments before the mage died.

Saints who study the ethos of sacrifice and redemption often find useful the different models of atonement that Christian theologians present.

- **Victory:** By choosing death, the Tamer of the Cave conquers it; it holds no fear for him, and no fear for any other. He suffers and dies to save lives, many lives. His death might result, but in dying, he gives his friends the time to escape, time to win through. In his final moments, his killers realize that they have not won, and that through killing him, they have defeated themselves, and that they have the consequences of his murder to deal with.

- **Penal Substitution:** The Tamer of the Cave contrives it so that he, innocent, dies in the place of someone who deserves to die. For example, the Saint switches places with an inmate on Death Row, moments before his execution. The sentence having been passed, the person whose life was saved owes it to the Saint to make something of his life. The formerly condemned man doesn't have to acknowledge the debt. The choice is his. It's up to him what he does with it.

- **The Ransom:** The Saint gives up her life so that others, who are imprisoned and innocent, can go free. Perhaps their imprisonment is literal — they might be in an internment

camp, for example. Or maybe it's figurative. Perhaps, when the Tamer dies on their behalf, enlightenment results. Their chains fall off, and they lift their heads and see the way of out of the cave for the first time. Perhaps it even means that they Awaken, *en masse*.

• **Solidarity:** The Tamer of the Cave pours out her life for the downtrodden, the poor, the diseased, the suffering. Perhaps AIDS victims. Perhaps the homeless and disenfranchised. Perhaps 100 slave-labor sweatshop workers in the Philippines. By dying for them, she shows that she is prepared to share in their suffering, even their deaths, in order to support and protect them. She provides an example, and through her death enfranchises and inspires many of those whom the rest of society has discounted. The rest is up to them.

Death Is Not the End

Is that the end? Perhaps not. Rumors persist of Tamers of the Cave who return, briefly, to life after having died, to teach their friends and work more miracles, before finally vanishing forever.

There are a few who swear blindly, even today, that their tutor, who died, rose again – literally, bodily rose again. He gave words of encouragement, words of warning, and then vanished from their sight.

Could it be that a Tamer of the Cave can transcend death? And if so, what could one who has died and rose again achieve?

And where would he go when his work was done?

Some say that Tamers of the Cave often become ghost mages (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 327), although others claim that Saints never do.

False Prophets

Prophets aren't always right, and they're not always spotless. Christ wasn't the only prophet of change of his day, and he wasn't the only miracle-worker. There were others, some who led their followers to their deaths, or who abandoned the faithful when they most needed their prophets.

A prophet often finds followers and the affirmation of those followers can make a person with mystical powers, especially one so prone to Hubris, arrogant. The people who hang on a prophet's words place him on a pedestal, and that pedestal can be narrow, tall and unstable. The followers of a false prophet (or even a true prophet) can turn on their former master and end him. There's that old, bleak joke about the church congregation who stoned their preacher to death, arguing that the Bible said that you should stone a false prophet, and that since it said nothing about *not* stoning a real prophet, it was better to be on the safe side.

Even if they don't turn on him, the prophet can find himself using the faithful. There are news stories every year about leaders of religious groups who take the faithful for every penny they have, use members of their congregation as sex objects or who inspire them to do darker, more violent things.

And then there's dying. A prophet doesn't *have* to die, but

many do. Not all of them die for any reason more than they've got a death wish. A prophet with a powerful personality can easily bring his followers to die with him, possibly through mass suicide (for example, the Heaven's Gate cult or the inhabitants of Jonestown) or acts of suicidal violence in aid of the "cause."

The number of Tamers of the Cave is small. Fewer still act this way. Few fall. But as time goes on, the number of those who abuse their flocks, who fall prey to nihilism, who die for no reason, is growing steadily.

Induction

The Tamers of the Cave have never been the most attractive of Legacies. Prophets, especially potential martyrs, don't appear spontaneously. Experienced Tamers are always looking for pupils. Those who approach a Tamer of the Cave and ask to join the Legacy are often given a fair chance, although the tutor should try to ascertain whether the potential pupil is cut out for the role or not.

The problem often lies in the simple fact that it's difficult to tell a real passionate outsider from someone who simply has a death wish, either consciously or unconsciously. Some Tamers of the Cave accept as pupils people who need therapy, not teaching.

Assuming, after a pupil has been told what initiation entails, that the pupil still wants to go through with it, the prospective Tamer of the Cave retreats to a lonely place and fasts and, under the guidance and supervision of the tutor, meditates on 99 traditional paradoxical phrases, learning them by heart with the tutor's help and repeating them over and over. This could take a few days. It could take weeks. It goes on until the pupil dies.

He doesn't really die. The hunger, thirst and constant meditation send the pupil into an altered state of consciousness, where he experiences death. For three days, he knows exactly what it means to be dead, and in those three days, when he experiences the joy of resurrection, he is transformed. He understands that he has become hope and despair, everything and nothing, creation and void.

The tutor is there all the time and – perhaps because of the connection brought about by the exertion of his will – knows when her pupil is likely to come back to life. When the pupil returns, crying, taking in great gulps of air as if he never figured out to breathe before, the tutor is there, with a simple meal and some water. The vegetables, bread and water taste better than anything the pupil has ever eaten.

Tutor and pupil work closely together, over the next few weeks. The tutor helps the pupil create the etheric mirror for the first time, and trains him in sculpting it and using it.

Each further Attainment involves a long period of fasting and meditation, although not to the point of death, apparent or otherwise. Each time, the tutor is there to help the pupil work with his new ability.

Story Hooks — Don't Fear the Reaper

These three story hooks work fine on their own, but could just as easily become a short chronicle.

• **Voice Crying in the Desert:** A Tamer of the Cave known to the characters begins to speak out against some organization, a corporation, perhaps, or a government agency or a political movement. Perhaps he's speaking out against something more abstract, such as institutional racism in a town's government and society, or the rights of children or against some business concern that may supply hundreds of jobs in the community, but is destroying the local environment or succeeding at the expense of many poorer people. His protests, although non-violent, become more and more flamboyant, and he puts himself — and his friends and colleagues — in a lot of danger. His opponents begin to mobilize, sending people to kill him, trying to find people whom they can pay to betray him. Perhaps the "bad guys" approach the characters and try to get them to sell out their acquaintance. Perhaps they get caught in the crossfire, repeatedly attacked by those who would kill the Saint. Either way, something has to be done. The difficult thing is, even if they try to protect the Saint, he might not want their help.

• **Passion:** As time passes, a prophetic Tamer of the Cave angers all the wrong people — the Sleeper authorities, maybe, or the Seers of the Throne, or the Guardians of the Veil or perhaps all of them. Perhaps individuals who would otherwise be enemies put aside their differences to end him. It's his plan: he contrives his death. Characters in the stories unwittingly take on roles in his private passion: inconstant friends, heartless authorities and the betrayer. But is it going to be worth it? Will his death achieve anything? And if it won't, can his friends save him before it's too late?

• **The Cult:** A Tamer of the Cave (perhaps a tutor or a fellow pupil of a Tamer of the Cave character) develops a small group of Sleeper, or Sleepwalker, followers. He might be known to the characters, or one of their friends might join the group. Gradually, what seems to be a positive organization begins to take on the character of a cult. And then, somehow the characters discover that the Saint who leads the group is planning something, perhaps a mass suicide or a terrorist act. Is it true or is it fabricated by one of the Saint's enemies? If it is true, what can the characters do?

Magic

The Tamers of the Cave have, over the centuries, developed many unique magics. Their decline in numbers has caused many of their rites to be lost. Today, only a few know how to manipulate the secrets of the void, although they're there for a truly creative magician to rediscover.

As an optional rule, to provide some sense of magical exclusivity or rarity to this magic, Storytellers might deem that these spells cannot be freely cast by any mage. A character must first witness the spell or be taught it by someone who knows it before he can cast it as improvised magic himself. Alternatively, it might just require an extended action task (rolling Intelligence + Occult once per hour) for the mage to properly imagine how the Imago for such a spell effect could be formed; once that's achieved, he can freely cast it as an improvised spell (and later even make it into a rite).

The Inescapable Question (Mind ●●●)

Many of the Awakened know that social change begins with the challenging of assumptions. The prophet constantly questions, causing discomfort and doubt in those who would listen. With the right insight, a mage can stop even the most hostile of opponents dead in his tracks, sent into a moment of self-examination by a simple "why?"

Practice: Ruling

Action: Instant and contested; target reflexively rolls Composure + Gnosis

Duration: Concentration (as long as the mage is engaged in conversation)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The mage asks a question that challenges the assumptions of the target. The question can be anything. As long as the target can hear and understand the mage, the target can be doing anything, even trying to attack the mage. If the spell succeeds, the target stops what he is doing and thinks about it, and perhaps talks to the mage for a while. The effect is broken if the subject is attacked, or put into some sort of danger.

If the mage achieved an exceptional success, there's no immediate mechanical benefit, but the subject of the spell takes the question to heart, so that at some point in the next few days, he re-evaluates his life. Depending on who's around him, how prone to self-examination he is and how open-minded he is (and how good the original question was), it could be a passing fad, over in a few days, or it could be the beginning of a changed life.

Silver Ladder Rite: Aporia

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind

Socrates was the master of creating *aporia*, the shocked silence that comes when someone has no answer to a question so challenging, so unexpected, that it shocks its subject into baffled silence. Many of the mages in the Silver Ladder know the value of this, and although they use it sparingly, they use it to good effect.

Grant Lifespan (Death ●●●●●)

Masters of Death are feared for their ability to steal years from the end of a Sleeper's life and graft those years onto their own. The Tamers of the Cave can, on the other hand, do the opposite, granting longer life to others at the cost of their own. The threads of life are of a certain length, but a true altruist can, if he so wishes, transplant the end of his thread of life on to the end of someone else's.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

For every success the Tamer of the Cave gains, he can give one year of his own lifespan to the target of the spell.

This spell cannot be cast on supernatural beings, including the Awakened. Its effects are for the most part in the hands of the Storyteller. It doesn't prevent the effects of aging on the target, and the spell doesn't prevent death through violence, although it does slow the effects of disease.

This spell can only be cast once per month per dot of Gnosis the mage has.

Free Council Rote: Gift of Years

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Death

The Libertine who uses this rote begins by coughing up the years of his life in the form of a small, black, round substance resembling a pearl. Then he gives it to the subject of the spell to eat, and eating passes on the years.

Libertines who teach this rote do not use it often, understandably, and when they do, they choose subjects whom they consider to be worthy.

Atonement (Death ●●●●● + Fate ●●)

Rumors of the Awakened raising the dead are partly true. A mage with the right knowledge really can return a dead person to life. But the mage cannot cheat death without giving something in return – himself. With this spell, the mage gives up his own life, and dies so that another might live, and more than this, so that the other might Awaken.

Practice: Making

Action: Instant (see below)

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None (special)

Although the casting of the spell is described here as “instant,” the time it takes a mage to prepare to cast the spell can be lengthy, as the caster will sometimes set up an appointment with the Reaper – perhaps creating the circumstances that will allow a crazed enemy to take one final, fatal shot, perhaps subconsciously exposing himself to a disease or a poison.

The corpse of the person whom the mage wants to raise must be intact, meaning that the body can't have begun to decay. Also, the subject cannot have died of old age – the subject

must have had an untimely death, from disease, violence or an accident.

If the spell succeeds, the subject returns to life with all her Health dots, Attributes, Skills and Advantages intact. The mage who cast the spell dies. How he dies depends upon the circumstances he has created. In effect, fate takes a hand in his demise. A sniper's bullet finds his temple at the moment the other arises. A terrible car accident claims his life, seconds after the spell is complete. His heart gives way to a congenital defect and he collapses, as the subject of the spell opens her eyes.

The price of this spell cannot be avoided. The Reaper can't be tricked. It's a life for a life; that's the deal.

The soul of the Tamer of the Cave who cast this spell vanishes. The soul cannot be retrieved, and the Saint cannot be revived by any means.

The subject of the spell, meanwhile, Awakens. She doesn't awaken immediately. It could be days, weeks, months or years down the line. But she does Awaken. It could be that this is where the mage's soul goes: it enters the body of the person the mage wanted to raise, joining with her and making her a mage.

Given that this spell can only ever be cast once by any given mage, it has never been formalized as a rote.

Attainments of the Void

The central principle behind the magic of the Saints is the “etheric mirror,” a malleable substance created from the void itself. It's similar but not identical to ephemera, the stuff of spirits and ghosts.

The Tamer of the Cave has become the void, and thus, he can draw more of the void through himself. He spits it out and works it with his hands into a form that he can use to create his magic, in much the same way as a mage using the Death Arcanum might work with ectoplasm. The etheric mirror isn't so much black as it is the color of the void: It appears to be a window, through which one can see infinite space, stars and all. Sometimes it takes on a reflective mirror-sheen (the legendary “magic mirror” of shamans). Sometimes it becomes white and opaque. Whatever it's used for, when the Tamer of the Cave has finished using it, it vanishes in about a minute.

Practically every spell cast by a Tamer of the Cave could be cast using this substance in some way, and he can use it as a dedicated casting tool. He doesn't have to, but many Saints do. A Saint casting a healing spell, for example, spits out a handful of the etheric mirror, which he spreads over the injury he wants to heal. As the spell does its work, the void stuff fades away. If he wants to create a scrying window, he does much the same thing, spitting the etheric mirror onto a wall or table, and using his hands to spread it out into a real mirror, which clears and becomes the window through which he can see through to other places and dissolves into the air when the spell is done.

All of the Saints' Attainments depend upon the Etheric Communion – a Tamer of the Cave has to produce the etheric mirror (using the first Attainment) before he can then use it to create the effects of the second and third Attainments.

1st: *Etheric Communion*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Death 2 (primary), Mind 1, Occult 3

The very first Attainment of the Void, the first thing new Tamers of the Cave learn, is the ability to create the etheric mirror.

The mage uses her own body as a conduit between the void and the Material Realm, spitting out (as an instant action) the strange, malleable material. The effect is similar to the Death 2 "Ectoplasm" spell.

The Tamer of the Cave can use the etheric mirror as a dedicated casting tool. The etheric mirror remains for one scene, or until the spell the mage is using it for is done, whichever comes first, at which point it dissipates back into nothingness. The mage's affinity with the void enables him to see the etheric emanations of the void that surround others. This is an effect similar to the Mind 1 "Aura Perception," spell except that the player rolls Wits + Investigation + Mind as an instant action to achieve the effect.

2nd: *Etheric Doorway*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Death 3

With the second Attainment of the Void, a Tamer of the Cave can use the etheric mirror to create a doorway to Twilight (an effect exactly similar to the Death 3 "Ghost Gate" spell). She produces a few handfuls of the etheric mirror and uses it to create an ersatz door frame on a wall, which becomes a portal through which anyone can pass. One person can travel through it per turn.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

The mage's affinity with the void allows her to reach out to the contradictions in others. Contradiction is a manifestation of the void. Like attracts like, and so the Tamer of the Cave can, through conversation, challenge another's preconceptions. Confusion results. The effect is identical to the Mind 3 "The Inescapable Question" spell (see above). The player rolls Manipulation + Persuasion + Mind. The target reflexively resists with a roll of Composure + Gnosis.

3rd: *Etheric Transfiguration*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Death 4

With the third Attainment of the Void, the Tamer of the Cave can now use the etheric mirror to trigger a transformation, causing her entire body to become composed of that same starry, shining substance. The Tamer of the Cave produces a handful of the etheric mirror, and covers her hands with it. As she rubs it into her hands, the etheric mirror spreads over her body, clothes and anything she is carrying. Within a turn, she becomes a walking, thinking etheric mirror, able to shift into and out of Twilight at will. Changing requires an

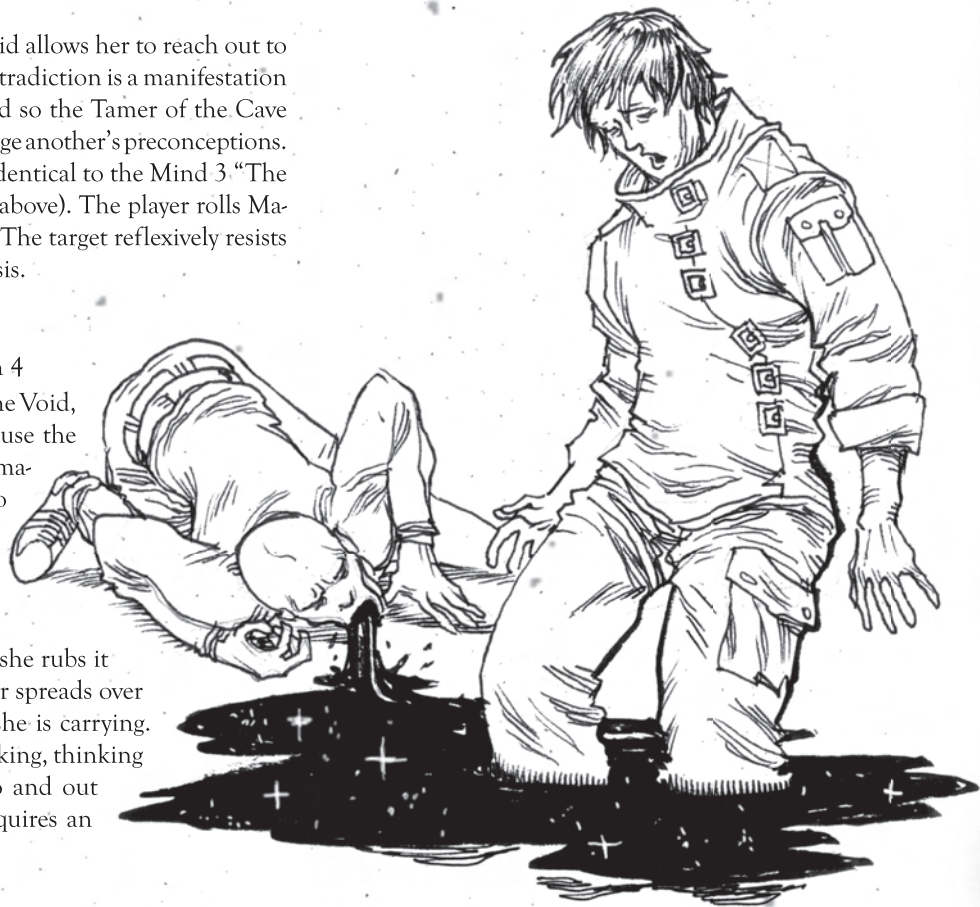
instant action, and the player rolls Stamina + Occult + Death to make the shift. Regaining her corporeal substance takes another instant action, but requires no roll. This exactly mimics the effect of the Death 4 "Twilight Shift" spell. Although the mage isn't strictly made of ephemera, her body can be affected by others as if she is.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

The Tamer of the Cave who becomes an Adept of Mind can now use her intimate connection with the void to create from nowhere realistic visions in the minds of those she meets. Drawing a connection with the deepest fears and guiltiest secrets of her target, she makes her target see things that either have come to pass, things that might come to pass (but might not) and things that don't have any real existence outside of the target's mind.

The idea is often to make the target change his ways, or to express a prophetic idea that can't be expressed through words alone.

What the target sees isn't completely up to the Saint. The mage doesn't get to see what the target sees, although the Saint does get to define what she wants the result of the target's vision could be. A politician might see the terrible, violent consequences that could result from his current course of action (the intention being that he change his policies). A hard-bitten killer might see his long-dead mother expressing shame at what he's become (the object is that he repents). A bigoted preacher could imagine himself caught in the flames of Hell. On the other hand, a man about to commit suicide might see a vision of a guardian angel or of some other



friendly, comforting figure, telling him that he doesn't need to go through with it.

The effect of this Attainment is similar to the Mind 4 "Hallucination" spell. The mage's player rolls Presence + Empathy + Mind to create the vision; the target resists reflexively with Composure + Gnosis. When the vision has begun, the target can deny its reality at any time, with a roll of Resolve + Composure. If the target believes the vision, there's still no guarantee that he will change his ways. That really depends on how active and persuasive the Saint is, and how open to moral pleas the target of the spell is.

Sample Character

Thaïs

Quote: "Look. It's going to be a beautiful day."

Background: There is, working behind the counter of a sweetshop in a provincial town in the southwest of England, a young woman of stunning beauty. Children stop and stare at her as she walks to work. Young men sigh. Old men smile.

She's a miracle, and miracles follow her around. Hidden, rarely practicing magic and separate from the other mages who know her, the woman is easy to talk to. People bend her ear. When she gives advice, it's revelatory. A few words from her change lives.

If anyone asks her who she is, or where she came from, her first response is to be vague. She's got an odd name because "her family is Catholic." She doesn't see them much anymore. She's quite happy where she is. It's rude to ask the age of a lady.

If she's talking to someone she likes and trusts, she'll tell the story of Thaïs the Saint, Thaïs the Prostitute.

It begins something like 1700 years ago. A prostitute in Alexandria called Thaïs, possessed of amazing beauty, was met by a monk, who preached to her about Hell. *Terrified, she begged to be able to do penance. She burnt everything she had and read out a list of her sins to her entire city. Then the old monk took Thaïs to a convent. He bricked her up in a cell, with only a small hole near the floor, through which the nuns passed her a small cup of water and a piece of bread each day. He told her to pray, one phrase, over and over: "Have mercy on me, you who made me." And he left. And he forgot all about her.*

Three years later, the monk remembered Thaïs, and went to get her out. Thaïs was still there, saying the same thing over and over, and she was thin, and she was sick, and her hair had fallen out, and she was surrounded by piss and shit, but she was still saying the words. And the old monk got the nuns to pull down the wall, and he told Thaïs it was time to come out. And Thaïs just stared into the middle distance and wouldn't come out, and she just kept saying her prayer over and over.

And the monk realized the terrible thing he had done, and he went in and held her so softly, and he told her that he was sorry, and that it was time to leave now and that it was all right, and she looked up and she got up on legs that hadn't straightened for a long time, and then she fell over. So the old monk carried her out, and they cleaned her up and laid

her in a soft bed, and she lived for another two weeks, and then she died.

And then they made her a saint. And the monk, he died a guilty, broken man.

Except that this wasn't the end. In the cell, she escaped in a way that no one could ever have known. She had her own vision, and her own transforming miracle. And although she died, she says that in death she saw the void, the substance of God, and that she saw the beauty of life in a way that she had never understood before, in a way that that cruel old monk could never understand. And then she descended one day from her place at the right hand of the Blessed Virgin to walk among the people of the world once more.

If the person she's talking to asks her what this has to do with her, she smiles, and raises an eyebrow, and suggests that they fill in the gaps. She looks and acts perfectly sane, but she believes that she is the saint, with the calm certainty of one who woke up this morning and saw that there was still a sun in the sky.

Description: Thaïs is of slightly less than average height. Her figure is slim and boyish. She has short, strawberry-blond hair. Her eyes are wide, blue and more clear than a summer sky. She smiles her sweet, benevolent smile with wide, full lips. She dresses in ordinary, casual street clothes, but like all truly beautiful people, she wears all clothes well.

Thaïs' nimbus appears as a light with no apparent source that catches the light in her eyes and sparkles around the tips of her hair, but which disturbs rather than reassures, making her look frightening and sad rather than divine.

Storytelling Hints: Thaïs is sweet-natured without being naive, loving without giving much of herself away and gentle without being weak. Sometimes, when she speaks, she cuts straight to the heart of a matter, and you can see the eternal void in her bright, clear eyes. She never gets angry, as such, but when forced, her wrath and regret can be terrible to behold. In everything she says, Thaïs quietly challenges the assumptions by which people live their lives. She often speaks in questions — really difficult questions that demand an answer. She might just work in a sweetshop, but even in a small provincial community, Thaïs makes a difference in the lives of people. Justice begins with ordinary people, and it's these ordinary people that Thaïs considers more important than the petty squabbles of magicians.

She really just wants to be left alone. When, on occasion, other mages find her and ask her for help, she gives it and leaves as quickly as she came. It's not personal. Thaïs is one of the most powerful willworkers in Britain, possessing a degree of power and magical knowledge frankly impossible for anyone who looks as young as Thaïs does. If she doesn't have hundreds of years of magical knowledge, she does a very good job of faking it.

Thaïs cannot possibly be an obscure medieval saint, descended from Heaven. She can't be. Whatever it was that caused Thaïs' delusion (and it has to be a delusion... doesn't it?) must have been terrible. She has no other identity, no memory of being anyone else.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A small mirror



Real Name: She doesn't know herself. She believes it's Thai. For all that anyone knows, it might actually be Thai.

Path: Mastigos

Order: Apostate

Legacy: Tamer of the Cave

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (History, Religion) 5, Medicine 3, Occult (Gnostic Christianity) 4

Physical Skills: Stealth 1, Survival (Fasting) 5

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Intuition, Listening) 5, Expression (Storytelling) 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Putting People at Ease) 3

Merits: Dream 1, Languages (Aramaic, Coptic, English, French, German, Koine Greek, Latin, Syriac), High Speech, Occultation 2, Resources 1, Striking Looks 4

Willpower: 10

Wisdom: 9

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Sloth

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 8

Health: 10

Gnosis: 9

Arcana: Death 5, Life 3, Mind 5, Prime 2, Space 4, Spirit 1

Rotes: *Life* — Banish Plague (⋯), Healing Heart (⋯); *Mind* — Voice From Afar (⋅) Emotional Urging (⋅), The Inescapable Question (⋯)

Legacy Attainment: 1st — Etheric Communion, 2nd — Etheric Baptism, 3rd — Etheric Transfiguration

Mana/per turn: 50/10

Armor: 5 ("Misdirection," Mind ⋅)

Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ⋅)

TAMERS OF FIRE

If anyone here runs, we all die. If you stand with me, we're probably going to die anyway. But this way, we die well.

Humanity needs its heroes. The people need their inspirational leaders. Ever since the very beginnings of civilization, there have been the warriors and the statesmen, the men and women of honor and bright inspiration. The Taming of wild, dangerous Fire is one of the very first things that humans did, arguably the point at which they became fully human, as they took on the power and responsibility of the flame.

The Tamers of Fire harness that primal energy. In their hearts, the Fire has the same power, the same wild abandon, the same need for responsibility and restraint. Fire, for these Champions, is the element of will, unstoppable and implacable, against which the only sane response is to stand down. Fire is the element of intuition, of innovation, the fire that triggered the beginnings of human civilization. Fire is the element of leadership, the pillar of fire in the wilderness that leads the invading hordes into the Promised Land, to buy it with blood and steel. Fire is the element of trial, the burning, cleansing flame that refines and purifies in pain and heat, incinerating the dross and leaving the gold.

Fire is also the element of anger, of rage uncontrolled, that burns and destroys. Fire is the element of madness. Fire is the element of destruction. Fire is transient and temporary. One day, it is impossible to fight against; the next, it has burnt itself out.

In Taming the Fire, the Champions embody all of these aspects. In the process of soulcrafting, they grow to understand their element, to mold it and make it their tool. They become the fire, and through becoming the fire, take on the role of the hero. Their magic concentrates on the fire in every respect: on the uncanny manipulation of the physical flame, and in the inner fire of inspiration and courage.

The hero was a superhuman figure. He stood in the space between humans and god. The Tamers of Fire stand in that place. Through the act of soulcrafting, they *become* the fire. The Tamers believed that Fire was inspiration and rage and destruction and courage, that the abstract concept and the elemental force were the same thing. The mage is also these things — he just doesn't know it yet. By taking the fire within himself, he becomes the fire. He becomes inspiration. His is the "hand that dare seize the fire," because he *is the fire*.

In this age of Quiescence, others might think that the Tamers of Fire need to limit their exploits. They're still heroes, but

their magic needs to be smaller, the scope of their heroism smaller. But the fire that they have become won't allow itself to be quenched. They defy the Quiescence. The fire rages against all limits. The fire will not be stopped until it is doused altogether. The Quiescence has the power to do that to the Champions' magic, certainly, but fire will not back down. It can't be reasoned with. It can't be made to change its mind.

Except that the Tamers know that it can. The fire is in everyone. They just don't know it. A passionate speaker can sway the fire within a man's heart. The same rhetorical techniques can, in the employ of a Tamer of Fire, sway the very fires themselves.

Some of these Champions aim for inspiration through excellence. Some excel in the field of sports.

Others inspire through words, becoming crusading activists, defenders of rights, leaders in their field. Others still become heroes in their work: there are firefighters, police officers, paramedics and soldiers among the Tamers.

The days when a man or woman could transform the entire world and be remembered for millennia are long gone. But sometimes small triumphs are enough. It's the way of the hero to blaze brightly and burn out. If the hero burns more dimly and flickers to nothing that much faster, what of it? In this world, any fire at all is enough.

Parent Path: Obrimos

Nickname: Champions

Orders: Given the martial nature of so many of the Tamers of Fire, it's no surprise that so many of them come from the Adamantine Arrow. Although the Silver Ladder's more hard-line members are wary of the way the Champions value ties with the Sleepers, the Ladder has a need for heroes in these dark days, and many Ladders see the superhuman potential of the Champions as a means to find a new kind of future. The Mysterium has its scholars, but there are always those who would raid ancient ruins and interpret ancient lore in new, brightly intuitive ways. They, too, look to join the Tamers of Fire. Although the Free Council has, perhaps, less time for heroes stepping out of myth, this order has its own great men, and the Libertines find Champions whose fire is directed toward reform and the advancement of human rights attractive.

The Tamers of Fire draw very few of their recruits from the Guardians of the Veil. The Guardians have long thought the Tamers of Fire to be careless braggarts, who waste their magic



on the Sleepers and court Paradoxes. Most of the Tamers of Fire, meanwhile, have little time for the paranoia and strict control that the Guardians seem to hold so dear.

Appearance: The Tamers of Fire can come from any walk of life. Many are good-looking and in fine physical shape. Although the skin on their arms and chests is sometimes marred after a while with small burns, most of the Tamers of Fire know how to avoid harm from flames, and a Champion with serious burn scars is rare. Eloquence is a must. Tamers of Fire often work their magic by convincing the flames to obey them. A person needs to be pretty convincing to do that.

A Champion's nimbus alters as he takes on the first Attainment of the Legacy, and develops a fiery, powerful quality. Blazing angels sing. Flames appear to burst from the mage's skin. Lightning flashes around the mage. Even when not visible, the Elemental Mark has its effect. The Tamers of Fire could be the epitome of the figure with burning eyes, the bright, bold, charismatic hero.

Background: Anyone can be a hero. In myth, the hero is just as often a lowly shepherd as he is the son of a king, a Maid of Orleans as often as the daughter of the King of France. The hero, and hence the Champion, is defined in spite of his or her origin, not because of it. The Tamers of Fire don't go looking for their pupils. Their pupils make themselves known to the Tamers. They look for Theurgists who distinguish themselves as leaders, as people of courage, and not just physical courage.

They value intellectual courage and spiritual courage just as much, and value most of all an individual with the courage of his or her convictions.

More Tamers of Fire are male than female. There is an unfortunate vein of sexism running through the Legacy's history, and women who join the Champions often have to prove themselves to be better than the men in order to be accepted as equals. Even the most radical Tamers of Fire are somewhat patriarchal in their radicalism.

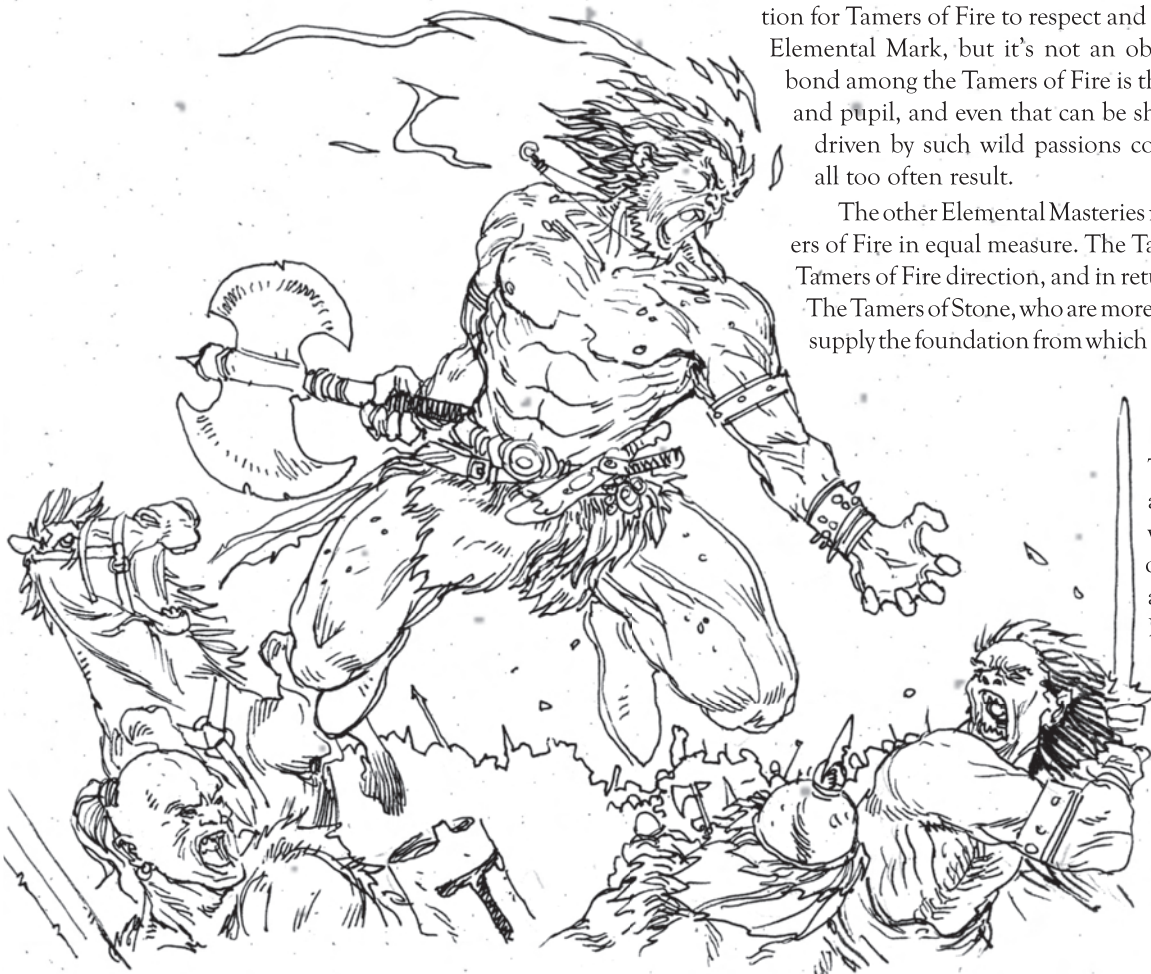
Governments come and governments fall, but in the eyes of the Tamers of Fire, there will always be governments of some kind. The Tamers of Fire might sometimes be revolutionaries, but they are rarely anarchists. The hero is a part of the social order, and needs a social order to be part of. His relationship with his order works on the same lines. A Tamer of Fire tends not to challenge the status quo of his order. He finds other battles to fight.

Organization: A Tamer of Fire who sees a likely pupil tests him. The test, traditionally, is part of the initiation. A tutor takes on only those pupils whom he considers to be worthy of the Legacy. A potential Tamer of Fire who approaches another to be taught has to prove himself worthy. Similar to David, who had to prove himself by slaying the Philistine giant, a possible student might have to undergo a quest or achieve some seemingly impossible feat.

As with the other Elemental Masteries, there's an expectation for Tamers of Fire to respect and aid other bearers of the Elemental Mark, but it's not an obligation. The only real bond among the Tamers of Fire is the bond that links tutor and pupil, and even that can be shaky. When individuals driven by such wild passions come together, fireworks all too often result.

The other Elemental Masteries respect and fear the Tamers of Fire in equal measure. The Tamers of Winds give the Tamers of Fire direction, and in return they supply passion. The Tamers of Stone, who are more grounded by definition, supply the foundation from which the Champions can base

their work. Awkwardness characterizes their relationships with the Tamers of Rivers. Fire and water rarely mix, and when they do, tempers often rise to boiling point as the direct Tamers of Fire and the subtle Tamers of Rivers clash over methods. Still, both the Champions and the Travelers recognize that they need each other, even if, in practice, they differ on how best to serve their society.



Suggested Oblations: Starting a campfire in the middle of nowhere by the “two sticks” method. Firewalking. Spending an entire night in physical training. Organizing a match of a team sport. Running a marathon. Burning your skin repeatedly with small flames from a lighter or a candle.

Concepts: Sportsman, demagogue, career soldier, incorruptible police officer, human rights activist, conscientious objector, NYC firefighter, paramedic, charismatic organizer of underground bare-knuckle boxing club.

Culture

In ancient times, heroes fought their way across the landscape of primal myth. From the Irish Cú Chulaind to the Sumerian Gilgamesh to the Greek Herakles, from Romulus to Siegfried to Beowulf to Samson, the heroes faced monsters, fought, killed and died.

Chances are that none of these men strictly existed beyond vague memories, written down after centuries of oral tradition. But then, that's part of the point. It's the *idea* of the hero that's important, not whether what he did is historically accurate.

Over the centuries, the Tamers of Fire have tried to be the Champions they claim to be. It's been theirs to protect, lead and inspire others in a thousand different ways.

They protect the weak and rescue the endangered. They take the roles of rescue and medical workers in dozens of countries.

They inspire by example. They perform acts of foolhardy bravery and athletic skill. They run marathons, become professional sportsmen. They go to war and win medals, inspiring others to lay their lives on the line for their ideals.

The Fire is a two-edged sword. The Fire brings liberty, but the Fire also brings extremism. It sweeps across the field, bringing change, but rages out of control. The Revolutions in Russia and France were both borne on a fire of inspiration that rapidly got out of control. The torch of liberty became its funeral pyre, as reigns of terror in both nations burnt away the good as well as the bad. The First World War began as a great patriotic venture in dozens of countries, and wiped out a whole generation of young men. What good were the ideals of the hero when 100,000 men could die in an afternoon, lost forever in an agony of gas, blood and sucking mire?

Even now, the Champion can go too far. Perhaps a Tamer of Fire blindly follows a flawed leader or a discredited philosophy. Perhaps the Champion falls prey to the easy certainties of violent fundamentalism. Perhaps in his desire to champion one cause, he performs terrible acts against the followers of another. Or maybe he simply no longer sees those who disagree with him as fully human.

The Fire brings inspiration, but it brings madness. Herakles' strength gave gods and monsters cause to quake, but his rage gripped him to the extent that he slew his own children without knowing what he was doing.

The Tamers of Fire can also fall prey to madness. Like the Fire that is bonded with them in essence, they have the potential to cause vast destruction.

The Tamers of Fire are the best known of the Elemental Masteries among the Awakened. Their fellow mages sometimes see them as heroes. Just as often they consider the Champions to be braggarts and loose cannons, dangerously flawed near-lunatics: point them at the enemy and stand well back, but don't trust them for anything more.

Symbolisms

The element of Fire is a masculine element, an element of heat, light and destruction, and the Tamers of Fire harness that element in its male aspect. The constellation of Leo has long been auspicious for the Champions, and those born under the sign of the Lion often have great Destinies.

The Hierophant, the fifth card of the Tarot's Major Arcana, has many correspondences for the Tamers of Fire, the Hierophant being representative of the mystical hero, the innovator and leader; to a lesser extent, the Emperor or the Strength card, too, makes itself known in the Champions' lives. The Virtue of Fortitude appears in allegorical symbols, as does the Vice of Wrath.

Temporary As Achilles

True heroes are flawed. The superhuman paragon beloved of the Hollywood action movie is no hero. The true hero is human, and just as any other human being, he has limitations. A hero becomes a hero by transcending these limitations. A true superhuman can only become so by recognizing his flawed humanity and refining it in the furnace.

There are several ways a hero can be flawed. Tamers of Fire don't go out of their way to pick flawed pupils, but the kind of people who bear the mark of heroism are often the kind of people who have needed to defeat their limitations.

- **Physical Flaws:** Some of the great heroic figures of history and myth had physical drawbacks that they overcame or addictions they fought their entire lives. Horatio Nelson and Quintus Sertorius were one-eyed. Nelson had only one arm. Julius Caesar was epileptic. Oedipus was abandoned as a child with a metal spike through his foot, and walked for the rest of his life with a limp.

- **Mental Flaws:** Psychological weaknesses can also prove disastrous for the hero. Herakles went mad; Achilles was prone to irrational rages. Alexander was an alcoholic and a megalomaniac. Oedipus' inability to know when to stop asking questions proved his downfall. Samson's weakness for a pretty face cost him dearly.

- **Social Flaws:** Some heroes have terrible secrets, or have made enemies from terrible mistakes they made in their pasts. Oedipus was destroyed by a terrible secret that even he didn't know. Arthur's plot to destroy the incest-born son who was prophesied to kill him not only failed, but turned the boy against him and sealed his fate.

- **Mystical Flaws:** A very few heroes suffer from flaws with a magical or divine origin. Cú Chulaind was doomed to die if he ate a dog, but was under an injunction never to refuse hospitality if offered — when a woman invited him into her home and gave him a stew made from dogmeat, he had no choice but to accept it and die. Samson's supernatural strength depended on the length of his hair.

Flaws and Characters

Many of the imperfect heroes of myth had several imperfections. A Tamer of Fire character probably has at least one Flaw (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 217) — if she doesn't, there's always the chance she'll develop one or more as she develops the Attainments of the Flame. The heroes of legend didn't always begin their lives with their Flaws, and there's no reason a Tamer of Fire character shouldn't gain a Flaw as time goes on.

Notionally, the more Flaws a Champion has, the more "mythic" in stature she can be. Powerful Tamers of Fire could have many Flaws. Players' characters, on the other hand, aren't usually powerful to begin with, let alone mythic. Not yet, anyway. With a more average starting character, one Flaw can provide plenty of interesting plot complications. The point of Flaws, particularly with the Tamers of Fire, is to provide a limitation that a character has to conquer. Too many could make a character unplayable.

Induction

Once a Tamer of the Fire has chosen the one he wants to teach, the Champion puts his prospective pupil through a hero's ordeal. The pupil might not even realize it — the initiation takes the form of a journey in the real world, with real dangers, a quest partly contrived by the tutor.

First comes the *Call*. The tutor asks the mage to go on the quest, without telling her why. Here, the prospective pupil may not wish to begin the quest. This *Refusal* is usual — in fact, it's to be expected; some tutors treat as failures those who go on the quest without some initial hesitation, reasoning that a hero may be brave, but should not, ideally, be foolhardy.

If the pupil has refused to answer the call once, the tutor appears and explains something more of the quest, and why it is important. Perhaps he appeals to the pupil on moral grounds. Perhaps he appeals on the grounds of self-knowledge. Either way, he produces a spiritual carrot on a stick, leading the pupil to the next stage, a *First Trial*. The enemy may be real. The quest may be truly dangerous. It may involve the pupil's friends, and there is no shame in that. A series of tests follow: a test of skill, a test of knowledge, a test of integrity, a physical

test, leading to a place of darkness, a *Cave*, where the pupil faces a life-threatening ordeal. If the hero-in-training gets out alive, she needs to escape. It's here that the tutor reveals all. If the pupil is willing to continue, she is granted a vision of the Flame, burning away the imperfections in her soul. It's now she is a full member of the Legacy.

Each subsequent Attainment works in the same way — a real quest, a real journey, which ends with a vision of the Flame. Each time the tutor is there at beginning and end to send the pupil on her way and to show her the refining Fire and guide her to the next Attainment.

Story Hooks — What the Hand Dare Seize the Fire?

- **Trial of a Legend:** A well-known and respected Tamer of Fire has been accused of using his magic to perform a terrible act of violence against some other mages. A cabal of respected magicians lie dead, burnt to a crisp, and the evidence, both circumstantial and material, points to a Tamer of Fire, who might even be one of the players' characters. The Consilium gives another member of his Legacy, his teacher or pupil, perhaps, the job of defending him. Is he guilty? If not, who did the deed?

- **The Wrath of Achilles:** A Tamer of Fire (perhaps the tutor or fellow-pupil of one of the characters) loses someone he loves — a friend, a sidekick, a pupil, a tutor or a lover — to an act of (not necessarily unjustified) violence. The Champion aims to get revenge. A scenario similar to the one in the *Iliad* plays out. The situation escalates; violence leads to violence, as honor demands satisfaction, and takes precedence for the vengeance-seeker above morality. Can the characters stop things escalating before too many people die? Or will they have to take down a hero?

- **Going Out in a Blaze of Glory:** An old Tamer of Fire, perhaps the tutor of one of the characters, has made the decision — he can't fade away, and so it's the alternative. He plans a suicidal assault against a near-invincible enemy, such as the Seer pylon that has the local government in its hands, a vampire queen in her lair, a pack of human-eating werewolves, a powerful and dangerous spirit or the near-invincible guardian of an ancient ruin. Maybe the Champion takes the characters along without telling them it's a suicide mission. Maybe they know he's hell-bent on dying, but need to stop him because the consequences of his final, insane action (reprisals, for example) could be far worse than an old man committing suicide.

Magic

The Tamers of Fire master fire in all of its forms. Their magic controls the flame in its physical and symbolic manifestations. It can be a terrible, glorious thing to see a Champion, blazing brightly, with a band of friends who'd die for each other at his side and an army of living flames springing from his hand.

They're also adept in the magic of the mind. To the Tamers of Fire, it's the same thing. When they work with fire, they talk to it, convince it to do their bidding. The mind and the fire are one and the same, and if the heart of a man can be swayed by impassioned talk, so can the fire itself.

Firestarter (Forces ●●●●)

Sometimes the wrath of the Tamers of Fire burns hot and bright. Magical arson may not be honorable, but fire can cleanse, and fire can destroy. When all looks impossible, an inferno from nowhere can ensure that even if a Champion doesn't get out alive, his opponents join him in the flames.

Practice: Unraveling

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert (but see below)

Cost: 1 Mana

This spell causes the area around a targeted spot (which can be anywhere within sensory perception) to catch fire.

Successes **Area around targeted spot**

1	One-yard radius
2	Two-yard radius
3	Four-yard radius
4	Eight-yard radius
5	16-yard radius

Fire causes automatic lethal damage to everyone within its radius per turn of exposure (see the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 180). The heat of the fire is roughly equal to that of a candle. The mage can increase this heat (and the damage it inflicts) by raising the Potency of the spell during casting:

Potency	Dice Penalty	Heat of Fire	Damage
1	None (basic success)	Candle (1st-degree burns)	1
2	-2	Torch (2nd-degree burns)	2
3	-4	Bunsen burner (3rd-degree burns)	3
4	-6	Chemical fire/molten metal	4
5	-8	Inferno	5

What happens next depends on how flammable the area outside the initial area is and what the reaction of anyone caught in the flames is. An old, dusty house in Arizona in the middle of summer is a lot more likely to go up in flames than the trees in a swampy clearing in the Everglades. Once the spell is complete, the flames created are entirely normal flames, and behave normally. Sprinklers and fire extinguishers work normally. Flames on dry, flammable material will catch very easily. Fire on material that is damp or not flammable at all will fizzle out very quickly indeed.

Adamantine Arrow Rote: Conflagration

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Forces

A mage with enough skill can actually *frighten* the atoms of the surrounding area into combusting. The truly inspired use further Forces magic to direct the course of the fire they have created. An intelligent and sensitive mage can cause a vast amount of destruction with very little effort.

Fiery Servant (Forces ●●●● + Mind ●●●●●)

Some mages pride themselves on their leadership skills. Many have the ability to make men lay down their lives. The truly



powerful, however, can make even the fire itself follow them, creating beings made of flame to do their bidding.

Practice: Making

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage creates a small, intelligent being made of living flame that will do whatever the mage commands it to do. Since it's made of flame, that's limited to burning things. The creature, which is about the size of a rat (Size 1) and which can take on any shape the mage wants it to, does get to choose what to burn and what not to burn. Successes can be split between Potency, the Size of the creature (one success adds one to Size) and the heat of the fire (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 180 – each success adds one level to the intensity of the fire).

A servant with one point of Potency has a flame that has the size and produces the heat of a torch. If the fiery creature tries to burn a person, it has an attacking dice pool equivalent to its creator's Gnosis + 2, and causes lethal damage. If the creature causes more than two points of damage on its first attack, the creature sets its target on fire, causing another point of lethal damage every round following, until the fire is put out.

Although obviously magical (and subject to Disbelief), the creature is made of nothing more than fire, and can be destroyed immediately by a fire extinguisher or a large bucket of water.

The creature is only barely sentient. Although it can follow detailed instructions, it can't change its plan, or come up with new plans on its own.

Free Council Rote: Firebug

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression + Mind

Even mages who prefer to do their work face-to-face admit that it can, on occasion, be necessary to send a small fiery agent in to defeat a minion, purify the ground or flush an enemy out so that the mage can confront him, man to man.

Will of Fire (Mind ●●●)

Fiery rhetoric can bolster human spirits. With the right words, a mage can give a group of friends and followers the will to succeed above and beyond their own capacity.

Practice: Perfecting

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage casts this spell on one or more people.

Successes	Number of People Affected
-----------	---------------------------

1	One
2	Two
3	Four
4	Eight
5	16

The actual casting takes the form of a pep-talk, which can be a few words or a long, involved speech. A long speech can be performed as an extended casting, although a weak mage may discover that talking for hours on end may prove counter-productive, as her audience loses attention.

The talk has to be directed toward psyching up the subjects of the spell for a specific purpose, which could be anything from winning a fight or a sports match to finding an elusive fact over a night of frenzied research in ancient tomes.

The spell enables the mage to grant one Willpower point to the subject(s) of the spell, which can only be used for actions related to the purpose of the spell and which, once used, can't be regained. These points should be recorded separately from the character's own Willpower points.

This spell can only affect any given individual once per scene.

Silver Ladder Rote: The Crucible of Hope

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Mind

A leader is nothing without a following. With this rote, a mage can inspire his followers with the extra force of will to achieve beyond their usual means.

Fireproofing (Forces ●●)

Fire can be a dangerous tool to use, since it often harms its user as well. Some mages have learned how to make their bodies fireproof, by manipulating the air around their bodies in such a way that fire cannot harm them.

Practice: Shielding

Action: Instant

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: None

The mage who casts this spell is proof against small fires. With the three-dot version of this spell, he can cast it on others. Like the Forces 2 "Unseen Shield" spell, Fireproofing allows the mage a degree of armor against fire damage (equal to one point of armor per dot of Forces). Even if he is not in direct contact with the flame, its heat does not bother him, unless it's hotter (in terms of damage inflicted per turn) than his Forces dots, in which case he suffers any excess damage due to heat prostration. In addition, his clothing and any object he holds becomes fireproof, no matter how flammable they might be (the fuse on a stick of dynamite can't catch fire so long as he holds it).

Free Council Rote: Asbestos Skin

Dice Pool: Stamina + Survival + Forces

If you play with fire, you're going to get burned. Except that some mages don't seem to get burned all that often.

Attainments of the Flame

Each of the Champions' Attainments depends upon fire. However, since the Tamers of Fire consider heroic abstracts such as inspiration, courage and rage to be the same thing, the fire can be symbolic as well as literal. Attainment effects that alter physical flames (using Forces synergy) require the Tamer

of Flame to have a small flame of his own that he can use as a focus to affect the flames. Many Tamers of Fire smoke. Most keep a box of matches or a lighter on their persons.

Attainments that use the symbolic flame need a different kind of fire, the fire of flashing eyes and passionate talk. Tamers of Flame at work are quite marvelous to behold. Their oratory can transform lives, bring down governments and move people to stunning feats of bravery.

1st: Touch the Fire

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Forces 2 (Primary), Athletics 3

Like attracts like, and the Tamer of Fire who gains the first Attainment learns how to use his transformed nature to commune with flames and control them. Simply by talking to the flames, he can create an effect identical to the Forces 2 spell "Influence Fire" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 166), except that the player rolls Presence + Expression + Forces to cast the spell. If he uses the fire to attack someone, the target's Defense is subtracted from the roll.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 2

This fiery sway extends to others. The fire, in its aspect of inspiration, reaches out to the inspiration of the people the mage communicates with. His charisma pays dividends. With impassioned rhetoric, he can influence the emotions of others as an instant action, an effect similar to the Mind 2 spell "Emotional Urging" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 208), except that the mage rolls Presence + Persuasion + Mind, contested against the subject's Composure + Gnosis.

2nd: Catch the Fire

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Forces 3

With Forces 3, the mage can control and mold physical fire, again simply by talking to it, as if he convinces it to do his bidding just as a charismatic general inspires his troops. This effect is the same as the Forces 3 spell "Control Fire" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 168), except that the player rolls Presence + Expression + Forces.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

The Tamer of Fire can now share his enthusiasm for an enterprise with others, catching the fire of inspiration and molding it into a tool. Speaking out with passion and force, he gives others the will to succeed. This Attainment duplicates the effects of the Mind 3 spell "Will of Fire" (see above). The mage rolls Presence + Expression + Mind.

3rd: Become the Fire

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Forces 4

With Forces 4, the Tamer of Fire finds that his own body can become a furnace for the Flame. As an instant action, he can cause his body to give off intense amounts of heat, enough to ignite nearby flammable objects. The Champion's player rolls Presence + Intimidation; the successes determine the intensity of the flame and the damage it inflicts (one lethal point per success), similar to Potency points in the "Firestarter" spell (see above). Unlike that spell, the effects of Become the

Fire are confined to a one-yard radius around the mage. The mage is immune to this heat, and anything he wears or carries will not ignite.

Anyone trying to attack the Tamer with melee combat suffers from the incredible heat, suffering its damage per turn of contact. In addition, anything flammable that the person is wearing or holding might catch fire. The Storyteller should keep track of the amount of heat damage inflicted per turn; if the cumulative amount exceeds a flammable object's Durability, the object ignites.

The Tamer of Fire has enough control over the effect that he can exempt certain people or objects from the worst of his heat, so that they do not suffer damage or ignite. He can exempt one object in his radius (in addition to those he carries) per Gnosis dot per turn.

The Tamer of Fire can cancel this Attainment with an instant action.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

The mage can now use the fire in his heart to refine and burn away the imperfections in the hearts of the people who follow him. A word of criticism here, an encouragement there, a revelatory phrase, and the hearts of the mage's friend burn within them. Their eyes see more clearly, their minds think faster, their own tongues speak more powerfully. This Attainment is similar to the effect of the Mind 4 spell "Augment Other Minds" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 213), except that the mage rolls Presence + Expression + Mind. The mage can augment one of the subject's Mental or Social Attributes by one dot for each success he gains.

Sample Character

Ray of the Rangers

Quote: "We're two-nil down, with only 10 minutes to go, but we can pull it out of the bag. We can win this one, lads!"

Background: It happened in the FA Cup final in 1979. Although Ray Rice, up-and-coming striker for Warwick Rangers, had suffered throughout the 1978-79 season from injury problems, his manager had faith in him. With Liverpool ahead by three goals to Warwick's one, Ray got to leave the subs' bench and take his chances on the pitch, with 15 minutes until the final whistle.

As he strode out onto the Wembley turf and the fans began to sing his name, something strange happened. Suddenly, he was in a golden room, and there were angels singing their own terrace songs. They put a pen made of fire in his hand. He signed for the most important transfer deal of his life.

And then the dream was over and the ref was blowing those three long bursts on his whistle, and Ray was being carried on his teammates' shoulders across the pitch. Unawares, Ray had won the game for Rangers, with a goal in the 79th minute, an equalizer in 87th and a penalty five minutes into extra time. He didn't remember doing any of it.

That day was the beginning of two lives for Ray Rice. In one, he became a sporting legend, a scorer of goals without compare,

who, because he was born in Wrexham, played for Wales and so never got to play in the World Cup. Faithful to the Warwick Rangers for nearly 30 years, he became, as time went on, player-manager, and finally manager. He had a rough time back in the '90s, what with the booze and the bad press that got him, but a few headlines in the *Sun* couldn't ever keep a man like Ray Rice down. He was Ray of the Rangers, a legend across the world.

In his other life, he entered the world of another kind of hero, the mage, with its own conspiracies and its own dangers.

People who knew Ray imagined that he'd joined the Masons, which back in the early '80s was hardly unusual in the higher levels of the FA. Ray never, ever used his magic on the pitch. Not one of the countless goals he scored throughout his career was due to anything other than his own skill and his own hard work. It's a point of honor for him.

Over the years, Ray gained a reputation as something of a fix-it man as time went on, the kind of man a player would go to if he'd got into some kind of trouble. Off the pitch, Ray poured out his life for others, getting people out of debt, freeing his friends from criminal entanglements and setting right the troubles of the world around him with supernatural speed. Ray's always been a hero.

He's starting to get bitter about that. Two failed marriages, a grown son (himself a player in a Premiership team with impressive prospects), an Aston Martin and a mostly empty mansion in Surrey are all he has to show for having been a hero. He's not half as great a magician as he was a sportsman.

The bottle beckons again.

Description: Ray is a fit, trim man in his late 40s. His fair hair has turned to gray and his clean-cut face has sagged a little and gained a few wrinkles, but the fire is still in his eyes, and he's in astounding shape for a man his age.

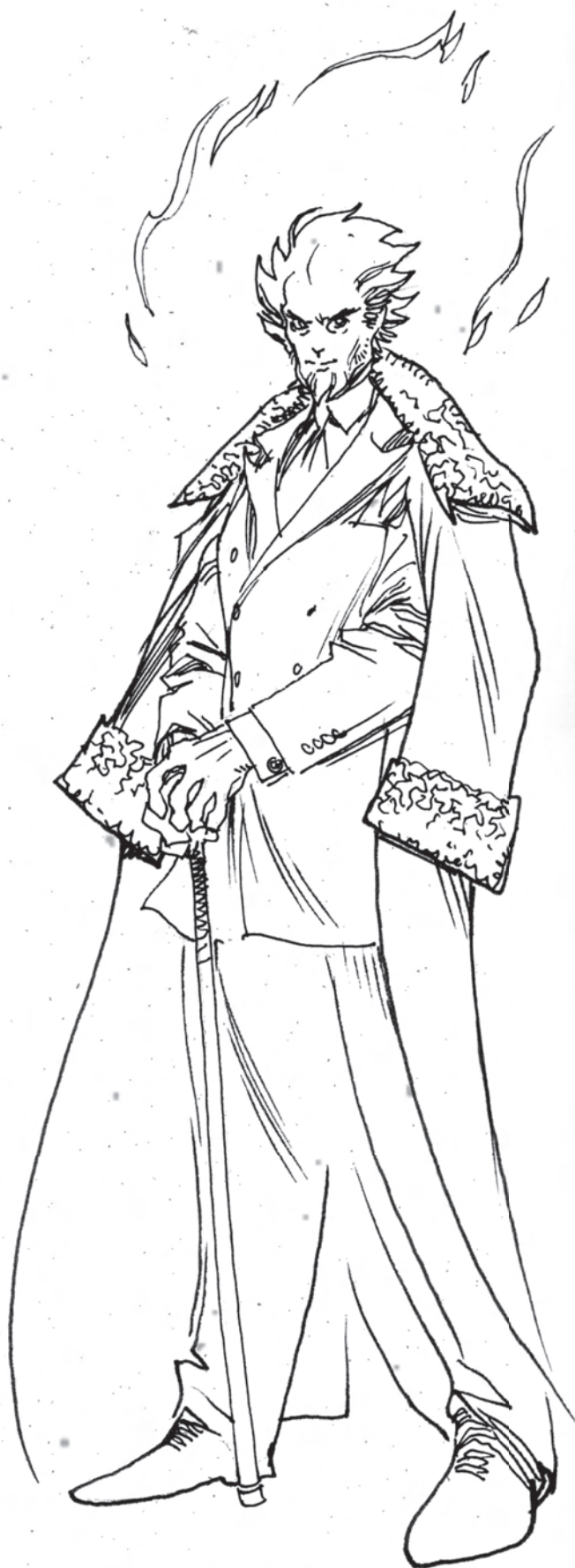
He dresses in smart suits, although the effect of affluence is slightly spoiled by the old sheepskin coat he usually wears.

Ray's nimbus creates the illusion of a fiery angelic crowd, all around, cheering as if they were at some kind of Supernal Cup Final.

Storytelling Hints: Ray's gruff and laconic in the way that only a veteran soccer star can be, but on the bench, he's the revelation that he was on the pitch, an inspiration to a new generation of professional players. He'd never use his magic to change the laws of physics or to nudge a ball into the back of the net, but he's not afraid to use it to inspire his players to be the best they can be.

In the three decades since he Awakened, Ray hasn't become all that powerful a mage. He parted ways with Hurst, his tutor in the Tamers of Fire, who then died in the mid-'80s, and Ray has never found another tutor. Although supposedly part of the Silver Ladder, he doesn't really have much to do with them. He's spent the years being a sportsman and a hero, and heroes have little time to study.

Ray has never taken on a shadow name. He's simply Ray Rice: Ray of the Rangers. Given that he was already a household name in Britain alone long before he Awakened, he reasoned that taking a name to hide behind was pointless. Besides, he's



a direct sort of man. He is who he is. Chances are that when he walks into a room, they know him already. Although he's rich and famous, he'll happily spend hours talking about the Beautiful Game with a fan.

The attitude has got him in trouble over the years, but he's been exceptionally lucky so far. His reputation as a sportsman is vast. His reputation as a magician is non-existent. He's pretty blasé about the dangers of magic, and doesn't have any real countermeasures against sympathetic magic. At any time, one of his enemies could destroy his life with ease. They haven't yet, but all it takes is one mage, even a weak one, to try to take him down.

Dedicated Magical Tool: FA Cup winner's medal

Real Name: Ray Rice

Path: Obrimos

Order: Silver Ladder

Legacy: Tamer of Fire

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Medicine (Sports Injuries) 2, Politics (FA) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (The Beautiful Game) 4, Brawl 1, Drive 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Half-Time Pep Talk) 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Warwick Rangers) 5, Contacts (Sports Media, Football Association, Players' Union, FIFA), Fame 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Iron Stamina 2, High Speech, Resources 5, Sanctum (size) 4/ (security) 3, Status (FA, UEFA, FIFA) 3

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 7

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 13

Health: 8

Gnosis: 3

Arcana: Fate 1, Forces 2, Mind 3, Prime 1

Rotes: Forces — Influence Sound (•), Unseen Shield (••); Mind — Will of Fire (•••)

Legacy Attainment: 1st — Touch the Fire

Mana/per turn: 12/3

Armor: 2 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)

Flaw: Ray is alcoholic. Although he's been dry for about five years now, it would only take one drink to bring it all back. If Ray takes a drink at any time, he suffers from the Addiction Flaw with regard to alcohol (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 218) until such time as he manages to get himself back on the wagon.



TAMERS OF RIVERS

I'd better be going.

And once again when the river swelled during the rainy season and roared loudly, Siddhartha said: "Is it not true my friend that the river has many voices? Has it not the voice of a king, of a warrior, of a bull, of a nightbird, of a pregnant woman and a sighing man, and a thousand other voices?"

"It is so," nodded Vasudeva, "the voices of all living creatures are in its voice."

— Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*

You can't swim in the same river twice. The water flows, constantly, in constant flux, constant change. The waters renew themselves constantly, and gradually change the nature of their landscape. The waters have many voices for change.

The waters are the very origin of creation. They're the living fount from which all other things take their being. The symbolic river runs to the primordial ocean, which contains all life forces. The waters bring fertility. The rain that waters the parched land brings life from what once was barren and dead.

The waters excite sensation. The gentle flow of water across human skin. The rise and fall of the fluids in the body dictates the physical response to desire, the transfer of life borne in water its culmination, its purpose.

The waters purify. Catholics flock in their thousands to the holy shrine of Lourdes to experience the healing powers of its waters. Hindus visit the sacred city of Varanasi, to cleanse themselves in the restorative waters of the Ganges.

The waters erode. The waters constantly alter their surroundings. The gradual erosion of the rocks happens over millennia. And yet, the gentle, persistent movement of the waters hides frightening powers. Water can just as easily bring destruction and death, in the devastating power of a tsunami, the wild, unpredictable anger of a flash flood. The river, without warning, becomes the mysterious depths that kill and annihilate. Water is healing and fertility, but water is also the dark habitation of demonic powers, the element of "tehom" or Tiamat — the dragon of watery chaos. The principle of life becomes a principle of death all too easily.

To Tame the River is to become water, and to become all of these principles. The Tamers of Rivers, for as long as they have practiced their magical arts, have claimed to have held the keys to life and death and everything that lies beyond. They're all



change, all transformation, and, like the path of the conceptual River that represents all rivers, it's a constant journey, from spring to river to sea to sky to ground to spring . . . and back again.

Their role in society has always to be agents of change in all things. Sometimes they join with artists and radicals. Sometimes they're activists. Sometimes they're healers and teachers. Rarely do they stick with one job or one identity. The Tamers of Rivers make the constant flow their tool. The unpredictability of this River, the symbolic representation of what they have become, makes soulcrafting fraught with pain and personal insecurities.

Every artist knows that, just as the ability to create beauty comes from somewhere outside of herself, so the source of her inspiration could just as suddenly dry up. Every inspired healer knows that, someday, his ability to heal could simply disappear, irretrievably and forever.

The River can run dry. This fear, that one day their power could be made drought, inspires many to continue creating. Many do so at a prodigious rate, feeling compelled to do as much as possible before the power to do so deserts them. Many Tamers of Rivers experience periods, which can be anything from a few days to months or years at a time, when they feel devoid of creative energy. They ebb and flow, going through phases of low and high water. When the rain of inspiration has not fallen for some time, the Tamers of Rivers can embark on periods of the blackest depression. Most come out of the other side of times like this, springing from the dry ground with renewed vigor and freshness. Some may fall into cynicism and stagnate, no longer having the will to continue developing the Attainments of the River.

Tamers of Rivers, like the River itself, don't settle in one place for very long. Historically, they were always travelers. Part of a tradition that began among some of the earliest matrilineal societies, they moved from tribe to tribe, city to city, promoting the arts of healing and childcare and teaching the benefits of culture, literacy and the arts.

These days, many of the "Travelers" have permanent homes, but the need to keep on the move still lingers. Many move their home at least once a year, and avoid putting down firm roots for fear of getting stuck in one place. The principle of

their soulcrafting depends on them becoming water, becoming constant change, becoming embodiments of frequent movement. The idea of spending a lifetime living and working in a single city or town is all but anathema: still waters soon become stagnant waters. If they take jobs at all, they usually avoid office jobs, preferring the freedom of jobs that let them move around. Their relationships are frequently fraught with difficulties. Lovers of Tamers of Rivers often accuse them, not always unfairly, of a fear of commitment.

Similar to the other Elemental Masteries, the Tamers of Rivers value the Sleepers and choose to live among them. Having been, in a real sense, reborn, the Travelers feel compelled to share some of their newfound energies with those around them, to put things right, to restore wholeness and completeness and bring beauty into a world that is often ugly and fragmented.

Not everyone welcomes their interventions. Not everyone considers a perfect society to be an itinerant one. Many other mages dismiss the Tamers of Rivers as oddballs. This doesn't stop them from trying to help and sharing their vision with the world. Mages who have given their all to the River are not doing it for respect and praise.

They're doing it because they can't help it.

Parent Path: Thyrsus

Nickname: Travelers

Orders: Few Tamers of Rivers come from the Adamantine Arrow. The Tamers of Rivers are quite simply not martial, and while they're not necessarily hostile to the Arrows, the Arrows usually see the Travelers as something of an irrelevance. Likewise, members of the Guardians of the Veil have little time for the principles of constant change the Tamers of Rivers espouse, and very few consider the Travelers a fit course to take.

The Tamers of Rivers are, however, very at home in the Free Council. Libertines have joined the Tamers of Rivers for as long as they have existed. The Mysterium, too, has time for the Travelers' magic. The Mysterium's members often value travel — it's a great way to gather information, and a reason to join, although not the only reason. Mages in the Silver Ladder, too, has few issues with the Travelers. Although their hierarchical structure and views toward the Sleepers can be a real sticking point, the utopian (and yet often traditionalist) ideals of many of the Tamers of Rivers are attractive to the more idealistic members of the Ladder.

Appearance: Tamers of Rivers often have an intuitive sense of style and harmony about them. They are good at choosing clothes that co-ordinate. They often have a natural eye for color and design. Although, superficially, they dress pretty much like everyone else, they usually add their own flourishes to their outfits. Even in a formal setting, they wear something that gives away a hint of their creative, dynamic nature, whether it be red stripes in an otherwise immaculate hairstyle or a hand-painted pendant beneath a classically cut suit.

They often dress provocatively, and they can be very tactile in the way they relate to others. They talk openly about things that many people find embarrassing — relationships, illnesses, personal histories.

The Elemental Mark transforms their nimbus, giving it some of the conceptual nature of water. Perhaps it makes the Traveler seem as though she's visible through deep water. Perhaps the viewer develops the uncomfortable sensation of being immersed in deep water.

Background: Many Tamers of Rivers come from medical or creative backgrounds. Some may also be engaged in areas that bring people together, such as trade or diplomacy.

When the Tamers of Rivers first appeared, the Travelers were entirely female. In the modern, Fallen World, they're still mostly women. A few men have joined the Legacy over the last few decades, challenging the perception of many Awakened within the Elemental Masteries of the nature of their "women's magic." Many modern Tamers of Rivers express their magic through various neo-pagan expressions of religion. For many of the Tamers of Rivers, the nature of the revitalizing power of the River lies in healing and the bringing of wholeness. That which is ugly must be transformed into something beautiful, either metaphorically or physically. Beautiful things still have room for improvement and room for change, and should become something more beautiful. A Tamer of Rivers might work to mend a broken relationship. That same Traveler might spend just as much time adding an element of conflict to a perfectly healthy relationship, keeping it (in the mage's eyes) from stagnating.

Childbirth and fertility were ancient concerns of the Tamers of Rivers. Although the business of bearing children is, in the developed West, nowhere near as difficult as it was in times past, there are many Travelers who have a particular affinity with children. The lore of the Tamers of Rivers idealized children. The Travelers speak, not always entirely accurately, of the value of children's innocence, their ability to see things through "untainted" eyes.

Organization: The Tamers of Rivers are among the most scattered and most disparate of the Elemental Masteries. Few live near to their tutors. In the old days, tutors and pupils would only interact when their respective journeys' paths crossed. In this era of email and cell phones, arranging to meet up in advance is easy.

Tamers of Rivers often go out of their way to find pupils. New blood is development, and development is evolution. Because of the peripatetic lifestyles so many of them lead, Tamers of Rivers often have several pupils at any one time, although they might not know that they are not their tutors' only pupils. Tutors, on the other hand, can be difficult for aspiring Travelers to find. In fact, some gain the right to initial instruction simply through succeeding in finding a tutor.

Similar to the other Elemental Masteries, tutors explain to their pupils about the theoretical sense of kinship and obligation the Tamers of Rivers have with others who bear the Elemental Mark (including other Tamers of Rivers). In practice, it means that they're likely to be well-disposed towards most others of the Elemental Masteries, but go no further than that, only really giving as much aid as they want.

The Tamers of Rivers work well alongside the Tamers of Stone and Tamers of Winds. The Tamers of Winds under-

stand the Travelers the best out of the Masteries, and while the Tamers of Winds have a very different approach to their watery brethren, the Tamers of Winds have a good grasp of the way that the Tamers of Rivers see truth and change. The Tamers of Rivers and the Tamers of Winds complement each other. The rather cold but measured approach of the Tamers of Winds tempers the emotionalism of the Travelers, whose primal, sensual nature takes the hard edges from the others' cerebral approach to their magic.

Tamers of Rivers clash with Tamers of Fire, feeling uneasy with the Champions' martial attitude, who, in turn, have difficulty with the way that the Tamers of Rivers put themselves at risk. But both Legacies recognize the need for each other among the Elemental Masteries.

Suggested Oblations: Praying or meditating near a perfectly clean spring, riverbank or stretch of seashore. Spending time beautifying an ugly area (for example, cleaning up graffiti or painting a mural over it, planting flowers overnight in a derelict scrub area). Mending something that is broken and giving it to a river. Spending an hour river fishing without bait and without catching anything. Making love with a stranger.

Concepts: Performance poet, circus performer, cabaret singer, peripatetic musician, homeopath, stage actor, interior designer, midwife, playgroup leader, teacher's assistant, doctor's locum, foreign diplomat, traveling salesman.

History and Culture

Human history has always depended upon change. Progress, however one conceives it, depends upon constant movement. Change is natural. Change is evolution. Change is the nature of water. Water is the most primal, basic element of human physiology.

Like attracts like. As embodied change, the Tamers of Rivers need to create change. They need to create wholeness, but it's a certain kind of wholeness they want. Progress for progress's sake is not, for the Tamers of Rivers, an adequate end in and of itself. Their attitude to progress is something of a paradox. They don't really want the world to change. In fact, many of them see "progress" in the classic Victorian sense as a bad thing. The change they seek to create is the amount of change necessary to avoid stagnation. It's the old saw: you have to change to stay the same; by staying the same, you become better.

The way the Travelers see it, they've always been what human society needed. Tutors in the Tamers of Rivers describe the ancient Legacy as a group dedicated to creating wholeness and beauty through change and growth, through the fertility of water, through encouraging the acceptance of sexuality and through the healing power of water.

In ancient Greece, the Tamers of Rivers identified the central, symbolic River from which they drew their powers with Oceanus, the personification of the enormous river that they believed circled the world-disc. Oceanus' consort was his sister Tethys, and from their union came the three thousand Oceanids, the ocean nymphs from whom flowed all the rivers of the world.

As a mystical sign, some Tamers of Rivers did at one point follow the example of the Ur-River-God and married their siblings. The practice died out long ago, but even so, there are quite persistent and pernicious rumors among the Awakened about the Travelers' sexual proclivities, even now, hundreds of years after the practice has been abandoned.

Having once entered the River of Oceanus, the Travelers cannot help but find themselves encircled by its waters. Encircled, they remain islands. They are like the adventurers and explorers of old, who return from distant lands filled with new visions and experiences, to find that the world without them has remained exactly as they left it, and that friends and family can no longer understand them.

The Flow of Time

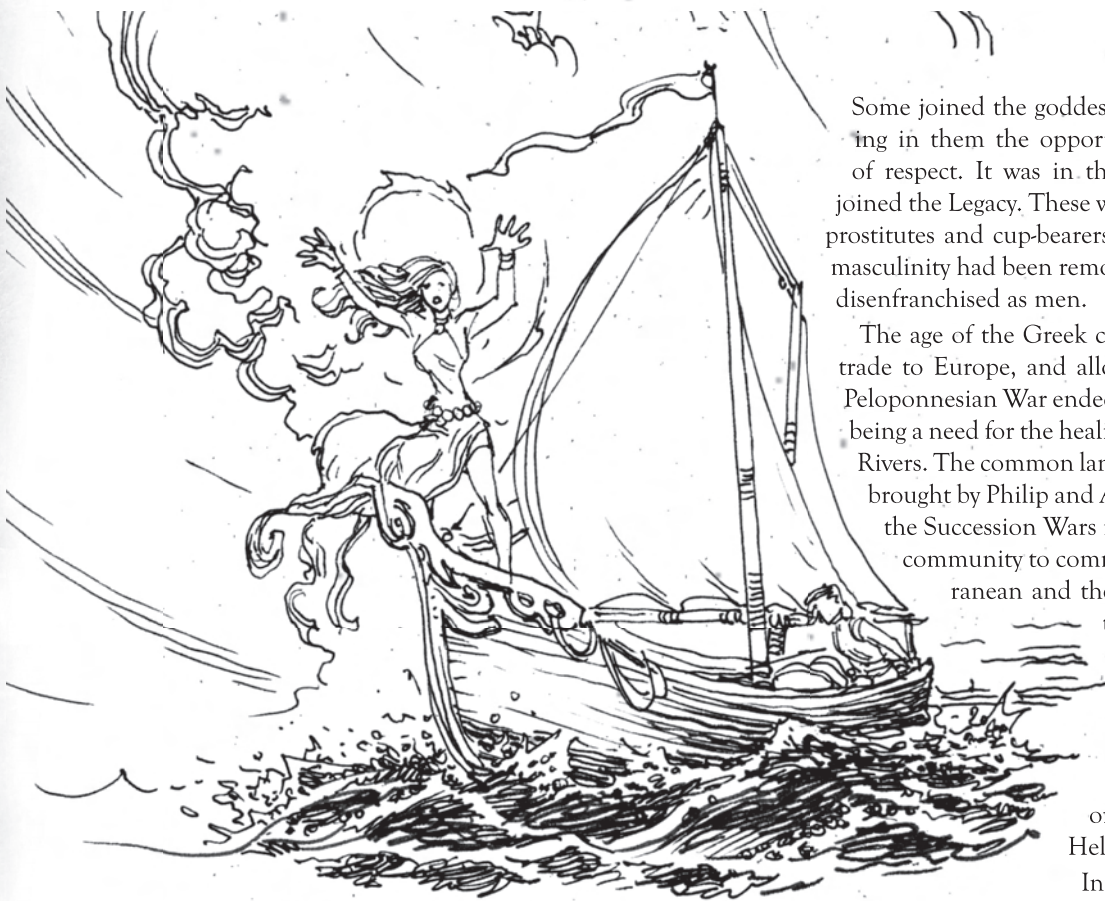
Over the centuries, the fortunes of the Tamers of Rivers have ebbed and flowed like the waters of the seas. The Travelers, they say, were the first of the Elemental Masteries. Some even claim that they were the first of the Awakened.

The lore of the Travelers, passed down over eons, tells that once, the Mainland Peoples lived in peaceful, goddess-worshipping matriarchal societies. Here, before there was any Quiescence, the Tamers of Rivers were highly respected. The first Tamers of Rivers were all women. Although they left the management of communities to the Grandmothers, their word carried a great deal of influence. They trained healers and midwives, moving from community to community as and when they were needed.

Sleeper historians, even those on the very edges, have lost the records of this caste. Even in the putative matriarchal societies suggested by radical historians, women stayed where they were. The evidence of the Travelers has gone, wiped out by the Quiescence and the machinations of the Exarchs.

The Atlanteans brought patriarchy to the Mainland. They sailed across the sea in their bright ships with painted sails, and they brought violence and control to the world. And they seized the Supernal Realms for their own, too. The Watchtowers were a means of control, the Travelers say, a means of keeping people *out* of the Supernal just as much as they were a means of access. Five obscene phallic monstrosities standing there, overlooking eternity, heralding the end of peace. As above, so below: the Atlanteans brought patriarchy to the world of humans and imposed the same patriarchy on the realms of magic. The Tamers of Rivers watched and wept, as all they had cared for fell before the ravaging legions of conquest from the West. They felt no satisfaction as the harbingers of violent control overstretched themselves and destroyed their own home.

Still, the Quiescence hit the Tamers of Rivers hard. They still clung to their old ways, but without the fanfare, hiding among the midwives and healers who once had revered them and sat at their feet. Things change. The orders were the future of the Awakened, and eventually, the Elemental Masteries, including the Travelers, joined them.



Matriarchy and Supernal Phallic Icons

Is the Tamer of Rivers' story true? Were the Watchtowers there to keep people out? It's impossible to know and impossible to prove.

Anthropologists have argued for years about whether matriarchal societies ever really existed. The consensus is mostly that they didn't, let alone that there was ever a sect of traveling midwives and healers. The consensus is also that Atlantis didn't exist, either, as well, of course, and it's quite possible that in the World of Darkness, prehistory was very different in many more ways than the reality of Atlantis.

The Tamers of Rivers might well be completely wrong. But in the end, no one will ever know if they are or not. What matters is that there's a story at all, because it's the story that gives the Travelers their identity and their sense of place in the world. It's very much *their* story, and whatever the truth of it, they're sticking to it.

The civilizations of the Middle East and the Mediterranean grew apace. The Tamers of Rivers, adapting as best they could to the new patriarchies and the mechanistic worldview they engendered, continued in the same traditional women's roles.

Some joined the goddess-cults that remained, seeing in them the opportunity to gain some kind of respect. It was in this era that the first men joined the Legacy. These were eunuchs, male temple prostitutes and cup-bearers, the kind of men whose masculinity had been removed or violated, who were disenfranchised as men.

The age of the Greek city-states brought nautical trade to Europe, and allowed them to travel. The Peloponnesian War ended the era, but brought into being a need for the healing hands of the Tamers of Rivers. The common language and social upheaval brought by Philip and Alexander's conquests and the Succession Wars made it easy to move from community to community across the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and again, the ravages of war meant that there was a constant need for healers, traders, teachers – and midwives. They rode the wave of the flourishing of art and literature of the Hellenistic era.

In time, Rome superseded the Hellenistic nations. The *Pax Romana* gave the Travelers more reason to travel. The rise of the mystery religions allowed the Tamers of Rivers unprecedented freedom. The priestesses of the Mysteries, of Cybele, the Eleusinian Cult and Isis, gave an Awakened woman the chance to cross great differences and gain a kind of tarnished respect in a world where women had little chance to travel or learn. Some took common cause with the Christians, who, during the days of their persecution, treated all of the disenfranchised – women, slaves, the conquered – with compassion and equality. Some of the Gnostics, particularly those who respected the Magdalene, Awakened. A large proportion joined the Travelers. By the time the Christians had gained the upper hand and had become the controlling religion of the Empire, they were no different from any other establishment religion. The sect that the Tamers of Rivers had favored was anathematized and wiped out.

The Empire ended in flames and humiliation, but the Tamers of Rivers continued. In the new world of the Middle Ages, their constant travel kept them safe in a world where few people ever went further than 20 miles from their homes. The Middle Ages allowed them to find new recruits from the outsiders of the world.

It goes on. They hid from the Church within the Church, at times taking on the part of nuns and saints. If some were hanged or drowned as witches, they hid well enough, and were few in number compared to the innocent Christians who were killed by mistake.

Tamers of Rivers traveled to the New World. They met others who had formed comparable traditions in the Americas, in Africa, in the Antipodes.

All the time, their numbers dwindled, slowly, inexorably, until the second half of the 18th century, when a sea change in Western philosophy and vast upheavals in the political landscape made people see themselves and each other differently. This created a vast potential for more change. The horrors of the 20th century changed the Tamers of Rivers. True, the emancipation of women in the Western world and the change of social mores that happened after the Second World War gave them more freedom, more chances to be part of Sleeper society, but the wars themselves gave them cause to fear. Two apocalypses, so close together. The loss of a whole generation of European men, and the loss of faith that followed, the loss of a social compass, the loss of a way forward, the death of compassion. And the Holocaust, the bomb. Suddenly progress and change sped up, and not for the good.

Many Tamers of Rivers are idealists. They truly believe that the world can be made that much better, if only enough people can be encouraged to change. But they also know that their vision is ultimately doomed to failure.

No matter what a Tamer of Rivers does, there's always the suspicion in her heart of hearts that she's on a highway to nothing, that the world is going to hell. The air's getting warmer. There are holes in the sky. The waters are vanishing. The River's running dry.

The Tamers of Rivers recruit the kind of people who have dreams of a better world. They want the compassionate people. They want women and men who are able to stand for the right of people to live and love and create. But these very people are the ones who can't live in this world. Every day the news bombards them with tales of corporate excesses, armies of liberation resorting to torture, sweatshops and cola wars, the death of 1,000 children every day from hunger caused by negligence and war. The AIDS epidemic. Poverty in the developing world. Simple, plain selfishness.

As the world lurches forward to destruction, as the River, the Ocean, flows ever more sluggishly, clogged with oil, refuse and blood, the Tamers of Rivers struggle to keep their spirit.

The Travelers keep traveling. They keep fighting their corner, working their magic, trying to change what little they can, so that the Sleepers can survive unharmed.

It's the best they can do.

Symbolisms

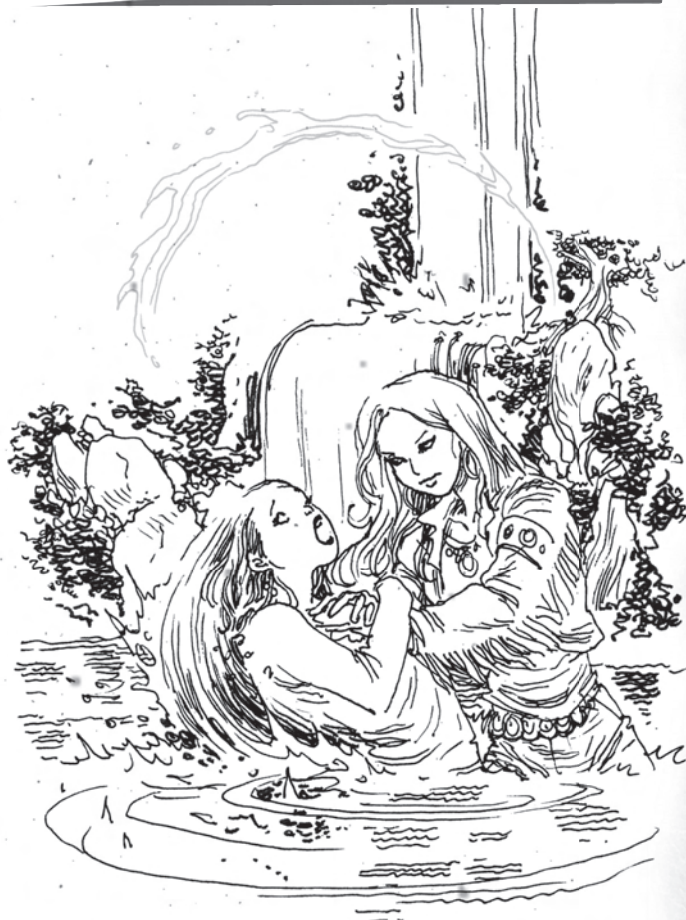
Water is the Tamer of Rivers' element, and the River is the Water, the most feminine of the elements, in its female aspect. That most Tamers of Rivers are female comes as no surprise to many.

The Lovers, the sixth trump of the Tarot's Major Arcana, appears in virtually every occult work that references them. It's the card of passion, the card of new things, of the ebb and flow of life. Also common is the Temperance card, especially the versions depicting an angel with water flowing between two cups. They also find correspon-

dences with the signs of Cancer and Aquarius, one carried within the water, one bearing it.

Animals often appear in dreams and visions to the Travelers. The salmon, which travels all its living days, has shown itself to the Tamers of Rivers on many occasions. Waterbirds, too, appear as symbols for the Travelers. Ducks and geese, white and black swans, herons and oystercatchers, seagulls and waders, all have their own character and their own symbolic meaning. A flock of migratory birds can be an omen that maybe it's time to move on. An elegant royal swan expresses beauty and fierce pride. The most potent of the birds is the mythic Caladrius, a waterfowl that was said to have the power to heal.

The figures of myth that hold meaning with the Tamers of Rivers are many. The Oceanids, the personified founding principles of the rivers of the world, represent the source of the Travelers' powers. They see Isis as one of their own, who lived by the Nile and brought life from death. Mary, the Magdalene, represented in the Gnostic texts as the *other* disciple whom Jesus Loved (perhaps even enough to marry), has much to teach the Tamers of Rivers. And they respect Ariadne, who, abandoned by Theseus, found respite in a marriage to Dionysus, the personification of passion, sensuality and madness.



Induction

When Tamers of Rivers choose their pupils, it's often a snap decision. Some Travelers decide they need pupils (perhaps they're lonely; perhaps they just think it's time). Others might not even contemplate teaching someone of their own until one day, they meet a mage whose very appearance transforms their lives, and pow, there they are with a pupil. However it works out, the pupil gets the choice to join, although by the time that her prospective tutor has even begun to explain to her who the Tamers of Rivers are, the pupil in all likelihood knows if she is destined to follow the flow of the River to its final outlet. An aspirant who wants to join the Legacy has to find a tutor, just like any other mage who joins a Legacy. The problem is that a mage who moves around as much as a Tamer of Rivers does can be very difficult to pin down.

There follows a period of purgation and cleansing. The Tamer of the River has to experience a letting-go of some aspects of her former life. She changes her name again. And she gives something up. Maybe it's a home, or a treasured possession. Maybe it's a relationship.

With all things stripped away, the Tamer of Rivers travels to a river with her tutor, and the more experienced mage helps her to undress. Naked, she enters the river. The tutor baptizes her, and holds her head under the water until she very nearly drowns. In the split second between living and entering into the afterlife, the new pupil becomes one with the River, with every watercourse in the world, with every sea, with every flow of blood and fluid in every living thing, all at once. She becomes the Water, and she becomes change. She becomes transformation. She bursts out of the water into the arms of her tutor, gulping in air, crying her heart into her tutor's arms, having become something both other than human and more human than before.

She returns with the tutor, possessed of what feels like a new mind. New thoughts and new desires well up within her. She changes, becomes different in some way. The change might be physical. Her eyes could have changed color, from brown to blue. Maybe she's thin where once she was overweight. The change could be in her social nature, in her desires. Perhaps her sexuality has changed. Maybe she needs to touch people when she speaks to them. The change could be mental. Perhaps she's lost some of the memories of her childhood, replaced with memories of something older and stranger. Maybe her opinions of some people or things have changed utterly. Maybe there's someone she once loved, whom now she has entirely forgotten. The core of her being hasn't really changed: she still has the same Virtue and the same Vice, for example, and her soul is the same soul, only it's a soul that knows it is one with the River. It's a soul that embraces change and continuing travel.

She's a Tamer of Rivers now. When it is time to gain a new Attainment, she returns to the water. Either she finds her tutor, and they do this again, or, having left her tutor behind — and it's in the nature of a Traveler to move on — she goes into the water alone. Immersed in the River, she becomes more like the water each time. Each time, she moves on a little, and

each time she has to give another thing up, maybe another memory, or a lover, or a home, maybe even a name. With each change, she begins again as a slightly different person. Neither the tutor or the pupil knows what the River's going to take (although a Traveler with a degree of self-knowledge might be able to guess). That's up to the River.

Story Hooks — Flow, River, Flow

• **The Healing Touch:** A Tamer of Rivers, known to the characters, perhaps the tutor of one of the characters, is taking on the role of a doctor. Her powers of healing are undeniable, but she is growing less and less cautious. Patients are beginning to demand that they see no one else. Her charismatic nature begins to develop a cult following. Perhaps she falls to the temptation and begins to exploit it. She has the power of life and death over her patients (who begin to die, or do strange things on her behalf). Perhaps the doctor's magic becomes more and more improbable, and begins to attract unwelcome attention.

• **Splash from the Past:** A Sleeper approaches a Tamer of Rivers character and tearfully, passionately accosts her, calling her by her real name. He claims to be her spouse. She has no memory of him. Did she forget him when she went through her rebirth into the Legacy? Is he really who he says he is? Whoever he is, he's found her, and he won't go away until she acknowledges him (and then he won't go away at all). He's spent everything he has to find her, and he's on the edge. What to do?

• **Still Waters:** A Tamer of Rivers is ready to go through the waters again. Except she doesn't want to. She's stopped traveling, settled down and found someone whom she wants to spend the rest of her life with. She's happy where she is. She doesn't want to go through the next initiation. She's scared of what she might lose. Things sour with her tutor, who decides to *make* her go through the next initiation, perhaps by kidnapping her, perhaps by waging a quiet campaign to wreck her life and force her to move on. A Tamer of Rivers character is caught in the middle, being perhaps a friend of the settled Traveler, a pupil of the tutor or both. Does the character help the Tamer of Rivers to escape? Or does the character help the tutor? And what about the settled Traveler's lover? Who is right? Who really lost her way, a Traveler who would rather not travel, or an advocate of freedom who seeks to force someone to be free? And what will the character do when one side (or both) asks him to help?

Magic

The Tamers of Rivers use water in all of their magics. This isn't always obvious. In the philosophy of the Elemental Masteries, water is change, and the abstract theme of change is as prevalent as actual magic. There is water in the air, and water in the human body. Many Tamers of Rivers learns how to cast their instant spells by reaching into the water that permeates all things, even in some of the driest places in the world, and manipulating it, duplicating it by bonding atoms of hydrogen and oxygen, driving it, pushing it, changing it.

The Travelers often use water in their extended castings in a more obvious way, using vials of purified water, homeopathic solutions and basins of fresh rain water to achieve the effects they look for.

Many Tamers of Rivers have familiars. Usually, they find an affinity with waterfowl, who travel across the world every year and understand the ways of the River. Many Tamers of Rivers seek out the Caladrius, the rare, near-mythical Healing-Bird, to give them company and aid.

Caladrius (Familiar ●●●●)

Quote: <A sound not unlike the croaking of a swan>

Background: The Caladrius is the Healing Bird of antique Roman myth. Catch a Caladrius, the story goes, and place it next to a sick man. If the strange white bird looks away, nothing happens. If it lays its head upon his chest, he miraculously recovers. The bird takes the disease into itself, and, gray-feathered, must fly away to purify itself.

The old bestiaries tell how the Caladrius can never be tamed, and it's true, it can't, but sometimes one of these *raae aves in terram* chooses to remain with a mage for a season. Thyrus mages value these birds and treat them very well.

Description: The Caladrius appears as a small, pure white waterfowl with a longish, blunt pale gray beak and gray webbed feet. It's not quite a heron, not quite a swan and not quite a duck, but has something of all three in its appearance. It's vaguely comical on dry land, but graceful in the air and on the water.

Storytelling Hints: The quiet, long-necked bird is proud, and looks slightly sad, as if it has seen things it would not wish to remember. It's temperamental, and prefers to circle around in the sky and perch on trees or the tops of buildings rather than be demeaned enough to sit on its owner's shoulder. When the Caladrius enters a building, the bird behaves like it owns the place.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Medicine 5, Investigation 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Brawl 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3

Willpower: 4

Essence: 10 (10 maximum)

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 15 (flight; species factor 10)

Size: 1

Health: 4

Influences: Health 2

Numina: Innocuous, Banish Plague

Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Beak	0L	2

• **Banish Plague (dice pool 9):** This works similar to the three-dot Life spell of the same name. The Caladrius spends three Essence and rolls Wits + Medicine to use this power. If the bird fails on its first attempt, it turns its head from the subject, and will not try again. If the bird succeeds, its feathers turn gray and dull, and it must fly away for a time.

Ban: After having healed a person, the Caladrius must fly away for a day and a night, to purify itself in the light of the sun. If it is not permitted to leave within half an hour, the bird dies.

Attainments of the Waters

The Travelers reach into elemental water, effecting physical changes in its substance and using it as a tool. Those who are more accomplished in the mysteries of the Life Arcanum understand that water in the human bloodstream can be manipulated in the same way, to heal and to control.

1st: Refresh the Waters

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Matter 2 (Primary), Life 1, Empathy 3

The Traveler learns first how to alter the structure of water, reaching into its atomic structure and tweaking it slightly, turning it into anything she wants. This effect is identical to the Matter 2 "Transmute Water" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 197), except that she can only change the liquid to or from something water-based. For example, she can turn milk, which is water-based, into something that isn't, like gasoline, and she can turn gasoline into orange juice, which is mostly water, but she can't turn gasoline into mercury. If the Tamer of Rivers wants to affect a volume of more than about a gallon of liquid, she has to roll Wits + Occult + Matter. She compares her successes to the table on p. 197 of **Mage: The Awakening**.

The Tamer can also extend her perception of the structure of water into the human body, enabling her to ascertain how healthy a human being is. This works as the Life 1 "Healer's Trance" spell (**Mage: the Awakening**, p. 181).

2nd: Mold the Waters

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Matter 3

Having changed the waters, the Tamer of Rivers learns how to shape them and move them. This is the same as the Matter 2 "Shape Liquid" spell, but cast at sensory range using Matter 3 (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 196). To do this, the mage rolls Dexterity + Crafts + Matter.

Optional Arcanum: Life 3

The Tamer of Rivers who is a Disciple of Life can extend her control of the waters into the human body, using the flow of water to drive out infections and bind together open wounds in others. This effect duplicates the Life 3 “Healing Heart” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 186). The mage can heal bashing and lethal damage. The player rolls Dexterity + Medicine + Life. Each success heals one Health level of bashing or lethal damage. She can use this Attainment a number of times per scene equal to the highest of her Gnosis or Life dots; each additional-use costs her 1 Mana.

3rd: Tap the Wellspring

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Matter 4

With the third Attainment of the Waters, the Tamer of Rivers can cause water to bubble up from the ground itself. She reaches her mind into the dry ground, and produces water from the very atoms itself, which gushes forward like a spring. This works like the Matter 4 “Lesser Transmogrification” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 201), except that it’s limited to producing water from solid earth or stone. The water created by this Attainment is perfectly drinkable, and can be used as the focus of either the first or second Attainment. The Attainment doesn’t strictly transform the ground (so, for example, causing water to spring from a brick wall doesn’t make the wall structurally unsound at all), but the effect is lasting. The water stays where it is.

Optional Arcanum: Life 4

An Adept of Life can extend this Attainment into the human body. A simple movement of liquids, the thickening or thinning of blood, can cause a person to lose all inhibitions, raging like a wounded dog, freezing in terror like a frightened rabbit, defending territory like a guard dog or rutting like a cat in heat. Blood will out, and as blood rises and falls, primal emotions come into play. The effect works like the Life 4 “Trigger the Lizard Brain” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 191), except that the mage rolls Dexterity + Intimidation + Life, contested by the subject’s Resolve + Gnosis.

Sample Character

Rebecca Nil

Quote: “There’s no such thing as me. I get used to it.”

Background: Rebecca knows that her real name is Francis Lynne, and she has a vague idea that she was born somewhere in the southwest of England and is fairly sure that she went to university in Oxford. But beyond that, she doesn’t really know who she once was.

Her mind is a *tabula rasa*. She knows how to speak English, and where she was when she heard that Princess Di had died, and what the first number one the Spice Girls got was, and who the other two members of Oasis were, and what Damien Hirst did with the shark and the formaldehyde. She knows she supports Chelsea. She has history and pop culture to go on for memories. The rest is nothingness. Whatever had happened to her, she was wiped clean when she drowned, lost to the River.

Hence the name: River One, Rebecca Nil.

There isn’t anything stopping her from finding out who she was, but she doesn’t want to. Her life now is enough for her, and she wouldn’t change it. Whatever Rebecca Nil forgot, she wanted to forget it, and she would rather it stayed buried.

For the last few years, Rebecca has lived as a performance artist, singer and poet. She specializes in devised pieces, and she’s had some respectable notices from the critics. She sang vocals on a very well-received but poorly selling album last year. She’s not well-known outside of the art scene, but she has hopes of going further.

Rebecca lives in a decommissioned Routemaster bus converted into a mobile home with a young man named Adam, a Sleepwalker. She met Adam in Wales a couple of years ago and although initially ambivalent when he began to pursue her, eventually fell desperately in love with him. Adam knows how to drive a bus, which helps, and helps Rebecca, who is desperately disorganized, to manage publicity and bookings. She gets her mail from a post office box she owns in Bristol, every week or so, and keeps her mobile phone on her.

Rebecca is ready to gain the Second Attainment of the Waters, but she hasn’t gone through with it yet. The River never tells what it’s going to take, but Rebecca is afraid that the thing she’ll have to forget or abandon is Adam. She can’t bring herself to do it.

Description: Rebecca is petite, and slightly birdlike. She has blue eyes, pale, flawless skin and thick, black, shoulder-length hair. She wears stylish but slightly old-fashioned clothes. She speaks quietly, but her voice is very clear. She’s in her mid-30s, but looks easily 10 years younger than that. She doesn’t actually know exactly how old she is, but does remember being a child when the Eurythmics released “Sweet Dreams,” which gives her a rough idea. She can be quite expansive when she talks, as if everything is dramatic for her.

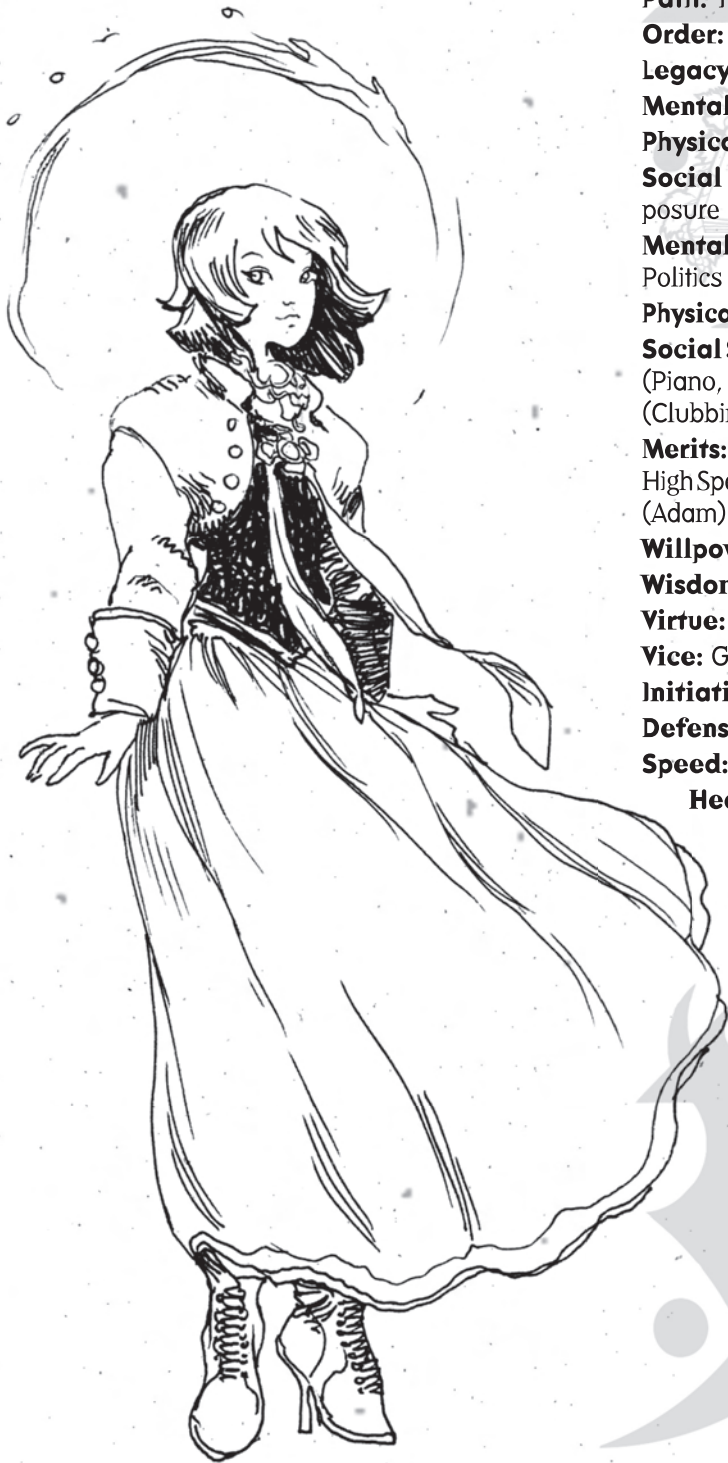
Rebecca’s nimbus manifests itself in the air around her, as a kind of haze in the air and a smell of ozone, not unlike the fresh, cooling feeling to be got from standing near a waterfall.

Storytelling Hints: The relationship between Rebecca Nil and her tutor, a woman named Calix, has soured somewhat in recent months. Rebecca’s putting off going further with her magic. Calix doesn’t understand why. If Rebecca seems unhappy or preoccupied at the moment, it’s only because she knows she can’t put off some sort of decision forever.

Normally, Rebecca Nil is bright and funny, although sometimes she can go blank for a few seconds, as a fragment of lost memory dances at the edge of her mind before vanishing again.

Adam is usually with her. He’s about 10 years younger, and has easy good looks and a pleasant, gentle demeanor. He grounds Rebecca. They love each other very much, and if anything happened to either, there is no telling what the other would do.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A battered paperback copy of *Siddhartha*



Real Name: Frances Lynne

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Mysterium

Legacy: Tamer of Rivers

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy (People-Watching) 4, Expression (Piano, Song, Written Prose) 4, Persuasion 1, Socialize (Clubbing) 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Contacts (Literary, Art World, Music Festivals) 3, High Speech, Resources 2, Sanctum 1, Sleepwalker Retainer (Adam) 3

Willpower: 5

Wisdom: 7

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Gnosis: 5

Arcana: Life 3, Matter 3, Spirit 1

Rotes: *Life* – Pulse of the Living World (•), Self-Healing (••), Self-Purging (••); *Matter* – Shape Liquid (••), Alter Integrity (•••); *Spirit* – Spirit Tongue (•)

Legacy Attainment: 1st – Refresh the Waters

Mana/per turn: 14/5

Armor: 3 (“Organic Resilience,” Life ••)

TAMERS OF STONE

See that? Seven hundred fifty pairs of hands built that, all working for the same purpose.
And we don't know the names of any of them. That's a beautiful thing.

Humanity has always built things. When we came out into the open air, we built shelters in which to live, temples in which to worship, edifices in which to bury our dead. As time went on, the buildings became more ornate, more impressive, more intricately designed. The Pyramids. The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. The Temple of Zeus at Olympia. The Gates of Palmyra. The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus. The Colossus of Rhodes. The Hanging Gardens. The Lal Qila at Delhi. Machu Picchu. The Colosseum. The Great Wall of China. The Taj Mahal. St. Paul's Cathedral. The Empire State Building.

The hands that built them were manifold. The architects may have been well-known, but the unsung thousands who actually made these grand structures were just as important. Theirs was not the inspiration. Theirs was not the design, theirs was not the grand conceit. Theirs was the craft. Theirs was the work of their hands, the honest toil, the skill and the sweat.

The Tamers of Stone were there. Although the self-styled "Craftmasters" have always trained their students to know the theory of design and the grand geometry of architecture, the Craftmasters have also instructed their own to get their hands dirty. The Awakened may have had no part in the design of the great architectural wonders of human history, but they were there in the act of building, and they were there in the building itself. They joined the common man on the ground.

The Tamers of Fire take the role of those born to lead. The Tamers of Rivers bring change and healing. The Tamers of Winds all distinguish themselves through their endless urge to know. But the Tamers of Stone blend in with the anonymous masses. All people are equal, the Craftmasters say. The Awakened have no right to treat the Sleepers as instruments, for they are as human as the Awakened. In these times, the Craftmasters represent and quietly protect the common man.

Humanity came from earth, and to earth every man and woman shall return. It's the basis of human life. Earth is sensation: the stones know and recall every foot that walked across them, every hammer and chisel that worked them. The stones have stories to tell, if only one will have the patience to ask them. The Tamers of Stone understand this. They craft their souls to the extent that they perceive that they *are* earth, they *are* stone. And for them, stone is creation and perception.

For them, stone is incarnation in the flesh, the means by which the One God, Urizen, the Demiurge or whatever, pulled Adam out of the ground. Stone is humanity, the common thread that links all men together.

Earth is incarnation: the stones are solid. The stones survive when the fire has burnt out, when the flood has dried out, when the wind has passed away. The stones remain.

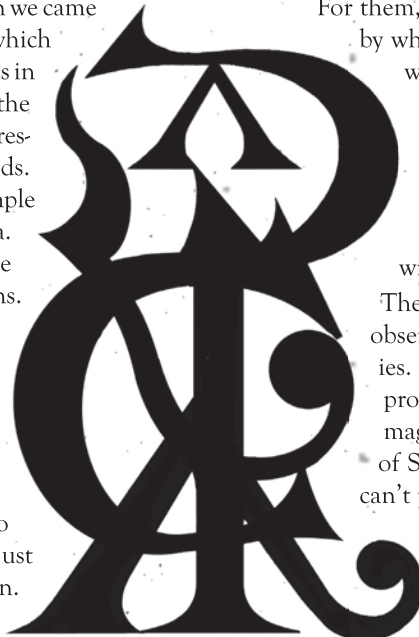
The Tamers of Stone bring the solidity and quiet observation of the earth to the Elemental Masteries. The Craftmasters stand among the Sleepers, protecting them and serving them. Capable of magics both subtle and spectacular, the Tamers of Stone know the magic means nothing if they can't play their part in human society.

The Sleepers are beset on all sides. Their cities are choked with the hungry, sneering dead, who prey on their blood, by shape-shifters, who tear them to shreds and dine on their flesh, by ghosts and spirits and demons and worse things and, most of all, by the other Awakened. The Tamers of Stone might care little for tales of cosmic struggles between Exarchs and Oracles, but the Craftmasters have no time for those who would exploit the Sleepers and keep them from Awakening. Apparently humble the Tamers of Stone may be, but as many would-be tyrants have discovered, the hand of the common man can be a powerful weapon.

Parent Path: Moros

Nickname: Craftmasters

Orders: The Tamers of Stone aren't equally represented in the Pentacle. Some members of the Adamantine Arrow see a common cause with the Craftmasters, and seek to join their number, seeing the battle as vital. The Guardians of the Veil want to keep the Sleepers unaware of magic. They preserve their paranoid hierarchies and keep the magic under lock and key. They have no time for the Tamers of Stone, and few join, although, occasionally, there is the mage who sees the edifice the Guardians would build as a castle, not a prison. Members of the Mysterium, who seek knowledge above all, often find it hard to appreciate the Craftmasters' obsession with the Sleepers. Can knowledge be found among ordinary people? Can knowledge be gained from getting your hands dirty? There are a very few Mysterium members for whom the answers to those questions are "yes," and they are not hostile to the idea of joining the Tamers of Stone.



The Silver Ladder, on the other hand, supplies many of the Craftsmasons' pupils. The idealists who form a large part of the Silver Ladder's membership see the Craftsmasons' ideals as completely in harmony with their own. The same goes for the Free Council, who include among their number craftsmen and political radicals, who see the soulcrafting of the Tamers of Stone as a simple continuation of their magical journey.

Appearance: The Craftsmasons look as if they work hard. Their clothes are practical, and their hands are the hands of manual laborers. Their faces catch the sun and they're often in good shape, although their physical condition is clearly due to rough manual work rather than working out in a gym, just as their tans are the uneven, deep tans of the navy rather than the shiny, glowing tan that comes from lounging on a beach or lying under a sun bed.

The Elemental Mark manifests itself on a Craftmason's nimbus, just as it does with all of the members of the Elemental Masteries. The nimbus of a Tamer of Stone appears to affect the area around him. The substance of common things might appear to take on life, or a personality. The Tamer of Stone's skin might appear to develop the texture of roughly chiseled stone. Or he might appear to be an everyman, taking on the aspect of every human being alive, just for a second, from the lowest to the highest, provoking a moment of recognition in everyone.

Background: Tamers of Stone often come from working-class or blue-collar backgrounds. Some have higher educational qualifications, but they still mostly come from technical and manual fields. As long as the mage is involved in manual labor of some kind, she's welcome. The Tamers of Stone include among their number decorators, carpenters, glaziers, roofers, architects, civil engineers and farmers, but the vast majority of Tamers of Stone work in construction, and perform their magic within that context. The nature of their everyday work means that most Tamers of Stone are male, although there are no prohibitions against women joining the Legacy, and few prejudices among their number.

Organization: The Tamers of Stone are the most organized of the Elemental Masteries. Since the Middle Ages, they've been loosely arranged into regional Lodges, which work together to support each other. Just as in all the Elemental Masteries, tutors approach potential pupils, particularly choosing blue-collar mages with a talent for manual craftsmanship. Although each pupil only has one tutor, members of each Lodge take part in the training of newer Tamers of Stone. The tutor-pupil relationship is the only relationship among the Craftsmasons that admits any kind of hierarchy, and even then, tutors and pupils are notionally equal: the idea is that the tutor is not imparting knowledge from above, but sharing it from a position of experience, so that the pupil may one day be brought up to speed, with the purpose of effecting true equality among the Tamers of Stone.

In practice, however, people are people, and although the Tamers of Stone are supposed to be completely equal, many Lodges suffer from political machinations among their members, as each tries hard to be first among equals.

There are still a lot of Tamers of Stone. They're a relatively numerous Legacy. Among the Elemental Masteries, only the Tamers of Rivers even come near them in numbers, and even then, they're fewer. The Tamers of Stone are the blue-collar journeymen of the Elemental Masteries. Thus, the Craftsmasons outnumber the others, many of whom (particularly the Tamers of Fire and Tamers of Winds) come from more privileged, educated backgrounds.

The Tamers of Stone work well with the other Elemental Masteries. Although the Tamers of Fire, with their heroic nature, can be autocratic, they often need a cause to be heroes for. Tamers of Stone who work in cabals alongside the Champions ground the Tamers of Fire and give them direction. Conversely, the Tamers of Rivers bring compromise to cabals that include Tamers of Stone. Like the constant flow of water eroding the rock, the Tamers of Rivers work to erode the sharp edges from the Craftsmasons' hard resolve and create something more harmonious. The Tamers of Winds often clash with the Tamers of Stone – the Craftsmasons find the Tamers of Winds' tendency to stand in judgment over others patronizing and elitist. Still, both Legacies recognize that they have a role to play and notwithstanding their reservations, they often work together and work together well, the straightforwardness of the Tamers of Stone complementing the more cerebral nature of their airy counterparts.

Suggested Oblations: Single-handedly building a cairn made of large stones. Spending some time bricklaying. Drawing up the blueprints for a new building. Redecorating a room. Organizing a trade union meeting.

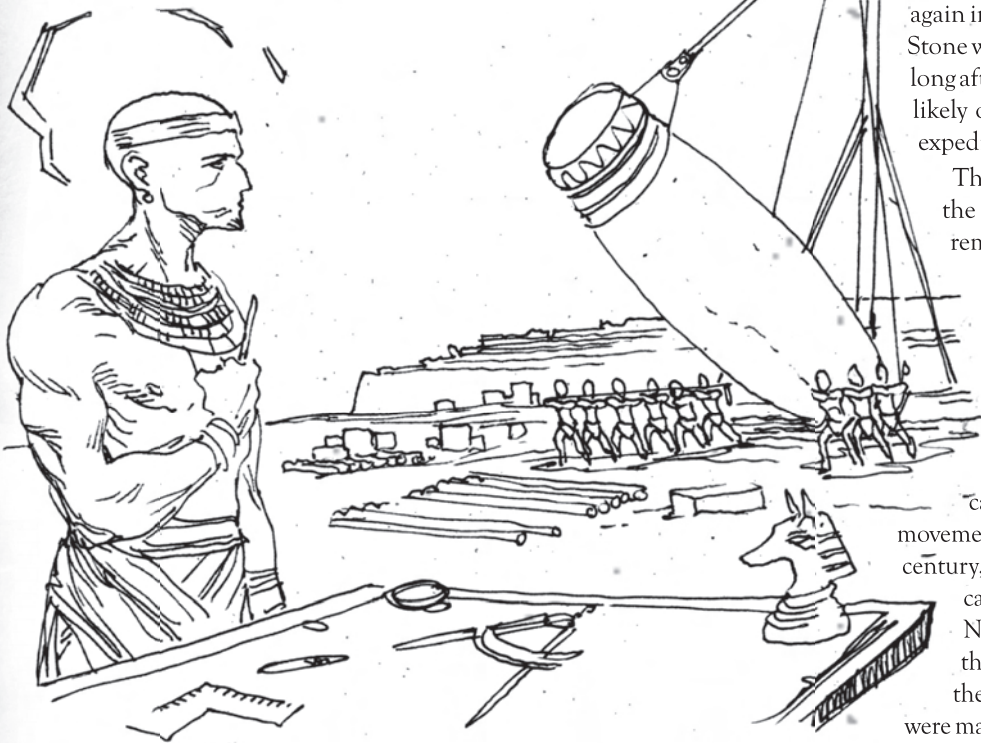
Concepts: Building contractor, union shop steward, architect, blue-collar conspiracy theorist, modern-day Robin Hood, convinced socialist, mystical geometrician.

History and Culture

The Tamers of Stone began, just as all of the Elemental Masteries, as people who took on a role within society. The Tamers in Stone were the craftsmen who built, who carved the pediments, who erected the pillars, who kept the blocks of the Great Pyramid straight and flush. For the longest time, they were ignored, with few to represent them among the Awakened. The Tamers of Stone, who took their place among the workers, knew their place and joined them in humility and obscurity.

There were a lot of them. Some Legacies have never been all that numerous, but as Legacies go, the Tamers of Stone have always had the weight of numbers.

Over time, craftsmen developed guilds. The guilds took on their own character, and craftsmen took pride in their work. The craftsmen grew wealthy. The result was that the Tamers of Stone, who lived and worked their magics among those craftsmen, gradually became politicized. As time went on, they began to develop the view that all men, who came from the earth, were equal. Mages who retreated into their own shadow world found it easy to forget the worth of the Sleepers. But the Craftsmasons, who spent their time among



the Sleepers and who knew them as friends and family, could not discount them. An Awakened human being is still a human being, and the Tamers of Stone felt that they were doing well to remember it.

They fought for their truth.

They began to bear grudges. One particularly sore point concerns the fate of the Diggers. Between 1649 and 1650, carried along in the wake of the Civil War, several groups of the so-called True Levellers, a pacifist and anarchist movement, began to set up land-working communities on common land across England. Although John Lilburne, the founder of the Diggers, was a Sleeper, several Tamers of Stone were part of the movement and believed in its aims. Landowners and community leaders abhorred what they saw as an affront to public order (and a way for poor men to escape paying rent to the large landowners). The reprisals began almost immediately, and the Diggers were finished by 1651. Every time a colony of Diggers began, the authorities crushed it, sometimes with court actions, and mostly with actual violence.

Beneath this social conflict lay another, esoteric clash. The Tamers of Stone who had been part of this movement found themselves, as their Sleeper companions were dispersed, betrayed into the hands of the Seers of the Throne on every occasion. The Tamers of Stone never proved that the Guardians of the Veil were behind it, but circumstantial evidence — rumors, letters, entries in diaries — suggested that mages belonging to the Guardians of the Veil had sold the Tamers of Stone out, feeding information of their supposed allies' activities to Seer spies. The Seers were always one step ahead of the Tamers of Stone. In England, hardly any got out of the 17th century

alive, and although their numbers would grow again in later centuries, the English Tamers of Stone would never forget what had happened, long after the Guardians responsible, who had likely only betrayed their allies as a political expedient, had died out.

The 17th century was a turning point for the Tamers of Stone. After that time, they remained the most political of the Elemental Masteries, with a general philosophy that, unlike the others, extended beyond the crafting of souls.

In the 18th century, Tamers of Stone were present among the Radical Dissenters, and took part in the revolutions in France and the American colonies. They were there within the movement for slaves' emancipation. In the 19th century, they fought on both sides of the American Civil War, with those on the side of the North fighting for the slaves, and those in the South fighting for independence. By the beginning of the 20th century, there were many Craftsmasons who had taken to heart the ethos of the Socialist International, joining with

labor movements and communist parties across Europe. Tamers of Stone took roles in post-revolutionary Russia. When the Communist dream ended, there were Tamers of Stone taking hammers to the Berlin Wall with the rejoicing thousands.

The socialist and communalist ideals of the Tamers of Stone have received several blows during the last two decades, particularly in Western Europe and the United States, but even so, they still exist and in large numbers. Wherever there are working men, there the Tamers of Stone are, mucking in.

The Day Job

As mages go, the Tamers of Stone are exceptionally grounded in everyday life.

Mages who eschew close relationships with Sleepers are safer, but gradually, such mages forget what it was like to be a Sleeper. They lose their empathy with the Sleepers. The mages no longer see the Sleepers as really human in the way that the Awakened are. The Elemental Masteries in general and the Tamers in Stone in particular prefer to retain their ties, and in the case of the Craftsmasons, this means holding down a day job, and doing it well.

Holding down a day job holds all kinds of complications for a mage. Many manage it, and do just fine. The Tamers of Stone depend upon it. They see remaining at work part of the work of taming their souls.

This can appear to be quite limiting for characters. Actually, it's a rich vein of complication and plot devices, just waiting to be mined.

The building trade, where most of the Craftsmasons work, can be quite peripatetic. Workers in years past used to travel

to where the work was. While that doesn't happen so much now, in some countries builders still move from town to town, taking on short-term construction work. A mage in this industry could be a valuable resource for a cabal, who could travel with him. The pay isn't going to feed all the mouths, but it offers a grounding for a group who can move on when he does. Another mage could be a self-employed building contractor. His fellow mages could work within the trade alongside him, meaning that they all have a means of support and a reason to stick together.

Colleagues can produce all sorts of plot complications, mystical and mundane. Even building sites have their leaders, their bullies, their good guys, their slackers and their bosses. A place of work has a ready-made supporting cast with their own concerns, and their own lives. Maybe some of them get involved, unknowing in the mage's "after-hours" life. What if one, entirely coincidentally, runs into his Awakened colleague and witnesses the mage doing vulgar magic? The co-worker might Disbelieve it, but there's still that niggling doubt there, that suspicion that something is wrong. What if one of the mage's work colleagues suddenly Awakens? What if she Awakens while at work?

Even if they don't, the soap opera of the workplace can make a welcome change of pace from rampaging spirits, insane magical conspiracies and monstrous creatures of the night. Workplace romances, issues with pay, industrial action and personal clashes can make stories all the richer.

Symbolisms

Earth is a female element, but the Craftsmasons use it in its masculine aspect. In practice, this means that their use of the element is characterized by balance and moderation in all things. They find meaning and correspondence with the constellation of Taurus. The bull's directness, connection with Earth, and place as a beast of burden and implacable nature symbolizes the Tamers of Stone perfectly.

The World, the 21st trump of the Tarot's Major Arcana connects with the Tamers of Stone in many ways. It represents the commonality of all things. It represents the earth, and it represents the harmony and concord that the Craftsmasons would so dearly like to see.

The number three makes itself known to the Tamers of Stone in dozens of different ways. It's the number of completeness, and the number of points of the triangle, which is the solid form. The right-angled triangle whose sides retain the ratio 3:4:5 appears often in the mystical geometry of the Craftsmasons, as does the Fibonacci Sequence, and the Golden Ratio, 1:1.618. Many practice gematria.

There are few mythological and historical characters who have direct relevance to the Tamers of Stone. It's part of the nature of their work that the greatest of the Tamers of Stone remain anonymous. Still, there is respect among them for the example of Pythagoras and Newton, who between them pioneered mystical mathematics.

Induction

Tamers of Stone often choose their pupils, although the process of gaining a pupil is a little more involved than it is with some of the other Elemental Masteries, since a tutor who decides that he wishes to ask a pupil to join the Legacy (or wishes to accept an applicant) must first return to his Lodge and put it to the vote.

The Lodge members usually vote yes. It's often, but not always, a foregone conclusion, since new members are always welcome, regardless of their apparent quality. The tutor approaches his prospective pupil and explains to him the Legacy's philosophy and its practices in brief, giving the less experienced mage the opportunity to turn down the privilege, if finding out more has changed her mind.

The first stage of soulcrafting begins with a building. Under the tutor's direction, the pupil must spend several days building a small edifice out of plaster and brick. Having completed it, he steps inside. And then the tutor bricks his pupil inside. The pupil has to leave the building behind. He exercises his affinity with the earth and with the dimensions of the earth. He speaks to it. He perceives it from every angle. And then he becomes the earth.

What follows is impossible. The mage folds himself into the earth and, having succeeded in escaping, draws himself to his feet behind the building, leaving the brick coffin undisturbed. It's a feat that a mage shouldn't be able to do until he's at least an Adept of Space, and yet, just once, the mage over-reaches himself, and transforms himself into stone and incarnation.

On the occasion that he gains each subsequent Attainment, the trainee Craftmason makes a new escape from a similar conundrum. Each time he gains a new insight into the nature of the earth: he is the earth. He is the ground. Each time, to escape, he perceives that and folds himself through his *own body*, turning himself inside out and remaking his soul in the process.

Story Hooks — Fanfare for the Common Man

- **Dangerous Blueprint:** A Tamer of Stone character is working on a building site. He becomes aware that there is something very wrong with the design of the building. Perhaps the layout of the building has hidden within it a summoning circle of some kind. Perhaps the

positioning of the stairs and corridors mean that energy created when people walk around it is released and used for some terrible purpose. Perhaps it's just . . . *wrong*. Who designed the building? What do they want? Is the fact the character is working there an accident?

• **Strike:** A Tamer of the Stone, maybe a character or a character's tutor, is involved in industrial action that causes work on a particularly important building, a hospital, perhaps, to grind to a standstill. He believes it's right. But who does the strike benefit? Perhaps someone or something wants to keep the building unfinished because it has a mystical significance incomplete that it doesn't have finished, and has taken control over the construction bosses in order to keep it that way. Or perhaps the mystical explanation is a red herring, and it's a simple question of choosing the right side.

• **Industrial Hazard:** Over the course of several stories, a Tamer of Stone character witnesses fatal or near-fatal accidents in his work that could have very easily happened to her. Gradually, she begins to get a reputation among her Sleeper colleagues as a jinx. Is someone trying to kill her? Or is someone trying to get at the people around her? Why?

Magic

The magic of the Tamers of Stone depends upon craftsmanship. It's worked and perfected. Craftmason rites are finely polished, ornately devised tools, with the beauty and practical application of a well-balanced hammer.

They favor spells that extend the senses (the stones see and hear all that comes to pass without comment; the stones are present in all great events) and spells that work with solid, constant matter (the stones abide; the stones remain).

Conversely, they excel in magics that deal with the flesh and sensation. They are aware of their bodies and the bodies of others.

Find the Cornerstone (Matter ●● + Space ●)

Some mages are craftsmen, with a craftsman's eye. With only the slightest application of magic, a mage can point out the weak spot in any structure, the central point on which the structure's integrity depends. Knowing the weak point of an edifice means that a true craftsman can act on it, protecting it from tampering and bolstering the integrity of the building as a whole. Conversely, it makes demolition easy.

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant or extended

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

The Tamer of Stone assesses a building or similar structure, and spots its weaknesses. Success means that the mage has isolated a single weak point, which can be exploited. If the mage concentrates an attack on this weak spot (for example, if he sets explosives right next to it), the mage can bring the structure crashing right down. The Size of the structure affects the caster's dice pool (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 118).

Free Council Rote: The Can at the Base of the Stack

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts + Matter

That single can at the foot of the stack can bring the whole pyramid crashing down. The trick lies in finding it. Pulling it out is the easy part.

Eyes of the Building (Space ●●●)

Some mages know buildings inside out. Some mages, with a little concentration, find that they can see and hear everything that goes on inside the buildings they have made or in those buildings to which they have a special link.

Practice: Instant

Action: Extended

Duration: Concentration

Aspect: Covert

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage can cast this spell while standing inside any building with which she has at least an Intimate sympathetic connection (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 114), such as her home, her sanctum or a building she designed or built herself.

If she succeeds, the mage is aware of anything that happens in the building. She can see any movement and recognize faces, but cannot see close enough to ascertain fine details (for example, written text on a letter or in a book). The mage can eavesdrop on conversations, but can only listen to one conversation at a time, unless she uses the Mind 3 "Multi-Tasking" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 211) in a combined casting with this spell.

Silver Ladder Rote: The Eye in the Pyramid

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts + Space

Mages have been using this rote since the days of ancient Egypt, and the rote still survives today. Even if the buildings have changed, the sacred geometry of the buildings they work on still operates on principles established thousands of years ago.

Petrification (Life ●●●● + Matter ●●●●●)

The ages-old fear of the magician comes all too often from the fear of transformation, the fear that the worker of wonders is going to be able to take control of your form. The fear of becoming stone, of becoming hard, dead and immovable has preoccupied the tellers of myth and fairytale for centuries. The mages who can actually make it happen are few. The mages who can make it last are even fewer.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant; subtract target's Stamina



Duration: Transitory

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must first grab hold of the target, with a roll of Strength or Dexterity + Brawl – the target’s Defense. If the mage is successful, he can cast this spell as a reflexive action. If the casting succeeds, the subject’s body and any possessions he is wearing become hard stone. As long as the spell lasts – determined by the spellcasting successes (see below) – the subject is literally made of solid, insensate stone, with his life functions suspended harmlessly. When the spell duration ends, the subject has no memory of being stone.

Success	Duration
One success	One turn
Two successes	Two turns
Three successes	Three turns
Four successes	Five turns
Five successes	10 turns

The victim becomes extremely hard, gaining Durability 3 as if he were an object; this Durability must be exceeded by any attack before his Health can be damaged. He’s impervious to fire and electricity while made of stone, and inert (and so immune to acid).

Mysterium Rote: Earth to Earth

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Crafts + Matter

Man was once earth, and earth man will become: it’s one of the great secrets of the world. The user of this rote can call forth the earth from within someone, transforming her to elemental stone.

Attainments of the Stones

The Attainments of the Tamers of Stone depend upon geometrical formulae. While most of the other Elemental Masteries directly use the elements they personify and become in the casting of their magic, the Tamers of Stone approach the Attainments of the Stones indirectly, working through meditation, blueprints, technical drawings and the use of tools such as hammers, mallets and chisels as the means through which the earth that senses and abides can be perceived and manipulated.

1st: Finding the Stone

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Space 2 (primary), Prime 1, Crafts 3.

The first thing that the builder of any edifice must do is to locate a suitable foundation. The Tamers of the Stone know this best of all. Their constructions depend upon sympathetic connections and sacred geometry. They favor places of power.

The first Attainment of the Stones aids the Tamer of Stone in finding a place to begin his edifice. Using a number of tools (a land survey map, a pair of dividers and a pendulum or dowsing rod), a Craftmason dowses for a place of power, and finds it. The effect of this Attainment works as the Space 1 “Finder” spell, cast as using Space 2 (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 233), and limited to places, although the mage’s affinity with the earth means that following the lines to a Hallow, even one completely unknown, is easy, no matter how obscure it might be.

This same affinity with the earth allows a mage to detect magical resonance in any place, which is similar to the effect of the Prime 1 “Supernal Vision” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 221) when applied to a physical place.

As any Tamer of Stone will tell you, finding a Hallow anywhere in the world is easy. The hard part is likely to be getting past whoever got to the Hallow first. Supernatural real estate of this kind rarely sits there without being claimed by someone or something.

2nd: Surveying the Stone

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Space 3

The art of a craftsman lies partially in assessment. The Tamer of Stone meditates on a section of a place. His perceptions widen, and he can look upon the area or building in question from many directions at once, allowing him to decide the best way to approach a task with the minimum of physical effort.

This works like the effect of the Space 3 “Multispatial Perception” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 237), except that the player rolls Wits + Crafts + Space.

Optional Arcanum: Matter 3

With Matter 3, a Tamer of Stone who knows how to survey an edifice knows also how to find its weak spots and how to improve its structural strength, which is similar to the Matter 3 “Alter Integrity” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 198). The player rolls Wits + Crafts + Matter to activate the effect.

3rd: Stepping Behind the Stone

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Space 4

The Tamer of Stone who knows the land and his work well enough knows enough about the spaces between spaces that every space holds to transcend the limitations of physical movement. He steps behind a rock, or steps through a door, and he is gone. Elsewhere, he comes out from behind a tree or out of a closet door. It’s as if he were always there.

This is a version of the Space 4 “Teleportation” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 241). The Tamer of Stone can only use this Attainment to travel to places with which he has an Intimate or Known sympathetic connection (which includes sanctums, homes and places he’s taken part in building or altering structurally). It is important that no one sees the mage teleport; the nature of the Attainment requires the mage to be unseen in order to duck between spaces. If anyone at all is watching, it doesn’t work.

Optional Arcanum: Matter 4

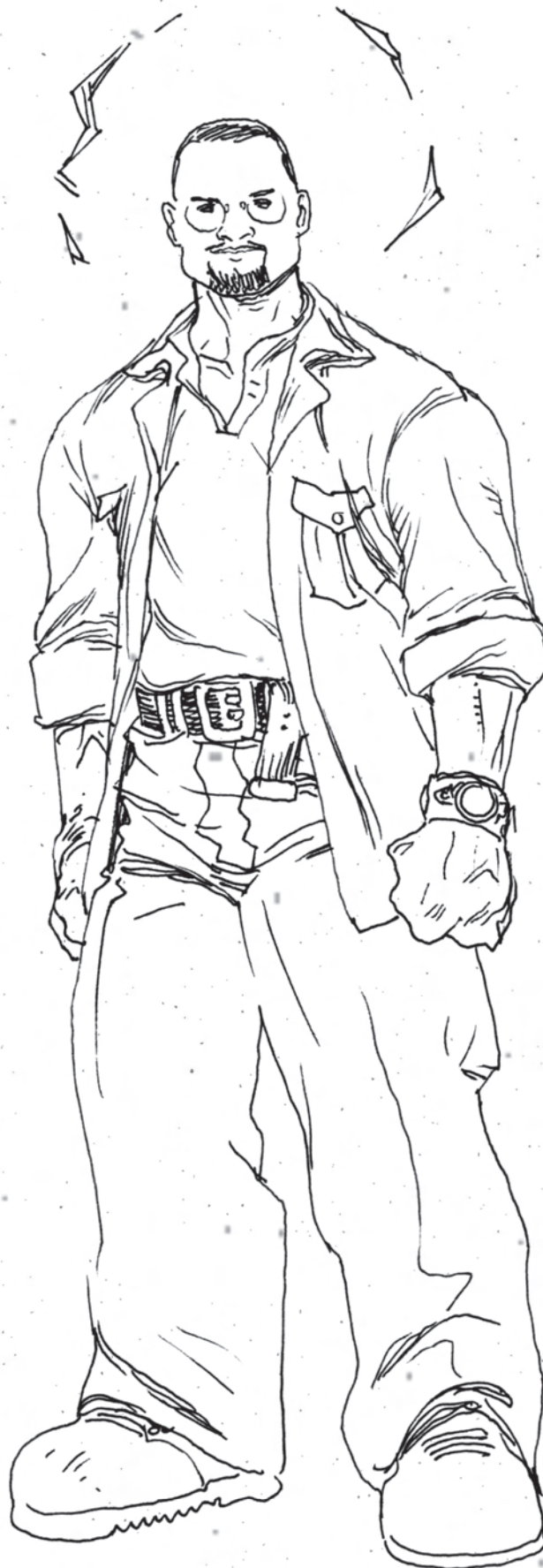
With Matter 4, the Tamer of Stone can cause objects he works on to transcend the limitations of physical space, remaking them in any form he desires at frightening speed, duplicating the effect of the Matter 4 “Reconfigure Object” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 201). The player rolls Dexterity + Crafts + Matter to create the effect.

Sample Character

Ben the Builder

Quote: “Yes. We can fix it.”

Background: Rob Morrissey was 17 when he Awakened; he’d left school to do a builder’s apprenticeship and was in the middle of his first job, the building of a new Guildhall in a provincial town in England. Sent across the site one morning to retrieve a blueprint, he suddenly stopped dead, in the precise center of the site. He became aware of the material of the site, every girder, every brick, every piece of marble. And then he realized that the structure was unsound. He dropped everything, desperately trying to get people to leave before the new roof came down on their heads. Some believed the boy, and enough of them took him seriously for work to stop, but not before the roof came crashing down. Two men were killed. Rob was himself caught in the accident, trying to rescue one of the victims. He spent a week in a coma. During that time, he found himself transported to the Watchtower of the Lead Coin, where he recorded his name.



When he awoke, things were never the same. When he qualified, he moved away, started using his middle name and set up as a building contractor. His trade came easy to him. He gained a reputation quite early on as a reliable, solid builder, who built simple things—home extensions, roofs, garages, that sort of thing—but simple things that had a kind of harmony to them, things that were beautiful in their way and things that were built to last. He'd joined the Free Council quite early on, and it was through the Free Council that his tutor found him. When the Craftsmen asked him to join, Ben jumped at the chance, realizing that this was where he always was meant to be. He still keeps in touch with his mentor and tutor, one Sam Tan.

He still runs his building business, with a few employees. His wife, Jenny, is a Sleepwalker. Most days, she handles Ben's accounts, sorts out his diary and hires people on the job.

Description: Ben's a short, broad-shouldered man in his late 30s. His very short, sandy brown hair frames a round, cheerful face with twinkling eyes and a broad, smiling mouth. He tends to wear hard-wearing clothes: jeans, boots with steel toecaps, heavy checked shirts. He's a busy man, and can be often found covered with dust and plaster. On site, he wears a bright yellow hardhat.

Ben's nimbus causes nearby inanimate objects, particularly those designed as tools, to appear to develop personalities. Suddenly it seems, just for a moment, as if they were moving of their own volition, as if they were watching Ben and sometimes even talking to him.

Storytelling Hints: Ben's a plainly-spoken, decent man with a practical, no-nonsense attitude to his craft and his Arts. He prefers to stand back and let others take credit for things.

Sometimes this reticence can be counter-productive. Ben has good ideas, but sometimes doesn't share them until it's too late.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Plumb line (cord with lead weight)

Real Name: Robert Morrissey

Path: Moros

Order: Free Council

Legacy: Tamer of Stone

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Bricklaying, Architecture, Blueprints) 4, Medicine 1, Science (Civil Engineering) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 3, Survival 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1

Merits: Common Sense, Contacts (the Building Trade, Engineering Contractors, Planning Departments), Destiny (Bane: Accidents) 1, High Speech, Mentor 3, Resources 2, Sleepwalker Retainer (Jenny) 3, Strong Back

Willpower: 5

Wisdom: 7

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Sloth

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 12

Health: 8

Gnosis: 5

Arcana: Death 1, Matter 4, Prime 1, Space 3

Rotes: *Matter*—Find the Hidden Hoard (•), Steel Windows (••), Alter Integrity (•••); *Space*—Spatial Map (•), Spatial Awareness (••), Bestow Spatial Awareness (••)

Legacy Attainment: 1st—Finding the Stone, 2nd—Surveying the Stone

Mana/per turn: 14/5

Armor: 4 ("Unseen Aegis," Matter ••)

TAMERS OF WINDS

Hold it there for a moment. Right. Now smile.

The truth is written on the wind. It's impossible to pin down, impossible to catch. If the wind is contained, it ceases to be wind. If the truth is captured and hidden in a box, it ceases to be the truth.

Still, if a magician is subtle enough, if he is sensible enough, he can glimpse the truth, just for a moment, fingers holding the air just long enough for that split-second of enlightenment before letting it go.

You can hold the winds in a bag, but you have to let them free eventually, if you're going to get any use out of them. And they're only winds if you open the bag. Before that, they're just air. Enlightenment is like that. Capturing it is all well and good, but at some point it has to be shared.

Appreciating enlightenment allows control over the physical air. Air, in the philosophical parlance of the Elemental Masteries, is the same as enlightenment. Air is reason. Air is knowledge. The mage who perceives that his soul can become the Air gains mastery over the weather and might even be able to defy gravity. That's Taming the Winds.

The mages who have, over the centuries, made this their pursuit meditate on the glimpses they receive of the truth. Glimpses of the truth are preserved in memory. Memory is the ground on which thought builds itself. The Tamers of Winds have always grown thought from memory. Except that memory is a different thing to what it once was.

Since the invention of the gramophone, the camera and the film reel, humans have had the ability to record facts as they happen. Suddenly, human memory has been made inadequate, superseded by simple technology. In the space of 100 years, facts became prevalent over truth in a million different ways.

The invention of instant recording changed the human psyche more thoroughly than any other invention. The Tamers of Winds are in a unique position. Their soulcrafting is of the same stripe as the soulcrafting of the ancients, but the practitioners of the Legacy, being mortal, have all been born into a world where these things exist. They have the psychological makeup of people who take cameras, video and sound recording for granted. The result is that the Tamers of Winds exist in a strange kind of tension. On the one hand, they have always

known that the facts don't necessarily hold the truth, and might in fact obscure the truth. On the other hand, they're of a generation that takes without question recording media as the refinement of memory.

The truth will out, they say. The Tamers of Winds are counting on that. There are Tamers of Winds who seek the truth through the media, aiming to capture small truths perfectly through the medium of film and sound. There are Tamers of Winds who work in law, who seek the truth from human accounts. There are others who work their magic through symbolic truth, using literature of various kinds as their conduit. Others still work as journalists, either professionally for newspapers and magazines, or as simple recorders of facts for the mystical orders they work for. And

then there are Tamers of Winds who work in neurology and the field of cybernetics, whose intent is to do nothing less than improve the human brain, to create a perfect memory, not just for facts, but for the truth.

Parent Path: Acanthus

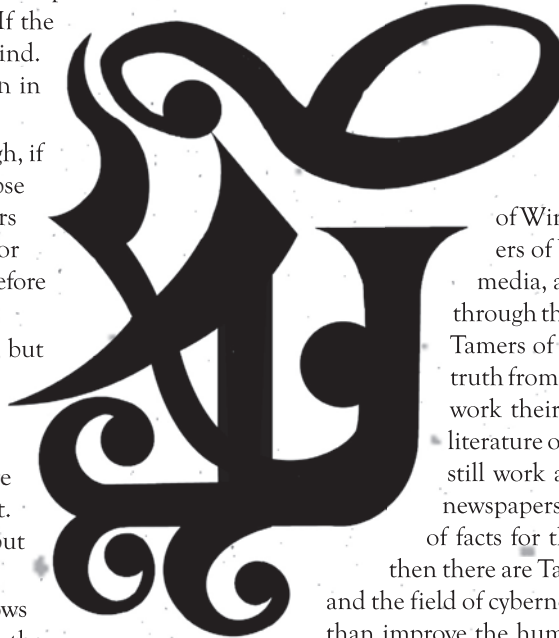
Nickname: Aeolians

Orders: Many Tamers of Winds have their origins in the Free Council, particularly those Tamers who have no problem working magic through technology. The Mysterium, too, an order of truthseekers, finds the Tamers of Winds attractive and gains a great deal from the association.

Some of the Silver Ladder's more progressive members are drawn to seek the Tamers of Winds out, attracted by the dream of knowledge for all. While the Aeolians hold no especial attraction for the Adamantine Arrow, there is no real reason why an Arrow would not join the Tamers of Winds either, and certainly, several prominent Tamers of Winds have come from the Arrows.

The Guardians of the Veil, however, don't tend to find the Tamers of Winds an attractive option. The Tamers of Winds make all this noise about seeking the truth, but they're not careful whom they show it to. Making the truth public to everyone, Sleeper and Awakened, terrifies and angers the Guardians of the Veil. As a result, very few Tamers of Winds come from the Guardians of the Veil.

Appearance: Most Tamers of Winds dress smartly, but then most are professionals, holding down professional jobs, and they look the part. No matter how they're dressed, smart or



scruffy, Aeolians as if they're looking for something. Their eyes move around, assessing their surroundings.

The Elemental Mark that changes their nimbus carries with it the twin markers of inspiration and air. It might be that a powerful wind comes from nowhere. It might be that the smell of ozone suddenly fills the area around the Aeolian's body.

Background: The Tamers of Winds used to come in large numbers from the priestly castes in ancient societies. In history, the churches of different civilizations have been the keepers of truth — and the keepers of the money. In the West, the tradition continued with the Christian churches, who owned huge amounts of land in Europe. In the last couple of hundred years, that's changed, as the money has moved from the priestly to the professional.

Many Aeolians are educated professionals, particularly in fields that require inquiry and investigation: science and technology, law, law enforcement, theology and philosophy, and journalism are particularly common professions among the Tamers of Winds.

Organization: When a Tamer of Winds sees someone he wants to teach, he sends the prospective pupil a long document. Traditionally, it was handwritten. Now, it is just as likely to be typed, or even put on a DVD or CD. The document tells the pupil why the tutor is offering this opportunity, what the Legacy has to offer and what the difficulties are. The document has no return address, and is unsigned. Voices and pictures on audio or video media are doctored to hide identities.

It's up to the pupil to find the sender. Only then can she reach the point of initiation. A potential pupil who wants to join the Legacy, on the other hand, and who approaches a member of the Legacy, usually has to pass a test. It might involve finding some hidden fact that has escaped the tutor for years. Or it might mean that the aspirant has to find something

out about the tutor that has been hidden for a long time.

Once initiated into the Legacy, the new Tamer of Winds only really has an obligation to her tutor. The Tamers of Winds take the tutor-pupil relationship very seriously and work very closely. Most correspond at least once a day. Just as with the other Elemental Masteries, the Tamers of Winds theoretically have a duty to provide aid to those who carry the Elemental Mark, but in practice, although they might be well disposed toward other Tamers, they're not really obliged to support them.

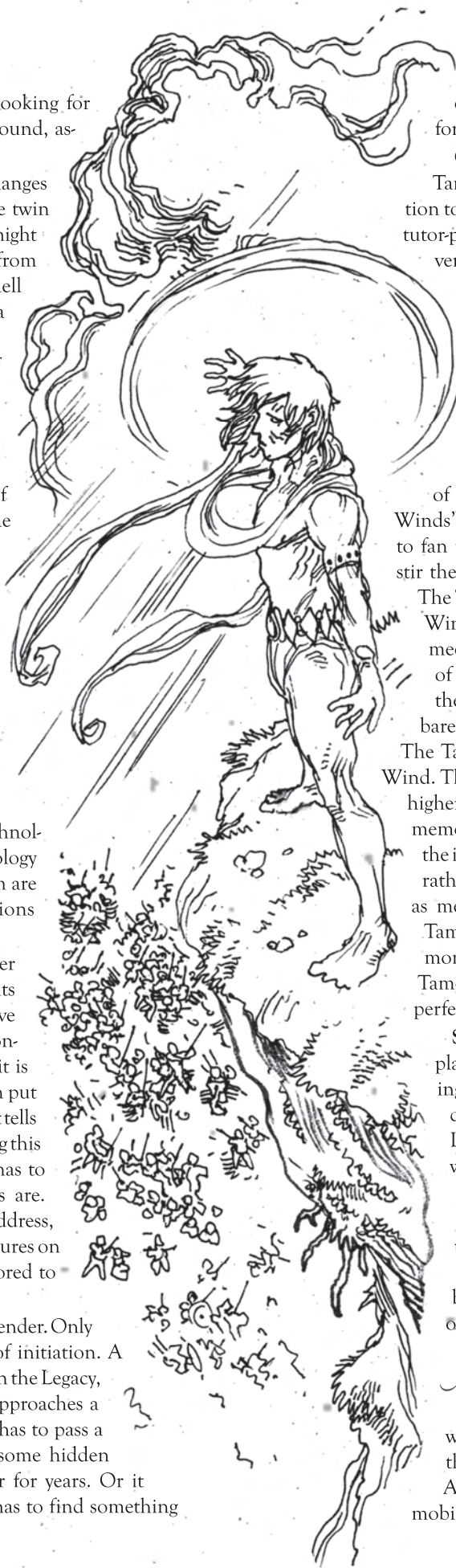
Tamers of Winds work well with some of the Elemental Masteries. The Tamers of Winds' endless search for the truth leads them to fan the flames of the Tamers of Fire and to stir the Tamers of Rivers to action and change. The Tamers of the Cave confuse the Tamers of Wind, however. The few Tamers of Winds who meet a Tamer of the Cave find these prophets of the Void to be impossible to understand: their truth is so vague, so inchoate that it is barely comprehensible to the Tamers of Wind. The Tamers of Stone annoy the Tamers of the Wind. The Aeolians would see humans raised to a higher level, given a gift of truth through perfect memory. The Tamers of Winds sometimes get the impression that the Tamers of Stone would rather drag the world down to their level. Still, as members of the Elemental Masteries, the Tamers of Winds still recognize their commonality, although things may change, as the Tamers of Winds go further down the road to perfected memory.

Suggested Oblations: Taking apart a DVD player and put it back together again. Spending an evening developing photos. Writing down the events of the day in perfect order. Listening to a recording of the sound of weather. Keeping a detailed journal of every event of the day.

Concepts: Lawyer, police detective, historian, documentary filmmaker, journalist, archaeologist, magistrate, evolutionary biologist, neurologist, psychiatrist, writer of literary fiction.

History and Culture

In the very beginning, the Tamers of Winds were the controllers of weather, priests of the sky who could blight or prosper crops. Although given over to the Air, that most mobile of elements, the use of their weather-



magic encouraged farming, and hence staying in place. As they developed into an institutional priesthood, they began also to record lore. They wrote some of the first histories, and began to promote the arts as a means of teaching.

It became apparent to these first Tamers of Winds that the truth of history, psychology and philosophy was a slippery thing, not unlike the wind. Similar to the rest of the Elemental Masteries, the Tamers of Winds believed that truth, knowledge and the wind were literally one and the same. They crafted their souls to exploit that “fact,” becoming wind, becoming knowledge, becoming truth.

As things got worse for the other mages after the Fall, the Aeolians retreated into academia, becoming lorekeepers, priests and librarians. They promoted literacy, traveled little and kept the winds from destroying their homes. They retreated into the shadow world of the mages, joining the orders, particularly the Mysterium.

And so they remained, for thousands of years, until the Enlightenment. The great truths changed then, and human politics transformed itself. In Europe, the Tamers of Winds, without really trying, changed the way they thought, the same way that everyone else did. But in the 19th century, everything changed.

Facts and Truths

Until the invention of instant recording media, all history depended upon human hands and human memories. History books were written by those who recorded accounts of what people recalled.

Memory was fallible. Everyone knew memory was fallible. It was a world in which four contradictory Gospels could be included in the Bible, and all of them thought to be true, because truth wasn't supposed to be about immutable facts. Truth was about eternal verities, regardless of facts. Facts were just things that happened, and that people remembered and forgot. It was supposed to be about what was true. Truth went beyond simple facts. To the historians of ancient Greece, something didn't have to have happened in order to be true. Herodotus and Thucydides gave accounts of great speeches that were never given, but that were no less a true encapsulation of the great statesmen's positions. Livy rewrote the early history of Rome from hearsay and dimly remembered oral traditions, choosing those facts that he regarded as true because they fit what he believed the order of things should be.

Facts and truth were not the same, and both were impossible for fallible humans to capture. Throughout the ages, the past was only a matter of memory, of hearsay and opinion. Although, when the Age of Reason arrived, the great thinkers of the day tried to deny this, claiming that facts could be nailed down, they tried in vain.

And then, in 1826, Nicéphore Niépce invented the first photographic plate. When, eight years later, Louis Daguerre patented the daguerreotype, the history of thought changed. Suddenly, people could capture a moment, as it was, with only the light and the chemicals on the photographic plate as intermediaries.

In 1877, Edison patented the phonograph, and now words could be recorded as they were said. A few years later, the movie camera appeared. And in the 1920s, film and sound were brought together.

Suddenly, the actions of people could be recorded. Suddenly, facts could be captured, and memory did not need to be relied upon.

During the course of the 20th century, facts and truth became conflated, a dangerous business in a world where propaganda was an art form.

The Tamers of Winds found themselves just as fascinated by these new technologies as everyone else. Cameras and film gave the Tamers of Winds factual material from which to find truth. To their frustration, truths became just as elusive, and were still locked in the human soul.

Facts are easy to find, but facts can be untrue. Facts can obscure more important things. The truth doesn't always out.

The Bleeding Edge

Some Tamers of Winds have entered the field of neurology and cybernetics. They're convinced that if human memory can be “fixed,” humanity can become more perfect, more whole.

Aeolian researchers have made breakthroughs in the use of drugs and hypnosis, but they have not yet found that holy grail, the means of making memory perfect.

There are rumors of institutions run by Aeolians, whose desire to fix people has led them to magically experiment—even operate—on Sleepers' brains, not always with their consent.

Like attracts like. The Aeolians *are* truth, and seek to find truth, no matter how it's recorded.

Symbolisms

The Tamers of Winds become the Air. Although Air is a masculine element, the Wind is Air is in a feminine aspect, and the feminine informs all of the Tamers of Winds, male and female. The sign of Libra—the scales—carries a great deal of meaning for many of the Aeolians. An Air sign, it is the sign of balance and of judgment, of weighing facts and of the process of decision.

In the Tarot, the Tamers of Winds find parallels with the Magician, the first trump of the Major Arcana. The Magician is the investigator, the mystical beginning of inquiry.

Of course, the central figure of myth for the Tamers of Winds is Aeolus, the mythological king of the winds. The beginnings of history inspire them. The Tamers of Wind see the line between truth and fact drawn in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides, both of whom recognized the unreliability of memory, and who were able to spin philosophical truths from brief glimpses of the truth, written on the wind.

Induction

When a potential Tamer of Winds finally figures out where his invitation to join came from, his tutor takes him to a high outdoors area, where they are unlikely to be disturbed — a cliff top, for example, or the roof of a tall building. A period of guided meditation in the company of the tutor encourages the potential Aeolian to enter a trance state. And then the tutor makes her jump.

The question of whether she literally jumps or not is never settled. The Tamers of Wind do not allow recording equipment of any kind. The pupil feels the rush of air, the impact of the ground, the crush of bones — and then she wakes up, still sitting in the high place, where she was before she jumped.

Did she dream it? Did she jump? If she did, how did she get back here? She has an epiphany. She jumped and she did not jump, and both are true statements. She is a Tamer of Winds now, and she is wind, and she is truth.

Not everyone makes it through the initiation. Every so often, though, there's a rumor of an Acanthus mage who leaps off a tall building and ends up a smear on the sidewalk.

The second and third Attainments of the Wind depend upon further initiations. Both involve paradoxes, things that didn't happen and yet which happened while the mage was in a guided trance. One Aeolian starves to death and feels himself eaten by crows. One feels his tutor's knife twisting between his ribs. Each time, the epiphany of truth in paradox is enough to cross the mage over the threshold of the next Attainment.

Story Hooks — How Many Roads?

- **The Book:** Rumor has it that there is a book written by a Tamer of Winds several hundred years ago that reveals a monumental secret. A young mage says she's found it. The fireworks begin. Is the book real? And more importantly, is it *true*? Does it matter if the secret comes out?

Perhaps it's like the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction* — there's something in there, but what, no one can say. Perhaps it's like the ancient book from the story that crumbles to dust the moment anyone tries to read it.

- **Stormbringer:** A rival mage begins to affect the local weather, desperately trying to prove a point. A Tamer of Winds character is the only one who can match him. Can the Aeolian win, and even if he can, will his own efforts bring on even greater destruction?

- **The Box:** The characters, including a Tamer of Winds, stumble across evidence of a brainwashing project (the same one from which Alice Free escaped — see below). The truth needs to get out, but at every turn the mages who control the project are there, obscuring the facts as soon as they happen. Friends may not be friends, cover stories

are hidden beneath cover stories and at every turn the characters find themselves drawn in. Will they find the truth? Who controls the Box? The Seers of the Throne are the obvious choice, but they're not the only possible culprits. After all, the brain alterations the controllers of the Box are carrying out on the victims change a lot of things, but mostly they're alterations to memory. Why is this happening? And why is the Tamer character's tutor so keen to get his pupil to go inside the building?

Magic

The magic of the Tamers of Winds controls manifestations of the Air, both the elemental force and the truth it can sometimes be. On the one hand, the Aeolians are the masters of the Air, controlling the wind and the rain in ways that other mages can only imagine.

The other side of the Aeolians' magic is that which seeks truth. Tamers of Wind are masters of creating magics that investigate the truth of a thing.

The Tamers of Wind cast both kinds of magic swiftly. They favor short castings and make heavy use of rote mudras (see **Mag: The Awakening**, p. 125): the air does not wait, they say. Having said that, when ritual or extended castings become necessary, the Tamers of Winds prefer to be outside: like attracts like. They are open Air, and the open Air calls to them. Their castings, similar to all of the Elemental Masteries' spells, often use the paraphernalia of standard occultism, although the Tamers of Winds also use gadgets, particularly cameras and video cameras, as tools in their magic.

Bag of Winds

(Forces ●●●● + Fate ●● + Time ●●)

Aeolus gave Odysseus a bag of winds, and if the bag didn't work, it was because of the incompetence of the hero's men, not the efficacy of the magic. Mages have long passed on the method of duplicating Aeolus' result in a bag or a pocket.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant

Duration: Conditional (Transitory when spell is triggered)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

This spell allows the mage to trap a current weather condition in a pocket or a bag (whether a natural weather condition, or one he has already created), to be kept for later. Fate 2 allows the spell to keep the weather safe as long as the bag is clasped shut, for a base of one scene (see the sidebar on "Conditional Duration," **Mag: The Awakening**, p. 150). When the bag is opened, the weather floods out, covering the immediate vicinity.

With Forces 4, the mage can trap weather conditions that aren't disastrous in the bag. With Forces 5, the Aeolian can trap dangerous weather, such as windstorms.

The spell only works outdoors. If the bag is opened indoors, the weather inside the bag escapes through cracks in the door or window, and affects the area immediately around the building in which the owner of the bag is standing.

Mysterium Rote: Aeolus' Gift

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Science + Forces

The Mysterium sometimes find it useful to give a bit of wind or rain to a friend, as a secret, "between you and me." With this, it's easy, as long as the friend isn't tempted to take a peek inside too soon.

Know the Truth
(Mind ●●● + Time ●●)

The camera sometimes lies. The newspapers don't always tell the truth. A Tamer of Winds, however, knows that the truth is written on the air, and using the magic of Time, can call the winds back to ascertain whether a written or printed document, a piece of film or a photograph or drawing is true.

Practice: Knowing

Action: Instant

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

When a Tamer of Winds casts this spell successfully, she knows whether a document is true. This is more subtle than a simple facts/falsehood dichotomy. A photograph that has not been doctored in any way can be said to lie (consider a convincing-looking photo of a UFO, composed in such a way so as to obscure the fact that the "huge alien craft" is in fact an airborne hubcap with some bits of plumbing equipment stuck to it). A news report can give a complete rundown of the facts, but can still give a false impression in the way that it organizes the facts.

Mysterium Rote: Freeing the Text

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Mind

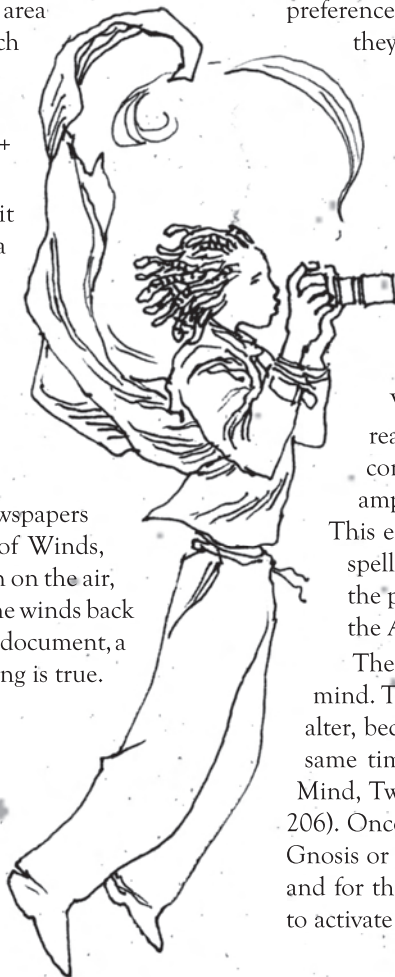
"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The mages of the Mysterium know that. Some work to make others free, by revealing the truth of matters above and beyond all other things.

Attainments of the Wind

The Attainments of the Wind depend upon perception more than anything. Of all the Elemental

Masteries, the Tamers of Wind rarely have problems finding their element, and although they prefer working outside, it's a preference borne of their training, and not from any advantage they might gain from being outdoors.

The first use of each of the Attainments of the Wind lies with the gross manipulation of the air. First the mage reaches out with her soul, which has the properties of the air in all its forms. Then she twists, grasping the air and holding it for a moment.



1st: Hear the Wind

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Forces 2 (Primary), Mind 1

Voices carry on the wind. The Tamers of Winds reaches out with his soul and manipulates the air, compressing or expanding it so that sound can be amplified and moved in ways it cannot naturally travel. This effect is identical to the Forces 2 "Control Sound" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 165), except that the player rolls Wits + Investigation + Forces to activate the Attainment.

The swift movement of the air transforms the mage's mind. The first sign of this is the way his thought processes alter, becoming able to hold two streams of thought at the same time, equivalent to the effect of the Mind 1 "One Mind, Two Thoughts" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 206). Once activated, the effect lasts for one hour per dot of Gnosis or Mind (whichever is highest). Once the effect ends and for the next 24 hours, the mage must spend one Mana to activate it again.

2nd: Grasp the Wind

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Forces 3

The Tamer of Winds can now grab hold of the air with his mind, compressing it and pushing to such an extent that it can lift and manipulate objects. This works just as the Forces 3 "Telekinesis" spell. The air as manipulated by the mage's mind automatically has Strength and Dexterity 1. If the mage wishes to have more dots to split between Strength and Dexterity, the player must roll Intelligence + Athletics + Forces. Each success gives an extra dot that the mage can choose to add to either Strength or Dexterity.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

Having learned how to grasp and twist the air outside of himself, the Aeolian Disciple of Mind can now twist the air within, splitting it further, allowing him to



perform multiple tasks at the same time. This is similar to the Mind 3 “Multi-Tasking” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 211). Once activated, the effect lasts for one hour per dot of Gnosis or Mind (whichever is highest). Once the effect ends and for the next 24 hours, the mage must spend one Mana to activate the effect again. He cannot use this effect at the same time as he uses the first Attainment’s “One Mind, Two Thoughts” effect, although he can cancel either Attainment’s effect to use the other instead.

3rd: Friend of the Wind

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Forces 4

The air within the Tamer of the Wind’s transformed soul can now call to the wind outside himself. Like sings to like, and the winds wrap and clothe him, lifting him from the ground and granting him the ability to move, slowly and surely. This effect works as the Forces 4 “Levitation” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 173). The player rolls Presence + Composure + Forces to activate this power.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

The Tamer of Winds who is also an Adept of Mind can now extend his control of the air, and his control of truth into the minds of others, giving them a remarkable degree of clarity—or making them believe anything he tells them. His truth becomes their truth. The Aeolian just has to speak to his target for the power to take effect. Maybe he’s gently persuasive. Maybe he’s seductive. Maybe he comes up with an amazing piece of propaganda. The effect is similar to the Mind 4 “Breach the Vault of Memory” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 214). The player rolls Presence + Persuasion + Mind, and the target reflexively contests with Composure + Gnosis. If the mage is successful, the target’s memory changes subtly. The minute alteration of the subject’s experiences and the things the subject *knows* about the world allow the mage to make the subject believe whatever he wants her to believe, if only for a short while.

Sample Character

Alice Free

Quote: “No, I’m not sure I could tell you how it feels.”

Background: Alice Awakened twice. Catherine Hearne had left university with a degree in media studies and all sorts of aspirations. They’d been crushed. After three years of unemployment, the best she could do was a team leader’s job in a call center, fielding tech support calls for a product she didn’t even understand.

The life got to her. Work, eat, sleep, work. She was far from home and with nothing she could call a career. Nothing meant anything after a while. When her boyfriend left her, she went on a kind of autopilot, a numb kind of living. She hardly even noticed when she got promoted into the Box, the stark, white open-plan office upstairs from the call center.

She didn’t even know what the Box was. She stopped taking calls there. She processed information. Just numbers, letters, things like that. The shifts got longer and longer. They began

to include “treatments.” They were doing something to her. The managers could say things, and Catherine and her colleagues would change what they were doing without question, without thought. The desk phone would ring, three times, and the rest of the day would be a blank.

There was one day when one of Catherine’s co-workers had a fit, there on the office floor, and no one stepped in until security carried the girl out, still convulsing. They didn’t see her again. No one knew her name. No one asked any questions. Catherine took advantage of her annual leave about then, and took a week’s holiday. At some point in the holiday she found herself with a new boyfriend. She had no idea where he came from.

By the time she’d returned to work, the nightmares had begun, agonizing, surgical dreams in which things were being implanted in her head, chips and wires and sockets, and she’d wake up every morning and feel for the scars, the dreams were so real.

She began to suspect that she was being brainwashed. Whoever was controlling her went too far, and found her a way out. One night, her boyfriend, who had been an agent of theirs all along, planted to keep her under their control, violated his orders. He began to use a hypnotic trigger phrase that Catherine’s employers had included in her conditioning. The trigger was supposed to be for emergencies, for when the agent was compromised. He used it for other things. Overuse weakened its impact: Catherine began to remember things.

One morning, she awoke after a blackout, and on a whim, went for a walk around the town. She sat on a park bench and broke down in tears. A young woman sat beside her and began to talk to her. Catherine realized that she was talking to her mother, who had died when she was a child, and Catherine Awakened. She returned from her vision of the Watchtower and found herself standing on the doorstep of her London apartment.

She packed a few things and left. Soon after that, she met with a cabal of mages from several orders; they introduced her to the Free Council. A Free Council mage named Nausicaä helped Catherine finally break her conditioning, and Nausicaä who pulled the strings to find Catherine a new home and a new name. Nausicaä, too, used her contacts to get the newly minted “Alice” the grant for the documentary she had always wanted to make.

And when the film was made, and had impressed the right people enough to get Alice a job as a director for local television news, Nausicaä offered Alice a place in the Tamers of Winds.

As one of the Aeolians, Alice has tried to find out what they were doing in the Box. She located the place where she thought the building was, but while there really was a call center downstairs, just as she remembered it, there was no office upstairs. In fact, there was no upper floor, and there never had been.

Alice is convinced that the Box has moved somewhere else. She’s going to find it, and when she does, she’s going to blow it wide open.

Description: Alice is very tall and very thin. Her skinny arms and bony shoulders, combined with her angular face,

give an impression of awkwardness that belies the grace with which she moves and the sensitivity of her camera work. She dresses in fashionable street clothes. She has pale blonde hair, buzzed close to her skull. She hides her large blue eyes behind enormous, bug-eyed black sunglasses, only removing them when she's talking to someone about something very important. She speaks quickly and precisely. She peppers her talk with technical terms and media buzzwords, without regard as to whether the person to whom she's talking really knows what she's talking about. Her voice is usually level, and she never really sounds more than mildly interested, even when talking about things that would have others screaming:

Alice's nimbus appears as a crystalline quality in the air around her, as if the air has hardened into glass when her magic is active, refracting light.

Storytelling Hints: Alice plays the role of dispassionate journalist too perfectly. Although the conditioning she underwent in the Box was broken years ago, she still has nightmares about the place, which affect her waking life. She needs to find the Box. She needs to know the truth of the place. Whatever it was they were aiming to take out of her, they didn't fail completely. There's something hollow in her, something empty. She's a cold fish. She rarely if ever smiles, and rarely makes small talk. Still, at times, there's a great sadness and passion that wells up within her. At times, she radiates loss and loneliness.

Alice doesn't know it, but there's something in her head. Maybe it's a chip of some kind, imbued with some kind of mind control spell. Perhaps it's the remains of a telepathic or post-hypnotic implant, or maybe it's some kind of magical object containing another personality, ready to consume and replace her mind (but not her soul) when the time is right. Whatever it is, it's inside her head, waiting to do its work, waiting for the signal or the keyword. Alice's desperate need to find the Box could, tragically, be the end of her . . . and anyone she persuades to join her in her quest.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Digital Handicam

Real Name: Catherine Heame

Path: Acanthus

Order: Free Council

Legacy: Tamer of Winds

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer (Digital Film) 3, Crafts (Film Editing, Film Composition) 3, Investigation 3, Medicine (Pharmaceuticals) 1, Politics 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Drive 1, Stealth 3

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Filmmaker) 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Local TV, Local Newspaper Editors), Eidetic Memory, High Speech, Mentor (Nausicaä) 1, Resources 3

Willpower: 8

Wisdom: 6 (Fixation)

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Gnosis: 4

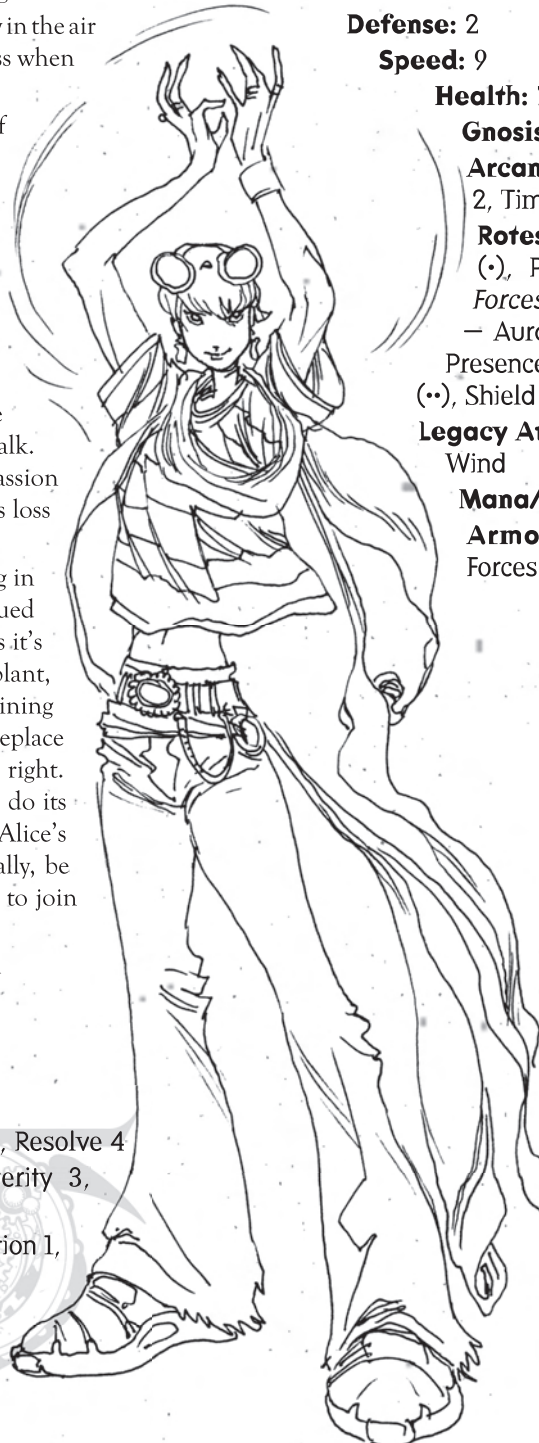
Arcana: Fate 2, Forces 3, Mind 2, Time 2

Notes: *Fate* — Winds of Chance (•), Platonic Mechanism (••), *Forces* — Nightsight (•); *Mind* — Aura Perception (•), Incognito Presence (••); *Time* — Postcognition (••), Shield of Chronos (••)

Legacy Attainment: 1st — Hear the Wind

Mana/per turn: 13/4

Armor: 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)



TAMERS OF WINDS

FORGE MASTERS

Can I make...a sword? Yes. Oh, yes, I can make you a sword!

At the dawn of known civilization, when Atlantis had long since passed into legend, Sleepers still knew that some men worked miracles. They chained the storm-wind in their bellows to send it roaring into the furnace. Kissed by the fire's ardor, dull ore sweated drops of shining metal. The smith shaped this metal with hammer and tongs, and then quenched it in water. A hundred useful things came from the forge: barrel-hoops and buckles, pins and plowshares. The smith knew the secrets of shining silver and heart-gladdening gold, the soft service of copper, tin and lead and the resilience of bronze. Most of all, though, he knew the secrets of iron. Not a pretty metal, but a strong one; the perfect metal for the swords and armor that made one man master over his fellows — and it fell from the sky.

Around the world, therefore, common folk and kings saw the smith as a figure of magic — because, of course, he was. Long before Egypt, Sumer or China, the mages of Atlantis wrought wonders in their forges of power. Smith-gods such as Greek Hephaistos, Celtic Goibniu or Yoruban Ogoun preserve a faint memory of their deeds. The mortal smiths remembered, too. They knew their Art revealed a sacred, Supernal truth: in creating tools, the smith did more than change the substance or shape of matter. He imbued matter with *purpose*, making it an extension of human thought and human will. This metaphysical change was at least as great and wonderful a miracle as the production of metal from ore.

In the modern age of factories and mass production, most people forget the awe that once surrounded the Masters of Metal. The miracles have become too commonplace. A few people keep the old ways and the old secrets, though — sometimes in the very heart of the industrial world that seems to have surpassed the wonder-smiths of yore. These Awakened few know that humanity has not yet laid bare all the secrets of metal. Indeed, some of these Forge Masters believe the golden age of their Legacy has not yet come.

Parent Path: Moros. In some parts of the world, mages of other Paths join the Powersmiths, but that happens because of local cultural bias.

Nickname: Powersmiths

Orders: The Forge Masters have a long association with the Adamantine Arrow, forging magical weapons, armor and shields for their battles. Arrow members sometimes join the Legacy so they can design and forge their own armaments. The Mysterium takes a more esoteric approach to the Legacy. The metaphysical transformation of matter into tool fascinates some of these Arcane scholars; others strive to reconstruct the techniques by which ancient mages crafted magical wonders.

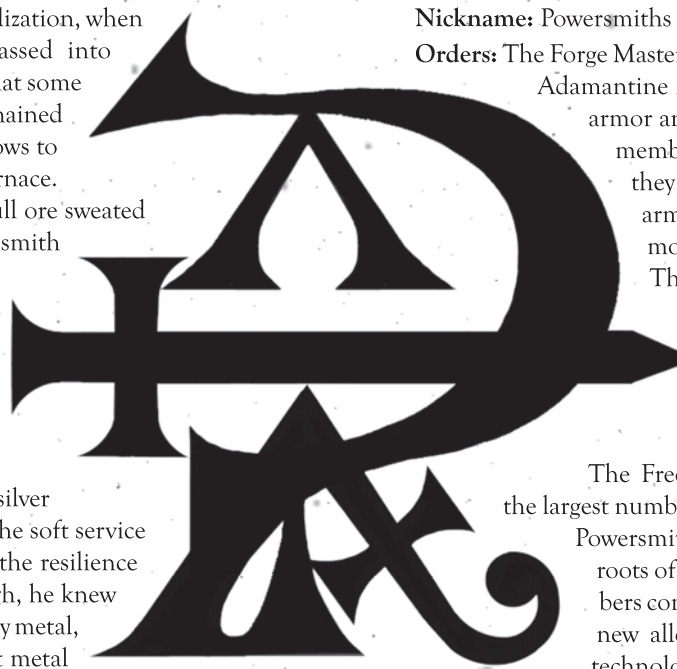
The Free Council, however, now claims the largest number of the Forge Masters. Libertine Powersmiths take great pride in the ancient roots of modern metallurgy. Legacy members combine ancient craftsmanship with new alloys, or apply new metal-shaping technologies to the crafting of Enchanted Items. A few Obrimos Libertines have become Forge Masters, but the order's capacity to spread the Legacy is *very* new and *very* rare as yet.

The Silver Ladder and Guardians of the Veil readily use the products of this Legacy's labors, whether to chastise a rebellious spirit or murder someone for looking where he shouldn't. Neither order has much in common with the Legacy's own interests, though.

The Seers of the Throne include a few Forge Masters. Makers of weapons and tools have always served power, and the Seers pay as well as — better than — any warlord, chief or king. The Seers' Powersmiths initiate their own apprentices and have little contact with their counterparts in the Pentacle.

Appearance: Forge Master practices involve a great deal of physical exertion, so there are no weaklings in the Legacy. Young or old, slim or fat, they have broad shoulders and a powerful grip.

While working at the forge, a Powersmith wears heavy leather gloves and a heavy leather apron that reaches from his shoulders to his knees. This protects him against sparks and the forge's heat. He also wears a patch over one eye, so an accident cannot blind him completely. Forge Masters often tool their eyepatch with a personal symbol, as a sort of badge of office. Even when they aren't working, Forge Masters usually prefer simple, sturdy clothing. For some Powersmiths, it's almost a



mark of pride to show up at Consilium meetings and other formal occasions dressed in spark-scorched denim and leather while everyone else is in their "Sunday best." Forge Masters who prefer jewelry work usually dress more upscale; the two factions rib each other over their fashion sense.

Background: Traditionally, blacksmiths are men. A few women join the Powersmiths, but they all have trouble finding masters willing to initiate them. Even Forge Masters who are not actively chauvinistic may wonder if a woman has the upper-body strength for the work, so female members find themselves working twice as hard for half the respect.

In many parts of the Third World, blacksmiths still practice their trade as a regular part of village culture. Any man who Awakens as a Moros soon learns about the Forge Masters as a career option. Any blacksmith who Awakens is *expected* to join the Forge Masters, whether he's a Moros or not, though no one actually forces the choice on a mage.

In the developed world, old-fashioned blacksmithing is now just an unusual hobby, so few Forge Masters were actual smiths before they Awakened. Instead, they tend to be engineers, machinists, factory workers and other people who work with metal for a living or as part of a hobby. Other Moros become interested in the Legacy because they want to create magical tools or wonders, and the Forge Masters know a lot about this. The Legacy keeps a strong working-class feel, though.

Organization: The Forge Masters place great stock in the relationship of master to apprentice, and show little concern for organization beyond that. If the Powersmiths in a region are numerous enough, (more than three or four), they may declare themselves a "guild," but no one takes these groups too seriously.

Forge Masters like to gather when a mage joins the Legacy or achieves a new Attainment. In some cultures, the guild marks these occasions with a solemn ceremony. In the developed world, the gathered Powersmiths usually limit the ceremony to drinking the member's health, and then just drinking.

Members of this Legacy enjoy teasing each other a great deal. Powersmiths who possess college degrees are apt to be called "Professors" by members who don't. The blacksmiths affect to look down on the smiths who work in "weaker" metals such as tin or precious metals, while the jewelers snub the "uncouth tradesmen" who work in base metals. It's all in good fun, though. Usually.

Suggested Oblations: Smelting your own metal from ore you dug yourself. Using that metal to make a tool or weapon for a client, in one day. Forging a small item and quench it in blood. Melting down scrap metal to make something both useful and beautiful. Repairing a weapon or armor that was damaged in battle so it's as good as new.

Concepts: Medieval hobbyist, Third World village blacksmith, foundry worker, jeweler, machinist, metallurgist, auto mechanic, junkman, metal sculptor.

History

The Forge Masters don't keep much history; or rather, they say their history consists of the things they made, not the people who made them. The Legacy's lore is mostly oral and practical:

how to recognize different alloys, how long to heat particular ores, different styles of metalwork and who used them. The great Powersmiths of the past are known through the items they enchanted and the personal hallmarks they stamped on their work. The Forge Masters know their Legacy is very old, though, because it occurs wherever people smelt metal from ore.

In Atlantis, the Forge Masters say, their Legacy did not exist as such. Matter responded to enlightened Will. All mages could do all things if they chose. Some mages simply developed greater skill at working with metal – and those mages wrought wonders. They also discovered the perfected metals such as orichalcum and lunargent. Some Atlantean artifacts suggest a half-technological magic of devices built from crystals and perfected metals: flying ships powered by sorcerous engines, weapons that fired lightning bolts from crystal rods and many other strange devices.

When the warring Atlanteans broke the world, the wonder-smiths lost their greatest powers. The arts that remained to them, however, seemed mighty enough to simple Sleepers. The Atlanteans and their heirs still wrought wonders that mythology would ascribe to gods and demigods, such as the dwarf-forged hammer Mjollnir, or the maidens of living gold who served Hephaisotos.

As magic faded from the world, the heirs of Atlantis had to re-invent their spells and rely more on mundane artifice. Nevertheless, their power remained great enough that even Sleeper smiths were treated as magicians – and similar to all magicians, the smiths inspired fear and contempt as well as awe and respect. In many cultures, blacksmith families were deemed of royal or even godly descent. In just as many other cultures, blacksmiths were suspected of knowing curses or called unclean for the sweat and grime of their profession.

Many of the rites known to Forge Masters reflect this mythic age. Powersmiths sometimes ascribe their techniques of enchantment to divine smiths such as Hephaisotos or Ogoun, the dwarf-smith Alberich and the faerie-smith Wayland or legendary mortals such as Daedalus or Tubalcain. The Forge Masters can point to more than myths, however, as evidence of their presence in the ancient world. Etruscan goldwork, for instance, is sometimes covered with nearly microscopic gold granules *somehow* soldered on without melting them. A temple in India holds a huge pillar of rustproof cast iron made in a time and place when supposedly neither iron-casting nor rustproof alloys were known.

Medieval blacksmiths lost a lot of prestige. More of them worked for common people, making everyday tools and implements. Armor and weapons became specialized crafts with their own practitioners. On the other hand, workers in silver and gold such as Cellini became famous as individuals for the first time. The Forge Masters lost prestige among fellow mages, too.

Perhaps the most momentous change, however, came when blacksmiths started making precision machines. The techniques developed for articulated suits of armor also enabled smiths to craft mechanical toys for royal patrons – or the first clocks driven by pendulums or springs – and from there, Forge Masters

tell their apprentices, it was only a short step to steam engines. Powersmiths didn't invent the new technologies — some may have been involved in particular inventions but their names are forgotten — but these mages accepted them gladly. Some Forge Masters still specialize in magical machines such as clockwork bodies for spirit familiars to possess, or Arcane seismographs that detect magical disruptions from far away.

The modern Forge Masters regret the modern world's hostility to willworking, but not much. Nowadays, they have dozens of metals to combine for just the right alloy, and techniques for shaping metal their mythic forebears could never imagine. The Legacy has its traditionalists who insist a real blacksmith knows when to temper steel by the color of the cooling metal, not a thermometer. Most Powersmiths say, however, that the true artisan always surpasses his tools — especially when the art is magic. They seek to tame the refractory hardness of tungsten, the lightness of magnesium and beryllium and even the sinister weight of depleted uranium. What magic lurks within the new metals and manufacturing techniques? They don't know — but they want to find out.

Impossible Alloys

Sleeper metallurgists still cannot make some metals combine. If their densities differ too much, the liquid metals separate; other metals won't mix because of chemical differences. Careful use of Matter magic, however, can force lightweights such as lithium to alloy with heavy metals such as osmium, or manipulate crystal structures or alloy compositions in other ways.

What good are "impossible" alloys? Nobody knows until someone manages to make them. A few Powersmiths experiment with these alloys in hopes of finding something useful — and profitable. After all, they only need magic to *make* the alloy. The metal itself isn't magical. These Forge Masters believe they can craft and sell objects made from "impossible" alloys without degradation by Disbelief just by saying the process is a trade secret. Whether this works, only the Storyteller can say.

Society and Culture

The Forge Masters are completely decentralized. They have no offices beyond tutor and pupil. Even their "guilds" are so informal they barely exist. In the Western world at least, no Powersmith has the authority to gainsay another's judgment about how to train an apprentice or when to bring another mage into the Legacy. By the same token, the Legacy has no serious internal divisions: clashes between members stay personal.

Less accomplished Forge Masters do show respect for smiths who have progressed further in the Legacy; that's just good sense. After all, you may need the senior Powersmith's help to gain your next Attainment, if something happens to your current

tutor. More experienced Forge Masters also know trade secrets they may impart if suitably flattered (and a little tipsy).

Titles are similarly informal. Tutor and pupil are generally called master and apprentice, regardless of their Arcana proficiencies. Once a pupil receives his first Attainment, other Powersmiths may address him as "journeyman" until he achieves his second Attainment. Forge Masters often assume the names of mythical or legendary smiths such as Sindri (the dwarf who forged Thor's hammer Mjollnir) or Hua Kuang Fo (the Chinese god of silversmiths and goldsmiths). Personal ancestors who worked with metal are another common choice.

In other parts of the world, Forge Masters and their guilds may behave more formally. Some cultures still believe in magic and the blacksmith's special status. In West Africa, for instance, blacksmiths sometimes belong to secret societies devoted to Ogoun (or similar gods). A society that claims a Forge Master as its leader gains great prestige, and Forge Masters themselves show great respect for members with higher Attainments. West African Forge Masters learn a copious body of myths, secret passwords and symbols as they advance from Attainment to Attainment. These secrets include spells and rites, the names of spirits that may assist or hinder their work and legends about great Forge Masters. All in all, West African Powersmiths take their guilds and ranks quite seriously.

Whatever their culture, however, the Forge Masters keep a distinctly working-class attitude and sympathies. They do not try to isolate themselves from the common people. Even in places where blacksmith clans claim descent from ancient kings, Forge Masters still *work* for a living. In West Africa, for instance, the Ogoun societies have become significant advocates for the common people against political or tribal elites — which puts the local Forge Masters in conflict with mages who cultivate the local ruling classes.

Powersmiths in the developed world seldom entangle themselves in politics, either among Sleepers or the local Consilium: tutors often advise their pupils that every other mage is a potential client, so it's best to stay neutral and sell to everyone. Most mages accept the Forge Masters' neutrality. Not all mages respect the Legacy, though. Mages who get caught up in the "few and the proud" elitism of being Awakened find the Powersmiths disgracefully common and close to the Sleepers. Such attitudes are perhaps most frequent among the Guardians of the Veil and the worst elements of the Silver Ladder, which exist for domination and control, but every order has its snobs.

The Master's Tools

Forge Masters traditionally leave their tools to their pupils. Since Forge Masters frequently enhance or imbue their anvil, hammers, tongs and other tools, the inheritance can be a trove of magical power as well as a sentimental gesture. Powersmith tools may be centuries old and have acquired layers of enchantment. Some Forge Masters divide their tools among pupils, others give everything to one favored apprentice and sometimes the former pupils ignore their teacher's wishes and just fight it out.

Powersmiths Among the Seers

Powersmiths, whatever their culture of origin, generally get along with each other. Let two Forge Masters meet and soon they're talking shop. This amity does not extend to Forge Masters among the Seers of the Throne. Parallel lines of Powersmith initiation have existed among the Seers for as long as the Seers themselves — and the two sides do not mix. Forge Masters of the Pentacle think of their Seer counterparts as social climbers who've chosen the safety of patronage instead of honest work.

The Seers' Powersmiths agree. They *do* have secret arts that place them above the masses. They *do* serve power. Similar to the legendary wonder-smiths of old, the Seers' clients are gods, or at least the representatives of gods. They are spiritual kin to the true kings of this world. If other Forge Masters choose to disgrace that divine heritage by grubbing among the common herd, so much the worse for them.

The two factions loathe each other. Pentacle Forge Masters may stay neutral in Consilium politics, but most are happy to supply arms and armor for attacks upon the Seers.

The Power of Iron

For centuries, Western scientists doubted that stones and metal fell from the sky, but ancient peoples knew this perfectly well. The Sumerian word for iron loosely translates as “star-stone,” and the Greek “siderite” has the same meaning. The metal from the sky obviously came from the gods and so was used for sacred blades; bits of iron were set in gold like jewels. Even after the Hittites learned to smelt iron, meteoric iron retained special value because of its celestial origin — plus, iron didn't rust, a property now ascribed to its nickel content.

For thousands of years, mortal blacksmiths could not actually liquefy iron. They charged their furnaces with ore and charcoal. Weeks later, they pulled out a spongy mass of iron still mixed with sand, slag and other bits of mineral that wouldn't burn away. The smith had to hammer these impurities out of the hot metal.

Blacksmiths thought the spongy iron looked like a plant, so they called it a “bloom.” Every iron-working culture developed the same conceit: iron, and other metals, slowly grew in the earth as a refinement or perfection of common stone. The heat of the furnace accelerated this growth into a higher and purer form; the furnace itself was a man-made womb where the generation of life took place. By speeding the work of nature, surely the smelter had worked magic — or even seized the fire of divinity itself.

Iron's new birth within the furnace did little to reduce the awe attached to the metal from the stars. Homer contrasted “democratic iron” with the bronze of aristocrats' weapons and armor — but no one ever imagined that bronze would kill spirits or bring luck. Iron retains its mythic role as a symbol of strength and power: no soldier ever received the Titanium Cross.

Indeed, modern Powersmiths say that science reveals greater depths to iron's mythic power. Iron is the death of suns: the fusion process that powers stars ends when it reaches iron.

Building heavier elements *consumes* energy instead of releasing it. Every element heavier than iron (including the other six mystic metals) is generated when a massive star dies in a supernova explosion, building heavier atoms from the iron in its dead core. One such supernova sparked the creation of the solar system, though, and iron from that dead star enables blood to carry oxygen.

Some Forge Masters give iron a different primacy. Iron nails held Christ to the Cross. Through the iron of Calvary, a single death led to life eternal. These mages would not deny the stellar significance of iron; seeing connections between theology and astrophysics is just part of being Awakened.

Whatever their faith, Forge Masters see iron as the greatest of metals. It is the metal of life and death conjoined. Iron gives humanity dominion over nature, and enslaves them to other men. Iron is power itself.

Magic

The Forge Masters see toolmaking as an innately magical act — the first magic, in fact, practiced long before Atlantis. A tool consists of more than its form and substance. A tool has purpose. Mages can detect that purpose, too, in the form of resonance. Forge Masters believe that when mages enchant objects, they build upon that resonance.

Arcana

By the nature of their Legacy, Forge Masters must study Matter and Prime: Matter for changes of form and substance, and Prime for imbuelements of power. Of course, they do not limit themselves to those Arcana. All Arcana have value for the spells a Forge Master can imbue into an item, but a few have special value for helping them do their job.

Fate can link a tool or weapon to a specific person: the item knows its proper owner and does not grant its power to anyone else. More ominously, Forge Masters can create weapons fated to slay particular creatures — or people. The wonders from a Powersmith's forge may also carry curses that fall upon people who wield them for improper ends.

Forces can amplify the impact of a weapon. Once upon a time, Powersmiths forged flaming swords and lightning-javelins for heroes to wield in their battles. Such enchantments are still known; the Paradoxes these weapons attract make them less useful than in days of yore. Forge Masters often study Forces, however, to protect themselves from the terrible heat of their furnaces and the metal they shape. Some ancient recipes for wonder-smithing require the use of an erupting volcano as a forge, as if the Powersmith were Hephaistos himself.

Spirit, however, is probably the Arcanum most valued by Forge Masters, outside of their Path and Legacy. They don't care much about spirits *per se* (though a few Powersmiths craft fetish items or treat with spirits of mining, smelting or craftsmanship), but Powersmiths need this Arcanum to create orichalcum, lunargent and the other perfected metals they use in their finest work.

Perfected Metals

Mortals can speed the work of nature by refining ore into metal; mages can go a step further and smelt away the grosser aspects of matter. These “perfected” metals are closer to the Platonic essence of metal-ness, and therefore accept enchantment more easily.

Ordinary metals are perfected by repeatedly sending them into Twilight as ephemera and pulling them back to material form. (Some mages think this is the true meaning of the ancient alchemical formula, “Dissolve and coagulate.”) Perfecting a metal requires at least two dozen such passages back and forth. The final product has a tenth the volume and mass of the original stock of metal. Only the seven metals known to antiquity can be perfected: gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead and mercury.

Perfected gold, or *orichalcum*, has a redder hue than pure but mundane gold. Orichalcum seems to catch and hold light in its translucent depth, giving it a warm, fiery glow. Similar to mundane gold, orichalcum can be drawn into incredibly fine wires and beaten into leaf. Even the fiercest mundane acid cannot dissolve orichalcum.

Lunargent, or perfected silver, is likewise translucent and holds a cool, slightly blue glow. Lunargent, too, is highly malleable and chemically inert.

Perfected mercury, or *hermium*, combines great density with a glittering silver gleam and perfect fluidity. In fact, hermium has the same “superfluid” properties as liquid helium: hermium can creep over the rim of a vessel to collect in a lower vessel,

stir hermium and the current circles forever. Hermium flows through the smallest opening with no friction at all.

Perfected copper, tin and lead are considerably less well-known to mages and have fewer known uses. The Forge Masters, however, esteem *siderite* – perfected iron – above all other metals. Siderite is the strongest, toughest metal of all. It can bend like rubber and spring back into shape without the slightest trace of metal fatigue. Siderite holds an edge that never dulls. It cuts diamond and the finest mundane steel. Siderite doesn’t look special, though; its gray gleam may glitter a bit more than ordinary iron or steel, but nothing about it looks magical to the untrained eye. Meteoric iron is half-perfected already: it takes just one dozen passes through Twilight to become true siderite.

The perfected metals do not have active magical powers of their own. If a mage enchants an item made of perfected metal, however, his player receives a +1 equipment bonus to all the rolls to cast the necessary spells. Each metal has its own mystic affinities, apart from physical properties that make one metal better suited than others for various purposes. The metals do not correspond neatly to particular Arcana or Practices, though: selecting the optimum metals for an item is a matter of intuition rather than charts and formulas. For instance, dull, heavy lead is often associated with Death, but lead’s ancient use as a vehicle for curses gives perfected lead an affinity for Fate as well – never mind that mages also associate Fate with lunargent, the metal of the Acanthus Watchtower. The strength of siderite, however, makes it the best perfected metal for weapons, no matter what spells the weapon bears.

Forge Masters also alloy the perfected metals. Some of these *do* have intrinsic magical powers of their own; thaumium is the best-known example. The Atlanteans knew dozens of perfected alloys. Modern mages know only a few. The Forge Masters study Atlantean artifacts in hopes of reconstructing the “trade secrets” of forgotten alloys. Each alloy requires its own spell of Matter and Prime to forge, however – analogous to “Forge Thaumium” (see *Mage: The Awakening*, p. 203).

Induction

As a Legacy, the Forge Masters set no formal requirements a recruit must meet, beyond the necessary competence at metalwork and the Arcana of Matter and Prime. Each master decides on his own whether to accept an apprentice, and helps shape his student’s soul when the master thinks the student is ready. No Forge Master has the authority to question another Forge Master’s judgment in this respect.

In practice, Powersmiths usually demand at least a year of apprenticeship before inducting a mage into the Legacy. Helping an apprentice to craft his soul is quite a drastic expenditure on a Forge Master’s part, comparable to forging an imbued item. They do not expend their own soul’s force lightly. A year of hard work pays the tutor in advance, and makes sure the prospective Powersmith really, truly wants to devote his life to



the Legacy. It also gives the tutor and pupil a chance to discover any personality conflicts before what may be a lifetime's work together.

Initiating a new Forge Master is the Legacy's most elaborate ritual. The tutor builds a special furnace of stone and clay, using no magic whatsoever and no tools he did not forge himself. A hollow in the furnace floor holds a cup of the tutor's own blood and as much tass as he can collect.

The apprentice climbs into the furnace. He carries a nail of siderite. The tutor fires the furnace with Mana, using the spells "Celestial Flame" and "Channel Mana" (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 224), and seals the apprentice inside. The spell-fire is modulated to cause pain but not serious damage. The apprentice drives the siderite nail through one wrist and lets his blood fall into the spell-fire to mingle with his tutor's blood. Then he meditates as his tutor channels the spell-fire into his body and soul, until the pupil absorbs all the Mana he can, charged with the resonance of blood, iron and fire.

The tutor breaks open the furnace. The pupil steps forth, glowing with spell-fire, and the Forge Master strikes the pupil with a phantasmal hammer of Mana imbued with the pupil's own soul-pattern. The Powersmith literally hammers his apprentice's soul into a new form. At the end, the pupil leaps into a waiting bath of cold water and lets the Mana flood out of him in a rush. Thus does he temper his own soul and lock it into the Legacy's pattern. When he emerges, the siderite nail is gone — consumed along with the tass. The tutor destroys the furnace and may even disintegrate its stones, so it shall never be used for any purpose less sacred.

The second Attainment involves a similar rite. This time, however, the pupil stabs his other wrist with a nail of thaumium. The third Attainment involves a third sojourn in the furnace, but the Forge Master stabs his own side with a blade of *electrum magicum*, the alloy of all seven perfected metals.

The initiation of a new Forge Master is a big event in the Legacy. Since an initiation is usually scheduled months in advance, other Powersmiths have plenty of time to learn about the ceremony. Even if the tutor doesn't belong to a guild, several other Forge Masters probably attend to watch and toast the new Powersmith.

Story Hooks — Out of the Furnace

• **Unalloyed Gall:** A Forge Master hired to enchant a powerful item easily becomes entangled in his client's conflicts. Other mages may want to prevent the character from enchanting the item, or they may try stealing it before delivery to the client. The item to be imbued could be anything from a ghost-killing sword to a car that can drive into the Shadow Realm. A Powersmith who lacks all the Arcana needed to enchant the item could turn to his cabal — or other mages — for help, entangling them in turn.



• **Works of the Ancients:** A clue surfaces to the location of a powerful Artifact supposedly used by a mythic Forge Master, such as the anvil on which Alberich forged the Rhinegold, or one of Hephaistos' automaton servants. Forge Masters around the world join the hunt, drawing in any cabals to which they belong — perhaps including the players' characters. The Seers' Powersmiths also seek the Artifact, and they are ruthless in their pursuit.

• **Sufficiently Advanced Technology:** A Powersmith starts a business that produces high-tech components by magic. The devices themselves aren't enchanted, but they are made from impossible alloys and fabricated using spells. (Employees, of course, must be Sleepwalkers or other mages.) The plan throws the local Consilium in an uproar: the Guardians of the Veil are aghast, but other mages think the business could lay the groundwork for Sleeper belief in magic. What side do the characters choose?

Enchantments of the Forge

Forge Masters know as wide a range of magic as any other mage, but crafting magic items is their reason for existence. They have few rivals in this demanding art. Over the millennia, Forge Masters gave the orders several rote to imbue magic items or to assist in the enchantment process. These rotes are now considered Free Council rotes, though the Atlantean orders may know them, too.

Creating a magic item is a big event among Forge Masters. They don't do it as often as they'd like because of the high personal cost (represented by the sacrifice of a dot of Willpower). Once upon a time, they believe, Powersmiths could imbue their works with magic purely through their craft and their Attainments. Now, however, a mage must place part of his Awakened soul in an item to preserve its magic. One consequence is that Forge Masters seldom waste their craft on small enchantments: they forge the most powerful and wonderful item they can. They also charge correspondingly high prices for their work, in rotes, favors and perfected metals as well as cash.

The forging of a wonder is a sufficiently rare and valued feat that any Powersmith who hears about it probably shows up to watch, kibitz and try to pick up a magical trade secret or two. Apart from Attainments, crafting magic items is the key to prestige in the Legacy. For all the rough humor among Forge Masters, they feel great respect for colleagues who have imbued metal with powerful and innovative enchantments.

Books of Metal (Matter ●●● + Prime ●)

The Forge Masters' idiosyncratic approach to magic expresses itself in their approach to grimoires. Instead of books, Forge Masters inscribe their grimoires in metal. The glyphs of a grimoire could hide in the filigree of a bracelet or the chasing of a brooch, but some Powersmiths prefer to hammer their grimoires into the metal itself. Such a grimoire shows no visible sign of its nature: to read the grimoire, a mage requires both Matter 1 and Prime 1, to sense how the mystic pattern of the rote is coded into the crystal structure of the metal:

Practice: Weaving

Action: Extended

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Covert

Cost: None

Other than the use of Matter to impress the rote's pattern into an object rather than a written form, this spell works the same as Inscribe Grimoire (see *Mage: The Awakening*, p. 220).

Free Council Rote: Hephaestan Hallmark

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Craft + Matter

A Forge Master brought the Free Council this rote, which enables a mage to turn any object of metal into a grimoire. The only visible sign to alert other mages to the hidden grimoire is a symbol stamped in the metal. The symbol itself is not magical; it is typically the mage's personal monogram. Many variations are possible. For instance, a Powersmith could bind

a rote into a ring, re-learn the rote and so gain the grimoire's benefit to casting the rote whenever he wore the ring. Forge Masters in the Adamantine Arrow sometimes turn weapons into grimoires, so they can gain the same benefit by turning the rote mudra into a weapon-flourish. A few Guardians of the Veil use this rote to record their secrets.

Primal Transfer (Prime ●●●●)

One problem with crafting magic items for other mages is the loss of psychic force — of one's very soul — involved in letting go of a spell so other people can use the item. An Adept of Prime, however, can demand that a client give of herself to assist in the item's enchantment: the client, not the mage himself, sacrifices a dot of Willpower to make the spell independent.

Practice: Patterning

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Composure + Gnosis reflexively

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

Sacrificing a dot of Willpower is so deep and traumatic an experience that this spell (and associated rote) only succeeds if the target knowingly assists the mage. Even then, the character's player must win a contested roll of the Forge Master's Gnosis + Prime against the target's Composure + Gnosis, for the soul resists giving up part of itself.

Free Council Rote: Blood Quenching

Dice Pool: Resolve + Empathy + Prime

Forge Masters sometimes demand that a client literally pay in blood. As part of this rote, the Powersmith bids his client to pierce her own flesh and let her blood drip onto the hot metal during the tempering process. With the blood and the taps of his hammer (actually the mudras of the rote), the Forge Master draws power from the client's soul and forces it into the enchanted metal.

Attainments

The Attainments of the Forge Masters strengthen the metaphysical imbue of purpose that distinguishes a tool from unshaped matter. At first, a Powersmith can work only a slight augmentation to make a tool or weapon subtly better at fulfilling its purpose, whatever that may be. Later, the Forge Master can strengthen this subtle power enough that an item can affect incorporeal entities. The greatest Powersmiths live up to their nickname by creating magic items from primal energy itself.

A Forge Master could perform all these feats through force of will, but he would wrench reality by doing so. The subtle magic of this Legacy, however, builds on the basic fact that a skilled artisan can improve whatever he works upon. To use each Attainment, a Forge Master must spend at least a turn testing, maintaining or otherwise fiddling with the item he wants to enchant. The character can obtain longer-lasting

results by a full scene of mundane-seeming work on the item. For example, a Forge Master might sharpen a blade or tune a pickup truck's engine.

These Attainments work best on items principally made of metal, since that is the Legacy's focus. Nevertheless, a Forge Master can use his Attainments on tools and weapons of other materials. Instead of a day, however, the effects last only one scene after the mage finishes his work, and he must expend one Mana (on top of any other cost). In any case, these Attainments cannot affect anything with a Size greater than 15. Any larger target requires actual spellcasting, with all the risks that entails.

1st: *The Master's Hand*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Prime 2, Matter 2, Craft 3

The knowing hand of a master craftsman can work away slight imperfections in a tool, improving its performance. A knife becomes sharper, a gun better balanced, a car handles better; even a hairpin can become a better lockpick, or a metal flute gains a sweeter tone. Whatever the Forge Master works upon gains the "9 again" quality, as if he had used the Matter 2 "Alter Accuracy" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 196). The mage's Prime dots determine the maximum number of rolls within the next day for which the item can gain this effect.

The improvement to function becomes most obvious, perhaps, with weapons. Any task gains a greater chance of success, however, if performed with tools improved by The Master's Hand. For instance, a car given a magical tuneup performs better in a chase or other challenging conditions ("9 again" on Dexterity + Drive), improvised tools let an amateur pick locks like an experienced burglar (Dexterity + Larceny) and a musician gives a better performance on the cleaned and slightly modified flute (Manipulation + Expression). Obviously, any repair attempt becomes more likely to succeed using augmented tools, so a sensible Powersmith carefully burnishes and tests his tools before important mechanical tasks.

In addition, a Forge Master automatically sees the enchantments on enhanced items, imbued items and artifacts, as if he used the Prime 1 "Analyze Enchanted Item" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 219–220), but rolling Intelligence + Occult + Prime. That a made object bears enchantment is as obvious as its color; analyzing the enchantment still requires the dice roll. This mystical sense does not detect magic not associated with objects shaped by intelligence; for example, this sense won't register an active Hallow. To sense other magical auras, a Forge Master needs to use normal spells or rites.

2nd: *Primal Tempering*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Prime 3, Craft 4

As a Powersmith gains in mastery, he can strengthen the power of will and purpose in any man-made object to make it realer than real: it becomes metaphysically potent enough to affect Twilight and Shadow entities such as ghosts and spirits. This acts like the Prime 3 "Ephemeral Enchantment" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 225), except no roll is required. The

mage's dots in Prime serve as the number of successes. Primal Tempering lasts a scene if performed as an instant action, or a full day if the Forge Master works on the object for a full scene. Only one object receives the subtle enchantment, so if a Forge Master wanted to enchant extra ammunition for a gun, he would need to spend an additional scene or action using Primal Tempering on each magazine. A suit of armor counts as one entity because one person wears the various pieces, but a suit of armor and a shield would nevertheless require separate enchantments.

A Forge Master with Prime 5 can endow an object with the power to inflict aggravated damage. This still requires a user who can supply the item with Mana, however, or the Powersmith can grant the item its own Mana reserve.

The metaphysical density given by Primal Tempering extends to more than attack and defense. The object becomes as real and solid to incorporeal entities as it is in the material world. Not only does Primally Tempered armor blocks a spirit's attacks, but an entity in Twilight could push the keys of a Primally Tempered typewriter to type a message, or the entity might find a Primally Tempered steel box as hard to escape as a mortal would. The Storyteller should judge such cases based on the *purpose* of the object: a spirit could type on the typewriter but not pick it up to batter a material foe, because a typewriter exists to write, not to be used as a bludgeon — and that reason for existence is what Primal Tempering strengthens so it extends into spiritual realms.

This Attainment also grants a small benefit to the "Imbue Item" spell or "Forge of Power" rote (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 225–226), though the Attainment's benefit does not substitute for the rote or spell. For a Forge Master with this Attainment, enchanting a magic item always counts as covert magic, even if the spells stored in the item are vulgar. Using the item can still cause Paradoxes.

Optional Arcanum: Matter 3

While granting an object Primal Tempering, a Forge Master with Matter 3 can also increase the object's Durability by as many points as his rank in Matter, much as if he used Alter Integrity (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 198). Similar to the basic Primal Tempering, this requires the mage to work on the object in some mundane way.

3rd: *Primal Forge*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Prime 4, Craft 5

At the apex of the Legacy's power, a Forge Master no longer needs a forge. He has so internalized the power of toolmaking that he can conjure weapons, armor or simple mechanical devices from pure Mana or tass. A Powersmith cannot conjure a device with its own power source (no automobiles or electric drills), and nothing much more complicated than a push-lawn-mower or combination lock. The mage's rating in Prime acts as the relevant factors for whatever the Forge Master creates. An item that lasts only a scene takes a turn to conjure; if the Powersmith spends a full scene, he can create an item that lasts a full day, and, in addition, give the item Primal Tempering

or imbue it with spells. Any spells cast into the conjured item still count toward the mage's normal number of spells in use. Nevertheless, sometimes it's extremely useful to conjure a powerful magic sword — even if it only lasts a day.

Optional Arcanum: Matter 4

If the Forge Master is also an Adept of Matter, anything conjured by the Primal Forge also gains additional Durability, as with the Matter-based advantage to Primal Tempering. The Attainment can also conjure items of siderite and other perfected metals. This makes conjured items easier to temporarily imbue with spells (thanks to the +1 equipment bonus to spellcasting). A conjured item of siderite does not gain still more Durability for its substance: the object is still, after all, just a very good illusion.

Sample Character

Kalvis

Quote: “If this demon is as dangerous as you say, wouldn't you prefer a magic chainsaw?”

Background: Davian Barrow Awakened on the operating table after a drunk driver crashed into his car. In his dream, he tried to reach a dull-gleaming tower across a dark, rocky landscape. A black-skinned dwarf offered to replace his crushed leg with a new leg of iron. Barrow, however, didn't like the dwarf's smile, and anyway, he was an aeronautical engineer. He called his supplier on his cell phone (it was a dream, after all) and ordered sheet magnesium and aluminum tubing. He built wings using the dwarf's tools and flew to the Watchtower of the Lead Coin. The Free Council found him soon after Barrow left the hospital and told him he was a mage of the Moros Path. Barrow's recruiter suggested he consider joining the Forge Masters.

Barrow resisted the suggestion for two years, but his future tutor drew him in by consulting him about metallurgy. For his shadow name, Barrow's mentor wanted to give him the name of an African smith-god. Barrow thought that was racial stereotyping. His ancestors lived in Jamaica for 300 years and his parents left *there* before he was born; what was Africa to him? He chose the name of an obscure Baltic god who had forged spurs for the gods to use on their celestial horses. Kalvis required more than a decade of work and training, however, before his teacher was satisfied Kalvis knew traditional smithcraft as well as high-tech metalworking.

Since becoming a true Forge Master, Kalvis has become one of the Legacy's more vocal advocates for modernity. As Davian Barrow, he works as chief engineer for a plant that makes aircraft parts, where his magic subtly boosts the efficiency of the machines. As a mage, he crafts high-tech magic weapons and armor for Adamantine Arrow colleagues, such as assault rifles temporarily empowered with Primal Tempering. His crippled leg prevents him from taking the field himself, though Kalvis recently killed a demon by running it over with a Primally Tempered SUV. In his spare time, Kalvis experiments with “impossible” metal alloys created using Matter. If he can find something useful, he might start his own business.

Description: Davian Barrow is a tall, lean man with coffee-hued skin and close-cropped, graying hair. Despite his limp, he keeps the upright bearing of his youthful tour of duty in the army. When not in his engineer's coveralls, he dresses in charcoal-gray suits with creases that look sharp enough to split rocks. He keeps a wallet of tools inside the jacket, though. He forged his own cane from titanium and magically enhanced it as a journeyman project.

Kalvis' nimbus initially manifests as heat shimmers around his body and a smell of smoke and hot metal. If his nimbus manifests longer than a few turns, sparks start flying around his body.

Storytelling Hints: If anyone presumes Kalvis will act a certain way because he's black, an engineer, a mage or even a Forge Master, Kalvis tries to do something different. He hates being stereotyped; that he embodies a mythic archetype annoys him no end, but every attempt to heal his lameness by magic has failed. Nevertheless, other mages think Barrow is very much an engineer: he prefers magically enhanced technology to straight spellcasting, and offering a technical challenge is the surest way to draw him into a project. (Payment in perfected metals helps, too.)

Kalvis prefers direct solutions to negotiation or trickery. He is always blunt and honest in his dealings. Barrow thinks people shmooze and equivocate because they're trying to pull a fast one or they aren't sure they can do the job. If Kalvis thinks a task is beyond his abilities, he says so — but he has great confidence in his own ingenuity.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A large screwdriver Kalvis forged himself, which he uses as a wand

Real Name: Davian Barrow

Path: Moros

Order: Free Council

Legacy: Forge Masters

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 2, Crafts (Metalwork) 4, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Science (Engineering) 4

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Expression 1, Persuasion (Haggling) 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Local Engineers), Enhanced Item 3, High Speech, Mentor 3, Resources 4, Sanctum 2, Status (Corporate) 2, Status (Free Council) 2

Willpower: 6 (reduced from enchanting items)

Wisdom: 6

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Health: 7

Gnosis: 5

Arcana: Death 2, Forces 2 Matter 4, Prime 3, Space 1

Notes: *Death* – Speak with the Dead (•), Soul Jar (••); *Forces* – Influence Heat (•), Influence Electricity (••), Control Fire (•••); *Matter* – Dark Matter (•), Steel Windows (••), Unseen Aegis (••), Repair Object (•••), Reconfigure Object (••••); *Prime* – Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Counterspell (••), Imbue Item (•••); *Space* – Finder (•)

Legacy Attainment: 1st – The Master’s Hand, 2nd – Primal Tempering

Mana/per turn: 14/5

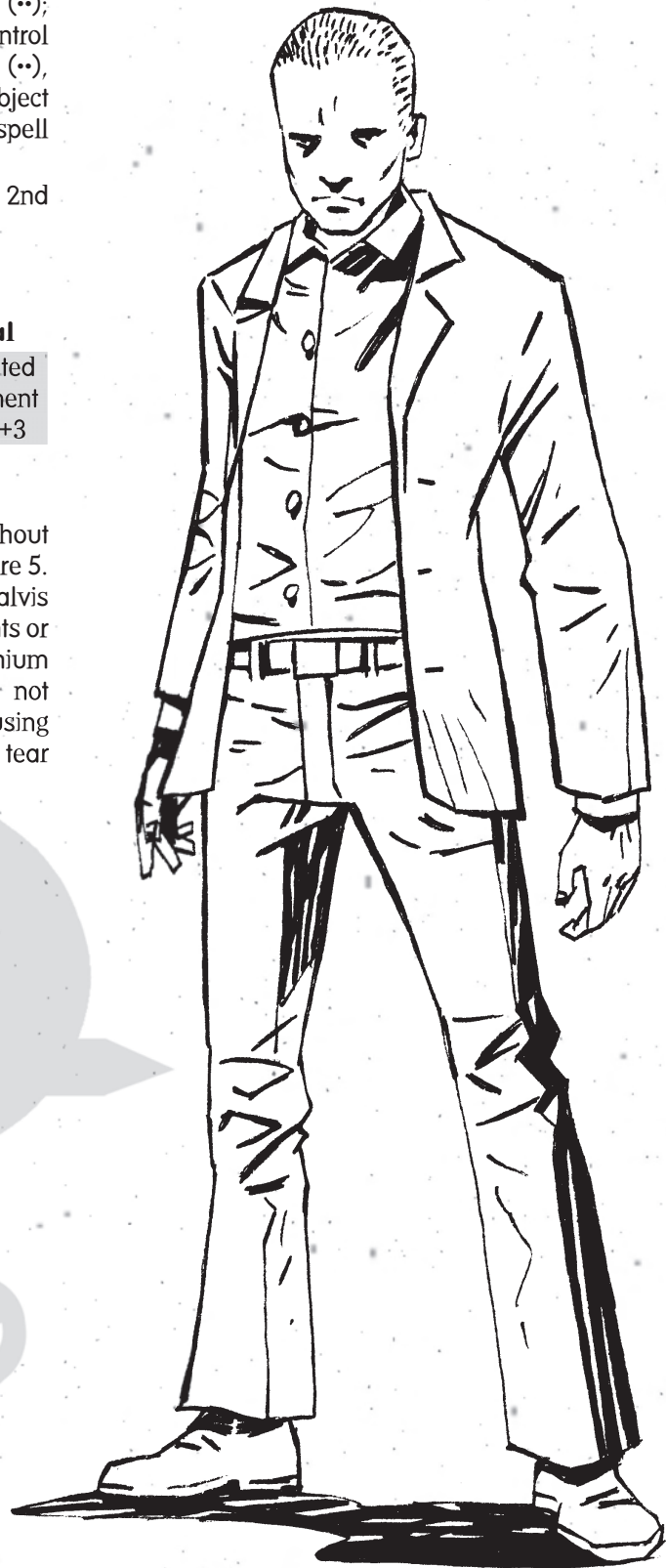
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dice Pool	Damage	Size	Special
Cane	12	3(B)	2	Enchanted Equipment Bonus +3

Armor: 4 (“Unseen Aegis,” Matter ••)

Magic Shield: 3 (Prime ••)

Notes: Kalvis carries a cane of solid titanium. Without any magic, the cane has Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5. The cane has a +3 enchanted equipment bonus; Kalvis can magically augment it further with his Attainments or spells such as Armor Piercing. Just saying it’s titanium usually suffices to cover up improbable (though not vulgar) displays of strength or damage, such as using the cane as a wrecking bar (with Armor Piercing) to tear apart a brick wall.



FORGE MASTERS

SKALDS

Did you like my performance, O Hierarch? Did you understand its meaning?

Skalds carry with them traditions from across the world. Though the core of the Legacy resembles their namesakes from Scandinavian history, they also represent the Armenian gusan, the Greek *aoidos*, the Celtic bards and the Islamic Sufi. Through poetry and song, the Skalds remember and represent the Tapestry's history and meaning. They learn the meter and the tune of the world and its past, and they live to retain and spread story and song.

Memorization and recitation are important to the tradition of the Skalds. The epic of Gilgamesh and Homer's tales are the Skalds' forerunners or, some believe, their legacies. Their tales describe the heroes of ancient legend and the falls of kings. They reward folly with ill fortune and extol the virtues of the day. Culture is one of their messages, poetry and song their conveyance, satire is one of their swords and wit a serviceable shield.

The Sagas of the Skalds are their heritage. These rhythmic, sometimes melodic performances embody the culture, the land, the times and the persons of all the Skalds who have come before. The Sagas are very long. Each Skald learns the entirety of the Saga that came before from her tutor, then adds her own experience and wisdom to it as she goes on, which she will eventually pass on to her apprentices. There are hundreds of concurrent Sagas of the Skalds in the world, many of them variations on the same theme but all meaningful, potent and valuable to the Legacy.

More than just remembrance, the magic of their words and melodies can change the world. Through song, they enact the wonders of their Legacy. Skalds can call to them the spirits of the land or of the past, and such entities often heed their beautiful words. While Skalds communicate with and understand spirits, this Legacy reveres the human culture, and Skalds often use their influence over the unseen to help tame or shape a region for other mages, or for humans in general.

Parent Path: Acanthus

Nickname: Lore-singers

Orders: Skalds earn respect from most who know them. There are always a few mages who think the Legacy's members are wasting their time on memorization, or that they spend too much effort on the past or that they are just plain fruity, but these detractors are in the minority. The sheer usefulness of



the Skalds' traditions cannot be denied, and their dedication earns them a great deal of respect.

Members of the Mysterium consider Lore-singers great resources. The epics, poetry and songs they memorize have been passed down within the Legacy for ages.

Mystagogues see untold potential in the Legacy's heritage. When the Mysterium can, the order quenches its thirst for ancient legends from the Skalds' cup and sifts through those words for clues to the Mysteries. The Mysterium is a common order to spawn a Skald, since both groups have a deep appreciation for remembering the past.

For the Free Council, the respect they hold for the Legacy is based on its philosophy: the Skalds memorize so that they can recite, not hoard. Though the methods of their memorization may be held from the unworthy, Libertines appreciate a group unaffiliated with their Council that believes in sharing the knowledge in their stories and music. Free Council members with enough influence may trade favors to prominent local Skalds in exchange for recitations in the Council's local Lorehouses.

The Adamantine Arrow and Silver Ladder both appreciate the Skalds. After all, the members of this Legacy are most likely to glorify and immortalize those orders' exploits. Arrows become very proud when their actions end up in a modern epic. Silver Ladder mages occasionally become a little more nervous about what the Skalds might say. There is no end of laud for a hero in battle, but the same bards who spread that word are just as adept at recording a mage's shame. And that happens more often in the realm of politics, where the Silver Ladder loves to play and excel. Still, the Silver Ladder considers the Skalds more positive than negative, because all of them *hope* to get "good press."

Only the Guardians of the Veil don't give much thought, good or ill, to the Skalds. After all, spies and assassins don't get songs.

Appearance: There's nothing in particular that sets a Skald apart from other mages, but Skalds do have some traits in common. Skalds are good listeners, a quality they gain after long practice at memorizing songs and poetry word-for-word. Most are quite personable. A sizable subset of the Legacy tends toward wandering the Awakened world, so many Skalds are in good physical shape. Finally, a Skald often has a musical

instrument of some kind, even something as simple as a recorder or a harmonica, though most favor musical tools that allow them to sing simultaneously.

Background: Mages who choose to become Skalds typically have some prior affinity for the arts. Some come into the Legacy with strong backgrounds in music and poetry; others build on their fond study of history or cultural literature of all kinds. More than a few combine all these. Teaching is a common profession and passion among the Skalds. Poetry and music aren't the only arts they favor. Many also paint, sculpt or just about anything creative — though they skew away from the more post-modern interpretations of “art.”

Organization: Skalds are only loosely tied to one another. One has very little influence over another, even with greater mastery over the Legacy's Attainments. It is in their nature to be respectful of their elders, who can teach them, but respect is not obeisance. Each Skald is busy soaking up the zeitgeist of his time, composing the sonnets and epics that acclaim or curse rulers or heroes of the day. The Skald remembers, recites and records. There's no reason for an elder Skald to give his students orders, because they do not perform missions or have concrete tasks. Their only mission is to watch, to absorb the ambience and from it to create.

Perhaps because Skalds do not feel obligated to one another, they communicate freely and often. Tutors and their apprentices know each other best and talk the most, but they are not secretive with contacts among the Legacy. If anything, Skalds are more open with each other than most mages. It isn't hard for one Skald to meet another in a far-away Consilium, even through a connection as vague as a twice-removed “cousin” in the Legacy. Communicating allows the Skalds to share poems and songs that they discover and create, and they do so eagerly.

There is usually only one Skald in a given Consilium, as the Skalds reason that it is better not to serve a region with too much recitation and song. More of them occasionally come together for training or for competition. When a mage is just joining the Legacy, he goes where his tutor goes. The apprentice studies under her, learning the Legacy's memorization tricks and ancient poetic tradition. After the student has learned enough about being a Skald to do the

duty and not embarrass his tutor, she cuts him loose. He may stay around or he may find his own place, but he's not going to have someone watching out for him anymore — even when the student and tutor remain on good terms.

Skalds sometimes come together for friendly (or unfriendly) competitions. Such events are much more occasions for several Skalds to share their compositions and spread their communal knowledge than real competitions. Depending on who attends, these can resemble poetry readings (or, less often, slams), historical debates, art exhibitions, mini-Woodstocks or combinations of them all. Even in friendly company, Skalds are generally proud of their skill at melody or oratory, and they really do try to out-perform one another. It's a matter of honor and renown.



Rivalries do exist between Skalds, and one might challenge another out of ambition instead of friendly competition. There's usually little more than recognition riding on the result, but two Skalds *might* agree that the victor in such a contest wins the right to serve a particular region or Consilium as the "official" or "foremost" Skald and chronicler. There's no stigma attached to challenges, at least not among members of the Legacy. They understand that the region wouldn't be under contention unless it were interesting and influential, and an area worth fighting over should have the best Lore-singer available.

Not all Skalds settle down in one area or Consilium. Some feel they best serve their calling by traveling, seeing the places that aren't frequented by others and being the flies on the wall in those places. Traveling Lore-singers pass through Consilii with "resident" Skalds every few weeks or months, depending on their habits. When one does, it is common practice to introduce herself to the member of her Legacy first. *He* then introduces the traveler to the Consilium, lessening the suspicion common about unknown mages. The foreign Skald has the opportunity to play for the Consilium, the local Lore-singer gets to hear where the traveler's been and play for her in turn and the Consilium gets a show. The local Skald's only responsibility is to vouch for the traveler, not to house her; she must earn her keep on her own, generally by bringing news and song to the Consilium.

Suggested Oblations: Spending an hour memorizing an ancient epic, saga or song, or acquainting oneself with a variant telling or translation of one already known. Performing, generally either a recitation or musical performance, for one or two hours in public. Composing a new work, whether it be poetic or musical.

Concepts: Singer/songwriter (especially protester-type), freelance journalist, professor of history (or music, or poetry, or classics), traditional and/or cultural poet, old-time philosopher.

History

One would imagine that, as a Legacy of people who recite history and sing of culture, the Skalds would have a pretty good idea of where they came from. The fact is, histories change with the telling. Lore-singers have fairly coordinated legends in some respects, but certain fairly major aspects of the tale change depending on who tutored the Skald, and who tutored the tuto, and so on, back to the beginning of the Legacy.

All Lore-singers agree that the Legacy's founder was around just after the Fall. He may have lived in Atlantis, if such a thing existed, before the collapse of the Celestial Ladder. But losing the home of the dragons destroyed an indeterminable number of records, histories and memories, and much of the mages' beautiful art sank with the island. The first Skald decided that such history was too valuable to risk losing again. Also a great artist, he wove history, recitation and music irrevocably together in his soul and taught others to do the same.

Some name this Lore-singer Bragi or Bragr, associating the first Skald with the earliest known Scandinavian minstrel of the same title. Others call him Egill or Kormák. Such differences

also represent differing philosophies. One who believes she succeeds Bragi usually focuses on unbiased history, while Egill or Kormák evoke concentration on war and conflict or love and politics, respectively. In other parts of the world, Skalds may trace themselves to Basho, Homer, Rudaki or others, and their inclinations skew appropriately.

Beyond the Legacy's origin, each Skald has a unique history that he can trace through the Skalds before him. Each history is unique, so there normally wouldn't be any additional problems with consistency, since they shouldn't be particularly consistent. But one addition crops up in roughly half of the Lore-singers' recitations about their origins — too prevalent for anyone to just write it off. When one tells of the founder's death, it goes one of two ways: the first Skald lived long, wisely and justly, and died of old age, or he was cruelly killed by an entity or organization that somehow opposed the founder and his Legacy. Just who or what kills him varies widely, from the oft-accused Guardians of the Veil to a Hierarch who didn't like his satirical songs.

Society and Culture

Lore-singers are usually respected members of an Awakened community and, because of their practiced social skills, often well-liked. Within a Consilium, the local Skald acts as a combination of entertainer, chronicler and herald. He remembers and spreads local news, always has time to talk to others, immortalizes important people and events in song or verse and happily shares those compositions. Skalds may take on the official position of Herald for a Consilium, since the Legacy is generally well-looked-upon and Lore-singers make friends with most of the mages in their region.

Members of the Legacy keep their fingers on the pulse of their Consilium. They are as aware of the attitudes of the less-political cabals as they are of the machinations among the Councilors and Provosts. They are valued for their status as "court musicians," but Lore-singers are not afraid to criticize the current "government." Skalds are as willing to call their Hierarchs on bad decisions as they are to glorify the good ones. One can also be an effective mouthpiece for the people, speaking for those not on the Council or without influence. Those with Spirit insight might serve as messengers to the Shadow Realm, if the Consilium needs one.

Skalds wield fantastic mental influence through their recitations, and mages who understand how great that influence can be sometimes fear them. For this reason, all Skalds follow a strict code of conduct when using their more invasive powers. While nothing they could do would eliminate all fear of misuse, the Legacy's openness about its powers and how it restricts their use goes a very long way to calming other mages. To make sure that the Skalds' good reputation remains unscathed, Skalds being just inducted into the Legacy are made very aware what is and is not acceptable. It is also made clear that breaking the code is a one-way trip to being refused instruction and welcome by other Skalds.

A traveling Skald is usually welcome in smaller Consilii and regions that don't have a resident Skald, though acceptance

can take some convincing when there isn't one in residence to vouch for him. Once welcomed, the Skald brings news of other Consilii, recounts events from his travels and listens to the local stories. Both the Lore-singer and the community profit from the encounter, much like the wandering minstrels and merchants in older times. A Skald with skill in the Spirit Arcanum, called a Gealdor (see below), will work with the locals to tame their spirit wilds to make their home safer and more accepting, while also making the humans more acceptable to the land. He strives after harmony. After a short stay, longer when there is more work to do, the Skald moves on.

Not everyone appreciates the work Gealdor Skalds do with the local spirits. Others often have their own plans for renovating the Shadow Realm, and disagree with the Lore-singer's attempt to change the resonance of humans as well as spirits. Where a Skald isn't wanted, he usually isn't needed. Skalds will often stay till their work is done, no matter what complaints they get, although they rarely settle in Consilii where there is strong opposition to their manner of handling the local spirits.

Although it can be hard on a Lore-singer, those who travel rarely move with cabals. Cabals are typically more threatening to smaller Consilii than lone wandering mages, so cabals are less acceptable. Still, a traveling cabal isn't out of the question. When the mages stick to regions where there are resident Skalds who can introduce the mages and where they have become known, they can have profitable and interesting lives wandering.

Music reveals the truth. As such, music touches the Supernal. To the Skalds, their music and their magic are the same. The Tapestry expresses itself through rhythm and words, and Skalds manipulate it with the same medium. Many Lore-singers are proficient enough with music that they have worked out a method of encoding messages and lessons on the Arcana in melody and song. They can further use High Speech to record their songs, keeping their magic (in the rare events that they write it down rather than passing it orally) safe from Sleeping maestros.

Music soothes the savage beast, so they say, and this Legacy proposes that both spirits and people are likewise susceptible to the power of recitation and song. A Skald's power is social. Though they may use rhyme to calm the tempest or fuel an earthquake, it is in culture where their magic is strongest. They use satire to wound, oratorios to inspire, bawdy shanties to arouse lust and epics or elegies to honor, but they always use them to express truth. More, their words can have special impact on spirits. Gealdor Skalds, who specialize in the Spirit Arcanum, believe that the spirits, as a natural part of the Tapestry, react more strongly to the magic invoked by song. Others suggest that the abstract nature of spirits inclines them to perceive and appreciate the meaning and truths in the Legacy's art. Often, through the efforts of these spirits, the Lore-singers influence more physical phenomena. The spirit of the land can shake with rage after the right speech, and the spirit of a storm can be calmed.

Many Lore-singers perceive magic as clear tones or repeating melodies when using the many varieties of Mage Sight. To them,

this is an expression of something's true nature through music. Some both hear and see what their magic lets them perceive, in a form of Supernal synesthesia. Death magic might register as a dirge, while Time magic could rapidly and unpredictably (though expertly) alter tempo and time. Persistent effects generally repeat themselves after short intervals, allowing the mage to analyze the melody (as analyzing resonance), and magic that is still being shaped or still changing shifts in the Skald's ears as it loops. Spells tainted by Paradoxes are off key, littered with wrong notes or generally (and inappropriately) dissonant. Other Skalds may interpret magic as the meter and rhythm associated with certain poetic forms, with Paradoxes inducing failure to match convention. There are rarely words associated with the rhythm, but occasionally a sense of theme.

Induction

New Skalds come from interested individuals who approach known members of the Legacy and inquire about joining. The potential tutor judges her potential student for multiple qualities: degree of motivation, perception, inspiration and simple aptitude.

The first step is to determine if a potential pupil possesses the drive necessary to relentlessly observe and absorb local culture, and to record it as well. Skalds do not move and shake history — instead of making it, they watch it. They aren't necessarily passive, as their recitations can and should upset social foundations (or threaten to, which is often as good), but the task of the Skald is to cheer or condemn the acts of others. Skalds uphold and reconcile culture instead of reshaping it willy-nilly. Tutors generally test this quality by questioning the mage about his desires and goals, and by investigating his habits for a tendency toward self-indulgence instead of selflessness.

All the good intention in the world cannot help the mage if he can't see what he should critique. Skalds are not supposed to ignore a Consilium's faults or merits. Even though doing so may weaken the social impact of a composition, the Lore-singer should wield the truth, in whatever form, as his weapon. One who cannot see through pleasantries and façades cannot possibly compose songs incisive enough to do the work of a Skald. It leads the tutor to wonder if the mage might miss even important local events that should be remembered by the Skald. Examining a potential pupil for good perception involves questions about the local politics (Sleepers and Awakened) as well as some uses of subtle language to see how much the mage infers.

Inspiration is a difficult quality to judge, and Skalds acknowledge this when examining their potential pupils. Genius in composition is deeply open to interpretation, and often goes unrecognized for years or decades. The examiner takes notes on her applicant's use of both magic and the arts, looking for creative use of common techniques in both. When other Skalds are available, the examiner may ask them for opinions if she is unsure about her own decision. In the end, Skalds are reluctant to disqualify students based on a lack of sufficient

“inspiration” or “creativity.” While they pay strong attention to it, they rarely refuse anyone on these grounds.

Finally, even if a student has the proper mindset and understanding of culture, he must have the appropriate skills to become a Lore-singer. Joining the Legacy requires him to memorize massive quantities of information, usually thousands upon thousands of words and entire scores of music, and to recite or play them without error and on demand. The Skalds teach secret mnemonic devices for doing so, but a mage must have the capability in the first place. He must be able to perform them skillfully, whether through oration or playing an instrument. Further, the position requires some skill at composition, so that the mage can do his duty in adding onto the Sagas of the Skalds. When everything else is there, it’s disappointing for a teacher to discover that her otherwise good student simply doesn’t have what it takes to become a Lore-singer. It takes more than just a little ignorance to disqualify a mage, though: tutors determine whether or not the mage could possibly learn the necessary skills before choosing to send them away.

Examining a potential student may take as little as a week for the extraordinary to several months when a teacher is holding out hope that the student may improve. Once accepted into the Legacy, the student’s apprenticeship begins. His tutor starts out simply performing her normal duties, watching, observing, recording, reciting and so on, letting the initiate get an up close, first-hand view of what the Lore-singer does. He is there when she acts as Herald for the Consilium, when she recites for the Mysterium and when she treats with spirits. From this, the student should be impressed with the dedication necessary to perform this difficult job.

After a time, the tutor begins lessons. She imparts to her student the various characters in the Legacy’s private alphabets. Each has multiple meanings. Usually, a single character denotes a single phoneme in the Skalds’ language, a single distinct object, action or class of objects or actions and a single abstract concept. These groupings have conceptual purpose; they usually make sense to a mage attracted to the Legacy, and they help reinforce the Skald mindset in those who learn it. A single character, for example, might represent the sound of the hard “c,” gardens and the objects that might be in a garden and the concept of growth.

Learning this system does more than make a Skald more of a Skald. It helps to unify the Lore-singers, both contemporary and historical. The language that this represents is something that all members of the Legacy learn, making them able to speak with one another even when they are from disparate cultures and may not have much else in common. The system also compacts the mage’s memory, throwing language, knowledge and concept together in a way that aids in recalling all of them. Enabling a single person to remember the entire Saga of the Skalds who came before him is what holds the Legacy together, even after the gulf of years from the Fall. Finally, the language holds some connection to or fascination for creatures of the Shadow Realm. Using this language to treat with or command them gives Lore-singers an advantage over the spirits.

Legacy Merit: Skald Cant (•)

Prerequisite: Skald, Composure 2, Expression 2

Effect: Your character knows the secret language of the Skalds; he can use it to communicate privately with other Skalds and prove his membership in the Legacy, if necessary. Though an eavesdropper who tries to piece the language together might be able to decipher some of a conversation held in the Skald cant, each word is so laden with meaning that only a prodigious feat by a master linguist could completely translate a phrase or text.

The language also serves as an effective memory aid. By spending a turn to concentrate, the Skald can perfectly remember the events of a single scene or the information (usually a song or epic) that he spends up to a day memorizing. After that, when calm, the character may recall those events perfectly without any dice roll, and the player may ask the Storyteller to fill in details he might have forgotten. This Merit gives no aid during stressful situations, like combat; trying to remember details then requires an Intelligence + Composure roll, just as normal.

Additionally, this language is somewhat pleasing to spirits, whether because of its rhythm or its origins. At the Storyteller’s discretion, using Skald Cant to deal with spirits can offer a +1 dice bonus when applying Social Skills to spirits, including rites that use those Skills.

Gealdor: Minstrel’s of the Spirits

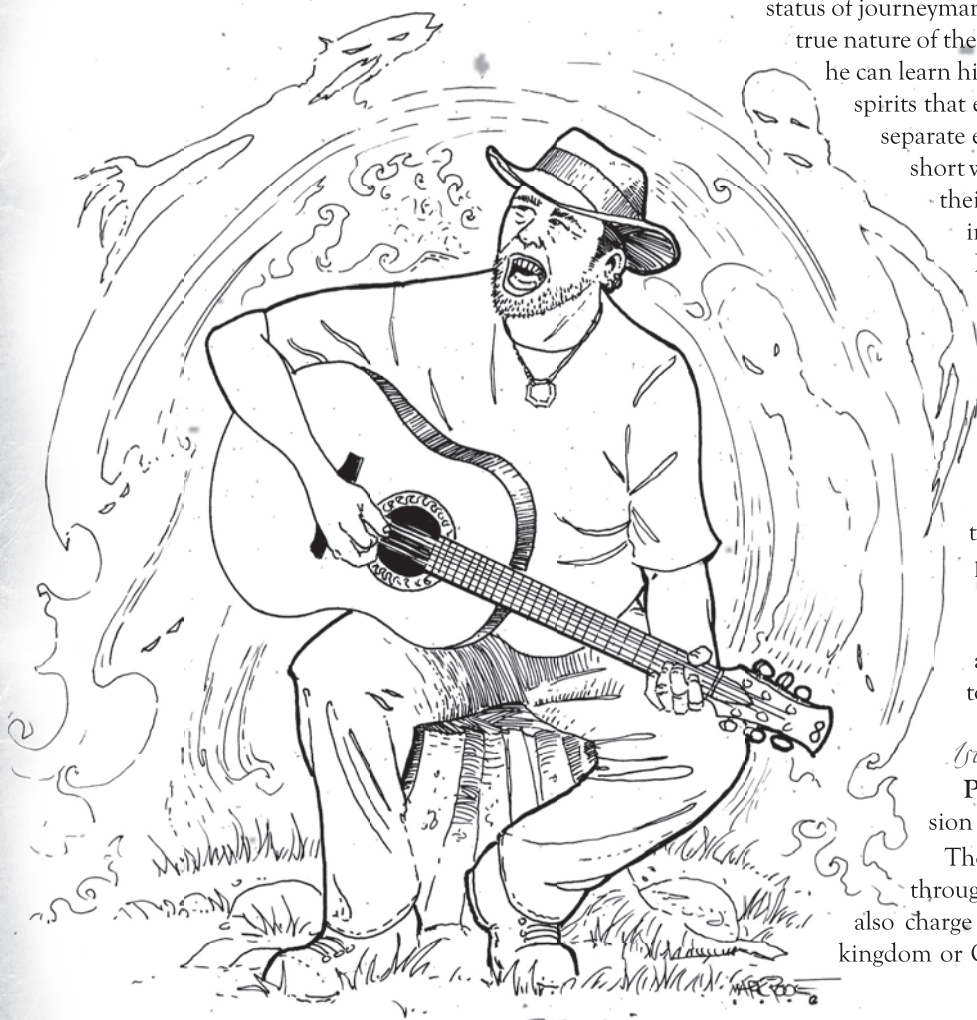
Many Skalds learn the Spirit Atcanum to take advantage of its special significance to their Attainments. The art of singing for spirits is called *gealdor*, from the Old English (Norse *galdr*) for one who cast spells by way of incantation, believed to be the root for the modern word “yell.” Skalds who use their skills on or for the benefit of spirits are also called Gealdor.

For a Gealdor, each stage of soulcrafting requires that the mage pass a test involving spirits and the Shadow Realm.

To prove himself worthy of the first Attainment, the mage must find a willing tutor among the local spirits, one that can teach him about the region’s spirit courts, their major players and their goals, and perhaps about spirits and the Shadow Realm in general. How the mage accomplishes this, whether through skillful cajolery or by promising major favors and gifts, is unimportant – what matters is that the mage forges a connection to the spirits of the land. Typically, he comes away from the encounter with inspiration for an original composition; some tutors consider this requisite. Not every tutor

appreciates a bond with every spirit; many prefer spirits of the natural land to spirits of artifice, and spirits of the culture or people to spirits of purer (and often less constructive) emotions, and such teachers place restrictions on the type of spirit the student must seek. Because it often difficult to find spirits of the appropriate type in Twilight, the ability to speak with those across the Gauntlet is invaluable to an apprentice Skald trying to earn that first real lesson. In most cases, however, the more accomplished tutor must cast the proper spells to get the pupil into the Shadow, until she gains enough spell lore to do so for herself.

Reaching the second Attainment, sometimes referred to as the rank of journeyman, requires that the Skald travel into the land of the spirits. As Orpheus, a mythic figure that Skalds love to claim as one of their own, once did in the land of the dead, the Lore-singer must walk through the Shadow Realm and return unharmed. It's common for a master to restrict her students from using any defense but their magic and song or poetry. Some tutors have specific requirements for where their students must travel in the Shadow Realm or what they must do there. It isn't unusual to require apprentices to return having learned a specific lesson, and send them back until they come away with that understanding. Others must wheedle or command knowledge from another spirit before they are considered ready to advance.



The Legacy of Orpheus

Though many Lore-singers feel an affinity with the legends of Orpheus due to the supernatural power of his music and his voice, most agree that his power over death means he couldn't have been a Skald (if he even existed). It leads some to question whether or not there may be a less public Legacy with similar roots or methods to the Skald that instead focuses on reconciling regions and cultures with the dead. Given the prevalence of cultures that honor their dead with song or recitation, this may well be true. Some who discuss this theoretical Legacy call its members "Orpheans."

Many journeymen Gealdor are expected to spend time wandering the world – material and spirit – learning and exploring. Even those who begin their career with a comfortable place in the local Consilium often travel upon learning the second Attainment, if only for a little while. Though most who wander eventually settle down again, some never find a home whose song calls to them.

Finally, to become a master of the Legacy and rise above the status of journeyman, the Gealdor Lore-singer must learn the true nature of the land and culture he calls his own. Before he can learn his third Attainment, he must seek out the spirits that embody these traits – usually one or two separate entities – and be possessed by them for a short while. He can entreat them to do so under their own power, or he can try to force them into his body through the Spirit 4 "Spirit Possession" spell, but he must remain under control of the spirit for at least a scene. Meditating on the experience, the Skald comes to understand himself and his origins better.

Attainments

The commitment of the Skald is to the land and the culture – to the zeitgeist, perhaps. She shapes and protects these concepts by making sure that they are healthy and strong. When a land or people ail, she can serve as a focus for the effort to excise the damage.

Art: Soothe the Beast

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Mind 2, Expression 2

The Skalds' mission is to see the world through unclouded eyes and record it. But they also charge themselves with improving a society, a kingdom or Consilium, by reminding those who live

in it of what is right. The Skalds' airs and epics move and inspire, and it is with this gentle lever that the Legacy tries to move the world.

Though most Skalds are perceptive, as skilled at untangling the webs of influence in a Consilium as they are at recognizing individuals' moods and desires, natural skill is not always enough. A Skald with the first Attainment has the ability to read the tenor of an audience. This effect is similar to the Mind 1 "Aura Perception" spell, except that Soothe the Beast reveals the general emotional condition of a crowd, rather than individual auras, although intense individual emotions might still be noticeable.

By playing a song or reciting a poem or story for at least a minute, the Skald can project a certain emotion into the minds of those who hear it. It might be sadness, or anger at an injustice, or, if she directs her songs toward a single individual (such as a Hierarchy), searing shame. The more people she tries to project to, the less intense the emotion. In general, she can affect a maximum number of people with this Attainment effect equal to her Manipulation + Expression + Mind dice pool.

Although the Skalds are usually liked and trusted among mages, any unknown mage is a potential danger in the Fallen World. Because traveling Skalds must constantly meet new people, the first Attainment also gives them an effect similar to the Mind 2 "First Impressions" spell, providing a dice bonus equal to their Mind dots for the first Social Attribute-based roll they make upon meeting someone new.

2nd: Bride Goeth Before

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

Many times, it is not enough to make a person feel shame at their actions. The Hierarchy may know the feelings to be false, or she may discard the emotion as a mere twinge of the conscience. When a person cannot be made to repent, it is the Skald's duty to force that person to admit fault and accept punishment, or leave for the better of the Consilium.

Using this Attainment requires the Skald to perform a critical song or poem, or to plan and put on a satirical mummery or a play. In some way, he must communicate to the intended target and to those around her the failings and flaws they should see. At the Attainment's shortest, this is an instant action based around a short couplet. Used with longer forms of art, the action takes place several times throughout the performance. As an example, consider Hamlet's uncle as the target of this effect.

The Skald's player rolls Manipulation + Expression – victim's Composure. Each success subtracts one point of Willpower from the target as the satire affects her, making her acutely aware of her failings, their effects and the right thing to do. If this effect reduces the target's Willpower to zero, she cannot contain or deny her shame any longer. She must either flee the scrutiny of her peers (nearly always diminishing her in their eyes) or admit her faults and submit herself to their judgments.

A Skald can use this Attainment on a single target once per dot of his own Intelligence per scene. If the scene ends without

bringing the target to zero, the target regains any Willpower lost to this effect. Clever Skalds may be able to fool a target into expecting another such cutting remark, even when the Skald cannot use the power again, and confess to lesser crimes to stave off the final blow.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 3

By whistling a melody, singing an aria or (most commonly) reciting verse composed for the purpose, the Skald impresses a nearby spirit and sways it to assist her. While the Lore-singer need not necessarily be able to see the spirit, the spirit must be able to hear her as she acts. She must also craft the performance to a specific entity; the performance cannot affect "the nearest spirit" or "a tree spirit" unless she knows specifically which spirit that is – usually by first observing it.

This Attainment resembles the Spirit 3 "Control Spirit" spell. By performing for at least one minute per Rank of the target spirit, the Skald may command that spirit with a Presence + Expression + Spirit roll, contested by the spirit's Resistance. One potent benefit of this Attainment is that the spirit generally does not feel put-upon. The skill and meaning of the Skald's performance makes the spirit *want* to perform the set tasks. When the effect's duration ends, the spirit returns to its old habits, but it does not feel anger at being compelled. The spirit was moved by the poetry, not by the mage's will.

This does not necessarily appear as magic to those who watch the Skald use it. To onlookers, the performance appears to be particularly poignant and meaningful. Some connect it to the subsequent movement of the earth or strike of lightning. Only those with some understanding of Spirit recognize the spiritual influence that leads the words or music, and often only another Skald can decipher exactly what commands the performance contains.

Lore-singers generally use this Attainment not to use spirits as spies or servants, but to utilize the spirits' particular Influences: One tune calms the storm-spirit and thus calms the storm; a well-worded sonnet causes an earthquake that slows a region's invaders. Skald use spirit's Influences to make forests more verdant, fields more bountiful or political infighters more susceptible to reason. The Skalds' influence over and relationships with the spirits of a region are the mainstay of their power.

3rd: Hearing the Kind Piper

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Mind 4

Finally, some societies are too sick with corruption to do their own healing, or too weak-willed to correct the ill tendencies of neglectful superiors. When that is the case, the Skalds must drive people to cure themselves, to do what they are otherwise unwilling to do and begin the process of recovery.

This Attainment requires an instant action to perform, and its power carries through an appropriate recitation or song. Woven through the art is a deeply concealed, strong mental suggestion. The power is like the Mind 4 "Telepathic Control" spell and requires a roll of Manipulation + Expression + Mind, reflexively opposed by the target's Composure + Gnosis. With

Mind 5, this Attainment can have prolonged Duration, just as the spell, and the Skald may affect additional targets for the typical dice penalties. Commanding people in this way is not obvious. Observers perceive the singing or the poetry, and then the target of the Attainment acts. Even Mage Sight does not reveal the influence of Hearing the Kind Piper.

That the Skalds wield secret, effective mind control frightens many. For this reason, the Skalds apply a very public code of ethics to the use of this Attainment. Wherever mages know of the Legacy and its Attainments, they also know that the Skalds are dedicated to using this influence *only* in pursuit of bettering individuals and societies. The Skalds use this control to expose the corrupt and reveal bashful heroes. On the individual level, the Skalds might help a person quit an addiction or not murder in a fit of passion, but even these are skirting the edge. The code, handed down from ancient times, directs Skalds to most often use this power in the healing of a Consilium – or in revenge against any who has lifted a hand against a fellow Skald.

A Skald who uses the third Attainment improperly risks censure by his fellow Skalds, and news of such disgraceful behavior is the sort that never fails to be carried by traveling Skalds. In part, the Consilii accept this code of behavior because Skalds so rarely show signs of severe Paradoxes; unwise mages would surely show more sign. Of course, just because the rule is in place doesn't mean no Skald ever breaks the rule.

Optional Arcanum: Spirit 4

Much as Skalds treat with the spirits of the land on behalf of their culture, Skalds work with the people to make them acceptable to the land and thus harmonize them both. This technique makes the agreement between the two easier to make explicit. The Skald gives a spirit the ability to possess a creature of the Fallen World, similar to the Spirit 4 “Spirit Possession” spell but with no roll required. This makes it possible for a spirit of the land to address a Consilium directly. In Consilii where everyone is able to see and speak with spirits under their own power, this may not be necessary, but such Consilii are the exception rather than the rule. In such situations, a mage or Sleepwalker volunteers to host the spirit.

Occasionally, this skill can also be a bargaining chip for spirits who do not normally have the Possession Numen and want the opportunity to use it.

Sample Character

Freeman

Quote: “*Nobody knows the trouble—What? You don’t appreciate the classics?*”

Background: As a boy, Freeman would spend hours at his grandfather’s knee, listening to the stories that that venerable old man had to share. Most of them had been passed on by the elder’s grandfather, who had been a slave in South Carolina before the Civil War. Many of the stories Freeman loved best

were those about the corn-shucking celebration and the few other revels the slaves were allowed; young Freeman relished every word of every song and chant that his grandfather shared with him.

During the civil rights demonstrations of the ’50s and ’60s, Freeman found his purpose. He traveled the South, participating in sit-in campaigns and the freedom rides that were going on at the time, keeping spirits up and celebrating unique Negro culture by leading the songs and chants he had learned from his grandfather. During one illegal police action, he Awakened: when the local authorities savagely beat and arrested many of the riders on Freeman’s bus, the knock to his head introduced him to Arcadia. He walked the Path of Thistle and saw the Fae, freer than any mortal could be, and resolved to bring that freedom and joy to his people. Returning to consciousness, Freeman found that he had scratched his name on the wall of a jail cell. The way he tells it, it was the same cell from which Dr. King later wrote his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” but Freeman’s probably just spinning a good yarn.

Freeman’s grandfather introduced his grandson, unknowingly, to the tutor who would make Freeman one of the Skalds. After his period as an apprentice, Freeman began to wander the Deep South, bringing pride in the African Americans’ way of life and their heritage with him. Where he could, he fought the hatred and fear and worked to improve African Americans’ way of life, supporting them through memory and song. Though he’s in his 70s now, he hasn’t stopped wandering, and he’s still in good shape. Freeman’s children have grown up – two became notable musicians in their own rights. As far as Freeman expects, he won’t stop following his calling until he meets Stygia.

Description: Freeman is a tall, black man with thin, curly hair that’s nearly all white by this point. Despite his old age, he appears quite hearty – thin but tough. He has a ready smile that almost never fails to cheer those who see it. Freeman wears plain, sturdy clothes, if in a somewhat old-fashioned style – a good pair of pants, held up by suspenders over a button-down workman’s shirt, often with the sleeves rolled up. Because he’s often traveling, his clothes are usually dusty.

Casting vulgar magic, Freeman’s nimbus appears free. Anything that binds him struggles to unwind, unlock or shatter; cursory visual comparison to anyone near him (for any quality) makes him appear equal – in strength, in dedication or anything else the observer is trying to judge. Some nearby hear faint strains of a spiritual.

Storytelling Hints: Freeman is almost universally friendly and easy to get along with. He’s an excellent storyteller and enjoys entertaining. When in a new area, he almost always takes the opportunity to visit and sing along with any churches that would appreciate the spirituals he is so skilled at singing. He has little patience for any sort of prejudice, and has a number of favored anecdotes he uses to chastise such people.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Silver pocket watch

Real Name: August Bryant

Path: Acanthus

Order: Mysterium

Legacy: Skald

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Civil Rights) 2, Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Survival (Cheap Shelter) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression (Storytelling) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1

Merits: Contacts (Civil Rights Activists, Slavery Historians, Churches), High Speech, Iron Stamina 2, Skald Cant

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 7

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 4

Defense: 1

Speed: 7

Health: 9

Gnosis: 5

Arcana: Fate 4, Mind 4, Prime 2, Space 2, Spirit 3, Time 2

Notes: *Fate* – Reading the Outermost Eddies (•), Exceptional Luck (••);

Mind – Augment the Mind (•••);

Spirit – Coaxing the Spirit (•), Lesser Spirit Summons (••);

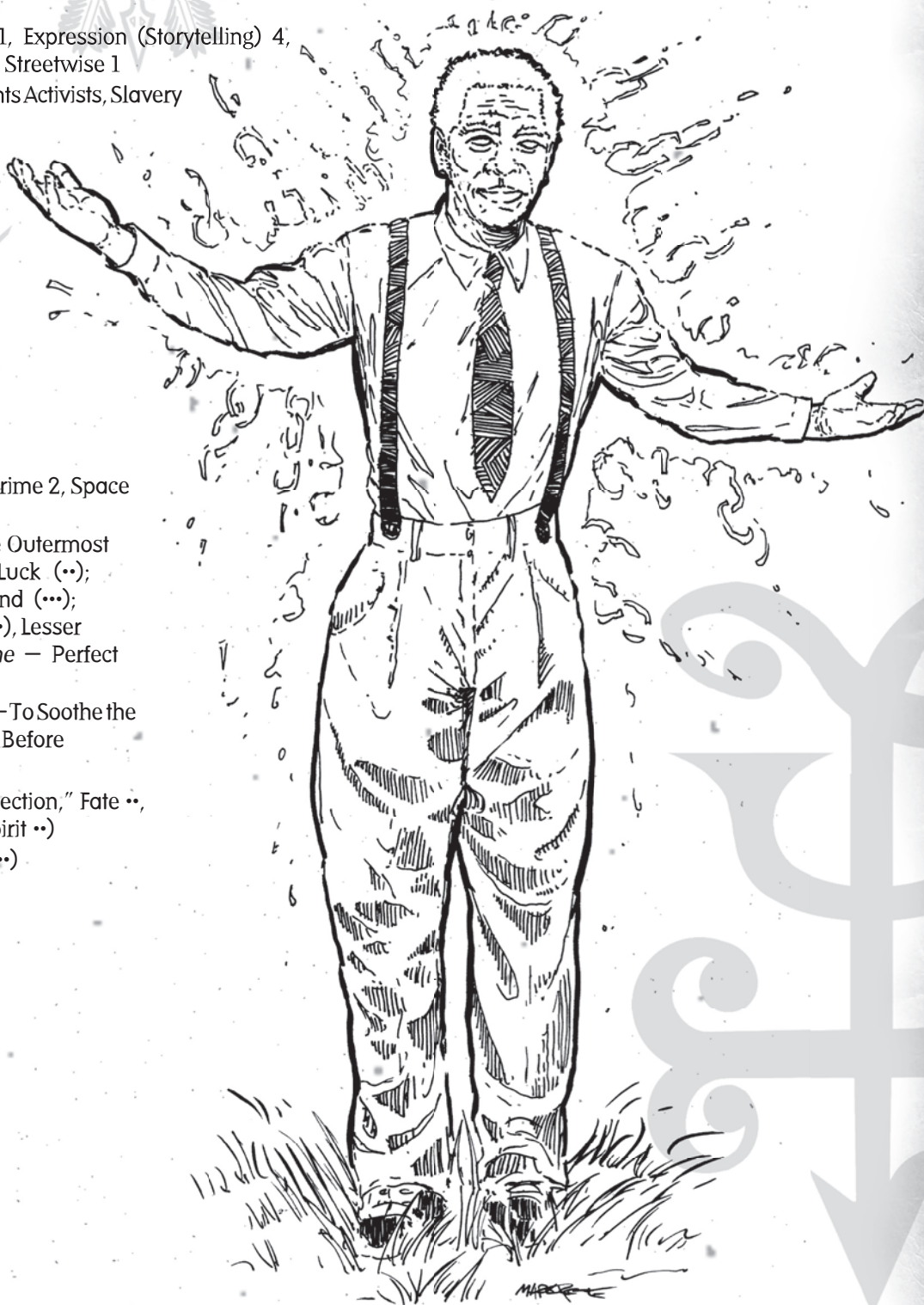
Time – Perfect Timing (•)

Legacy Attainment: 1st – To Soothe the Beast, 2nd – Pride Goeth Before

Mana/per turn: 14/5

Armor: 4 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••, or "Ephemeral Shield," Spirit ••)

Magic Shield: 2 (Prime ••)



SPHINXES

Don't think. Just know.

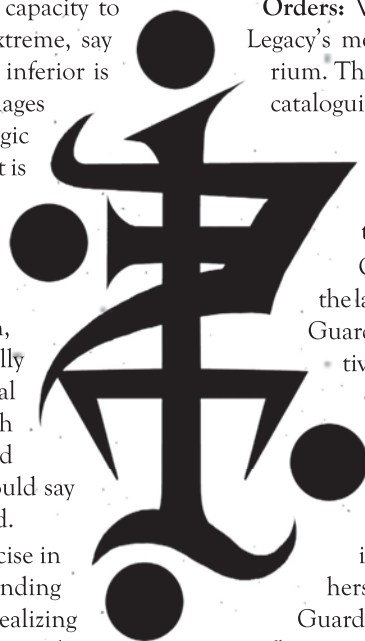
What makes humanity special? Is it the capacity to Awaken? Such a view is arrogant in the extreme, say the Sphinxes, for to look at the Sleepers as inferior is to ignore one's own humanity. No, to the mages who choose to follow this Legacy, the true magic of humanity is language. More to the point, it is the capacity for symbolic recognition, to see a gesture or a marking, hear a collection of sounds, and from that *understand*. Human beings are optimized, either by the design of a greater being or the rigors of evolution, toward speech and language, both anatomically and neurologically. But all of the biophysical adaptations of the human body toward speech mean nothing without the ability to understand symbols. Upon this phenomenon (some would say "miracle"), the Legacy of the Sphinx is based.

Walking the path of the Sphinx is an exercise in abstraction, for the Legacy teaches understanding without processing, learning truth without realizing fact. A Sphinx sees meaning everywhere — in the number of cracks in a sidewalk, in the seemingly random sounds from a baby's babbling, in the texture of a brick wall. Intrinsic in this ability to find meaning anywhere is the knowledge that this meaning comes from somewhere. Sphinxes who cleave to the Atlantean model of mystical understanding posit that this meaning might come from ancient masters sending information forward in time, in a much more subtle way than with the ananke (see p. 330 of *Mage: The Awakening*). Those who do not follow the orders of the Pentacle — and even some who do — believe that this truth comes directly from the Supernal Realms.

The name "Sphinx," of course, comes from the mythological creature that Oedipus confronted near Thebes. He solved the riddle of the Sphinx, and she leaped to her death in horror that her secret was revealed. Whether the name "Sphinx" was one that members of this Legacy originally applied to themselves or not, they do not see themselves as jealous keepers of secrets. Indeed, they tend to view themselves as searchers trying to solve a riddle. That riddle is difficult to express, because it is so vast in scope, but the basic idea is this: If meaning can be found in anything, at any level of understanding or consciousness, then what is the ultimate meaning? Where does the truth come from, and to what purpose?

Parent Path: Mastigos or Mysterium

Nickname: Pathfinders



Orders: While any Mastigos can become a Sphinx, the Legacy's membership is primarily drawn from the Mysterium. The order's predilection for finding, analyzing and cataloguing knowledge, combined with the fact that the Mysterium often encounters information too dangerous to be read and understood by an untrained mage, points members of all Paths toward the Legacy.

Outside of the Mysterium, the order that claims the largest number of Pathfinders is unquestionably the Guardians of the Veil. Sphinxes are by nature superlative ciphers, capable of breaking almost any code or circumventing any puzzle, given enough time.

The Guardians thus appreciate their ability to weave symbols and hidden messages, both true and misleading, into the secret societies and fronts that the order sets up. In fact, it isn't uncommon for an Epopt to be a Sphinx herself or at least work with one. It's easy for even the Guardians themselves to become lost in the morass of conflicting symbolism and double-blind codes, and a Sphinx makes a good "skeleton key" when quick understanding and interpretation are necessary.

Warlocks of other orders do find their way to the Legacy as well, of course. Sphinxes of the Adamantine Arrow tend to use their ability to find meaning and truth in the mundane as a way to avoid danger and protect those around them. Pathfinders in the Free Council stay on the cutting edge of linguistic theory and language development, searching for ways to expand people's understanding of each other and themselves. The Silver Ladder's few Sphinxes often believe that the Ladder is the best way to recreate some of the conditions in lost Atlantis, and thus come closer to the secrets and messages that the ancients held.

Appearance: Sphinxes might come from any walk of life. The Legacy is not culturally based, and so doesn't dictate a lifestyle or a given mode of dress. Most Sphinxes are contemplative and observant, and many are easily distracted, staring for long minutes at patterns of texture or light as they try to interpret them. Pathfinders also tend to be good listeners and remain open to communication with others. Thus, Pathfinders go out of their way to appear non-threatening and available.

Background: Prospective Sphinxes are often linguists, or at least interested in language and symbolism. Some are computer programmers working with code; others are teachers or speech pathologists attempting to help others communicate. Some don't come from a background relating to communication at

all, but feel that the universe has a greater meaning that needs to be deciphered.

Mastigos who choose this Legacy are often struck by the cacophony of Pandemonium during their Awakenings, and wish to interpret the ranting and screaming of the demons found there.

Organization: Sphinxes of the Mysterium have a worldwide system of coded messages spread throughout a variety of media. Small radio stations, public access television shows, magazine articles, books and, of course, Internet sites, all serve as bulletin boards for the Legacy. The messages are all heavily coded and require time and effort to encode or decode, but the wealth of knowledge that a Sphinx of the order can draw upon is great.

The Mysterium Network

Any Sphinx, Mysterium or otherwise, can take advantage of the network of information created by the order's Pathfinders. Doing so requires purchasing the Contacts Merit (Mysterium Network). The information that can be gained via the network is vast and usually accurate, but requires use of the Hidden Meaning Attainment (see p. 96) to ask a question and decode the answer. As such, the network is almost useless for time-sensitive queries (most questions get answered in less than a month, at least).

Outside the order, Pathfinders have little in the way of formal contact, though when they encounter each other the meeting is usually friendly.

The relationship between mentor and student varies. Since the training requires so much intuition and comparatively little actual study, some students come to resent their mentors, feeling that they are deliberately keeping secrets and knowledge from the students. Others (typically those who go on to become successful as Sphinxes) recognize that the philosophy and wisdom of the Legacy is extremely difficult to teach, and respect their mentors all the more because of it.

Suggested Oblations:

Solving a puzzle (crossword, Sudoku, even certain video games). Translating written work, transcribing a speech (be it a story,

monologue, even a political address). Facilitating communication (by acting as a mediator or translator, for instance).

Concepts: Translator, spy, speech-language pathologist, linguist, historian, fortune-teller, therapist, humanist philosopher.

History

After the Fall of Atlantis and the subsequent scattering of mages across the world, language became a barrier rather than a tool for the Awakened. The greatest secrets of the Supernal Realms were fractured, shards of power and knowledge spread out among the mages of the world. Without the Island of the Magi's society to compile the knowledge, the Awakened had to work alone or in small cabals, never knowing enough of the truth to recapture their past glories.

The Sphinx Legacy arose from the frustration of those mages. The Mastigos of the time knew that with the application of the Mind Arcanum they could comprehend any earthly language, but that wasn't enough. Language wasn't the true barrier, these mages discovered, because a language is merely a set of symbols. These primordial Sphinxes realized that inherent in the process of making symbols lay the solution to the confusion caused by the destruction of the Celestial Ladder — that they could look beyond graphemes and sounds and simply communicate with pure meaning.

Modern-day Sphinxes sometimes claim that the Legacy was an important part of the formation of the Mysterium, and that might well be true. Whether or

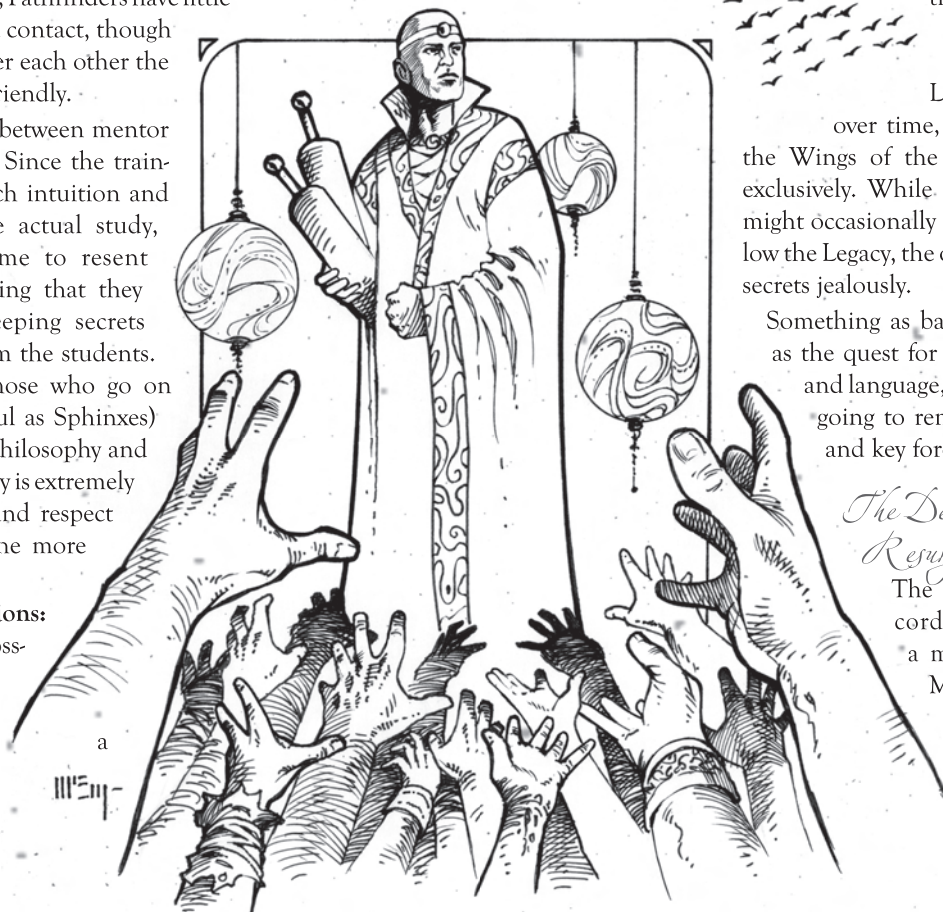
not this was the case, the Sphinx Legacy became,


over time, the province of the Wings of the Dragon almost exclusively. While a lone Mastigos might occasionally discover and follow the Legacy, the order guarded its secrets jealously.

Something as basic to humanity as the quest for communication and language, however, wasn't going to remain under lock and key forever.

The De Velasco Resurgence

The first reliably recorded instance of a mage outside the Mysterium joining the Legacy came in 1575 or so, in a book written by a





Spanish nobleman (and Mastigos) named Juan de Velasco. De Velasco had observed his two young cousins, who were both born deaf, being tutored by a Benedictine monk named Pedro Ponce de León. Classical opinions on the deaf stated that they had very little education potential and that they could never learn to speak (if deafness occurred pre-lingually). Ponce de León, himself a Sleeper, challenged that opinion, and taught the de Velasco brothers not only to read and write, but to speak three different languages. He did not, however, record his methods, and so history would have to wait for widespread methods of educating the deaf, but Juan de Velasco watched his cousins' lessons with interest. He was less interested in teaching deaf people than in the conveyance of meaning in non-verbal ways. He wrote several treatises on the topic for his Consilium, the most famous of which was titled "The Art and Science of the Recognition of Meaning." In that document, he detailed how he was able to send coded messages through paintings and divine the immediate future by listening to hymns at Mass (as later mages have pointed out, de Velasco probably wasn't reading the future *per se*; rather, he was reading probability).

De Velasco's writings have been translated into many different languages over the years, although modern Sphinxes have found that reading them in their original Latin yields layers of meaning far beyond the simple message of the words. The Mysterium currently holds most of these documents, but de Velasco was a prolific writer and painter, and historians the world over might unknowingly hold either one of his esoteric writings or hauntingly beautiful paintings. Either type of work might actually be a road map to a rote, an Atlantean temple or some other worthy goal.

De Velasco left no record behind of a pupil, but it is widely accepted that de Velasco passed his learning along to another Mastigos. Whether this pupil was a member of the Mysterium or not is a debated issue; the order claims that he was, while members of all of the other orders also claim him (and often have records that seem to support their claims). The Mysterium has history on its side, of course, but after de Velasco the Legacy became available to any mage of the order who wished to become a Pathfinder. Since then, the Mysterium has tried to project the image that they created the Legacy in the first place. Even so, the Legacy remains the province of the Warlocks just as much as that of the Alae Draconis.

Other than de Velasco, history has not produced famous Sphinxes. The Pathfinders tend to be inscrutable and unobtrusive, even by Awakened standards, and, of course, any mage who achieved mastery of the Legacy's Attainments would be exceptionally difficult to find in any record (see the Off the Path Attainment, below). The Mysterium, true to form, tries to keep records of the members of the order who have gone on to become Pathfinders, but the Sphinxes themselves often alter such records, leaving behind only obtuse riddles that, properly interpreted, might lead to the mage in question.

Society and Culture

Because so much of the Sphinx mindset and activity relies on observation rather than direct action, mages outside of the

Mysterium don't often know much about the Legacy. What they do know tends to depend on who they hear it from or the particular Sphinx they've encountered. Some Sphinxes are infuriatingly cryptic, either because they genuinely enjoy lordling their uncanny insight over others or because they are inundated with so much information that they fear to reveal too much or too little. Other Sphinxes are happy to share what they know, but are well aware that their information tends to be true, but lacking in context. Consider: A Sphinx can read a thick book in an ancient language in an hour and understand all of the information it contains, but he will be hard-pressed to convey the nuances and intricacies of the information. His rendition of the information resembles a quick summary, and this leaves listeners to wonder about its accuracy. Indeed, it's not uncommon for non-Sphinxes to assume that a Pathfinder is using some kind of fortune-telling method to glean the information, and such methods (often based on Time or Space magic) aren't often completely accurate. The Sphinxes protest this, saying that their methods rely on direct observation rather than symbolic guesswork, but because those methods are based largely on intuition that non-Sphinxes do not possess these protests often go unheard. In the end, many Pathfinders find it easiest not to advertise their membership in the Legacy and to offer help and advice only when it is requested. Of course, that sometimes results in other mages labeling them reclusive and unhelpful, but an experienced Pathfinder has long since given up on pleasing all the people all the time.

The culture of the Sphinx Legacy is one of research, academia and intuition. Sphinxes aren't necessarily impulsive, but they do tend to be easily distracted, and mentors of the Legacy encourage Pathfinders to follow clues that they see in the hidden patterns of the world. This leads Sphinxes to cross paths with cabals of mages and even stranger inhabitants of the World of Darkness, and so members of the Legacy tend to be skilled at either diplomacy or flight (or, more rarely, defensive combat). Among the Awakened, Sphinxes try to become well-versed in which cabal holds influence in what area and who the local movers and shakers of the Consilium are, just in case the Sphinxes need to name-drop to justify trespassing. Their skill in dealing with people grants them a great deal of latitude in such situations, and so Sphinxes often occupy positions in a Consilium such as Herald or Councilor.

In the Mysterium, the Sphinx takes up the role of guardian, much like his namesake. Sphinxes don't ask riddles of seekers, but they also don't give information out to just anyone. This isn't due to a perception that others aren't worthy of the knowledge (usually), but rather that the knowledge in question might be dangerous. Sphinxes can absorb information without attracting its attention, learning by observation of patterns rather than direct reading and study. As such, a Sphinx might administer a coded test to a mage seeking a book or fact that the Sphinx considers risky. If the mage has the patience and skill to decipher it, the Sphinx considers it safe to grant the mage what he seeks. This role, of course, is the very definition of a thankless task, since it brands the Sphinx as a stingy distributor of knowledge. Even so, it is a role for which the



Pathfinders are uniquely suited, and so members of the Legacy who belong to the Mysterium often become Censors.

The Legacy's overarching philosophy — that the universe has meaning and that this meaning was put in place deliberately — doesn't actually see much discussion among Sphinxes unless one of them has made a breakthrough. New members of the Legacy often hear the theory on the matter that their tutors espouse, and pick up more as they interact with other Pathfinders. Most Sphinxes have preconceived notions about the nature of the meaning of the universe. Popular hypotheses include the following:

- **God:** Regardless what religion or faith the Sphinx espouses, the notion of a Divine creator (or at least organizer) is almost as popular among mages as among Sleepers. The fact that no explanation of Atlantis, the Fall, the Celestial Ladder or the Supernal Realms actually contradicts this belief is helpful. Theist Sphinxes believe that the messages they see in everyday patterns are God's communication with Earth, and that the language of pure meaning is the true divine language.

- **Oracles:** Sphinxes with a more magic-centered view of the world believe that the Oracles, the secret masters trapped in the Supernal Realms during the collapse of the Celestial Ladder, manipulate events and patterns so subtly that these machinations are virtually unnoticeable unless one is specifically looking. These Sphinxes claim that, with rare exceptions (such as the ananke), the Oracles cannot communicate directly, as the Abyss thwarts them. Only by nudging the world in

imperceptible ways — causing a flock of birds to take flight at the right second, a gust of wind that alters the direction of raindrops, and so on — can they send their messages. Of course, if the Oracles can do this, the Sphinxes sometimes wonder, what stops the Exarchs from doing so as well? The answer is: nothing, and the Seers of the Throne boast their share of Pathfinders.

- **The Supernal Realms:** Although the Sphinx Legacy belongs as much to the Warlocks as to the Mysterium, comparatively few Mastigos espouse this particular theory to explain the origin of the messages in the world. Those who do are quite different from the usual contemplative and observant Pathfinders — such Mastigos tend to be fearful and paranoid. Some Sphinxes believe that the denizens of the Supernal Realms are responsible for the informative patterns that the Sphinxes so diligently analyze. These denizens might not even be creating these patterns deliberately, the mages say, but the Fallen World reflects the Supernal Realms. Therefore, the true nature of reality comes through in everything the world has to offer, regardless of whether Sleepers (or even most of the Awakened) are prepared to look for it.

Of course, the implications of the inhabitants of Pandemonium leaving hints for mages to find are troubling, to say the least. This, perhaps, is why this theory has more adherents among Mysterium Sphinxes of other Paths. The notion that the patterns are the inhuman whispers of demons is profoundly disquieting. No matter which Supernal Realm the patterns originate from, though (and it would make more sense to assume that *all* of them have some input), their natives are inscrutable and largely unknowable by human standards, yet certainly not all-powerful. Is there a greater design above even the mysterious clues left in random patterns of wind, ink and brick?

Induction

Prospective Sphinxes often begin their training for the Legacy before they know it exists. Inquisitive and persistent, they pay close attention to the world around them, searching for an overlying meaning. Chaos theory, fractal theory and even the "theory" of intelligent design have produced students of the right mindset to become Pathfinders. If a mage looks deeply enough into the right patterns, using the right methods, he might receive a flash of insight that allows him to break a message coded with the Hidden Meaning Attainment. Alternately, his studies might just lead him to a mage already known for the same kind of research. In any case, sooner or later the prospective Sphinx finds a Sphinx.

Presuming that the Sphinx that the prospective member finds is willing and able to take on a pupil, and that the

chemistry between the two mages is of the right sort to permit such a relationship, the tutor typically inundates the student with coded messages. At first, the mage simply uses mundane codes, starting with simple alphabetical ciphers and moving up to complex encryption. The mage doesn't need to learn how to break all of these codes, and certainly isn't forbidden from using magic in his attempt. The important lesson here is to look beyond letters, numbers and words and see meaning in markings, sounds and patterns. This kind of approach isn't easy to teach, as it relies more on intuition than process, and some mages simply aren't up to the task. The tutor watches carefully to see if his student is capable of learning what the tutor is presenting, of seeing a meaning greater than the message. If so, they can begin the process of soulcrafting. If not, the tutor gently (or not-so-gently, depending on the mage in question) suggests that the student might find what he seeks elsewhere.

In the *Mysterium*, the process works a little differently. Mages who show a predilection for puzzles, ciphers and language are often told about the Legacy in a roundabout fashion (so as to avoid making it seem as though membership in a Legacy is being offered or suggested). A mage who is a good candidate for becoming a Pathfinder will pursue information about the Legacy, or so goes the theory. Once word gets out in a given Consilium's *Mysterium* cabal(s) that a mage wants to join the Legacy, the network becomes activated and the mage's accomplishments, history, faults and foibles are made known to any Sphinx who bothers to check. If the mage is a good fit for the Legacy, a tutor arranges to travel to the student or have the student brought to him for training.

In either case, the stages of soulcrafting don't require much in the way of ceremony. Once a mage has reached the required level of power, his tutor assists him in delving deeper into the mysteries of the world's wisdom. This is normally accompanied by several days of study, questioning and observation of whatever phenomena the mentor feels hold the wisdom the student needs in order to progress. Some tutors hole their students up in libraries preceding a new Attainment, others immerse their charges in as much sensation as possible in order to force the student to focus on one pattern at a time.

Tutors, whatever their methods, watch their students for signs of madness at all times. When everything around a mage is significant, when *nothing* is coincidence or meaningless, he can feel paralyzed and helpless, afraid to do anything for fear of offsetting some cosmic balance. Alternately, some Sphinxes become drunk with the power and knowledge they possess, striving to learn as much as they can to exert maximum possible influence in the world. Either of these eventualities is cause for alarm to the tutor, because they distract the student from his quest to learn the origin of meaning. A Sphinx who degenerates too much or too quickly in Wisdom might find himself placed in an oubliette, magically deprived of any sensation whatsoever. It is believed that, in this kind of environment with no patterns from which to derive information, that a mad Sphinx can find himself again and regain his sanity. This doesn't always work, of course; sometimes the madness just intensifies, but the oubliette is the best the Legacy can

do to help. The alternative is to remove the mage's ability to see the world's meaning permanently, and the only way to do that is to kill him.

Story Hooks — Riddles of the Sphinx

• **Viral Knowledge:** The characters visit a neighboring cabal's sanctum and discover the mages dead, except for one gravely ill survivor. The illness doesn't respond to magical treatment, though it does seem magical in origin. The mage reveals that his cabal came into possession of a book written in Latin (or any other ancient language, at your discretion), and that the disease began after one of them read it aloud. The characters need to decipher the book in pursuit of a cure, but they need to do so without actually reading and processing the words to avoid catching the disease themselves. A Sphinx mage could do this for them, but what might he want in return?

• **Unwanted Secrets:** A member of the cabal (preferably a Mastigos, but a member of the *Mysterium* would also suffice) starts perceiving messages in odd places — hearing voices in the white noise of a washing machine, seeing words in the ripples made by raindrops, etc. If he brings this to the attention of the Consilium or the *Mysterium*, he will eventually hear about the Sphinx Legacy and probably receive a visit from a Pathfinder. The only problem is that the messages are telling the character horrible things about his friends and cabal-mates, revealing their darkest secrets and greatest crimes. Are the messages genuine, or is a Sphinx simply sending messages tailored to the character as part of a grudge match? Of course, another possibility exists: the character might be going mad, seeing meaning where there is none. And what do his cabal-mates think about having their secrets revealed? Are the "secrets" even true?

• **Temptation:** (Note: This story works best if one of the players controls a Sphinx character.) A Pathfinder notices messages in strange patterns, as usual, but these messages seem to be part of a greater whole. If he starts collecting them and trying to put them in proper sequence (which might take several stories and lead the cabal into other, peripheral adventures), he discovers that they are instructions for opening a gateway. Where this gate will open to isn't immediately obvious, but some clues suggest that it will allow entry into or exit from Pandemonium. All Atlantean learning says that entering the

SPHINXES

Supernal Realms after Awakening is impossible, except possibly with archmastery. Is this gateway genuine? And do the characters really want the denizens of Pandemonium to escape? Does anyone else know what the character has been researching, and could someone else create the gate from his notes?

Attainments

The Attainments of the Sphinx are, for the most part, perceptive in nature rather than proactive. To the Pathfinders, the important and most difficult part of problem-solving is gaining the knowledge required to solve it. Alexander's brutish solution to the Gordian Knot repulses them, because it sends the message that brute force can replace patience and understanding. Destructive magic can be countered, manipulative magic can be redirected, but magic that hides knowledge cannot stop a persistent and intelligent willworker.

1st: Hidden Meaning

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Fate 2, Investigation 2

The Sphinx's first Attainment allows her to find and decipher wisdom in the mundane. Anything that has a pattern can be used for this purpose, be it cracks in the ceiling or the calls of a flock of birds. The mage merely needs to study the pattern for a few seconds to gain the information contained therein. The effect is similar to the Fate 1 "Interconnections" spell (see p. 148 of **Mage: The Awakening**), except that the Attainment requires only an instant action and bestows information as though the mage had achieved five successes on the roll. Sphinxes, therefore, are awash in information if they stop to consider it, able to see connections, however faint, between any objects, people or places in sight. In addition to see these sympathetic connections, a Sphinx can use this Attainment to solve puzzles and riddles, since she can see the patterns behind their creation. Sphinx characters with this Attainment receive a +3 modifier to all Mental rolls involving riddles, puzzles, mazes or other such conundrums.

A more common use of this Attainment, however, is its ability to hide meaning within seemingly random patterns. A Sphinx can use Hidden Meaning to write (or draw or record) a message in a code that no Sleeper cipher can crack. The mage must physically create the message, either by writing a seemingly innocuous letter, drawing a picture or any other method she prefers. The player rolls Manipulation + Investigation or Academics to encrypt the message. When another mage with this Attainment tries to decipher the code, her player must make an extended Intelligence + Investigation roll to do so, with a number of required successes equal to [5 x the successes on the encryption roll]. Again, each roll requires an hour of deciphering. The encoding mage may choose to forego her roll, meaning that any Sphinx can decode the message automatically.

A mage with Fate 2 can also attempt to uncover the meaning in the message. First she must be aware that the underlying

meaning exists, which is by itself difficult (she might be tipped off by an ally, a hunch or even the Dream Merit). She then casts an improvised and extended Fate 2 spell, with a number of required successes equal to [5 x encoder's successes, minimum of five].

Optional Arcanum: Mind 2

A Sphinx who has studied the Arcanum of Mind can use her knowledge of the patterns and intrinsic meaning to aid her in interactions with others. By studying a person's movements, the subtle messages conveyed by facial expression, body language and breathing and even how others react to him, the Sphinx gains an advantage in dealing with him. This effect is similar to the Mind 2 "First Impressions" spell (see p. 208 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The Sphinx may add her dots in Mind as a dice bonus to the first roll made with a given target.

Many Pathfinders discover that the first Attainment of the Legacy is all that they require. Indeed, much of the Legacy's reputation is based upon the knowledge and insight conveyed in Hidden Meaning — the ability to solve puzzles and escape labyrinths, to see meaning in the mundane. Sphinxes who continue on use this Attainment as a basis upon which later, more powerful magic rests. Those who pursue other agendas, however, use Hidden Meaning to send messages to double agents in other factions (or even orders), to share research with colleagues around the world, right under the noses of their enemies, and to help Sleepers and even other mages solve puzzles that no methods the Fallen World has produced can fathom. Sphinxes who make frequent use of this Attainment to encrypt messages often develop a preferred format for those messages. One Sphinx might design websites dedicated to some inane fandom, while another writes poetry reproduced only in small-circulation periodicals. As long as the message reaches its intended viewer, the Sphinx doesn't often care how the vehicle for the message is regarded.

Sometimes, though, a Sphinx creates a vehicle for a message that has resonance and value in its own right. When this happens, the message might gain fame and widespread circulation, inadvertently passing the message along to any mage who knows how to look for it. Some such messages are even rumored to trigger Awakenings, as Sleepers on the verge of enlightenment see the Supernal Realms lurking in an otherwise mundane painting or song.

2nd: Truth Without Knowledge

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Fate 3, Investigation 3

Knowing the truth of the world by interpreting its many hidden messages is only the first step toward the superlative understanding that the Sphinx hopes one day to reach. Along that way, however, she learns to take advantage of the clues that surround her as to the fundamental nature of reality. To the untrained eye, she looks lucky or simply confident, but to a mage, every action she takes is fraught with significance.

The second Attainment that a Sphinx can achieve allows her to mimic the effects of the Fate 2 "Exceptional Luck" spell (see p. 151 of **Mage: The Awakening**). No roll or Mana

expenditure is required. The mage simply takes an instant action to study the patterns of meaning around her, in the same way as described for the Hidden Meaning Attainment. The player may then designate a number of rolls equal to the character's Gnosis rating during the same scene to have the 9 again quality.

Pathfinders also find that the more they rely on this Attainment, the more resonant their actions become. Mage Sight cast through the Fate Arcanum can easily detect them. Mages attempting to use Fate spells such as "Interconnections" or "The Sybil's Sight" receive a +1 dice bonus during any scene in which Sphinx has used this Attainment to gain the 9 again quality. This bonus can cancel penalties levied by the Occultation Merit and spells such as Fate 3 "Fabricate Fortune."

Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

By listening to patterns of sound in speech (or watching patterns of letters in written discourse), the mage can understand anything she hears or reads. This mimics the Mind 3 "Universal Language" spell, save that the mage can only understand rather than express with this Attainment. Also, she can perform research and learning-related extended Mental tasks in half the time they would normally take (that is, if every roll in an extended task would normally take an hour, this time is reduced to 30 minutes).

The second Attainment of the Sphinx Legacy opens the mage further to the truth of the world and the hidden messages it contains, but still does not address the question of who or what might be sending these messages. Pathfinders at this stage make superb interpreters, translators and researchers (which is one reason the Mysterium teaches this Legacy). More martial Sphinxes enjoy the tactical benefits of this Attainment, but are careful when using it in conflict with other Awakened, as the Sphinxes are wary of coming to the notice of powerful mages by weaving themselves too tightly into the universe's inner workings. Indeed, the Sphinxes tell stories of members of the Legacy who have become unable to see the world as anything other than an abstract mess of implication and possibility – unable to perceive light or sound anymore, they function solely through the information this Attainment grants.

3rd: Off the Path

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Fate 4

The mage learns to "walk between" the paths of meaning in the world, disappearing from the cycles of destiny. As far as the world and its many layers of hidden messages are concerned, the Sphinx no longer exists (for as long as this Attainment is active). The Sphinx spends a moment in silent meditation, perceiving the threads of fate and stepping between them (this requires three turns of contemplation). After this, the mage's destiny can remain "invisible" in this manner for as long as she wishes, but during this time she cannot use the Truth Without Knowledge Attainment to gain the 9 again quality, or cast any spell altering another person's destiny (this include spells dealing with oaths, such as "Alter Oath," as well as spells such as "Occlude Destiny" or "Destroy Bindings"). While the

Attainment is active, however, she is immune to all spells that would perceive, alter, improve or denigrate her fate (including the spells just mentioned). All sympathetic magic targeted against her is considered to be four steps further removed. (So, to even attempt targeting her with a sympathetic spell, the caster would need an Intimate connection, which would then suffer a -10 penalty as though it were Described.) Also, the Sphinx is extremely difficult to scrutinize magically. She is considered to have the Occultation Merit at a rating equal to her dots in the Fate Arcanum.

This Attainment does not make the character physically invisible, but does make her easy to ignore. She receives a +3 on all Stealth rolls while the Attainment is active.

Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

Reading a person's intentions isn't difficult; a Sphinx can decipher a target's basic mood and reactions enough to play off them with the first Attainment of the Legacy. At this advanced stage, however, a tic of the eye or a shift of the hand betrays everything about the target – his hopes, his fears and even his memories. This effect is much like the Mind 4 "Read the Depths" spell (see p. 215 of *Mage: The Awakening*). The mage must spend at least one turn studying the target before using this Attainment. After that, the player rolls Intelligence + Academics – the subject's Composure. Unlike Read the Depths, mages with the Mind Arcanum do *not* get a chance to detect the Attainment's effect, since it is based entirely on external observation rather than telepathic intrusion. Modifiers for distant memories might apply, but memories or experiences that significantly contributed to the target's development (such as child abuse or the death of an important figure) might actually grant bonuses, even if the target has repressed them.

The third Attainment of the Legacy allows the Sphinx to exert some influence over the world's meanings. Very few Sphinxes progress to this point, because most of them focus more on discovering what being or phenomenon is responsible for the meaning of the world. Those who do are among the most powerful and inscrutable beings in the World of Darkness, fully in tune with the world's patterns and able to step outside of those patterns at any time.

Sample Character

Bibel

Quote: "Wait. Say that again. No, slower. Oh, nothing. It's just a pronunciation I hadn't heard before. Mind if I record you?"

Background: When Brian Miles was four, he saw his big sister have a fit. He learned about epilepsy later, but as a little child, the experience was terrifying. He didn't understand what she'd said to him at the height of her convulsions, right before she bit off the end of her tongue, and over time he forgot about it entirely.

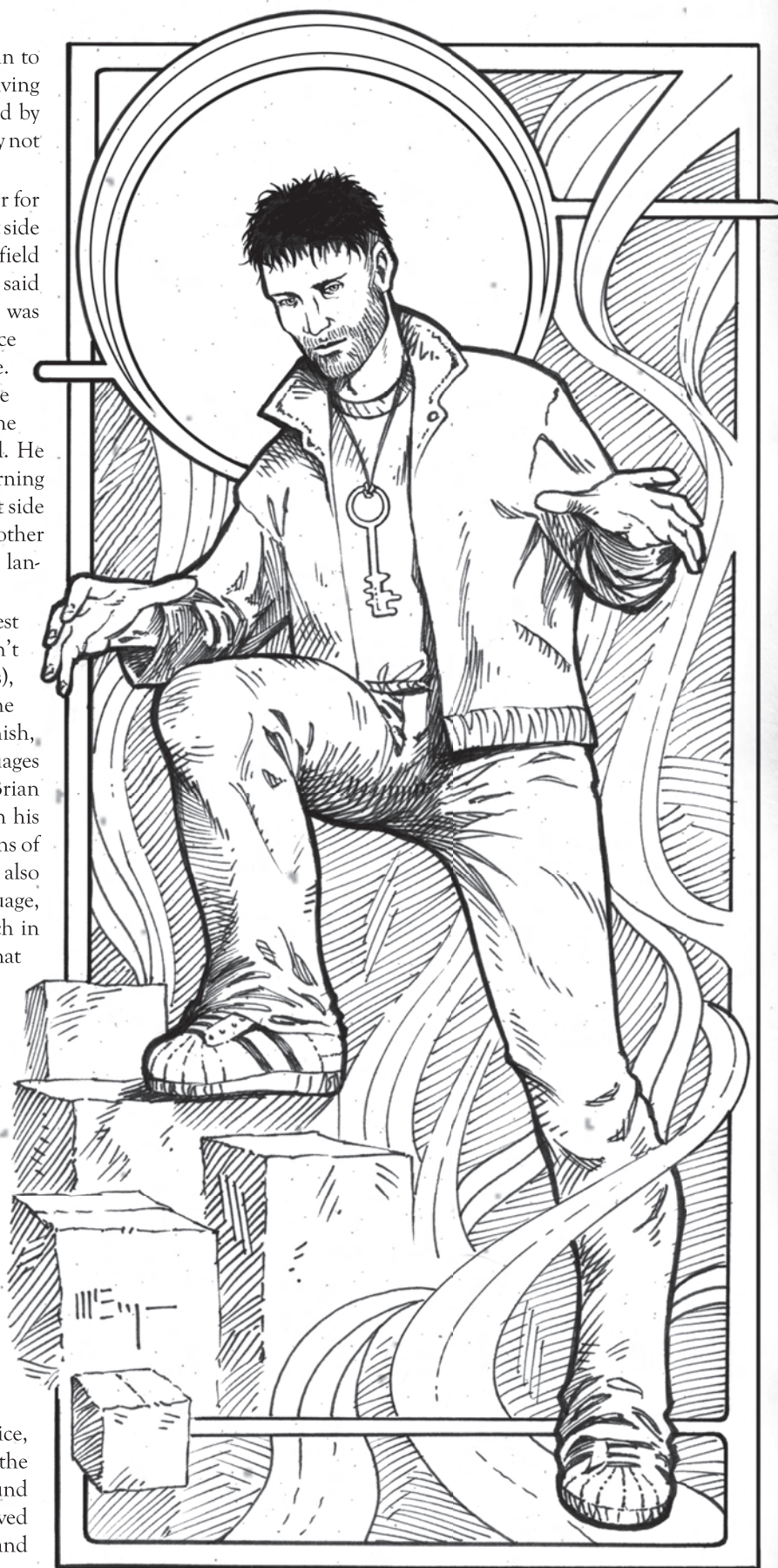
Brian's family didn't pay much attention to him during his childhood. His parents were much more focused on his unfortunate sister, plagued with seizures so violent that eventually the doctors were forced to perform "split-brain" surgery,

separating the two hemispheres of her brain to stop them. After that, she had two minds living in the same head, and Brian was fascinated by how one side of her body could quite literally not know what the other side was doing.

On his 16th birthday, Brian took his sister for a drive and had a conversation with the right side of her brain (since he was sitting in her left field of vision). She said the same thing she had said during that horrible fit 12 years earlier. It was a strange jumble of sounds, with resonance and inflection he had never heard before. He asked her what it meant, what language it was, but she couldn't tell him. Indeed, she couldn't seem to remember saying it at all. He repeated it to himself over and over again, learning it by rote. Later, at home, he sat on her right side and repeated it, and she responded with another phrase, one that seemed to be in the same language but was much more complex.

Brian wrote down these two sentences as best he could (since the English alphabet didn't seem to have letters for some of the sounds), and the next year arranged to take all of the foreign languages his school offered – Spanish, French and German. None of these languages could translate the strange phrases, but Brian noticed that some of the sounds present in his sister's utterances seemed to be combinations of speech sounds from various languages. He also realized that he had a knack of learning language, and went on to study linguistics and speech in college. He participated in several programs that allowed him to travel abroad, and everywhere he went introduced himself to new languages and new variations on languages. Brian marveled at how a few miles could change a dialect radically, and he kept careful note of the differences.

It wasn't on any of his travels to other lands that his greatest journey took place, however. He was walking through his hometown on Christmas Eve and slipped on a patch of ice, landing face-up in front of the local library. In the cracks in the stone edifice, viewed from this angle, he could see letters in an alphabet he had never encountered but, somehow, could understand. He stood and began to climb the side of the building, hands freezing from the ice, trying to read the phrases, until he reached the iron weather vane at the top. There, he found a blank spot and scratched in what he believed would be next logical series of characters, and in that instant he Awakened.



Brian continued his studies of language as a mage, and continued his travels with a new sense of wonder. While in California, he followed a series of strange symbols to the sanctum of a local Mysterium cabal, one member of whom was also a Sphinx. Brian spent hours in conversation with this woman, and eventually repeated the phrases his sister had said. Brian's new mentor realized with some amazement that the phrases were in the High Speech, and roughly translated to "Please help me" and "I am trapped here."

Since then, Brian — taking the shadow name of Babel — has worked to understand as much of the High Speech as possible. He tries to speak it to his sister, but she doesn't seem to understand it. The fact that the High Speech is not a functional language, as far as communication is concerned, frustrates him to no end. He is convinced that the split-brain surgery that saved his sister's life also trapped her somewhere between her two minds, and that in the High Speech lies her salvation. He simply cannot put the pieces together enough to help her — not yet.

Description: Babel is in his late 20s, and is a thoughtful, quiet man. He wears his brown hair short and typically sports a week's worth of beard growth (easier to trim a beard than shave every day, he feels). He dresses to fit the occasion, as he knows how much meaning can be conveyed by appearance, but has little in the way of material possessions, as most of his money gets bound up in travel and research.

Babel's nimbus manifests as a multitude of voices, all speaking a language that a listener feels is familiar, but cannot quite recognize. The language is not the High Speech, to Babel's disappointment. He has noticed that when he casts spells meant to harm others (which is an extremely rare occurrence), the voices seem loud and harsh, whereas they are usually gentle but insistent.

Storytelling Hints: Babel is intense and driven, but at the same time kind and compassionate. He detests the stereotype of Warlocks as mind-rapists and manipulators, and takes great pride in the fact that he has never once used magic to read another person's mind without permission. His ultimate goal is to make his sister's mind whole again and find out what part of her is trapped. His suspicion, which he has not shared with anyone, not even his mentor, is that his sister was meant to Awaken very young but the seizures and surgery prevented it somehow. He feels that if he could help her to heal (which is quite beyond modern medicine, but not, Babel believes,

beyond magic) she would be a mage of considerable power and import.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A gold key that he purchased in Egypt

Real Name: Brian Miles

Path: Mastigos

Order: Mysterium

Legacy: Sphinx

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Linguistics) 3, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Medicine (Neuroanatomy) 1, Occult (Mystical Alphabets) 2

Physical Skills: Drive 2, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Empathy (Good Listener) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Academic, Medical) 2, Destiny ("Misunderstanding Kills") 3, Eidetic Memory, Languages (Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish), Mentor (Tutor) 3, Status (Order) 1

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 8

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Sloth

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Gnosis: 3

Arcana: Fate 3, Mind 3, Space 2

Notes: *Fate* — Winds of Chance (•), Granting the Sybil's Sight (••), Bestow Exceptional Luck (•••); *Mind* — One Mind, Two Thoughts, Sense Consciousness (•), Voice From Afar (••), Universal Language (•••); *Space* — Correspondence, Omnivision (•)

Legacy Attainment: 1st — Hidden Meaning

Mana/per turn: 12/3

Armor: 3 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

THREAD CUTTERS

No purpose, no life.

In the beginning, there were Three.

The first Thread Cutters didn't know their names, but knew their natures. Before recorded history, the Legacy's progenitors huddled in the hinterlands beyond the ruins of Atlantis, contemplating the doom of their kind. With Supernal senses, they saw the wreckage of the heavens and newly distant constellations of occult power.

This was not as it should have been. How did prophecies fail a nation of oracles? Awakened refugees searched for the answer. They found it when they found the Three. They learned that their homeland's fall was overdue.

Thread Cutters learned to measure the proper span of lives, master the calculus of punishment and bring about the end of men, women, ideas and kingdoms. Thread Cutters believe that all things have an appointed purpose and ending time. Should any being twist that purpose or defy that end, that being must be corrected — even killed. This is why mages call Thread Cutters Euthanists. Sometimes the title is ironic; Thread Cutters are not always gentle and, once convinced of the rightness of an action, never merciful.

Thread Cutters are dedicated to what they believe are natural laws. To violate one's purpose or live beyond one's destined ending is a crime against nature. Atlantis turned into a bloated tyranny that tried to extend its life on the backs of the gods. This crime wounded Creation itself; the Legacy preserves what's left. Euthanists believe that all other laws are subservient to this so-called *Mahadharmā*. The customs of a Consilium or order is of no consequence if the customs must be violated for the sake of the Great Law.

The Legacy's faithful believe that they are duty bound (Indian members call it their *dharma*) to force people and institutions to fulfill their "true purpose" — but only for as long as Fate decrees that they should exist. Thread Cutters define this as the ability of the subject to do his, her or its duty without causing undue harm. The Legacy has a reputation for solving problems with torture and assassination, but the truth of the matter is that most of the Thread Cutters' work is nonviolent. Destroying a decrepit corporation through bankruptcy is easier than killing.

Thread Cutters hail from many, far-flung cultures, but most are profoundly influenced by Indo-European mythology. The first Euthanists followed Indo-European migration. The Legacy's beliefs evolved alongside those of the Indians, Iranians, Greeks and Celts, but whether mages inspired the people or vice versa may never be known. In any event, the Legacy reveres what it believes to be the archetypes behind these peoples' most ancient gods. The Legacy as a whole calls them the Three, but individual sects give them local names.

The Three are manifestations of the Mahadharmā. In cosmic roles, they are the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. In the context of individual lives, they are Maiden, Mother and Crone, or Weaver, Measurer and Cutter. When pressed to find a culture-neutral term, Thread Cutters call them Beginning, Being and Ending. The Three can be male or female. They wear as many masks as needed, sending these avatars to offer revelations to the devout. In such guises, the Three visited the first Euthanists and charged them with preserving the Great Law.

Thread Cutters do not believe that the Three are gods in the sense of being powerful, immortal individuals. They may show themselves in that fashion, but in truth, each is a living cosmic principle that is endowed with a vast intelligence and limitless power. Despite their might, the Three do not break their own rules; to deal with those who would abuse and twist the Great Law, the Three need free-willed humans.

Faces of the Three

Thread Cutters almost always identify the Three with existing gods and goddesses. Thread Cutter magic invokes these deities (and their attendant rites and symbols) according to particular magical associations. A Euthanist might channel Clotho (Beginning) to "weave" wounded flesh to heal with Life magic, or call upon Kali (Ending) to master Death. The Fate Arcanum is fundamental to the Three, so a Euthanist may cast Fate spells while invoking any of them. Legacy mages do not always agree on specific occult associations, but those listed below are the most widely accepted.

Beginning: Clotho of the Fates, Tisiphone of the Furies and Urd of the Norns; Nemain of the Celts (especially for frenzied or violent creation) and the Indian deities Sarasvati and Brahma. Beginning is also associated with the Life, Prime and Spirit Arcana as well as the Shadow Realm.

Being: Lachesis of the Fates, Megaera of the Furies and Verdandi of the Norns; Anann of the Celts and the Indian deities Lakshmi and Vishnu. Being is also associated with the Mind, Forces and Space Arcana as well as the Astral Plane.

Ending: Atropos of the Fates, Alecto of the Furies and Skuld of the Norns; Morrigan of the Celts and the Indian deities Shiva and Durga (particularly as Kali). Ending is also associated with the Death, Matter and Time Arcana as well as the Underworld.

Parent Path or Order: Moros or Guardians of the Veil

Nickname: Euthanists

Orders: Thread Cutters are wolves in the fold of Awakened society. Only Guardians of the Veil formally accept Legacy members. Even so, a known Euthanist is unlikely to ever reach a high station within the order because of fears that her dedication to the Mahadharmā will conflict with Guardian agendas. The order prefers to let Thread Cutters work in their own cabals, isolated from other Guardians. Even so, there are many times when Guardian and Thread Cutter ideologies mesh. Euthanist Guardians earn more honor than trust, but that honor is considerable.

Otherwise, the only other order that openly deals with Thread Cutters is the Free Council. Thread Cutters have deep, long-lived ties to Fallen World civilizations and are not especially enamored of Atlantean pomp. Plus, the Legacy concerns itself with Sleepers' well-being as a matter of course. Nevertheless, the Euthanists follow their own dharmas, and are willing to break any agreement that gets in the way. The Legacy's more cold-blooded tactics also dissuade Libertines from getting too involved.

The Silver Ladder and Adamantine Arrow believe the Legacy is despicable. Thérarchs have no tolerance for mages who would ignore Lex Magica whenever it suits them, and Arrow mages don't like to deal with habitual oath-breakers. Members of both orders rarely agree with the Euthanists' intimation that Atlantis deserved to die. Still, Thread Cutters have joined these orders before. Thérarchs and Arrows appreciate that the Legacy tends to cull the weaknesses out of the organizations they join.

Thread Cutters have little interest in the Mysterium, but the reverse is not true. The order's scholar-mages are fascinated (if mostly ignorant) of the Legacy's philosophy and magical theories.

Finally, a significant number of Thread Cutters are apostates. Some Lineages have been submerged within particular societies for so long that Atlantis and the finding of the Three is less important than its members' modern roles as priests and gurus.

Appearance: Thread Cutters avoid undue attention whenever possible, but they do tend to adopt a simple, reserved style. Their interest in destiny makes them sensitive to how their appearance and speech may affect others: Even an innocent statement or affectation may bring important consequences through a social "domino effect."

Thread Cutter ritual garb comes from whatever culture a Legacy member identifies with. Many Euthanists use bone magical tools to represent impermanence and flowers to symbolize birth and renewal. Vestments tend to be somber.

Background: In the unlikely event that one could interview a Thread Cutter, it's likely she would tell you that, even after Awakening, she thought her life was shallow or hypocritical. Many mages rush upon the Mysteries with a newfound sense of purpose, but there are those for whom Supernal revelations bring no comfort. Prospective Thread Cutters often Awaken with a sense of shock and despair. They've discovered that the world is a lie and that malevolent, intelligent powers twist it to their desires.

Thrust into such a world, these mages find little comfort within the paranoid, duplicitous milieu of Awakened society. Men and women duel to the death over the most abstract secrets, all the while claiming to do it in the name of spiritual enlightenment or salvation for all. If a mage can't stand the corruption and wishes to cleave to a higher law, the Legacy might find him.

Attaining the soul of a Thread Cutter comforts these mages. They find a purpose that is intolerant of evil, objective and, after a fashion, compassionate. A Euthanist's duties are dangerous and imperil the spirit, but at least they serve a noble end.

Organization: Thread Cutters meet secretly whenever it is possible to do so. Matters of station mean little; the only divisions are between partial initiates (or *shravaki*) who are trusted enough to be allowed to attend, full Euthanists (*chelas*) and masters (*pramatars*). Order rankings are irrelevant, as are all intermediary marks of distinction.

In these meetings, members discuss their current projects, settle any disputes that may arise during the course of their work and share the lore of the Legacy with one another. Moral support takes up no small part of these gatherings. Only a master (*pramatar* is Sanskrit for "judge") or three initiated *chelas* may interfere with another Thread Cutter's work. In the most formal situations, the Legacy holds a trial consisting of a *pramatar* judge, one *chela* as prosecutor and one as defender. Thread Cutters know that assuming the role of executioner and fate-twister goes hand-in-hand with severe temptation, and watch each other closely to keep themselves from acting for themselves over Mahadharmā.

As many Thread Cutters are also Guardians of the Veil, many Thread Cutters also cultivate cults and secret societies according to the Labyrinth customs of Guardian tradition. Thread Cutters make great use of these in their mission to fulfill the Mahadharmā, but are quick to punish those who would treat death lightly. Thread Cutter Labyrinths are marked by stringent codes of honor and reverence for life, but also carefully delineated situations where murder is permissible.

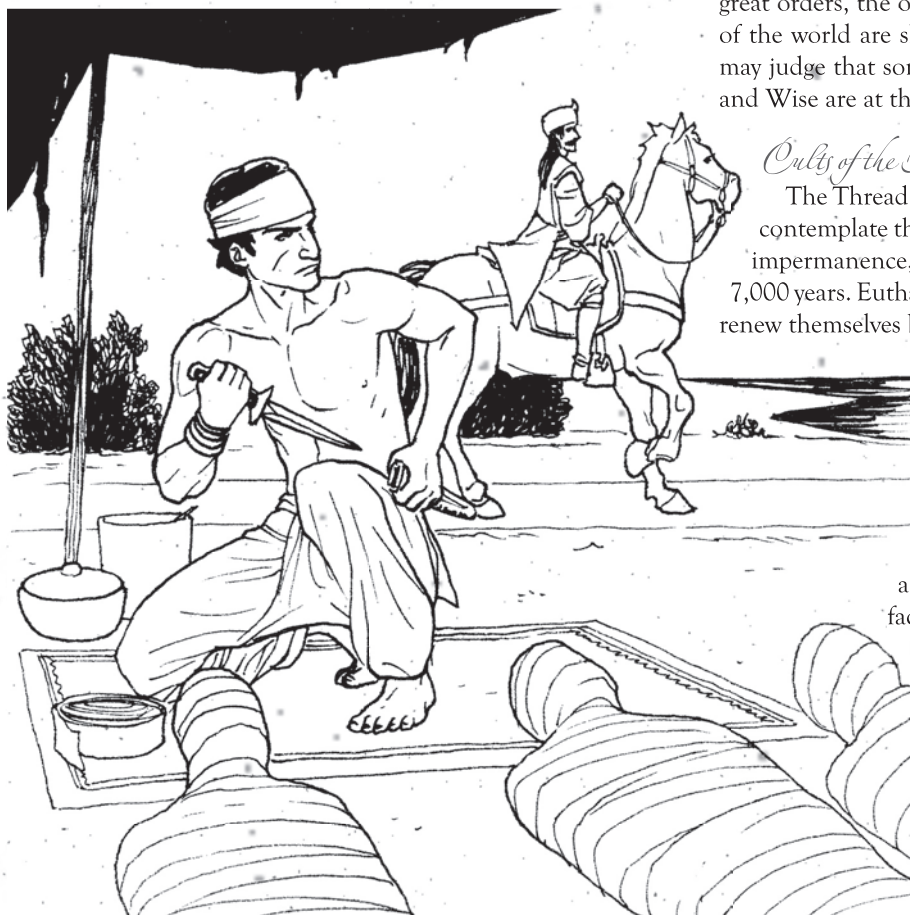
Suggested Oblations: Presiding over or attending funerals. Self-mutilation. Casting lots. Meditating near a corpse. Painting the image of a skeleton or the Three. Burning flowers. Traditional mourning (wailing and tearing clothes in some cultures). Fasting.

Concepts: Assassin, executioner, doomsayer, gambler, private investigator, funeral director, cop, veteran.

History

Thread Cutters trace their origins to the first Atlantean exiles. While most of the Awakened refugees set their sights on survival first, the forebears of the Legacy looked inward. They wanted to understand why Atlantis fell. The Legacy's first guru (whose name is lost to time) Awakened with knowledge of the Three. He (or she) demonstrated the attainments of his soul and codified the Thread Cutters' teachings. At his command, the first Euthanists became ascetics and beggars.

The Euthanists believe that they journeyed to every corner of the world, but as far as they know, the only successful settlements lived among ancient peoples in the Ukraine and Asia Minor. Unlike many exiles, the Thread Cutters threw themselves at the mercy of the Sleepers. The rough tribes the Thread Cutters encountered remembered Atlantean raids and conquests. They treated mages harshly, forcing them to live among offal and corpses. Over the centuries, the Thread Cutters' ancestors found a place within these tribes, performing "unclean" tasks such as burials and butchery.



About 5,000 years ago, the herdsmen and warriors that Thread Cutters followed began to settle South Asia and Europe. Archeologists would call these settlers the Indo European peoples. They spawned hundreds of related languages and religions. Bound to these diverse beliefs were the Three. Euthanists worshipped them under many names, but the Sleepers of Europe themselves treated the Three as ambivalent or evil figures, as necessary as they were terrible. South Asian civilizations gave the Three a higher place, as manifestations of one God. Accordingly, Thread Cutters acquired influence in South Asia that persists to the present day. Otherwise, Euthanists spoke for the dark forces that threaten the thunder and sun gods of a thousand people's pantheons.

Even though the Indo European peoples turned to monotheism and philosophy, its Sleepers remembered the Three and told tales of the witches who did the work of the Three. When Shakespeare wrote of three "weird sisters" in the doom of Macbeth, he invoked the shadow of the Thread Cutters. When the British Empire destroyed the Thugee cult, the British did so with the approval of the Euthanists, who wanted to see the fall of a conspiracy that had outlived its purpose. Kali, manifestation of Ending, needed subtler servants.

This brings us to the modern age, when Thread Cutters hide among mages, doing their secret work for the benefit of all. Euthanists claim partial credit for a diverse, strong Awakened community because they "cut out the rot," but that is not their entire goal. They simply do what is necessary. The great orders, the old philosophies and the mightiest nations of the world are slipping into old age. One day, the Legacy may judge that some of the core institutions of the Sleepers and Wise are at their Ending.

Cult of the Three

The Thread Cutters are a truly ancient Legacy. Initiates contemplate the paradox of a Legacy that is obsessed with impermanence, yet has survived, continuously, for at least 7,000 years. Euthanist pramatars say that the Thread Cutters renew themselves by adapting to their environment.

Calling the Three by their universal names is rare; the Legacy prefers the names they have within Sleeper faiths and myths. Bereft of a memory of Atlantis, Sleepers constantly reinvent themselves. Thread Cutters use this cultural dynamism to renew their own organization, learning a little more about the Three through the faces they present to the world. Some Thread Cutters are so ensconced in their own faiths that they barely recognize foreign comrades, but even after millennia of adaptation, most of them can identify one another through certain secret signs and beliefs.

Following Indo European migration, the Legacy has formed a number

of distinct cults, fellowships and ancestral cabals. The following three have the broadest reach; mages might find their adherents anywhere in the world.

- **Aided:** Propelled by the Celtic revival, Aided (“Death”) mages recruit a larger percentage of Euthanists now than at any other point in their known history. The Aided can reliably trace their history back at least 800 years, and that limit only exists because their accounts grow unreliable past that point. Aided see the Three in the Triple Goddess, and specifically where she destroys heroes such as Cú Chulaind. Similar to the Morrigan, Aided make great use of entangled *Geasa* (magical bans) and *Buada* (blessings) to work magic. Aided mages value treachery and twisted oaths as tools to secure an Ending and deplore mere “Craft,” or magic used to serve a selfish end. This puts them at odds with a number of other Celtic magical societies, including the Daoine (see **Legacies: The Sublime**, pp. 33–42) and the Sodality of the Tor (ibid, pp. 83–94): The Aided have no ill-will toward the Tor, but hate the Daoine’s cavalier approach to Fate.

- **Devasu:** The Devasu (“Divine Arrow”) take their name from the arrows of Rudra, aspect of Shiva and lord of disease. At 1,000 years of age, the current cult is the successor of an older cult called the Sapindya Satandanda (“Consanguinity of Eternal Joy”) that destroyed itself when its members believed that it had reached its own Ending. Members are tantric practitioners who believe that defying Ending blocks cosmic *shakti*: the living energy of creation. The Devasu praxis concerns the divine attributes of deities from the Vedas and Bhagavad-Gita. Through self-purification, these mages become manifestations (avatars) of these gods on Earth. Of all the Euthanist cults, the Devasu may be the most ritualistic, advocating specific forms of Ending for members of various professions, temples and businesses. The cult harvests Mana from these acts.

- **Eumenides:** The “Kindly Ones” style themselves after the Furies of Greek and Roman mythology and consider themselves to be the servants of the Fates. Various Greco Roman cults have existed throughout Thread Cutter history. The Eumenides trace their roots to a hidden society of Greek nobles. In the mid-18th century, these aristocrats revived Classical traditions within their secret rites. In their hunger for more occult knowledge, they opened a Cretan tomb containing the secrets of the Legacy. The cult has since discovered that this is the way of things: Greek branches of the Thread Cutters discover the secrets of their ancestors, take up the banner of the Fates and meet their doom a few centuries later – but not before leaving their own secrets for successors.

Society and Culture

The roots of Thread Cutter beliefs are the Three: divine concepts that guide the cycle of birth and death. Everything has a purpose and natural lifespan. Thread Cutters use their Arts, Attainments and philosophy to divine what a person or thing’s purpose is, whether it is fulfilling that aim and whether or not it should continue to exist. Most Euthanists concentrate on particular types of people or institutions. One might study

financial institutions and another, police officers. But Thread Cutters don’t limit themselves to their special interests. If they see a life out of balance, they do what they can to correct it.

The Euthanists’ Dharma

Thread Cutters use a term from Indian spirituality – *dharma* – to describe the inherent purpose all beings have. Euthanists know what their dharma is: to change and destroy according to the Mahadharmas. Mahadharmas teach them to analyze a situation, categorize its current place among the Three and, when necessary, how to intervene.

A person or organization can be enmeshed in Beginning, Being and Ending. If the subject is in the cycle of Beginning, it’s the mage’s duty to ensure his (or her, or its) growth. Outsiders rarely talk about how Euthanists cure sick children or use magic to give a struggling new business a windfall, but these interventions are quite common. This is not always a function of raw age. A young child with an incurable illness can be at the cusp of Ending. An old man, freed from his life’s obligations, may embark on a new Beginning as an artist. Euthanists not only remove impediments to new growth, but ensure that subjects follow their true purpose. They remove criminals that would corrupt a new business, or might spirit a young woman far away from a destructive family or community.

A mature subject enters the phase of Being, where the subject must cleave closely to its dharma. Thread Cutters believe a proper dharma consists of the subject’s aspirations combined with the prospect that he will benefit those ensnared in his destiny. There is a delicate balance between these elements. A business that means well but cripples local economic health is acting against its dharma; a murderer whose victims would have gone on to kill or corrupt is following his true dharma.

If a subject violates his dharma, Euthanists employ a series of escalating tactics to correct him. These start with methods by which the mage acts indirectly, foiling the target’s plans, turning friends against him and offering rewards for correct actions. If these fail, Euthanists take a direct hand in affairs. They use threats, torture, blackmail and other extreme tools to achieve their aim.

If even this fails, the subject is irreparable; he, she or it has come to the time of Ending. That is the nature of this cycle, for Ending is the time when a person or organization is no longer fit to do its duty. Sadly, too many people refuse to let go of their failed ambitions and ruined lives, so it falls to the Thread Cutters to set things right. The Legacy is infamous for their murderous, destructive acts, but most of these are carefully considered. It isn’t always necessary to destroy the subject, but total renewal, while a fine ideal, is difficult to achieve. Euthanists often deal with psychopaths, servants of the Abyss and blood-drinking monsters and have no compunctions about putting them out of their misery.

Thread Cutters prefer to inflict painless deaths, but as most Thread Cutters believe in reincarnation, the type of Ending is important. Some Legacy members believe that various forms of corruption merit specific Endings, by fire, water, a blade

or strangulation. For example, the Devasu cult holds that it is best to kill a holy man by opening the top of his skull. Temples to certain gods must fall to fire; others, to flood.

Knives Behind the Throne

Needless to say, Thread Cutters' actions do not sit well with other mages. Awakened society values its laws. They ensure a measure of liberty and peace among people who might otherwise kill each other with a wrathful chant, gesture or even a thought. The Euthanists respect the Lex Magica only as far as it suits them, ignoring it to dispatch mages to their Endings or otherwise meddle in prohibited affairs.

Thus, mages who value law and order distrust Thread Cutters. As a result, the Legacy is a secret society among secret societies. Most Thread Cutters are nominal members of the Guardians of the Veil, but only serve the order's political agenda as far as it suits their own esoteric aims. This isn't to say that the Euthanists are unheard of. In fact, Thread Cutters loom large in legends, where they kill and torture arrogant mages — or mages who break strange, faerie tale rules. Despite this, few mages have knowingly met a member of the Legacy. Thread Cutters know their reputations (and some use them quite effectively over the course of their duties) and keep a low profile. In effect, they are willing outcasts, unable to share the fullness of their doctrine with others. Thread Cutters usually make an effort to avoid murder and violence and will counsel potential targets to avoid a "bad end," but never in such a way that they would reveal their Legacy-driven motives.

Left-Handed?

Thread Cutters figure in well known stories, but living members of the Legacy rarely reveal themselves. The stories paint the Thread Cutters as the rigid executioners of moral laws or as capricious killers and meddlers, punishing victims for infractions they didn't know existed.

As a consequence, there is no consensus as to whether the Legacy is acceptable or "Left-Handed." When Thread Cutters have revealed themselves, they've provided considerable help, but were so cavalier about the Lex Magica that many of them were punished with death or exile.

Induction

Thread Cutters use the Three as the model for Thread Cutter training. A newly Awakened mage serves the Beginning. Reborn into enlightenment, she explores her new world. Tutors let new mages explore their powers and perceptions freely, because their charges are experiencing a burst of creative power that they will never feel again.

After a mage begins formal occult study, she passes into the realm of Being. She tempers her raw power with discipline.

Normally, her tutor teaches her the Mysteries alongside the beliefs of the Euthanists. At this stage, the tutor encourages his charge to develop an alternate identity. This protects her and gives her a refuge (a "normal life") within the world of Being, while, over time, she learns to serve the cause of Ending.

Eventually, a Thread Cutter learns the occult beliefs, ethics and techniques of the Legacy, and it is time to fully enter the Way of Ending. Full initiation entails a form of temporary death called the Agama ("revelation"). This is a rote that suspends the target's life and plunges her soul into the Underworld. Bound to a ghostly form, she searches for the lost path to Stygia. No mage has successfully mapped this route, but it is said that the closer one gets, the more one learns from the journey.

As many Thread Cutters are Guardians of the Veil, tutors often integrate the order and Legacy initiations into one ordeal. In this case, the study of Being occurs alongside the Crimson Veil, and the Agama rite occurs after passing through the Black Veil. See **Mage: The Awakening** (pp. 44–46) and **Guardians of the Veil** for more information about the Veils of initiation.

Experienced mages are not required to pass through the Beginning stages of training, and take their old lives as their Being identities. Thus, an experienced initiate (pupils usually require a Gnosis of 3 and third-degree Disciple status, with Fate or Death as one of the Disciple-level Arcana) can pass through initiation in a matter of months, but must still endure the Agama rite.

Only fully initiated mages are allowed perform the Legacy's work. They have passed into full knowledge of Endings.

Deathlike Journey (Death ●●●●● + Life ●●)

Practice: Making

Action: Extended

Duration: Prolonged (one scene)

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

Deathlike Journey severs a mage's soul and grants it a body of ephemera. This body appears to be a ghost to anyone who does not inspect its aura. The ghost is drawn into the Underworld (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 283). In ghostly form, the mage cannot travel to other parts of the Realms Invisible without finding some special path or conduit. The subject of the spell uses his normal traits, but cannot make use of equipment.

While the mage journeys in ghostly form, his body appears to be dead; his life signs and aura are absent. Unlike many spells of this type, the mage's soul is truly absent from his body. Thus, the subject of the spell should ensure that his body is protected against possession and other forms of tampering. Life magic prevents the body from decaying or suffering similar ill effects (such as damage due to oxygen starvation) throughout the spell's duration. If the mage's body is killed, he almost always becomes a ghost, but remains in the Underworld instead of moving into Twilight near an anchor.

Mages normally use this spell to uncover the secrets of the dead. Unfortunately, some force (perhaps just the trauma of the magic, but inherent to the laws of death) distorts the mage's perceptions, so that separating the reality of ghostly experiences from metaphors

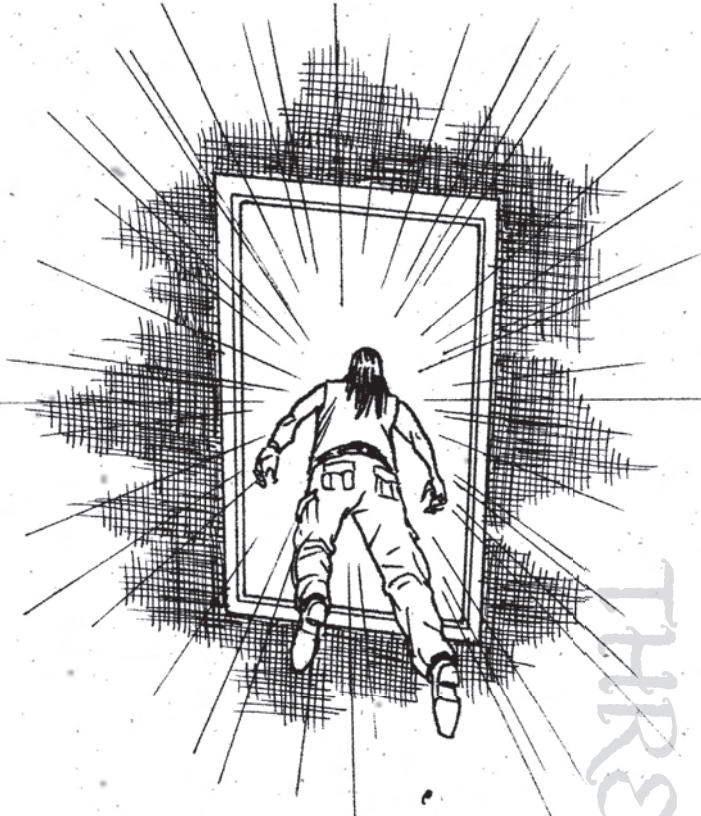
and visions becomes difficult. Ultimately, the Storyteller decides which parts of the mage's journey were literal experiences and which parts were visions, but all parts normally have symbolic significance. They may represent the distorted forms of strange entities the mage encountered, waypoints that no human eye can truly describe, or prophecies gleaned from the ravings of the ancient dead.

For example, mages have boasted of finding Atlantis within the Underworld, but this could be anything from a genuine echo of the Awakened City to a personal vision. Nevertheless, the ghosts and writings the mage encounters there may well pass on genuine knowledge. Alternately, the traveler might encounter a dead lover who knows an obscure spell, even though he was a Sleeper throughout his life.

Guardians of the Veil Rote: Agama Rite

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult + Death

Euthanists of the Guardians of the Veil use the rote to send their initiates to the lands of the dead. Initiates often acquire Arcane Experience on the journey that allows them to commit to the Legacy. Euthanist tutors who are not Guardians of the Veil also know this rote.

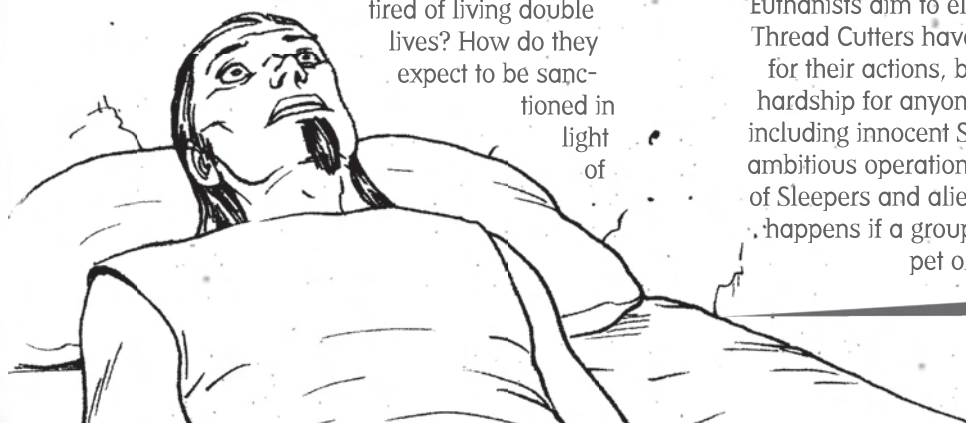


Story Hooks — Tangled Threads

• **Endings:** Thread Cutters have targeted someone important to the characters — maybe even one of them — for Ending. Assassination is possible, but it's also likely that the Euthanists want to forcibly "renew" their target. They destroy the target's personal life, separate her from her financial assets and try to induce a psychotic break that forces her to rebuild her personality from the ground up. You can play this as a story of inexplicable ill-luck and sadism or as hardship that ultimately teaches the target a lesson. David Fincher's 1997 film, *The Game*, is full of inspiration for this kind of chaos and renewal. In the case of an assassination, matters are a bit more straightforward, but don't underestimate the clever tactics that Euthanists can employ.

• **Out of the Cold:** One or more Thread Cutters decide to abandon their traditional secrecy. They present their beliefs and agenda to the local Ruling Council. Are they simply

tired of living double lives? How do they expect to be sanctioned in light of



the Legacy's legendary contempt for Lex Magica? It may well be that the Thread Cutters have the resources — or a devastating secret — to sway influential mages to their side. Legacy members may be new visitors, or they might be high-ranking members of the establishment. Imagine, for instance, what might happen if Boston's Shadow Chorus (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 384–385, and **Boston Unveiled**) turn out to be Euthanists? One variation of this might occur if the players' characters discover that certain powerful mages are secret Thread Cutters. Will the characters expose the Thread Cutters or blackmail them?

• **Pride Goeth Before the Fall:** Thread Cutters gather for a major operation. They believe that a large institution, such as a government, corporation or Consilium, ought to meet its Ending. The characters are caught in the thick of it, either through their social ties (Awakened allegiances, Status, Allies or Contacts) or the fact that the Euthanists aim to eliminate a long-term rival. The Thread Cutters have many excellent justifications for their actions, but they will cause long-term hardship for anyone connected to the institution, including innocent Sleepers. Furthermore, such an ambitious operation is liable to draw the attention of Sleepers and alien supernatural factions. What happens if a group of vampires don't want their pet organization to fall?

THREAD CUTTERS

Attainments

Thread Cutter Attainments exist to help initiates guard the Mahadharma. A Euthanist crafts his soul with an eye toward attuning it to the subtle currents of Fate. As he masters the powers of the Legacy, he learns to bind Fate closer to the will of the Three.

1st: *Sense the Fraying Thread*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Fate 2 (primary), Death 1, Empathy 2

A Thread Cutter can sense a target's connection to possible Endings. In some respects, this resembles Fate 1 "The Sybil's Sight," and Death 1 "Grim Sight," but is broader and detects more mystical and social forms of decay. Thread Cutters use this Attainment to determine if a target is following his proper dharma or is a force for pain, death and corruption. If the target's actions are likely to cause great harm, Thread Cutters arrange his Ending.

The Euthanist's player activates the power with a Wits + Empathy + Fate roll. The character's insights depend on the number of successes, as follows:

Successes Result

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Basic success tells the mage the conditions under which the target is most likely to satisfy his Vice (but not what the Vice actually is) and whether he has ever killed another person. The Thread Cutter can also determine the conditions under which a target is most likely to kill a person and whether the target has ever directly influenced another person to attempt to kill a person. The attempt need not be successful, but it must have consisted of more than just thinking about the act. |
| 2 | The Thread Cutter can determine whether or not the target's actions have directly contributed to another person's Morality loss or Vice indulgence, as well as the conditions under which it occurred. She can also determine the conditions under which the target is likely to inspire another person to commit murder, including its rough likelihood and possible scenarios. Finally, she can determine whether the target has taken or broken a magically enforced oath such as that created with the "Swearing an Oath" spell. |
| 3 | With this degree of success, Thread Cutters can determine the target's indirect influence on others. If the target has indirectly inspired murder, Vice indulgence or Morality loss among those with an Acquainted sympathetic relationship or one degree of social separation, such as |

members of the same business, neighbors and so on. The target does not have to have consciously inspired such actions, but must be their primary cause. A Thread Cutter can also determine the conditions under which the target is likely to inspire such actions in the future. At this degree of success, the Thread Cutter can also detect whether the target's destiny has been magically altered and the degree and nature of any Fame, Occultation or Destiny Merits the target may possess.

4

A Thread Cutter who is this successful can detect whether or not the target is the primary cause of murder, Vice indulgence or Morality loss among those with an Encountered connection or three degrees of social separation, as well as the conditions under which the target might exercise such influence in the future. The Thread Cutter can also detect the presence and nature of direct supernatural influence on the target's mind or behavior. Finally, the Thread Cutter can detect the nature of the target's probable influence on a large institution, such as a business, union or an Awakened order's caucus.

5

Exceptional success allows a Thread Cutter to track the target's full destructive influence on people, institutions and even entire societies. This destructive influence is defined (as before), as Vice indulgence, Morality loss and murder, but the Thread Cutter comes to understand it in statistical terms — she understands the "moral calculus" of the subject's influence. Major turning points, such as actions that lead to the death and degradation of many people, stand out, revealing themselves in symbolic visions.

2nd: *Preserve the Thread's Measure*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Fate 3, Empathy 3

This Attainment functions as the "Occlude Destiny" rote (see **Magick: The Awakening**, p. 156), but the Thread Cutter rolls Resolve + Empathy + Fate. Furthermore, a Thread Cutter may designate conditions that automatically negate the protection granted by this power. Each condition imposes a -2 penalty on the dice roll.

Thread Cutters usually add conditions that enforce the target's apparent dharma. If the mage believes that the target is destined to be a pacifistic spiritual leader, she will add conditions that negate the power if the subject ever indulges in violence or satisfies a Vice at the expense of another. Similarly, a soldier

who refuses to kill or follow orders may lose the Attainment's protection. Remember, however, that the Euthanist must impose these conditions when she uses the power, and that they are primarily a product of her *opinion*, not a special capacity for understanding the target's true purpose. Thread Cutters do their utmost to ensure that they know what the Three demand of a person, but even their code is fallible.

Optional Arcanum: Death 3

If the Thread Cutter is sufficiently skilled in the Death Arcanum, Preserve the Thread's Measure also acts as the "Suppress Aura" rote (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 137-138). Any conditions that caused the target to lose the normal benefits of the Attainment also negate this benefit.

Thread Cutters use this power to guard people who might have important dharmas. Targets include individuals with the Destiny Merit, people implicated in prophecies or even virtuous people in trouble. Important figures such as these are often hunted by supernatural enemies, so this Attainment is an invaluable tool to help them fulfill their Being. Thread Cutters don't help those who would violate their own dharmas, however, so the Attainment's protection vanishes when the target perverts his place under the Great Law. The Legacy understands that not everyone is comfortable with his dharma, and does forgive minor infractions, but their charges should demonstrate that they are making progress. Otherwise, they must proceed to their Endings.

3rd: Sever Thread

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Fate 4, Empathy 4

When a Thread Cutter decides that a target must meet his Ending, she uses this Attainment to "cut him off" from the rest of the world. He finds that he cannot exert his will on the world around him as reliably as before. While he is not cursed *per se*, anything that depends on tools, social networks and anything else separate from the target's own mind, body and spirit are affected.

In game terms, the Attainment functions much like the Fate "Monkey's Paw" rote (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 155-156) except that it lasts for one scene and targets a person instead of an object. The Thread Cutter rolls Resolve + Empathy + Fate – the target's Composure. The Attainment costs one point of Mana to use.

The penalties of Monkey's Paw apply to (almost) *every* tool the target uses. Furthermore, they also apply to social actions that rely on an organization and not the target's raw force of personality. For example, the target could fast talk an official at the DMV without any special hindrances, but any forms he files might be lost, tagged for investigation or routed to his enemies. In game terms, this affects rolls that relate to Contacts, Fame and Status Merits. In conjunction with Fame, the Attainment can be particularly disastrous, because it affects nearly every social interaction. The target becomes the subject of a scandal, gets thrashed by the critics and otherwise becomes a figure of scorn. Fortunately, famous people benefit from the metaphysical "weight" imposed by others' expectations,

so Fame provides a bit of protection against the power. Each dot of the target's Fame background imposes a -1 penalty to the Thread Cutter's roll.

Similar to Preserve the Thread's Measure, Sever Thread allows Thread Cutters to add conditions that will negate the Attainment. Each condition imposes a -2 penalty on the activation roll. These conditions are usually actions the target could take to demonstrate that he has "turned over a new leaf," for example, returning stolen property or performing a specific act of self-sacrifice.

Remember that Sever Thread does not penalize the target's direct interactions with the world. A gun might explode in his hands, but he can still use his fists effectively. The mayor's office might not return his calls, but the target will be as persuasive as ever in a face-to-face meeting. Allies and Retainers are still reliable unless the target uses an intermediary to communicate with them. The Attainment does not affect supernatural powers or dedicated magical tools, even when the tools are used for mundane tasks, or anything with an Intimate sympathetic connection to the target.

Optional Arcanum: Death 4

If the victim kills and the Thread Cutter is sufficiently skilled in the Death Arcanum, the Attainment takes on a sinister twist. The target becomes the anchor for the ghost of the first person the target kills while suffering its effects. This is similar to the "Haunting" spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 143). The ghost may roll its Resistance to avoid being bound to the target, but the target may not roll (his Resolve is already figured into the Attainment roll). The ghost may be that of a Sleeper or of the mage who activated the Attainment. Thus, an enemy who kills the Euthanist risks pursuit from beyond the grave.

Thread Cutters exercise this Attainment against targets destined for their Endings. It either serves as an extreme way to convince the victim to renew himself or hinders attempts to escape assassination.

Sample Character

Marut

Quote: "I'm here to teach you."

Background: Aside from wrestling and track and field, Sandhya Helekar wasn't interested in school. He just wanted to alternate between workouts and dancing. Eventually, his lackluster school attendance cost him his athletic pursuits. After he dropped out of school and started spending his nights in the New York club scene, his parents issued an ultimatum: live with his uncle in Goa or live on his own, without a dime of family money. He went to Goa.

It took two weeks in Goa for him to get out of his uncle's reach and into the expatriate drug and trance music scene. Ironically, he was welcomed because of his clean living. In exchange for perks at the club, he took care of frequently wasted, impulsive patrons. Over the next year, the gig evolved into a paying job as a bouncer. The money kept his family at bay and gave him a chance to immerse himself in music and



partying. He knew that the club kept afloat on heroin and crystal meth deals, but he chose to ignore it.

It all came crashing down on New Year's Eve four years ago. That night, 18 friends and patrons died from what police would call a combination of overdoses and poisoning. His bosses decided not to take any chances. Sandhya was the only one who knew enough about the club to threaten them but didn't have enough local ties to be trusted. A day later, he stumbled on a man breaking into his uncle's house. Sandhya wrestled the man to the ground, but took a knife in his belly.

While his body lay on a stretcher, his soul drifted through what his teachers would later call the *lokhadhatu*, the Hindu hierarchy of worlds. His soul battled warring demons and floated among the gods as he ascended toward a three-sided light. Then there was darkness and the feel of metal at his fingertips, and a stroke of lightning as he was reborn in a body of iron.

He Awakened in hospital, his uncle by his side. The doctors discovered that his wound wasn't as severe as when he'd been first examined. He went with his uncle, who explained his purpose. Together, they burned down his uncle's house and went to the countryside. Living as an ascetic, Marut learned the ways of the Thread Cutters and the Guardians of the Veil. He specialized in physical discipline, mastering Hatha Yoga and the Kalaripayattu martial art. Two years ago, his uncle arranged for him to return to the United States. The Thread Cutters apparently have plans for him. Marut doesn't know what they are, but his travels have taught him that, in certain company, he could be mistaken for a member of the Adamantine Arrows. Is he being groomed to spy on them or kill one of them? Marut doesn't know. At age 22, he merely waits for orders, making his living as a martial arts teacher as he travels from city to city.

Description: Marut's broad shoulders, rippling muscles and sharp jaw line are handsome; his pockmarked skin and scarred hands (old defensive wounds from the knife attack) are not. He dresses in loose casual clothing, affecting an understated rave or B-Boy style. Marut hates the cold; he dresses in a heavy parka and long scarf during the winter. Wearing these, he tends to slouch into his stride. He habitually wears a red cord necklace and a set of headphones around his neck. Marut conceals an iPod, a fighting knife and a light autoloading pistol on his person at all times. At home or during a training session, he is likely to have a number of exotic, archaic Indian weapons close at hand. Marut specializes in the *gada* (a huge, two-handed mace) and trident.

His nimbus takes the form of an iron sheen that seems to cover his body, a cold blue halo and the smell of ozone. Cold, white lighting flashes in his eyes, and his normally shaven head seems to wear a tattooed crown of concentric wheels.

Storytelling Hints: Player characters who want to learn fighting skills might meet Marut, since he frequently trades lessons for small favors. As far as American mages are concerned, he's a young, trendy mage who can teach self-defense skills.

What are the Thread Cutters preparing Marut for? Will he be a spy? An assassin? Marut's physical skills are impressive for

someone so young, but he has little practical experience. He suspects that the Thread Cutters believe he's nothing more than dumb muscle. As he uses his Attainment to find and erase the destructive influences in people's lives, he is beginning to think that he might just go his own way. And if he knew that his uncle masterminded the poisoning of 18 of his old friends, Marut might rebel completely.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Knife

Real Name: Sandhya Helekar

Path: Moros

Order: Guardians of the Veil

Legacy: Thread Cutters

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult (Tantra) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Unarmed Against Weapons) 4, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise (Club Scene) 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Fighting Style: Kung Fu (Kalaripayattu) 2, High Speech, Holistic Awareness, Languages (Hindi and Sanskrit; English is Native), Weaponry Dodge, Status (Guardians of the Veil) 1

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 5

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 13

Health: 8

Gnosis: 3

Arcana: Death 2, Fate 3, Life 2, Matter 1

Rotes: *Death* – Grim Sight (•), Ghost Summons (••); *Fate* – Quantum Flux (•), Fortune's Protection (••); *Life* – Cleanse the Body (•), Body Control (••); *Matter* – Alter Conductivity (•)

Legacy Attainment: 1st – Sense the Fraying Thread

Mana/per turn: 12/3

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dice Pool	Damage	Size	Special
Combat				
Knife	8	1(L)	1/S	n/a
Gada				
(Maul)	11	4(B)	4/B	n/a
Trident	11	4(L)	4/L	+1 Defense

Type	Dice Pool	Dmg	Range	Clip	Special
Glock 26	8	2(L)	10/20/40	10+1	n/a

Armor: 3 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)



THREAD CUTTERS

THRICE-GREAT

The stars dispose, they do not command. That's our department.

The doom of Atlantis came from its greatest feat of magic – perhaps the greatest feat of magic there ever could be. When the Atlanteans raised the Celestial Ladder and ascended bodily to the Supernal World, they created a myth that would last forever. From the Tower of Babel to the Apollo Program, humanity has sought to storm the heavens once more.

The Legacy that calls itself the Thrice-Great claims it wants to bridge the Abyss and follow the Exarchs and Oracles beyond the sky. The Thrice-Great began during the Hellenistic period between the conquests of Alexander and the Roman Empire. In this period, Greek philosopher-scientists tried to devise a rational model of the universe. The resulting system received its definitive statement by the astronomer Claudius Ptolemy. The Earth, he said, occupied the center of the universe. Around the Earth, concentric crystal spheres carried the Sun, Moon, planets and finally the fixed stars.

In this “Ptolemaic” system, mystics saw more than a convenient model for predicting eclipses and casting horoscopes. They saw a Celestial Ladder. Each crystal sphere was another rung between Earth and the imperishable stars where the Supreme Godhead dwelled. Sleeper mystics tried to climb this ladder through visions, rituals and appeals to the gods and spirits of each planet.

The founders of the Thrice-Great understood that the stars were merely a symbol for the Supernal World; they tried to Ascend by way of the Shadow Realm and the planetary spirits who dwelled there. They did not beg or pray, either. The Thrice-Great believed that a mage who found the right formulas could *command*, and the gods themselves would obey.

These forceful mages, true followers of the Path of the Mighty, therefore became experts at dealing with spirits. They believed (or discovered) that each planet bore mystic affinities to phenomena on Earth: plants, animals, parts of the human body, gemstones, metals, colors, musical tones and numbers. By adding these substances and qualities to their spells, they could attract the forces and spirits of a particular planet – and compel them.

The Thrice-Great called their mystical doctrine Hermeticism, after the god of passage between worlds. A simplified, bastardized form of Hermeticism became known to would-be wizards among the Sleepers, and has influenced Sleeper occultism to this day. The complete and true doctrine remains hidden, care-

fully preserved by the mages who use its methods to become mighty in three worlds: the material world, the Shadow Realm and – they hope – the Supernal World beyond.

Parent Path and Order: Obrimos and Silver Ladder

Nickname: Hermetics, Stargazers

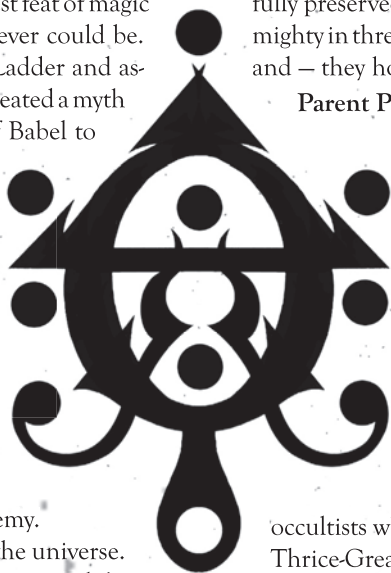
Orders: From their inception, the Thrice-Great worked within the Silver Ladder. The association is old and strong enough that the théarchs now teach the Legacy to mages of any Path, not just its Obrimos creators. The Mysterium also holds a fair number of Hermetics who seek the keys to command the planetary spirits and Ascend to the Supernal World. The Guardians of the Veil have a history of clashes with the Thrice-Great, but a few Stargazers help the order monitor the Sleeper

occultists who study Hermetic lore leaked long ago. These Thrice-Great recruit any who show real mystic talent and steer the rest away from the genuine Mysteries.

The Thrice-Great's ritualist approach to magic discourages members of the Adamantine Arrow from joining the Legacy. Mages in the Free Council often think the tradition-bound, elitist Thrice-Great embody everything the Libertines don't like about the Atlantean orders: they Libertines don't try to join, and no Thrice-Great has yet become a Libertine.

Appearance: Modern Thrice-Great often try for a look that might be called “classy outsider.” They wear black a lot, whether it's a turtleneck sweater or frock-coat (for men) or flowing robes or pseudo-Victorian widow's weeds (for women). Some male Thrice-Great affect well-trimmed goatees, shaved heads or other styles just a bit outside the mainstream. Hermetics of either sex tend to wear low-key jewelry made from different metals and semiprecious stones, using images appropriate for particular planets. For instance, a Thrice-Great might wear a copper pin shaped like a swan: copper and swans are both associated with Venus. Such jewelry isn't magical – but makes an acceptable offering to planetary spirits, if the Stargazer must summon them on the fly.

Background: The Thrice-Great began among the elite of the Greco Roman world; only well-off, educated people had a chance to learn about Hermetic mysticism, or could afford to use its ritualist methods. The Legacy still affects a scholarly and aristocratic air. Most members have college degrees (or say they do). They can afford to craft the occasional talisman of precious metals and gems, not to mention acquiring a diverse assortment of plants, animal parts, perfumes and other



substances associated with each planet and pleasing to its spirits. Hermetics see themselves as the underappreciated intelligentsia of the magical world, and the Legacy tends to attract people who already held that attitude before they Awakened. Thrice-Great often were interested in the occult before they became mages.

Organization: The Hermetics organize themselves in lodges that act as diffuse Consilii, with their own officers, bylaws, oaths and rituals. Stargazers are supposed to bring their problems and disputes to their lodge leaders, not their Consilium—a bit of secrecy other mages do not appreciate. Stargazers obsess over ranks, titles and other indicators of power and (supposedly) progress up the Planetary Ladder.

Lodges tend to schism every time there's a conflict in leadership, or even fall apart completely. Some lodges also refuse to acknowledge other lodges as "genuine" Thrice-Great. Depending on whom you ask, the Legacy includes anywhere from six to 15 lodges. Hermetics sometimes abandon one lodge for another, so the lodges lack well-defined territories.

Suggested Oblations: Performing a full Hermetic ceremony during a planetary conjunction. Performing an hour-long invocation to a planet and the zodiacal sign the planet currently occupies. A ceremony whenever a planet (usually Venus or Jupiter) first appears visible to the naked eye in the night sky. Charting a client's horoscope based on Classical principles (not New Age hokum).

Concepts: College humanities professor, professional astrologer, "metaphysical" bookshop proprietor, artist, amateur astronomer, mystic cult leader, barista, invisible worker in a big organization.

History

The Stargazers believe their Hermetic doctrine began with a figure called Hermes Trismegistos, "Thrice-Great Hermes." Hellenistic mystics identified the Greek god Hermes with the Egyptian god of magic, Thoth. By the later Roman period, mystics said Hermes Trismegistos was a mortal wizard and prophet—the first prophet in fact, whose doctrine was older



(and therefore more authoritative) than other mystic stalwarts such as Moses and Zoroaster. The Stargazers say, however, that Thrice-Great Hermes was fully historical: Sleeper history knows him as the Greek astronomer Hipparchos, who lived from 190 to 120 BC.

Hipparchos is one of the key figures in the history of astronomy. Orthodox history does not describe him as a mystic, but even Sleeper historians have recently figured out that he triggered a religious revolution. Hipparchos discovered the precession of the equinoxes: that the point in the zodiac where the sun rises at the start of spring and autumn slowly moves, taking 26,000 years to make a complete circle. This incidentally means the celestial pole isn't constant, either. It slowly traces a circle in the sky, so one star after another becomes the pole star. In Hipparchos' time, the Sun rose in

the constellation of Aries, the Ram, at the spring equinox, but 2,000 years before, the Sun rose in Taurus, the Bull. And in a century or two, the Sun would rise in Pisces, the Fishes. The sunrise at equinox currently approaches the constellation of Aquarius, the Water-Carrier.

In the Ptolemaic model, the entire universe spun around the Earth, completing one circuit each day. The Sun, Moon and planets moved more slowly against this daily background. The system was self-contained. Hipparchos discovered a grander motion superimposed on the system. Some force was tipping *the entire universe*, making it wobble like a top about to fall!

When Claudius Ptolemy recorded Hipparchos' discovery, Ptolemy simply described the precession of the equinoxes as a fact, without trying to explain it. Mystics saw the hand of the Supreme Godhead – no longer dwelling inside the universe but beyond it, turning the cosmos and bending the path of the poles.

The Thrice-Great say that Hipparchos himself Awakened when he realized some force must exist outside the cosmos he could observe. Over the years, he learned the star-magic of Mesopotamia and the god-magic of Egypt, and then quested into the Shadow Realm to find the spirits of the planets. He Ascended the celestial spheres to the sphere of the stars and cried out, demanding to pass and face the One Beyond.

Hipparchos received an answer from the Oracle of the Golden Key itself, whom the Thrice-Great call Aion. The Oracle gave Hipparchos the powers of the Legacy and told him how to use his Attainments. Aion also explained the affinities that still linked the material, planetary and Supernal realms. The astronomer returned from his celestial voyage as Thrice-Great Hermes, the Oracle's own messenger to the Fallen World. The Thrice-Great say their founder never truly died, but climbed the Planetary Ladder again and jumped across the Abyss to the Supernal World.

Thrice-Great During the Roman Empire

Hipparchos' discoveries, both astronomical and metaphysical, spread far beyond the Legacy he founded. The early Thrice-Great did not keep their doctrines secret. In fact, they tried to teach every educated, philosophically minded person they could find, in hopes they would Awaken as Hipparchos. After so many centuries, of course, the modern Thrice-Great have little hard evidence of their forebears' activities, but modern Thrice-Great point to circumstantial evidence of the Legacy's influence.

The far-flung but secretive religion of Mithraism, for instance, built temples filled with astronomical symbolism. Thrice-Great tradition holds that the central Mithraic image, of the god killing a bull, represented the shift of the equinox from Taurus to Aries.

The Gnostics – diverse offshoots from Christianity and Judaism – believed that evil, false gods held souls prisoner in an evil, false world. Some Gnostics associated these false gods with the deities of the planetary spheres. The true god dwelt outside the realms of matter, spirit and the visible heavens.

In each written dialogue of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a divine figure tells an eager mortal how souls come from a higher, purer realm. Salvation involves understanding one's connection to this greater reality.

The *Chaldean Oracles* tell how to contact and summon gods and spirits through their affinities to plants, animals, stones and other material things. No one now can say how much of the Thrice-Great methods the *Chaldean Oracles* revealed: only fragments of the book survive through quotations by other writers. The Guardians of the Veil say they worked for centuries to suppress the *Chaldean Oracles*. If they still own any copies, they certainly won't admit it.

The purest statement of Thrice-Great ideas to Sleepers came through the Neoplatonist mystics of the fourth through sixth centuries AD. The Neoplatonists combined philosophy with magic rituals from the *Chaldean Oracles*. Indeed, the Thrice-Great say many of these now-obscure mystics were members of their Legacy.

The Neoplatonists insisted on sticking to Greek religious forms after the Roman Empire made Christianity the state religion. The Thrice-Great Legacy died out in Europe with the suppression of the last Neoplatonic academy. Nevertheless, the Stargazers regard the Neoplatonist movement as their Legacy's golden age. They seek to recover lost works by their Neoplatonist forebears, for many Thrice-Great believe several of these Awakened philosophers matched Hipparchos' epic journey and brought back powerful secrets about the planetary spirits and the Supernal World.

Medieval Hiatus

After the suppression of the Neoplatonists, the Thrice-Great survived in secret among scholars of the new Muslim empire. Unfortunately, while Muslim savants preserved a great deal of Classical astronomy and philosophy, Islam was no friendlier than Christianity to the idea of planetary spirits. The Legacy, and its lore about planetary spirits, declined simply because it was hard for members to find each other, share information and assist in training each others' pupils. Still, Muslim Stargazers added a few texts to the *Corpus Hermeticum*.

The Thrice-Great achieved a few small revivals in this period, though. Most notably, Legacy members gathered at the court of Ulugh Begh, in 15th-century Samarkand. Astronomy fascinated this grandson of the conqueror Timur. His observatory compiled the most accurate star tables and calculations of planetary motion the world had yet seen. Under cover of this research, the Thrice-Great restored contact with many powerful spirits of the planets. The mages who currently occupy the Legacy's hidden sanctum, however, are not Thrice-Great and refuse to let modern Hermetics search for lost secrets of their forebears.

Meanwhile, the Thrice-Great Legacy filtered back into Europe along with the rest of Classical learning. By the 15th century, European mages actively sought to reclaim the secrets of Greek and Roman willworkers. Sleepers also rediscovered the *Corpus Hermeticum*, much to the Guardians of the Veil's collective annoyance.

A Troubled Transition

The leading figures of this Hermetic Revival gathered in Italy. The Sleeper Classicist and mystic Marsilio Ficino almost let the Hermetic Mysteries escape through his translations and commentaries on the *Corpus Hermeticum*, but he misunderstood what he read through his lack of an Awakened perspective. His Awakened readers, however, recognized what he got wrong and sought corrected information.

Some of these new Thrice-Great wanted to spread the word as badly as their Neoplatonist forebears. The Legacy's most determined publicist for this period was surely the magus Fabio Paolini, whose *Hebdomades* described in explicit detail how to evoke planetary spirits and draw on their power for willworking. The Guardians of the Veil retaliated with Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, meant to lay out the Guardians' usual deluding mix of incomplete truths and convincing lies. Agrippa was not as good a pawn as the Guardians hoped. His work revealed more of the truth than the Guardians intended. On the other hand, a few Sleepers every century Awaken from dabbling with Agrippa's methods; the Thrice-Great sometimes list Agrippa as *their* pawn, if they feel like annoying Guardian colleagues.

Just as Europe's new Hermetics congratulated themselves on recovering ancient powers, a Polish bishop pulled the rug out from their enterprise. Nicolaus Copernicus' argument that everything revolved around the Sun, not the Earth, rocked the mystical and scientific communities as thoroughly as Hipparchos' discoveries had done 16 centuries before. No one took it worse than the Thrice-Great. If the Earth was merely one planet among other planets, what did that do to the crystal spheres and spirit realms that Thrice-Great doctrine called the remains of the Celestial Ladder?

Each century after Copernicus brought new shocks. Galileo found moons around Jupiter, something never revealed by centuries of Thrice-Great dealings with Jovian spirits. During the 18th century, William Herschel discovered a new planet, eventually named Uranus, which had never appeared in Hermetic plans. The stars didn't occupy a crystal shell; they were distant suns. Nineteenth-century astronomers found the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, then Neptune orbiting beyond Uranus. The 20th century brought Pluto, a tiny world whose madcap orbit sometimes brought it within the orbit of Neptune. By the century's end, Pluto was demoted from planet to the largest known member of the Kuiper Belt of icy planetoids, with an inconceivably vast Oort Cloud of other small, icy bodies beyond that.

The Legacy's official response to each new discovery has been to ignore it. All the discoveries of modern astronomy, the Thrice-Great leaders declared, are but deceptions placed by the Exarchs. Before the fall of Atlantis, Earth *was* the center of the universe, the planets *did* ride on crystal spheres and the planetary spirit courts in the Shadow Realm *do* occupy the surviving rungs of the Celestial Ladder. This attitude, unfortunately, made the Thrice-Great into dogmatic foes of the mages who would form the Free Council. Bad feeling persists on both sides.

The sheer diversity of magical doctrines now available to contemporary mages also erodes the Thrice-Great's claims to ancient authority. The Hermetics certainly wield great power, but not enough to render them clearly superior to other Legacies. The Hermetics' methods are also undeniably cumbersome. The Legacy enjoyed a surge in recruitment during the 1960s, when interest in astrology made newly Awakened mages receptive to the Thrice-Great's claims of ancient wisdom. Recruitment dropped off again, however, and the Legacy is clearly in decline. After 2,000 years of reaching for the sky, will the Thrice-Great finally crash to Earth?

Society

The Thrice-Great hold a high opinion of themselves. All the Awakened are special people, of course — but how many Legacies formed through the direct command of an Oracle? An Oracle that continues to send messages to its disciples, the Thrice-Great say. The Stargazers claim Aion itself as the leader of their Legacy, with Hermes Trismegistos and other Ascended Masters, or *Ipsissimi*, as the Oracle's assistants in the Supernal World.

Here in the Fallen World, however, the Legacy has no single leader. The head of each lodge takes the title of Pontifex. Each Pontifex has the Legacy's third Attainment but otherwise achieves his office only by persuading other Hermetics to follow him and form a lodge. The Pontifexes entice Hermetics from other lodges by bragging about the quantities of lore the lodge has gathered, the lodge's influence in the planetary spirit courts, and their own power. The greatest boast for a Hermetic, of course, is to Ascend the ladder of planetary spheres and return with a new message from Aion. Such a Thrice-Great takes the title of Magister Caelestis.

Thrice-Great receive lesser titles based on their Attainments. A Hermetic with all three Attainments is a Dominus. The second Attainment brings the rank of Philosophus, while a Stargazer with only the first Attainment is a Practicus. Apprentices not yet initiated are addressed as Zelator. In formal communications (including lodge meetings), a Thrice-Great is expected to begin with another Hermetic's rank in the Legacy, order and Arcana mastery: for instance, "Philosophus Deacon Chrysantius, Disciple in the Third Degree." For the rest of the encounter, Thrice-Great may limit themselves to the other mage's rank in the Legacy.

Stargazers typically choose shadow names in Greek or Latin, and assign such names to their apprentices. Shadow names may express some ideal or hoped-for achievement (such as Telephassa, "Far Shiner"), or just "classicize" a contemporary name (such as turning Kurtz into Curtius). Names of ancient philosophers and astronomers such as Anaxagoras or Hypatia are also used.

Celestial Power

The Thrice-Great believe that as they gain Attainments, their souls become more similar to that of their patron Aion. This creates a sympathetic link between the Fallen World and

Supernal World. The more of the Fallen World the Hermetics bring under their influence, the more easily Aion can reach into the mortal realm to spark more Awakenings. They also strengthen Aion's position in the Supernal World: as below, so above.

As members of the Silver Ladder, Thrice-Great mages often seek influence in politics, business or other worldly institutions. A few Hermetics use their magic to advance their careers and gain social power directly. More often, though, a Hermetic stays in the background. Instead of becoming mayor or running a million-dollar business, the Stargazer works in the City Hall mailroom or at the coffee shop where the executives congregate. The mage nudges events through covert magic, sympathetic links or spirit minions. It's less direct, but safer.

Thrice-Great also seek influence in the spirit courts associated with the planets. Thrice-Great know the rulers of each planetary court, whom they call Archons, will not help rebuild the Celestial Ladder — not unless the Thrice-Great force them somehow. Some Hermetics suspect the Archons may be trustees for the Exarchs. At the very least, Thrice-Great tutors say, the Archons do not care about human affairs or anything humans could comprehend.

Only an archmage could hope to bind an Archon. Fortunately, the planetary courts include spirits of every power level. The lesser gods wield enough power for most of a mage's purposes. Legacy members build their power step-by-step, drawing minor planetary spirits to their service and using them as envoys to greater spirits. When a Hermetic cannot compel, he dickers and bribes until he can forge a lasting contract for particular services — and gain audience with the next tier of the spirit court.

Following the example set by the great Paolini, Hermetics call planetary spirits *henads* — “sevens” — to distinguish them from other spirits. Between the seven planetary courts, Thrice-Great can recruit henads with almost any Influence they need.

Thrice-Great doctrine holds that to send a call across the Abyss, a mage needs backing from all seven planetary courts. A high-ranking henad must grant the mage an honorary rank in the court, increasing the mage's authority over spirits of that planet. This special status comes with a new name the mage uses with spirits of that planet as a sort of password. When a Stargazer collects password-names from all seven courts, he may seek the final celestial realm, the sphere of the stars, and call to Aion.

Revelations from Aion

Once a Thrice-Great possesses all three Attainments and all seven passwords to the planetary courts, she may climb the ladder of celestial spheres and seek a revelation from Aion. Thrice-Great tradition says some Celestial Masters returned with fourth Attainments — all different, all awesomely powerful. Others returned as archmages . . . and others did not return at all, because Aion pulled them into the Supernal World.

In verifiable, modern history, however, Aion's revelations have proved less spectacular. A Celestial Master returns with merely a new rote — conveniently, for some feat of magic the Stargazer has already performed many times — or a useful tidbit of lore. Skeptics also suggest the communications from Aion seem less than divine in their wisdom. Exhortations to guide the Sleepers in the paths of wisdom and protect them from the Abyss and the Seers are high-minded enough but a bit . . . hackneyed, as if some merely human intellect tried to come up with something a superhumanly wise spiritual master *ought* to say.

New Merit: Celestial Name (● to ●●●●●●●●)

When a planetary god gives a Stargazer a new name, it confers a minor, honorary rank in the spirit court of that planet. The new name acts as a password to enter that court: the mage still must obey all the court's rules, but at least hostile henads may give the mage a chance to talk.

The Hermetic also gains a +1 bonus to all dice pools for interacting with spirits of that court, whether magically or socially. For instance, the mage gains the bonus to summon this class of henads, to compel them or banish them, or to attempt to persuade or negotiate with the spirits using mundane Skills. The Thrice-Great does not gain the bonus for outright attacks on the spirit (including use of the third Attainment).

Given time, power and successful negotiations with high-ranking spirits, a mage could parlay a Celestial Name into actual Status in the planetary court. This would confer greater authority over lower-ranking spirits but also mean obligations toward higher-ranking spirits, so Thrice-Great are cautious about pursuing this route. A Celestial Name is pure privilege. Status in multiple spirit courts also tends to cause conflicts of interest, while the point of Celestial Names is to collect them from all seven planetary courts.

Magic

The quick, on-the-fly spellcasting of Thrice Great mages looks much the same as that of any other willworker. They prefer wands and disks as Path tools. A Hermetic's disk sometimes takes the form of an astrolabe (a device for measuring a star's position; it looks like a disk with a crossbar for sighting). The defining tool for the Thrice-Great, however, is the *strophados*. This device consists of a golden ball on a cord. The mage swings the strophados to imitate the circling motion of the heavens. Thrice-Great generally engrave their strophados with a diagram and sigils representing the position of the planets at the time of their Awakening. A Thrice-Great strophados also unscrews so the mage can load it with substances sympathetic to the planet whose power or spirits she wants to invoke. The strophados is essential for extended spellcasting and is a favored tool for summoning planetary spirits or opening roads to the Shadow Realm.



Thrice-Great magic becomes most distinctive when these mages engage in extended casting in their sanctums. A Hermetic collects a wide range of substances with affinities to the planets, from bolts of colored cloth to body parts from different animals. For a full ritual, a Thrice-Great draws a magic circle marked with the signs of the zodiac and the current positions of the planets, with chords drawn to mark relationships such as opposition, trine, sextile and square.

The Hermetic strengthens the influence of planets that relate to his intended feat of magic by placing the proper substances on their sigils. The chamber of the ritual may also be hung with cloth of the proper color; corresponding perfumes scent the air. As part of the ritual, the Thrice-Great may also play notes associated with the planets he invokes, using a lyre or similar instrument. Especially long rites can include a chanted recitation of a hymn by the Greek poets Homer or Hesiod to a god associated with the planet. The Hermetic also swings the strophados. The total time spent whirling the strophados must exceed one time increment for extended spellcasting, as set by the mage's Gnosis (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 76), so extended spellcasting can be quite strenuous for novice Stargazers.

This elaborate paraphernalia grants the Thrice-Great certain benefits to spellcasting. (They are not usually feasible for instant spellcasting.)

- All cooperative spellcasting by Thrice-Great mages gains a +1 bonus to teamwork rolls, as if they belonged to a symbolic cabal. This applies to instant as well as ritual spellcasting, but requires the use of at least three planetary correspondences.
- Combined spellcasting is easier. Using at least five planetary affinities cancels the penalty for one spell in a combined casting. For instance, a Thrice-Great could cast two spells at once, without raising the effective Arcana ratings of the spells or suffering a -2 penalty to the dice pools for casting each spell. (This does *not* enable a Thrice-Great to cast more spells at once than his Gnosis would allow, though.)
- At least three planetary affinities in a spell counters -1 dice of any other penalties to the mage's spellcasting dice pool. Five affinities cancel 2 dice of penalty.
- Use of at least three planetary correspondences reduces the Paradox dice pool by 1. Use of five affinities reduces the Paradox dice pool by 2.

Other mages do not gain these benefits by using Hermetic methods and planetary correspondences: other mages' souls lack a Thrice-Great's sympathy for planetary energies.

Astrological Magic

No one can say when humans first associated magic with the planets. By the Renaissance, Sleeper astrologers no longer believed the planets were actual gods moving around the sky. Instead, the planets radiated forces that made various events more or less likely — such as how the Moon controlled the tides, but more subtle. Mars, for instance, governed fire, war and disease. If Mars occupied particular signs of the zodiac or particular angles to other planets, people were more likely to quarrel, get sick or have their homes burn down.

The Thrice-Great now ascribe these arcane influences to the planetary courts. The tides of celestial power shift according to the planets' locations and angles to each other in the sky, however, even though the power comes from the Shadow Realm instead of outer space.

Astrology, therefore, is real — at least if you're Awakened. The Silver Ladder has initiated several Acanthus into the Thrice-Great. These mages use astrology for prophecy and fate-weaving. All Hermetic magic involves concentrating the mystic tides to bolster the mage's spells.

Planetary Correspondences

Thrice-Great use special substances and conditions to attract mystic energies from the planetary spirit courts. The character of each planet suggests Influences for its spirits and a range of magical feats it can empower. The planets do not correspond tidily to specific Arcana or Practices, however, so Thrice-Great (and their players) have some freedom in which planets they invoke in spellcasting.

The **Sun** is associated with magic of light (of course), energy, life-force, willpower, healing and augmentation of power. No surprise, the Sun is the favorite "planet" for Obrimos mages.

The **Moon** is the planet of transformation, illusion and everything changeable, from the element of water to emotions and magic itself.

Mercury is associated with thought and motion: investigation and analysis as well as literal travel and exploration. Commerce, theft and divination also fall in this planet's purview. Mercury's element is Air.

Venus governs living creatures, fertility, pleasure, love, friendship and all the softer emotions that bring people together. Venus' element is Earth, but as the abode of life rather than solidity or stability.

Mars is the planet of raw force, sometimes creative but often destructive, the element of fire, war, violent emotions and other disruptions. Mars also governs fever and blood. Venus seduces; Mars overwhelms.

Jupiter is associated with the element of air and weather as well as politics, laws, morals, rulership and justice. Jupiter also governs money, religion and social power in general.

Saturn is the planet of time, age, death and restriction. Saturn's element is Earth, offering stability and defense as well as limitation or destruction.

Even Sleeper occultists know that gold and yellow correspond to the Sun, silver and white to the Moon, quicksilver and gray (or mottled colors) to Mercury, copper and green to Venus, iron and red to Mars, tin and blue to Jupiter and lead and black to Saturn. The jewels, animals, plants and other associations of each planet are too diverse to list. Pop-occult books give detailed (and contradictory) lists of planetary correspondences . . . but none should be trusted.

New and Lost Planets

A few Thrice-Great believe the asteroid belt represents a broken "rung" in the Celestial Ladder, while the "rungs" corresponding to Uranus, Neptune and Pluto were lost to the Abyss when the Ladder broke. A few other Hermetics believe the four missing spirit courts are now scattered, in hiding or imprisoned in some way. These Stargazers think the Celestial Ladder could be mended by restoring the lost spirit courts.

The majority of Thrice-Great, however, believe such plans are modern, revisionist nonsense. As they point out, tradition gives no correspondences to the asteroids or outer planets. Hermetic Tutors generally cut off "heretical" pupils. The situation might change if a heretic Stargazer could locate a spirit for one of the "new" planets, or could show some great benefit from creating such spirits.

Spirit Allies

A great deal of Thrice-Great magic deals with summoning and controlling henads. The legacy's masters of Spirit also create planetary spirits — and after more than 2,000 years, they've made significant additions to the planetary courts. Most Hermetics eventually gain henad associates of their own, and the Legacy as a whole claims a host of contacts and allies in the planetary courts. The Thrice-Great define three classes of allied spirits.

- **Iynges** (singular lynx) are personal familiars. A Thrice-Great can easily create a "feeding station" for a henad familiar using objects and conditions corresponding to the spirit's planet. For instance, a spirit of Mars could gain Essence from a wolf's head mounted on a cedar plaque over a fireplace, flanked by iron swords and with red candles on the mantelpiece; every day, the mage burns an appropriate incense.

• **Synocheis** (“Connectors”; singular, Synocheus) are henads bound to statues to create fetishes. A lodge can’t gain any respect unless it has several Synocheis. Not only do the fetish-statues provide the lodge with Paradox-free powers, the bound henads can contact other spirits and tell them of a Thrice-Great’s desire for an audience. When a lodge breaks up, much of the acrimony centers on who takes possession of the Synocheis. Creating a Synocheus involves placing substances sympathetic to the spirit’s planet within a hollow statue (called a *telestika*), as well as use of the “Create Fetish” spell. Synocheis can be represented as Imbued Items or as Retainers.

• **Teletarchs** (“Initiation Masters”) are the greater spirits allied to the Legacy as a whole, bound to respond when a Thrice-Great uses the proper formula. The mage must still persuade the Teletarch and offer it some consideration in return for its aid, just as a mortal Ally. Teletarchs are at least Rank 4, and they can carry appeals to more powerful henads. The formulas for contacting Teletarchs are so valuable that Pontifices and other senior Thrice-Great tend to keep them secret from lesser members – with the inevitable result that the Legacy has lost the protocols to contact many Teletarchs. These potent spirits would still respond, though, if any mage could rediscover the proper rites.

Initiation

A candidate to join the Thrice-Great must first prove her knowledge of Platonist and Neoplatonist philosophy, naked-eye astronomy (enough competence to track the planets through the zodiac) and classical astrology. She must also demonstrate her ability to evoke planetary spirits and perform other magical feats in the Hermetic style. Her examination takes place at a lodge’s main sanctum, before a board of three Hermetics with a minimum rank of Philosophus. The Thrice-Great also call one of the lodge’s Teletarchs, who may ask whatever questions it pleases and examine the candidate’s aura. The divine spirit may veto the candidate’s application at this time, without any need to give a reason. The candidate can try again a year later, with a different Teletarch.

If the mages and patron god agree that the candidate deserves to join the Legacy, the senior Thrice-Great open a Verge in a special chamber. The lodge’s Synocheis are summoned to add their own auras, giving the ritual chamber the resonance of all seven planets. In this sacred space between material and spiritual, terrestrial and celestial, the tutor guides his pupil in a complex astrological ritual that shapes her soul. After the ceremony, each attending spirit receives a gift of Essence from the lodge.

The ritual to confer the second Attainment is very similar. A triumvirate of Domini, including the lodge’s Pontifex, verifies the Stargazer’s proficiency as a Disciple of Spirit. While they’re at it, they register his current competency at the other Arcana, too. As a final test, the Thrice-Great himself summons a Teletarch to witness the Stargazer’s graduation to the next Attainment. This is usually quite easy, since the divine spirit has been notified of the ceremony and is already nearby.

The ceremony of the third Attainment happens so rarely that a lodge’s entire membership may gather to witness the event. The ritual itself does not differ greatly from the previous Attainments. The new Dominus, however, ends the ceremony by giving out Essence to as many planetary spirits as wish to attend. The Thrice-Great consider it auspicious if the Dominus can use her new Attainment to convert the sanctum’s Hallow into a temporary locus, while the other Thrice-Great lower the sanctum’s wards and issue a call to every spirit in the area – an open house and all-you-can-eat spiritual feast. Such events remind the spirits and lodge members of their position as lords of the spirit world. For this reason, most Thrice-Great wait until they become Adepts of both Prime and Spirit before seeking their third Attainment.

The Thrice-Great hold firm doctrines about fourth Attainments. Such ultimate mastery comes not from any mortal rite but by contacting Aion. The Oracle itself confers a fourth Attainment, which may be different for each mage. As usual with fourth Attainments, however, no Thrice-Great in living memory has provably received this ultimate power.

Attainments

Thrice-Great mages, in their spirit dealings, use many techniques known to other mages – true names, offerings, commands in the name of mightier spirits and so on. Thrice-Great also reach out with their will to shape the substance of the Shadow Realm itself. A Hermetic can ease a spirit’s activities or make them more difficult.

1st: Celestial Beacon

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Spirit 2 (primary), Prime 1, Occult 2

A mage’s initiation into the Thrice-Great Legacy grants him power over the Gauntlet at places where Supernal energies flow with abundance. With an instant action, the Thrice-Great can raise or lower the location’s Gauntlet strength by as much as his Spirit rating. This Attainment acts similar to the Spirit 2 “Place of Power” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 247) except the results are automatic. The Attainment also works at ley nodes, while the spell can only be used at Halls. If two Hermetics cooperate, their uses of Celestial Beacon do not add; apply the results from the mage with the higher Spirit rating. If the Hermetics oppose each other, however, subtract the less-proficient mage’s Spirit rating from the change wrought by the mage with greater proficiency at Spirit.

From Twilight or the Shadow Realm, a Thrice-Great who lowers the Gauntlet seems to draw in waves of light that form a sparkling vortex, advertising the lowered Gauntlet to every spirit nearby. Raising the Gauntlet spreads a hard, crystalline darkness as if the location were drowned in obsidian, warning any spirit not to bother attempting a passage. Similar to the spell a Celestial Beacon emulates, a Celestial Beacon lasts one scene.

A Practicus can also see into Twilight. When the Hermetic uses this aspect of the Attainment, he also gains the benefit of Second Sight, allowing him to see the traces of spirit Numina

as well as willworker magic, and gauge the strength of the local Gauntlet. Any time the mage wants to use this aspect of the Attainment, he must devote an instant action to doing so.

2nd: Planetary Portal

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Spirit 3

By drawing in the tides of power from the planetary courts, a Philosophus can open a swirling portal between the Material Realm and Shadow Realm; either mortals or spirits may pass. The Planetary Portal resembles the “Spirit Road” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 251). Similar to the spell, using this Attainment costs one Mana each time.

The mage can open a Planetary Portal anywhere she wants, but the process may take several actions. Subtract the mage’s Spirit rating from the local Gauntlet strength to find how many turns it takes to open the Planetary Portal (a minimum of 1). At a ley node or Hollow, the Thrice-Great could use Celestial Beacon to weaken the Gauntlet first. As with Spirit Road, the Planetary Portal lasts only one turn. Anything longer requires actual spellcasting.

To mortal eyes, a Planetary Portal looks like a momentary, circular shimmer in the air. It could be a trick of the light, or a person’s imagination. From the Shadow Realm or Twilight, however, the ingathering spiritual vortex shines in coruscating hues: every Thrice-Great’s portal looks different, with colors set by the position of the planets at the time of her initiation into the Legacy. Any Thrice-Great (or someone else with spiritual perceptions and Occult proficiency) can figure out when a Hermetic received initiation through a successful Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 3), just by studying his Planetary Portal.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 3

If a Thrice-Great is also a Disciple of Prime, he can augment or counter the powers of planetary spirits. This resembles Counterspell Prime (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 222) except this Attainment affects spirit Influences. The mage contests the spirit’s Power + Finesse roll with his own Gnosis + Prime. Each success for the mage removes once success from the spirit’s attempt to use Influence. Alternatively, the mage can apply his roll as an attempt at teamwork, increasing the spirit’s chance of success. Thrice-Great lack sufficient affinity to other spirits to strengthen or counter their Influences.

Thrice-Great use this power to entice or threaten henads. Every spirit wants to use its Influences with greater power, for those Influences define its nature. Boosting their power affirms the spirit’s existence, while weakening them diminishes the spirit’s sense of its own being. However, Thrice-Great cannot use this power to affect a spirit’s Numina — and a diminished spirit is quite likely to strike back.

3rd: Orb of the Firmament

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Spirit 4

The highest verified Attainment of the Thrice-Great terrifies all spirits, for it locks them into the hostile Material Realm. From the Shadow Realm (or to creatures with spiritual perceptions), what looks like a violent whirlwind of light wraps around

the spirit, and then hardens into a crystal sphere that traps the spirit in a particular location. This resembles the Spirit 4 “Bind Spirit” spell (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 251), but the character merely needs to win a contested roll of Gnosis + Spirit against the spirit’s Rank + Resistance. The Orb of the Firmament lasts one scene. The Attainment does not allow extended rolls; neither does the binding gain indefinite Duration with Spirit 5. The Orb of the Firmament may last long enough, however, for the mage to attempt a more thorough restraint using regular Spirit magic.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 4

On the other hand, a Dominus who is also an Adept of Prime can offer spirits a most tremendous boon. By casting the Orb of the Firmament into an active Hollow, a Stargazer transforms the Hollow into a locus of equal strength. Seen from the Shadow Realm, the Hollow’s power curls in on itself and then beams out, transformed, like a brilliant, circling searchlight. The Hollow continues to produce Essence for a scene, and then reverts to its former state.

Sample Character

*Dominus Deacon Herald Nestorius,
Master in the Second Degree*

Quote: “I think I can help you with this little problem.”

Background: Don Fechko Awakened in 1973 after he tried to summon the spirit of the San Andreas Fault using a ritual he cobbled together from Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* and assorted pop-occult books. He thought a few of his little ritual spells had worked; in the naïve enthusiasm of youth, he imagined that if he could summon the fault’s spirit he could also bind it, and so prevent earthquakes. Of course, nothing came to his magic circle. His life turned strange in the coming days, though, until someone he took to be the Spirit of the Fault guided him to the Watchtower of the Golden Key. Don’s first mentor was a Thrice-Great who gave Don the name of a Neoplatonist who used a statue of Achilles to save Athens from an earthquake.

Nestorius has spent his entire magical career with the Thrice-Great, even before he could actually be initiated. He’s a Herald for his Consilium and a Deacon for the region’s Silver Ladder. He oversees a branch sanctum for his lodge, the Temple of Sothis in Splendor. Under his leadership, the local théarchs rigged an urban redevelopment project to shift the city’s ley lines to their benefit. Several years ago, Nestorius rediscovered the Thrice-Great’s pact with the minor goddess Aphrodite Epitymbria (“Aphrodite of the Tombs”); her necromantic power enabled a group of Hermetics to quash an uprising of ghosts. He’s acquired Celestial Names and spirit allies. Indeed, Nestorius has done almost everything the Thrice-Great can hope to achieve.

Nestorius has not, however, become a Magister Caelestis; he hasn’t told anyone yet about gaining his seventh Celestial Name. He knows he must obtain a revelation from Aion, however, before achieving the final honor: becoming Pontifex of his own



lodge. Thrice-Great tradition says Nestorius should be able to call across the Abyss. He has made trial expeditions to the far, little-known frontiers of the Shadow Realm where dwell the spirits of the uncaring stars – but he hesitates. What if he's not quite great enough? What if the Abyss has spread too wide?

Patient preparation has always served Nestorius well. He expects it will again. In his travels for his Consilium, Nestorius cultivates brilliant young mages with innovative ideas. He even swallows his pride to be civil to snotty young Libertines. Nestorius vows he *will* produce an amazing revelation when he returns from his ascent of the Celestial Ladder – whether it comes from Aion or not.

Description: In his public identity, “Donald Nestor” runs a hole-in-the-wall used bookstore with a great New Age section. (The local Guardians appreciate his tips on who's doing what in the Sleeper occult community.) He looks every inch the avuncular mentor, with his swept-back, gray hair, neatly trimmed mustache and a twinkle in his eyes behind gold-rimmed glasses – scholarly and professional with his waistcoat and pressed slacks, but endearingly approachable with his tennis shoes and Led Zeppelin T-shirt. The seven closely-spaced buttons of his waistcoat are each carved of a different semiprecious stone, engraved with a symbol for each of the planets.

Nestorius' nimbus looks like half-seen crystal bands wheeling around him, with an ever-changing, multitonal hum. This is a common nimbus for advanced Thrice-Great.

Storytelling Hints: Behind his façades as the helpful mentor and confident master mage, Nestorius fears failure and losing face. He's done bad things because he didn't want to seem less capable than other mages, and will do so again – he *must* produce some proof of a successful ascent and contact with Aion. In fact, he works harder to prepare for the chance of failure than he does to ensure his success. He is also not a very original thinker: he seeks out young prodigies so he can steal their ideas (and, if necessary, their roles). Nestorius' undeniable power, prestige and connections in the spirit world make him a valuable but ultimately treacherous mentor . . . perhaps lethally treacherous.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Gold and steel wand, concealed within the handle of an umbrella; strophados, for Spirit workings

Real Name: Don Fechko

Path: Obrimos

Order: Silver Ladder

Legacy: Thrice-Great

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Arcane History) 4, Crafts 1, Investigation 3, Occult (Planetary Courts) 5, Politics 3, Science 1

Physical Skills: Firearms 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy (Draw People Out) 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Spirit Dealings) 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge (False Friendship) 4

Merits: Allies (Teletarchs) 5, Allies (Junior mages who owe him favors) 3, Celestial Names 7, Contacts (Sleeper occultists), Familiar (Twilight) 3, Hallow (Shared: Silver Ladder in Home City) 3, High Speech, Imbued Item (Synocheis) 4, Languages (Greek, Latin), Library (Magical History, Spirits, Mystic Philosophy, Astrology), Occultation 2, Resources 4, Sanctum (Personal 3, Shared 4), Status (Consilium 3, Order 4)

Willpower: 8

Wisdom: 4 (Depression)

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 8

Gnosis: 7

Arcana: Fate 3, Forces 4, Mind 3, Prime 5, Space 3, Spirit 5, Time 3

Notes: *Fate* — Interconnections (•), The Perfect Moment (••), Superlative Luck (•••); *Forces* — Nightsight (•), Control Light (••), Telekinesis (•••), Friction Knife (••••); *Mind* — Aura Perception (•), Memory Hole (••), Augment the Mind (•••); *Prime* — Supernal Vision (•), Counterspell Prime (••), Magic Shield (••), Celestial Fire (•••), Siphon Essence (••••), Create Hallow (•••••); *Space* — Correspondence (•), Apportation (••), Portal (•••); *Spirit* — Coaxing the Spirit (•), Ephemeral Shield (••), Lesser Spirit Summons (••), Control Spirit (•••), Sacramental Chain (••••), Control Gauntlet (•••••); *Time* — Perfect Timing (•), Postcognition (••), Divination (•••)

Legacy Attainment: 1st — Celestial Beacon, 2nd — Planetary Portal, 3rd — Orb of the Firmament

Mana/per turn: 20/7

Armor: 5 ("Ephemeral Shield," Spirit ••)

Magic Shield: 5 (Prime ••)

Nestorius' Familiar: Chrymos

When Nestorius obtained a fetch, he decided to get one that could help him stay alive. Chrymos is a healing-spirit from the court of Venus. To those who perceive Twilight entities, Chrymos looks like a large, copper dove with emerald eyes, and she carries the scent of clover. She can heal wounds and mitigate diseases and poisons; her Influence has grown in breadth and power from years with Nestorius.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 2

Willpower: 6

Essence: 10 (10 max)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 16 (flight; species factor 10)

Size: 1

Corpus: 3

Influence: Health 3

Numina: Wilds Sense

Ban: Chrymos must heal any wounded, sick or poisoned person who asks for help in its presence. Indeed, Chrymos routinely heals minor illnesses of customers who enter Nestorius' bookstore, without being asked. Chrymos will not attack in any way.

For one Essence, Chrymos can heal one bashing level or cure minor infections such as chicken pox or sniffles. For two Essence, she heals one lethal wound level or moderately severe diseases such as flu. Severe diseases such as pneumonia cost three Essence. Each Essence spent also reduces the toxicity of poisons by 1. Chrymos cannot heal aggravated damage.

ECHO WALKERS

(LEFT-HANDED LEGACY)

Let me show you. It's perfectly safe.

Similar to the Tremere liches, the Echo Walkers make use of the souls of the Sleepers around them. Unlike the liches, however, these mages do not destroy, consume or even remove the soul. Instead, they use it as a lens, a way to look into the Supernal and witness the glory of the idols of their worship, the Ones Before.

The Echo Walkers believe that the “angels” in the Supernal Realm of Aether are actually the remnants of a proto-human first race. Most members of the Legacy refer to these beings as the “Ones Before,” but many Echo Walkers have their own theories or stories about what these beings are.

Some Echo Walkers consider the Ones Before to be true angels, others look to Biblical accounts of the Nephilim, children of man and angel. Some look to pre-Christian mythology and identify the Ones Before with the Titans or the giants of Norse creation myths. All agree, however, that these beings are unknowable in the Fallen World as it stands, and this truth pains them. They believe that the key lies in the noble soul of humanity, and they are quite willing to dislodge, prod and injure that soul to find it.

Parent Path: Obrimos

Nickname: The Elect (self-applied; mages outside the Legacy who know of these mages' true nature often call them the Blinded)

Orders: The threat that the Echo Walkers pose to Sleepers, and, to a lesser extent, the Awakened, isn't fully realized by the orders of the Pentacle. There are Consilii the world over that know about the Blinded, but they aren't nearly as well recognized or feared as the Scelesti or the Tremere. As a result, the orders don't have opinions about the Echo Walkers that could be considered a “party line.”

The Echo Walkers, however, claim membership in all five of the orders. In the Silver Ladder, they find access to other Obrimos, the better to pump them for information about their experiences of Aether. In the Adamantine Arrow, the Echo Walkers' desire to emulate the Ones Before takes on a warrior's code – the Elect look at their Supernal idols as teachers, deities and objects of protection (and, if necessary, martyrdom). Echo Walkers in the Free Council use the order's connections with new learning and techné to try to find a scientific or

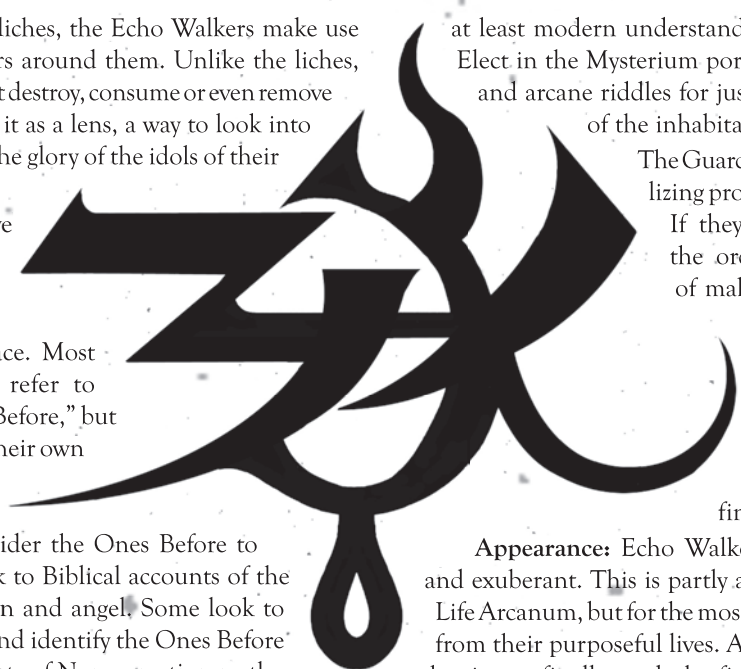
at least modern understanding of the Ones Before. The Elect in the Mysterium pore over tomes, tomb markings and arcane riddles for just a hint as to the true nature of the inhabitants of the Aether.

The Guardians of the Veil provide a tantalizing proposition to the Echo Walkers. If they can secure membership in the order, the Guardians' mission of making sure that Sleepers aren't exposed to magic unnecessarily gives the Elect a host of interesting test subjects. Of course, the Guardians also tend to deal most harshly with the Blinded when they find them.

Appearance: Echo Walkers are often healthy-looking and exuberant. This is partly a result of their studies of the Life Arcanum, but for the most part, their enthusiasm comes from their purposeful lives. An Echo Walker lives each day hoping to finally crack the final riddle and meet the Ones Before once again, and that notion fills her with joy and anticipation. Echo Walkers, despite their Left-Handed appellation, are some of the most positive and outgoing mages the Awakened could hope to meet, which is just one more reason that the Elect are so often overlooked.

Background: The Obrimos who chooses to become an Echo Walker was typically a devout practitioner of one faith or another before her Awakening. A good number of the Elect, though, pick up such faith after their visit to the Aether. Whenever they received their calling, such mages feel that the Awakened are missing something. Perhaps the mages feel that the orders put too much stock in stories of Atlantis, or maybe they think that using magic for day-to-day needs is disrespectful. The common thread is that these Theurgists feel the pull of something greater than they, some long-lost birthright to their Path. That birthright, of course, is the wisdom and power of the Ones Before.

It would be tempting to say that mages who join this Legacy aren't very bright, or, at least, are weak-willed for placing their faith so blindly in such a legend. The truth, though, is that many Echo Walkers are intelligent, well educated and quite lucid. They simply *believe* in the Ones Before, and so their actions, however deplorable another mage might find them, are reasonable to the Elect. That's small consolation to the Sleepers whose souls the Blinded push out of joint for a bare glance at glory, of course.



Other Paths and the Echo Walkers

What stops the other Paths from joining this Legacy? A Moros mage, after all, might identify the shades of Stygia as beings similar to the Ones Before. A Thyrsus might see something in the Primal Wild that she believes is the mighty forerunner to all humankind. Can other mages with similar beliefs (or delusions) become one of the Elect?

It's really up to the Storyteller. The Legacy has, historically, been the province of the Theurgists, but that has more to do with the mindset that typically accompanies these mages and the descriptions of the Ones Before that Adam Goode recorded. There is no hard-and-fast rule, though, that bars members of other Paths from becoming Echo Walkers.

Organization: While the Echo Walkers certainly don't think of themselves as a Left-Handed Legacy, they do recognize that openly advertising their methods would be unwise. Therefore, the members tend to cleave close to their tutors but seldom see other Elect. If several happen to operate in the same area, they often hash out some sort of schedule so that all of them aren't knocking people's souls off-kilter at the same time, as such a thing would quickly draw notice from other mages.

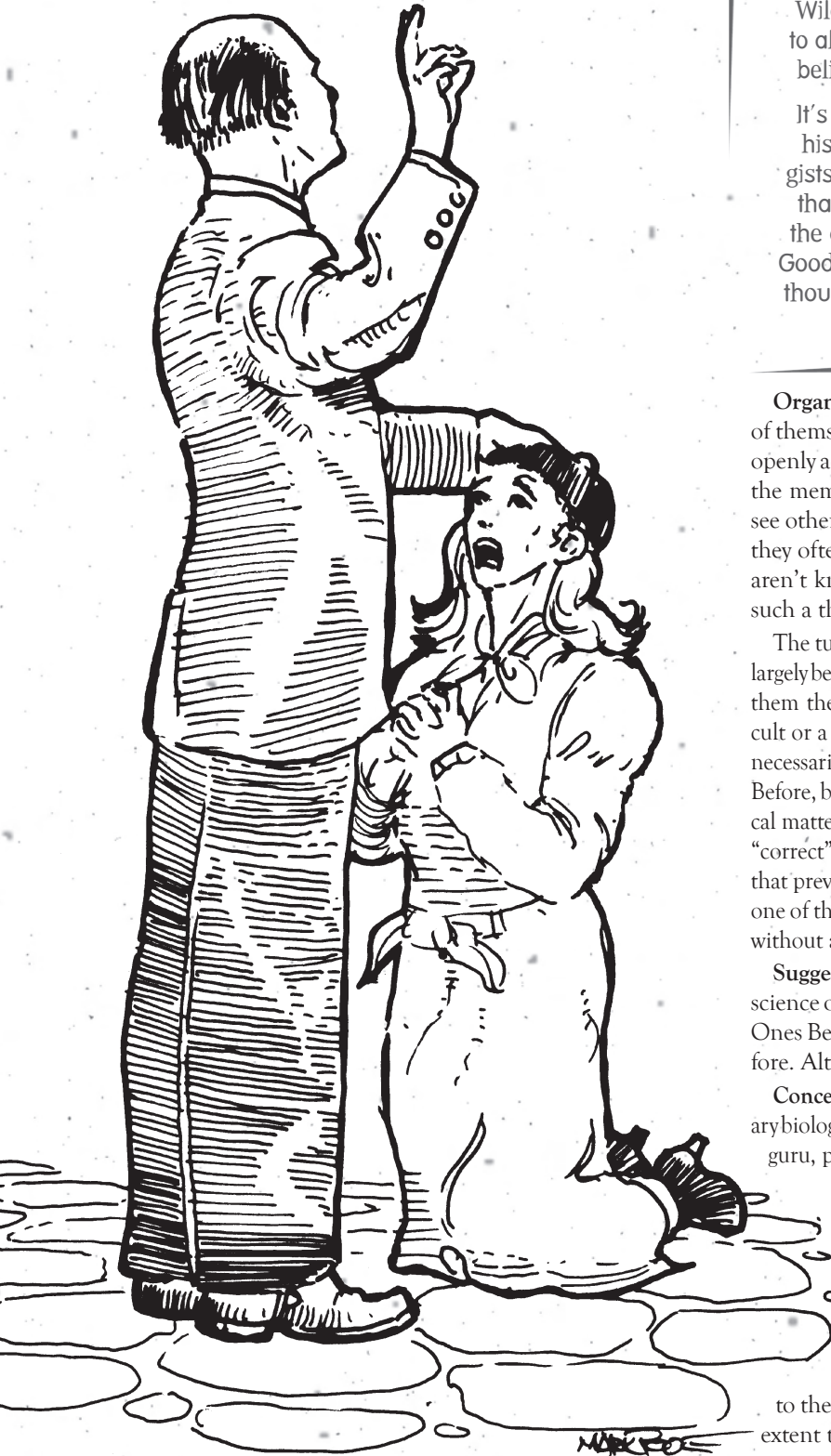
The tutor-pupil relationship in the Echo Walkers is very close, largely because the members don't expect anyone else to understand them the way another Echo Walker can. The Legacy mimics a cult or a radical church in this respect. The Echo Walkers don't necessarily look down on other mages for not recognizing the Ones Before, but the Elect do see talking to such Awakened about magical matters as tedious and frustrating, because outsiders lack the "correct" frame of reference. There is no set proscription, though, that prevents Echo Walkers from joining orders or cabals. Thus, one of the Elect might be a high-ranking member of a Consilium without anyone except her tutor knowing it.

Suggested Oblations: Studying ancient myths, evolutionary science or anything else that could contain information on the Ones Before. Creating artistic representations of the Ones Before. Altering one's body to be more like the Ones Before.

Concepts: Traveling preacher, helpful occult scholar, evolutionary biologist, psychotherapist, Consilium supporter, empowerment guru, practical philosopher, soul stone collector.

History

To hear the Echo Walkers tell it, their Legacy began the moment the Ones Before were barred from interacting with humans by the gulf of the Abyss. There have always been mages on the Path of the Mighty, they say, who strive to bring the angels to the world — or, barring that, become those angels, to the extent that they can.



In fact, though, the Legacy's first known practitioner dates back to the mid-17th century, as the Puritans were crossing the Atlantic for religious freedom. One of those Puritans, a man that history remembers as Adam Goode, Awakened during the crossing. His account, written on fragments of paper and reassembled in later years, describes a conversation with the angels of the Aether and his subsequent "realization" of their true nature:

I came upon a great tower, so high that I could not see the top, so bright that it nearly blinded me, I drew in my breath and allowed the light of the Lord to fill me, and it lifted me up, and in a blink of an eye I stood upon the top of the Tower. And all about me were luminous angels. Some were winged and some carried swords, but some resembled great beasts, and still I knew them all as angels.

And one said unto me, "Behold, Adam Goode, for you have been chosen to look out upon the Kingdom of Celestial Spheres and know the world for what it is – Fallen."

And I said unto the angel, "Have mercy upon me, for I am but man, consigned to the watery depths by the will of the Almighty," for I believed myself to have been flung into the sea by the storm.

And the angel said, "No, Adam Goode, you have not perished, but are exalted, and stand here upon the Watchtower of the Golden Key to meet your destiny as one of the Mighty."

And I knew then of the nature of the beings around me – not the angelic Host, but their children, scoured from the Earth in the Great Flood. I had been chosen to walk among them, to become one of the Mighty, and I knew that these beings were from Before. My voice died in my throat, but I made my mark in their great book, and before I could ask further questions or utter my thanks I was back on the ship, and all around me was thunder, lashing rain and fear. And I pointed to the sky and commanded the storm to cease, and as I was one of the Mighty, it did obey."

Adam Goode reached America, but by that time most of his fellow Puritans were dead or mad. Plague on such ships, of course, wasn't uncommon, but when these new settlers came ashore they told strange tales to the resident colonists. The newcomers spoke of Adam's sermons and the way he would lay his hand upon their foreheads, his fingers colder than death and yet searing at the same time. Many of those who had received "Adam's Touch" died in their sleep or jumped into the sea within a month or two, and even those who survived were haunted by terrible nightmares, malaise, paranoia and general ill health for the rest of their lives. Adam, for his part, opined that his touch was merely opening the recipient's soul to the glory of the Ones Before, and that Satan was attracted to those thus illuminated and caused their afflictions. This flimsy logic only held up for so long (particularly as mages among both the colonists and the native peoples saw the detrimental effects of Adam's magic), and Adam Goode was hanged in 1687 for witchcraft. He was suspected to have taken on apprentices, however, but they were never identified. The Echo Walker Legacy, then called the Covenant of the First Angels, had taken root.

Over the ensuing centuries, the Legacy spread out across the United States, and then the world. Many cultures and mythologies have stories about some primal race, sometimes sublime, sometimes bestial, and these tales were easily subsumed

into the Legacy's beliefs. As the Legacy grew and encompassed other theories on the Ones Before, the Covenant of the First Angels became the Walkers in the Echoes of the First Voices, and later simply the Echo Walkers.

The Elect have adapted their theories with the times, and this is part of what makes them so dangerous – it's not accurate to classify them as religious fanatics, because some Echo Walkers are quite secular. It's not accurate to say that they believe in the Nephilim, or the Titans or any other mythological precursor to humans, because some Echo Walkers don't believe any such thing. And, while it is accurate to call them a Left-Handed Legacy, doing so is dangerous. Most mages think of the Scelesti or perhaps the Tremere liches when that term is applied, and such mages are often easy to identify with close scrutiny. But the Echo Walkers can be part of a Consilium or even a cabal for years before the nature of their magic becomes apparent.

Society and Culture

To the Echo Walkers, the human soul is a kind of living record. The human soul is a lens with which a perceptive mage can view the original "blueprint" of humanity – the Ones Before. Of course, motives for wishing to view this blueprint vary, as do the ultimate goals of the Echo Walkers, but the treatment of the soul in question is uniformly unpleasant. The Death 2/Prime 1 "Dislodge the Soul" spell (see sidebar) is an integral part of the Legacy, and learning the Glimpse of Glory rote based upon it is often part of the induction into the Echo Walkers.

Other mages, however, don't normally know enough about the Echo Walkers to recognize them as a threat. These so-called Elect seem to be driven, zealous and perhaps a bit deluded, but ultimately their fanaticism is aimed at the Supernal Realms, not at serving the Abyss, stealing immortality or some other unpalatable prospect. Yes, individual Echo Walkers might be dangerous, but that danger is a function of their zeal, not their beliefs *per se*.

Those Awakened who know that the Echo Walkers not only seek to learn about the Ones Before, but do so by forcing Sleepers' souls out of alignment and peering into the gap between soul and consciousness, see the Legacy in the same light that most mages see the Wicked or the liches. The Echo Walkers are taught that they will, at some point, probably run into a mage who knows of the more unpleasant aspects of their quest. When confronted, the Echo Walkers are taught to make the magic seem, if not benign, then at least reversible. For whatever it's worth, a few Echo Walkers do learn the required Spirit magic to repair the damage done by their spells and make it a point to do so. Others use more mundane means of helping their victims, such as sponsoring free clinics to help people suffering from depression. These altruistic behaviors only last until the mage's Wisdom falls to the point that she simply doesn't care anymore. The Echo Walkers know, though, that most Consilii will not appreciate what the Elect are trying to accomplish, and the members of the Legacy are advised to have an escape plan ready.

Dislodge the Soul (Death ●● + Prime ●)

The mage can magically knock a Sleeper's soul out of alignment. This does not remove the soul, or it physically harm the Sleeper, but the lack of alignment does make him more susceptible to soul-affecting magic in the future. The mage, for her part, can use this spell as a weapon or a threat, but it is more commonly used by the Echo Walkers to gain information about the Ones Before (see below).

Practice; Ruling

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resolve reflexively

Duration: Lasting

Aspect: Vulgar

Cost: 1 Mana

The mage must touch the target to enact this spell (at Death 3, she can cast this spell at sensory range). The target feels a sudden chill and then a profound feeling of distance and isolation, as though he were miles away from everything in his vicinity. The mage, through the use of the Prime Arcanum, can see "behind" the soul, viewing the Sleeper on a spiritual level so primitive that no part of his individual ego is present. Most mages find the experience profoundly disturbing, because a human being stripped of his individual humanity is simply a great deal of instinct and a little bit of intellect. Thus, it is possible to cast this spell using only the Death Arcanum, which knocks the soul out of joint but does not convey any mystical insight. This glimpse behind the soul lasts only a turn, after which the mage loses focus on the soul and must cast this spell on a different Sleeper in order to see this "proto-soul."

While the mage peers through the gap, the player can make a Gnosis roll. If the roll is successful, the mage regains a spent Willpower point. Doing so too often, however, can have a serious drawback — the mage becomes addicted to what she sees through the gap, and for every week that passes in which she does not successfully use this spell to get a glimpse, she suffers a cumulative -1 dice penalty on all Social- and Mental-related rolls. When this addiction sets in is up to the Storyteller; one possibility is that it occurs as soon as the mage loses a dot of Wisdom from casting this spell. It is safe to assume that most, if not all, Echo Walkers suffer from this addiction.

The effects on the Sleeper target are long-lasting and brutal. The target becomes depressed, irritable and unable to relate to others as well as he once could. All Social rolls suffer a -1 dice penalty until the Sleeper can realign his soul. Doing this requires the target to reaffirm his connection to the rest of humanity, meaning that some people can correct the damage within a few hours (a loving father, for example, might find that spending an afternoon caring for his children does the trick, while an ER doctor might save someone's life and repair the damage). Other people can help the person realign his soul — therapy, spiritual counseling or simply positive attention can shift the victim's soul back into place (this might require a roll of, for instance, Manipulation + Empathy for counseling or Intelligence + Medicine for psychiatric help, though it's worth noting that pharmaceutical remedies don't

help matters). People who lack the tools to fix the damage themselves, however, often make it worse. Any degeneration rolls made for the victim while the soul is dislodged automatically fail, and any derangements gained are considered severe. The victim often becomes suicidal (or, occasionally, violent) within a week or two.

A person afflicted by this spell can be detected by the Death 1 "Soul Marks" spell (see p. 135 of *Mage: The Awakening*). Any spell that affects the human soul receives a +2 dice bonus when cast upon a Sleeper suffering the effects of Dislodge Soul.

The Spirit 3 "Restore Lost Soul" spell (see p. 250 of *Mage: The Awakening*) can also correct the damage that Dislodge Soul causes. Doing so requires the restoring mage to accumulate a number of successes equal to the Potency of the Dislodge Soul spell.

Casting this spell upon a Sleeper requires a degeneration roll for mages of Wisdom 2 or more.

This spell cannot be cast upon Awakened targets, although a Death 4 version of this spell can target mages.

Echo Walkers Rote: Glimpse of Glory

Dice Pool: Resolve + Intimidation + Death

While most mages find the images they see when using this spell disturbing (those few mages to whom it ever occurs to dislodge a person's soul, that is), the Echo Walkers claim to see quick glimpses of the Ones Before. Over time, they claim, they build up enough of a concept of these beings to shape their usages of the Legacy's Attainments. Of course, by combining this rote with the Image of Perfection Merit (see below), the Echo Walkers become much more driven and dangerous.

Searching for the Ones Before

Every Echo Walker has her own reasons for trying to find the truth about the angels of the Aether. Some of the Elect feel that the Ones Before have knowledge that would allow the Abyss to finally close and for mages to reveal themselves to a world that can finally understand them. Mages of a more religious bent might believe that living service to or emulation of the Ones Before is akin to a holy vow, but before the Echo Walkers can actually take this vow, they must learn what it entails.

Some Echo Walkers are in it for the sheer philosophical discovery — what *are* these Supernal beings, and how do they fit into humanity's destiny? Other Elect are simply power-hungry, and see the Ones Before as a source of potentially limitless magical prowess if the Echo Walkers can learn their secrets. Finally, some Elect theorize that the Ones Before might not be a more enlightened state of humanity, but instead might represent a *less* advanced version. If that is the case, then what did humanity gain by giving up the obvious glory and power of the Ones Before?

Many of these reasons are benign or even noble, or at least understandable, when the mage begins her journey. As Wisdom falls, though, the mage's quest tends to become obsessed with an image of the Ones Before. Her reasons for searching for them fall away, slowly but surely, replaced by a simplistic need to *know* about them. At this point, usually around Wisdom

4 or 5, the mage develops the Image of Perfection Merit (see sidebar). The mage has abandoned so much of her humanity that she would betray her order, cabal and even her closest friends and family if it meant learning even one tiny iota of information about the Ones Before.

New Merit: Image of Perfection (•••) Prerequisite: Echo Walker, Death 2

Effect: The Echo Walker has developed a goal for herself, an image of her own soul merged with the glory and might of the Ones Before. This image is her muse, her daimon and her constant guide, beckoning her on through any moments of doubt or uncertainty. She becomes unable to consider that any action taken in pursuit of this goal is immoral or harmful, no matter how others might be affected. Such Echo Walkers often have constructed reasons or excuses as to why this is the case, usually with some variation on the "greater good" or the "ends justifying the means."

What it boils down to, however, is that the mage's lust for power outweighs her morality.

This doesn't prevent the mage from losing Wisdom, of course, but does help in avoiding the insanity that comes with Wisdom loss. After gaining this Merit, whenever the Echo Walker

loses a dot of Wisdom due to an act of Hubris, the player can spend a Willpower point to change the dice pool to avoid gaining a derangement to the character's Resolve + Composure rather than her new Wisdom rating. The character's Image of Perfection keeps her focused and, if not exactly sane, than at least functional. This serves to make Echo Walkers very dangerous, however, as they become true sociopaths given enough time.

Induction

Echo Walkers who wish to act as tutors to potential members have a delicate time ahead. A few Obrimos emerge from their Awakenings wanting to know the truth about the angels of Aether, but few are willing to base their magical practice on seeking out these beings, particularly if doing so means causing harm to others. Some Echo Walkers get around this by finding potential pupils *before* they Awaken, but there is no guarantee that a prospective mage will indeed Awaken at the Watchtower of the Golden Key, or find her way back from the Supernal Realms at all.

Tutors, therefore, spend a great deal of time feeling out prospective students before making any offers. The tutors take special interest in the Obrimos' experiences during her

Awakening. After all, not every mage even visits the Supernal Realms in a direct fashion, and Obrimos who experienced mystery plays instead of "normal" Awakenings (see p. 31 of **Mage: The Awakening**) aren't usually the kind of mage that the Elect invite aboard. If nothing else, an Echo Walker often tries to teach the prospective member the rudiments of the Death Arcana, since it is not only necessary for the Legacy's research but tends to be difficult for Obrimos to learn.

If a tutor successfully captures a student's interest in the Ones Before (by whatever name the student is comfortable using), the tutor slowly shows his student the "evidence" that the Legacy has collected on these beings. What form this evidence takes depends on the mage in question. Some have books of accounts, drawings and other primary sources about these figures, others use the Prime Arcanum to create illusions of them. At every turn, the tutor stresses that the Legacy doesn't know enough about the Ones Before to make a definitive judgment about their nature or on the concrete benefit of unlocking their secrets. One might expect this admission of ignorance to turn prospective members away, but mages are generally curious and often a little arrogant. Where other Awakened have failed, perhaps this new pupil might succeed? How much glory would an Obrimos who uncovered the secrets of the angels of the Aether receive?

Adding credence to the tutor's words is the fact that he truly believes what he is saying. The Echo Walkers don't have a sinister agenda (it's their *methods* that are sinister), and so even the most paranoid mage won't find traps or lies waiting for her in the Legacy. The Echo Walkers promise the potential of glory, knowledge and power, and they mean to deliver exactly that.

The First Step

When an Obrimos agrees to join the Echo Walkers, the first thing she must be taught is the Glimpse of Glory rote (see above). This, of course, often requires making her an Apprentice of Death, since the Death Arcanum is difficult for the Theurgists to learn. Many nascent Elect wonder if perhaps there might be a better way to go about learning about the Ones Before. The Echo Walkers are happy to try any method that a pupil can think of, but the fact is that Death is the only Arcanum suitable for manipulating the human soul. Time can't reach far enough back to glimpse the world before the Fall, and Spirit can't take a mage back to the Aether. The Echo Walkers lament that studying Death is the only way to reach their goal, but so be it.

Once the pupil has learned this rote (by which time she has normally practiced it enough for her Wisdom rating to drop a bit), the tutor begins teaching her the Life Arcanum in preparation for the first Attainment. During this time, the pupil is expected to refrain from conducting "research" into the Ones Before (that is, dislodging souls) without the tutor's presence. This is partially to avoid notice from other mages, but mostly because the Echo Walkers don't want someone who is not a member of their Legacy to gain insight into the Ones Before that they don't possess.

Once the mage has made enough progress in her magical studies (which is a matter for the tutor to decide), the tutor and the pupil begin the soul-forging process. Joining the Echo Walkers shows the mage what Sleepers feel when their souls are dislodged, as the tutor uses the Death 4 variant of the “Dislodge the Soul” spell on the *pupil* in order to begin the process (mechanically, this spell is identical to Dislodge the Soul, though the pupil submits willingly). Of course, when the process is complete, the mage is whole again, and therefore any sympathy with Sleepers doesn’t tend to last.

The Second Step

Some mages leave their tutors after achieving the first Attainment, having learned firsthand what their Sleeper victims go through. These mages are still Echo Walkers, but refuse to progress any further in the Legacy because doing so involves harming others. These laudable mages are tolerated so long as they keep quiet about the Legacy’s methods — which, of course, few of them do. Destroying their pupils pains the Echo Walkers, but they feel that doing so is preferable to having the Awakened community as a whole lump the Elect in with the Scelesti, the liches and their Left-Handed ilk.

Mages who stay with their tutors are encouraged to gather as much data as they can. What follows is a spree of soul dislodging that usually leaves the mage with a precipitous drop in Wisdom, along with a number of dead or mad Sleepers in her wake. Many Echo Walkers believe that they gain better results when using the “Dislodge the Soul” spell on a certain type of Sleeper, but this is simply a way for the mage to subconsciously feel better about the harm she is inflicting. A racist white mage might decide that she can see the Ones Before more clearly when looking through the souls of African Americans (and, in the process, believe that she’s not racist at all, since she recognizes that black people clearly have a strong connection to the Ones Before). Any bias or prejudice can appear here, and Echo Walkers often developed elaborate theories as to why a given type of person produces a clearer picture.

Once the mage has accumulated a good body of data on the Ones Before, she presents her findings to her tutor. This presentation can take the form of a thesis, a lecture or any other medium that the tutor finds appropriate. If the pupil’s presentation meets the tutor’s approval, he declares her worthy of progressing in the Legacy and the pupil reshapes her soul once again.

The Third Step

Few Echo Walkers reach the third Attainment, but it’s not for lack of trying. Once the mage has presented her findings on the Ones Before to her tutor (and thus achieved the second Attainment), she has become one of the Legacy’s up-and-coming researchers. She is then expected to be extremely selective in her choices of Sleepers to “study,” choosing only those who have something to contribute. How this is determined, of course, depends very much on that mage’s research. Normally, the mage examines a prospective Sleeper carefully, often using such spells as Death 1 “Soul Marks,” for whatever trait she finds important, before dislodging the Sleeper’s soul.

Since the mage is establishing a pattern, though, she is also making it easier for others to track her. Upon reaching the second Attainment, Echo Walkers are warned that if they are captured or questioned, they must not betray the Legacy, lest all of the research of the Elect be lost. Echo Walkers, therefore, often fight to the death if confronted, though more clever ones make use of spells such as Mind 2 “Memory Hole.”

Most Echo Walkers develop the Image of Perfection Merit (see p. 125) during this period, fixating on their ideal picture of the Ones Before. If an Echo Walker manages to build up a convincing picture and theory of what these beings truly are before she becomes irrevocably insane or is hunted down by other mages, her tutor allows her to make her presentation to a council composed of three Echo Walkers who have achieved the third Attainment. This presentation takes the form of an interview or thesis defense, with the more advanced members grilling the pupil on her theory, its applications and any supporting evidence. A Sleeper is almost always presented as part of this evidence. The elder Echo Walkers dislodge the unfortunate’s soul and examine the “data,” usually with someone on hand who can reattach the soul so as to facilitate repeated viewings. (This punishment is very often fatal for the Sleeper, but the mages present have typically long since passed the point of concern.)

The actual merit of the data presented at this council is probably negligible. The mages have become so blind, and usually mad, by this point that their delusions simply feed into one another. However, an Echo Walker who can remain functional long enough to reach this point is rewarded with the third Attainment. After that, she continues her research, normally picking up a pupil of her own not long after.

Note, of course, that an Echo Walker can actually achieve the third Attainment on her own without submitting to the examinations of the council. The pupil isn’t *told* this piece of information, however. If she figures it out on her own, the more learned members of the Legacy congratulate her on her ingenuity — and keep *very* close tabs on this most clever of the Elect from then on.

Story Hooks —

Between Soul and Body

- **Guinea Pigs:** The characters enter an area in which the Consilium is made up almost entirely of Obrimos. As it happens, these Theurgists are also Echo Walkers, but make common use of the Death 4 variant of the “Dislodge the Soul” spell for use on mages. These Theurgists don’t want to use it on locals (not often, anyway), but visitors make for perfect test subjects.
- **Business Partners:** An Echo Walker strikes up a friendship with a Thyrsus mage and reveals her quest for the Ones Before. The Shaman is intrigued, but concerned about the Sleepers that the Echo Walker harms, and agrees to use

the "Restore Soul" spell to heal the damage she causes. As a strange side effect of this loosening and sudden reattaching of their souls, however, the Sleepers thus afflicted become Sleepwalkers. They are instinctively hostile to mages, though not so hostile that they attack on sight. As the number of these victims grows, though, life for mages in the area is going to get difficult.

• **Predator of Opportunity:** A local Obrimos becomes an Echo Walker and begins the process of searching for the Ones Before. He isn't callous about his actions (not as much as some of the Blinded), but another being notices the people the Echo Walker leaves with their souls "loosened." This being might be a Tremere lich, an Abyssal entity with an appetite for souls or even a vampire who only knows that these people are easier to subdue. In any case, the people whom the Echo Walker is experimenting upon are winding up dead (or worse), and he has no idea why.

Attainments

The Attainments of the Echo Walkers focus on regaining the power and glory of the Ones Before. Because the Echo Walkers know that they cannot hope to achieve the true spiritual and magical prowess of these beings while still in the Fallen World, the Elect attempt to sculpt their bodies into the Divinity they know all mages can possess.

1st: Temple Inviolata

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Life 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2

The Ones Before could purge their bodies of impurities, both physical and spiritual, with only a few seconds' concentration, or so the legends say. Poison and disease are dangers only to lesser mortals. With this Attainment, the Echo Walker can enjoy the benefits of the Life 1 "Cleanse the Body" spell and the Life 2 "Self-Purging" spell reflexively, the moment she suspects that she has become infected or poisoned. The player need not roll to avoid the effects of mundane poisons or diseases. Poisons of supernatural origin force the player to roll Stamina + Resolve against the poison's Toxicity rating. Supernatural diseases work as they normally would, except that the Echo Walker gains a +3 on any rolls to overcome their effects.

2nd: Form of the Nephilim

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Life 3

The Echo Walkers look in reverence, awe and envy at the Ones Before, studying the images of angels in Fallen World artwork and legends of Titans. The Elect's own frail bodies cannot approach this sort of glory, but with the second Attainment of this Legacy, the Echo Walkers can at least start down the right path. Similar to the Life 3 "Honing the Form"



spell, the Form of the Nephilim Attainment allows the mage to increase her Physical Attributes. Sadly, this increase is temporary. The meat of the Fallen World does not hold on to the power of the Supernal easily, not with the Abyss constantly sucking the power away.

To activate this Attainment, the mage merely concentrates for a few seconds and wills her body to take on the strength and nobility of her spiritual forerunners. The player spends one point of Mana. She can then add a number of dots equal to the character's Life Arcanum into one of the mage's Physical Attributes. This allocation can be different each time the Attainment is used. For instance, a mage with Life 3 might choose to add the points to Strength if she is anticipating a fistfight. If she needs fine motor control or precise handling of an object, she might instead allocate them to Dexterity.

This Attainment can boost Attributes over the maximum normally allowed by the character's Gnosis. Any increases to these Attributes also affect derived traits such as Speed and Health (see "Temporary Health Dots" on p. 173 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Echo Walkers often become more attractive when using this Attainment. The change isn't enough to stop people who know the Elect from recognizing them, or to grant bonuses to Social rolls (as the Striking Looks Merit would), but is simply reflective of their overall bearing. They carry themselves with confidence and power, as though they were channeling the Ones Before.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 3

While the physical prowess that this Attainment brings is often a good enough reason for using it, the Echo Walkers sometimes need to demonstrate their power and enlightenment to doubting mages (or even to Sleepers). If the mage also knows Prime 3, she can create a magical halo around her, and even add wings, weapons or any other features she believes that the Ones Before might have possessed. This effect is similar to the Prime 3 "Phantasm" spell, save that the illusion is centered around the mage herself and does not cost Mana. The illusion can make the Echo Walker look either angelically beautiful or horrifically ugly, but cannot make her appear nondescript or be used to disguise her. Calling upon the Form of the Nephilim in this manner is meant to awe or terrify her audience.

Aside from any bonuses to Intimidation or Persuasion rolls that this use of the Attainment might grant, calling upon the illusion also changes the Echo Walker's personal resonance somewhat. Her own aura and nimbus are obscured for as long as the illusion lasts, replaced with the feeling of unmitigated glory of the Ones Before.

3rd: Seeds of Loyalty

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Life 4

Deep within the hearts and souls of all Sleepers — indeed, all human beings — is the compulsion to follow and obey the Ones Before. This, in many legends, is what forced these elder beings into exile or called down their destruction from

their enemies or creator, but the Echo Walkers feel that since humans are predisposed toward certain instinctual reactions, there is no harm in making use of them. By triggering deep-seated biological programming, the Echo Walkers can nudge others to take certain actions.

This Attainment works similarly to the Life 4 "Trigger the Lizard Brain" spell (see p. 191 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but affords the mage a slightly greater range of responses she can evoke. The player rolls Presence + Medicine + Life in a contested roll against the target's Resolve + Gnosis. If the Echo Walker wins, she may evoke any instinctual response that the target is capable of — mindless rage, abject fear, the urge to mate and so on. Because the part of the brain being triggered is so closely linked with memory and learning, however, the mage may choose to manipulate the target's mind more subtly. This changes the roll to Manipulation + Medicine + Life (still contested in the same way). If the roll is successful, the target is unable to process any new memories for the duration of the scene. His brain simply does not convert the information from short-term to long-term memory. This means that no matter what the Echo Walker does to the target during the next hour or so, he won't remember it, and no magic based on retrieving the memory allows him to (since it simply isn't present in his brain). Magic or supernatural powers based on psychometry or postcognition, of course, reveal what happened in that area and thus can show a viewer what the Echo Walker did or learned.

Obviously, use of this Attainment can very easily require a degeneration roll, depending on what use the mage puts the Attainment.

Optional Arcanum: Prime 4

Echo Walkers with the appropriate magical expertise can extend this Attainment's "divine right" to magic. With a simple command, they can quash any active spells that offend them, in much the same way as the Prime 4 "Supernal Dispellation" spell (see p. 229 of **Mage: The Awakening**). This requires the Echo Walker's player to roll Resolve + Occult + Prime as an instant action, and equal or exceed the Potency of the targeted spell. She does not need to know the Arcana involved in the spell; she must simply recognize that the spell exists.

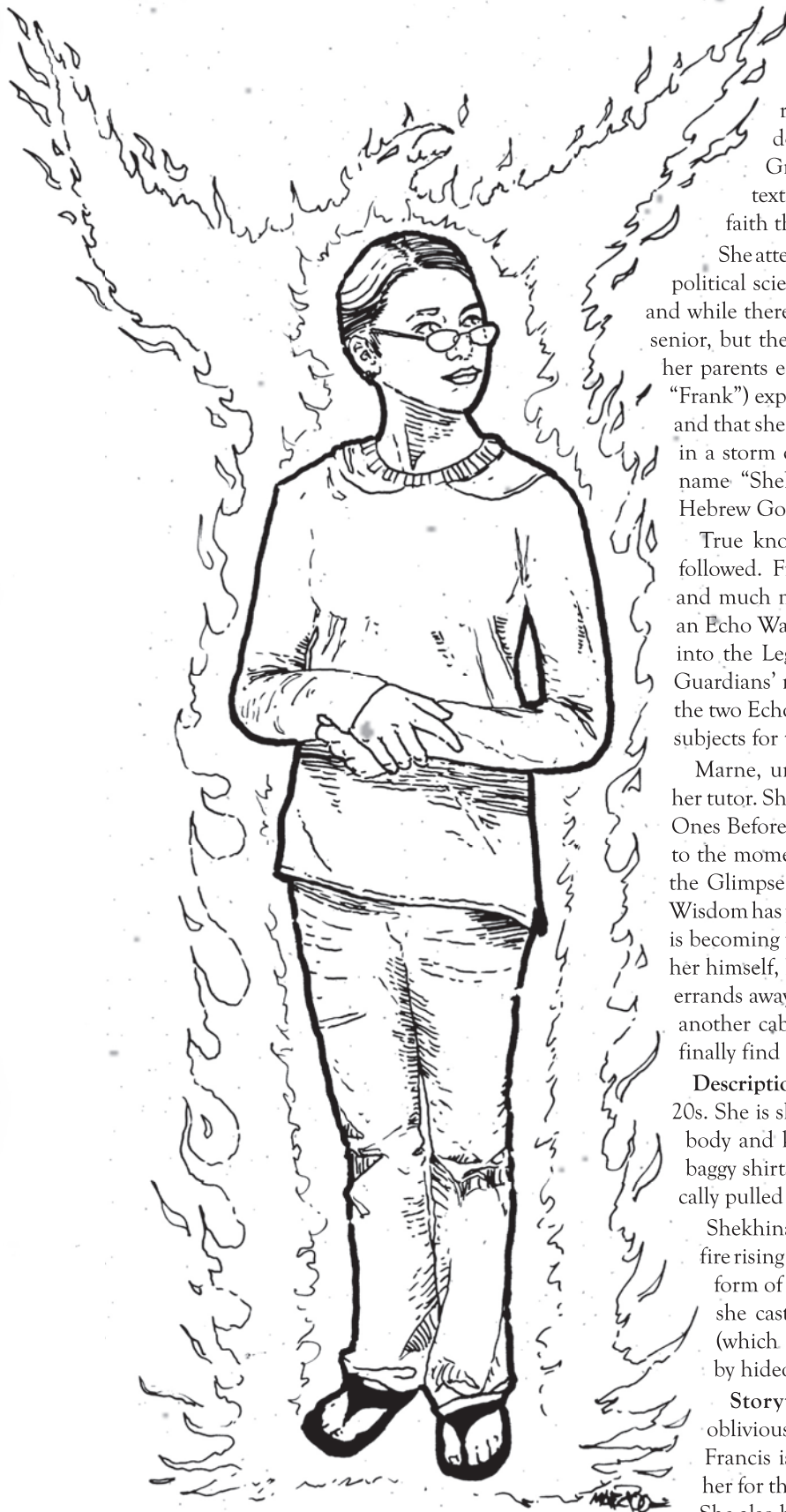
Sample Character

Shekhina

Quote: "So close."

Background: Marne Varsek has trouble thinking of herself as a "mage." The word is strange to her, because her Awakening and the subsequent ability to perform magic (another term she dislikes) didn't seem so much like the opening of a new, Arcane world as a simple confirmation of what she had believed all along. Namely, God was watching, He had a plan, and sometimes people became part of that plan.

Marne was born in Lansing, Michigan, to parents who practiced a lax form of Christianity. They attended church when they felt like it, prayed when something bad happened



and generally felt that by behaving with tolerance to others (or appearing to do so) they were doing their part. Marne accepted that when she was a young girl, but as she got older she started reading the history of the faith. As she dug deeper into the origins of Christianity, into Gnostic Gospels and finally into the older texts of the Torah, she discovered facets to her faith that she had never known existed.

She attended Eastern Michigan University, studying political science (with a minor in theology, of course), and while there, she met Francis. He was many years her senior, but the two of them formed a bond that others, her parents especially, never understood. Francis (*never* “Frank”) explained to Marne that God did have a plan, and that she was part of it. On the night she Awakened, in a storm of fire and blinding light, he gave her the name “Shekhina,” after the feminine aspect of the Hebrew God.

True knowledge, however, came in the years that followed. Francis was more than an Obrimos mage and much more than a Guardian of the Veil. He was an Echo Walker, one of the Elect, and initiated Marne into the Legacy as soon as she was ready. Using the Guardians’ network of spies and false cults in the area, the two Echo Walkers had no problem finding suitable subjects for their research.

Marne, unfortunately, hasn’t remained as stable as her tutor. She has become impatient for the truth of the Ones Before that continues to elude her, and addicted to the momentary feeling of enlightenment that using the Glimpse of Glory rote on Sleepers gives her. Her Wisdom has paid the price for this, of course, and Francis is becoming worried. He lacks the courage to deal with her himself, however, and so has begun sending her on errands away from their home base, hoping that either another cabal of mages will deal with her or she will finally find the knowledge that the Elect seek.

Description: Shekhina is a prim woman in her early 20s. She is slender and shapely, but very shy about her body and keeps it well covered with long pants and baggy shirts. She wears her brown hair long and typically pulled back away from her glasses.

Shekhina’s nimbus manifests as a brilliant pillar of fire rising up around her. Sometimes this fire takes the form of an animal, typically a bird or a bull. When she casts the “Dislodge the Soul” spell, however (which is often), the fires are often accompanied by hideous screams and moans of despair.

Storytelling Hints: Shekhina is completely oblivious to her tutor’s concerns. As far as she knows, Francis is pleased with her progress and grooming her for the third and final Attainment of the Legacy. She also believes that the Guardians of the Veil have

no idea as to her Legacy's goals, and in this, too, she is mistaken. The Guardians are simply unaware how *far* Shekhina has fallen, and are presently debating what to do about her. Meanwhile, Shekhina continues her studies, but has trouble going a day without dislodging a Sleeper's soul and peering in at the glory of the Ones Before.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Hooded EMU sweatshirt (order), seal of Solomon (Prime)

Real Name: Mame Varsek

Path: Obrimos

Order: Guardians of the Veil

Legacy: Echo Walker

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Religion) 2, Computer 2, Investigation 1, Occult (Angels) 3, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Social Skills: Intimidation (Zealous) 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, High Speech, Image of Perfection, Tutor (Francis) 4, Status (Order) 1

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 3 (Irrationality, Suspicion)

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 8 (with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Gnosis: 5

Arcana: Death 2, Forces 1, Life 3, Prime 3

Notes: *Death* – Soul Marks (•), Dislodge the Soul (••); *Forces* – Influence Sound (•); *Life* – Sense Life (•), Self-Purging (••), Two Faces (•••); *Prime* – Counterspell Prime (••), Transform Aura (••), Celestial Fire (•••)

Legacy Attainment: 1st – Temple Inviolable, 2nd – Form of the Nephilim

Mana/per turn: 14/5

Armor: 3 ("Organic Resilience," Life ••)

Magic Shield: 3 (Prime ••)



LOGOPHAGES (LEFT-HANDED LEGACY)

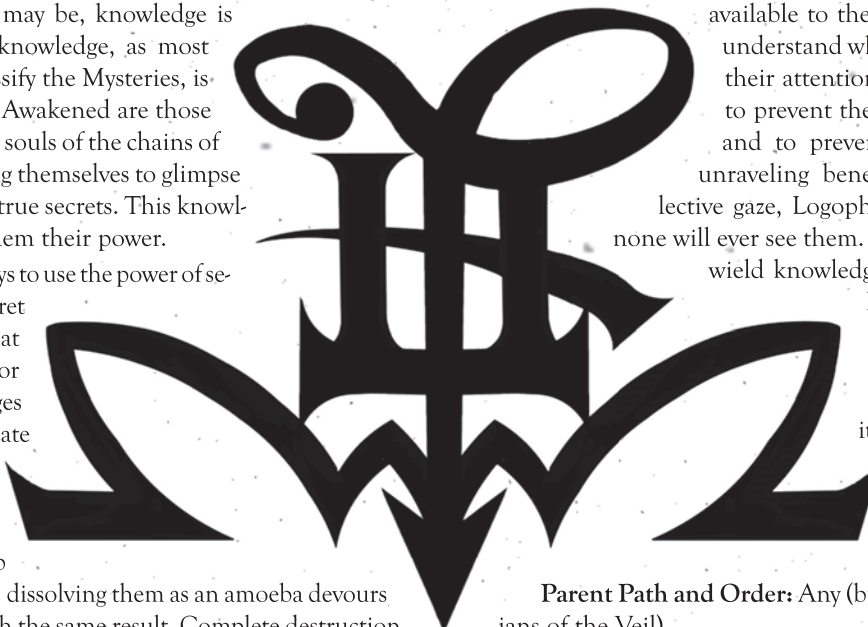
I HAVE FORGOTTEN MORE THAN YOU WILL EVER KNOW.
NOW GIVE ME YOUR SECRETS, LITTLE MAGUS,
SO I MAY FORGET THEM TOO.

Cliché though it may be, knowledge is power. And secret knowledge, as most any mage would classify the Mysteries, is most powerful. The Awakened are those who have freed their souls of the chains of Quiescence, enabling themselves to glimpse some of the world's true secrets. This knowledge is what gives them their power.

There are other ways to use the power of secrets. To destroy a secret is a final act, one that can never be repaired or repealed. Some mages learn how to eradicate knowledge, ensuring that it can never be recovered. These mages' souls absorb and consume secrets, dissolving them as an amoeba devours its nutrients, and with the same result. Complete destruction of unshared knowledge, perfect in its privacy, gifts such a mage with strength and power that she could not otherwise possess.

This is an unacceptable habit by the standards of most mages. Secrets are the lifeblood of Supernal power. Even the smallest secret might be the key that unlocks the next portal into the Mysteries. The words of a long-dead Adamantine Arrow might be the last clue necessary for a contemporary master of Forces to reach archmastery. Secrets might lead members of the Mysterium to a lost temple from the time of Atlantis. Knowledge is what mages *need*, and destroying it is anathema to them. Keeping secrets close, hiding them, parceling them out to only the worthy and righteous, these are all par for the course. But to consume knowledge, losing it forever, is what makes the Logophages – or Secret Keepers, as they call themselves – a Left-Handed Legacy.

Most important is what binds the members of this Legacy to one another: keeping secrets. All the Logophage does is in the service of keeping the secrets from falling into the wrong hands. There are so many mages in the Fallen World who belong there, who are fallen, too, and would not properly use the knowledge



available to them. Sleepers would not understand what they learned even as their attention tarnished it. In order to prevent the misuse of the Arcana, and to prevent the Mysteries from unraveling beneath the Sleepers' collective gaze, Logophages put secrets where none will ever see them. A mage truly worthy to wield knowledge that a Secret Keeper has hidden will find a way, they believe. They destroy understanding in order to save it, and it is the nobility of their quest that empowers them – not some obscene exchange of truth for might.

Parent Path and Order: Any (but especially the Guardians of the Veil)

Nickname: Secret Keepers (their own name for themselves), Logophages (other mages' name for the Legacy)

Orders: All of the orders desire more clues to the Mysteries. Keys to understanding are the blood in their veins and the currency that trades hands. In that light, it's no surprise that the rumors of this Legacy bring out anger in all of them, the rage that they often can't direct at the distant Exarchs. When the Logophages come up in discussion, the conversation inevitably turns dark, often murderously so.

Pentacle mages consider the Logophages to be doing the next best thing to working for the Exarchs directly. Logophages do as much, some claim, as the Seers of the Throne toward suppressing the world's magic and mages. But no order is as vocal as the Mysterium. Mystagogues endlessly rummage through the lost corners of the world, and so often their progress depends on the missing word of a riddle or the faded portion of a map. To them, the habits of the Logophages are nothing short of sabotage and treason.

Conversely, the Guardians of the Veil are, if not agreeable, more sympathetic with the concept of a Logophage. Few actively

want to destroy knowledge not known, but rare is the Guardian who hasn't felt the simple (and flawed) urge to destroy material rather than hide it. It is *safe*, if not wise, and some extreme Guardians of the Veil leave behind the "illusion" that they steal and hide secrets not for their power, but for others' Wisdom. Despite this sympathy, Guardians are aware that more whispers connect the Logophages to their order than others, and occasionally make an effort to root followers of the Legacy out of their ranks.

Appearance: Because Secret Keepers are members of a Left-Handed Legacy, they need to blend in. In general, a Logophage looks just like a mage trying to look like a Sleeper. Some Logophages develop slight tells in their personalities. They eavesdrop and spy almost habitually, though they *are* relatively subtle about it, because even mundane secrets are secrets to be used.

Background: As noted above, Guardians of the Veil who begin to obsess about keeping dangerous secrets hidden may step over the edge into this Legacy. Such a mage might begin by worrying overmuch about the security of certain knowledge, then develop that concern into a full-blown paranoia by keeping secrets only to himself. Others cannot be trusted to prevent them from falling into unworthy hands. From there, it is only a small advance into the territory of the Logophage — consuming the clues is the only way to keep them forever safe, especially in a world where one's foes can read one's mind. The power that results from the Logophage's meal of secrets is simply the strength of righteousness.

This "madness" can come upon any mage, as every member of the Awakened world quickly learns the importance of concealing the truths of the Fallen World from its Sleeping inhabitants. Such knowledge should also be kept from many other mages, because only few deserve that understanding. Some, for example, the Guardians, begin to take the matter too far. It becomes clear to them that there *are* none worthy, and that they should, therefore, destroy the knowledge, or they delude themselves into thinking that the hiding is more important than measured sharing. They then seek to become, as a Logophage, the best of hiding places.

Organization: The ties that bind Logophages to one another are very, very loose but very, very secure. Tutors of this Legacy meet their students the way fanatics of any sort do — by sounding out each others' ideologies and finding the agreement that they need. The process is careful and exacting, not proof against betrayal but functional enough that the Logophages have survived since ancient times.

After a certain amount of instruction, the master and student separate, because their security best lies in distance. This bond and the identity of one's pupil is the one thing that no Logophage can ever forget, secret though it may be. Occasionally, one will contact the other — they share recent goals reached (but never sought). Sharing what secrets they have successfully protected from danger is impossible, but they can occasionally describe what *sort* of understanding they have "saved."

In rare instances, one knows of a threatening secret that is soon to be uncovered or that is insecure and in danger of

being disseminated beyond one's ability to consume it. That one might request that a teacher or student recover the secret first and guard it from undesired discovery.

Beyond the student-teacher bond that the Secret Keepers keep forever, the amount of organized communication between followers of this Legacy borders on none. Each and every Logophage understands that other mages do not recognize the nobility of the Logophages' efforts. To be too open, or too lax in protecting themselves, would shortly result in the destruction of their already limited brotherhood. In the pursuit of security, a Logophage routinely purges himself of any knowledge of his contacts. This practice helps prevent other Awakened investigators from rifling through the mage's mind and learning enough to devastate the Legacy's goals. That burning the knowledge gives the Logophage a small burst of power is merely an attractive by-product; to the Secret Keepers, it is a reward for good duty.

Not knowing any other Secret Keepers beyond one's tutor and students has a price. When a Logophage needs trustworthy help, he rarely has more than one or two mages whom he believes can "safely" observe something secret. They may not be available. He needs to depend on mages whom he can manipulate, and he must force them into a situation in which he can control the flow of information. If necessary, he won't hesitate to tear their memories apart after he no longer needs them. Such acts threaten to endanger the Logophage's overall mission but are sometimes necessary.

Two Secret Keepers sometimes meet through happenstance. Each may be sounding out the other as a potential candidate for induction, only to discover that they are already allies in their war to defend the Mysteries. Such meetings are occasionally fortuitous, occurring when one Logophage or the other needs confidential assistance. Most of the time, the two mages simply "forget" about one another (via their first Attainment) as soon as is convenient. The Legacy survives through secrecy.

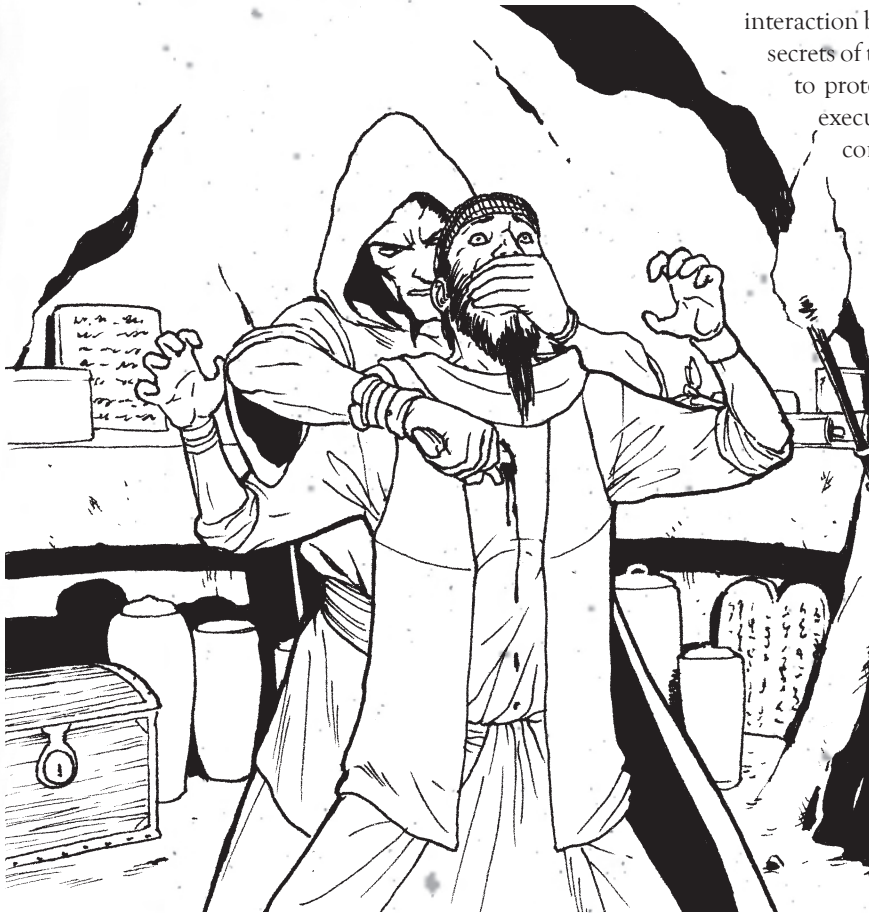
Suggested Oblations: Destroying sources of knowledge (stealing and burning old or rare books from a library or silencing an informant). Spending a few hours spreading misdirection to direct attention away from a specific truth. Forgetting a personal secret and meditating one one's devotion to the cause for an hour (now *nobody* knows you pulled that gag in high school).

Concepts: Cryptologist, IP lawyer, paranoid inventor, security-minded military officer, employee of any intelligence agency, professional thief.

History

Purportedly, early Secret Keepers decided that the greatest threat to their cause was the possibility that other mages might discover the Secret Keepers' genesis and learn how to destroy them. So they chose to forget their foundation, protecting it as they do all important secrets. As far as anyone knowing the truth, that was the end of that. Not all Logophages, or other mages, for that matter, are willing to leave it at that.

The histories that mages can find are too varied to be worth too much. Only a rough estimate of timing pervades all the



interaction between the two; examination revealed the first secrets of the Legacy. Despite his sins, he had endeavored to protect knowledge. Oholibamah's first "students" executed him to make his unintended success complete, then dedicated themselves to being as excellent secret keepers as Oholibamah had been, through his actions and in his death.

History That Was Not

Living in the cold lands in the north, Munin saw how mages interacted: wary, full of distrust, they rarely became friends and every treaty between their groupings required lengthy politicking. They warred over small slights, eager to use their dangerous spells and tools to claim supremacy and spoils. There was no order, no larger organization that bound mages to each other, nothing to prevent the endless self-attrition and nothing to encourage them to greater things. Despairing, Munin sought a miracle.

Working a great spell aided by her apprentices and bound demons, the great mage created a false past. She invented an island where mages had once ruled, where they had belonged to orders and worked in concert. To make it an attractive belief, she made it a time of ideal magic, free of Paradoxes and with plentiful Mana. She created enemies, usurping gods of the Supernal Realms, to give

mages a shared purpose. And mages across the world remembered something greater. They began to share purpose and fear, and in so doing they discovered their potential for greatness.

Munin swore her apprentices to secrecy and went to her grave without telling another soul. The apprentices went on to found the Secret Keepers.

The Necessity of Cain

There were twin brothers once, both mages, identical in every way but that one walked the Path of the Moros and the other the Acanthus. Together, the two brothers came upon something so horrific that both agreed it could never be shared or seen again. Some modern Logophages name it Abyssal, others a fiendish scheme of the Exarchs or the Oracles' Achilles heel, but none of them *know*. Here is why they don't know.

No fools these brothers, they knew that someday, somebody would have the secret out of them. That was unthinkable. Together, they sought a way to kill their knowledge so that it might be safe. Between one brother's mastery of Death and the other's insight into Fate, they discovered an answer. So it came to pass that the Moros killed his brother, weeping all the while, in a ritual to slay his own memory. In so doing, he saved the world from his terrible knowledge. Instead of remembering what could devastate the world, he remembered only murdering his brother. He was the first Secret Keeper, and to honor his brother's memory he passed on the Legacy and the responsibility that comes with it.

myths: they all agree that the first Secret Keepers formed during the time of troubles following Atlantis' Fall. Here are a few *beliefs* that some Logophages may hold, or that the mages who research them may uncover.

Consequence of Sin

The unintentional father of the Legacy, the mage known as Oholibamah, lived in the period following the Fall. In his folly, others found inspiration. A small cabal of Logophages reconstructed the events after the fact. Oholibamah seemed to have been working with a group of other mages while seeking to protect and hide away their lore for an age when civilization might rise again. In the process of concealing the resting place of their Artifacts and grimoires, a petty argument led Oholibamah to kill one of his companions in a rage. Then, fearing justice for his action, he slew the rest of the group to keep his sin a secret.

This is not unique. People kill out of rage and fear every day. What is remarkable is that Oholibamah refused to lose the knowledge the group had journeyed to hide away. During each murder after the first, which was out of passion, Oholibamah took from his companions' minds all they knew of the Mysteries. He could not comprehend it all, so he compartmentalized it within his memory.

When Oholibamah was eventually found, he was half-mad from his own conscience and his fraying compartmentalization. Studying his mind and soul, his saviors found a remarkable

As the legend's name suggests, some Logophages who believe this origin story consider it the foundation of the Bible's story of Cain and Abel.

Studying History

It's not easy to study history at the source, rather than from books. Pages can be reprinted; the actual places where history *happened* have withered, weathered hundreds or thousands of years, suffered decay, been torn down and rebuilt. Truth is hard to find amidst all the confusion.

The task only gets harder when people deliberately destroy written knowledge of the event. And when magic ensures that no one remembers it, there are no witnesses, or people who can write new records to replace those lost. Some societies that wipe out written accounts replace them with their own, or keep some form of the truth encrypted with their personal codes, but the Logophages are far too paranoid to believe that's a secure option. They are very complete when it comes to hiding something, reducing evidence it ever existed to unidentifiable tatters and then forgetting that they ever hid it.

So, since mages can't look at what remains to figure out the Secret Keepers' histories, the mages look at what's missing. Patterns surround suppression, and those who hunt what the Logophages hide — their Legacy's origins or valuable secrets — examine what isn't there. For instance, when the Winnebago tribe's trickster cycles explain several natural phenomena and cultural practices but ignore certain others, ones that other Native American myths cover, it is a clue. Perhaps that legend was embedded by a mage as a lesson to later shamans or seekers, and it is gone because a Logophage deemed it dangerous and consumed it. Records from the Tang Dynasty mention several thousand magisterial judgments; the fact that none can be found concerning accusations and punishment of charlatan magicians or Taoist alchemists is strange.

Secret Keepers work very hard to keep what secrets they deem important. They clear away as much of a trail as possible, altering memories and eliminating records. Even the Logophages admit that it's impossible to get rid of everything; they can only do as much as possible and hope it's enough. Occasionally, a member of this Legacy becomes obsessed (more so than usual) with concealing a specific secret. That person proceeds to attempt to destroy knowledge in ever-widening circles around the secret, never satisfied with its security; he ends up only drawing more attention to it. Secret Keepers consider this something of a sickness. If they refer to it at all, they call it by the simple term: "mania."

Society and Culture

In general, Logophages blend in with their Awakened brethren, participating in their orders' and Consilii's activities. While Logophages are not *pleased* with what they perceive as others' lax attitude toward sharing secrets only among the worthy, Logophages understand that most mages cannot be as dedicated as they. It is a failing they expect of those outside their Legacy.

A particularly great number of Secret Keepers belong to the Mysterium and the Guardians of the Veil. The former because mystagogues actively seek out ancient knowledge, and being the inside man on such an expedition is one of the most advantageous positions for a Logophage. Logophages occupy the latter because the Guardians' goals are most similar to the Logophages' obsessions. Not only do more Secret Keepers recruit from the Guardians of the Veil (and more successfully), but doing so offers a similar advantage when the Guardians steal secret and powerful knowledge from other sources.

When a mage's companions or acquaintances discover that she is a Secret Keeper, she typically neither flees nor fights unless forced to do either. She explains. All but the most extreme Logophages have very rational reasons for believing that they must protect knowledge the way they do. This attempt is often more effective than mages would expect. Few outside the Legacy really know the Secret Keepers' true aims, considering them nothing more than thieves and destroyers, and learning a Logophage's perspective sometimes moves her captors. If other mages still do not see the necessity of her mission, so be it; if they were likely to, they might already be Secret Keepers. Some exposed Logophages continue to proselytize throughout their subsequent capture and interrogation, secure in the belief that no one will learn how to find others of her Legacy from her. Others simply flee to a new area, taking a new name and integrating themselves once again into Awakened society.

Secret Keepers don't have much of a social structure internal to the Legacy. They are, as one would suspect, very secretive. Quite on purpose, the only bonds a Logophage retains within the Legacy are with his tutor and his students. Even those, he breaks after he or his students attain the third Attainment. Any meetings with other Secret Keepers, usually arranged through tutors or students, are very important secrets to be kept — and Logophages keep them the best way they know how. They don't come together often, or for anything less than a piece of knowledge they consider pivotal, but once they go their separate ways the Logophages rarely remember their companions. Or the mission, for that matter.

Members of the Legacy consider themselves protectors of the Fallen World and the Supernal Realms. They guard, in order of importance, the world from the misuse of magic, the *Ars Mysteriorum* from the attention of the unworthy, and the safety of their Legacy. As important a job as the Secret Keepers are doing, every one of them joined the Legacy out of personal responsibility to the world; they would be remiss to place themselves above their duty.

Some have trouble believing that they have the wisdom necessary to destroy knowledge: if they are not worthy enough to *master* a Mystery, how can they be worthy enough to *destroy* that Mystery? Logophages who suffer this uncertainty may restrict themselves to eliminating secrets of lesser import (but also lesser danger) until they grow more confident (and hubristic, other mages would say). Another Secret Keeper might correspond with her tutor, using her teacher's wisdom as a guideline until she feels capable of doing it herself.

Less rarely than Logophages would like, one of their number goes “rogue.” Similar to those afflicted with the mania, these renegades are dangerous and must be stopped. But instead of growing obsessed over the Legacy’s core mission, a rogue Secret Keeper has become disaffected. He sees through the lies they tell themselves — that what they do is for the good of the Awakened, that the information will one day be recovered — and doesn’t care. Enjoying the taste of knowledge and the feeling of power that burning it produces, the rogue acts as a Logophage for his own benefit. Other members of the Legacy hunt down rogues with great prejudice — although Logophages often have as much trouble tracking the rogues as other mages do.

Induction

Logophages are very, very cautious about whom they let into their little club. The Secret Keepers must be wary of those mages who do not understand the Legacy’s dedication, and would destroy them. Even beyond that, allowing mages without the ideal moral character and devotion to serve such a grand cause would be folly; should the weak join them and then falter, it could begin a domino effect that would decimate their frail teacher-student networks, perhaps completely dooming their self-appointed mission.

As noted earlier, a Logophage finds potential pupils by sounding them out on the subject of protecting the Mysteries from Sleepers and unworthy mages. Few potential pupils possess the temperament and principles necessary to “pass,” and those who do must be shaped before they can become true Secret Keepers.

The tutor, having found a prospective recipient for his Legacy, must now test her. Between philosophical discussions on the nature of the Mysteries and their misapplication, the Logophage arranges for the student to encounter examples of magic misused. If he can show her a demonstration (not his own, surely) of a terrible Paradox or a spell that has harmed the secrecy of the Invisible World, that is ideal. Anything that makes her more concerned about into whose hands the Mysteries fall is a good lesson. When the master can arrange it, the lessons increase in severity and preventability. Pointing directly at a recently discovered secret as the cause of a disaster is about as perfect an example as the mentor could want.

Once the Secret Keeper decides the student is ready, he begins the test. He gives his student a secret, one both know is worth keeping. It is not, of course, of paramount importance, but it is nothing that should just be thrown away, either. The student receives the knowledge in some form that requires a personal sacrifice for her to protect the secret through destruction. One master might circle certain letters on certain pages of a student’s heirloom book, another might tattoo clues on the student’s back. Something must threaten to expose the knowledge to complete the test. Sometimes this happens naturally, as others ask to borrow the book or the student takes a lover who might see her back; if not, the tutor arranges it — spreading rumors about so-and-so’s hidden magic generally does the trick.

There is only one real way to pass the test. Knowing that, a Secret Keeper chooses his methods based on his personal belief

of how difficult the test should be. It’s one thing to shed a tear and burn the Torah your grandfather used at his bar mitzvah; it’s something else to take a power sander to your own back because anyone who helped you would see the writing. Because of the danger of being a Logophage, more masters of the Legacy tend toward more severe tests of devotion. Unusual scarring or wounds are not uncommon among Secret Keepers, though hardly a tell.

Passing this test makes the mage a Proselyte. Logophages rarely use the term in this context, since they speak with other Secret Keepers almost not at all, but they use the title enough with their apprentices to pass it on. Proselyte refers to any inductee to the Legacy, from one who is trusted but without enough Gnosis for the first Attainment to one who has not yet achieved the second Attainment.

Realizing the Legacy’s first Attainment requires the student to *use* it. This is not paradoxical, but more sacrifice. As the dedicated pupil feels the shape her soul is taking, it is still not fully formed. Her first step on the road of the Secret Keeper (or down the cursed path of the Logophage, some might say) is to consume one her own secret memories. It must be something powerful, something she loves. The memory of a very personal joy is perfect, but a person may love her hate or misery; forgetting the moment that caused her to swear an unexpressed revenge or the unshared childhood event that drove the rest of her life is just as valid. She is dropping her baggage so that she may advance along her chosen path. This act, the student vandalizing her own memory and shaking the seat of her current personality, locks her into the Legacy in one soul-stirring moment.

A character may be so very open and expressive that she has no truly secret memories. Such a character *probably* does not understand keeping things hidden from others well enough to have advanced to the status of Proselyte.

Advancement

Once a student possesses the Legacy’s first Attainment, the tutor and pupil typically go separate ways. One, usually the student (as the tutor is a higher-ranked Secret Keeper), may leave for another Consilium, often one a goodly distance away. Most ask other members of their order or Path for the Awakened equivalent of a letter of recommendation — at least a contact in the new area, since it’s very hard to become trusted as an unknown mage. Those who are more confident in their ability to dissemble, or just like taking risks, may play themselves off as new mages and hope to be recruited into an order. Passing induction into whatever order already recruited them once isn’t that hard — for a skilled liar, anyway.

Some Logophages resist their students’ inclinations to sever the tutor-pupil link to develop the later Attainments on their own. The Legacy, they claim, has already benefited from centuries of development in that vein; already optimal for the Secret Keepers’ purpose and concealment, to change it is dangerous. And the title of power doesn’t hurt. Others consider the possibility that a student might be discovered and forced to give up the identity of the only Logophages he cannot forget — his tutor

and pupils—a frightening weakness. These teachers encourage their apprentices to strike out on their own, believing improved safety worth the price of an imperfectly shaped soul.

For those who keep the bond in place, the teacher and pupil meet occasionally. They communicate securely if possible, but not with such heavy security that onlookers would attribute it to anything more than reasonable (for a mage) paranoia. Essentially, they appear to be old friends who occasionally get together for chats. They chat, however, about the form of a soul and how to perfectly eliminate knowledge, instead of local political gaffes and the weather.

Reaching the second Attainment requires further commitment, another sacrifice. Where releasing one's past makes the apprentice free to step forward, the next step requires her to clear the path ahead. In order to advance, the student must feed one of her secret ambitions or desires to her soul's fire. The only goals not valid for this sacrifice are those of the Secret Keepers. Anything else, from the untold desire to become Hierarch or the burning need to kill a mage who slighted her, is an effective choice. Clearing the knowledge from her mind, the mage removes one urge that could tempt her from the path of righteous defense of the Mysteries.

From this point on, the mage graduates from Proselyte to Secret Keeper. Others who recognize the character's level of advancement generally accord her respect for being a full member of the Legacy, though a little disdain or distrust for those younger or less advanced is not unusual.

When the pupil is ready for the third Attainment, to become a pupil no more, the act of forgetting who once taught her lets her attain it. Her teacher's tutelage helps her reach the position of understanding from where she can take that step, but once she does, she does not know him any longer. Everything she once knew about the person who guided her is gone, and she is a master Logophage in her own right.

Logophages who diverge from the core Legacy may develop separate sacrifices, or other actions necessary for advancement within the Legacy.

Story Hooks — Drowned in the Mind

• **The Good Ol' Days:** One of the characters has a chance encounter with an Awakened friend — someone the character may have grown close to while joining her order and learning the meaning of being a mage. When the character starts reminiscing about old times, her friend is completely unable to recall the memorable events they went through together. This is suspicious enough behavior for the cabal to investigate — especially among mages, where just about anything suspicious should receive some scrutiny. But there are no mind-draining spirits or doppelgängers in this tale. The character's friend has joined the Secret Keepers. Eventually realizing this, the cabal must decide what to do about a friend who has joined this disreputable Legacy.

Alternatively, the new Logophage may be an old friend of one character's mentor, who worries that some creature has harmed his old friend and asks the cabal to look into the matter. This smacks a little of a "typical" story introduction, but it'll do in a pinch if none of the characters have appropriate friends for the hook. Also, the mentor will owe them a favor.

• **Heist:** Because of the cabal's reputation (or maybe just convenience), another cabal offers an allegiance. Both groups will work together to uncover some lost secret, or just to liberate it from the mystagogues or Guardians who keep it hidden. This can be classic Indiana Jones style, racing for the lost temple's throne room at the same time, or it can easily take place in a modern city — making it more like a two-party heist movie. Unfortunately for the free dissemination of information, the driving force of the other cabal doesn't actually want to release the knowledge. He wants to see if it's safe enough.

If the two cabals combined can't get away with the secret, the Logophage becomes satisfied with its safety — for now — and is content to give up the search. The players' cabal may not accept failure; if they continue trying to get the information, the Secret Keeper comes after the characters. He probably doesn't have his cabal's help trying to stop what they had just been doing, so he'd have to work alone. Should anyone actually get the secret, it triggers political interplay. Convinced that the secret wasn't safe enough, the Logophage now aims to devour it so that it will be. Of course, he must first make sure that no one else knows it.

• **Parliament of Thieves:** Somebody is convinced that there will be a congregation of Logophages nearby enough to be concerned — and soon. No one's entirely sure why they're gathering, but it's enough to worry the local Consilium, and mages of the Mysterium and the Free Council especially. What little the two of them know about the Secret Keepers suggests that both orders are high-priority targets for the ultimate censors, and they want to protect themselves.

The Consilium falls into a state of heightened paranoia, as mages try to find out what particular project or discovery might be attracting the Logophages' attention. Also of *immense* concern is whose weak security might have let them know — or worse, who might be one of them and called them in. Even if this doesn't disrupt any plans the players' character might have had, they're still likely to get caught up in the hustle.

Attainments

The Attainments of the Secret Keepers allow the Legacy's dedicated members to destroy knowledge as effectively as possible. Books may be burnt, computer records destroyed and ancient Artifacts buried under the ocean, but human knowledge is hard to fully annihilate. So the secret skills of the Logophage allow him to perfectly eliminate his own, and eventually others', memory of certain information. It's the only way to be sure.

1st: *Security of the Lost*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 3, Death 1, Mind 2 (primary), Occult 2, Subterfuge 1

This Attainment is the mainstay of the Secret Keepers' Legacy. While many mages understand how to submerge some of their knowledge for a short time, the Logophage perfects that art. More than simply concealing knowledge, the Logophage can wipe it completely from his mind. His mind consumes the memory so well he can never recall it. Logophages consider this to be the power they receive for their dedication; to them, they are not destroying knowledge, but returning it to the Supernal (or some other place they imagine to be safe) until one worthy of that wisdom will retrieve or rediscover it.

Secret Keepers also know that consuming information for its own sake is not always the wisest course of action. A Logophage may be forced to retain certain knowledge until he can be sure that evidence of its existence has been removed. For this reason, they also learn how to conceal secrets without destroying them. Security of the Lost functions identically to the Mind 2 "Memory Hole" spell. Per the spell's description, each success on a Resolve + Occult + Mind roll subtracts one die from others' dice pools to detect lies relevant to the concealed subject. Using this Attainment to *consume* knowledge is an unrolled instant action; it immediately destroys all knowledge of the secret the mage has. Doing so might give him one or more points of Willpower, depending on the secret's potency.

The Logophage keeps these points of Willpower in a special "Logophage pool." There is no limit to the number of Willpower points a Logophage may keep in this pool. They do not represent dots of a trait; they are not lost when an effect drains Willpower, and they don't protect him against deleterious effects that occur when his true Willpower pool is empty. Otherwise, he can spend these points in place of Willpower, though still only one point per turn from either pool.

Logophages use this as the final act of consuming knowledge. Prior to using this power, they destroy or censor any other sources of the information. They often wipe out many of the clues that would lead to it. *People* who know the information must be dealt with, either through murder, long-term conditioning, incurred amnesia or the Legacy's third Attainment. If the secret belongs to somebody in particular (especially if the third Attainment is involved), that target can only be affected once per chapter.

Strength of a Secret

It is not some eldritch release of energy that gives the Secret Keepers power after they consume information once and for all, it is the righteousness of their cause. Sacrificing one's own memory and power to keep knowledge from the unwise reinforces their natural arcane mastery.

Even secrets not of the Mysteries are valuable to conceal and destroy, as doing so reinforces the mage's dedication to the cause. Destroying any secret earns the Logophage a brief burst of power; follow these guidelines to determine the appropriate bonus.

- **Minor secret.** Knowledge that has somewhat shaped the person who owns it, or would affect others who learned it. Letting people know about this is like kicking an anthill — makes for a bit of a mess, but the ants recover. 0 Willpower. (Destroying minor secrets don't provide a boost of confidence, but helps hone the Logophage's skills for when he needs to devour greater secrets.)

Examples: The woman, when young, once locked her brother in the bathroom for several hours, and he never cried; it has always somewhat disturbed her, and maybe bathrooms make her nervous. The paralegal steals printing paper from work; if anyone found out, he'd get in trouble.

- **Moderate secret.** If this gets out, the person who tried to hide it will be very upset . . . and possibly in a deal of trouble. The secret was formative to a person. This information would be revelatory to many. Valid clues to the Mysteries begin here. 1 Willpower.

Examples: Our troublesome paralegal has been hiding a video camera in the woman's restroom at work since he got there; he sells the videos. The woman suffered sexual abuse as a child, at her respected father's hands. Knowledge that the ramblings of a madman in Guinea reveal truths about both Life and Death.

- **Major secret.** These secrets transcend matters of the Fallen World; only important information about the Realms Invisible qualifies. 2 Willpower.

Examples: Knowledge that the Vietnam War began as a quarrel between Consillii over some lost texts (assuming this is known to few or none). Knowing the fantastic results of a mage's experiments on a captive theriomorph. Information about the only way to enter a long-dead archmage's lore-filled citadel. Other secrets about the Mysteries.

LOGOPHAGES

2nd: *Knowing of the Unknown*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 5, Mind 3

Secret Keepers cannot protect what they do not know. While Logophages study to improve their ability to find and recognize potent information without talking to others, they cannot know everything. This Attainment makes a Logophage able to recognize what he reads or perceives no matter what; the Mind 3 “Universal Language” spell is effectively active for the mage at all times. Should she desire, she can suppress it for a time. Logophages use this to read ciphers that might conceal the existence of a valuable secret, or to interpret telepathic messages that they manage to tap into.

Optional Arcanum: Fate 3

Mages who also have Fate 3 gain the ability to recognize important secrets by the way they shake the web of destiny. When the Logophage is trying to determine whether or not something she has learned is a major secret (or just points to one), any relevant rolls she makes (usually Investigation or Occult) benefit from the Fate 3 “Superlative Luck” effect.

3rd: *Righteous Theft*

Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Mind 4

Logophages may not consign their knowledge to the void until they are absolutely certain that that is the last step in making it safe. They can burn books, wipe hard drives and deface ancient enlightenment as much as they like, but doing so won't help as long as there are still others who know what the Secret Keeper wants to forget. This is one of the powers that makes other mages hate the Logophages so: they can permanently remove knowledge from their victims. Similar to the Mind 4 “Breach the Vault of Memory” spell, a member of the Legacy may invoke this spell with a dice pool of Resolve + Occult + Mind versus Resolve + Gnosis. Success removes knowledge of the offending secret, or relevant clues toward the secret, with a default duration of one day.

During that period, the Logophage's victim does not count as having that knowledge for the purpose of Security of the Lost. Should the Secret Keeper successfully activate his first Attainment while subjecting a mage (or many mages) to this power, the effect becomes permanent.

Optional Arcanum: Fate 4

With Fate 4, the Logophage manipulates the circumstances surrounding his attempt to steal away another's memories.

Events conspire to make the target uncertain, off balance and unprepared at the moment that the Secret Keeper abuses her mind. The Logophage gains the benefit of the Fate 4 “Probable Cause” spell when using Righteous Theft.



The Last Secret

This is one legend about the Logophages' fourth Attainment. As a member of the Legacy grows in power, she grows closer to becoming the perfect guardian for a single, deadly secret. Her soul develops into a mighty spell of itself, sealing that knowledge away from the world as long as the mage lives — or maybe for all time.

Sample Character

Queen Scotch, a.k.a. Mary

Quote: "Gee, I guess I don't know. Anymore."

Background: Queen Scotch began life as Anne May Matheson, daughter of a transportation man in Kansas City. Her youth was fast; it wasn't long before childhood blurred into her father's business of selling and moving hundreds of America's everyday foods and products. Mary picked up on the nature of the work quickly, growing adept at the understandings and backroom deals necessary for profit as she took over her father's tasks. Then William Matheson died, and Bill Matheson, Jr. took over the family business. Without any of the skills or dedication Anne had developed, and too proud or stupid to let her take care of things, he ran the shipping concern into the ground.

Anne, too sentimental to just let go of the business that had consumed so much of her, found refuge from the pain in drink. It was at the bottom of a fifth, and not the night's first, that she found her own death. After a whirlwind tour of her ailing body, too soused to fight the poison she imbibed and too poisoned to live on, she etched her name into the base of the towering bottle that had killed her.

Anne joined the Free Council because none of the other orders grabbed her, but it wasn't long before an unsavory mage caught one of her tirades about how *stupid* people shouldn't be trusted with secrets or power — something she learned from her brother's example. After a thorough sounding out, Queen Scotch, as she now called herself, promised her life and soul to the Secret Keepers. Her new mission in life is to guard the Mysteries, and her knack with contacts and backroom deals makes it easy to learn interesting things and to avoid suspicion.

She still enjoys a drink now and again. It's meaningful to Queen Scotch to kill herself slowly, and besides, she likes getting drunk.

Description: Queen Scotch is average height and has curly red hair that she either binds into a low ponytail or lets hang free. Her face is pale and looks even more so beside the red of her hair. Most often, Queen Scotch wears comfortable, casual business suits, in the fashion that she wore while doing normal business. Her manner is detached; she often reacts to something more slowly than others would expect, but without losing control of the situation.



LOGOPHAGES

Her nimbus makes her appear as though she were drowning: she seems to be seen through rippling water, and her hair and clothes seem to float in a phantom current.

Storytelling Hints: When she needs to be, Queen Scotch is friendly and quite personable. She's skilled at telling people what they want to hear and trading favors, usually to her advantage; bargaining is a genuine joy for her. Because of her avocation, she makes a point of trading in secrets and almost always has *some* information worth knowing.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Bone hip flask adorned with several small diamonds (filled with scotch, naturally)

Real Name: Anne May Matheson

Path: Moros

Order: Free Council

Legacy: Logophage

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics (Business) 2

Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Persuasion (Making Deals) 4, Socialize (Making Deals) 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Contacts (Shipping Business), High Speech, Status (Order) 1, Resources 2, Retainer 3, Striking Looks 1

Willpower: 6

Wisdom: 5 (Narcissism)

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Gnosis: 3

Arcana: Death 3, Matter 2, Mind 2, Space 1

Rotes: *Death* — Ghost Summons (••), Control Ghost (•••); *Matter* — Find the Hidden Hoard (•); *Mind* — Sense Consciousness (•)

Legacy Attainment: 1st — Security of the Lost

Mana/per turn: 12/3

Armor: 3 ("Entropic Guard," Death •••)



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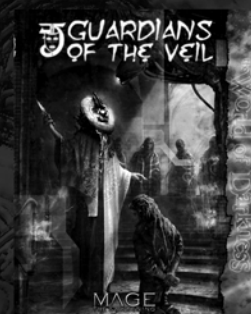
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*— Johnny Harper, Skald,
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