Mage Chronicles

Volume 2





Includes:

Ascension's Right Hand™

Halls of The Arcanum™

A Sourcebook for Mage: The Ascension

ASCENSION'S RIGHT HAND

Fellowship in the Line of Fire: The Acolyte's Sourcebook



















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Mage is a game. It contains no true rituals or demon summonings.

There are no esoteric codes hidden within the text.

Any material which the reader finds objectionable is merely the product of the authors' imaginations. If it offends you, skip over it. As one nice lady I know says: "When I'm reading along and I come to a bad word in the book, I just close my eyes."

Enjoy.

ASCENSION'S RIGHT HAND

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Prelude: Take One

By Nicky Rea



And to love: a god
And to fear: a flame
And to burn a crowd that has a name
— Live, "Selling the Drama"

"Hey, somebody turn the damned air conditioning on! It's like a steambath in here!" A gravelly voice cut through the low-key music and murmured conversation, startling some into silence and producing an equally loud demand to shut up.

Most of the tables were filled with college students from the nearby university, enjoying the inexpensive pizza and beer or the vegetarian pasta which was the specialty at Crossovers. A wild variety of people sat at other tables — Goth zombies, health fanatics, martial arts students, bruiser-types and even a few who looked downright respectable.

It had been a slow night for the bar's real patrons, however. One or two regulars had dropped in and chatted with Zorro, the albino bartender. One even complimented her on her new quasi-mohawk. There weren't enough regulars here to call a meeting, though. She served a plate of zucchini lasagna to a skinny guy in the corner and wondered if she ought to close early tonight.

Then the Marauders arrived.

The mirror over the bar shattered, sending shards of silvered glass in all directions as an axe-wielding woman in a business suit stepped through. Behind her trailed seven creatures clustered behind a portly little man with a goatee and beret. He pulled a chair with the word "Director" stenciled on it through the remains of the mirror, set it up on the bar, and yelled, "... And *Action!*"

A squirrel-tailed, fanged zebra called out, "Take two!" and pointed her video camera toward the scene. Zorro felt ridiculous when in the midst of it all she fastened on the idea that there had been no "Take one." Six pygmies swarmed after the axe-woman, who headed full-tilt for the table where the bruisers were sitting.

Several people made for the door, running over anyone in their way. The bruisers stood to confront the screaming Amazon-cum-corporate raider as she launched herself at them. Neither seemed impressed, though their eyes flickered red momentarily.

"Oh, shit!" yelled Zorro, diving for cover. "*HIT Marks!*"

With a whirring *kachunk*, the HIT Marks' chain guns rose over their shoulders, and they fired point-blank at their opponents. Two of the pygmies went down in a sickening spray.

"*Effects!* Not so much blood!" the director barked. "We don't want an R rating here!"

Several large holes appeared in the woman then sealed shut as she leaped at the one on the left. Her axe sheared through part of his head, revealing sparking wiring.

"Ha ha!" crowed the director. "We just took *Terminator II* one better! Take that, you hyper-steriod technopaths!"

Zorro crouched behind an overturned table as slugs tore the wall behind her into plaster chips. "Is it always this exciting?" the skinny guy cracked. She raised her eyebrows and gave him her best are-you-for-real stare. Seizing a brief moment of relative safety, she leaped forward and tumbled behind the bar.

The other two pygmies jumped atop the second HIT Mark and began pummeling it with their tiny fists. Surprisingly, they left dents. The Amazon panted and shrieked as she chopped the first HIT Mark to shiny pieces.

The HIT Mark burdened with the pygmies spun in an arc, firing at any and all. Bullets sprayed the room.



"Whoops!" cried the director, overturning his chair behind the bar and almost landing on Zorro. "I've never liked all this violence myself," he confided, "but it's what the audience demands." Zorro winced. The director scowled, surveying the damage. "Props, it seems, have outdone themselves this time, but Set Dressing's going to have a fit if we need a third take." He replaced the chair and climbed into it again. The video camera-wielding zebra, who had ducked at the first hail of bullets, gave him a dirty look. "*Cut!*" called the director, but no one listened. Zorro found her gun and eased around the end of the bar, setting up a clear shot.

It took only moments for the pygmies, the axe-woman and Zorro's occasional bullet to bring down the second HIT Mark. The axe-woman picked up the android's severed head, ran into a nearby still life painting, and disappeared, followed by the two remaining pygmies who carried their comrades' remains. The zebra looked at Zorro kindly for a moment and said, "Sorry about the mess. I hope you'll have no trouble with the police."

Zorro laughed. "In this neighborhood?"

Smiling (Zorro wasn't sure if it qualified as a smile), the zebra leaped through after the others.

The director yelled "Cut!" again. This time, the action subsided. Picking up his chair, he moved to the painting as well. "Thank you, everyone! Cast party is at eight! Good night!" he cried as he stepped through the picture frame and vanished.

Zorro surveyed the wrecked HIT Marks, her bullet-riddled walls and the skinny guy, who was the only customer left in the building. Then she pulled draft beers for herself and Skinny and leaned on the bar. He looked questioningly at the HIT Marks.

"Don't ask," she said.

He smiled tentatively. "Okay."

Just another damned night at Crossovers.



Introduction

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but on the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise,
Doth ask a drink divine:
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.
— Ben Jonson, "Song: To Celia"



It wasn't a good town — all hard-edged buildings and dark alleys strewn with trash, human and otherwise. Not the best place to be running for her life. She'd tried to shake the two techno-assassins, but they kept coming back for more. Winded and bloody, she made for the alley ahead just as they turned the corner behind her.

Nice coat, *she thought, momentarily distracted by the black leather duster worn by the ruggedly ugly man window-shopping at the corner store.*

He didn't acknowledge her presence as she whipped into the alley, but turned as though to stroll up the street as the assassins followed their quarry.

A sizzling light momentarily lit the alley before abruptly dying. "Damn it!" he heard the woman's desperate voice.

"You can do nothing we cannot counter," one of the assassins said.

"Oh, yeah?" asked the man in the coat, stepping into the alley behind them and firing off two bursts from his previously hidden submachine gun. "Then counter that, ya mothers."

Cody smiled at his partner as the assassins slumped to the ground.

Mages do not, and cannot, stand alone. Powerful as the Awakened may be, they require the help of *custos*, or "followers" — friends, acolytes, servants, allies and sometimes slaves — to survive and prosper in their ever-changing world.

Ascension's Right Hand concerns these custos, the normal (and special) people and creatures who live alongside and assist mages in their lives and struggles. Some of these non-mages know the score, but others move through their lives never knowing they were ever involved with the mystick ones.

Who, What and Why



It's not easy love, but you've got friends you can trust,
Friends will be friends...
— Queen, "Friends Will Be Friends"

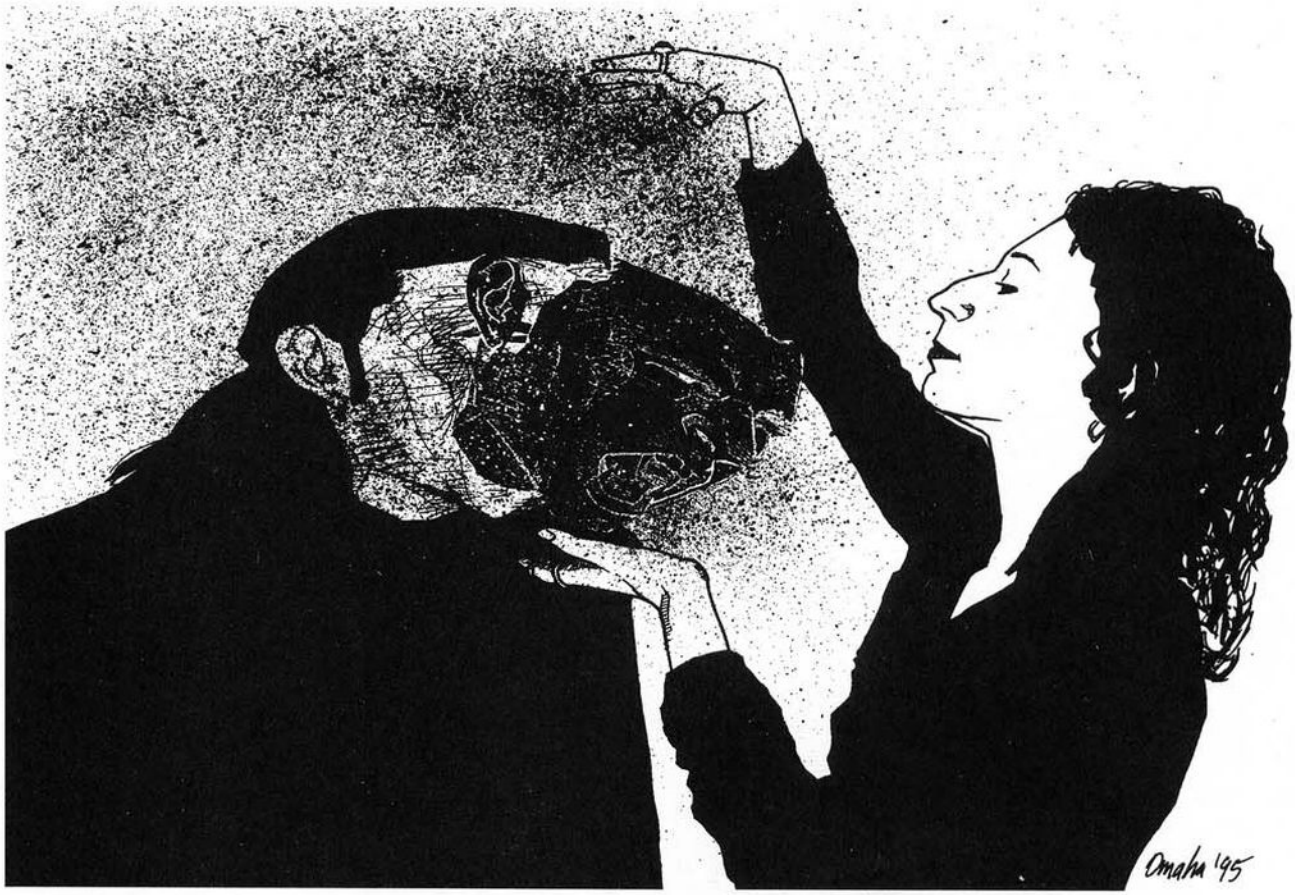
What're ya looking at me for? Ya got a problem? I said I'm a custos, kid. And so are you. It ain't no insult. The word "custos" is from the old form for "favored servant." Now don't ask me what old form, 'cause I don't know, and if ya don't like being called a servant, take it up with your mage. You wanna hear this or not? Then sit back and listen, and ol' Cody'll tell ya a thing or two.

Custos are the companions, friends, acolytes, followers, servants, familiars and sidekicks of mages. Got through the list pretty well for an old guy, huh? Most of us don't know a lot about the mystick arts, but our skills and talents can sometimes get us through better than our mage's powers. In this world, ya gotta watch out for each other. Sometimes having a friend to hang out with, a companion to watch your back, or a sidekick who lets ya hide out at his place may mean the difference between survival and damnation. And don't think it's only the Trad mages that need what we can give 'em.

There's all kinds of custos. We're childhood friends helping to keep a mage's secrets hidden, lab technicians cleaning the lab so our boss can work undisturbed, and coyote-ugly vampires arranging an escape through the sewers for a mage on the run. Pretty obvious what the mages get out of the deal, ain't it? Now you're looking at me like I'm supposed to tell ya what you're gonna get from your mage. Probably a lot of hell, kid. If ya don't know why you're doin' what you're doin', I sure can't tell ya. You'll hafta figure that one out for yourself.

Living on the fringes of the Ascension War, allied with those whose real purposes they may not even understand, the custos struggle to survive and adapt. With far less power than the mages they associate with, all are prime targets for attacks from their companions' enemies. So why do they do it?

Some admire the mage and what she is trying to do. Some want to learn and hope to discover their own aptitude for magick. Others are family members, lovers or old friends and feel that their bond requires them to help. Many are employees of one sort or another and handle household duties or business matters in exchange for money. A few, those who are aware that reality is flexible, may see it as their duty to help keep it that way (or want to help the Technocracy keep things stable). Other custos join with mages



because they hate or fear their mage's enemies. Some may be on the run and seek safety from someone more powerful. At least a few find their lives more fun and exciting since meeting the Awakened one and look for opportunities to increase the excitement and have blow-out parties. Others simply find that working for a mysterious employer or battling magick-wielding foes provides them with a challenge.

How'd I get into all this? Well, it was a long time ago. No smart remarks, kid, I know how old I am. There was this girl. She was somethin' special. Turned out she was special in more ways than one. When they came lookin' for her, I wasn't quite ready to just let 'em take her. See, I thought she was the one for me. That was back when there used to be romance in the world, not like today and you kids. Okay, okay. I'll quit callin' ya kid. Whadda ya wanna be called? Death-threat? Yeah, well. So anyway, I blasted 'em with my daddy's shotgun. It was them or us, I figured. And I been with her ever since. Nah, we never did get together that way. Just wasn't in the cards, but I've watched her back for forty years and never regretted one of 'em.

Their backgrounds are as varied as their reasons for becoming custos. Students of the occult, fantasists, New Agers, science fiction aficionados and punks are all easily integrated into life as custos. Relatives, students, teachers, clergy and other professionals (doctors, lawyers, librarians, etc.) may find themselves drawn into things as a side effect of their professions. Attracted to the mage for one reason or another, psi talents, vampires or Garou might fall into the role, and familiars (from cats to ghosts in the machine to imaginary playmates) may be summoned. Custos might quite literally be anyone. The real differentiations among them are their varying degrees of talent and power.

Consider yourself lucky that you're able to talk to me. Some of us ain't such willing participants in the War, ya know. What War? Kid, where you been? And what has your mage been tellin' you? Sit her down, and make her spit it out. You ain't Awakened, but ya ain't dumb either!

She ain't been giving ya drugs, has she? Have ya noticed if your mind is still clear on everything ya wanna think about? Sometimes ya gotta watch it. I'd rather do what I do 'cause I choose to than be forced into it and made to think it's all my own idea. Oh, you didn't know it could be done? Well, hey, I ain't 100% sure my mage hasn't messed with my mind. I just think *this is all my own choice. Make ya paranoid? It should.*

It is a regrettable fact that many mages force service from their custos. With mind-altering magick and drugs at their fingertips, mages are more than capable of compelling service. But drugged or controlled servants are not as effective as free-willed ones. Blackmail, threats against loved ones and intimations of possible torture can often bring companions into line and exact service from them. Little-valued by their mage masters, these custos lead wretched existences. Many are ripe for rebellion, but most have long since lost the will to resist.

Yeah, kid...sorry... Death-threat, ya never know where life is gonna take ya. Just stick with your mage, though, and I guarantee it'll be interestin'.



How to Use This Book

Whoever wants to be creative in good and evil, he must first be an annihilator and destroy values.

— Friedrich Nietzsche

This sourcebook sheds some light on the followers who so often disappear beneath the heading "Allies." Here, Storytellers will find several ideas for stories and chronicles based around custos. The players may all play custos of a Storyteller-controlled mage; some might be mages, while others play their friends, servants, bodyguards, lovers and familiars. All these roles and more are detailed in **Ascension's Right Hand**. If players don't want to be tied down to a specific mage, they might be a group that is affiliated with a certain cabal, or natives of a Horizon Realm, or might not even know that their mysterious friend is a mage. They might be Chantry servants, bodyguards or troubleshooters. They may have no connection with mages at all. The information in the book allows troupes to generate normal mortals, weird Horizon realm beasts, artificial intelligences, vampires, werewolves and familiar spirits. Some have special abilities and powers; otherzs don't.

Some of the most intense and interesting roleplaying comes from playing characters who aren't all-powerful and who don't have magick at their fingertips. Living in the World of Darkness without supernatural powers can be just the challenge a troupe's characters need to add that edge of excitement and imminent danger. The pre-generated characters included in this book can be used as is or can serve as templates for creating players' custos characters. So long as the points used to generate them remain about the same, players and Storytellers should feel free to tweak them a little to customize them for their chronicles.

Alternatively, the Storyteller could use the details and characters given in the book to populate her chronicle. The people at the mage society's fringe must also live in the Gothic-Punk milieu of the World of Darkness, and they have far fewer powers and defenses with which to protect themselves. When the Technocracy wants to get to a mage without directly confronting him, they might kidnap his un-Awakened girlfriend and use her for bait, or they might replace her with a clone. What about that big, black, friendly dog that followed the characters around all last night? Will they guess that it was a familiar and told its master everything it heard and saw? If the pre-generated characters given in the book are used as helpers for the opposition, however, the Storyteller should change a few details. Players can buy and read books too, and encountering someone who is supposed to be mysterious or a spy and already knowing what he is will spoil the enjoyment.



Finally, the Storyteller can have players generate "normal" mortals and have them play through several stories, becoming increasingly aware of strange occurrences behind the scenes and coincidental events and meetings. Only after running what is basically a mortals' chronicle does the Storyteller reveal that they were all being tested in some way — either to serve as custos for one faction or another or to become mages themselves.

Likewise, Umbral beasties and familiar spirits might enjoy an Umbral chronicle, or vampires and werewolves might believe themselves to be playing **Vampire** or **Werewolf** until they come in contact with mages and form bonds with them. The players might even create normal mortals who are Embraced during the game or who discover their true heritage as Garou some time before or after they become custos. The possibilities are limited only by what the players and Storyteller can conceive and the Storyteller's tolerance for the unusual.

What's Where

Ascension's Right Hand is broken down into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Who Be These Mortals?

This chapter explores custos in detail and is broken down into Tradition, Technocracy, Nephandi and Marauder followers.

Chapter Two: Society of Servants

Exploring the internal and external relationships of the custos, this chapter provides insight into their motivations, fellowships and interactions with mages.

Chapter Three: The Tale Is Told

This chapter offers Storyteller suggestions including hints for troupe play, setting and story ideas.

Chapter Four: Bones Clothed in Flesh

Rules for custos character creation, including concepts, new Traits, advantages and devices, are covered in this chapter.

Chapter Five: Numina

These paranormal powers allow un-Awakened hedge magicians and psychics to work some small amount of magic (as opposed to *magick)*. Although such powers, called Numina, are limited, they transcend the supposed limits of technological reality and hearken back to more mystic times.

Chapter Six: Who's Who

This chapter profiles a bunch of custos (everything from servants to weird Horizon Realm beasties).

Lexicon

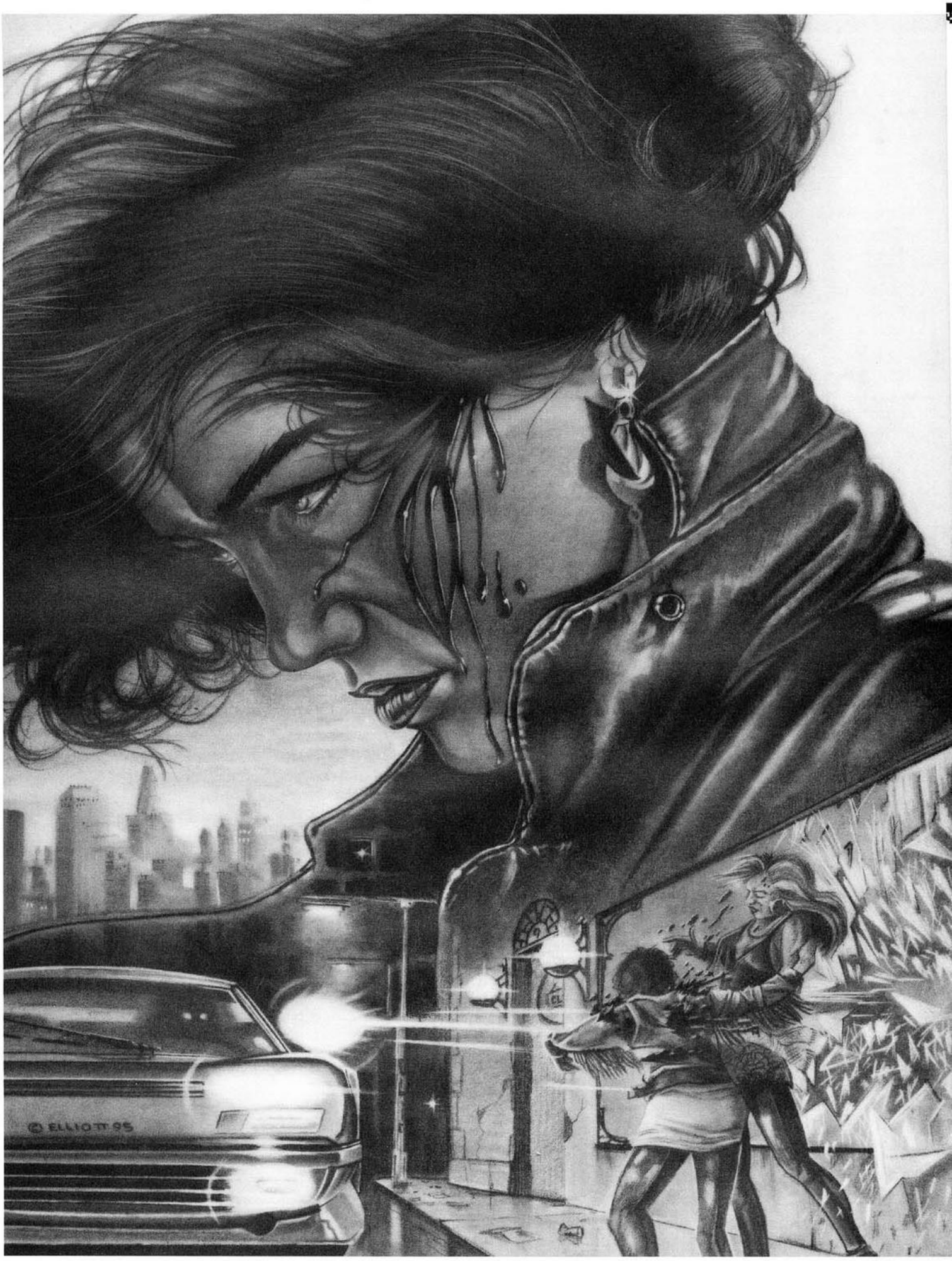
Acolyte — Acolytes are mages' companions of fairly low power and ability. Many of them are unaware of the true nature of their employers or friends.

Consor — These companions have certain powers or abilities which allow them to operate at a higher level than acolytes. Though not Awakened, consors know what the mages are and are aware of the Ascension War and the fluid nature of reality.

Custos — Custos is a catch-all term for mages' companions, whether they are acolytes, consors or familiars.

Familiar — Familiars are spirits summoned by mages. They are housed within bodies which are specially prepared to receive them. Many appear as normal animals, but they may be almost anything, from cats to computer programs.

Hedge Magician — An un-Awakened sorcerer who uses a very limited form of static magic (as opposed to dynamic True Magick). Though they command powers greater than those of common mortals, their arts are limited by a variety of essential foci, rituals and other perimeters and do not disrupt the Tapestry the way True Magick does. Such magic works only one way, every time, under certain conditions and with limited effect and power.


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Chapter One: Who Be These Mortals?

Acolytes? Sounds like some sort o' church group. Consors? Isn't that somebody who ain't good enough to marry a king or queen? Familiars? Why don't you just call 'em pets and have done with it? Who comes up with these lamebrained names? I call 'em servants and flunkies. And I ain't never felt familiar enough with anything that I'd let it bond with my mind. Call 'em what you want, but tell the truth while you're at it!

— Sam Haine, Verbena Master



Who are the people who serve as mages' companions? What is their position within the Ascension War? Why are some chosen while others are not? Each faction has criteria they search for when seeking new companions. Acolytes need have no special talents at all. Consors tend to have marketable skills or special talents. Familiars are summoned by the mage with a specific purpose in mind.

All too often, mages view their most important associates as collections of useful abilities. With all the possibilities of this universe and others spread before them, the magickally Awakened have an unfortunate tendency to regard their helpers, even consors, as mere tools. They seem unaware of the irony inherent in their own selective blindness regarding the people and creatures closest to them.

To some extent, the custos categories are arbitrary. An acolyte who has been with a mage for many years or who knows the true nature of reality might be considered a consor if she had more skills or useful talents. Some consors work for mages, but never really understand who it is that they are working for.

This chapter emphasizes the "utility value" of acolytes, consors and familiars to their mages. Yet, it is wise to remember that these "tools" are very much alive and have their own views of their "masters" and their own paths to follow.

Acolytes

I understand, you're busy saving the world. I'm expected to take care of these little, unimportant things, but you'd think it would be too much trouble for me to get some cooperation. Nasty necromancers are out there, threatening the human race, but meanwhile we're out of toilet paper.

— Simon Hawke, *The Wizard of Lovecraft's Cafe*

Good afternoon. The master is away at present, but I shall be more than happy to explain your new duties to you. I am Reynolds, the butler. Though you might believe that a butler has little to do with a guard's position, you would be in error. I oversee all the servants here at Haven House. If you have any sort of problem, please do not hesitate to bring it to me. I assure you, I shall find a solution to it. Do not ever disturb the master or his family and friends who live here with mundane concerns. They are very busy and cannot be bothered with the everyday running of the household.

Now as to your position, you shall guard the estate from trespassers. You will be on duty for six hours each day. We like to make certain our guards do not become inattentive through boredom. You have your own room, and there are several game rooms, a pool and a firing range where you may while away your hours. Every three months, you shall have a week off, at which time you may leave the estate. The salary is quite generous. I see you agree. Then everything is settled?

Good. Welcome to the staff. Your room is the third to the right down this hallway. You'll start tomorrow. I'll leave you to yourself until then. Oh, yes, there is just one more thing... don't let the flying leopards throw you. Just shoot them like you would anything else. I'm sure you'll get along splendidly!

Acolytes are companions of fairly low power and ability. This term suggests loyal, worshipful souls who aspire to follow in the path of their mage, but relatively few acolytes fit that description. While some acolytes know about magick, mages and the Ascension War, most have sketchy knowledge at best, and many are completely unaware of the true nature of their Awakened employers or friends. Acolytes range from menial Chantry servants to boon companions. Examples include bandmates, cultists, occult shop employees, lab techs, students or good friends. Servants (see **The Book of Chantries**) fall into this category.

Acolytes can be available to assist characters during stories by simply doing their jobs or by performing other necessary services depending on their loyalty and ability. They can also serve as useful hooks to draw the mage into adventures, either through their actions in their private lives or by their vulnerability to the mage's adversaries. Remember that acolytes are (generally) regular folks who may not necessarily volunteer to put themselves at great risk or cheerfully die for the mage. Of course, not all acolytes have a choice in these matters. Nephandi tend to think of (and treat) their acolytes as slaves. Marauder acolytes may be caretakers for their insane charges or be swept up into the altered reality of their madness.

Consors

If you ever need anything please don't hesitate
To ask someone else first
I'm too busy acting like I'm not naive
I've seen it all I was here first

—Nirvana, "Very Ape"

"Well, there goes lunch." Church emerged from the shadows of the alley and turned to follow Lorelei with his eyes, hunger written across his handsome features. Shard grabbed him by the collar and threw him most of the length of the alley back into the deep shadows, where he crashed into a dumpster.

"Damn you, Church!" she hissed, baring her fangs. "I'll kill you if you so much as look at Lorelei! Sate your thirst elsewhere, or control yourself! We're here to watch over her, not feed from her." Shards's ice blue eyes gleamed red in the darkness as she waited to see if her Childe would try to fight her. He picked himself up, glaring at her resentfully.

"But she was my type," he said plaintively.

"So are eight billion other people! You'll find some of them here in this city. Type O isn't that rare. Now come on, or we're going to lose her."

Shard's short black hair framed her delicate face, accentuating her high cheekbones and pallor. Her torn black stockings, hiking boots, a skirt which barely reached her upper thighs and a long black T-shirt with the slogan "All in all, I'd rather be in Philadelphia" were topped with a fringed, black leather jacket. Church wore jeans, black leather boots, a black T-shirt featuring the movie poster from "The Crow" and a patched fatigue jacket. His pale blond hair fell to his shoulders in a tousled mop. She looked like she might be a model. He looked about 14.

"Why are we following her if we aren't gonna feed off her?" he asked.

"Just shut up and come on, Church. We need to keep her in sight. Somebody's been stalking her, and I have no intention of letting them get her."

"But I'm hungry...," he mumbled, then sighed as they hurried to keep the dark-haired Hollow One in sight.

Lorelei's hair was much longer than Shard's and had brilliant silver and red streaks which started at her left temple. She wore a spidery black lace skirt and a black see-through shirt over a ripped leotard. A fringed shawl tied around her waist formed another layer of skirt. Her ripped black leggings ended half an inch above her ankles, and she wore black ballet slippers that were turning gray with age. Silver earrings dangled to her shoulders and pierced one eyebrow. Her pale face stood out in stark contrast to the ring of dark makeup around her eyes and her black lipstick.

She crossed the street and disappeared around a corner. Shard hurried after her while Church lagged behind, still grumbling. They heard the sound of a car accelerating as they reached the turn. Church didn't hear the click of the safety being released on the gun, but Shard's preternatural hearing warned her, and she was already gone by the time he opened his mouth to ask what was happening.



As he rounded the corner, he saw Shard diving in front of Lorelei and being cut down by gunfire. Shard screamed as the bullets tore into her. Glass from the storefront shattered and cascaded over the two figures. The car screeched around another turn and sped away from the scene of the attempted assassination. Blood seemed to be everywhere. It had sprayed the jagged glass windows and pooled on the sidewalk. Church didn't even think of it as food. He thought Shard was dead until she groaned and tried to sit up.

Lorelei shook the glass off herself. She held Shard's head in her lap and stroked her raven hair. "Jesus, Shard, you idiot, you're hurt! Can you heal yourself? Why do you do this shit anyway?"

Shard laughed. "Somebody's gotta watch over you, sis. That's my job!"

Operating on a higher level of ability than common acolytes, consors know exactly what is going on and often accompany mages into "the line of fire." For both Tradition and Technocracy, these include very skilled un-Awakened mortals (witch-hunters, agents, scientists, doctors, etc.), vampire or werewolf companions and Horizon Realm beings. Though not mages themselves, consors are aware of the true nature of reality. They lack the aptitude, ability or desire to learn True Magick. Guardians (see **The Book of Chantries**) and constructs such as golems and robots belong to this category.

These competent allies are usually more skilled than acolytes and more loyal as well. Consors *tend* to be long-term associates of mages and will almost always cheerfully risk their lives for the mage. Over the course of time, many mages find themselves owing debts to their longtime companions.

The familiarity which results from the longer span of the relationships, the mutual obligations and intimate knowledge of each other, leads to a more equitable relationship between consor and mage. This is particularly true in the case of supernatural consors such as vampires, werewolves or spirits. Most consors have seen the mage looking her worst (physically, mentally and emotionally), and quite a few have dragged their mage's butt out of the fire on more than one occasion. This shared experience makes it very difficult for the mage to successfully sneer at the consor over the dinner table or order her around indiscriminately. The obvious relationship of the superior employer to the lowly servant, so often found in the interactions of mages and acolytes, is rarely seen between a mage and a consor.

This relationship of relative equality often holds true even among the Nephandi and Marauders. While Nephandi will always be cruel and tyrannical in their relationships, Nephandi consors are often "junior partners" in the enterprise of corruption. Marauder consors usually join the mage in creative insanity, helping to mold and twist the universe (and often the mage) like taffy.

Familiars

Daddy only stares into the distance
There's only so much more that he can take
Many miles away something crawls from the slime at the
Bottom of a dark Scottish lake...
—The Police, "Synchronicity II"

My name is Suzi, and I'm five. I live here on Oak Street with my friend Cindi. She's five too. We like to swing on the swings and play dollies and dress-up. I like Cindi. She gives me good things to eat. Cindi's mommy and daddy can't see me or hear me. Cindi's teacher can't either, but Cindi can. Her mommy and daddy and teacher told Cindi my name is "Imaginary." They don't know it's really Suzi.

One day a bad man took Cindi away in his car. He didn't know I got in too. He took us to a bad, smelly place and ripped her dress. We got mad. Cindi made him stop, and I helped. The red stuff that came out of his ears and nose looked like fingerpaint. It took us a long time to walk home, and I was hungry.

Cindi and I are friends. We'll be together forever and ever.

Familiars bond with mages on a magickal level and trade their knowledge and abilities in return for upkeep, companionship and Quintessence. They are in no way subservient to their mage (in fact, they often think of the mage as *their* familiar), and their non-human perspectives frequently prove to be as valuable to their companions as their more concrete abilities. Mages should never forget, however, that familiars have radically different world views. They may see nothing wrong, for instance, in randomly singling out a child to be killed for their amusement. Normal ideas of good and evil, of law and morality, do not apply to these otherworldly spirits made flesh. Mages had best use caution when agreeing to contracts with these beings. They sometimes require extra services or conditions over and above the minimum as rewards for their help. These demands do not always make sense to the mage, but failure to provide them once such is agreed upon breaks the contract as far as the familiar is concerned. On the other hand, mages can find no companions more loyal so long as they fulfill their side of the bargain. Aside from their ability to eat Paradox and provide information, familiars may have other powers such as magickal ability in one Sphere or danger sense.

Familiars may take the forms of animals, computer programs, strange, otherworldly beings or something else altogether. Although each Tradition has its favorite or preferred form for familiars, as a general rule, most of the Tradition mages (with the notable exception of the Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts) tend to have familiars that could pass for natural creatures. Some Tradition mages have more exotic familiars, but these stay in Horizon Realms. Their visits to static reality are,



of necessity, quite brief. A few Technocracy mages may have familiars who are quite similar to those of the Traditions, but for the most part, the spirits they bond with are housed in less natural forms. The Technocracy almost never refers to these spirits as familiars, preferring to call them by some euphemism which better fits their paradigm. Marauder familiars are the strangest of all, like Abominable Snowmen, fire-breathing dragopedes or a red-spotted Dalmatian that can play a wicked chess game. Nephandi familiars are twisted spirits who serve to corrupt those they serve and those they come in contact with. (More information on familiars can be found in **The Book of Shadows: The Mage Player's Guide**.)

Mage Factions and their Followers



Like attracts like; custos tend to be drawn to (or seized by!) mage factions which travel in similar circles. The general categories below cannot encompass every sort of ally a mage might find, but offer a range of un-Awakened companions for the wizards of your chronicle.

The Council of Nine Traditions

Here and now are the Mysteries.
Out of no stored and storied past
Of things long lost;
But the breathing moment of time.
— Doreen Valiente, *The Mysteries*

Tradition mages are as varied in their preferences for familiars, acolytes and consors as they are in all other aspects of life. Mages from each Tradition shape all facets of their lives so that they might work toward Ascension, and their more personal goals, by whatever means best suits their current pet paradigm. Mages attempt to find and create ideal living situations, Horizon Realms and magickal workings. They choose their less magickly adept associates with equal care (or with at least an equivalent amount of attention).

The following information gives an overview of what mages of different Traditions typically look for in their acolytes, consors and familiars. Keep in mind, though, that the only thing truly typical about any mage is her singularity.

Akashic Brotherhood

•Acolytes

The Brotherhood tends to attract those who are looking for enlightenment, but it also gets its share of people who adore old Bruce Lee films. Many are clerks in martial arts, health food and alternative book stores or serve as waitpersons in Chinese or Indian restaurants, especially the ones in which the food is authentic and healthy. The Brothers respect and protect their acolytes. They neither mistreat them nor coddle them, believing that they will find the way to Ascension through contact with those who seek it. Such companions are not all martial arts proponents, however. The Brotherhood reportedly has a Chantry in which Mayan indians and followers of the Dalai Lama serve as acolytes.

•Consors

A lot of people make the mistake of thinking the Akashic Brotherhood's consors are just martial arts fanatics. They confuse the means with the ends. It's true they attract certain types, but their consors aren't show-offs who act like they're action movie stars. Mostly they're serious students of Zen or yoga who can achieve amazing results even without magic. Some levitate while meditating or move objects around without touching them. The key is the power of the *mind*. Psychics and diviners fit in well with the Akashics, as do peaceful Umbrood spirits.

• Familiars

The Akashic Brotherhood members tend to rely on themselves and the powers of their own minds, but some few either enjoy the companionship of a familiar or wish to learn what the familiar can teach them. Generally, Akashic familiars are clothed in the shapes of grasshoppers, monkeys and birds. Some are tigers and even llamas. Quetzal birds are popular among the South and Central American Brothers. The more bizarre ones must remain in Horizon Realms most of the time and may be as fantastic as feathered dragons or phoenixes. Akashic Brotherhood familiars are reputed to be chosen from among the wisest spirits.

Celestial Chorus

•Acolytes

The Chorus finds those who try to serve humanity in some way. Soup kitchen workers, young people or old ladies who hand out religious tracts, crusading police officers, social workers, doctors at free clinics and TV evangelists are all prime examples of the sort of person the Chorus likes to recruit. Aside from their humanitarian concerns, most of them have one thing in common — they believe in something outside themselves that gives them a purpose. Whether they are Christian, Jewish, followers of Islam or adherents of the Goddess, all of them

worship a deity which they can associate with the One. Whereas the Akashics go for those who believe in themselves, the Chorus attracts the ones who believe in something *outside* themselves.

• **Consors**

Many of the Celestial Chorus' consors evince powers of one sort or another. Some of them can't be Dominated by vampires, and many of them have True Faith. They sometimes have psychic powers which they attribute to being chosen by the One. Perhaps they have been. A very few have the power to summon otherworldly beings to their aid. Whether these are angels or not is open to speculation. Some Celestial Chorus consors act as witch-hunters, stalking such evils as vampires and the Nephandi. The hunters know various sorts of lore and ways to deal with their foes and are often armed with "holy" weapons. Bagheera (werepanthers) also love to interact with the Chorus to discuss religion and philosophy and sometimes serve as consors to do so.

• **Familiars**

Some Celestial Chorus mages are uncomfortable with the idea of familiars, equating them with such things as imps. Others see them as spirit beings that have as great a connection to the One as any human. They tend to prefer white birds (like doves) and lambs (when such wouldn't cause comment), though many find it easiest to summon spirits into dog forms. Their more exotic familiars, those who spend most of their time in Horizon Realms, tend toward winged humanoids reminiscent of angels.

Cult of Ecstasy

• **Acolytes**

Cult of Ecstasy acolytes believe in having a good time. Just about anyone who's into the entertainment business or devoted to partying might make good Cult material. They aren't simply mindless hedonists, however. Like their mages, they use certain drugs, music or the high they get from acting, dancing and even mountain climbing to alter their consciousness. Musicians, actors, groupies, psychedelics dealers, race car drivers, bungee jumpers and all kinds of thrill-seekers qualify. One thing almost all the Cult's acolytes have in common is their attractiveness. It is as if beauty were one more stimulant.

Though the idea would surprise many outside the Cult, the Ecstasy mages and their followers often practice a rigid code of responsibility and self-discipline. This is not a discipline of denial (far from it!), but foresight and an eye toward the consequences of their behavior. Transcending the boundaries only makes sense if you're around to learn from what you have done. Although the Cult and its custos appear to be mindless pleasure-seekers, there is a method and a code underlying their indulgences.

• **Consors**

Cult consors are usually like the Cult mages, trying to push the envelope and force people out of their safe little lives. They believe that if you break out of the mundane, whatever is left must be the fantastic. Alternative media folks, performance artists, poets and musicians make good Cult consors. Most of them have some special touch of power which makes them compelling. Some run nightclubs of the more decadent kind; others started the white water rafting craze to scare the bejeezus out of people and wake them up. There are even some vampires that hang out with the Cult; lots of Toreadors get into their music and beauty. They also attract some Bastet (werecats) who love their sensuousness. Cult mages are quite likely to have Horizon Realm creatures as consors, and those beasties may come complete with their own internal synthesizers and hookahs. Changelings, too, are drawn to Cult mages because of the creativity they can sense within them.

• **Familiars**

Like many among the Traditions, the Cult of Ecstasy usually confine themselves to familiars that can pass as normal animals. They tend to like ferrets, but have been known to choose boa constrictors and exotic birds. Some Cult mages prefer cats, including big ones such as cheetahs or ocelots, though these are harder to explain to animal protection groups. Those familiars who must remain in Horizon Realms for the better part of their time usually have pleasing, but completely alien, shapes and features. Often they also exude heady perfumes or have melodious voices as well. Many Cult familiars require some special services in return for their bond—special music they must have access to or regular infusions of hallucinogenics, for example.

Dreamspeakers

• **Acolytes**

People who are attracted to the Dreamspeakers are often those who believe in the guardian spirits of the land or who work to protect the environment. Many of them are into crystals and holistic medicine, aromatherapy, shamanism and tribal beliefs, whether those are American Indian teachings, Aboriginal or African. The Dreamspeakers attract shamans, dancers, drummers, ecologists and such.

• **Consors**

Dreamspeaker consors are those who see beyond outward trappings in their search for truth. They tend to spearhead environmental movements. Lots of them are movers and shakers in their tribes, working for the return of American Indian artifacts or fighting for African national identity. Many of the Native Americans have popularized pow wows where the drums, chanting, singing and dancing can trance people out and get them wired at the same time.

Qualmi (werelynx) and Pumonca (werecougars) sometimes serve as consors for Dreamspeakers, as do the Balam (werejaguars), who are involved in trying to preserve the South American rain forest. Some Dreamspeaker consors have subtle powers, even more impressive than the Akashics'abilities. Many Umbrood spirits work with the Speakers, and they attract Garou, who work in concert with the Dreamspeakers on behalf of Gaia.

• **Familiars**

Dreamspeakers prefer their familiars in the shapes of various totem animals. Dogs, wolves, bears, eagles, kangaroo, foxes, snakes and monkeys are all common choices. Those that are more exotic or that the public would consider dangerous are kept quietly in more isolated locations and not paraded around. Dreamspeakers take great pains to keep the familiars who wear the shapes of endangered species out of the limelight, lest the authorities attempt to take them away. Their more exotic familiars assume the guise of white buffalo or thunderbirds or long-extinct animals such as mammoths. While some may exist on earth so long as they are kept hidden, others may only visit occasionally and reside in Horizon Realms.

Euthanatos

• **Acolytes**

For the most part, Euthanatos followers are people who want to help others to understand the death process. Many of them have what others would consider a morbid interest in death and dying, although mystery writers, psychologists and physicians are as common among the followers of the Euthanatos as are occultists, undertakers, survivalists and hit men.

• **Consors**

Many people believe that the Euthanatos and their custos are only crazed killers, but nothing could be further from the truth. Euthanatos do not kill on a whim. For them, each death has a purpose and every life is sacred. Euthanatos are the least likely to accept a psychopath among them, for those sick individuals kill for no reason and serve no higher purpose. It is simply a matter of wiping the slate clean when it's time for somebody to let go. Some Euthanatos consors seem concerned with nothing but torture and death, but others are the most compassionate people you'll ever meet. Some consors are active in the right-to-die movement, and attorneys among them have become specialists in helping people obtain and implement living wills. Others are the forensics experts who work with the police, but help the Euthanatos cover their tracks, and the performance artists staging death-plays to help people come to terms with their fear of death. A few Euthanatos even attract vampires and ghosts, the Awakened dead.

Bastet (Werecats)

It is extremely rare for werecats to be companions to mages, so it is a fortunate mage indeed who has a Bastet as a consor. It is doubtful that they see themselves in the sidekick role, however. Bastet consider themselves to be "the eyes of Gaia" and believe that She created them to oversee her human children. Watchful and curious, the Bastet are ever fascinated by the inventiveness of humanity. Their inquisitiveness and love of diversion are their main reasons for associating with mages, along with their penchant for sensuousness (they love being petted and stroked and revel in new sensations).

Bastet see their association with mages as educational. They believe they have the divine right to know everything and unearth all secrets, while revealing little of what they know to non-Bastet. These fascinating creatures are graceful, vain and independent. They greatly value cleanliness and are fastidious about their grooming. For the most part, they are solitary, staking claim to their own territories and defending them against interlopers. They meet during full moons at gatherings called *taghairm*. There they sing, tell tales and exchange all the juicy information they've gathered since the last meeting. Gossip among themselves is considered a high art, and good dirt is likely to garner much fame.

Each Bastet has her own Den-Realm, the only place where she may freely pass through the Gauntlet. Bastet cannot step sideways as Garou do unless they possess the Gift: **Walking Between Worlds.** The territory each claims in her Den-Realm extends to the portion of the Penumbra which surrounds her claimed earthly den.

There are (or were) nine tribes of Bastet, though one of them, the Ceilican of northern Europe and Britain, has supposedly been destroyed. They are the Bagheera (Panther), the Balam (Jaguar), the Bubasti (Egyptian), Khan (Tiger), Pumonca (Cougar), Simba (Lion), Swara (Cheetah) and Qualmi (Lynx). They are found throughout the world in their native habitats, though all Bastet are rare. Bagheera are sages; Balam currently defend the South American rain forests, and Bubasti are thought by many to be extinct. Khan passionately hate and hunt humans for decimating their tiger cousins and destroying their habitat. Pumonca interact with Native American cultures and Uktena Garou. Simba are the only Bastet who live in groups (or prides) and were originally to have led catkind. Swara were once the messengers of the Bastet and tend to be shy and nervous, while Qualmi practice cat and human hedge magick and breed exclusively with Native Americans. They have several powers and Gifts as well as their own Rites. More complete information on the Bastet and other kinds of changing creatures can be found in **The Werewolf Players Guide.**

• **Familiars**

The Euthanatos' familiar spirits tend to be of the darker sort. They like creatures such as black dogs, rats, snakes and birds. The most popular shape for Euthanatos familiars is that of a raven or crow. Many of these spirits require the sacrifice of some smaller creature (a mouse, for example) to them as both food and spiritual sustenance. Their stranger spirits may be quite fantastic, assuming shapes which are capable of dealing out death. They can be quite varied, with some that may resemble the Creature from the Black Lagoon, while others assume a form like that of Kali, the Hindu goddess of death.

Order of Hermes

• **Acolytes**

Acolytes for the Order of Hermes tend toward secrecy. They love mystickal, magickal languages and symbols. They are mathematicians, occultists like the Order of the Golden Dawn, Freemasons and other secret societies untainted by the Nephandi and people who like playing with codes and formulas — scientists, cryptographers or those who like to work the puzzles in the newspaper. Many of their most trusted acolytes are old family retainers whose ancestors have kept the mages' households in order for generations.

• **Consors**

The Order attracts spies and unusually secretive people or those who tend to think and speak in codes or metaphors. Influential Talmudic scholars, lawyers and alchemist-types love being part of the Order. Scientists, pure theorists who only speak mathematics and scienceese, that don't join the Technocracy or the Sons of Ether slip in with them too. The Order also seems to get paramilitary sorts for some reason. Some Bagheera, the werepanther sages of Bastet, serve as their consors, probably because the Order based a lot of their magickal formulae on ancient Egyptian magick.

• **Familiars**

The spirits who respond to Order of Hermes mages' calls tend to think in symbols. They are among the most intelligent and well-informed familiars, but can be difficult to understand. Even when the mage believes she has plumbed the depths of meaning in her familiar's cryptic remarks, she may have been too literal or not literal enough in her interpretation. These familiars almost always require access to magickal tomes in return for their services. Non-black cats, owls, goats, frogs and snakes are favorite forms for familiars, though pot-bellied pigs are gaining in popularity as they become acceptable as household pets. Many of the Order's stranger familiars such as lamasu, sphinxes and griffins are confined to their Horizon Realms where they cause no Paradox.



Sons of Ether

• **Acolytes**

Contrary to popular belief, not all Sons of Ether acolytes are earnest young men with pocket protectors and glasses taped in the middle. There are a few such among them, those who haven't been recruited by the Technocracy. Not all of them look like nerds, though. The six footer who is built like a Neanderthal, works on cars, and talks nothing but autojargon is one. So is the gorgeous girl who speaks of quantum physics like she invented it (maybe she did). Anybody who's interested in inventions and science and eccentric theories fits right in with the Sons. Never underestimate the power of somebody who can earn a Ph.D! Some of the Sons are unable to work well with living servitors or feel uneasy in social situations. These tend to build their own acolytes, robots programmed to perform certain functions and who don't bother the mage with undesired chatter.

• **Consors**

Just like the mages themselves, their consors are usually tinkerers. All of them love to play with gadgets and try to build balloon cars, thought meters and mind rays. Lots of psychics end up as their consors, if only because the Sons are the ones acting as parapsychologists. They are editors of alternative science magazines, chaos theorists and inventors. They have also constructed more advanced robots to act as their consors, either serving as walking reference libraries or acting as security forces. Computerizing systems in cars was thought up by the Sons and the Virtual Adepts working in tandem as a way to provide them with mobile consors. The ones they've made are far superior to what most folks can get. Some of their consors are television people who have been backing shows that feature computerized and sentient cars and futuristic computer companions.

• **Familiars**

The Sons summon the weirdest spirits and Umbrood types. These seem to be almost as inventive as the mages they bond to. Various types of robot bodies are usually made available to them, and some mages go so far as to make cars, brooms and even items of apparel for their familiar spirits to inhabit. A few Sons create more natural forms such as dogs or cats for their familiars, but most prefer to house their spirit companions within strange machinery of some sort. Weird monster and alien types are another favorite form, though these must stay in Horizon Realms or cause great Paradox if spotted by Sleepers.

Verbena

• **Acolytes**

Witches, Wiccans and New Agers tend to hang out with the Verbena. Lots of them are fine holistic or herbal healers, and a lot are just good ol' country people. Many are very down to earth, full of common sense and folk wisdom. What seems to distinguish them from other people is that they demand freedom. Most are independent thinkers who don't let society dictate how they will live.

• **Consors**

Whereas the acolytes focus on the freedom to be had with the Verbena, their consors are somewhat more informed. They're all very much into life. Surgeons and chemists that aren't Technocracy tainted sometimes find the Verbena to their liking. A lot of the recent popularity of holistic medicine and Chinese herbalism was started by Verbena consors. Nudists tend to fit right in, and pharmacists and midwives make good recruits. Certain teachers and lawyers reach a lot of young people and infect them with ideas of individual freedom and liberties. Some werecats enjoy associating with them, especially those Verbena with cat-type familiars. A few changelings and mythical beasts from the Umbra find that they are compatible with Verbena as well. The scariest consor on record was created by a particularly powerful Verbena who'd lost his mind. He apparently woke up on the wrong side of the bed and animated a blood-drenched tree that acted as his bodyguard for a time.

• **Familiars**

Verbena tend to prefer cats as their chosen shape for familiar spirits. Most choose black, though a few like white, calico, orange or grey cats. Other favored shapes include crows, owls, mice, dogs, sheep and goats. Some few create horse familiars. Among their more exotic familiars are those that resemble unicorn, pegasi, leprechauns and brownies. These usually serve from Horizon Realms, but may occasionally cross into static reality for brief periods to inspire children and fantasists.

Virtual Adepts

• **Acolytes**

Move over, Mr. Data! Virtuals tend to attract science fiction fans in droves. Most of them want to find out what it's like to make love in virtual reality. Hackers, computer game players and anybody who likes computerized gadgets fits in with the Adepts. Some people who are on computer bulletin boards exchange information that is useful to the Adepts and never realize they are serving as their acolytes.

• **Consors**

Adept consors tend to be computer programmers and designers. Many of them design intricate security programs, while others concentrate on creating computer games which stretch people's imaginations and open them up to new possibilities. They also have an entire network of consors that they meet online in BBSs. Those could be anybody and do anything. Certain Garou help them out occasionally, and some more primitive AIs also serve them as consors. The Virtual Adepts have also profited from a joint venture with the Sons of Ether which produced some very sophisticated computerized cars — in effect traveling consors.

• **Familiars**

Virtual Adept spirit contacts tend to be "ghosts in the machine," super-enhanced programs or AIs. They are not always found within computers, however. Adepts tend to computerize their living quarters, and their safety might be overseen by a quite sentient and powerful spirit housed within the security system. They even manage to carry familiars with them in the form of pocket calculators and laptops. A few Adepts work with familiars in more normal forms like dogs and cats, but they are the minority. Their more fantastic spirits tend toward the truly alien, being beams of light or concentric rings of sparkling motes or shaped much like computer icons. Whenever these cross into the real world, they do so by means of the virtual realities created by the Adepts.

The Orphans and the Lost Tradition

Some come dark and strange like dying
Crows and ravens whistling
Lines of weeping, strings of crying
So much said in listening
Songs to aging children come
Aging children, I am one.

— Joni Mitchell, "Songs to Aging Children Come"

Orphans attract followers just like Tradition mages do, but many more Orphan acolytes and consors tend to be real outsiders than those who join with the Council of Nine. Many are self-taught, some pursue individual occult theories, and some would never be thought of as material for acolytes (junkies, bag ladies) or consors (gang members, sewer maintenance workers). Orphan familiars are usually related in some way to the type of magick the Orphan practices. An Orphan who utilizes his computer might attract an AI's attention, while another who leans heavily toward Akashic Brotherhood teachings may keep wild songbirds like nightingales. Other familiars could simply follow the mage home. Mice inhabiting the corner of the occult shop, eagles, crickets, dolphins, a friend's boa constrictor, iguanas, the stray cat the Orphan feeds out of compassion or even the family pet are all potential material.

Although the Hollow Ones are by no means the only Orphans, they are the best-known faction. Their custos, while leaning a little heavily toward the outré, are fairly representative.

Hollow Ones

• **Acolytes**

Hollow Ones find the Traditions too moribund. They know life sucks, but party anyway. They Awakened on their own and don't owe anybody anything. Anyone who wants to party with them is welcome to join. Blood dolls, artists, runaways and punkers can all be found serving as acolytes for the Hollow Ones. They take care of themselves and don't seem to fit in anywhere else. The Hollow Ones respect the abilities and individuality of their acolytes. Most of them feel it is all pointless, but they may as well go out in style.

• **Consors**

Hollow Ones are into vampires, ghosts and anything else that can show them a few new truths. They draw those who like to take risks. A lot of their people are artists of one sort or another, musicians, writers, dancers or fashion designers who have influence in their fields. Club owners, performance artists and any sort of cutting edge types are welcome. Mostly, though, they are just friends of the mages who have a few skills beyond cooking or putting another CD on.

• **Familiars**

Orphans, particularly Hollow Ones, pick up familiars that are similar to those the Traditions prefer, though strange ones such as imaginary playmates are not unheard of. They tend to like "spooky" things, going for black cats, rats and ravens. Some prefer tarantulas. The Umbrood types they call up are extraordinarily Gothic.

Ahl-i-Batin

• **Acolytes**

Most Ahl-i-Batin acolytes come from families who have served their mage masters for generations — sometimes without knowing they serve mages at all. They are very traditional and hold their positions to be ones of great import, as they must serve their masters' needs, yet remain discreet in all matters. Many acolytes seek service with those they perceive to be holy men to purify their hearts and minds. While some are humble servants or beggars, others such as doctors, holy men and scholars all know of the wisdom of prayer and the ancient ways.

• **Consors**

The Ahl-i-Batin were once part of the Traditions, but were lost to them long ago. Only recently has contact between them been reestablished. Holy men and scholars from various Islamic sects, a few assassins and professional soldiers all serve the Ahl-i-Batin. Discretion is counted highly. They were once great proponents of mind magic, and psychics are drawn to them because of their knowledge in this area.

• **Familiars**

In general, Ahl-i-Batin are somewhat hesitant when dealing with familiars, for many remember the raw chaos of the Marauders and their djinn companions. Those who do accept familiars (or who are accepted by them) are much like the Traditions in their choice to house the spirits within the forms of natural-seeming animals like goats, sheep or camels. Rumor has it that they also make golems. Their more exotic familiars take the shape of rocs and giant tigers. It is said that they are able to exist for longer periods of time in static reality because more Arab people still believe in such things. It is also theorized that they remain longer because anyone seeing one of them simply believes she is experiencing a hallucination brought on by the desert's heat.



The Technocracy

By reminding us of our deep cosmic ignorance, science — far from dulling the mystery of existence — sharpens it the way garlic wafting on the evening breeze whets your appetite. It reminds us that we dwell in a mystery that is ultimately more to be savored than solved.

—Dennis Overbye, *Time*

Gentlemen and ladies, it has come to our attention that recruitment among the unenlightened has recently begun to slip. We all know how busy we are with our various projects, but without adequate assistance, none of us shall succeed. We are in dire need of more household servants, lab assistants, factory workers, clerks, computer operators, guards, receptionists and so on. Aside from their value in these areas, those selected will serve as unwitting control groups for many of our ongoing projects. Our need for more highly trained operatives is also great.

You have been chosen from among our operatives to recruit those whose services we need. We anticipate that you will be able to persuade 85.6% of those you approach so long as you utilize care in selecting those you contact. To assist you in doing so, I have composed a memo with a few observations concerning our most likely prospects. Please read and initial it to show that you have absorbed the material in it. Congratulations on your new appointments.

To the Technocracy, allies and followers fall into the "favored servant" role. As the Technocrats are chosen to protect and help humanity, their more mundane helpers are lesser partners in this magnificent enterprise. There is a great distinction between drones and allies in the Technocracy mindset; while the former are naturally good citizens, the latter are more desirable when real work needs to be done.

Nearly all allies are regarded as security risks by the higher ranks of leadership. Tasks and information given to the unenlightened are on a "need-to-know" basis. This is not to say that Technomancer allies are treated badly; most are given rewards commensurate with their usefulness and loyalty. Those who betray that trust, however, are relegated to Horizon Realm workpits and laboratories. There, they can continue to serve the greater good while suffering the punishment they deserve.



Memo to Recruiters
From: J.B. Cullington, Regional HQ, NWO

The New World Order has gathered this information in an attempt to assist our fellow Conventions in acquiring new staff. It is hoped that by heeding the suggestions contained herein, overlap will be minimized and efficiency maintained. The following are the most likely prospects for recruitment into our Convention control groups. They have been separated into target groups as technicians and operatives for your convenience:

Iteration X

• Technicians

People who are interested in computer technology and cybernetics are naturally of great interest to Iteration X. Such may be found at almost any university or computer store. Recruitment efforts might also be extended to those who appreciate different kinds of high tech devices and weapons. Science fiction fans who are attracted to hard science and cyberfiction also make excellent recruits, provided they have not been infected with the fantasies and delusions of the kind which spawned the Virtual Adepts and Sons of Ether. Computer operators and programmers are preferred. Maids and janitors are needed for some locations, and security guards are required to staff several new facilities. Each candidate must be either bondable or capable of receiving a security clearance (though they will, of course, not be told the true extent of their work). Often, a talented individual with the potential to serve Iteration X is found among those who fancy a job in which they believe they are privy to secrets. Remember that they must be capable of strictly following orders. Iteration X will tolerate no mavericks.

• Operatives

Mechanical engineers and computer designers of both hard- and software are primary targets for recruitment as operatives. Additionally, those with physical handicaps who might be improved by Iteration X's cybernetic replacements should be vigorously pursued. Anyone who evinces psychic powers should immediately be reported to the Convention. Operatives are instructed not to contact these persons directly. There is no need for recruitment operatives to investigate non-human sources such as Artificial Intelligences. Iteration X would, however, be interested in hearing of any AIs that are found as a result of your more mundane investigations.

New World Order

• Technicians

It should be obvious that the New World Order is most interested in those who can gather information, but not spread it to the wrong ears. Statisticians, poll takers, credit bureau clerks, "snitches" and bondable household servants are the first choices. Security guards, historians and those who enjoy cracking the codes found in newspapers are other possible targets. Remember that it is not enough that recruits be capable of gathering and processing information; they must also be discreet. Again, we accept only those who can follow orders precisely. In all cases, it is best if the candidates are not told anything of the actual nature of the New World Order. If they believe they are working for the government and think that what they know might compromise national security, so much the better.

• Operatives

Experts in computer languages, foreign languages and statistical analysis are our primary targets for the moment. Espionage agents, undercover police officers, private investigators, experts in surveillance media and special forces trainees are likewise sought for immediate recruitment. Fortune tellers who show signs of genuine ability to predict the future should be immediately brought to the Convention's attention. As always, discretion is a must.

The Progenitors

• Technicians

The Progenitors need people who can act as lab assistants, watching over minor experiments in progress, cleaning equipment, mixing chemicals and performing general tasks which call for repetition more than insight. Chemistry and pre-med students who show no signs of brilliance, even bartenders, are all possible targets. In addition, the Progenitors are looking for hardy genetic types to serve as security and servants. Don't overlook gang members or addicts who might be recruited in return for drugs, runaways who will cooperate in return for shelter and food or animals that might serve as guards once they are properly enhanced.

• Operatives

Gifted surgeons and medical researchers should be recruited for the Progenitors immediately. Pharmacists, drug designers, biologists, chemists and geneticists are desired recruits as well. Pure genetic types are needed to "assist" with experiments in progress. Criminals who volunteer for medical experiments could serve in this capacity as well.

The Syndicate

• Technicians

CPAs, bank tellers, loan officers, store clerks and anyone else who knows how to handle money is of interest to the Syndicate. They prefer to recruit their support staff such as maids, guards, secretaries and such from those who have fallen into arrears on loans, have overextended themselves with their credit cards, or who are overdrawn at the bank. Additionally, they are seeking enforcer-types: bruisers, football players, brawlers at the local bar. Any of these might be of use.

• Operatives

The Syndicate is most interested in acquiring the services of members of crime families and organizations, corporate officers and professional financial consultants. Experts in security systems, prison guards, gang members and mercenaries should be secondary targets. Finally, media personnel such as journalists, admen and television programmers could be canvassed as well.

Void Engineers

• Technicians

Though they themselves have only requested "volunteers for experimental voyages," we have taken the liberty of also requesting general household staff and guards to serve as technicians for the Void Engineers. Aside from reckless thrill-seekers, explorer positions might attract cartographers, space exploration buffs and UFO enthusiasts. The more mundane staff may be found almost anywhere, but must believe that they are working for NASA or some such agency.

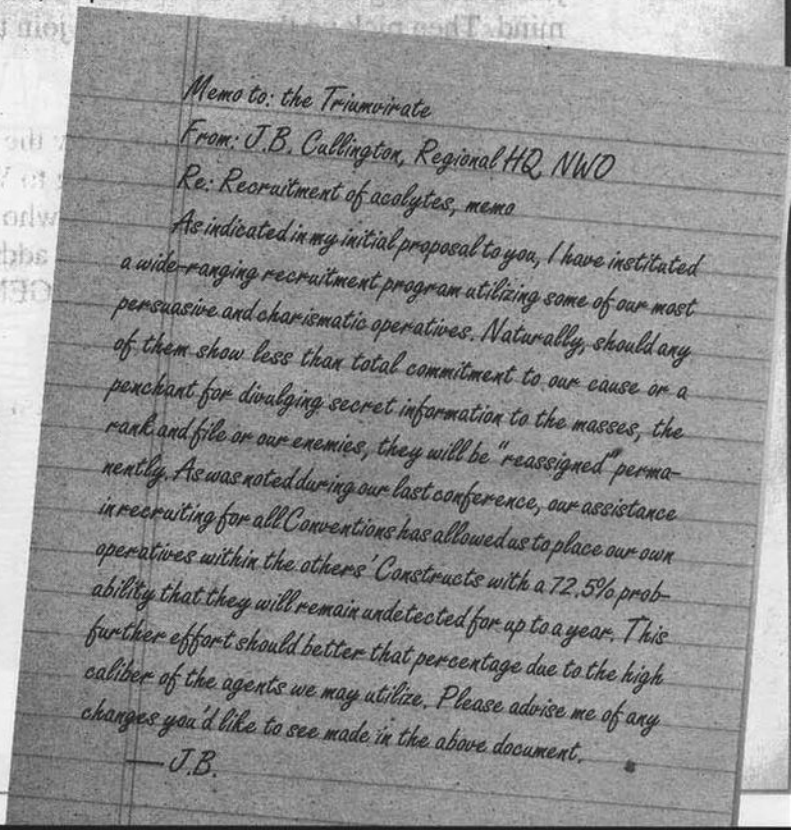
• Operatives

Aerospace engineers and astronomers head the Void Engineer's list of desired operatives. Investigate the possibilities in anyone involved in the space industry such as theorists or radio astronomers or in manufacturing optical magnifiers or space probes. Additionally, highly-trained security personnel are needed.

Please be advised that recruitment operatives are not to bother Convention members in order to gain access to Horizon Realm creatures. These will be dealt with directly by the leaders of each Construct.

General note: All Conventions desire charismatic, inspirational and resourceful individuals to serve as recruitment operatives.

Thank you for your cooperation. Initial below.



Memo to: the Triumvirate
From: J.B. Cullington, Regional HQ NWO
Re: Recruitment of acolytes, memo

As indicated in my initial proposal to you, I have instituted a wide-ranging recruitment program utilizing some of our most persuasive and charismatic operatives. Naturally, should any of them show less than total commitment to our cause or a penchant for divulging secret information to the masses, the rank and file or our enemies, they will be "reassigned" permanently. As was noted during our last conference, our assistance in recruiting for all Conventions has allowed us to place our own operatives within the others' Constructs with a 72.5% probability that they will remain undetected for up to a year. This further effort should better that percentage due to the high caliber of the agents we may utilize. Please advise me of any changes you'd like to see made in the above document.

—J.B.

Technocracy Familiars

The Technocracy have few natural-seeming familiars. Of these, the Progenitors make clones of normal creatures and genetically enhance them, while the New World Order utilizes black dogs that follow the Men in Black. These are known as "special bonded operatives."

The Syndicate is generally leery of familiars, fearing that they will not be able to control them and will thereby throw a wild card into their plans. Nonetheless, some have familiars that can serve well as spies, such as rats. Not surprisingly, they call them "information specialists." Iteration X utilizes the same sorts of special programs and AIs as the Virtual Adepts. Neither the Adepts nor Iteration X realizes that their familiars regularly exchange information, since they see no particular difference between the two sides. Iteration X's familiars are known as "conceptuals."

The Void Engineers clothe their familiars in truly alien flesh. Many are patterned after the short, bald aliens with the large heads, small mouths and big eyes popularized by *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. These in turn were based on the Void Engineer's familiars, who are regularly spotted by people living in remote areas. Often, these familiars demand the right to kidnap humans and experiment on them as part of their contract with the Engineers. This may account for the number of UFO kidnapping "I-was-experimented-on-by-aliens" stories prevalent among certain tabloids. These familiars are called "aliens."

The Nephandi

Because I'm evil. I thought you would have figured that out by now.

— Baron Orloch, *Transylvania 6-5000*

"Line up!" He checked out the new recruits as they fell in and formed a ragged line. A couple of them looked like real prospects. Maybe they'd done a couple of years in ROTC or read Soldier of Fortune *magazine. One or two looked like gangers who'd decided to go their own way. The rest were the usual sorry-ass wimps he hated almost as much as the goddamn niggers and kikes. He strutted back and forth in front of them. He was particularly fond of the way he looked in his black uniform and boots. With his hairless head, it made him look tough and almost regal.*

"This is the Proving Ground. If you ain't ready, you got no business bein' here. Now you may think you'll just ease on into your training. Get that out of your minds right now. This here is a war. You're the soldiers. We gotta clean this country up. The damn niggers and kikes have the government by the balls, and they're squeezin' hard, but we're here to change all that. We're here to take America back for the real Americans." He stopped and looked them over, willing just one of them to try to speak or cough, waiting for the opportunity to show them who was in charge.

"I'm called Body Count. I earned my name. If you want to be a part of us, each of you is gonna have to earn a name for himself. We're about to let you do that. Any o' you girls too sensitive for this line of work better speak up."



A few of them shifted uncomfortably, but no one left the line.

"Arright. Now we're all gonna have a little test. Step over to the supply depot, and grab a weapon. They're loaded, so watch your asses. Now down at the end of the field, you may see some targets we've set up. We're gonna go practice shootin' right now. If you ain't never done that, you're gonna learn—fast. So march, double quick time. Run, you sorry mothers!" he screamed.

After half an hour getting used to their weapons, he judged they were ready.

"That's enough!" he yelled, moving down the line until all had stopped. He pointed to a covered truck making its way toward them. "Here comes the real fun."

The truck pulled up, and Body Count opened the canvas in the rear. Inside sat three black children. The youngest was a little boy about six years old. He had a pinched face and huge brown eyes. The middle child looked about seven or eight. He was round, with pudgy hands, short, sausage-like legs and fat cheeks. The eldest, a girl who might have been nine, had the sort of delicate look Body Count liked. He wished there were time for other things than the hunt today and briefly regretted the lost opportunity. He manhandled them out of the truck, roughly tossing them into the dirt. The youngest began to cry.

"Shut up!" he yelled, kicking the child. He looked around to see the recruits' reactions. A few looked tense, like they knew they should stop this, but didn't really want to. Some looked excited as they realized what was about to happen. One was frowning. He noted the frowner, then turned to the children. The girl had put an arm around the smaller boy. The child shivered, but dared not make a sound.

"Now," Body Count said, "we're gonna play a little game. You three are gonna run across this field and head for those woods. We're gonna give you a three minute start. Then we're coming after you. Run!"

The children stood for a moment as if they couldn't believe what was happening, then the girl tugged on the smaller boy's hand and they took off running. The round boy goggled at Body Count's gun as he pulled it out and pointed it at him.

"I said run, nigger, or I'll kill you right here."

A few of the recruits snickered as Body Count yelled, "Lookit 'em go! Just like coons!"

"We're not seriously supposed to hunt down and kill those kids, are we?"

Just like he'd figured, the frowner was a weenie.

"Well, hell, no," Body Count crooned. "At least, you aren't." He shuddered orgasmically as he leveled his gun at the frowner and shot him between the eyes.

"Any other objections?" he asked. "No? Then let's go hunt some coon."

The followers and allies of the Fallen Ones tend to either cater to the demented corruption of their masters or fall beneath their lash. These allies are often sick in some way — physically, mentally or spiritually unwell. This sickness is not always obvious, but might be noticed by the perceptive or wise.



Acolytes

The acolytes of these corrupt mages are either dupes or slaves. For the most part, individual members of either group are completely unimportant to the Nephandi. They are cannon fodder that provides some slight amusement while they live. In groups, they are useful tools to be used as needed and discarded when broken.

Dupes: The Nephandi work best when they hide their influence by controlling Sleeper groups (who are referred to as dupes or stooges). Such diverse groups as Satanists, neo-Nazis, the KKK, certain secret societies around the world and even some Masonic lodges serve as dupes for the Nephandi. For the most part, the mages are content to allow their stooges to spout their homegrown views and perform their various rituals (whether sacrificing chickens to Satan or beating up Jews in the name of Hitler) without overt interference. Changes are brought about over time by insinuating "guides" among them who subtly corrupt the groups they join and bring them closer to furthering Nephandi goals. Dupes who begin asking too many questions often disappear and become slaves.

Slaves: Slaves usually have few talents that the Nephandi would find useful. Healthy bodies which can endure physical punishment and long hours of menial work are the primary criteria by which they are chosen. Of secondary importance is any vestige of innocence which might be corrupted or destroyed. Slaves rarely have the ability to become mages, though many who are chosen think of themselves as being "special" in some way. Those who play with ouija boards, groove to Satanic music, hold séances or follow strange, mystic cults or religions qualify for slave status. Of course, anyone can become a slave; the qualifications aren't stringent. They are as likely to choose those who attend church regularly and volunteer their time to teach disadvantaged kids. There is no safety in goodness and nowhere to hide if the Nephandi want you. Literally anyone who can be kidnapped or enticed into accompanying a Nephandi slaver is a potential recruit.

Slaves are used to perform menial labor in Nephandi labyrinths. They are kept in line with mental domination or brute force. They are the lowest of the low and highly expendable. As an amusement for their masters, slaves are allowed to realize all the details of their situation while being prevented from doing anything to change it. Aside from their chores, many are kept by individual mages as sex slaves and subjected to every imaginable kind of humiliation and torture, "just for practice." Those are the lucky ones. Some are earmarked for use as toys or sacrifices for the mages' Nephandi masters.

There are three main groups of Nephandi. Each prefer slightly different sorts of dupes and slaves.

Infernalists: These Nephandi make pacts with the demon hordes of the Astral Umbra. They generally prefer Satanic cults and their attendant heavy metal hordes as





dupes, although they also enjoy seducing mystic religious cults into following their practices. Favored slaves are those who are hardy enough to endure prolonged torment or who are innocent or corruptible to be given as gifts to fulfill parts of the infernalists' pacts with the demons.

Malfeans: Malfeans serve corruption itself. Their preferred dupes are irresponsible developers, businessmen, politicians and special interest groups. They are usually blind to the greater good in their selfish and narrow vision of the world and so corrupt that they don't care where their money comes from. Slaves are chosen from among their most vocal opponents or from those who will be little missed (winos, addicts, homeless and runaways).

Outsiders: Those who serve these incomprehensible entities who inhabit the Deep Umbra use power-hungry, greedy people as their dupes. Promising wealth or advancement, they organize them into cults whose primary function is to perform rituals and sacrifices. These rites are designed to test out ways of breaking down the barriers which prevent the Nephandi-Lords from entering the world and tearing reality to shreds. Their secondary function is to recruit people in decision-making positions in city, state or national government to their cause.

Nephandi Consors

Regardless of which group the Nephandi belong to, all find the following the most useful as consors:

Corrupters: Corrupters are usually leaders of lunatic-fringe political parties, extremist factions, particularly virulent survivalists or hate-mongering evangelists. Having been corrupted by the Nephandi, they are encouraged in their particular brand of hate and sent to gather new members. Funded by the Nephandi, they are often manipulated by plants among their converts, who whip up righteous fervor among the rank and file.

Fellow Travelers: These are the Umbral creatures and supernatural allies of the Nephandi. They might be lesser demons or Banes sent to assist the Nephandi or attracted by their work, or weird, incomprehensible and disgusting creatures who offer their services for unknown reasons. Vampires, in particular Sabbat who follow the Path of Evil Revelations, often ally themselves with Nephandi, as do the corrupt Garou known as Black Spiral Dancers.

Nephandi Familiars

The Nephandi have weird and twisted Umbral creatures as their familiars. Usually the more hideous they are, the more power they have. Nephandi-Lords must give their permission before those under them may have familiars. In many cases, the Lord calls for a specific type of creature to answer the summons.

A significant number of Nephandi familiars are bizarre beings that seem to embody the forces of entropy and decay. Often these entities can hasten decay, cause the cessation of growth, or otherwise produce entropic effects in others. It is believed that some of these familiars may even feed on this process, thriving at the lowest, most chaotic point of the universal cycle. Regardless of the truth of this assertion, there is little doubt that most Nephandi familiars only remain familiars for as long as they are allowed to play their perverse games of deterioration and decay. Some may, in fact, be minor demons. In all cases, however, the familiar serves to further corrupt the Nephandi to whom it owes allegiance, just as surely as it corrupts the Nephandi's foes.

Marauders

And it's hi ho hey, I am the bold marauder
And its hi ho hey, I am the white destroyer
For I will show you silver and gold, and I will bring you treasure
I will wave a widowing flag, and I will be your lover
And I will show you grotto and cave and sacrificial altar
And I will show you blood on the stone, and I will be your mentor
And night will be our darling, and fear will be our name.
— Richard Farina, "Bold Marauder"

"Would you like some more tea, mum?" I realized I was holding a lovingly polished silver teapot over the diminutive, white-haired lady's rose pattern teacup. I was wearing a maid's uniform with a starched white apron, a matching cap and sensible shoes. My hair was pulled severely back into a bun. This was strange because I had thought I was wearing jeans and viewing Whistler's Mother, *which was currently on loan at our local museum. Now I seemed to be talking to this weird old lady.*

"Oh, that would be delightful, Annie," she answered in her cultured British accent, crinkling her lined face into what she probably believed was a winning smile.

I started to say My name isn't Annie, it's Rebecca, *but what came out was, "Cream and sugar, mum?"*

"Yes, please, Annie, " she replied, "And remember to bring out a cup for Donald. He'll be joining me today."

What the hell is going on here? Am I losing my mind? *I try to formulate the words to express my confusion. Instead I drop a curtsey (I've never curtseyed in my life!) and say, "Very good, mum." Jeez, now I'm British too!*

The tall blond man in tennis whites strolling across the lawn must be Donald. He looks a little like her. Maybe he's her son.

"Hello, mother!" he calls out cheerily, confirming my guess. "What a lovely day to take tea outdoors. Mind if I join you?"





I head over to a wheeled cart upon which is set out various tea paraphernalia and scoop up another cup and saucer. Are those scones on that plate? I've never seen a scone before. And what are those atrocious-looking little green sandwich things?

I wipe my hands on my jeans, and the painting seems to float just inches in front of me. What painting? Trousers? I'm in my uniform. What nonsense is this? Jerking myself back to reality from my silly daydreaming, I take the cup and saucer over to Mr. Donald. "Here you are, sir" I say in my less cultured accent. "Get a spot of tea in you, and things'll be right as rain! Not going off to the war after all, sir?" I ask as I briskly bring the scones and cucumber sandwiches to the table.

"No, Annie," the mistress answers, her dear face dimpling with relief. "Donald has acceded to my wishes and will be remaining here with us."

"That's splendid, sir," I say as I pour cream into his cup and add the two sugars he always takes, "We would have missed you terribly had you gone." We exchange smiles all around, content for the moment to enjoy the idyllic, green fields of England.

••••••

The tiny old woman quietly slipped out of the museum, followed by the hollow-eyed, jeans-clad girl whose name tag read "Rebecca."

Like their Fallen bretheren, the Mad Ones tend to attract and hold allies and servants who fit in well with their general dementia and visionary nature. Such allies favor dynamic changes in their personality and environment and exemplify, inwardly or outwardly, some dramatic departure from the everyday world.

Acolytes

Many Marauders keep no acolytes. Why would a whirlwind need a maid? And who's going to tell the guy slinging balls of lightning around while riding on a winged snake that he needs someone to protect his domicile? Those Marauders who have acolytes usually have one of three types:

Caretakers: Family members, lovers and friends sometimes care for the Marauder's day-to-day needs, either on earth (if the Marauder is very unobtrusive) or in whatever realm within the Umbra that the Marauder calls home. Some live within the dream-reality that the Marauder's madness creates, while others never enter that state, but wash, clothe, feed and try to talk to their forgetful loved ones. Those who fulfill this particular role may find that their ministrations are never even acknowledged.

Spear-Carriers: Spear-carriers (also known as "bit players") may be drawn from among care-givers or recruited (on purpose or by accident) when the Marauder interacts with them. Many of them are given to daydreaming or evince interest in art, drama, poetry or any sort of diversion which opens the mind to imagination, such as gaming. These people assume minor roles (called spear-carriers among actors) within the Marauder's madness, acting out the parts assigned to them and ultimately coming to believe in the reality themselves. Some fill roles which are totally unfamiliar to them, but which fit the personal world of the Marauder and strengthen its reality. Others are chosen because they already live the role they are chosen to fill and it is simple for the Marauder to coopt them for her own use. Some spear-carriers buy into the Marauder's insanity so thoroughly that they actively seek to maintain it and act as shock troops during assaults on the Gauntlet.

Jesters: These non-Awakened beings know about the Ascension War and the Marauders' place in it. They work to bring about opportunities for Marauder penetration of the Gauntlet by fostering imagination, fantasy and altered states of consciousness. Anyone from performers at medieval fairs to fiction writers to storytellers to drug pushers might be Jesters. Game designers also fit in this category.

Consors

Those who have greater powers or possess useful talents may become consors. In some cases, this talent is merely the existence of their own insanity, which combines nicely with that of the marauder. They usually fall into two categories:

Madmen: Such is the strength of some Marauder Quiets that they infect others nearby. Those who have come under the influence of a Marauder's madness and lived to tell of it, yet who have not been drawn completely into the Marauder's reality, are called madmen. Despite the masculine name, there are as many madwomen as men. They serve to anchor weak spots in the Gauntlet which can be ripped more easily. Often, they become quite good friends with the Marauders, who find easy access to static reality through the madmen's similar perceptions. Madmen accept whatever the Marauders do as perfectly natural and may even convince others that this is so. They can be found in insane asylums and homeless shelters, wandering the streets, breaking and entering, teaching history....

Playmates: Playmates are weird Umbral critters and beings who interact with and accompany Marauders on their forays into static reality. They come in all shapes and sizes and often possess powers which can cause great confusion or damage to those who oppose them. Faeries are rumored to be among those whom the Marauders call playmates, and they are occasionally accompanied by werecreatures other than Garou.



Marauder Familiars

Marauders only have familiars when their personal paradigm calls for it. They tend to be the most outrageous familiars conceivable, both in form and powers, or else they become a natural part of the Marauder's Quiet and are almost unnoticeable. Marauders call familiars whatever they feel like calling them.

Individual Marauders are either the least likely or the most likely of all mages to have familiars. Although this seems paradoxical (and with Marauders may well *be* paradoxical!), it does make a perverse kind of sense. The Marauders' self-oriented pursuit of individual Ascension invariably means that each of the mages gropes for greater and greater power and dominance. Some Marauders believe they can find and control the *things* they take on as familiars and thus feel they must always have one around to add to their power. Other Marauders, however, know that beings who serve as familiars are so weak that they allow themselves to be used as pets, (and why let such a weakling into your innermost circle?) or they perceive the danger in embracing a creature with enough power to be a danger to others... and the Marauder. The Marauder blithely referring to a creature as his familiar or pet might discover at a particularly inopportune moment who's really in control of the relationship! Thus, some Marauders refuse to buy anything from the universal pet shop. After all there's no money-back guarantee in the Ascension War!


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Chapter Two: Society of Servants

Here we belong. Fighting to survive.
In a world with the darkest powers.
— Queen, "Princes of the Universe"



Like the mages with whom they interact, custos have lives, desires and goals of their own. Some may live with mages; others just work for them. Many are specifically recruited, while others fall into it through serendipitous (or awful) coincidence. Motivations range from a sense of duty to an admired colleague to finding out where the next big party is going to happen. Some are running from deadly enemies and seek safety in numbers (or magick). Others may provide refuge and hiding to a hunted mage. Their emotions run the gamut from love to respect to disdain, depending on the individual custos and the mage in question. Some custos actually hate their mages and secretly work to undermine them.

All custos have dreams and preferences, a need for appreciation and a sense of personal worth, just like anyone else. Some hope to realize their greatest potential through their association with the mystick ones; some never know they're associating with mages at all. Then again, sometimes that's impossible to ignore...

Motivation



He had famished in a wilderness,
Braved lions for my sake...
— William Butler Yeats, "He Had Famished In A Wilderness"

Why do custos do what they do? They act from respect, admiration, love, hope for the future, self-aggrandizement, fear for a loved one's safety, camaraderie, desire for excitement, money, to learn magick from one who is already Awakened or for more complex and personal reasons. Regardless of motivation, all custos have a sense of duty. Many are willing to put their lives on the line to defend the mage, battling against foes who often overmatch them. Even employees who believe they are only protecting a mage's property or profits may fight to prevent theft and vandalism to that property. Every time they are called upon, each custos makes the decision anew to reenter the fray. Of course, some of them do make a whole lot of money.

Professionals

Custos can be just as greedy and self-serving as anyone else, and these folks charge high prices for their services. They stick their necks out for money or services, and those who are good enough at what they do are hired despite their lack of personal concern. Many mages even feel that hired guards and bodyguards are superior to those who serve out of friendship or love — they know the professional who fails won't be hired again! Pros have a vested interest in maintaining themselves at peak performance and doing their utmost to preserve the mage's life. It's hard to tell your big brother that you love him, but he shoots about as well as a chicken on acid. The same argument applies to those who handle business dealings for the mage. Aunt Emily's inexperience with tax laws could end up costing the mage far more than he'd have to pay a professional to keep his books for him.

Some professionals are not greedy, but simply feel that their expertise and knowledge ought to be acknowledged by those who wish to utilize them. That usually takes the form of payment. Their motivation is not greed, but pride. These custos will often go beyond the strict parameters of their contracts in order to prove their excellence. Some have gone so far as to give their lives. It is also not unusual for professionals to develop quite close friendships with those they serve. Many actually slip over into the "amateur" category through such friendships, yet continue to demand payment rather than admitting their fondness for the mage. Chantry servants, especially those whose families have served the Chantry for generations, may fall under either the professional or the amateur category.

Several categories of professional custos are listed below:

• **Accountants:** While this profession may seem terribly mundane to be included among the custos of a mage, accountants and business managers are among the key figures of many corporate or magickal empires. They keep the books, manage the transfer of money and resources for the business, and otherwise ensure the continued functioning of these commercial enterprises. Depending on the duration and nature of their service, these professionals may also act as key advisors to the mage.

While many of these professionals know nothing about magick or the Ascension War, they are in a unique position to oversee and understand the mage's operations. Therefore, they may become aware that there is much more going on in their employers' lives than first meets the eye. They may also prove to be valuable sources of information or tempting targets for the mage's enemies. These often-overlooked positions are also prime places for spies to attempt to infiltrate and observe an enemy mage's activities.

• **Bodyguards:** These custos are professional hirelings of the mage, used to protect him from physical or magickal threats. They rank as acolytes or consors according to their level of ability. (Familiars may perform a similar bodyguarding function, but their relationship with the mage is far more complicated, and their "payment" takes different forms.) Conventional guards are usually humans with backgrounds as private security specialists, martial artists, law enforcement officers or military personnel. These custos (Sleeper or aware) may also serve as guards for a Chantry. The guards may not initially be aware of the true nature of the threat that they face, but those who survive for any length of time (and remain in the mage's employ) tend to learn quickly.

Certain mages also have Awakened beings serving on their security staffs. These are often hedge magicians and sometimes Kindred, Garou or spirits who work to provide the mage with protection from magickal and supernatural enemies in addition to more mundane threats. Though these beings may work for money, their motivations are usually far more complicated than mere financial gain. The mages understand this, and employer and employee will often watch each other very carefully even in the midst of a satisfying and successful professional relationship.

• **Computer Programmers:** In the modern era, even the most conservative Traditions are learning the importance of information management and computer technology. Computer programmers and other such experts are particularly important to the Progenitors, the



New World Order, Iteration X, the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts. In fact, these programmers, usually acolytes, often serve as both offensive weapons and as the first line of defense against Net-running enemies in the Ascension War. They create protective programs as well as viruses or information-gathering programs and, with the advent of virtual-reality technology (and the computer-related magick of their mages), often enter the computer Net themselves to do battle.

The Nephandi often hook up their programmers to their computers, so that the programmers are always monitoring one or more systems. Such acolytes also serve as convenient "hacker alarms," since the delicate pathways of their brains are much more sensitive than the computer nets which they guard. If a programmer goes into seizures, dies suddenly, or otherwise suffers a dramatic physical or psychological change, the Nephandus and her other custos are alerted to a potential bug or interloper in the system.

The Marauders are said to have a slightly different spin on this form of alarm system. Some Marauders seem to enjoy converting human assistants into living chaos programs. According to the few mages and aware hackers who have encountered such beings in the Digital Web, these programs seem to retain just enough of their humanity to know what they are, and more importantly, how much more they once were. These living programs seem drawn to other living creatures in the Web just as drowning men are drawn to their rescuers. Unfortunately, the only rescue for such beings seems to be death, and all too often they infect others with chaos viruses that will mean madness and death for any who stumble upon them. In this desperate and pathetic way, one that the Marauders presumably find entertaining, these pseudo-human "programs" protect their masters. (For more information on mages and the Net see the **Mage** supplement **Digital Web**.)

• **Personal Assistants:** These professionals serve much the same purpose for a mage as they do for a celebrity or business executive. They assist the mage in the mundane parts of her existence: keeping track of schedules and appointments, managing the affairs of the household, paying bills, and generally serving as the mage's liaison to the "real world." These custos must be among the most trusted servitors of any mage, for they have continual close contact with the mage and know nearly every detail of her life and her schedule. They generally occupy a position of prominence on the mage's staff, often speaking with her voice to the other employees.

Given the manner in which most mages, particularly the more powerful ones, are distracted from day-to-day reality by the contemplation of realities undreamed of by lesser beings, personal assistants are often vital. Personal assistants are not necessarily aware at first of the arcane life of a mage, but most who have been with a mage for any

length of time come to know at least part of the truth. Most personal assistants have a broad range of skills, from filing to the fast draw. After all, their employers' enemies may take "corporate raiding" to new heights!

• **Roadies:** This is only one of the many more unusual categories of professional hireling found in mage society. Roadies are common acolytes for any mage who travels as part of a band or a theater company (or a circus, for that matter). Members of the Cult of Ecstasy are by far the most likely mages to have roadies for custos.

• **Scientists:** Mages often sponsor and lead extensive research into the mundane and arcane mysteries of the world. Depending on their available resources (often quite extensive), many mages employ professional staffs of scientists, engineers and other academics to push back the unknown and expand the frontiers of human understanding. In fact, many mages believe the activities of such guided humans may be one of the most important means of moving the human race towards Ascension. Of course, mages invariably sponsor and encourage research that leads humanity toward their own personal spin on Ascension. Such research rarely takes place from a totally unbiased perspective. (Of course, what research is truly unbiased?)

These custos are most common, of course, among the Technocracy, but Virtual Adepts (particularly in the computer industry), some Sons of Ether, the Order of Hermes and members of other Traditions participate in these scientific ventures. Some speculate that Nephandi mages have also operated behind the scenes at certain major corporations to engineer hazardous products, create ecological disasters, and otherwise spread misery and destruction across the planet.

Most scientists, though highly-trained professionals, are unaware acolytes. After all, the scientific paradigm in which they function best utterly rejects the multiple-paradigm reality of the mages. These scientists usually believe that they are engaged in standard research for private firms and may not even have an inkling of the true nature or purpose of the research. They may not know the mage, or he may appear to them as the elusive or eccentric senior scientist or president of the company (or even the weird janitor down the hall!). It is possible that a small core of scientists is aware of the true nature of the mage and the purpose of the research. These aware acolytes (rarely consors) almost always direct the activity of the firm or laboratory and may have more direct involvement in the Ascension War.

• **Servants:** These are the folks who keep the day-to-day grind from setting off too many sparks. They are the maids, butlers, cooks, mechanics, gardeners, launderers, etc. who move quietly in the background of the mage's everyday life, attending to the mundane matters necessary for survival. They range in loyalty from temporary or part-time help to those whose families have served the mage's family (or the mage) for generations. Many mages, particularly those with limited resources, will have few of these hirelings, if any. Masters of conservative Traditions or of the wealthy and powerful Technocracy may have extensive estates and multiple staffs to support them.



These servants are usually acolytes, but many know far more of the mage's activities than she would care to believe. A wise mage screens her servants very carefully, for those faceless blurs in the background of her life can be either indispensable aides or invaluable sources of information for her enemies.

Amateurs

Of necessity, the other side of the coin are those followers who neither expect nor receive pay for what they do. They choose to help the mage either from a sense of duty or from friendship or love. These custos may include bandmates, old friends, thrill-seekers, lovers and concerned family members. Some among them are professionals in the sense that they might be doctors, lawyers, teachers and such, but many are just normal people trying to make the world a better place. Those who have special abilities usually fall into this category, as they seek like-minded people with whom to associate.

Garou, vampires and Horizon beasties choose to associate with and aid mages for their own reasons. Garou usually help those who have similar goals, while vampires may seek knowledge, friends who accept them for what they are or powerful allies. Some serve as Guardians for mage Chantries in return for safe havens. Other Guardians may serve out of love or to honor an agreement.

A few common categories of Amateur custos are listed below:

• **Allies:** These custos are powerful beings in their own right. They associate with the mage and fight in the Ascension War out of some shared purpose or in pursuit of their own mysterious goals. These consors do not fight for pay and are not in the mage's employ, but will often expect hospitality and assistance from the mage. This will, of course, vary with the relative resources of the two!

Kindred, Garou, wraiths or Umbral spirits who ally with a mage will generally fall into this category. The enigmatic, free-roaming Gypsies act as allies rather than hirelings of the mage. While mages are by nature inclined to feel superior to those around them, the relationship between a mage and his allies is normally one of mutual respect (at least on the surface). However, trust takes much longer to develop than respect in these relationships. Allies all have their own purposes for associating with the mage, and allies may seek to use the mage just as the mage will undoubtedly seek to use them.

• **Friends/Lovers:** Friends, lovers or family members are especially good candidates for amateur custos. They associate with the mage out of love or friendship, and in most cases a mage can trust them implicitly. This type of trust is a rare and valuable commodity for a mage, and he can easily become addicted to its purity! If the mage is newly Awakened, these people may be remnants of the mage's former life. If the mage comes from a magickal family, these people may equally be friends and family members who have devoted their lives to service in the Ascension War, at least to the best of their ability.

While most of these friends are undoubtedly acolytes, some may be talented enough to classify as consors. If they are unaware of the truth about the mage or the nature and existence of magick, they may have to be told quickly. It is very difficult to keep a close associate in the dark about such a thing for long (which is one reason why mages have few close associates).

Friends and family are extremely valuable to the mages who so rarely experience such intimacy. However, these same friends and family members are an immediate and glaring weakness ripe for exploitation by a mage's enemies. Perhaps more than any other reason this is why so many mages isolate themselves emotionally as well as physically from other humans. More than a few mages have had those people most dear to them callously kidnapped, killed, or worse at the hands of one of their many enemies. Yet even mages find it difficult to live in an emotional vacuum.

• **Guardians:** Guardians are often amateur custos in the sense that they do not usually work for pay. Rather, these beings who guard Chantries normally do so out of a sense of honor or within the terms of some mutually beneficial agreement.

"Guardian" refers not to the mortal guards discussed in the section above, but to the spirits and/or supernatural creatures who often guard Chantries in exchange for Quintessence or other benefits (see **The Book of Chantries**). These may include Kindred, Garou, spirits or other magical creatures. Guardians generally are tied to a Chantry and do not venture away for any great length of time, even to aid members elsewhere.

• **Thrill-Seekers:** Some humans associate with mages simply for the sheer thrill of the experience, the constant sense of danger and excitement they experience from their contact with the Awakened. These sensation-jaded humans are almost always acolytes and usually guess or know only a part of the truth about the mage. It is possible that a number of thrill-seekers can just sense the power and potential of an Awakened Avatar. Although Sleepers, they are Sleepers who dream, and their dreams focus on the brightest lights — mages and other Awakened beings. (Some of the vampires' so-called blood dolls may also be dreamers; if this is true, their dreams are more likely nightmares.) Many of these poor dreaming souls are led to their own destruction by tantalizing quarter-truths and promises of more knowledge, more exciting experiences or greater power.

Nephandi and Marauders often take full advantage of thrill-seekers when they seek pawns or slaves for their cause. Many Tradition mages also take advantage of the zealousness of thrill-seekers. However, members of certain Traditions (e.g. Akashic Brotherhood, Order of Hermes, the Verbena) only find these people ("Grasshoppers," "wanna-bes," "pretty pagans," "goobs," "closet Merlins") incredibly annoying and avoid them at all costs.

Compelled

Not all custos are free-willed. The Nephandi are notorious for abusing their companions, treating many as little more than slaves. Even Tradition mages may compel spirits to guard their Chantries, binding them with agreements the creatures are not free to break. They cannot leave the area they are required to guard. The Technocracy are masters of intimidation and terror, and many custos are forced to serve them out of fear for themselves and their families. Some Conventions administer mind-altering drugs or fit their custos with cybernetic enhancements which deaden their humanity while turning them into perfect machines to serve the cause. Marauders may compel service from those caught up in their paradigms, whether accidentally or by design. All of these unfortunates are known as the Compelled.

As this would suggest, there are many types of compulsion, and many mages have and will compel service from their custos. It is all too easy, even for mages of the "noble" Traditions, to find rationales to force service from custos. Common styles of compulsion are discussed below.



Technocracy

While many servants of the Technocracy are true believers, even well-intentioned in their actions, the Technocracy makes frequent use of compulsion to attract and keep its custos. The Syndicate is the most likely to resort to the blackmail and physical compulsion of the "offer that you can't refuse" school, but the other Conventions (particularly the New World Order) also make use of their vast information networks to compile potentially damaging information about their employees (or potential recruits). Blackmail and implied threats to the family of the custos are common.

Regardless, it is common for the Technocracy custos to be drawn into the web slowly, unaware of who they work for or the purposes of what they do. Those who are not true believers, or who do not become so, may eventually discover unpleasant truths about their employer's activities. The truth most definitely does not set them free. For those custos who are aware, there is no retirement from the Technocracy.

Traditions

While the more brutal forms of compulsion are rare among the mages of the Traditions, they are not entirely unknown. Magick charms or manipulation, however, are more commonly used than brute force.

Many Tradition sorcerers see no harm in manipulating reality in this way. After all, they are masters of the art of manipulating and controlling the world around them. That desire to command reality usually extends to the people who inhabit it. This is particularly true of the Hermetic wizards, Euthanatos and Dreamspeakers, whose Traditions do not emphasize free will or the value of individual responsibility and individuality. The Akashic Brotherhood is perhaps the least likely to use compulsion on its custos, although shrewd psychology and peer pressure certainly have an effect on their behavior.

Marauders

The Marauders often compel their custos into service, at least at first, through magicks which sweep their minds up into the altered reality of the Marauder. The victim becomes a part of the world of the Marauder, unless she is strong enough to hold onto her own perception of reality and frustrate the Marauder's efforts (and this is rare indeed!). Although Marauders are certainly capable of violence when it suits their purpose (or their fancy), they normally avoid the harsh tactics of the Nephandi.

While initially this servitude is the result of magickal compulsion, the custos is almost inevitably integrated into the Marauder's reality and comes to accept that reality as truth. At that point, the acolyte or consor is serving voluntarily, though some would say that she has lost the ability to truly consent to anything.

Nephandi

Many Nephandi resort to blackmail, brutal physical force or raw magickal power to compel their acolytes into service. As noted above, they treat all but their most powerful consors as little better than slaves, and the threat of horrible torture is as omnipresent as the penalty for failure. Even the most powerful, trusted and successful consor must always know what lies ahead should he fall out of favor with his masters.

The Nephandi also use more "subtle" magickal methods to compel their pawns into service. These methods often involve charms or illusions which alter the subject's perception of reality and shape it to suit the needs of the Fallen One. This gradual shaping process often has the side benefit of providing the Nephandus with hours of perverse entertainment as she watches her servant struggle to hold onto his own identity and exert some sort of control over himself and his situation.

Recruitment



A consenting adult
Technique in moderation
But vogue to the cult
Me, I've got my strangers
To exile in the night
— Melissa Etheridge, "Occasionally"

Trust is all-important when Tradition mages go "shopping" for companions; many recruit friends or other folks with whom they feel a sort of kinship or loyalty. Followers of similar religions or fashions, people with ethnic or cultural ties, or even those who owe the mage a debt are common choices. Other supernatural beings — werecreatures, vampires, even the occasional fae — are less common allies, but will sometimes join a mage in need. These beings, too, will have some sort of common ground for trust; Dreamspeakers typically ally with Garou, while the secretive ways of the Hermetic types appeal to the inquisitive Bastet.

The Technocracy makes regular recruitment efforts, sending agents to contact the candidates they have targeted. Some of these are compelled to join through threats or blackmail, but most join for other reasons: they are flattered to have been chosen, they like the money, they have freedom to experiment, or they truly believe they are performing a service to humanity.

Nephandi search for those who are ripe for corruption or make pacts for services from Umbral beings.

Marauders take what comes.

That being said, several common recruiting methods come to mind. Of course, it is important to remember that there are as many ways to recruit custos as there are mages. The methods discussed below are but a cross-selection of possibilities. Although the groups most closely associated with each method of recruitment are mentioned below, remember that mages are always exceptions to the rule in everything they do. Undoubtedly there is a Dreamspeaker somewhere who routinely uses blackmail to get what he wants from his servants, while some Marauder sweetly persuades his custos to join forces with him. (Of course, this same persuasive Marauder may also enjoy snacking on randomly chosen appendages from his loyal servants, after their sweet introduction to Marauder life is completed!)

• **Blackmail:** A fairly common recruiting practice among the Technocracy, blackmail is sometime used by the Nephandi as well (often as a prelude to their efforts at corruption). The Conventions are particularly adept at gathering damaging information concerning those whom they wish to recruit. When combined with veiled threats of violence, blackmail usually produces the desired results.

The disadvantage of this technique is that it ensures only forced compliance and builds no loyalty among its victims. So long as the organization seems able to enforce its threats, most people will stay in line.

• **Corruption:** The Nephandi favor this method when bringing new servants or slaves into the fold. The Nephandus or her servants offer prospective recruits their hearts' darkest desires and appeal to the worst in their natures. Such dupes are then either so corrupt that they voluntarily serve that Dark Path mage or become irrevocably ensnared by the terms of mystic bargains. Many of these new custos soon realize their folly, but far too late to do them any good.

• **Employment:** Many mages, particularly those of the Traditions and the Technocracy, hire custos just as any business would hire prospective employees. This hiring process — complete with advertisements, applications and interviews — is typically used for positions requiring only Sleeper acolytes, However, it may also be used to fill more delicate or powerful positions. (Some Marauders run want ads as well, delighting in the absurdity of the process!)

Organizations and individual mages who hire their custos will of course go through a more rigorous background check than the standard employer and will usually magickally screen unsuspecting applicants. This reduces (though does not eliminate) the chance that an enemy spy will infiltrate the organization in that way. While a "hiring" process is much more rarely used to find aware acolytes and consors, similar methods may be employed. This "advertising" is most often done magickally or by word of mouth spread through appropriate channels, particularly through custos fellowships. This is a popular method for hiring consors for individual missions. Such consors may or may not become a more permanent part of the mage's household afterward, depending upon the outcome of the mission (which is itself a form of screening exam).

• **Magickal Tracing:** This method of recruitment most often involves individual mages, cabals or Conventions casting magicks to locate and "tag" potential recruits. These magicks may operate by detecting the strength of the magickal potential or Avatar of the Sleeper or may simply be a form of prophecy that then becomes self-fulfilling. Some mages flippantly refer to this recruitment method as "big game hunting" or "doing a Marlon Perkins" (for all those Wild Kingdom buffs out there).

"Tagged" individuals are usually monitored for some time. The mages watch their growth (if they are children) and their behavior to determine whether or not they truly share the potential for power and the perspective required for the task in mind. Eventually, the mages send agents to interact with the prospective recruit, hopefully attracting his interest and attempting to bond as "kindred spirits." Through a careful process of tests and training, the mages develop the potential recruit until he is prepared to join the organization. Although this method is time-consuming, it is usually successful in producing high-quality and loyal recruits. Unlike the products of more forceful methods of recruitment, these servants rarely "blow up," going insane or otherwise collapsing under the combined pressures of magickal loyalty and the remnants of their own horror and repulsion.

• **Persuasion:** While all of these recruiting methods "persuade" an individual to work for a mage, this method comes closest to meeting the definition school kids find in their Webster's. This technique consists simply of watching carefully for individuals who possess the necessary



qualifications for the job and who share the basic outlook of the organization. The mage, consor or acolyte contacts the prospective recruit, befriends her, and slowly introduces her to the idea and reality of magick and life as a custos.

The recruiters must be very cautious when using this technique because of the ever-present need for extraordinary secrecy and security. This may be, however, the most common method of recruitment used by the Technocracy and the Traditions. The Nephandi and Marauders use it less often — it is normally quite difficult to rationally "persuade" someone to be that twisted, and the process is pretty boring anyway. Some Marauders, however, do enjoy persuading some of the more "interesting" residents of insane asylums to join their cause.

• **Raids:** Nephandi and Marauders sometimes obtain new recruits (slaves) by the simple expedient of going out and grabbing a few likely prospects whenever necessary. These servants are nothing more than slaves, although many may later be brainwashed into enthusiastic service by magick or madness. These mages usually kidnap those unfortunates least likely to be missed, but are quite capable a stealing a child from the presence of her family or taking a prominent person if the mood strikes them. In these cases, the Dark Ones almost always go out of their way to implicate some person or group in the kidnapping, stirring up all sorts of amusing political and/or personal strife. Some mages even suspect that the kidnapping and subsequent "brainwashing" of Patty Hearst was actually a Marauder plot. If this is true, then it seems likely that another mage faction helped restore her to her family.

Mage-Custos Relations



O fret not after knowledge — I have none,
And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens
At though of idleness cannot be idle,
And he's awake who thinks himself asleep.
— John Keats, "What the Thrush Said"

The relationship between a mage and her custos may be as simple as that of an employer and employee. Yet, perhaps because of the nature of magick, the demands of the Ascension War and the power of mages to shape "reality," the relationship is often far more complicated and intense. Success often leads to great rewards, while failure may cost a custos far more than his job!

The risks that custos may take for their mages are far greater than those required of nearly any mundane. Yet there is something to the relationship, some component of the equation, which keeps them coming back for more. In part, the answer must lie in the benefits which they derive from the relationship or the disaster which would befall at its end.

Mages and their custos interact on three basic levels: the physical, the mental (intellectual and psychological) and the magickal. Therefore, the rewards and punishments which a mage can provide to a custos fall into these three categories as well. Remember, though, in most relationships, all three levels of interaction combine in unique and complex ways to form a powerful bond between mage and custos alike.

Rewards

I bring peace and understanding
I bring wit and wisdom fair
Precious gifts beyond compare.
We can build a world of wonder
I will make you all Aware
— Rush, "Cygnus XI, Book II: Hemispheres"

These are the goodies, the rewards and incentives which keep the tired, frightened, embattled or despairing custos going. These rewards also ensure the performance of the routine duties, the grind which occupies much of the time of the custos, just as with any worker. A wise mage ensures that her custos are amply rewarded for good service. Generous and fair treatment builds loyalty and motivates the custos to continue to perform at or above expectations.

Physical Rewards

The most common physical reward or incentive for service is simply payment, whether in currency or some other suitable mechanism of exchange. Naturally, this method is that which mages favor above all others for Sleeper acolytes. Of course, magick comes in handy when it comes to stretching the budget!

Professional acolytes and consors by definition receive some form of salary or payment, and even amateurs may accept room and board or special gifts from time to time. Familiars may demand certain items which attract their interest, but their primary rewards are magickal (particularly in the form of Quintessence).



The nature of these tangible rewards varies greatly depending on the proclivities and situation of the mage involved. For example, many Technocracy Conventions focus heavily on cash payments, but mages of Iteration X will often reward their chosen with biological or cybernetic physical enhancements. A Nephandus may reward a favored acolyte or consor with a slave of his own or perhaps brand the acolyte as a mark of honor.

These practices also vary greatly among the Nine Traditions. The Cult of Ecstasy provides notoriously extravagant rewards, while the Akashic Brotherhood expects its custos to live very simply. The Celestial Chorus believes in just recompense, but they also feel that virtue is its own reward! The Hollow Ones see little point in all of this (or pretend to), while the Sons of Ether often create astonishing technological gizmos to bestow upon their followers.

Mental Rewards

These rewards encompass the intellectual and psychological. Psychological rewards of service, from a generous, wise or kind mage, are similar to the benefits of serving healthy organizations everywhere, although the nature of service in the Ascension War may render the psychology and comradeship more akin to that of a military unit than a civilian business.

Feelings of belonging, recognition, validation and pride in the self and the organization are examples of the psychological rewards of loyal service. These can be particularly powerful given the ability of mages to subtly enhance emotions or manipulate the psyche through magick. Even the most miserable slaves of the Nephandi crave and receive certain types of psychological gratification during their service (although this often results from the psychological reversal of the slave identifying with the master). Marauders often reward their servants at bizarre, even utterly inappropriate times with kaleidoscopic fantasies that overwhelm the senses.

There are also intellectual rewards which a mage can offer to a custos. In a mundane sense, this may include cultural outings and instruction. This form of reward is particularly common in the case of an Awakened acolyte or consor who desires to be trained in the mystic arts or some other form of exotic instruction. While many mages may not have the time and patience to instruct a rank beginner, the bond between an acolyte and a mage is only strengthened by adding the dimension of instructor and student to the mix.

Magickal Rewards

It is this form of reward which sets the mage-custos relationship apart from the mundane. The ability of the mage to manipulate reality can gift a loyal follower in ways which exceed the limits of the imagination.

Mages can and do reward their custos with extraordinary things, bound only by the limits of Paradox. These rewards can take the form of magically-created gifts, property or cash. Familiars routinely receive magickal rewards in the form of Quintessence. Protective or offensive devices can be immensely valuable to the custos and enhance his utility to the mage. Iteration X and the Virtual Adepts are often the most "generous" in this regard, but Hermetic mages are well-known for their magick gifts as well.

Horizon Realms, and the ability to live in them, are often rewards in and of themselves. Many custos serve simply to live in another, better world. What mortal could resist the opportunity to visit (perhaps permanently) a custom-built reality where wonder is commonplace? The idealized Realms of the Dreamspeakers, Ecstasy Cultists and Verbena call to their acolytes' primal instincts and romantic fantasies. The gleaming corridors of Autocthonia, by contrast, are a technophile's wettest dream.

Another form of magickal reward stems from magickal charms and illusions. Magick can create, for the custos, an illusory world or sensory experience so powerful that the follower longs for more. These intense experiences, however, risk raising a psychological dependency not unlike that caused by certain drugs. Nephandi often use this craving to shackle their followers tighter. Some wise custos decline these gifts because they fear the loss of control and dislike being manipulated in this fashion.

Punishment

I'm goin' down to the whipping post
Down to the whipping post,
Oh God, I feel like I'm dyin'
— Allman Brothers, "Whipping Post"

This is the flip side of the coin, the iron fist inside the velvet gauntlet. As with any organization or relationship, service to a mage carries with it certain "disincentives" for poor performance. As with the rewards, the magickal abilities of the mage change and expand the nature and limits of the equation.

Physical Punishment

The most common form of physical punishment for failure is the demotion or dismissal of the custos. Because of the nature of the relationships involved, this punishment is used primarily for Sleeper acolytes. The dangers inherent in simply firing someone who is aware of the nature and abilities of the mage should be readily apparent (as witnessed by the damage rogue custos can do to their former masters). In extreme cases, (extreme, at least, among mages of the Traditions), the mage's need for secrecy may result in far more permanent "dismissal" for an ineffective custos.



The Nephandi, of course, use protracted physical torture extensively as a punishment for failure (and, perversely, as a reward as well!). Certain Marauder mages have been known to "zap" acolytes with painful bolts when in a fit of pique. Some are said to create brands on their acolytes' bodies that burn continuously for the period of punishment. The Syndicate may have relatives or friends of an erring custos beaten. The nature of the punishment varies with the organization, but it is seldom quickly forgotten, save by those who do not survive the more extreme forms of punishment.

Mental Punishment

This category of punishment consists primarily of the denial of the positive feelings mentioned above. Peer disapproval, shunning, guilt and shame all play a part in modifying the behavior of a custos (or any member of an organization, for that matter). This might also involve the denial or suspension of certain privileges or instruction.

Magickal Punishment

The mage can, of course, punish an erring follower magickally. The possible options for physical or mental mistreatment are limited only by Paradox (and decency). This tactic is rarely used by those mages who value their custos and their continued service because of the tremendous humiliation involved. Such punishment can also aim the mage down the path to his own doom as his ego begins to overpower his good sense. Inevitably, such mages become caught up in their own arrogance, and this arrogance almost always leads to disaster. A dangerous path indeed, and one to which all mages are particularly susceptible.

Rogues



Love is clockworks
And cold steel
Fingers too numb to feel
Squeeze the handle
Blow out the candle
Love is blindness
— U2, "Love is Blindness"

All good things must come to an end. This maxim applies to the relationship of the mage and custos as well. Sometimes the sudden end of the relationship is instigated by the custos rather than the mage. While this often leads to an honorable parting of the ways, many times it means that the custos has abandoned the mage and "gone rogue."

When a custos goes rogue, she might simply leave the mage and seek another life. She may also abandon her patron in the face of grave peril or betray him to an enemy.



Why might this happen? While it is impossible to adequately explore all motivations for abandonment, certain reasons are more common than others:

Rogue Familiars

The consequences of a poor relationship between a familiar and a mage, much less a familiar going rogue, has its own uniquely devastating consequences for the mage. When a familiar goes rogue, it can unleash all of the Paradox it has consumed for its mage back upon its former master—at once! If the mage and familiar have been together for any length of time, this sudden influx of Paradox can destroy the mage in one blast. Witches have fallen to dust, Sanctums have been obliterated, and wise men have disappeared forever after vicious fallings-out between mages and their familiars.

Sometimes, however, the familiar merely decides to leave the mage, using this Paradoxical lever to keep the mage from pursuing the relationship any farther. However, if the familiar is mad enough at the mage, or merely finds no other use for her, it may use this Paradox to blackmail the mage into getting the familiar what it wants. This potential for harm is the single greatest reason why more mages do not search out familiar companions. However, many mages still believe the benefits of such a relationship far outweigh the risks.

Acolytes and Consors

Although acolytes and consors cannot hold the threat of Paradox backlash against a mage, they too can do irreparable harm to a former master or to a current master who has grown too complacent in his "mastery" of lesser beings.

Betrayal

A custos may go rogue when she finds, or believes, that she has been betrayed by her mage. While such behavior might be expected of a Nephandus, betrayal is particularly devastating when it comes after a long term of service or from an unexpected source.

This is not a particularly uncommon occurrence; most acolytes and consors feel a tremendous amount of loyalty and connection to their mage. Their entire lives revolve around a single, powerful, awesome individual. The mage is invariably placed upon the proverbial pedestal, but even magick cannot always keep the mage from falling flat in the eyes of her custos. An acolyte or consor feels bound to her mage, and such bindings often lead to feelings of love and worship. However, such feelings can all too easily turn to loathing and hatred should the mage fail too often or too severely in her servants' eyes .

While many mages are honorable and would never betray an associate, others are self-absorbed, distant and unconcerned with those around them. When a mage attempts to use his custos by placing him in an impossible situation, using him as bait, or simply sacrificing him to an enemy for personal gain, the survivor will naturally be outraged. In this case, feelings of rage, shock and betrayal and a desire for revenge will often cause that follower to go rogue.



Compulsion

On occasion, a custos may betray a mage and go rogue through some magickal compulsion placed upon her by an enemy. These magicks may take the form of mind control or may simply be suggestions or urges placed deep within the mind, set to activate when given the proper stress or stimuli (often at the worst possible time). The follower is not in control of her actions and may or may not be aware of them. The horror of a loyal custos watching herself betray or attack her mage is terrible indeed!

A certain school of thought holds that such an occurrence should be blamed on the mage in question at least as much as the enemy. A wise mage takes precautions against such occurrences through regular magickal examinations of those within her care.

Greed

Of course, certain custos may betray a mage for one of the oldest of all human motivations — greed. This occurs primarily among professional custos, with acolytes falling prey to this base urge more often than consors simply due to their different levels of experience, training and maturity. In the world of the Ascension War, supernatural or magic-wielding opponents can sometimes offer a servant even more than her heart desires.

Mistreatment

A custos who is mistreated, particularly habitually so, will often go rogue when given the opportunity to do so with any chance of success. This is most common among the Nephandi custos, for the mistreatment there is particularly brutal and habitual. Such behavior is fairly common in certain Conventions of the Technocracy (and the Sons of Ether) as well, but also occurs in individual cases in almost every faction, no matter how well-intentioned that group may be. While abuse may cow a servant for a long while, every being has its breaking point...

The consequences of betrayal, of a custos going rogue, are drastic indeed. A wise defector should attempt to do so at a time when her action will probably kill the mage and thus reduce the possibility of revenge. Mages as a group are not notoriously kind in any event, and this severing of the relationship is regarded as particularly unforgivable. Most mages who have been betrayed thusly by a custos will hunt her indefinitely for the sheer pleasure of taking revenge or at least to be rid of the danger she presents. This may even be true if the custos was compelled to betray the mage. After all, nobody said life was fair!





Fellowships



We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition.
— William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

Custos have just as much (if not more) of a need for companionship as mages. While some groups of custos are thrown together by affiliation or job description, others have founded fellowships to provide themselves with emotional and intellectual outlets. Those who are aware of the true nature of their employment or association often form groups within which they can freely discuss their problems, tell anecdotes, share solutions and relax.

Groups can be large or small and take several forms. Some might be covens or activist groups while others might be bands or poetry-reading societies. As they are formed in response to the desires of their membership, custos fellowships could be anything. A few are fiercely protective of themselves and require stringent rules for membership. Many simply lump custos together by Tradition or level of association.

A few custos organizations are detailed here. These are by no means all of them or even the better known ones. Storytellers should work with their players to create their own groups in addition to those listed.

The Crossovers

This multi-Tradition custos organization encourages consors, familiars and reality-aware acolytes to go beyond Tradition associations and work to heal misunderstandings, schisms and antipathies among them. They welcome custos from the nine Traditions, Orphans and Ahl-i-Batin. The mages themselves are welcome should they wish to attend meetings, though some custos feel that they cannot speak as freely in front of their "masters" as they would like. The Crossovers share information that they learn about magick and mages in general and specific information about particular foes.

The Crossovers believe that the Ascension War can only be won when the Traditions and other "good" mages stop fighting among themselves over minor differences and philosophies and learn to work together in common cause — not just when necessary, but all the time. Many members of the Crossovers view their mage friends with bemused tolerance, but secretly feel that they should stop being so childish and get over themselves. In view of mages' tendencies toward hubris, the Crossovers might be right.

This group has no regular gatherings; meetings just happen whenever enough Crossovers get together in private (i.e. when no interfering or overcurious Sleepers

are around). They are loosely run in democratic fashion. When an emergency arises, they can contact one another through a facilitator, who usually works at or owns a place where they most commonly meet. Such places are usually restaurants, bars, coffee houses, motels or craft stores. There are several throughout the world, all of which have names which use the words Cross or Over — the Crossover, the Crosstown Saloon, Overby's Silver Shop, the Overlook Bar and Grill, or the Criss-Cross Craft Shoppe. Though their openness allows them to contact many custos from all over the world, it does render them more vulnerable to discovery and infiltration by the Technocracy.

The Corpselight Connoisseurs

Unlike the Crossovers, who have a worldwide organization and cross Tradition boundaries, the Corpselight Connoisseurs is composed of just six people. All are consors of Euthanatos mages and have begun to doubt their mystick companions' views. They are haunted by the suspicion that they have unwittingly assisted in murders rather than releasing spirits so that they may progress along the wheel of reincarnation. Because of this doubt, the Connoisseurs try to investigate death on their own. They use ouija boards and séances to contact wraiths and question them about the afterlife and reincarnation and engage in near-death experiences similar to those depicted in *Flatliners*. They occasionally use "volunteers" in their ongoing investigations. The Connoisseurs are led by a Native American psychic named Dark Water, who lives up to his name — cool, flowing and seemingly impenetrable.

SysOp Inc.

SysOp Inc. (also called "SysOpians," or "SysOphus" by the truly obscure) is a group of acolytes, consors and the occasional familiar of the Virtual Adepts (and a few Sons of Ether) who meet regularly in the shared reality of cyberspace.

Technomagickal gifts often allow favored companions to interact on a more immediate basis than most mortal Net users ever know. Thus, SysOp Inc. has their own heavily-warded network which spans the globe. There the members share information, company, understanding and the results of their experiments with cutting-edge software and technology.

The SysOpians spend most of their time on-line. Most have jobs in the computer industry or in related fields of information technology with a fair sprinkling of individuals still firmly ensconced in their aging parents' basements. They move freely about the Internet and all of the major on-line services and work together to attempt to carefully monitor the Technocracy. Many SysOpians actively hack into a variety of key areas in the Digital Web, keeping tabs on everyone from the government to the Nephandi. In this respect, they perform a valuable service to the Council of Nine Traditions, for they combine an understanding of the technology and philosophy of the Technocracy with a far more cooperative spirit than can be found among most of their mages.

SysOp Inc. is, of course, vulnerable to penetration by Technocracy spies, particularly those from the Progenitors and Iteration X. They are very aware of this danger and rigorously screen potential candidates for membership. The SysOpians often monitor the on-line and off-line activities of new members for years before easing their scrutiny — if they ever do! Rumors abound that SysOp Inc. operatives sometimes spend a great deal of time and effort monitoring each other and/or attempting to hack into each other's computer set-ups. Cooperation is a wonderful thing, but no one can afford to be lax in the pursuit of scientific knowledge or one-up-manship!

The Children of Springtime

The Children of Springtime is an association of acolytes and consors who gather to celebrate life and Nature. They revel in the joy of reaching out to the world and to each other, and they use their "festivals" to rejuvenate their weary spirits, enabling them to return refreshed to the battle against the Technocracy.

Membership in the Children of Springtime is theoretically open to custos from all nine Traditions as well as Orphans. Most members follow the Dreamspeakers and Verbena, with a scattering of custos from the Akashic Brotherhood and the Cult of Ecstasy.

Custos and mages are always welcome at the festivals, which often coincide with concerts (particularly Grateful Dead, Indigo Girls and Crash Worship shows) or New Age or pagan celebrations. The Children use these events to mask their activities and see them as excellent recruiting opportunities besides. Many Sleepers who attend such concerts or celebrations have found themselves drawn into the society of the Children and from there into the service of one of the Traditions as their awareness grows.

While the Children of Springtime is primarily a social organization, its members will make every effort to come to one another's aid when needed. Their network spreads throughout North America and many other Western nations. Springtime members may be recognized by the forsythia flowers which they often wear, carry or incorporate in the design of their clothing, jewelry or gardens.

The Lab Rats

This group of Technocracy custos are all recipients of cybernetic enhancements courtesy of Iteration X. Each was once physically handicapped in some way. Some were thalidomide babies, while others were soldiers who lost limbs in warfare. A few others were accident victims who were left partially paralyzed. For all of them, the cybernetic replacement parts provided by Iteration X have

allowed them to become self-sufficient and active once again. Because they know they are serving as living experiments, they refer to themselves, with grim humor, as the Lab Rats.

Many of the Rats are active supporters of the Special Olympics and Paralympics and fundraising for the handicapped. Some serve as physical therapists. All are active recruiters for Iteration X because they believe quite strongly that every physically handicapped person can benefit from the wonderful new technology which has helped them so much.

Members of the Lab Rats are usually genuinely likable and concerned people. They care about those who suffer under the difficulties they themselves used to experience and fully support Iteration X's humanitarian efforts, helping others get into pilot programs like the ones which they experienced — programs which will fit the handicapped with cybernetic enhancements that will change their lives.

The Oscars

The Oscars are a group of Marauders who have sprung up around a mage named Oscar Fieldstone, a former Order of Hermes mage who always wanted to be a movie director. Now that he's insane, he can be one all the time — and his friends can come along with him for the fun! Aside from Oscar, who carries his prized director's chair with him wherever he goes, the group has a core membership of seven others. Actress was once Oscar's wife. She was a brilliant mathematician who was captured by the Technocracy and reprogrammed to serve as a mindless cipher for them. Oscar managed to rescue her with the aid of Persephone, the fanged, squirrel-tailed zebra, and Persephone's Umbral friends, the Mszxeg'lleich (little pygmy fellows). Actress' mind was never the same after that, and Oscar retreated further and further from reality himself. Since he couldn't pronounce the names of the pygmies, he renamed them. They are now known collectively as "extras." Individually, they are named Props, Costumes, Lighting, Set Dressing and Effects. They play all the minor roles whenever the troupe goes "on location." Persephone acts as camera man. Actress plays all the leading roles. Oscar, of course, directs.

The Great Unwashed

Custos of the Hollow Ones make up a large portion of the Great Unwashed, along with a few Orphans and refugees from the Technocracy (Rumors persist that there are a few young Kindred in their ranks as well). This loose (what else?) organization gathers at and sponsors clubs, concerts, conventions, interactive theater events, poetry readings and other forums to promote their own dismal view of society, human nature and the human condition. They have taken their name both as a cynical jab at their image and as a statement of their protest against the world.





This organization has adherents in many cities and small towns and is particularly popular around university campuses. The events and clubs it sponsors promote a distinctly hip, "Goth-Punk" culture and work somewhat listlessly to influence modern society away from the psycho-spiritual domination of the Technocracy. It is rumored that acolytes of a certain clique of Hollow Ones, members of the Great Unwashed, have recently founded a small publishing house to spread their views to a wider audience.

Red Flag

Red Flag is the latest name of a group of cross-faction vigilante custos. Each has lost someone to the Ascension War, and all have decided to put an end to the conflict — through the elimination of mages. Members come from the Traditions, Technocracy and Marauders. Nephandi and their companions are not welcome and are regarded as prime targets. Red Flag feels that the common people of earth will only be safe once those with magickal abilities and supernatural powers are gone. They believe that, with mages, werewolves, vampires and other Awakened individuals destroyed, the mass of people can then shape the world to their beliefs and desires.

Almost all of Red Flag's members are consors or former consors, and most have mental abilities which allow them to hide themselves and their comrades from detection. Some are rogues who remain with their mages and act against them secretly, gathering information for Red Flag, noting people, places, times and plans so that the group may know when to strike most effectively. They are led by a woman known only as Marta. It is rumored that Marta was the wife of a Euthanatos who tried to kill her, that she survived and began recruiting others to her cause to fight such arrogant behavior. Other rumors say that Marta has a vampire lover who is really the force behind Red Flag and who is using the group to rid himself of enemies and competitors. No one repeats these rumors to Red Flag members and lives.

The Typing Pool

This tightly-knit secret group of highly skilled office workers, mostly aware acolytes of Verbena, believe that the Ascension War can only be won through the placement of key personnel among the ranks of underlings in Technocracy Constructs. These consors note meeting times, personnel, supply requests and hundreds of other little details which help their mages assess what the Technocracy is up to or when they might strike next. At least one member of the Typing Pool is rumored to have become the personal secretary of one of the ruling triumvirate in one of the larger Technocracy strongholds. The Verbena have combined their talents to supply her with an untraceable, insidious drug which dulls the mind and makes the recipient more suggestible. She has been slipping it into her boss's morning coffee, so the story goes.

The members of this group have no powers; they can infiltrate the Technocracy simply because they seem so ordinary. In reality, each member is a superb actor and possesses great flair for undercover work. They are front-line spies who have agreed to have their true memories blocked off while they are at work to avoid unintentional betrayal. Mostly, however, they rely on the Technocracy's own arrogance to hide them. Non-Awakened non-essential workers are rarely subjected to any sort of intense scrutiny, as they are just part of "the Masses," and therefore not a threat.

Hex Pariah

This group loves heavy metal — the blacker, the better. More a gang or a cult than a fellowship, they dress in leather and chains, wear inverted crosses, pierce themselves in painful places, and raise literal hell at their favorite gigs. Many carry whips and knives, and rumor has it that winos and street people disappear when Hex Pariah goes on a "shopping trip." They use an abandoned warehouse, decorated in early Satanic, as a headquarters and are led by a young woman named Nun, who claims the title of "Devil's handmaiden."

Most of Hex Pariah's members are kids who just want to belong to something, who feel powerless at home and get a thrill out of dressing up and acting tough. The core group, however, are practicing Satanists who use the trappings and convenience of the group as a means of recruiting new followers for the Nephandi. By feeding rebellion and anger with drugs, violence and deliberate sacrilege, these consors help their masters drag the disaffected into a moral whirlpool while having a ball themselves. Herr Flax (see **The Book of Madness**), a potent Nephandus, is a patron of the group, but leaves the mundane chores to Nun.

The Tinkerers

Despite their carefree name, the Tinkerers are a serious and scholarly group of Technocracy companions. Their main focus is on sharing information on various cutting-edge technologies from cybernetics to artificial intelligences. Membership in the Tinkerers is quite exclusive. Though none are mages, all are extremely intelligent and innovative scientists and computer programmers.

The Tinkerers meet every three months. Coming together on the second weekend of the month, they hold seminars on various topics and hear the preliminary presentation of a paper or article written by one of the members, which will be submitted to one or another of the professional journals. Constructive criticisms are offered, and a question and answer session is held. Many of the Tinkerers have no idea that their Technocracy friends would be annoyed if they discovered that possible secrets were being leaked to the other factions. Others attend with their Construct's blessing, either to enhance their prestige or to steal those very secrets.

Survival Tactics

For her own breakfast, she'll project a scheme,
Nor take her tea without a stratagem.
— Edward Young, "Love of Fame."

The following treatise was prepared for the January 5th meeting of the now temporarily disbanded consor fellowship known as The Green Door.

Whether we are Sleepers or aware, acolytes or consors, whether we know it or not, all custos are playing a dangerous game — including those of us who think we know better. We are non-mages operating in a mage's world in the midst of a mage's war, and casualties can be high. Sometimes the mage you work for is at least as dangerous to you as the ones you don't. Although certain consors (particularly those with supernatural abilities) are far more capable than merely "aware" acolytes such as myself, we all are faced with the challenge to survive and thrive in a hostile world. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves living out the Hobbesian life: "nasty, brutish and short."

This does not mean that we should despair entirely. Far from it! There are ways that non-mage custos, such as yourself and yours truly, can stay alive in our mages' war of Ascension. I must make note, however, that my comments tonight do not necessarily apply to our mages' familiars. These creatures almost inevitably demand and receive sufficient attention and respect from their mage. While some mages refuse to acknowledge it, we know that the familiar usually manages to maintain at least an equal stance in the relationship — and any of you who have had to help your mage keep "kitty" entertained at three in the morning know that the upper hand does not always belong to the mage "master." Every mage will try to protect her familiar and keep it happy, while taking a potshot at an enemy's familiar. They are rarely as solicitous of their other custos.

The following information should help all custos, acolyte and consor alike, stay alive in this most dangerous profession. I would advise those of you with less tolerant masters and mistresses to keep some of these suggestions to yourself. Remember, you have only yourself to blame should you overestimate your mage's good will.

Knowledge is Power

The key to surviving as a custos is knowledge, either its complete lack or the equivalent of a Ph.D. in mage studies. If you have any knowledge, you need a lot of it. While those acolytes completely ignorant of all things magickal may be too insignificant to become targets, aware acolytes and consors run great risks. As all of you here tonight have already heard too much information for your own good, you had better start studying for those orals! It is vital for you, as a custos, to get as smart as you can as quickly as possible.

This means that any custos should learn her job and the do's and don'ts of that job in every particular. Angering your mage (particularly a Nephandus) can be the surest way to forced retirement! Every new employee should also seek a mentor, a senior person who knows the ropes and is willing to share her hard-earned knowledge. In this way, the young acolyte can learn as much as possible about the Ascension War, magick, the enemy, the supernatural, your employer and other mages. Whether this information involves knowing what weapons to pack for which kind of fight or knowing the rivalries between various factions, knowledge is as essential to your survival as the air you breathe.

Discretion is the Better Part of Valor

Silence is the best tactic for him who distrusts himself.
— Francois, Duke de La Rochefoucauld, "Reflections; or Sentences and Moral Maxims."

While I have just told you that the first rule is to learn as much as possible, the second rule for a custos is to keep your mouth shut about it! A wise custos will avoid drawing attention to herself, other than favorable attention for doing her job well. Showing off your knowledge concerning the intimate details and particulars of every aspect of the Ascension War and your employer's activities is bound to cause trouble.

First, as a young custos who knows more than you should, you may attract unfavorable attention from your employer and his allies. Your mage may start to wonder how a youngling knows so much, and what secrets you know that you aren't telling! A mage is never more dangerous than when he fears a spy or a usurper. Remember: each and every one of us is a potential spy or usurper in the understandably paranoid eyes of our mages.

It is also wise for you to not appear overly ambitious, lest you be seen as a threat by the other members of your mage's cabal or household. It is far easier to survive as a small fish (which even the most powerful of us still is) in the Ascension War if you avoid drawing attention to yourself. A faceless acolyte is not perceived as any particular threat by the enemy and is therefore unlikely to be specifically targeted. A hotshot, however, is more likely to be disposed of just on general principles. Practicing discretion may allow you, as a custos, to survive long enough to gain the power and knowledge necessary to make a reputable stab at defending yourself.

High Performance

It is essential that any custos who wishes to survive be good at his job. It is an excellent survival technique to make oneself indispensable to the mage. Seek to do the job well, whatever it is, and always be ready to do more. A mage who loves her coffee is not going to kill the person who makes the finest cup (don't laugh! The ability to brew a good cup of coffee has saved my life on more than one occasion!), and good help of any kind is always hard to

find. Increase your knowledge, improve your skills, and seek more responsibility. Over time, your good performance and increased responsibility will make an impression, and a mage is more likely to run risks to protect employees she cares about.

By gradually increasing your abilities and responsibilities, and becoming more and more important to your mage or her organization, you learn the skills and earn the respect which is so necessary to your continued survival.

Manipulating Your Employer

Your mage's world is filled with intrigue and manipulation. It is a torte with layer upon layer of deception. Plots and counterplots, real goals and hidden goals, rivalries and intrigue are the ingredients of its icing. In this atmosphere, a completely open and honest person is at a great disadvantage and may not survive unless he is quite powerful. Most of us aren't all that powerful, at least not in relation to our mages, and therefore we must use a certain amount of guile to survive.

This caution applies to dealings with your employer as well as with outsiders. It is certain that the mage is using her custos for her own purposes; the wise custos should use the mage as well. Beware not to misinterpret this instruction! Your mage will probably expect that everyone, including her employees, are out for their own interests. She therefore is unlikely to take it amiss if you use flattery, exaggerations or your own particular skills and talents to get what you want.

However, do not lie to your mage (unless it is absolutely necessary for survival), and do not allow her to see you working against her interests. Plotting with the enemy or any other betrayal, real or imagined, is the fastest way to shorten your life span in the paranoid world of the mage. Therefore, a truly wise custos realizes the limits of effective manipulation and goes only so far and no farther. Knowing when to push and when to back off is an art form I suggest you learn with alacrity.

Manipulating Your Enemies

The enemies of the mage, and therefore of you, his custos, are many and varied. They range from other mages; to supernatural creatures such as vampires, werewolves, faeries and spirits; to other acolytes and consors; to threats unknowable and perhaps unimaginable. A key dilemma of every custos is how to survive as a "mere human" (or in any event, a less powerful being) when faced with this variety and depth of threat.

It is critical to remember that while many of these beings don't like you, they often don't like each other either! The rivalries between the vampires and the Garou, the mages and the faeries, and between the various factions of mages are legendary. Therefore, it is possible for a shrewd custos to manipulate these groups to keep their primary attention on each other and away from you. One common technique is to disguise your operations to appear to be those of another faction. While this may involve surrendering a bit of the "glory," it can greatly facilitate your survival. In the Ascension War, the most successful people are some of the least well known. Fame is a wonderful thing, but it's always nicer if you can live long enough to enjoy it.

It is also useful to remember that many of these groups will leap at the chance to foil the plans of another. Thus, if a vampire is plotting against you, the local werewolves may be more than happy to assist you in disposing of the threat (if you make it worth their while). If a particular mage is threatening you, he undoubtedly has enemies with whom you can consort to your advantage. Remember, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," at least for the moment. Try to keep on at least neutral terms with one or two of these factions at any given time, lest you find yourself surrounded by enemies and bereft of friends.

To successfully manipulate the rivalries between these groups, it is essential to keep your finger on the pulse of politics, both mundane and supernatural, of the area. Contacts are important, and you must see and be seen to keep up with the ebb and flow. While the mage may be divorced from such machinations, his custos should never be. Indeed, it is often the good work of the custos which enables the mage to maintain his aura of detached contemplation.

It is also possible to directly plot to manipulate two or more factions of enemies into costly conflict. This can be profitable, but must be approached with caution. If such plotting is discovered, the two enemies may well decide that it is worth their while to unite and eliminate you!

Strength in Numbers

A final key strategy for survival in the Ascension War is to seek strength in numbers. Custos are less powerful than mages or other supernatural beings, but numbers can often overwhelm individual power. We must band together and make sure that senior, more powerful custos train the younger ones well. Custos should know their enemy, understand his strengths and weaknesses, equip themselves properly, plan carefully, and always try to apply surprise, overwhelming numbers and firepower to the situation.

This philosophy also works well as a defense. Well-equipped, knowledgeable custos who congregate in numbers may present such formidable opposition that an enemy will depart to find an easier target.

In closing, I say good luck to all, whether you are mortal or fey, acolyte or consor. No matter who we serve, we share one thing in common: our mages. Good night and good luck.

—Jared Singhman, personal assistant to Mayra Llewellyn, Order of Hermes.


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Chapter Three: The Tale is Told

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair stand an end,
Like quills on the fretful porpentine.
— William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*



The Storyteller plays a crucial role in any chronicle. She sets the tone of each story, orchestrates the actions of whole worlds of individuals, and monitors the ebb and flow of her chronicle. For a Storyteller used to tailoring stories for reality-busting mages, designing a chronicle for custos characters can be a bit tricky if she isn't careful. A story that is perfectly suited for a few seasoned mages would, in all likelihood, turn a group of custos into demon chow. After all, custos are different: they aren't mages, they're usually not Awakened, and they may not even know *anything* about mages, magick or the real world in all its Awakened wonder.

Custos are usually lower-powered characters trying to survive in a world of warring mages and other supernatural nasties, a world which many of these custos are still struggling to comprehend. It is up to the Storyteller to play out the knowledge and wonder, slowly bringing the custos characters into the alternately murky or lucid world of the Awakened. Throwing too many mage-level obstacles at these characters can be as deadly to the chronicle as tossing a seal into a feeding frenzy of sharks. Remember, players tend to get bored really fast if their characters drop like flies or never have anything important to do.

This chapter is designed to help the Storyteller integrate custos characters into an existing chronicle, as player characters or as non-player characters, and design custos-based chronicles. Although not as overtly powerful as the mages whom they serve and befriend, custos are particularly resourceful and creative individuals. There is little doubt that custos have a unique perspective on the World of Darkness. They are each Alices adrift in Wonderland, and remember how many adventures Alice had!

Playing Custos



Judging by the virtues expected of a servant, does your Excellency know many masters who would be worthy valets?

—Pierre de Beaumarchais, *Le Barbier de Seville*

When the Storyteller decides to incorporate custos characters into a chronicle, whether it is already in progress or not yet begun, he must first decide what role these companions will play. There are two main ways to integrate custos characters into a **Mage** chronicle: the first is individual play, in which a player simply plays a custos as her primary character. In this type of game, the entire group may consist of custos or may be a mixed cabal of custos and mages. This is the most common approach, with each player taking the role of a single character throughout the chronicle or playing the "serial monogamy" game should her first character meet with an unfortunate demise (Of course, there's always **Wraith**...). Custos are also particularly suited to use in the less common form of roleplaying known as troupe-style play.

Troupe-Style Play

Some players and Storytellers may want to have custos play an important role in the chronicle, while still keeping the main focus on their mage characters. The custos are around, but their role is subservient to — or at least different than — that of the mages. In troupe-style play, the players also use their mages' acolytes, consors or familiars as characters. For example, instead of just sending a group of agents out to infiltrate a lab suspected to be a Progenitor front and anxiously waiting for the results, the players can play out the mission as custos. For the duration of that scene (or story), the players play the custos risking their necks while their mages argue existential philosophy, turn common household chemicals into family pets, fly off to the farthest reaches of the Astral Umbra for a little R&R, etc.

Troupe-style play has many advantages. First, it can keep the players much more involved in the plot affecting their main characters — it offers them the chance to do more of the dirty work. It also gives the players a break from their primary mage characters while keeping the plot moving along. Portraying a custos can be a refreshing change and can also give a player a different perspective and sometimes new insight into the problems of the story. Finally, it can be very liberating to roleplay these relatively minor characters. Players can take risks when playing their secondary characters that they might not take with their main characters, even if those risks are necessary for the story or fit the character.

Playing a custos character in troupe-style play can also provide challenges and opportunities for roleplaying that the player wouldn't have otherwise. The challenge may be just playing a far less powerful character in the same world and same chronicle as the mage. It's not always easy learning to talk your way out of a beating when you're used to altering the fabric of reality just by wriggling your nose! For another challenge, players can also roleplay the custos of other mages (swapping loyalties and goals).

Some examples of possible groups of custos particularly suited for troupe-style play are given below. Of course, these troupes could just as easily work in an all-custos story or chronicle.

Custos Troupes

Mage Allies: A group of allies of a particular Chantry or cabal of mages may include vampires, Garou, familiars and spirits. This group is more powerful than most custos troupes and may be used for particularly dangerous missions or if the Storyteller knows she's lined up an unusually deadly foe. This troupe offers the players the excitement of relatively powerful non-mage characters, as well as the opportunity to bring other genres and supernatural beasties into the chronicle. Playing such allies also provides a perfect opportunity for crossover chronicles with one or more of the other Storyteller games.

Chantry Guards: A group of Chantry guards also works well as a custos troupe. Mages must sometimes venture away from their precious sanctums, and their enemies know it. Chantry guards are all too often called upon to defend the Chantry against attack, ferret out infiltrators, or deal with more subtle and terrible foes... perhaps including one or more of those inside the Chantry.

Cabal of Familiars: A troupe of players can also take a break and play their mages' familiars, letting players go places and do things that they would never otherwise do. Familiars don't necessarily share their mages' ideas on the nature of the familiar-mage bond. In fact, most familiars feel that *they* are the ones in charge of the relationship! Familiar characters can also often move through the Umbra, even traveling into the Deep Umbra to battle foul, twisted spirits and other nasties far more easily than most mages.

Friends: A group of un-Awakened (or at least "sleepy") friends of newly Awakened mages can form a very close-knit group, learning together the perils of mages and magick. Most of these custos are even less aware than the budding mages of the true nature of the lives they will soon lead. Yet, their concern for their friends and lovers quickly ensnares them in the whirlwind of power, intrigue and betrayal that is life among the Awakened.

Servants to the Cabal: The most common custos used in troupe-style play may be the individual servants of the players' primary mage characters. Normally composed of aware, relatively powerful companions, this highly-skilled group can handle quite dangerous missions and perform critical services for their mages. This group is ideally suited for keeping mage players involved in all aspects of a given story.



Individual Play

In individual play, the player decides to run a custos as her primary character. Custos can play many different roles in a **Mage** chronicle, as discussed in the section above and in Chapter Two. Some Storytellers may decide to run a "Right Hand" chronicle, with all players playing custos. There are advantages to these groups, since they are often easier to plan storylines for, and tailor danger levels to, than a mixed group containing both custos and mages. The Storyteller must remember to adjust the power of the stories and the enemies faced to the skills and abilities of the companions, using discretion and mercy when appropriate to keep events moving. No one wants to face the shocked horror of a group of players after the big, nasty Umbral spirit eats all of their characters twenty minutes into the evening's festivities.

It is possible that only a few players will want to play custos. This is rarely a problem, so long as the Storyteller is willing to create and run a mixed chronicle with enough opportunities for all the characters to strut their stuff. After all, cabals composed of one or two mages and their custos are not uncommon in the World of Darkness. They offer a diversity of background, experience and power that makes for excellent roleplaying.

Of course, with mixed chronicles there may be tension between players if (or when!) the mages in the group try to throw their weight around ("Polish my shoes, Mr. Acolyte, or I'll turn you into a toad!" "Oh, yeah? Polish *this*!"). This sort of "class conflict" provides a lot of interesting opportunities for roleplaying and character development. However, if the tension is between *players*, then the Storyteller might want to consider giving the acolyte something more exciting to do than searching for the mage character's missing socks.

So-called "buddy flicks" provide good examples of how to design a mixed chronicle. These movies usually feature two or more protagonists, one of whom is often substantially more skilled and/or experienced than the other (think of the Green Lantern & Kato, Sherlock Holmes & Dr. Watson, or any crusty detective-rookie cop combo). In these films, the talented "star" protagonist often does the bulk of the work, while his "buddy" always provides invaluable services throughout the film. These services range from simple comic relief to pulling the star's bacon out of the fire (often without the star character realizing just how much of his success is due to his buddy's efforts on his behalf). It is only by facing different enemies, overcoming dangers together, and gradually coming to understand each other that the characters realize how much they depend on each other for emotional and physical survival. So too do mage and custos often discover that they need each other to survive in a world filled with Sleepers and Awakened alike.

The most obvious difficulty in running mixed chronicles is keeping the danger and power level high enough to challenge the mages while allowing the non-mage characters a fair chance to survive. The Storyteller may want to give the custos characters some sort of special protection, knowledge, additional powers or defensive magic to enable them to survive in higher-octane mixed chronicles.

Certain Traditions are far more likely than others to foster these mixed cabals. Hollow Ones, Cultists of Ecstasy, Dreamspeakers and the Sons of Ether are prime candidates for these groups. It is particularly common in these Traditions for a group of neophytes and followers to arise around a more powerful and experienced mentor.

The Setting



Jim was most ruined for a servant, because he got stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches.

— Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

The kindest term most people would use for the life of an aware custos is *bizarre*. Unaware companions don't know any better, and familiars don't expect things to be any other way. However, most custos are caught in between these two extremes. They have just enough information to know that the world is chock-full of big bad wolves, vampires and bug-eyed monsters, and that they'll probably get the short end of the stick in any confrontation. Custos had better have more prepared than a juicy stake and the garlic in their kitchen if they want to hang around for long!

Many custos feel that their mages' ability to manipulate reality skews their perceptions away from the workings of the world in which most people live. It is all too easy for a mage to become wrapped up in magickal concerns, temporarily losing the inclination to tend to more mundane concerns. This constant shifting between reality paradigms is a major reason why mages retain custos in the first place. Familiars serve the opposite purpose — they are continually aware of and concerned with their mages' magickal realities. Someone more grounded in the mundane world needs to make sure that the mage showers occasionally and that the power bill gets paid so that the experiment in the freezer doesn't climb out and wander around looking for a snack.

As a result, a custos is constantly pulled to and fro between the mundane world and the magickal. She experiences the disconcerting juxtaposition of the two worlds and comes to realize even better than a mage that nothing is as it seems (Mages, after all, tend to see and concentrate on the mystick behind the mundane, sometimes to the exclusion of all else). A custos must be constantly on guard against the dangers of both worlds — a stressful, if rarely boring, existence. She can literally be washing her socks one minute and fighting the Technocracy the next.



Through The Looking Glass

Curiouser and curiouser!

— Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

What would Wonderland be without Alice? Through Alice's eyes, Wonderland comes alive, replete with confusion, horror, excitement, beauty and wonder. To the inhabitants of Lewis Carroll's bizarre world, Wonderland is the norm — it is all they have ever known. The inhabitants of Wonderland accept and expect the Red Queen to scream, "Off with his head!" and for the Cheshire Cat to disappear, leaving only his wide grin floating in the air. It is only Alice's eyes that can look afresh upon Wonderland and remark upon its wonders... and its horrors. In the World of Darkness, it is the custos who take the role of Alice, stepping through the dark mirror of mundane reality to enter a world filled with magick.

One of the most interesting aspects of a custos-oriented chronicle is the opportunity to gaze afresh on the wonder of magick, to "step through the looking glass." It is up to the Storyteller to help convey this sense of a new world to his players and their characters. Perhaps the easiest way to create this sense of newness and curiosity is to introduce players who have never played **Mage: The Ascension** to the game by using un-Awakened custos for characters. As stories unfold and the magickal nature of the world is revealed, characters and players alike can easily appreciate the wonder of the Awakened world. (Custos characters can also be easier for new roleplayers to play, as their abilities are more easily defined and used than those of True Mages.)

But what about those players who already know all about the World of Darkness and the Awakened beings that exist within it? Here the Storyteller may have to stretch a bit to reawaken the sense of naiveté and mystery the players' new custos should feel when faced with their weird new world. One of the most effective ways to immediately put more experienced players back into Alice's patent leather shoes is to *describe* everything magickal. Don't just casually inform the players their characters see, say, a small demon attempting to trail them. Instead, describe slightly different scenarios to each character. Perhaps one character notices the reflection of a tiny, wizened form, red as an apple, staring intently at her in a shop window. Another character might notice the smell of burned fruit over and over again. Yet another character glimpses small hands shoving an antique vase off its shelf in a store the group has just entered. The players can work to figure out what this awful little thing is that seems to be following them... or maybe they all just need more sleep. Describing all things and effects magickal creates mood and interest far more effectively than saying "it looks like its one of those creatures from page 82."

Another technique that Lewis Carroll uses brilliantly in *Through the Looking Glass* is the manipulation of language to create the sense of an alien world. In several of his poems, such as "Jabberwocky," Carroll uses bizarre words and phrases to convey the otherworldly creatures and actions taking place. "And as in uffish thought he stood/ The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,/ Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,/ And burbled as it came!" Of course, not every Storyteller has to be Lewis Carroll to use this technique. Using a few unusual words in key places — even "nonsense" words — can help players think about the world in unusual ways.

Storytellers should also remember that the world the custos have newly entered brims with complex relationships, age-old enmities and ancient, ongoing quests. There is absolutely no way that the young custos can know more than a few vague pieces of information about the social dynamics of mages and other magickal creatures. However, experienced **Mage** players almost assuredly believe that they understand much of the dynamics of the World of Darkness, even if their characters do not. The Storyteller can use this sort of confident belief to completely unsettle her players simply by switching around a few of the major allies/enemies groupings. Having the new companions stumble into the midst of a situation — or forcing a situation on them — in which they receive only tantalizing pieces of information about the forces surrounding them and what they really want is also quite effective. (Men in Black are often useful for this kind of work.) Storylines based on the theme of loyalty or subterfuge (see below) also work well to foster uncertainty and mystery in a chronicle.

What's Familiar to a Familiar?

Unlike other custos, who generally regard the mundane mortal world as the norm, familiars are quite accustomed to magickal reality. Thus, while other mage companions "ooh" and "ahh" upon entering the High Umbra, the familiars may just be coming back home. To most familiars, it is the human un-Awakened world that often seems bizarre, nonsensical and even horrific. Perhaps the familiar finds mechanical devices incomprehensible or thinks that human social dynamics are ridiculous and in need of correction. For the familiars, this world is Wonderland, and they are our Alices. The Storyteller should try to work with any player running a familiar to come up with ways in which the human world seems bizarre to the character. The perceptions of a mixed group of familiars and acolytes often feed off each other, as what familiars find fascinating is often commonplace to consors (and vice versa).



The life of a companion is always strange and very often surreal. Custos deal with the unique stresses in their lives in any number of ways. Many develop a sort of cynical good humor, a "nothing-can-surprise-me" attitude that uses wisecracks to shield them from the shock and pain. Others, especially those who devote all their time to the service of a mage and live in an Awakened environment, take in all the strangeness with complete equanimity. They expect nothing else from their service. Some crack under the strain and go spectacularly rogue.

Idiosyncrasies abound among the custos. They reflect, and reflect upon, their mages' world in ways utterly impossible for someone personally swept up in magick. It is perhaps this sense of perspective that is the custos' most important contribution to the World of Darkness. It is this same unique perspective that can make custos characters so enjoyable to run in a chronicle.

Stories

Well, honor is the subject of my story,
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life; but, for my single self,
I had as lief not be as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
— William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

There are many kinds of custos stories, running the gamut from horror to romance and from intrigue to action. Yet there are a few elements and themes that custos stories and chronicles are easiest to shape around. If the Storyteller knows the theme (or themes) she wants to convey through her story, it becomes far easier to determine the motivations and actions of the non-player characters and groups with which the custos interact.

Successful chronicles most often are those in which the Storyteller weaves together two or more central themes that are interesting and evocative for the players and their characters. It is also important for the Storyteller to ask herself a few questions about the player characters who will take center stage in the drama. For example, why are the characters custos? Are they motivated by love? Money? Revenge? Curiosity? What is important to these characters? Honor? Service to one's mage? The search for knowledge? Punishing themselves for some failure? The information given in Chapter Two on motivation and recruitment provides a number of good examples to draw from. The answers to these questions usually lead to the form the theme of the story should take. The sections on common punishments and rewards meted out by mages can also provide fodder for these stories.

Remember, the characters are far more likely to become involved in the action if the themes in the story resonate with their motivations and concerns. It is also important to keep in mind that no matter how powerful the consor, or how wise the acolyte, they are never a match for the sheer raw power of most of the beings they encounter. Likewise, custos are generally new players stepping into a game almost as ancient as time itself. It is bound to take the characters quite a while to figure out what game they're playing, let alone the rules! Of course, just when they think they have it all figured out, it's time to change the game...

The following themes and story suggestions provide examples of how the Storyteller can craft storylines which work well for most custos characters. The Storyteller should feel free to expand on these themes to create the stories that work best for her particular troupe.

Loyalty

Almost all custos chronicles revolve to some extent around the themes of loyalty and trust. Loyalty is a constant issue between mages and custos, and one that is tested in many ways. Where does loyalty end, if anywhere? At what point does loyalty sour? Mages need to be able to rely on the loyalty of their companions, while the custos must also rely on their mage. After all, mages teach them about a world that a short time ago may have been beyond their wildest imaginings.

Trust is often an even more delicate issue among wizards and their custos. Often, all parties involved in a story must give trust (or withhold it) equally or face the sudden collapse of their efforts. In many respects, the custos-mage bond is a marriage, with all the strengths and vulnerabilities that such a relationship implies.

Loyalty Stories

• A war for control erupts among the various cabals in the Chantry. If the players are custos serving the Chantry, they must of course stand with their mage in the swirl of battle and intrigue. Yet the players may believe that their mages are acting out of foolish pride, endangering the Chantry and possibly their own best interests. Where lies honor? What is the price of loyalty?

• The characters discover a spy in the Chantry (or in their cabal). This traitor, who had masqueraded as a companion, is actually a mage of great power who has been spying on the characters and now wishes to use them in his diabolical schemes. As a fail-safe measure, the traitor has ordered his minions to slay loved ones of the characters should they fail to report to the captors at regular intervals.



Do the players betray their mage and their Chantry to save innocent lives? Is their loyalty to the Chantry more important? Is there another way out?

Intrigue

Intrigue abounds among the Awakened. The custos who share their lives inevitably get swept up in one or more of the varied plots and counterplots that are always hatching among the myriad factions of mages and their supernatural friends and foes. Their position ensures that custos are likely to imagine intrigue and subterfuge even where there may not be any. They are not full-fledged members of mage society and often must gain their information from overheard snippets of conversation, back-stairs gossip and hasty summaries. A single odd remark or a strange doll found on the doorstep one morning can send custos scurrying as they attempt to discover who has turned their attention on them and why. It is easy to jump to conclusions in this complex and deadly world.

Intrigue Stories

• The Masters and Mentors of the Chantry are closeted in an arcane ritual of terrible importance when the Chantry is attacked. The companions must stretch their skills to the utmost to defeat the enemy, save the Chantry, and prevent the interruption of the ritual.

Yet in the aftermath of the battle, the characters discover clear evidence of the unthinkable — the Technomancers and Nephandi joined forces in the assault! The characters must discover the cause of this mysterious alliance, unearth the source of the link, and root it out before the dark tide overwhelms them all. (In a troupe-style story, the mages might take over the investigation, giving their poor Chantry guards a much-deserved respite!)

• The custos characters are sent on a mission of grave import to the Nine Traditions to recover an artifact from the hands of Infernal minions on another continent. The diabolist in question has devised a means to detect any Awakened being which approaches his stronghold; therefore, these companions will be more effective at recovering the object. They are instructed to return the artifact to one particular mage, high in the ranks of the Tradition followed by a majority of the player characters. This mage is to secure the artifact and safeguard it against all non-Tradition forces.

As the mission unfolds, the characters begin to uncover disturbing evidence that all is not as it seems. They find themselves wooed by agents of the Technocracy, the Nephandi and even elements within the Nine Traditions who are competing with them to retrieve the artifact. In fact, the group is approached by a mage of a competing Tradition, preferably one to which at least one character feels some loyalty. This mage tells the characters that the first one is lying to them, seeking to use the artifact for his own selfish gain. While it is clear that the characters have not been told the full truth, who do they believe?



The characters recover the mysterious artifact from the cultists with relative ease, but then have to run a gauntlet of competing groups to get it back home. If the characters choose not to take it to their employer, where do they go? Why is this object so danged important? What are their employer's true objectives?

• This story is designed for a group which contains at least one supernatural ally, such as a vampire or werewolf. The local vampire prince, or the elder of the local sept of Garou, declares war against the local mages. The characters are caught in between, with at least some of their members torn by conflicting loyalties.

The characters must negotiate their way through the dark intrigues of the city (or the culture of honor, respect and vengeance of the Garou). They must discover the causes of the conflict and attempt to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table. It is up to the characters to avert the conflict and the massive bloodshed it will engender, which would severely weaken both cultures and likely result in the deaths of more than one of the characters' allies and associates.

Horror

Horror is a visceral, gut-wrenching theme which takes more than throwing a few slavering creatures at the characters to cause. In fact, it is most often the time between when the characters *know* (or believe) that there are slavering beasties coming after them and when the monsters actually put in their appearance that horror occurs. In the movie *Alien*, one of the main characters slips into the ductwork to find the nasty critter waiting down there in the dark. Unfortunately, the crew member monitoring the alien's position in the maze loses the alien, and the man is left alone in the dark with *it*. When the alien actually munches him, it releases the audience from their horror. Why is it a torturer rarely hurries in his work? Because his victims feel the most horror while watching him heat the brand or sharpen the knife. They know what is to come, and their imaginations create whole worlds of torture before the brand ever touches their skin. Storytellers who remember that this time between knowledge and confrontation is often the most horrific can create horror and tension fairly easily in their stories.

Discovering a *fait accompli* or that the character has arrived just a little too late to help can also cause horror. Here it is the horror of failure, of loss, that confronts the custos. This theme usually works best if it is brought in at the beginning or middle of a story, because the character will want to find a way to make up for, or fix, the result of her failure. Storytellers who leave a character feeling like a failure at the end of too many stories, however, will undoubtedly soon surpass even the most dedicated player's angst tolerance.

Horror Stories

• A player character, custos or mage, is captured by the Nephandi. The foul mages wish to enslave her and warp her mind to their cause. The other characters must track the kidnappers, either magically or physically, through the Nephandi's nightmare world of noise, pain and chaos. They must then decide whether it is worth the considerable risk to attempt to rescue their companion. Do they dare risk trying to infiltrate the evil web?

Even if the rescue is completed, the character may have already been driven insane by the hideous evil of the Nephandi and the torment she endured. Only by traveling deep into the dreaming representations of her crazed mind can the characters slay their friend's internal demons and truly bring her home at last.

Stories involving insanity and torture require caution, but can provide great drama. Properly handled, they can allow the characters to explore the depths of horror, pain and evil which the Nephandi symbolize.

• The custos are battling a revolting Nephandi familiar when the creature steps through a magickal portal to escape. Unfortunately for the custos, the creature also draws them through the portal in its magickal "backwash." They find themselves in a shifting nightmare Realm somewhere in the High Umbra. The characters must find a way to return to their world as swiftly as possible, for their chances of survival in this alien Realm are slim at best.

Romance

Love and passion are at least as important to mages and their companions as to the Sleepers curled up in the safety of their beds, comfortably ignorant of the true nature of reality. In fact, the topsy-turvy world of the Awakened may make a stable, loving relationship even more important to those within it. Glimpsing the true multiplicity of reality is enough to make a character feel lonelier than ever among that great, vast incomprehensiveness.

Love, whether the love of a parent for a child or a lover for his partner, is a powerful force. People will do almost anything to keep the object of their love alive and safe. When a custos loves, however, that love unfortunately creates a vulnerability that far too many people can use to manipulate or exploit him. Custos can also serve as pawns in that game, used to manipulate a mage who dares let down her defenses long enough to learn to love a devoted companion. This combination of danger, elation and love in the World of Darkness makes romantic connections a particularly useful theme to keep characters interested in a storyline.

Romance Stories

• In this story involving an unaware custos, romance blooms in the most unlikely of places! An august mage is smitten at the sight of a young person (one of the characters) whom she sees in passing on the street. The mage's pursuit of the character rivals the great Cyrano de Bergerac, but how does a mage bring a young mortal into her life without revealing the secrets of the Ascension War?

This story, suitable for beginning custos characters, revolves around the growing awareness of this young lover and her friends and tracks their shock and wonder at the new existence that opens up before their eyes.

A twist on this story, or a more abrupt introduction to reality, has the love interest kidnapped by the mage's enemies. The kidnapping and subsequent rescue by the mage and the other characters may affect their relationship adversely or provide a more interesting courtship than just sending roses!

• A loyal custos (preferably one who has a long history of loneliness and heartbreak) finds the love of his life in a beautiful, intelligent and happy soul who seems the answer to any man's prayers. Neither realizes at first that the other is magickally aware, but both eventually the learn the truth. They are tragically divided by their loyalties, for the lover is a rival consor. As the two struggle with this revelation, fate steps in.

Both are ordered by their masters on missions that they know might bring them into direct conflict, even combat. The custos must choose between love and loyalty. Meanwhile, the character's friends watch his growing anguish. They also await their friend's decision, for they will have their own choice to make if their companion chooses to follow his heart. (This story also has a strong loyalty theme.)

Rescue

The theme of rescue is an age-old one. Rescuing someone or something is always at the heart of quests (or else they wouldn't *be* quests) and often crucial to adventure yarns of all kinds. In coming to the rescue, characters prove their worth to themselves and to others. Stories with this theme also often bring to light the importance of relationships and people's connections to each other. There are not many better ways to form a bond with another person than by rescuing him, being rescued by him, or rescuing someone else with him. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons that romance often flourishes in adventure tales, blooming in the harsh atmosphere of gunfights and brawls. Combining these two themes in one story is one of the easier ways to get players quickly involved in a game (see the first example story under **Romance** for an example of this combination of themes).



Rescue Stories

• The custos, in all the brashness of inexperienced youth, are lured into a trap by agents of the New World Order. Captured and facing torture and brainwashing by their enemies, they wait and suffer in the face of certain doom. In fact, they are merely bait to trap their mages.

Predictably enough, the concerned and affronted mages venture a rescue attempt, only to find themselves surprised, ambushed, and captured in the course of freeing their servants! The minions of the New World Order, veritably cackling with glee at their success, make only a half-hearted attempt to recapture the insignificant custos. After all, they now have the true prizes! The companions must now regroup, rearm, band together, and mount their own rescue attempt against forces powerful enough to keep their mages imprisoned. They had also better hurry if they hope to have anything left worth rescuing! (This storyline is ideal for troupe-style play. Here, the players can begin by playing their mages, then turn to their custos characters, then back to their mages, etc.)

• Someone the companions value — a lover, a friend, a pet, an innocent bystander, etc. — is endangered by some mundane but nonetheless dangerous crisis. Perhaps a dishonest landlord has kicked her out in the street, the cops have arrested her for some crime, or a local gang has singled her out for robbery or assault. Concerned custos will have to be careful when confronting a situation where force or magick might be a liability. Clever detective work, subtle intimidation or behind-the-scenes manipulation might be more effective (and less dangerous) than head-on confrontation.

This kind of story makes a nice change of pace after a long series of mystick adventures and might offer some comic relief in an otherwise grim chronicle. Imagine what fun a custos group could have harassing a slumlord, sabotaging a corporate takeover, or humiliating an obnoxious politician! Who needs the Nephandi when you've got Newt Gingrich? These kinds of rescue stories should be cleverly set up and run with an eye towards the mundane rather than the mysterious.


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Chapter Four: Bones Clothed in Flesh

First you go speaking to the shrubbery, and now you've taken to naming it, as well. Faith, Doc, and you're a different sort o' man entirely.

— Simon Hawke, *The Inadequate Adept*

Character Creation



What's it like to play a companion, striding (sometimes blindly) alongside your mage into a world he and his kind take for granted? What are you like? What kind of abilities will you bring to the journey? What if you yourself are the guide? Although they resemble the mages they follow in many ways, custos have aptitudes unique to their own natures, dealt with in this chapter.

First of all, you must decide just who you will play. The best place to start is to decide what the character did before becoming involved with mages. Was she a student or an older person with a career? Did he believe in magick or think the whole thing was lunacy? In this particular instance, you may have the option of being wildly creative in your character creation, for some custos are Horizon Realm creatures, mythic beasts, cyborgs, possibly even animate shrubs. Players should work with the Storyteller to determine what type of custos will most enhance the intended chronicle without unbalancing the game. Aside from the need to avoid destroying the story with maxed-out, overpowered characters, your imagination is the only limit to what you may create.

It bears repeating that despite the rather mechanical nature of this chapter, **Mage** characters are more than a collection of point-costs and Advantages. Players should build custos characters with an eye towards interesting stories and dramatic possibilities, not lists of neat powers. Storytellers should ignore point-costs for their non-player characters — these systems are unimportant except as game balancing tools. A custos is more than the sum of her points!

Once you know what the character used to do (and possibly still does), you must determine when and how the character came to associate with mages. The Storyteller may have some ideas which will tie into her chronicle, or the player may suggest ideas which the Storyteller may be able to work in. Before getting too involved in this part, however, the player should know whether she will be playing an acolyte, consor or familiar. Acolytes tend to know little of what is really going on and so would have a slightly different introduction to the mage than a consor or familiar. This part can also shed some light on the character's motivation for being with the mystick ones. Is there a love interest? Perhaps a rival faction is attempting to kidnap the character, and he finds safety with a mage.

If you plan to play an Awakened being such as a Garou or vampire, you will need to rationalize your association with mages. Perhaps you are a family member who has become a vampire and now seeks to reopen communications with a beloved brother. Perhaps the mage is a Garou Kinfolk and considered good breeding stock.

Natures and **Demeanors** are optional, but are recommended as excellent tools for roleplaying characters who are slightly or radically different from yourself. Playing within the constraints of the character's Nature and Demeanor can be a satisfying challenge and may give you greater insight into her personality, behavior and motivations.

Your **residence** is your home base. It may be where you live and keep up a mundane lifestyle when not with mages or it may be a Chantry. You may wish to have more than one residence. One could serve as a front, another might be a hideaway, while a third could be in your mage friends' Horizon Realm.

Affiliation is the faction to which you belong. You must choose (with Storyteller approval, of course) whether you will be affiliated with Tradition mages, Orphans, the Technocracy or even the Marauders. Though Nephandi-affiliated characters are not recommended in a normal chronicle, these might be possible in a chronicle which features themes of corruption.

Type refers to the sort of custos you are. You are one of three types: acolyte, consor or familiar. Acolytes have no Special Advantages and are generally not as powerful as consors or familiars, some of whom have Special Advantages unavailable to acolytes. These stronger companions are usually aware of the Ascension War and their part in it.

Concept is a one or two word description which sums up your character. Examples of concepts include Horizon beast, music teacher, talking cat, scheming vampire, hotel maid, rock guitarist, environmental researcher, computer programmer and gonzo journalist.

Once you've reached this point, you can start filling in dots. As with most Storyteller system characters, you must prioritize your Attributes as Primary, Secondary and Tertiary and assign points to them. Keep your concept in mind when doing this, and choose the attributes that make the most sense for your character. Alternatively, you might play against type, choosing, for instance, to play a bodyguard with low Strength and Stamina, while maximizing your Wits in order to gain the first move in combat situations. Poor Dexterity might be compensated for by increasing Brawl or Firearms.

Next you should prioritize and assign points to your Abilities. Again, you should choose Abilities that will allow you to function in the role you've chosen (unless you wish to play an inept, bumbling character who drags the rest of the troupe into whatever misadventure his ineffectiveness generates). Starting characters may not raise any Ability above three dots using their initial Abilities points. They may, however, be raised using "freebie" points as usual.

Your **Advantages** come next. Your only Advantage is Backgrounds if you are playing an acolyte. Consors and familiars choose Backgrounds, but may choose to take five points worth of Special Advantages as well. Special Abilities include Hedge Magic, Psychic Phenomena and a host of other powers and forms. Consors automatically have the Mentor background at one dot and may choose only four more dots worth of Backgrounds with their initial Backgrounds points (These may, of course, be raised with "freebie" points).

The last few touches to your character include recording her base Willpower (custos begin with three points) and spending your "freebie" points. Servants and basic acolytes receive 15 "freebie" points, while consors and familiars have 21 "freebie" points to spend. Remember that "freebie" points are not spent on a one-per-one basis (See chart).

Merits and **Flaws** are optional Traits you may use to flesh out your character. They can add depth and provide further insight into the character's personality and motivations; they can also give additional powers or limitations. Merits cost "freebie" points, while Flaws give a character more "freebie" points to work with when chosen. No character may take more than seven points worth of Flaws and Merits unless doing so truly defines her Concept. Even then, Storyteller approval is required and caution is advised. Characters with too many Merits can severely disrupt a chronicle, while those with too many Flaws may find that they are too crippled to be of any use.

Supernatural Creatures

Some consors are vampires, ghouls, Garou or other werecreatures. To adequately portray all their attendant abilities (Garou Gifts, vampire Disciplines, etc.) and complex societies, these characters should use their own creation rules. Vampiric and werebeast custos are not allowed to take Special Advantages on top of their own. For details about these supernatural beings, see **Vampire**, **Werewolf** and their attendant **Players Guides**.

Character Creation Outline

Step One:

Character Concept: Who Are You?

° **Identify Concept:** Who were you before you encountered mages?
° **Choose Motivation:** Why have you involved yourself?
° **Choose Affiliation:** Traditions, Technocracy, Orphan, Nephandi or Marauder?
° **Choose Type:** Are you an acolyte, a consor or a familiar?
° **Choose Nature and Demeanor (Optional):** What is your personality?

Step Two:

What are your basic capabilities?

° **Prioritize your 3 Categories:** Primary 6, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3
° **Choose Physical Attributes:** Strength, Dexterity & Stamina
° **Choose Social Attributes:** Charisma, Manipulation & Appearance
° **Choose Mental Attributes:** Perception, Intelligence & Wits

Step Three:

Select Abilities: What do you know?

° **Prioritize your 3 Categories:** Primary 11, Secondary 7, Tertiary 4
° **Choose Talents:** Your innate, intuitive Abilities
° **Choose Skills:** Your trained Abilities
° **Choose Knowledges:** Your studied, memorized Abilities

Step Four:

Select Advantages: In what ways are you unique?

° **Choose Background Traits:** May be limited by chronicle concept (5 points). Consors must choose Mentor for at least one point of their backgrounds.

° **Choose Special Advantages:** Special consors and familiars only. These Traits may only be purchased with Background or "freebie" points and only during creation.

Step Five:

Last Touches: The All-Important Details

° **Record Willpower (base 3 points)**

° **Spend your "freebie" points.** Acolytes have 15 "freebie" points to spend; consors have 21 "freebie" points. Only certain consors can purchase Special Advantages.

° **Choose Merits and Flaws (optional).** You spend "freebie" points to purchase Merits and gain more "freebie" points for taking Flaws. You may only have up to 7 points in Flaws and Merits.

"Freebie" Points may also be used to raise any Trait at the following cost:

° Special Advantages (see next page for costs)
° Attributes (5 points for one dot)
° Abilities (2 points for one dot)
° Backgrounds and Willpower (1 point per Background dot, 2 points per Willpower dot)

Starting levels in Abilities and Special Advantages may not be higher than four dots.

Merits

- Loyalty (1)
- Hideaway (2)
- Faerie Companion (3)
- Shapechanger Kin (4)
- Ghoul (5)

Flaws

- Compulsive Speech (1-2)
- Conflicting Loyalties (1-3)
- Alien Appearance (1-5)
- Hero Worship (1)
- Whimsy (1)
- Bizarre Hunger (2-4)
- Double Agent (2)
- Hunchback (2)
- Thaumivore (5)

Special Advantages

- Animal Form (3 pts)
- Cause Insanity (varies)
- Chameleon Coloration (4/6/8)
- Claws, Fangs or Horns (3/5/7)
- Extra Limb(s) (3 pts per limb)
- Extra Speed (variable)
- Hazardous Breath (variable)
- Immunity (2/5/10/15)
- Information Font (3)
- Intangibility (8/10 pts)
- Musical Influence (3)
- Mystick Shield (varies)
- Nightsight (3)
- Numina (7+; see below)
- Physical Enhancement: (variable)
- Paradox Nullification (2-6)
- Shapechanger (3/5/8)
- Size (3/5/8)
- Symbiotic Knowledge (5)
- Umbral Travel (8/10/15)
- Water Breathing (2/5)
- Wings (3/5)

Numina Quick Reference

Numina Affinities: Hedge Magic (divided into Paths), Psychic Phenomena (divided into different Phenomena), True Faith (not divided)

"Freebie" Point Costs

First Starting Affinity	7
Additional starting Affinities	14 each
Hedge Magic Costs	
Hedge Magic Paths	7 per dot
Each Ritual	3 each, one free with each Path dot
Psychic Phenomena Costs	
First Phenomenon	7 per dot
Each additional Phenomenon	14 for first dot, 7 for successive dots
True Faith Cost	7 per dot

Experience Costs

Hedge Magic	
Raising Path with experience.	current level x 7
New Paths	7 for first dot
New Rituals	corresponding Path level x 3, one free when Path dot purchased
Psychic Phenomena	
Raising a Phenomenon with experience	current level x 7
New Phenomenon	14 for first dot
True Faith	cannot be raised with experience

Hedge Magic

Successes Needed

Standard task (Conjuring a card)	one
Difficult task (Healing a gunshot wound)	one per path level
Impossible task (Binding a raging werewolf)	one per path level, + 2 difficulty (10 maximum)

Path Listings

Path	Effect	Roll	Willpower cost
Conjuration	Pull things from "nowhere"	Dexterity + Occult	(no cost)
Cursing	Cause bad fortune	Manipulation + Intimidation	1 Willpower
Enchantment	Create minor talismans	Intelligence + Occult	1 Willpower
Ephemera	Deal with spirits	Charisma + Enigmas	(no cost)
Healing	Reduce pain or injury	Manipulation + Intuition	1 Willpower
Herbalism/Brewing	Create potions	Intelligence + Herbalism	(no cost)
Summoning, Binding and Warding	Call, Bind, Ward & Dismiss	Charisma + Occult to Summon	(no cost)
		Manipulation + Occult to Bind	1Willpower
		Wits + Int. + Occult to Dismiss	(no cost)
		Wits + Occult to Ward	(no cost)

Psychic Phenomena

Phenomena			
Clairvoyance	Extend perceptions	Perception + Alertness	1 Willpower
Psychokinesis	Move objects mentally	Wits + Athletics	1 Willpower
Telepathy	Read minds	Intelligence + Intuition	1 Willpower

True Faith

Repels vampires with a successful contested roll of Faith rating vs. vampire's Willpower. Also functions as one die of innate countermagick for each point of Faith.

CUSTOS

MAGE: The Ascension™

Name: **Nature:** **Affiliation:**
Player: **Demeanor:** **Type:**
Chronicle: **Residence:** **Concept:**

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●OOOO
Dexterity ●OOOO
Stamina ●OOOO

Social

Charisma ●OOOO
Manipulation ●OOOO
Appearance ●OOOO

Mental

Perception ●OOOO
Intelligence ●OOOO
Wits ●OOOO

Abilities

Talents

Alertness OOOOO
Athletics OOOOO
Brawl OOOOO
Dodge OOOOO
Expression OOOOO
Intimidation OOOOO
Intuition OOOOO
Streetwise OOOOO
Subterfuge OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Skills

Drive OOOOO
Etiquette OOOOO
Firearms OOOOO
Leadership OOOOO
Meditation OOOOO
Melee OOOOO
Research OOOOO
Stealth OOOOO
Survival OOOOO
Technology OOOOO

Knowledges

Computer OOOOO
Culture OOOOO
Enigmas OOOOO
Investigation OOOOO
Law OOOOO
Linguistics OOOOO
Medicine OOOOO
Occult OOOOO
Science OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Advantages

Special Advantages

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Backgrounds

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Merits & Flaws

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Other Traits

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Willpower

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Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised -0 o
Hurt -1 o
Injured -1 o
Wounded -2 o
Mauled -2 o
Crippled -5 o
Incapacitated o

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Special Advantages: 5 Freebie Points: 21 or 15 (7/5/4/2/1)

New Traits



Once, they were men. Now, they are land crabs.
— Attack of the Crab Monsters

The new Traits below (excepting the Special Advantages and the Thaumivore Flaw) can be added to virtually any **Mage** character. They are, however, especially applicable to custos and expand on the possibilities offered in **The Book of Shadows**.

New Knowledges

Health that mocks the doctor's rules,
Knowledge never learned of schools
— John Greenleaf Whittier, "The Barefoot Boy"

Familiar Lore

You have studied the ways of the spirit-beings who bond themselves to mages. Although they seem almost infinite in their variety, you have learned ways to categorize the creatures in both type and abilities. You know something of the nature and habits of these strange beings who come from the depths of the spirit-realm to join a mage in exploring the nature of reality. You comprehend at least a few aspects of the true nature of the mage-familiar relationship and know what types of familiars most often associate themselves with certain mages.

Merits and Flaws from The Book of Shadows

Many of the new Traits offered in **The Book of Shadows** are as appropriate to custos as they are to mages, if not moreso. Any Ability in that book (except for Blatancy) works well for companion characters. As for Merits and Flaws, those below come highly recommended for un-Awakened characters:

Psychological: All

Mental: All but Prodigy.

Awareness: All.

Aptitudes: All (these are especially apt for custos).

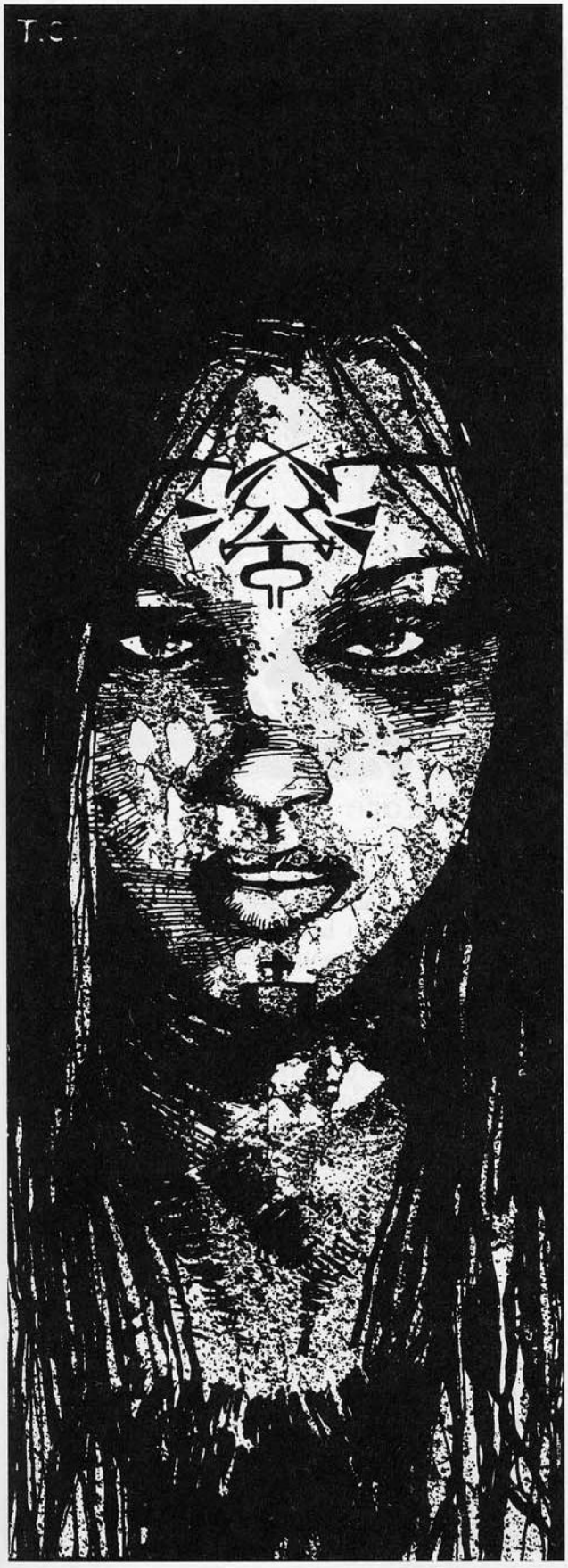
Supernatural: True Love (especially for one's mage), Danger Sense, Luck (good to have!), Unbondable, True Faith (see Numina), Spirit Magnet, Cursed, Magical Prohibition or Imperative, The Bard's Tongue, Spark of Life or Psychic Vampire (for familiars), Dark Fate (perhaps a mage can help you avoid it!).

Mage Ties: Any, if they apply to your association with your mage.

Sleeper Society: Any are good; they make you useful.

Physical: Any except Child (unless the mage is either your guardian, a child herself or a real pervert).





The character must have at least two dots in either Spirit Lore, Cosmology or Occult Knowledge before purchasing this Knowledge at all. (This restriction does not apply to characters who *are* familiars.)

• **Student:** Well, it's got wings, a tail and three toes.

•• **College:** Not only can you identify them as familiars, but you know many of the theories of their origin.

••• **Masters:** You have a good grasp on Familiar Psych. 101 and are aware of the most common familiar powers.

•••• **Doctorate:** You know a great deal about the interactions between mages and familiars and have heard of a number of the more obscure familiar powers and quirks.

••••• **Scholar:** You know more about familiars than they do themselves. You can often tell what powers one may have simply by looking at it.

Possessed by: Sages, Mages, Consors, Familiars, Spirits

Varieties: Marauder, Nephandi, Tradition, Orphan-Drawn

Hearth Wisdom

Yours is the common wisdom of the wise peasant, a working knowledge of hidden things. Some call your skill "superstition" or "folklore," but you know the power simple items (cold iron, blessed wafers, gri-gri, herbal cures and such) have over the world of shade. Although this Knowledge does not grant you any form of magical ability, you can use supernatural beings' weaknesses (silver, holy words, fire, Fetters and such) against them. You may not comprehend the true intricacies of vampiric society, Garou ways, Shadowland politics or the Ascension War, but you can recount the secrets that commoners have always known about these mystic beings — secrets that hold more truth than those beings believe!

In game terms, this Knowledge grants you a supply of folk tales and simple charms which may or may not work in given situations. Characters with this wisdom might recognize a vampire, changeling, wizard or werecreature for what it is, even if it pretends to be otherwise, and may understand some fact which the Awakened one thinks is obscure. Hearth Wisdom might state: "Men go mad in the sight of moon-born and recall it not thereafter. Avoid angering those of bestial aspect," a helpful reference to the Delirium and Garou Rage. A successful Hearth Wisdom roll should offer a helpful insight into a supernatural threat and how to deal with it. The effectiveness of such insights are left to the Storyteller, but the better the roll, the more accurate the information should be. This is especially useful when coupled with True Faith or used against mages with the Echoes Flaw or vampires with the Flaws Taint of Corruption, Repelled by Crosses or Repulsed by Garlic.

Characters with Hearth Wisdom can also use simple remedies for colds, labor pains, fertility and such. Although not as potent as the Herbalism skill, such cures should have some effect. After all, many discoveries of modern medicine and ancient healing are based in so-called "old wives' tales."



• **Insightful**: You know a few bits of lore from your native culture.

•• **Clever**: You recognize the traces the supernatural has left on our world, even if others don't.

••• **Knowledgeable**: People come to you for advice and minor cures. You are familiar with lore from other cultures, though you're not well-versed in it.

•••• **Learned**: You are a fountain of lore and remedies from your native culture and others as well. You can spot a supernatural being with a successful Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7) if you get close enough, and you know the things he fears.

••••• **Wise**: Though not a scholar, you are versed in folklore from every part of the world. Those who respect your wisdom undertake pilgrimages to ask you for advice. Although your knowledge is cloaked in riddles and stories, you understand more about the shadow world than many of its denizens do.

Possessed by: Village Elders, Old Wives, Supernatural Hunters, Witches and Witch Doctors, Folklore Researchers, Arcanum Investigators, Hermits, Herbalists, Farmers, Game Designers

Specialties: Northern European, Native American, Appalachian, Central African, Amazon Native, Caribbean, Eastern European, Gypsy, Vagabond Lore, Eastern Mystic, Outback, Grassland, Pacific Island, Mediterranean

Spirit Lore

Thoughts of the great beyond often fill your mind. Your attention often focuses on the spirit world which parallels our own and its multitude of mysterious inhabitants. Moreover, you have some practical knowledge concerning the inhabitants of these Realms. You know of the different regions dividing the spirit world, and you also understand the distinction between spirits and wraiths. If you have devoted your attention to this study long enough, you may also be able to read and interpret arcane texts on spirits and their Realms.

This Knowledge cannot be bought during creation unless the character is a spirit, mythic beast or familiar. Humans can only purchase this Ability with experience.

• **Student:** You've read a lot of roleplaying games.

•• **College:** You frequent séances and own a number of Victorian spiritualism books.

••• **Masters:** You have an extensive library on spirits and their lands.

•••• **Doctorate:** You are a recognized expert and renowned author in the study of spirits.

••••• **Scholar:** The spirits ask you for advice.

Possessed by: Custos, Garou, Kindred, Mages, Occultists, Sages, Spirits

Varieties: Ghosts, High Umbra, Middle Umbra, Specific Spirits, Cosmic Hierarchies, Animism

Merits and Flaws

Charms strike the sight, but merit
Wins the soul.
— Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*

Custos have some particular Merits and Flaws that suit their natures. Merits will benefit to the characters while Flaws act to their detriment. Some Merits and Flaws will have little effect on the game besides style, but others may unbalance an entire chronicle and should be handled with care. Here are a few new ones for custos:

Loyalty: (1 pt Merit)

You are a loyal and devoted individual. The object of this loyalty may be either a particular individual (your mage, lover, etc.) or a group or cause (your Chantry, Greenpeace, etc.). You easily resist almost all temptations toward disloyalty. If you are facing supernatural persuasion (Mind magick, etc.) to betray your master or cause, your effective Willpower is increased by two due to your extreme loyalty.

Hideaway: (2 pt Merit)

You own a special hideaway— a house, cottage or other building that no one knows about but you. It has never been registered in your name or linked to you in any way, making it quite unlikely that anyone could trace you there. It is modestly furnished, and you keep it stocked with necessities for about a two week stay. Such places are good for hiding from all the various enemies a mage and his consors might make.

Once each game in which the hideaway plays an active part (i.e. one when people might discover it), the Storyteller will call for a roll on two dice with a difficulty of 6. Success (at least one six) means no one has discovered the hideaway. Failure indicates that you didn't adequately cover your tracks, and your foes know the general vicinity of your property. Four such cumulative failures leads them right to you, while a botch immediately renders your secret worthless.

Faerie Companion: (3 pt Merit)

You have a faerie companion, a friend and associate who's one of the wee folk — the changelings. Perhaps he is a Muse of yours, or your creativity feeds his craving for dreams. In any case, this fae companion tends to stay out





This does not come without cost, however. You must continue to feed on vampire blood occasionally, otherwise you will regain your mundane mortality and crave forever the sweet rush of your former mistress' essence. Should you revert (after going a month or more without the sacred vitae), you will lose your supernatural might forever.

Compulsive Speech: (1-2 pt Flaw)

You are compelled to speak in some manner which is against your own best interests. You find it impossible to stop yourself from being rude and blunt when finesse is called for, telling a self-aggrandizing lie when it is obviously not the truth, criticizing someone or her work when your opinion has not been asked or when you actually know very little about the subject, or telling the absolute truth when a small fib or white lie would smooth the way.

Choose one of these (or some other equally obnoxious tendency). A one point Flaw means you only do it some of the time when you are speaking to those you consider equals or inferiors. A two point Flaw means you say such things to everyone, regardless of their relationship to you. Spending a point of Willpower allows you to ignore the urge for one scene.

Conflicting Loyalties: (1-3 pt Flaw)

You are a very loyal individual (and undoubtedly possess the Loyal Merit). Unfortunately, one or more of the people or things you feel great loyalty towards are in conflict. Even if the conflict is currently submerged beneath other concerns, you know that one day you will be forced to make one or more anguish-filled choices.

What will happen when your sister discovers that your mage is the man who killed her child? You know it was an accident, but you also know your sister will never rest until she avenges her baby. Yet you are desperately in love with your mage... You can only hope that you can find some way to reconcile your conflicts before you are torn apart by your need to fulfill the responsibilities of your conflicting loyalties.

The extent and immediacy of the conflict determines the point cost of this Flaw; the greater and/or more immediate the conflict, the larger the Flaw.

Alien Appearance: (1-5 pt Flaw)

You have an appearance that marks you as different from normal humans (or cats or whatever). You are more noticeable and easily remembered because of your bizarre appearance. At level one, you may only have a minor difference such as plaid eyes or fangs which are visible when you speak, while at level five you are such an oddity (a tiger tail, elephant ears, blue skin) that you must remain covered wherever you go to avoid upsetting the Sleepers. If you can convince someone you're in theatrical makeup, of course...

This Flaw is often possessed by Umbral beasties and some familiars.

Hero Worship: (1 pt Flaw)

You regard another individual, most probably your mage, with respect that approaches reverence. The object of your hero worship can literally do no wrong in your eyes, which can lead to some serious disputes with your fellows. You must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 5) to disobey an instruction given by your hero. In your eyes, he is perfect. In fact, you add + 1 difficulty to any roll in which success would require you to admit that your hero is wrong.

Whimsy: (1 pt Flaw)

You become whimsical under stress. Rather than getting serious when things go wrong, you tend to get tickled and adopt a fey attitude. While this can occasionally be so disarming that foes are caught off-guard (perhaps giving you another chance to best them), it usually prevents you from doing anything particularly helpful for one turn and really annoys your companions.

Bizarre Hunger: (2-4 pt Flaw)

You have very odd dietary needs. Rather than normal food, you must consume some odd or disgusting substance in order to maintain your health. If you are unable to acquire and consume your required substance, you begin losing Health Levels at the rate of one per day after your first day of fasting. Although you may eat "normal" food as well, you derive no sustenance from it.

Eating such odd fare is bound to attract attention if you do it in public. Some substances are also harder to get than others. In general, the more disgusting the substance required or the more difficult it is to obtain, the greater the Flaw. Examples:

2 pts Pig's blood, iodine, cat food (unless you *are* a cat)
3 pts Heroin, rotten meat, mare's milk
4 pts Child's blood, gold, feces

Double Agent: (2 pt Flaw)

You are a double agent, secretly working for another faction in the Ascension War. If you associate with a Tradition mage, you secretly work for the Technocracy, the Nephandi or the Marauders. Whoever you actually work for will eventually make demands which place you in an awkward position. Should your actual role in affairs be discovered, you would be reviled (at the very least).

Hunchback: (2 pt Flaw)

Almost expected of Son of Ether servants, this deformity hinders your movement and focuses the scorn of those who walk upright. Some day, they'll pay... Add 1 to all Social difficulties (regardless of how your face looks) and Dexterity-based Attribute rolls.



Thaumivore: (5 pt Flaw)

You are one of the Bygone, a mythic beast shut off from the Earth by the powers of disbelief, the death of magick. In the spirit world, you found a home, until some purpose, friend or compulsion brought you back to the material world. To stay alive here, though, you must consume raw magick — Quintessence, in Tass or Prime form.

This Flaw resembles Bizarre Hunger, except that your food is Quintessence. In one form or another, you must consume at least one point of Quintessence per day or suffer pangs of deadly hunger (most Thaumivores require much more than that to stay in fighting trim). After no more than a week of starvation, your physical form will deteriorate to rotted nothing. During that time, you will lose Health Levels, endure Dice Pool penalties, and generally suffer. An eating binge will satisfy your hunger for a time, but the more you eat, the more you'll crave.

This diet is almost guaranteed to get you and your companions in trouble. If you cultivate a taste in a certain "flavor" of Quintessence (distilled by hate, love, anguish, sacrifice, etc.), you may not want any other kind. If your demands are not met, you may turn and eat your mage out of Node and home, munch on Talismans, or just depart in a huff, returning to the more hospitable Realms.

Special Advantages

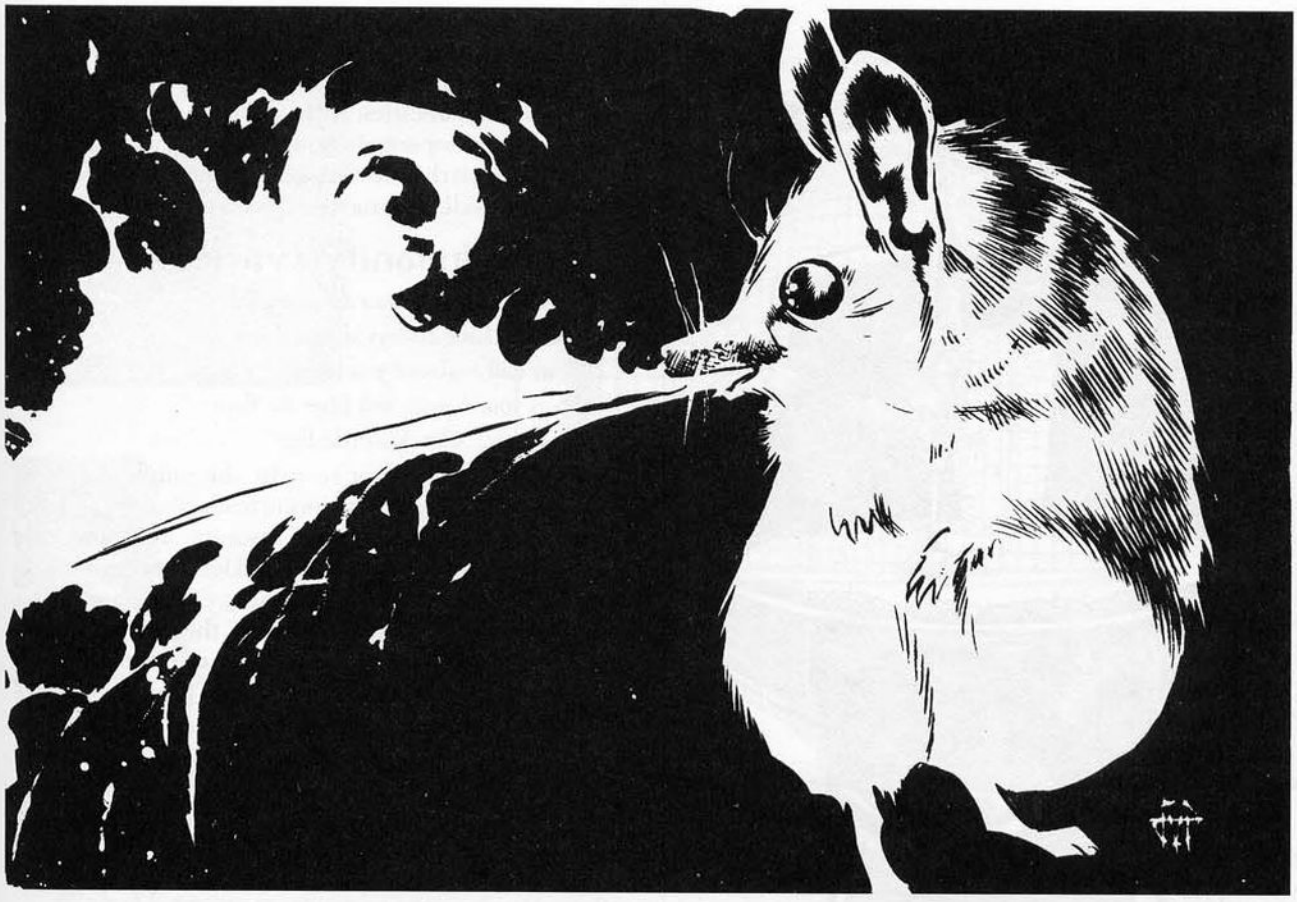
E's invisible! That's wots the matter wi' im!
— The Invisible Man

The special Traits below are the providence of the paranormal. Normal human beings cannot purchase these weird powers without some sort of supernatural tinkering (which is not generally a good idea in the long run!). These special Advantages are intended for consors and familiars from odd places — Horizon Realms, Technocracy laboratories, the twisted corners of Nephandi-held lands and out-of-the-way places that reality forgot.

Conventional reality is not kind to creatures with these abilities (note the prejudice inherent in calling them "creatures" to begin with!). In the harsh light of the Technocratic paradigm, outlandish beings quickly grow sick and sometimes even die. A fanged zebra with wings will not last long on this world (see "Unbelief" in **The Book of Madness**). The climate does not agree with their kind. While secret hidden places shelter beings far beyond our comprehension, such entities do not usually wander down Main Street without problems.

With these Traits, Storytellers and players can create the more bizarre types of magickal companions — talking wolves, golems, unicorns and such. Only consors and familiars may purchase these Advantages and only during character creation with Background or "freebie" points.





Some Advantages, such as Hazardous Breath, Physical Enhancement, Numina and Immunity, may be bought up with experience, but the ability *must* exist from the beginning for it to be added to later.

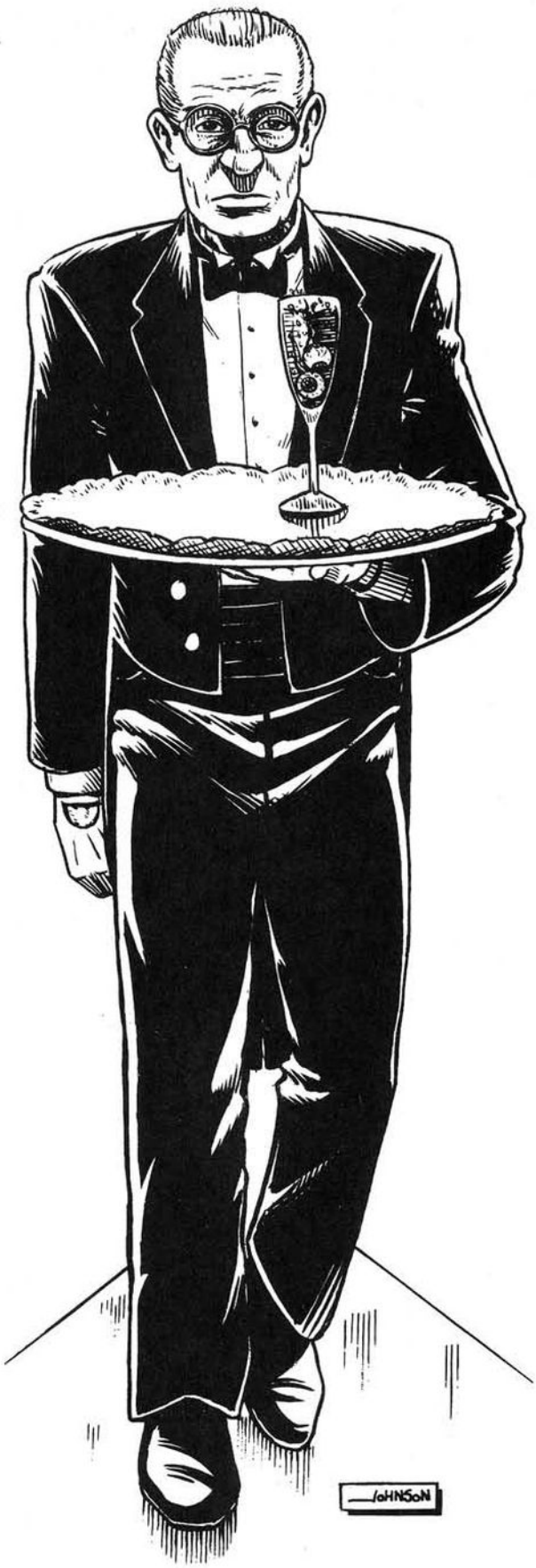
Although Paradox will not instantly strike down a being with these powers, it may erode their existence (see above). At the least, it will make them uncomfortable in plain sight of mundane folks. Those same people will probably be distressed to find an unearthly beastie in their midst as well. They might go running straight to the *National Enquirer* — or to a gun store!

With the exception of Numina, these Advantages are beyond "normal" human beings, as they involve some sort of physical or magickal characteristic mortals do not share. Some, like wings, will be obvious to anyone who sees them. More subtle mutations, like fangs or cybernetics, are generally inconspicuous but still abnormal. Storytellers should not allow human mages to purchase these Advantages; used carelessly, such Traits can turn a serious game into a goofy comic book. Naturally, there are some merits to an off-the-wall kind of game, but flamboyant superpowers really aren't appropriate for the Gothic-Punk setting. These Advantages, and creatures with them, are *rare!*

Animal Form: (3 pts)

Although your consor is intelligent and empowered, she is (or appears to be) an animal of some sort — a cat, a bear, a hawk, a horse, etc. This has no effect on Mental Attributes, but may affect the Physical and Social ones and will definitely prove to be both help and hindrance, depending on the circumstances. Most societies require some kind of control over animals — leashes, licenses, impoundment, shots and such — and will not often allow them into buildings or meetings. People rarely take unusual "beasts" seriously, and some may want to hunt them, collect them or purchase them. All the same, animals, especially small ones, can often get into places no human could reach and may overhear things no person would choose to reveal.

If you choose to run an animal (or something which resembles one), first decide what type you want to be, then figure your Attributes accordingly. Mammals tend to have higher Social Traits than reptiles or birds, although this is largely a judgment call (is a snake more charismatic than a monkey?). Physical Attributes will usually figure most prominently in an animal companion.



This Advantage allows the character the natural form of some kind of animal — the type itself is unimportant. The animal can still talk normally if the player desires. Natural abilities, such as Claws, Wings, or Size, must be bought separately from this list. Magickal beasts are possible with this Advantage, but their powers must be purchased as well, making them pretty expensive to build.

Cause Insanity: (varies)

Parasitical scum, you die so easily
But you have always sickened me
Your will enslaved you grovel for more
Soon your bowels will litter the floor
— Gwar, "Crack in the Egg"

You have the power to twist the minds of others, dragging them away from the solid roads of sanity and into the rotting, fevered jungles of insanity. You are a true maestro of your art. Every twitch and leer taps out another perfect crack on the brittle housing of your audience's mind. Few mortals can long resist the power of your performance, and they offer up their minds to you like fragrant bouquets, acknowledging your genius.

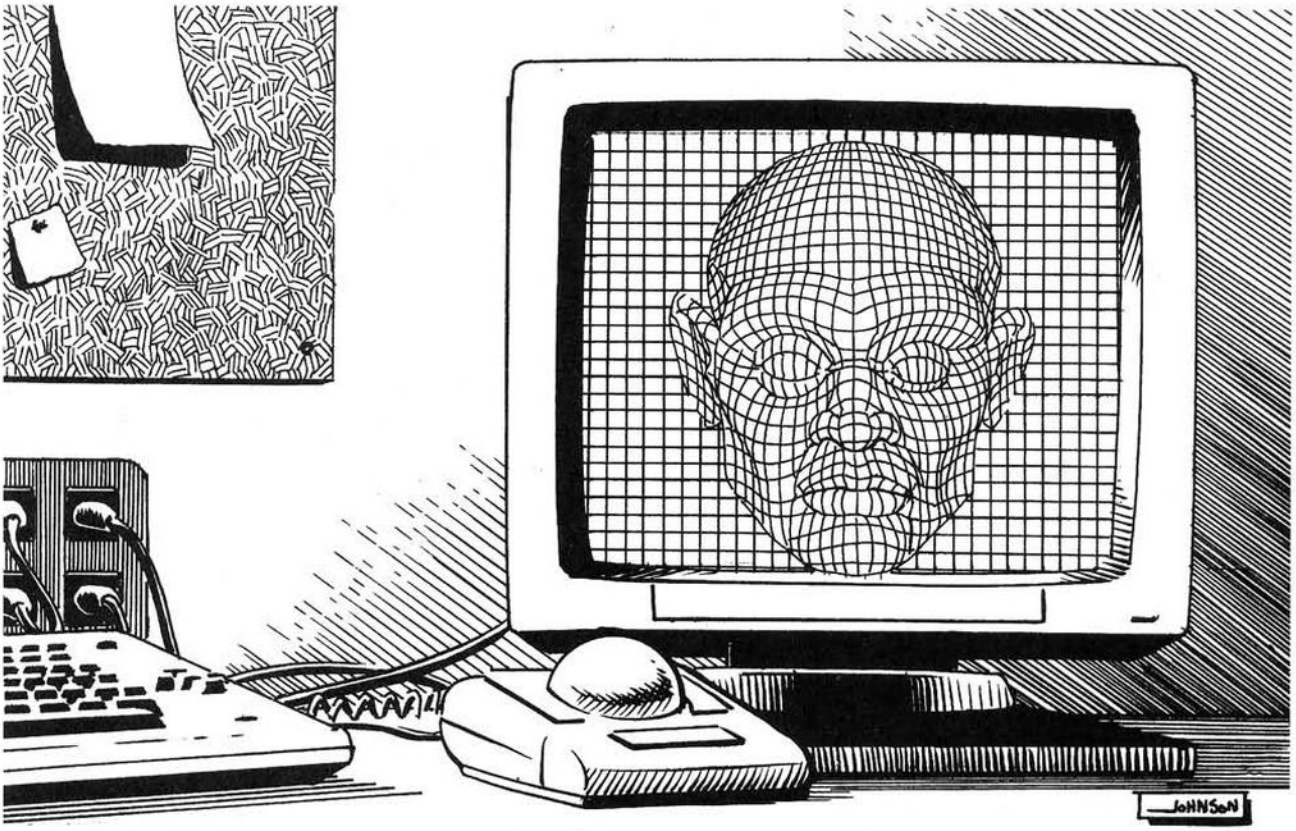
This foul power is normally possessed by beings allied with Nephandi or Marauders. The means each familiar uses to cause insanity varies according to its physical form and personal twisted preferences. Some open windows into the deep Umbra, allowing unsuspecting victims to view the horrors therein. Others revel in performances involving crazy gibbering and insidious conversation to eat away at sanity, while still other familiars graphically transform their bodies into monstrous horrors.

Whatever method the familiar uses, the player rolls one die for every two points in the pool, with the difficulty being the target's Willpower. If the character only gets one to two successes, the Storyteller determines the type of insanity caused. If the familiar wins three or more successes, the player may decide what form of dementia she inflicts. The length and severity of the madness depends on the number of successes rolled as well; one or two successes might inflict a minor phobia, while five or more could ring in a full-blown freak-out. Such insanity can be cured with patient psychotherapy or Mind magicks.

Chameleon Coloration: (4/6/8 pts)

This Advantage allows the character to change color, blending in with her surroundings. Such a transformation will take one to three turns, depending on how radical the change is. A variation on this power, **Shadowwalking**, lets the character darken her skin to blend into surrounding shadows.

Changing color does not require a roll. People trying to see the character, however, must roll Wits + Alertness, difficulty 7, to see her. Shadowwalking costs 4 points. Shifting hues within a single color (red, brown, etc.) costs 6 points, and changing to fit any color background costs 8 points.



Claws, Fangs or Horns: (3/5/7 pts)

With this natural weaponry, a companion may bite, gore or slash his opponents if he is so inclined. These appendages may be cybernetic implants, custom-built weapons or real fangs and claws, but they are not generally removable without injury (though they could be sheathed). For three points, the character may have one type of attack; for five points, two. Seven points will buy all three. These attacks do not normally do aggravated damage. If the Storyteller allows it, however, a mythic beast (unicorn, dragonet, etc.) may inflict aggravated wounds with its attacks for double the usual cost (6/10/14).

Maneuver	Difficulty	Damage
Bite:	5	Strength + 1
Claw:	6	Strength + 2
Gore:	7	Strength + 2 (Strength + 4 if the character has just moved 10 yards or more)

Extra Limb(s) (3 pts per limb)

You have one more limb than the average human being. This might be an extra arm, a tail, facial tentacles or something like that. Such a limb comes in awfully "handy" at times. This Advantage is most commonly possessed by familiars, but other unusual custos (cyborgs, Horizon beasties, lab "accidents") may take it as well with some sort of good explanation.

This Advantage might allow you an additional melee attack each turn (with -1 to both die pools), in addition to that extra hand to juggle the groceries, keys and wallet! Of course, you do look a bit unusual and may have to hide your appearance from the easily startled Sleepers that surround you. This Advantage can be purchased more than once, but costs 3 points for each new limb.

Extra Speed: (variable)

This allows a companion to outmaneuver a normal human. For every 5 points (up to a maximum of 10), the consor may take one extra action per turn without splitting her die pool. When moving, this allows the character to multiply a normal human's speed by x 1.5 for each five points spent.

Normal human		5 pts	10 pts
Walk	7 yrds/turn	11	14
Jog	13 yrds/turn	20	26
Run	20 yrds/turn	30	40

Hazardous Breath: (variable)

The dragon lives! A mythic companion with this Advantage can blast out some sort of dangerous substance on command — fire, bullets, poison gas, acidic spittle, etc. The attack need not really be a breath weapon; any sort of long-range hazard will do. This ability is potent and uncommon. Storytellers should consider beforehand whether they wish to allow players to buy this attack.

For every five points spent, the character inflicts one Health Level of damage with its breath with a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll (difficulty 7). The exact specifications of the attack depend on its nature. A blast of flame will have a quicker effect than a gout of deadly goo.

For seven points per Health Level, the damage can be caustic, inflicting an additional Health Level per damage level each turn until the stuff is washed up or the target dies. Napalm, caustic glop, gas and toxic waste are good examples of this kind of hazard. Either kind of damage can be soaked.

Breath weapons usually cause normal damage unless the target is vulnerable to that attack (vampires and fire, for example). For double the usual cost, the damage can be aggravated. Under most circumstances, this weapon can be used once per scene for every point of Stamina the character possesses. Range is the Storyteller's discretion and will vary from attack to attack (lightning bolts will carry further than acidic drool). If the hazard could potentially hurt more than one target at a time, assume that each success above the first allows an additional victim to be hurt if he is within range of the attack (roughly two yards or less from the initial target).

Immunity: (2/5/10/15 pts)

A being with this Advantage can ignore the effects of some kinds of potentially dangerous things. It's mostly intended for robots, golems, cyborgs and odd Horizon Beasties, but can be used to reflect an especially tough or conditioned person ("I've spent years building up an immunity to iocane powder...").

Players must have some reason to grant their characters physical immunities — they do not simply occur. Each kind of resistance most be bought separately; thus, becoming immune to everything is extremely expensive.

2 pts Some minor nuisance (poison ivy, common cold or flu, minor temperature changes)

5 pts Major threat (diseases, venoms, temperature extremes, hunger)

10 pts Terminal effects (electricity, fire, age, deadly poisons, radiation, icy cold)

15 pts Death (character is essentially immortal, but can be hurt or even crippled. Some sort of doom can still befall him, though he may not know what it is.)

Information Font: (3 pts)

All familiars have access to information not readily available to their patrons. They also view the world from radically different perspectives; they have, after all, traveled other lands and other dimensions, and it shows. For the same reason, familiars are often reservoirs of vast amounts of knowledge not always easily accessible to even the most esoterically versed of mages. Of course, these same familiars might get the heebie-jeebies from opening a refrigerator or watching a TV sit-com. Such is culture shock.







All familiars come up with bizarre, yet helpful information at random and unpredictable intervals. This data is almost always cryptic to both mage and familiar, although for opposite reasons. It is often exceedingly difficult for the familiar to relate its knowledge to the physical world around it. They are truly "strangers in a strange land" and often have difficulties fitting the truths of one realm of experience into the framework of an entirely different one. Like people barely fluent in a second language, familiars often have problems translating complex, esoteric concepts from one language to the next. Likewise, the familiar's internal translations are often a bit haphazard. This garbled wisdom comes through to the mage in ways the familiar feels should be utterly comprehensible, but are not. Nevertheless, the familiar's mage can often complete the translation through her understanding of this realm of existence. Indeed, a number of familiars feel this translation service is one of the most useful advantages of taking on a mage.

This complex flow of insight is best reflected in off-the-wall roleplaying. When a system is needed, however, occasional Perception + Knowledge rolls could be used. The nature of the Ability should be matched to the situation — either totally appropriate or wildly inappropriate! To understand these outer reaches of esoteric knowledge at any time, a puzzled mage's player should roll Intelligence + Enigmas with a difficulty ranging from moderate to impossible, depending on how weird the input is. The clarity and usefulness of the information dredged up depends on the number of successes received. The greater the number of successes, the better the information is understood.

Intangibility: (8/10 pts)

Where'd she go? A companion with this rare Advantage can either disappear from plain sight (eight points) or become totally incorporeal (10 points). Either option can be a hassle for Storytellers, who may choose to disallow this Advantage for player characters.

Going Intangible does not normally require a roll, but it does cost one point of Willpower each time the companion changes from one state to another. Running out of Willpower will trap her in whatever state she was in until she can get herself back together.

A creature who simply disappears will confound any normal observer or surveillance equipment, although motion sensors, IR and UV gear, laser spotters, vampiric Auspex, Lifesight and sensing Gifts and magicks will detect her on a normal Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7). This Advantage does nothing to hide any odors or sounds the character might emit, either. A sharp observer can notice an invisible companion by the effect she has on her environment (Perception + Alertness difficulty 9).

Going totally Intangible renders the companion immune to any sort of physical obstacle or force. Mystick forces, including True Faith and Numina, still affect an Intangible character normally. The character herself, however, cannot orient onto a physical target while insubstantial; she must reform before she can turn those energies outward. She can still be seen by mortal sight, but vaguely (Perception + Alertness or Awareness, difficulty 8).

This Advantage simulates spirits who drift from flesh to formlessness. It should not be allowed for non-ephemeral beings without an excellent explanation.

Musical Influence: (3 pts)

A companion with this Advantage can sing, hum, wail or howl in some unusually expressive way. With a successful Social Attribute + Ability roll (difficulty is target's Willpower), the character can charm, cheer, depress or terrify anyone within hearing range.

Manipulation is the most common Attribute coupled with this Advantage, although Charisma might also work. Appropriate Attributes include Expression, Intimidation (to raise chills), Seduction (to lure someone to his doom), Ventriloquism (to throw the sound), Mimicry (to mirror another's song), Animal Training (to influence animals), Singing and even Torture and Hypnotize (for really unusual effects). The feelings engendered by this song are pretty surface-level; this ability weaves a mood, not a mind-altering spell. Still, the emotional effect of a good roll ought to color any subject's attitude for a while to come.

Mystick Shield: (varies)

This power, common among familiars, lets you focus limited magickal forces to save your butt from magickal attacks. Although this protection isn't perfect, it's a heck of a lot better than doing nothing in the face of a determined mage or slavering demon!

Some familiars with this power have a magickal, yet natural, resistance to magick attacks. Spell energies seems to wash over them, they happen to be behind cover during the explosion, and you never can quite get a bead on their brains with those psychic attacks. Others can throw up sudden shields to intercept incoming magicks. Whatever the effects might be, players should decide the nature of their characters' resistance beforehand.

Every two points in the Advantage grants your character one die of countermagick or adds + 1 to the difficulty of a mystick attack directed at her (not both at once). The power acts like a Dodge. To attempt it while doing other things, subtract the dice in the shield from your normal total. Whipping the shield up merely takes a declared action during Initiative.





Nightsight: (3 pts)

The effect of this Advantage is simple: the character can see in the dark so long as some dim light source exists. This source can even include self-mounted spotlights in the case of robots. Unusually bad conditions (smoke, fog, total darkness) may demand a Perception + Alertness roll, with difficulties dependent on the circumstances.

Numina: (7 pts+)

These unusual abilities include Hedge Magic, True Faith and Psychic Phenomena. Normal humans can use these Advantages, although they're pretty rare. See Chapter Five for details about Numina.

Physical Enhancement: (variable)

Players who wish to run companions stronger, tougher or faster than humans have come to the right place. For each five "freebie" points spent, you may buy another dot for your character's Physical Attributes (to put them above 5), buy an additional soak die for absorbing damage, or add one more Health Level to your custos' total. This could reflect minor cybernetic enhancement, built-in armor, steroids or just natural agility, power or mass.

Storytellers should be careful, lest this Advantage get out of control. A maximum cap of 8 for Attributes and three extra Health Levels or soak dice is recommended.

Paradox Nullification: (2-5 pts)

Familiars can absorb and nullify a certain amount of Paradox energies. Some speculate that the Bygone consume the banality of the world that has largely rejected them. This talent is one of the more prominent reasons why mages search out familiars. The companions themselves maintain that this ability meshes so well with the needs of the Paradox-ridden mages that they must be meant to be together.

This Advantage comes naturally to most familiars. The amount of Paradox one absorbs and nullifies varies from individual to individual.

2 pts Absorb up to one point of Paradox per month.
3 pts Eat up to one point of Paradox biweekly.
4 pts Consume a point of Paradox per week.
5 pts Snack on up to two points of Paradox per week.
6 pts Absorb up to a point of Paradox per day.

Shapechanger: (3/5/8 pts)

Some consors have many different shapes and guises; this tricky Advantage lets a character shift forms. It's a pretty vulgar power and an unusual one. Storytellers should feel free to restrict or disallow this ability if they fear its abuse.

Transformation usually takes one turn, although the nature of the change may dictate a slower or quicker shift. Any clothing, equipment or weapons should be discarded

first unless the new form could carry them as well. Changing shape in public is not wise, as strange backlashes have been know to happen. Even if the consor avoids a metaphysical rebuke, folks who witness beings changing shape tend to react with either fear, madness or curiosity — any one of which could be fatal to the shapechanger!

This power only grants the ability to change shape. Any non-human characteristics of the new form must be purchased with the appropriate Advantages. If Valgreth the Incamani were to shift from human form into a white falcon, he would also have to purchase wings, claws and reduced size, regardless of which form was his real one.

A shapeshifter is easily detectable as a magickal being if one knows how to look (Perception + Awareness, difficulty 7, or any number of Life, Prime or Spirit magicks). He should also have some sort of good background reason for his power — it is not an talent easy to come by. Such shapshifters are not true werecreatures and are not protected by the effects of the Delirium (see **Werewolf**), though they may pass as Gaia's Chosen to the uninitiated. This is, however, an innate power. It cannot be stopped by an outside party without transforming the companion himself.

Players may wish to list their alternate form(s), with their attendant Advantages, either on the back of their character sheet or on a separate one. Unless the new form dictates otherwise (see Size and Animal Form) or the player desires differently, the Attributes and Abilities of the new form(s) are the same as the old. If the character stays in different forms for long periods of time, his player may, with Storyteller permission, buy Talents, Skills or Knowledges unique to one form or the other.

3 pts Character has one alternate form.

5 pts He can transform into anything within a certain group (people, fish, cats, mythic beasts, mind-shattering horrors, etc.).

8 pts He can change into anything if he has enough Advantages that apply.

Size: (3/5/8 pts)

Characters within the human size range should consider the four point Huge Merit or the one point Short Flaw (see **The Book of Shadows**). If your companion is considerably larger or smaller, however, the following Advantages apply:

3 pts A bit larger (pony, lion) or smaller (mastiff, cheetah) than human.

5 pts A lot larger (horse, tiger, boa) or smaller (poodle, housecat, barracuda) than human.

8 pts Considerably larger (rhino, great white shark, small tree) or smaller (mouse, goshawk, sea urchin) than human.

Each size level adds or subtracts one Health Level to the amount of damage the character can withstand (note that a rat with four Health Levels is still a pretty tough rat!) and gives or takes one additional point of either Strength or Stamina. Although it seems like larger characters come off better than smaller ones at first glance, consider what... inconveniences a massive being has when hiding, getting into cramped places, and evading attacks. Companions with two levels of size either add or subtract 1 from their opponents' difficulties to hit them or spot them; ones with three add or subtract 2.

Symbiotic Knowledge: (5 pts)

You have an extremely close relationship with your mage. In fact, you have entered each others' consciousness to such an extent that you now know some of what she knows. In the same manner, your mage has doubtless absorbed some wisdom of your own. This shared knowledge has aided your understanding of each other and allows you to share thoughts through a mental bond.

This power, a very common one between mages and familiars, creates an empathic channel between the two. It is not thoughts that are exchanged so much as hunches. Through this bond, both parties can utilize any Knowledge that the other possesses, so long as the two are in the same room. This is an intuitive understanding, not instruction. The Ability fades when the channel is closed, although either party may teach the other that Knowledge at leisure. Both familiar and mage must make a conscious decision to share their wisdom. For especially complex transmissions, like trying to pass on your understanding of quantum physics, both parties might have to make Wits + Intuition rolls with the level of the Knowledge + 3 as the difficulty.

The strengths and liabilities of such empathic transmissions should be obvious. If either mage or familiar is pissed off, in love, agitated or otherwise impassioned, those sentiments (and the reasons behind them) are unflinchingly clear to the other partner. This is great when relations are good, or when one of the partners is in trouble, but can be disastrous if one is trying to keep secrets from the other.

Umbral Travel: (8/10/15 pts)

You can "step sideways" into one of the three Umbral realms that exist near the mage's home reality. All you need do is peer into a reflective surface or dive through a pool of water, and you're there. Well, okay, so it's not quite that easy, but it sure beats taking the bus!

Moving through the Gauntlet requires spending a point of Willpower and rolling five dice against difficulty 7 (or the Gauntlet rating, if you prefer):

Successes	
Botch	Failure, lose Willpower point (or get stuck!!)
None	Failure, try again
One	Three turns to pass through
Two	Takes two turns
Three, four	Takes one turn
Five or more	Instant passage

Sample beginning character: Valgreth the Incamani

Attributes (parenthesis indicate white hawk form): Strength 3 (2), Dexterity 4, Stamina 2 (1), Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Subterfuge 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Meditation 1, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Cosmology 2, Linguistics 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Arcane 2, Mentor 2

Willpower: 3

Merits and Flaws: Acute Sight +1, Compulsive Speech -2, Curiousity -2

Advantages: Shapeshift 3, (Animal Form 3, Size level 3-8, Wings 3, Beak and Claws 5). Total freebies spent: 23

Background: Valgreth's mother claimed he was birthed of a vision she shared with the great shaman Laughing Eagle. The mage himself has no comment, but seems kind enough to the young man, especially considering the latter's sharp and ready tongue. Raised in the Gray Squirrel's protectorate, Valgreth alienated many of his tribe by the time he passed puberty. His good looks and nasty wit enticed the girls, but did not endear him to their parents. By 16, he wandered the plains alone, seeking friends who could appreciate his wisdom. Despite his obnoxious ways, he was wise.

From childhood, Valgreth knew the power of the hawk, his chosen guardian and soul-companion. He understood the hawk so well that the spirit gifted him with the power to transform, to wing through the updrafts and learn the ways of nature unbound. In time, his abrasive temper mellowed. He still holds forth on anything he pleases, but his jokes are gentler and his observations more guarded.

He fell in with Gail Holsombake while the latter was visionquesting herself. Their mutual curiosity and sarcasm ignited a friendship that has endured three years of constant company. While he has never used the word "love" in reference to Gail, Valgreth has deep feelings for his Verbena pal. He often accompanies her on her journeys away from their Realm, perched on her shoulder in his white hawk guise or lounging in weathered denim somewhere nearby.

Image: A rakish Apache in his early 20s, Valgreth shows his affinity for the hawk in his sharp features and lean build. He usually wears ragged jeans and a denim jacket and ties his long black hair back. A sarcastic smile often plays about his mouth, and his witticisms sting those he distrusts. Despite his unspoken relationship with Gail, he flirts constantly, and his "subjects" usually respond in kind. In hawk form, Valgreth's wings span nearly five feet and his feathers glow a soft, snowy white. Twin black-feathered stripes beneath his eyes mark him as chosen of the hawk for those who understand. He will not, however, explain what an "Incamani" is. This is his little secret.

Roleplaying Notes: A know-it-all who really does understand a great deal, you trust your rangy looks and enigmatic aura to bring lots of fun your way. Smile with the promise of more, and give away none of it.

Despite your contempt for most whites, you find the wild variety of their world fascinating and the insolence of their manners a comforting change from your more conservative upbringing. Gail has passed her interest in anthropology on to you, and you seek the causes behind the effects. Still, you like your silence. Nothing thrills you like the brush of clean air across your wingtips and the blood tang of a kill.

Once in the Penumbra, you can travel to the Umbral Realms (assuming you know how!). The layer of Shadow that you pass into, however, depends on the your character's nature and conception. Most Bygones will be drawn instinctively to the Middle Umbra, where they feel safest. Highly refined companions (especially familiars) may pass on to the High Realms. A handful of death-bound consors can even delve into the Shadowlands, though they can go no further than the dead reflection of the living world. Only the rarest of companions can travel into more than one of the Three Worlds.

Basic Umbral travel (into one chosen World) costs eight points; it costs 10 points to go into two Worlds, and 15 to be able to reach any of the three. Storyteller may feel free to restrict or disallow this Advantage. For more information on the Otherworlds, see **Werewolf, Wraith: The Oblivion, Haunts, Necropolis Atlanta, Umbra: The Velvet Shadow, The Book of Madness** and **The Book of Shadows**.

Water Breathing: (2/5 pts)

With this simple power, a consor may either breathe underwater or, for five points, need not breathe at all. This Advantage also confers a certain degree of resistance to underwater pressures and decompression problems, although considerable depths or radical changes (going from 500 feet to 30 in less than a minute) will cause some damage.

Wings: (3/5 pts)

This obvious Advantage grants a consor the ability to fly. The name is a bit misleading. The character does not actually have to have wings, though her player will need a good rationale to purchase non-winged flight. However she moves, she may hover, glide, soar or float about, depending on the nature of her power.

For three points, the companion may fly at up to normal human jogging speed (13 yards/turn). For five, she may cover 20 yards per turn. With effort, winged fliers may push their speed by adding their Dexterity score to their flight velocity for short bursts.

The inconveniences posed by these limbs should be obvious. Some wings are obvious, while others only appear in a certain form or under given circumstances. It should be noted that mundane folks tend to react poorly to non-avians with wings sprouting out of their backs.

Player Hints: Familiars and Weird Beasties

Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep.
— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Assuming the role of an alien being presents a host of roleplaying challenges that go far beyond deciding which cool powers belong on your character sheet. Your character's perspective, language (verbal and otherwise), morés, culture, attitude and perception will all be wildly different than those of a similar character raised on Earth. Even if an Otherworldly being has been raised among humans her whole life, the culture(s) that she has seen during that time will influence her view of these earth-bound mortals.

There are, theoretically,an endless variety of Realms in the Otherworlds. While the Middle Umbral worlds constitute thirteen Realms by most reckonings, the spaces between them are vast and nameless. The confusing Higher Realms (which meld into the Dream Realms with annoying frequency) number in the dozens, and no one has ventured far in the Deadlands and returned with much to say. While most authorities claim that there are no more than 39 Horizon Realms, no one seriously believes that, and no way exists to catalogue them all. The sourcebooks **Umbra: the Velvet Shadow**, **The Book of Chantries**, **Verbena**, **Progenitors**, **Sons of Ether** and **Digital Web** all have hints or descriptions of suitable Realms of origin.

Players who wish to create characters from the Otherworlds should decide what kind of a world they came from, how they got there, how they left, what abilities they have (and why they have them), what culture (or lack thereof) they grew up with and what goal they have here on Earth. With a solid grounding for whatever being you choose to create, approach your Storyteller, give him a description of the place and try to work it into your chronicle's cosmology. For the sake of cooperation, try to avoid silly or inappropriate origins for your companion.

The trials of an alien being trying to make heads, tails or both out of the Gothic-Punk world can be touching, frustrating, tragic or hilarious, depending on how you approach it. Ideally, it should be a little of each. Whatever path you choose, make sure that your character has some firm grounding, substance and dimension. Portraying an innocent(?) abroad can be much more rewarding than doing a Mork from Ork schtick.

An Odd Bond: Familiars

Familiars and their mages have a unique bond, far different from that found in other mage-custos relations. Although many custos are friendly, even intimate, with their mages, there is seldom any true confusion over who holds the power in the relationship — except in the case of familiars. Mages generally feel that they have chosen their familiars, but familiars are just as likely to believe that they are the responsible party, taking charge of the welfare of their hand-picked sorcerer. Thus, the master/follower relationship is often solely a matter of perspective.

Nevertheless, the bond between mage and familiar is powerful, complex and utterly individual. No two mage-familiar relationships are the same, and both parties guard this bond with great ferocity. In the rare instances when a familiar goes rogue, it is often devastating, if not fatal, for his former mage. Familiar-less mages often point to this as a good reason to refrain from any dealings with such alien beings. (For more information on the mage-familiar bond see **The Book of Shadows**.)

Storytellers and players alike may note that familiar characters in **Ascension's Right Hand** are not simply assigned a certain power level based on their mage's Familiar Background. Here, the familiar is assumed to be the primary character with her mage being of secondary importance. Thus, the familiar is not limited by the mage's point expenditure. Players and Storytellers should, however, feel free to use the dot-based Familiar Background should they so choose. In that case, simply follow the power and creation guidelines outlined in **The Book of Shadows**, using the additional Advantages presented here to flesh out the familiar and her more unusual abilities. Although this mage-based system does not provide quite as much variation in powers and abilities from familiar to familiar, it is perfectly adequate.

Beginning Play

Players courageous enough to attempt playing a familiar or other alien being (and Storytellers brave enough to let them!) should plot their preludes around the circumstances which brought that being to Earth. The **Books of Shadows** and **Chantries** have plenty of background information about the circumstances which might lead to such a journey. A player and her Storyteller ought to decide what the character's past history was, then structure the traveler's introduction to humanity from there. The sample character, Valgreth the Incamani, offers one such prelude in his history.

Familiars have their own special "origins." Pages 125-128 of **The Book of Shadows** present the beginnings of the bond in detail. Whether the mage is a player character or not, his compact, discovery and relationship with a familiar should be run for all they're worth.

Building a Familiar

Regardless of their peculiarities, all familiars have the Special Advantages Information Font, Paradox Nullification and Symbiotic Knowledge and the Thaumivore Flaw. Depending on the power of the mage they "serve," familiar characters may start with either 15 or 21 "freebie" points. Coupled with the required Flaw, this gives them 20-26 points to begin with. This is a fair amount, and players should avoid abusing it.

A familiar's powers are determined both by the peculiar nature of the spirit and the physical body which the spirit inhabits. More powerful familiars have a greater variety and depth of powers, while relatively weak familiars may only be able to do one or two unusual things. Such a character may, if the Storyteller allows, purchase a Hedge Magic Path or two. Psychic Phenomena are rare, but possible. True Faith is inappropriate for familiars. The many things they have seen undermines the single-minded devotion True Faith denotes.

Disputed Origins:
Fragments, Wayfaers and Bygones

So what have they seen? What can a familiar recall about her Otherworldly past? Even if mages remain in the dark about the origins of familiars, the companions themselves know the truth, don't they?

Well, sort of. The passing of a familiar spirit into the material world leaves them with a sort of mystick amnesia. While they remember glimpses of past lives and fathomless worlds, the concrete memories of an earthbound familiar are hazy at best. The exact nature and clarity of these flashbacks are left to the player's considerable imagination, but some theories about such spirits' nativity offer some roleplaying hints.

Theories abound about the fate of mythic beasts and mages lost or broken by intense Quiet or Paradox storms. Many sorcerers speculate that their companions began life as material creatures somewhere, either in the Deep Umbra or on Earth itself before the encroachment of settled paradigms. While there is no way to prove either claim, the few hints that familiars have let slip indicate some truth behind both ideas. Perhaps, as the Celestial Chorus believes, such spirits are merely pure fragments of the One, undiluted by repeated lifetimes.

Whatever the case may be, familiars have traveled the spirit Realms over incalculable amounts of time, absorbing great wisdom and a multitude of facts. Spirits who undertake such journeys (willingly or not) are known as "Wayfaers," "Tehloon" to some Dreamspeakers. The vast information the Wayfaers consume jumbles together over time, becoming a whirling current of images, names, sensations and possibilities. Like the imperfect recall of people passed from incarnation to incarnation, this torrent proves unsortable, even by the familiars themselves. Still, it offers an abundance of insight to those who can puzzle out their companions' riddles and lore.

"Bygone" is the general Tradition name for a mythic spirit that once had solid form but abandoned it for an ephemeral existence when some crisis threatened it with extinction. Some say that the beasts that roamed the Earth during the Mythic Ages passed into the Umbra to avoid reality's stranglehold. Others claim that they willingly forsook their physical forms for the spirit, while still another theory speculates that they never existed in solid bodies at all, but wandered as dreams of both humanity and the creatures that predated us.

Whatever the answer to this riddle may be, it is generally thought that Tehloon began their spirit lives as Bygones too restless to remain in even the Near Umbral Realms. Somehow, they crossed over the Horizon and into the Deep Umbra through channels mages cannot fathom (though they would love to discover them!). The things such traveling spirits remember from those quests are generally left to the player's imagination and the Storyteller's discretion, but should remain hazy in the minds of earthbound familiars. When such vagabonds leave their earthly form (through death or abandonment), it is thought they recall all that they had forgotten. The truth is an enigma.

Mythic Beasts

The mythic ones who still exist in their original forms in Horizon Realms, Umbral places (usually the Middle Worlds) and hidden spots on Earth usually require a refreshment of the essence that spawned them (mystick energy, i.e. Quintessence). Spirit beings usually need a material body to inhabit on this side of the Gauntlet if they lack the potency to form their own. Many Horizon Realms, however, contain mythic beasts in their original(?) forms. The Hollow Earth, the four secret Seasonal Realms of the Verbena, Doissetep's Shade Realm and the Second World of the Diné are only a few of the places a living creature from mythology might find refuge.

Some odd creatures evolve whole cloth in the Otherworlds, either through genetic or magickal tinkering, natural selection, ambient energies, mysterious visitations or the resonance effect (see The **Book of Chantries**). These unique species rarely leave their home Realms. Players who wish to run such beings should take the nature of their home Realm into account when designing their characters. Examples of more conventional Bygones can be found in Chapter Three of **The Book of Madness**.


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Chapter Five: Numina

Magicians can do more by means of faith
Than physicians by the truth.
— Giordano Bruno, *The Heroic Enthusiasts*



Hedge Magic, Psychic Ability and True Faith

Some un-Awakened humans have Special Advantages, collectively called Numina. These include Hedge Magic, True Faith and Psychic Phenomena. Such abilities can be seen as a function of a partially-Awakened Avatar which has determined a small part of its potential, or one which has Awakened to its full, but limited, capacity.

Numina are static abilities. They exist in a very limited form within the momentum of reality and do not rearrange that flow in the way True Magick does. They seldom generate Paradox, but require a lot of time, effort or both. Despite their limitations, these mysterious powers offer a glimpse of the mystick that most mortals never receive.

Mages maintain that even other supernatural creatures use forms of Numina — the magical abilities of the vampire, werewolf, ghost, spirit, demon, etc. These beings, they point out, have limitations on the scope of their powers, limitations imposed by millennia of belief or their own pre-shaped Avatars. True Mages claim to be the only ones whose perceptions and abilities allow them access to the Spheres... but then, mages are an arrogant lot.

Consors and familiars are most likely to have these Advantages. Un-Awakened acolytes and other custos will have the more mundane Backgrounds instead. The following powers are meant for custos who are somewhat aware and adept. Naturally, the Storyteller gets the final say about which Advantages a character may or may not possess.

Only the rarest of custos have access to multiple Numina. Due to the constant work and training required to maintain these skills, as well as the necessary natural aptitude, most companions possess only one of the Numina types listed below.

Game Costs and Effects

Magic will always give you what you want — but not what you think you want.

— Donald Tyson, *Ritual Magic*

There are three different Affinities of Numina — True Faith, Hedge Magic and Psychic Phenomena. Hedge Magic is further divided into specialized Paths, and psychic abilities into different Phenomena. In system terms, there is no real difference between Psychic Phenomena and Hedge Magic, although their in-game applications are quite different. True Faith is another thing altogether. Advancement is earned, not purchased, and Faith's effects are largely the Storyteller's option.

Numina Affinities cost seven character points for the initial dot and double that (14 points) for each additional starting Affinity. If, for instance, you wanted to begin the game with both Herbalism and Telepathy, it would cost you 21 points. Obviously, specialization is helpful when learning the mystic arts.

Paths within the Hedge Magic Affinity cost only seven points each to begin, and each new dot includes one Ritual of that Path level. These Rituals, which allow a magician some latitude within her art, cost three "freebie" points to purchase and three times the level of the Path to buy with experience. A level three Ritual would then cost nine points, while a first level one would only take three experience points to purchase.

Psychic Phenomena are harder to diversify. The first Phenomenon costs seven points, but any additional ones require 14 points to buy initially. Each dot after the original one costs only seven points. It's easier to get the hang of a new ability after breaking through to find it. There are no Psychic Rituals.

Each Numina Affinity (except True Faith) costs its previous level x 7 to increase after character creation and requires an Attribute + Ability roll to perform (the types of rolls vary with the Path or Phenomena). Many also require some time and effort. This is largely a roleplaying thing, although Storytellers can assume that Hedge Magic Effects take at least one turn per level to set up and use. Numina-blessed individuals are not True Mages, remember, but talented mundanes who have discovered a way of reaching further than most.

Numina also require some kind of focus, ritual or concentration to work. This can be anything from a drawn-out rite involving rune-carving and chanting to a trance or all-out concentration. This focus will vary from character to character (an Aboriginal shaman won't use the same process as a California psychic), but is essential. Whatever the focus may be, it must be performed the same way every time, or it won't work. Numina are not easily tossed off; they require work, skill and time.

Using Hedge Magic among the uninitiated is tricky. While dramatic Paradox backlashes are rare (though not unknown!), most overt spells simply fail when observed by skeptics (see "Unbelief" in Chapter Two of **The Book of Madness** for a possible reason for this). This often results in a would-be wizard with egg on his face unless there is some sort of "suspension of belief" thing going on — a ceremony, stage show, etc. The difficulty of working around the "magic is impossible" paradigm could be reflected in complete failure, additional difficulties to spells cast in public or additional Attribute + Ability rolls (Manipulation + High Ritual, Charisma + Expression, etc.) which might be needed to convince an audience that such magic was possible. Psychic ability is easier to use because popular culture accepts its existence, but levitating a couch is going to be more than most people can accept.

These abilities are not gained easily, and diversification is rare. One seldom finds a psychic magician with enough True Faith to stop a charging vampire. People usually discover one talent and focus their efforts on that one thing. Learning new Numina ranges from difficult to near-impossible; mentors must be found, ancient texts perused, and long hours of study invested. Even then, a given character may not have the talent to use both Psychic Phenomena and Hedge Magic. Psychics tend to extend the power of their minds while hedge magicians learn new forms of magic.

These rules may, at the Storyteller's discretion, supersede the Numina system given in the **Vampire** supplement **The Hunters Hunted**. (For the record, the Hedge Magic called "Thaumaturgy" in that book is now considered a "survival kit" Path of related spells referred to as Hunter's Craft.)

Systems

Hedge Magic and Psychic Phenomena require study, ceremony and concentration. The methods will vary from art to art and place to place, but the mechanics for each Affinity are essentially the same:

- The level of the Path (or Phenomena) determines what the magician can do (**Cursing** is the exception to this).
- In the case of Hedge Magic, some sort of ceremony must be performed or some focus must be used. Rituals can take one turn per level of the magic (or even longer) and might require extended successes. Some Paths cost a point of Willpower each time a Ritual is used.
- Psychic Phenomena are not instant powers. Users must concentrate upon whatever they are doing for the duration of the Effect. A focus may be necessary.
- An Attribute + Ability (usually Intelligence + Occult for magic and Intelligence + Alertness for ESP) should be made. Failure means the magician has to begin again, with + 1 to her difficulty for each additional try.



• Hedge Magic's usual difficulty is the Path's level + 4. Psychic Phenomena go against a difficulty of 8 or the target's Willpower, depending on the Effect.

• The amount of successes needed to achieve certain Hedge Magic Effects depends on the circumstances. Under normal conditions, only one success is necessary to work an easy Effect. More strenuous spells, such as lengthy Healings or difficult Enchantments, require one success per Path level before they work. Really hard tasks, like throwing up a Ward against a pissed-off vampire, demand an additional penalty. The difficulty is raised by 2 for such labors, up to a maximum of 10.

• Willpower can be spent to grant an automatic success. Quintessence, however, might as well not even exist. Magicians and psychics cannot use it in any way, though they may be able to detect it (Perception + Awareness, difficulty 9).

• If a hedge wizard or psychic truly Awakens, she may no longer use her Numina; the character points are converted back into "freebie" points (on a one-for-one basis) and can be used to purchase Arete and Spheres *after a long training period*. (see **Mage**, pg. 102 for costs). All of these must be purchased from the beginning; such characters do not have initial dots in either Arete or Spheres, or any Avatar Background points, for that matter. All True Magick abilities must be bought from ground zero.

Awakening has no effect on True Faith, except perhaps to raise questions in the person's mind about her beliefs.

A quick reference chart of abilities, costs and rolls can be found in Chapter Four.

Rituals

The dots describing Hedge Magic Effects define the general abilities of the art. Rituals within those Paths allow the magician a wider latitude with her actions. Such Rituals must be purchased separately (see above) and are bound to the level of Effect. A magician must attain a level in her Path in order to buy the corresponding Rituals which allow her to expand its possibilities.

The particulars of the Rituals themselves are theoretically limitless. There are thousands of styles of magic in the world and no system could hope to replicate the tremendous variations between them. For rules purposes, use the Ritual suggestions mentioned at each level of the Paths to define the magic's game Effect. Narrate the story aspect of the spell as you see fit. A player *may* design her own Rituals if she can justify the research in story terms. However, her Storyteller should be make sure that the power of the Ritual does not exceed the general Effects of the character's Path rating.

Although the particulars will vary from style to style, these Rituals require a bit of time to perform and often utilize special objects, like sacred stones, runes, holy water, magic paper, inscribed circles, medicine bags and burnt offerings. Generally, the more powerful the magic, the more complex the Ritual must be.

Teamwork

Some forms of Hedge Magic demand that practitioners pool their resources. Most forms of Psychic Phenomena are more potent if a number of talented people work together. To do so, the characters must share a common Path or Phenomena (Herbalism, Telepathy, etc.). A telepath cannot aid an herbalist in her labors — he doesn't understand the nature of what his associate is doing.

When two or more characters with related Numina combine their efforts, one prime person makes the roll. Each helper rolls his or her Attribute + Ability as well; an additional turn may be required for each helper to join in. For each successful assistant, lower the difficulty of the prime character's roll by 1 to a minimum difficulty of 3. This isn't helpful for short, easy tasks, but can be vital when trying to pull off something really difficult, like levitating a safe or Binding a mad vampire, which might require extended rolls.

Teamwork failure usually leaves the prime character where she started, with no help or hindrance. Anyone who botches, however, adds + 2 to the prime caster's difficulty or subtracts her successes if more than one is needed. If the task involved some sort of heavy power (a level 5 Effect, for instance), an unpleasant side-effect might be forthcoming...

Hedge Magic



A full moonbow shimmered overhead as Grady laid the circle and poured pure water into a large glass bowl. Breathing deeply and evenly, he swished a white cloth in the water and raised it to his face. The cold water stung his bare skin where it fell, but the sensation cleared his head as he chanted in a low, melodic murmur. Setting aside the cloth, he gave his thanks to the God, took up a candle, and stepped into the circle.

Have mercy upon me, O God.
Blot out my transgressions,
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquities,
And cleanse me from my sins.
Purge me, and I shall be clean.
Wash me, and I shall be white as snow.
Create in me a clean heart,
And renew a right spirit within me.
Thou, who art the Crown,
And the Kingdom,
The Power,
And the Glory,
And the everlasting Law,
Amen.

Wind rustled the bare branches above him, flickering the candle and chilling wet skin. As Grady raised his arms to the haloed moon, the power stirred within him, cascading outward from center to fingertips. An ecstatic smile transformed him from mortal to magician, and his voice grew deep and husky as he spoke the spell of Summoning. The winter whispers soon answered his demand.

The wind, and one other: "What wouldst thou have of me?"

Some talented individuals can learn a very limited form of magic. Plenty of folks believe that these practitioners are mages, including many of the magicians themselves. Though their arts can transcend the apparent limitations of technological truth, hedge wizards are a far cry from True Mages. Nevertheless, even limited craft has great potential.

Hedge wizardry is often taught by mentors who remember the secrets that lent power to commoners during the Mythic Ages. Although shadows of Awakened possibility, the rituals, spells and minor talismans of Hedge Magic are still a step above sitting in front of the TV and slothing off. Students of mystery often learn a Hedge Magic Path to sharpen their spirits and grant them some say in their destiny. A good number go on to learn many types of magic, but some simply focus their energies to become, in their opinions, great magicians in their chosen art.

Some custos enter service to learn the magical arts. Such acolytes may learn a certain amount of occult knowledge from their mages, but the latter may become frustrated with pupils unable to progress past "book" magic. True Mages have gone beyond mere hedge wizardry; they cannot use it and cannot teach it. Their wisdom may inspire a prospective hedge magician in his endeavors, and their libraries may supply the necessary lore, but the magician herself must learn a Path, and a mage must first Awaken to reach the Spheres. True Magick cannot be taught; it can only be understood.

It is possible for a hedge magician to Awaken, but the more powerful she becomes in her static magic, the further from real Awakening she wanders. Such a character must begin again from scratch if she does Awaken, though her Knowledges, Talents and Skills remain intact. Her Path of magic will probably influence the Spheres she chooses, but everything she knows is, if not wrong, then at least mistaken.

There are a variety of Hedge Magic Paths, each with a particular emphasis and structure. Their names are given for convenience only; a Persian fravashi is unlikely to refer to her spirit magic as "Ephemera." Each Path lists its general description, Effects, limitations, system roll and the rituals necessary to do certain things. If you wish to design alternate Paths or Rituals, use the descriptions below as a guide. Remember, however, that hurling fireballs around is not conducive to the overall atmosphere of the World of Darkness. Hedge Magic is slow, difficult, low-key and inextricably tied to a given style of magic.



Magic Styles

Magic, even Hedge Magic, is an art, not a series of combat maneuvers. To the mage or magician, the beliefs that guide magic are more vital than the effects of the magic itself. The form these beliefs take shapes the caster's style and the rites that open the channels in the self, allowing the magician to defy mundane reality.

The bottom line with any form of magic in the World of Darkness is that intent shapes reality. Mages and magicians throughout the ages have disputed *whose* intent shapes *how much* of *which* reality, but they generally agree that intent is the prime magical component. Thus, the magical practices of Chinese geomancers, Wiccan herbalists and Hindu fakirs are equally valid if the people themselves truly know what they're doing. Although many True Mages realize that foci are merely a means to an end, most un-Awakened practitioners swear by the art they study. Thus, the ceremonies they perform will be guided by the style of magic they pursue.

Styles are not just special effects. Although they do not have an impact on game systems, the style a character practices colors his whole life. Players and Storytellers should define their characters' magic styles and keep them in mind when magic comes into play.

There is, in **The Book of Madness**, a whole series of Paths called Dark Sorcery. This Numina is an unusually powerful one, but requires mortgaging your soul to Infernal beings. It's not a pretty sight. Normal hedge wizardry is less potent and harder to learn, but it leaves its practitioners free to control their own destiny without outside... debts.

The Paths

Conjuration

With this Path, a magician may move pre-prepared objects from one place to another. Rabbits can be pulled out of hats, coins moved around, and swords summoned to one's hand. Mages who have studied the art declare that such feats are limited applications of Correspondence principles, but claim that the magicians lack the understanding or might to truly access the Sphere itself.

Any object moved must be prepared in advance by some method of the caster's belief. If the conjurer is a *voudoun* mambo, she must make sacrifices to the loa, sprinkle the objects with blood, ash, bone dust or blessed earth, and consecrate them. If he is a stage magician, he could hypnotize his assistant before he saws her in half. A Satanist may dedicate his machete to Lucifer while a Wiccan witch might inscribe the item, call the corners and invoke the Goddess and God (see "Styles"). In any case, the prepared object can be quickly called with an appropriate ritual. A coin cannot be Conjured using a Ritual designed to bring forth a Coke can. The magician's expertise determines the maximum distance. Failure means the Conjuration did not work, while a botch makes it go spectacularly wrong.

Conjuration is difficult to use offensively. The item moved cannot be chosen at whim. It may be an animal (rabbit, cat, mouse, or even human), it but may not be whisked in and out without prior ritual preparation. Unconscious beings may, with proper preparation (like hypnosis), be moved against their will by a powerful conjurer, but this Path *cannot* be used against an enemy in combat.

A conjurer can nudge or summon one additional object for every level above that required to move it in the first place, assuming he has the Ritual to do it. A magician with a Ritual to shift coins could move one at level one, two at level two, three at three and so on. Multiple objects cannot be Conjured at the basic level; thus, the greatest of conjurers could only move one human being with this art.

Other Rituals allow the magician to manipulate an object without moving it, like making a coin spin in midair or a rope grow taut and hang from nothing. Different Rituals must be learned for each kind of object and each different application. Levitating a knife, nudging it and picking it out of thin air all require separate Rituals, although any kind of knife will do if it has been prepared. A coin, however, cannot be used in place of the knife; it requires another set of Rituals. Once the subject is readied, it can be called with a simple command ("O Blade of my Father, I summon thee!"). The item itself does not become magical in any way, and once the magic is used, it must be re-set. Only one object can be Conjured at a time.

With a bit of style and a good Dexterity + Subterfuge roll, a conjurer can fool even the most sophisticated audiences into thinking that his magic is merely a good trick or hide the Conjured item until it's needed. This is difficult, though not impossible, with larger (or living) subjects. Just ask David Copperfield!

Roll: Dexterity + Occult No Willpower cost

Effects

• Wow! Caster can nudge a tiny nonfunctional object (a coin, a knife, a business card) without touching it. The magic carries no real force behind it. Anyone who wants to stop the item from moving can simply pick it up. Range is roughly 10 feet or less.

•• At this level of expertise, the caster may move a small simple item (a book, a jar, rope) or Conjure it across intervening space, from up to 15 feet away. Anyone wishing to stop an object moved with this level of magic should make a Strength roll, difficulty 5.

••• A large or complex inanimate object (a sword, a telephone, a boom box, a bottle of wine) or a simple lifeform (snail, ant, roach) can be moved, levitated or snatched from thin air. This object can be no larger than a chair and must be within 25 feet of the magician. An item moved at this level can support about 200 pounds, and those attempting to stop it must roll Strength against difficulty 7.



•••• Where'd that rabbit come from? At this level, the caster can move, levitate or summon a living mammal, reptile or bird, any complex lifeform of less than half human mass. Each kind of animal requires a different Ritual. Inanimate objects as large as steamer trunks can also be moved or levitated at this level. Maximum range is 50 feet or less.

•••••Presto! The caster can move or manipulate a human or human-sized animal from up to 60 feet away. This subject *must* be either willing or unconscious. It's best to work with a longtime partner when performing this "trick," as the experience is disorienting and distressing. Botching this Conjuration roll can have disastrous consequences. At best, the magic will simply fail. At worst, well... ick.

Rituals: This Path allows a magician to levitate, push, or summon a given subject. He could even briefly (two turns or so) separate it into parts and rejoin it, so long as he has the proper Ritual. Each different type of object moved requires its own Ritual, as does each application.

Cursing

One of the oldest forms of magic, aCurse imparts some bad wish onto an offending party. This ranges from the Evil Eye to a group malediction. Though anybody can direct ill will at someone, this Path allows a hedge magician to vent his spleen with real effect. At its most basic level, such a curse quickly fouls up its victim's life then dissipates. At its worst, potent Cursing can last for generations.

The severity of the Curse is usually bound to the dots in the character's Severity rating (the dots in his Path), and the effects usually only happen once. With a number of successes, however, he can make nasty things happen to more than one person in a given group. A magician cannot Curse someone more severely than his skill will allow (i.e. above the dots he has) if working alone. If he works with a group versed in the same Path, however, his anger carries more clout.

The basic system for Cursing is simple. The magician decides what he wants to inflict (within his ability), spends one turn per level of Severity magically collecting and focusing his hate, then discharges it in some cathartic fashion (a scream, a dance, a venomous e-mail message, etc.). His player rolls Manipulation + Intimidation to work the Effect and spends a point of Willpower. His successes get divided between Relation and Severity (player's choice), allowing a player to custom-tailor his Curse. The Curse's Effect occurs soon afterward, at some point and in some way determined by the Storyteller, not the magician; he may choose who he effects, but not how.

If, for example, Justice the Shadow-Chosen (with three dots in Curse) rolls four successes when Cursing his landlord, he could choose to inflict a serious injury on him or cause embarrassment to both the landlord and his wife. Two days later, the landlord trips and falls, breaking his leg (Severity 3). If Justice had decided to humiliate the family instead, the fall might have ended in a pile of dog feces; the wife, meanwhile, burns the brownies for her first PTA meeting (Severity 2). Simple, but effective!

Unlike most forms of Hedge Magic, Cursing can focus the will of a group into a force more potent than a single magician could muster. By acting in concert (see "Teamwork," above), an angry pack of Curse-skilled hedge witches can bring down death and worse upon their enemies. In such cases, each additional member grants a new dot to the pool, adding to either Severity, Relation or both. Justice, therefore, could use up to four levels of Severity if he teamed up with Cheryl of the Five Rose Sect to curse the landlord, and his difficulty drops by 1. In the case of group Curses, set the initial difficulty at 8 for simplicity.

Curses do not force events to happen or rearrange the laws of nature (that is the province of True Magick). They do, however, subtly nudge things or people already in motion towards the caster's intent. A hedge wizard's Curse may take days or even months to occur, but it *will* happen. Someone successfully Cursed may not immediately walk through a plate glass window, but she may find herself under a falling windowpane the next time she passes a construction site. In magickal terms, such events are always coincidental and will only strike when a strong possibility exists for them to.

An especially skilled magician may invoke the Death Curse. By spending all her permanent Willpower, the player can add that Willpower to her Curse dots, and divide the total as she sees fit between Severity and Relation. The character then turns into a mindless husk and dies soon after, burned out by inner hatred. A witch with minimal skill in Cursing might only get four or five dots to spend, but a powerful one could wither a whole family!

Supernatural creatures may be Cursed, but they can resist the Effect with a successful Willpower roll. This roll's difficulty will usually be 7 or 8, but might go as high as 9 if the magician was especially powerful or successful. Naturally, the being in question has to be aware of the Curse in order to resist it. Short problems will probably just happen and be done with, but prolonged Curses can be discovered with a little work (consulting the spirits, checking auras with Prime magick or Auspex, reading probability with Entropy, etc.). A mage's Arcane can take successes away from a wizard attempting to Curse her on a one-for-one basis.

As any wise practitioner knows, rearranging the paths of fortune can backfire on you. Botching a Curse will bring the effect back upon the caster in ways that should delight the most sadistic of Storytellers. Even if the roll is success-



ful, there will always be some kind of fallout from a Curse, especially a severe one. The nature of this payback lies more with storytelling than with systems, but should be in line with the general power of the Curse and the ill will of the magician. Backripples range from dropping an expensive item (and having to pay for it) to foreclosure, physical aliments or sudden disappearing acts on the parts of one's friends.

No Curse need be used at full potency. The caster may choose to revoke the Curse at any time prior to its effect. A magician skilled in this Path can also try to undo another's Curse with a Wits + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 9) and a Willpower point.

Roll: Manipulation + Intimidation Costs 1 Willpower

Severity Effect (Path rating)

- • A brief inconvenience (dropping an object, saying something stupid, closing a door on your fingers, etc.)
- •• A slip-up which results in lasting injury or embarrassment (stepping on glass barefooted, throwing up on the Japanese Prime Minister, breaking an heirloom, etc.)
- ••• A serious injury or illness, not incapacitating, but painful and inconvenient (broken limb, hernia, gunshot wound, etc.)
- •••• A lasting illness, not fatal, but debilitating (infection, stroke, heart attack, Alzheimer's disease, etc.)
- ••••• Death, usually by some ghastly means (decapitation, impaling, mangling, torture, disease, etc.)

Relation

- • One person only
- •• One close relation or friend
- ••• Two similar relations (male heirs, lovers, parents)
- •••• All close living relations or friends
- ••••• All relations *and* friends!
- 6 + Relatives or friends for generations to come

Rituals: Although the practices involved in Cursing vary tremendously, the system Effects are pretty consistent. There are no special Rituals for this Path.

Enchantment

Enchantment is the magical art of creating minor talismans (as opposed to the more powerful True Magick Talismans). Crafting magic from ingredients both eldritch and mundane, the enchanter spends much of his time closeted in a laboratory peering through foul smoke, containing minor explosions, and tracking down bizarre magical ingredients.

Minor talismans differ from their magickal counterparts in many ways. Each has a single power, which usually operates a few times under set circumstances. Even the strongest such talismans pale in comparison to those crafted with True Magick. Their Effects aren't flashy, but they do get results... usually. Although they carry a trace residue of magic (detectable with the Prime Sphere), they

show up less readily than Talismans with a capital "T." Most reflect their homemade origins. Crafting a talisman, even a minor one, calls for a certain degree of mundane craftsmanship, which some enchanters have and some... well...

Talisman creation should flow more from story concerns and good roleplaying than from die rolls. For those who want a system, assume that each different minor talisman requires a Ritual process which must be mastered before the craftwork begins. When the Ritual is purchased, the enchanter sets to work on the object itself. After the talisman's form is crafted (which may require a few Dexterity + Ability rolls), the talisman should be prepared in some special way according to the belief or style of the magician— carved with runes, inset with crystals, dipped in blood, blessed by the son of a priest, etc. Useful Abilities for these tasks include Crafts, Artistic Expression, Gunsmithing, Hunting, Traps, Alchemy, Herbalism, Poisons, Stone Lore and Hearth Wisdom, depending on the purpose and manufacture of the talisman.

After this, the enchanter sets *one* purpose for the item. This is the power it will have. Successful enchantment usually demands a day or two of preparation per talisman level. A simple level one item would require only two to four days of work, while a fifth-level one would demand at least five. At the end of this time, the enchanter makes an Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty is talisman's level + 4). A point of Willpower spent during final creation infuses his might into the talisman.

An enchanter can never create a talisman more powerful than his Path level. If he has four dots in Enchantment, he can only craft talismans of four dots or less in power. Once created, a minor talisman will work within some specified framework, i.e., when the moon is waning, when a blind man coughs, when the blade is drawn in anger, etc. These conditions should be colorful and very specific, tied to the purpose of the enchanter, not to general utility. Such particulars should be described during the creation process and must be adhered to. Each minor talisman will only work a certain number of times (usually based on the number of successes rolled) and will be useless, if decorative, thereafter.

Minor talismans vary tremendously, from the rowan necklace that protects against faerie magic to bones that allow one to (hopefully!) speak to one's ancestors. Such talismans can be used by anyone. Some potential talismans appear below, but clever enchanters can create their own with a little ingenuity and a lot of work. First, the player must decide what single Effect the talisman contains. She then details her character's research and development process. A simple "I create a level five talisman that makes me invisible" will not suffice! Both player and Storyteller should check the prospective talisman to make sure that it fits the general guidelines offered



below. After a period of story-defined time (anywhere from a few days to a year or more), the player attempts an Intelligence + Occult roll, difficulty 9. Success means the enchanter has discovered the secret of enchantment and can proceed as described above.

Botching a creation roll can be a bad thing. Many an enchanter has disappeared in a sudden conflagration caused by something as prosaic as an untimely sneeze or a misread passage in his alchemical notes. Obviously, talisman creation is not a quick and easy art!

Roll: Intelligence + Occult Costs 1 Willpower

Effects and Sample Talismans

• A small object with tight restrictions and a limited power, perhaps a brief addition to an Attribute or Ability, that is never obvious as magic.

— A silver toe ring which protects its wearer from incoming projectiles if she is barefooted at the time (two dots of Dodge vs. missiles).

— A colored candle that grants the user some one-time favor after it is burned (two points of Resources, Arcane, Allies or Influence, depending on the color of the candle). The Background works once to provide a favor, then fades. Each success creates one candle.

— A handful of grave dust that enables the user to sleep soundly. He will wake immediately if someone approaches him with hostile intent.

— An oak picture frame that preserves any painting or document placed in it for as long as the frame remains intact. Both frame and contents must be sealed with almond oil and sprinkled with pure water.

•• A more potent version of a level one talisman (with an additional die or two of effect), or one that alters reality more noticeably.

— A handful of bullets (one per success) that do two additional dice of damage when fired from a specially-prepared gun.

— An iron nail which enables the user to cause someone to painfully stub his toe. The nail must be driven by an enemy into a footprint left by the target.

— A golden charm that alerts the wearer when the talisman maker (or some other single party) is in danger. The charm must be sprinkled with wine each time it is used and works once for each crafting success.

— A rowan ring which negates any form of fae magic (called Glamour) used to bewitch the wearer. This works for one incident per crafting success.

••• The item performs some obviously unusual function. Witnesses who know anything about magic will sense it being done. Clueless folks will be confused; how did he do that?

— A salve which heals three non-aggravated Health Levels worth of open wounds in a matter of minutes. This must be applied by moonlight by one who loves the wounded. Each success creates one application of balm.

— An obsidian bull torque which strengthens the wearer once after it is blooded (three points of Strength that last for one scene per success after blood is wiped across it).

— A handkerchief which wipes away any normal thing it is used to clean (blood, ink, spilled food, fingerprints). The user must hum softly while mopping up. This works once for every success rolled during creation.

•••• With a talisman of this caliber, the user can defy a fair amount of conventional reality, albeit with some restrictions. If these limits are ignored, the magic is ineffective.

— Bones which allow the user to contact the person they came from. Note that this is not always successful! If it is, however, the user can ask one question per creation success. Whether or not the ghost answers accurately is the spirit's prerogative, but it will answer if it can. These bones work only three times, then crumble to dust.

— A book which translates anything written in it into the reader's native language. This book must be sprinkled with paper ash before the magic works. The translation effect works once per creation success, then reverts to the original language set down.

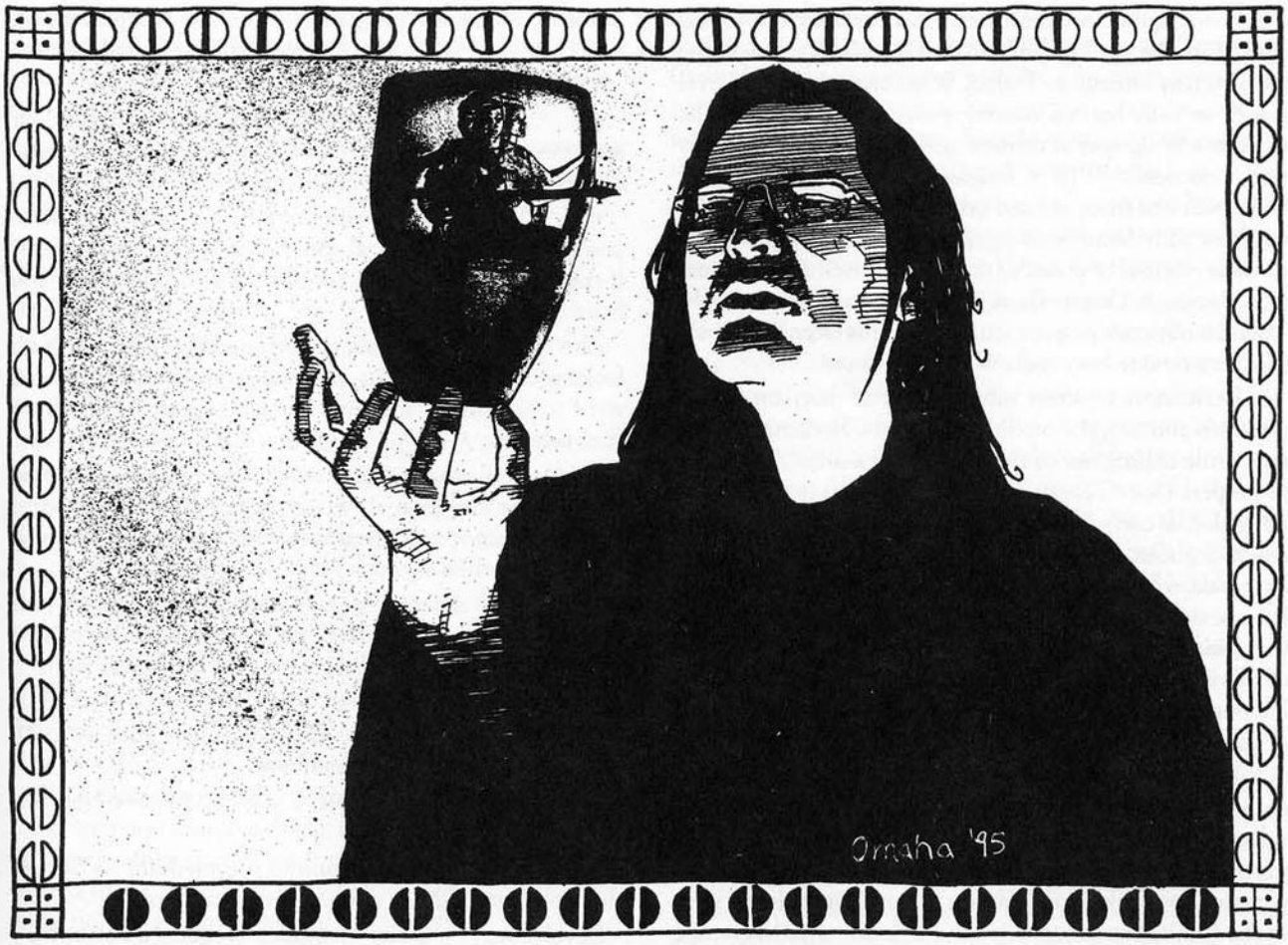
— A knife which stabs directly for the heart when used. This inflicts Strength + 5 dice of damage and can be thrown. The blade must first be drawn in hot anger and washed afterward in fresh blood. Works once per success.

••••• Items this potent are rare and unpredictable. They often fail in places where the technological paradigm is strong. Nevertheless, they work some wonder that obviously defies the seeming order of things.

— A black cloak that masks the user's footsteps, even if he walks across a squeaky floor. While this magic is active, the wearer will be effectively silent unless he speaks aloud. Silver threads must be sewn into this garment; they break and fall away after the magic expires.

— An exquisite piano which plays beautifully for anyone who strokes its keys, even if she knows nothing about music. A prayer to the nine Muses (by name!) must be recited before the piano will play.

— A brass amulet which protects the bearer from detection and observation by magickal means. This amulet of the mists obscures its bearer from the flow of magickal energies (adds +4 to the difficulty of any roll made to locate the wearer magickally). The user must first answer an enigma before the amulet will protect him. This veil lasts a number of weeks equal to the creator's successes.



Ephemera

This Path allows a medium to reach into the Velvet Shadow and contact spirits. These ephemeral ones may dwell in either the Low or Middle Realms. Those few who pass into the High Realms after death cannot be reached (save by the most talented of mediums). Sadly, few mortals know the differences between the Three Worlds (or acknowledge the existence of spirits at all, for that matter!). A medium can only try her best and see what happens.

The nature of the spirits contacted depends upon the Rituals the medium knows. One group of rites allows contact with natural spirits, while others breach the barrier between the living world and the Shadowlands. Note that even the medium herself might not realize which spirits she deals with; at least two dots of Spirit Lore or Enigmas are required to know the difference. Amateur mediums frequently get themselves in trouble this way, opening themselves to Bane corrupters or Gaffling pranksters (see Chapter Five of **The Book of Madness**). The early steps of this Path are dangerous but unavoidable.

Mediums open themselves up as spirit channels. Those spirits, however, have minds of their own. If they have some reason to mislead, possess or abuse the magician, they may try. In **Wraith** terms, a medium offers herself up as a temporary Consort for the Puppetry Arcanos so long both are in contact. A spirit with the Possession Charm (see **Werewolf**, Chapter Seven or **The Book of Madness'** Appendix) lowers its difficulty by 2 if attempting to take over a medium. In story terms, this means the ghost or spirit can act through the medium with little hindrance.

Thankfully, these magicians have some defensive Rituals to help them out if the spirits are unruly. Wise mediums are versed in the practices of Warding and Forbiddence (**Wraith**, pgs. 234-235). Each of these counts as a level one Ritual and has the following system effects:

- Warding protects an area from ghostly intrusion. By using some precautionary charm (an intricate chant, a prayer, painted sigils, iron nails, sprinkled salt, smudging with incense), spending a point of Willpower, and rolling same vs. difficulty 7, the medium can block wraiths from entering an area for one week per success.
- Forbiddance immediately drives a wraith from an area. By rolling successfully (magician's Willpower vs. difficulty 7), the medium can push a ghost from her immediate area. A willful wraith can oppose this Ritual by spending one of its own Willpower per success, but must otherwise flee until the medium has left.

Nature spirits are more direct, if more problematic, to deal with. With the Banishment and Seal Rituals (level two), the medium may attempt to Forbid, Ward or, with Dolor (level three), actually harm a natural spirit. This last inflicts the medium's Willpower as damage against a spirit's own Power with a successful Wits + Enigmas roll. She totals up her Willpower and successes and takes a figurative chunk out of the spirit with them. A strong spirit will be unimpressed, but a weaker one may be wounded or even destroyed if the medium is good enough. Despite these Rituals, throwing one's weight around is not a safe proposition, as the spirits often fight back. Mediums tend to have high Willpower scores!

Persuasion is often more effective than force. To establish contact, the medium rolls her Charisma + Enigmas while calling out to the spirits in the area. A number of helpers (see "Teamwork") can help lower the initial difficulty, as can a Fetter or Haunt if the medium hopes to reach a ghost. Locating her quarry usually requires an extended roll (see below). Once some communication begins, the magician states her case, hoping to win over the spirit to whatever purpose she might have. The details of this interaction play out like any normal conversation, but ought to be a hell of a lot weirder. The uncanny nature of this Path should be obvious.

Many among the dead cannot be reached by mortal entreaties. Those who can may be called with an extended roll of as many successes as the Storyteller sees fit. Contacting your brother in the city where he died last year would demand less work than finding a Colombian bishop killed in the 1970s. The Storyteller should decide whether or not the ghost has passed beyond mortal reach, though the truth should remain a secret from the players. An ill-intentioned spirit might masquerade as the ghost the medium wanted to meet, and this could cause all kinds of fun.

Unlike other Paths, the difficulty of reaching across the barrier goes *down* with each level, while your ability increases. A medium with one dot in Ephemera works against difficulty 9 and cannot actually communicate with anything other than human ghosts (and then only if they wish to be spoken to). This goes down by one step per dot, to a final difficulty of 5, but cannot go lower than 3. As a medium's skill grows, she can speak with natural spirits, see into the Penumbra (but not pass through) and seek out specific entities.

A number of Traits are especially appropriate to medium characters. Enigmas and Spirit Lore are essentially required (although the latter cannot be bought during creation — it must be learned the hard way). Occult, Subterfuge, Awareness, Cosmology and Intimidation are very helpful. The Merit/Flaw Spirit Magnet is common, as are the Haunted, Guardian Angel and Spirit Mentor permutations. Characters with the Shapeshifter Kinfolk or Medium Merits reduce all Ephemera difficulties by 1. Spirits, it should be known, make good allies — and terrible enemies! Behave.

Roll: Charisma + Enigmas — No Willpower cost (except for Rituals above)

Effects

• You can feel the spirits moving and even get their attention with a successful roll. What they do is up to them. This is a dangerous but necessary phase in a medium's Path.

•• You can make distinctions between the spirits you summon and can call specific ones if you know how. If things get out of hand, you can try to dismiss what you have called.

••• When you speak, something always comes. With luck, you can address it, befriend it, or dismiss it. If you want to personally address a particular spirit, you can try at this level.

•••• You can pierce the veil between worlds and actually see and hear those ephemera around you. Most spirits respect you for your insight and ability. Some will even come when you *don't* call...

••••• The spirits of nature and the dead know your name and often come when you call. You can hurt those who displease you and dismiss those who offend you.

Rituals:

Level One: Open to the Unknown (free Ritual), Call Ghost, Ward, Forbiddence

Level Two: See Ghost, Call Naturae, See Naturae, Seal, Banishment

Level Three: Gossip (allows the medium to "spread the word" around her chosen contacts), Dolor

Level Four: Grasp (medium becomes a Fetter for a chosen wraith for seven days), Command (medium can order a minor nature spirit to do one task and expect to be obeyed), Deny the Veil (allows medium to see into the Penumbra; actually two separate Rituals, as one grants a view of the Shadowlands and the other a look into the nature spirit world)

Level Five: Distant Call (Medium can attempt to speak briefly to one who has passed on to some afterlife or punishment. This works within Storyteller's discretion)

Healing

This Path allows a magician to quell pain or even heal small injuries or illnesses. Such Healing is not a miracle cure-all. It takes a long time to treat an illness or injury and longer still for the patient to fully heal. Even the simplest magics, though, can ease pain for as long as the healer keeps his hands on the ailment, and the risk of infection drops greatly when he is working on a wound.

Healing magicians usually need some form of Medicine Knowledge, though that Ability need not be Western medicine (in fact, it's usually more effective when it's not). Meditation, needles, chanting, massage, herbs and foul-smelling brews are common foci. This Path also saps a certain amount of energy out of the magician during the process, and it's easy to burn out by healing too much too

quickly. Magical healers often have a strong sense of duty and compassion, and the traumas of the World of Darkness often use up such people long before their time.

This Path cannot heal aggravated wounds.

Roll: Manipulation + Intuition Costs 1 Willpower per ailment

Effects

• You can soothe a headache, backache or other minor pain. The ailment doesn't go away, but your patient feels better for a while.

•• Sprains, migraine headaches, flu, minor infections — you can speed the healing process by 50% or more with a little work.

••• A cure for the common cold! Broken bones and nasty wounds heal twice as fast as they normally would and without infection. You can help an Incapacitated character to her feet and get her moving, though you cannot heal the injuries completely.

•••• Chronic diseases (athsma, arthritis, diabetes, etc.) are not beyond your care, although healing them will take hours or weeks. Broken bones and severe trauma will heal 50% faster than normal, and your touch banishes all but the worst pain.

••••• With effort, you can cure deadly conditions (AIDS, cancer, meningitis, stroke), though it takes a lot out of you and requires weeks of treatment. When these diseases go, they're gone for good. Broken bones and major trauma heal in one to three weeks of care, and infection poses no risk as long as you're on the job.

Rituals: Open wounds, area trauma (including broken bones, sprains and dislocations), diseases, chronic aches and infections each require a different Ritual to heal. These each cost only three points across the board. The specifications of such rites depend on the healer's outlook on injury and disease. Some believe that medicine is simply a matter of contacting (or driving out) the right spirits, while others insist that internal energy must be guided around an obstruction. Healers should decide ahead of time what their magic philosophy is.

Herbalism/Brewing

This elemental Path allows a wise person to brew natural ingredients into potions, salves, oils, incense, poultices, stews and powders with real potency. It requires the Herbalism Knowledge to perform and usually involves dozens of harvested materials — plants, mosses, grains, molds, earth and sometimes bodily fluids or remains, depending on the herbalist's practices.

Many herbalists believe that the magic they work comes through an affinity with the innate power of living things. Most dispute the concept of will-driven magic, arguing that all things have powerful properties (or inner spirits), essences which must be respected. Herbal magic is not simple enchantment — it is a relationship between the wise one and the Earth.

Like the Enchantment Path (above), magical Herbalism demands a certain investment of time, effort and material. Only the right ingredients will do! The basic system for herbal magics is the same as Enchantment, but the concoctions take longer to prepare. Each level of Effect takes two to four days of harvesting, sorting, mixing and aging before the results can be achieved. This time can be reduced by a well-stocked pantry or ready garden, but will almost never drop below one day per level. These things take time, dearie!

Herbal concoctions are usually good for a single use and a single purpose. The potency of the broth, salve or brew depends on the herbalist's successes (Intelligence + Herbalism). A single success indicates a bitter batch that is only marginally effective, while four or more indicate an especially enticing bit of work with double potency and a pleasing form. Victims of the darker variety of Herbalism should be allowed to resist the Effect by rolling their Stamina (or Willpower) against the herbalist's successes.

Because of the slow and subtle nature of herbal and brewing magics, their exact Effects are better left to stories than to systems. Players are encouraged to devise their own recipes (Rituals), with the samples below as guidelines. The discovery of some new brew might be a subplot of a whole story as the consor seeks the perfect materials to concoct a love potion or experiments with the flora of some new Realm.

Roll: Intelligence + Herbalism No Willpower cost

Effects

• Enables the herbalist to concoct poultices and brews which cure minor aches or rashes, induce or prevent sleep, alleviate symptoms of slight illnesses, preserve foods when they would otherwise spoil, and other minor Effects that would never be considered magic.

•• At this level, an herbalist's creations quickly cure minor illnesses and pains, avert or confer pregnancy with 100% certainty, radically alter a person's mood, discourage or attract animals or insects, induce or cure intoxication with a few sips, and other noticeable effects that, while not apparently magical, seem remarkable.

••• These potent concoctions can put people to sleep with a pinch, reduce the effects of deadly poisons and serious illnesses, speed recovery of open wounds and broken bones by 50% or more, put folks into light trances or randy moods, and perform other obviously unusual functions with amazing speed.

•••• Brews and items created with this level of Herbalism can accomplish some obviously unearthly things — adding one or two dots to a Physical or Social Trait for a scene, clearing up an infection in a few minutes, aid recovery from life-threatening illnesses and such. Obviously, these effects are subject to both accepted local reality and Storyteller judgment; they are not sudden, flashy or long-lasting.

••••• These are the magic brews of legend — sleeping potions, love oils, deadly poisons, healing salves, instant cures, all-night aphrodisiacs, flying ointments and other

impossible (or at least improbable) solutions. Such potions, if they work, allow the imbibers to defy conventional reality for a scene or two. Like Curses, the reality such concoctions displace is open to interpretation. Did this person really fly, or did she just think she did? Did the apple kill her, or was there strychnine in the apple? Players should not merely drink some potion and turn into swans — the effects of the mightiest herbal arts remain subtle and subjective.

Summoning, Binding and Warding

I caught her on Mount Helicon... She was bathing in a spring, and I caught her and bound her with moly — sorcerer's garlic, as it's sometimes called — and with certain rituals. The hardest part was getting her back to England.

— Erasmus Fry, Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*

The most dangerous sort of Hedge Magic. Summoning Path Rituals draw forth creatures — from rats or birds to vampires or werewolves — guard against them, or press them into service. It is a complicated Path, loaded with precautions and Rituals, and even under the best of circumstances, it creates lifelong enemies.

As with any other form of Hedge Magic, there are multitudes of Summoning styles, from simple pagan appeals to the creatures of the Goddess to elaborate medieval rituals, Aboriginal soul-snarings and modern black magic compulsions. Few are designed with politeness in mind. Most order some being to appear, bind him magically when he does, and keep him at arm's length until he does what you want him to. The style of magic and outlook of the magician will have plenty to do with the Summoned creature's disposition — and its desire for revenge.

Most such Rituals require long preparations. Few wizards would be foolish enough to compel anything, especially something powerful, to appear without first making sure their asses were covered. These protections require Rituals, a separate one for each different kind of being. After these Wards are laid, the Summoning begins. This too requires a specific Ritual; one cannot Ward against a dog, then Summon a vampire. Finally, when the one called does arrive, a Binding may be laid to force some kind of service. A Minor Binding merely requires one task be performed before the Binding dissipates. A Major Binding compels servitude until some condition is met and usually creates an eternal grudge. No one, not even an animal, likes being forced into service.

Some magicians prefer to use only Wards or Summonings to protect themselves or to call upon aid. Only a fool would dare to lay a Binding without protection, although some have tried. Dismissal Rituals offer the magician some sort of compromise. If the rite is successful, the Summoned being will leave in peace — for the moment, at least. The forms these Rituals take can range from dancing around a consecrated mound to human sacrifice, bended-knee prayers or intricate circles which take days to engrave. Players and Storytellers should play such ceremonies to the dramatic hilt (see the fiction opener for this section). The bare-bones systems for such actions might work as follows:

- **Warding:** The magician lays some sort of Ward (a pentacle, a triangle of salt, an offering of food and good liquor, gold, herbs, a plate of wolfsbane and blood, etc.) and rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty is the Path's level + 4). The target of the Ward will have to spend one Willpower per the magician's success to enter the area protected. A Ward lasts for one scene per success. A fair but devious Storyteller might make the Ward roll herself, leaving the magician to wonder whether or not his Ward will hold!

This Ritual will act as countermagick (one die per success) or reduce any incoming Gift or Discipline by one dot of effect for every one of the wizard's successes. Wards do not, however, restrict gunfire.

- **Summoning:** After a long series of recitations, entreaties and preparations, the wizard rolls his Charisma + Occult with the usual difficulty. He must accumulate twice as many successes as his target's (permanent) Willpower rating with one roll per hour. The range of the compulsion is one mile per level of the Path rating used, i.e. a Path level three Summoning has a reach of three miles. Once this is done, the first such being within the area of enchantment will be compelled to go to the wizard as rapidly as possible.

This magic does not instantly conjure a creature out of thin air. The Summoned one will come at her own speed. If there isn't a suitable being in range, the wizard may have to continue until he finds one. For each Willpower point spent, he may add another mile to the range. This is a dangerous tactic, because if it works...

- **Minor Binding:** Once the subject is present, the magician can try to compel her to service — if he dares! A Minor Binding pits the wizard's will against his subject's, using the Immutable Laws of What Is. True Mages claim that such a contest is a reflection of Avatar against Avatar... with perhaps a bit of outside help from other concerned parties.

To affect a Minor Binding, the wizard spends a Willpower point and performs his Ritual (Manipulation + Occult). His target rolls her own Willpower (difficulty of the wizard's own). If she wins, the Binding has no effect. If she loses, she must perform one task for him before she is freed. This should be spelled out in as complete a form as possible. Rest assured that any Bound being will be looking for the way out.

- **Major Binding:** The system for a Major Binding is the same as a Minor one, except that both parties extend their rolls to amass 10 successes. For each roll, each party spends a Willpower point; whoever reaches 10 first (and still has Willpower left over) wins. If the Summoned one loses, she is bound to the wizard until some condition is met. This "contract" must be specified at once and can be anything from "Until my hair goes gray" to "Until Haley's Comet next approaches Earth," so long as it is a possible event (Conceptions of "possible" can get pretty fluid, however!).

If the wizard loses, he is toast.

• **Dismissal:** If the wizard wants his subject to depart in peace, he performs another Ritual (involving some sort of thanks, a benediction and a request to depart, usually with a healthy bribe attached). A simple Wits + Occult roll with normal difficulty "persuades" the Summoned one to leave without ripping the wizard a new asshole. This does not prevent later animosities, but for now, the being will leave content. This will *not* work after a Major Binding has been attempted.

Hedge Magic Summonings work only on material beings. Ephemera (above) handles spirit-dealings, and the Dark Sorcery Path of Summoning (in **The Book of Madness**) describes the command of elemental beings and demons. Vampires, werecreatures, mages and those of fae blood can counterattack with their own magical abilities unless a Ward or some other outside force prevents them from acting. This Path is best performed with allies standing by to help.

The Rituals above need not be performed together. Bindings or Wardings can be used on their own if the circumstances permit. Players and Storytellers should be flexible, dramatic and fair when running such Summonings. This magic Path could stimulate either suspenseful storytelling or intense debate.

Rolls: Wits + Occult (Warding)	No cost
Charisma + Occult (Summoning)	No cost
Manipulation + Occult (Binding)	Costs 1 Willpower
Wits + Occult (Dismissal)	No cost

Effects

• This level's Rituals affect only small animals — rats, bats, birds, lizards, etc. The wizard may Summon three of these per success.

•• The higher mammals (chimps, dolphins, cats, dogs, wolves, apes) may be Summoned and controlled at this Path level. A magician may control two of these per success.

••• Normal humans can be Summoned at this level. A wizard attempting this should use some artifact of the individual he wants to command (a hair, an item of clothing, etc.) in his Rituals for them to work. Only one can be commanded per success.

•••• Minor supernatural beings (ghouls, Kinfolk, other consors or familiars, formori, etc.) can be brought forward and Warded. The limitations of normal humans apply.

••••• Major supernatural beings (vampires, werecreatures, mages, faeries, and some types of earthbound monsters) can be Summoned and Bound with these Rituals. Only one individual can be so treated, and some bit of fur, blood, armor, clothing, etc. must be used. This is really dangerous territory; one blown roll and...

Rituals: Each different kind of subject, whether bird, wolf, or vampire, has a unique set of Rituals which must be purchased and used to have any effect. Warding, Summoning, Minor Binding, Major Binding and Dismissal all require separate Rituals as well.



Psychic Phenomena



It was always foul.

Slip into the thoughts of the best person who ever lived, even Saint Thomas Aquinas, for instance, just to pick an absolutely terrific person you'd think had a mind so clean you could eat off it (to paraphrase my mother), and when you come out — take my word for it — you'd want to take a long, intense shower in Lysol.

— Harlan Ellison, *Mefisto in Onyx*

Disciples of the Mind regard psychics with pity and slight disdain. After all, they settle for such a small taste of the possibilities of the unchained mind. How could they be so blind? But the un-Awakened psychics, who reach beyond their physical limitations, know their talent for what it is — a backstage pass to the show in progress.

Psychic Phenomena are a mixed blessing. Unlike hedge magicians, psychics rarely seek out their abilities. They come naturally, unexpectedly, shaking that person's world and forcing them to either hide their gift or suffer hell for it. In their earliest stages, Psychic Phenomena are inconvenient at best and terrifying at worst. Strange, sudden insights and frightening spasms of power push some psychics into insanity. Those who have fully, spontaneously Awakened might relate with the lot of the kid who just discovered his ESP. Such an epiphany might leave you feeling like a hero and a freak at once.

With practice, the psychic can refine her talents into the sixth senses they were originally intended to be. By opening her mind to its possibilities, she has more in common with the True Mage than he would like to admit.

Phenomena

It's a rare psychic who shares more than one Phenomena. For the most part, these mental adepts have a single natural aptitude which can be trained but hardly diversified. There are no Paths for Psychic Phenomena, only the aptitudes themselves. With practice and luck, however, a consor with mental talent can delve further into the world around her than many more self-absorbed magicians.

All Psychic Phenomena below cost one point of Willpower to use.

Clairvoyance

Clairvoyance is the ability to extend the senses far beyond their normal range and to see or hear things that are happening in other places. This power normally requires some focus, such as someone or something that the psychic knows is present at the area to be observed.

Psychic characters must roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 8) to project the senses. When projecting, the psychic can no longer see what is happening around her body, nor may she effect events that she witnesses. The psychic is merely an observer.

Roll: Perception + Alertness Costs 1 Willpower

Effect

• The psychic sees events in a hazy, dreamlike manner in any room in the building that he is in. These visions are easily misunderstood.

•• The clairvoyant can see events anywhere in a fifty mile radius and sometimes hear them as well (3 successes), although the sounds are distorted.

••• The psychic can see and hear events anywhere within a 250 mile radius and even touch objects (3 successes), although they feel vague and amorphous.

•••• The clairvoyant can now see, hear and touch anything within a 2,000 mile radius.

••••• The master psychic who has reached this level can use all five senses on any object anywhere in the world.

Telekinesis

Telekinesis allows the character to project her will and move objects with the power of thought. A roll of Wits + Athletics (difficulty 8) is required to use this power. If the psychic botches the roll, objects begin to fly randomly about. To first pick up an object, it must be within view. You need not see that item while holding it.

Roll: Wits + Athletics Costs 1 Willpower

Effects

• The psychic can levitate small objects with great difficulty. Physical gestures make this somewhat easier (e.g., throwing, lifting, etc.). If these are not possible, the difficulty rises by 1.

•• The telekenetic can affect small objects, such as bending a spoon or levitating a glass of water. Again, without gestures, the difficulty rises by 1.

••• At this degree of proficiency, the psychic can handle an object in the next room and throw it around. Gesturing sharply in that direction helps. However, the psychic may only lift objects that require *half* his Intelligence (determined as if Intelligence replaced Strength) to lift.

•••• The telekenetic can lift items that require his full Intelligence and no longer needs to gesture. He can pick up any item within a 200 foot radius and can pick up more than one object by concentrating.

••••• The psychic who has reached this level can lift anything in sight which his Intelligence + 2 can handle. He can manipulate as many items as he has points of Dexterity.

Telepathy

This ability allows a psychic to read minds. The telepath must roll Intelligence + Intuition against the target's Willpower to read its mind. The being whose thoughts are being read is unaware of the psychic's presence unless he botches the roll.

As the quote at the beginning of this section shows, this talent is not always the most pleasant of Phenomena. Both player and Storyteller should make the most of the degradation and disgust this talent can evoke in a psychic. The darkest secrets in the World of Darkness can get *really* unpleasant.

Roll: Intellegence + Intuition Costs 1 Willpower

Effects

• The psychic can feel the current emotions and sense the mood of one target within view.

•• The telepath can read the surface thoughts of one target within view, receiving whatever they are thinking about at that moment.

••• At this level, it is possible to read the target's recent memories and plans for the near future. The target must still be in sight.

•••• The psychic can read the target's deep thoughts and plans for the distant future. The amount of information received varies at the Storyteller's discretion, based on the number of successes. He can read the minds of people in other nearby rooms, but requires descriptions of them to "get a lock-on."

••••• This master telepath may now read multiple minds at once and discover the deepest secrets of people (even things that they have repressed). He can read the mind of someone across the world, so long as he can see them or their image, or even read the minds of those using psychic powers elsewhere in the world.

True Faith



Those people from whom I have freed myself are the ones who become attracted by the body and repelled by the spirit, and who know naught of Love and Beauty. The only mediator between them and God is God's pity for their ignorance of the law of God. I cannot judge, for I was one of them, but I sympathize with all my heart.

— Kahlil Gibran, *Spirits Rebellious*

The details of this Numina can be found in Book One of **The Book of Shadows**, as well as **Vampire: The Masquerade** and **The Hunters Hunted**. Briefly, this Affinity allows a companion to turn aside vampires or hostile magicks through his belief in an outside power, in some God or gods beyond human will.

The exact origin of this power is open to debate. Some mages claim that it conclusively proves the existence of the One, while others consider it the ultimate expression of suppressed Awakening — the innate Avatar held back yet focused by what its incarnation *wants* so badly to believe. Whatever the "real" reason behind the Numina may be, its power against the undead is legendary. For this reason alone, consors with True Faith are treasured by mages who cross swords with the Kindred on a regular basis.

The blade of the Faithful, however, is double-edged. Besides the steadfast convictions of those who hold the Light (convictions that often turn to fanaticism if conflicts arise), there is the dulling effect True Faith has on True Magick, almost as if both were opposing forces — or the same force, albeit in a different form. The line between a Faithful companion and a witch-hunter is a pretty thin one.

In game terms, True Faith allows the companion to use one die of countermagick for every dot of Faith he has. Vampires must make a Willpower roll to even approach one with True Faith. The human character's rating is the difficulty of the roll. To progress in Faith, however, the character must follow the tenets of his chosen belief without fail. Faltering jeopardizes further gains, and continual doubt can erase the Numina completely.

Each dot of True Faith costs seven "freebie" points. Only roleplaying can reflect this Numina's vagaries. After character creation, the rating cannot be increased by spending experience, only by living it.


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Chapter Six: Who's Who

Welcome to my little world
Completely self-contained, yeah
We'd like to eat up all your sins
And soak up, soak up,
Soak up lots of pain, yeah
— Oingo Boingo, "Pain"



The following custos examples range from normal human servants to weird Umbral beasties. Some serve Tradition masters, while others work with Technocrats or more extreme factions. The different custos types are explained in detail in Chapter One.

Storytellers may employ these ready-to-use consors as inspiration, templates or non-player characters. We recommend that Storytellers using these characters in their game alter them somewhat (even if means just changing their names) to foil well-read players.

The motivations for an allied character are pretty important; they will determine the strength (or weakness) of that custos' devotion to the mage and her associates. Always remember that custos are individuals, not mere cannon-fodder. While many acolytes will throw themselves into harm's way if necessary, there must be some compelling reason — love, fanaticism, desperation, etc. — for them to do so. The custos below have solid reasons for what they do, which can lead a story into all kinds of complications. Never forget, or underestimate, the role of acolytes in your chronicle. They can become the hinge of some great conflict or hold a story's resolution in their un-Awakened hands.

Servants (Low-level Acolytes)

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what *work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.*
— Psalm 44

"Annie" (Rebecca Goldman)

Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Caregiver
Residence: Hollytimber
Affiliation: Marauder
Type: Acolyte (spear-carrier)
Concept: English maid, circa 1940
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Expression 3, Intuition 1, Streetwise 1, Style 1
Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 1, Melee 1, Research 1, Service (tea serving, table serving, etc.) 1, Stealth 1
Knowledges: Art History 3, Enigmas 1, Investigate 1, Linguistics (French, Hebrew) 2
Willpower: 3
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Mentor 1, Resources 2
Special Advantages: None
Merits and Flaws: Acute Senses (+ 1), Ambidextrous (+ 1), Amnesia (- 2)

Background: Rebecca Goldman was born in the Bronx and spent most of her life in New York. She always loved art and old things and was particularly fascinated by museums. She managed to wrangle her parents into taking her to every museum in New York and a few others as well, learning all she could about what sorts of exhibits they scheduled and the care of priceless antiques and artwork. Alternately mocked and admired by her peers for her absorption in art, Rebecca turned ever more to the museum for companionship. She began painting and did well enough in school to win a scholarship to college, where she studied art history with an eye toward becoming a museum curator.

She failed to make any real friends in college and was always lonely and searching for something she could paint that would express her love for the old days and the idyllic lifestyle pre-World War II times seemed to offer. A certain longing and wistful desire infused her works, and she began to imagine herself in various roles among beautiful antiques and lovely gardens. Although she did not know it, Rebecca was slipping toward catatonia and actually had several episodes of "lost time" in which she simply sat while she imagined another world around herself.



When the Marauder known as "Mum" encountered her while believing she was visiting the museum with her long-dead son, their psychoses overlapped, and Rebecca became caught up in Mum's Quiet. Because Mum has a stronger mind and will than Rebecca, the young woman now finds herself cast in the role Mum has created for her, that of her serving maid Annie. Annie has no recollection of her former life as Rebecca.

Image: As Rebecca, she is an attractive jeans-clad girl with curly brown hair and a wistful, haunted look about her. She speaks with a pronounced New York accent. As Annie, which is the only personality she now recognizes, she is immaculately clad in a maid's uniform with a starched white apron. Her hair is bound back in a bun, and she speaks with a lower-class British accent.

Roleplaying Notes: Rebecca was somewhat shy and hesitant, making it difficult for her to make friends. She was passionately interested in art and museum work and never missed an important exhibit if she could help it. As Annie, she is much more outgoing, given to chattering on about nothing in particular in a cheerful and helpful manner. Her special "training" in various helpful fields has puzzled Annie (why does a maid need to know how to fight?), but she consents to it with good will. After all, Mum knows best.

Story Hints: Annie/Rebecca might be encountered either by accident through coming into contact with "Mum" or purposely if the characters have been sent to retrieve her for some reason.



Josh Snelling

Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Conformist
Residence: Hightower Apartments (studio)
Affiliation: Technocracy (Syndicate)
Type: Acolyte
Concept: Computer operator
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 1, Dodge 2, Intuition 1, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 1, Firearms 1, Research 2, Survival 2, Technology 2
Knowledges: Computers 3, Computer Hacking 3, Enigmas 1, Finance 3, Investigate 2, Law 1, Linguistics (German) 1, Occult 1, Science 2
Willpower: 4
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Resources 2
Special Advantages: None
Merits and Flaws: Computer Aptitude (+ 1), Allergic to alcohol (- 1)

Background: Josh Snelling always considered himself above average. In school, he was the one who threw off the curve on tests. Once when he brought home a B on his report card rather than straight As, his father beat him so badly he couldn't return to school for two weeks. Josh survived and vowed to himself that he'd never fail again. No matter what, he'd survive.

As soon as he was able to do so, he moved into his own apartment and began working at the Computer Shak. Things went well until his father put his mother in the hospital with a beating so bad it ruptured her lung. Sick of his father's violence, Josh decided to ruin him. Having learned his way around the Internet, he broke into his father's records at the bank, his credit card companies and even at his work. With a few strokes, he erased his father's finances and filed numerous unsatisfactory reports on his job performance. With a few more, he gave him several thousand dollars outstanding debt on each credit card. Needless to say, his father was ruined and is now in jail for tax evasion (which Josh also engineered).

All this clever manipulation did alert the Syndicate, however. They were looking for a few good recruits, and Josh signed on. Of course, they made him an offer he couldn't refuse — literally.

Josh is a frightened young man. He realizes that the Syndicate is a dangerous organization and he knows they wouldn't hesitate to ruin him and wipe him out just like he did to his father. He has begun teaching himself survival skills (along with dozens of manuals) in case he has to make a run for it. He has no idea he's dealing with mages. The Syndicate he fears is a looming confederation of dangerous mortals.

Image: Josh is an average-looking young man in his early 20s. Unlike many computer "nerds," Josh is in very good shape from working out, hiking, and going on wilderness survival trips. He keeps his brown hair reasonably short and wears suits to work to blend in with the other computer operators. At home he wears jeans. Though he tries to hide it, Josh always looks a little scared.

Roleplaying Notes: Josh lives in terror. He knows better than anyone what could happen to him if the Syndicate figured out he's not a loyal "company man." He fears the underworld and believes that should he ever reveal anything of what he knows about their operations, he'd be killed — or worse. He is racing against time to prepare himself to disappear into the back woods some night. He doesn't know you just can't hide well enough to throw off mages if they really want you.

Story Hints: Josh might come to players' attention when they stop his paroled father from murdering him. Glass Walkers (a tribe of urban werewolves) might have taken note of Josh and his situation. One of them might be a mage's consor and suggest that Josh might know some interesting information — if they can get him out of the Syndicate's clutches.



Body Count (Floyd Thomas)

Nature: Bravo
Demeanor: Bravo
Residence: The Proving Ground
Affiliation: Nephandi
Type: Acolyte (Dupe)
Concept: Psychotic Skinhead
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2
Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Security 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Torture 1
Knowledges: Finance 1, Law 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2
Willpower: 2
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Fame 1, Mentor 1
Special Advantages: None
Merits and Flaws: None

Background: Body Count was born in Detroit and given a name (Floyd) he doesn't want to remember. Brought up in one of Detroit's tougher neighborhoods, he was taught to hate "niggers and kikes and wops and all other un-American trash." He first killed when he was 10. A smaller boy refused to give up his lunch money to Floyd. Floyd beat the boy senseless, then held him underwater until he drowned. It gave him a sense of power and he wanted to do it again — soon.

By the time he was 12, Floyd had a gun and a gang (though some people on the block thought he was slow getting to it). He began shaving his head, shouting fascist slogans, and wearing basic black with jackboots and swastikas. He renamed himself Body Count.

His gang terrorized the neighborhood, and it wasn't long before he was contacted by Sigmund Groell. This new mentor captured Floyd's imagination with visions of a takeover of the whole city. This would be followed by the state and the nation as they gained more converts. Naturally, Groell explained, he would be happy to supply expert military training, weaponry and even a place to train and live among "the pure." Body Count took the bait. Now he and his gang have joined like-minded people from all over the country at the Proving Ground, several acres of fields and firing ranges set off from the surrounding area by electric fences and armed guards. They are training and awaiting their summons.

Image: Body Count is a big bruiser, standing 6'3" and weighing close to three hundred pounds. All of it is muscle. Arnold Schwarzenegger should be this muscled! Body Count has no body hair at all. He shaves his head and body daily and polishes his bald top to a high sheen.

Roleplaying Notes: Body Count is a killer. Though he can use cunning when necessary, his usual approach is a frontal assault. There is nothing subtle about him. Those he can intimidate can live if he isn't in a bad mood. Those who stand up to him die.

Story Hints: The characters might stumble upon the Proving Ground while Body Count is on guard or might meet him with a lot of his friends when Groell (a Nephandus) sends his troops to kidnap (or assassinate) a mage who has been interfering with his plans.

Sallow (John Bremmen)

Nature: Visionary
Demeanor: Deviant
Residence: Tamalin (an old RV)
Affiliation: Tradition (Dreamspeaker)
Type: Acolyte (Dreamer)
Concept: Whacked-out Seer
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 2
Talents: Awareness 2, Expression 4, Intuition 5
Skills: Drive 1, Meditation 1, Sculpture 4, Technology 2
Knowledges: Cosmology 2, Electronics 3, Enigmas 2, Occult 1
Willpower: 4
Backgrounds: Destiny 2, Dream 5
Special Advantages: None
Merits and Flaws: Nightmares (- 1), Strangeness (- 1), The Bard's Tongue (- 1).

Background: Born just outside of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in the early '70s, Sallow was once known as John Bremmen. Sallow's life was a slice of perfectly ordinary, small town, apple pie Americana until the year he turned 15. It was then that the dreams (and nightmares) began. Sallow's dreams were bizarre, Jungian affairs in which everything was a symbol for something else. Yet, they always came true. Due to the complexity and strangeness of the images, Sallow was hardly ever able to interpret the dreams until they actually came to pass.

If Sallow's prophetic dreams were all of happy or minor events, he might have learned to accept his inability to properly interpret them. Unfortunately, all too often, they predicted disaster. After he saw his best friend run over by a drunken driver (an event Sallow realized he had dreamed of for many nights), Sallow became obsessed with divining the meaning of his dreams. However, the harder he tried, the more obscure the dreams became. Only when the prophesied event occurred did the meaning become clear.

By the age of 19, Sallow had utterly withdrawn from the world around him. Refusing to go to college or hold a job, he spent most of his days and nights in bed alternatively trying to stay awake or to sleep for days (even weeks) on end. Although his parents brought Sallow to every type of medical specialist they could think of, no one could seem to help their child.

Then one day, a few years ago, Sallow made a small breakthrough on his own. He realized that staring into the fuzz on his TV screen after sign-off was incredibly soothing to him. Sallow soon learned to induce hypnosis using the white noise and fuzzy picture as a cue. Although he still couldn't interpret his dreams, he felt much more relaxed once he had stared at the screen for a few hours.

Last year, a Dreamspeaker mage known as Assentia discovered Sallow while on an Umbral journey. His aura drew her to the powerful, emotionally-scarred youth. Offering her services as a counselor, Assentia slowly gained his confidence. She also discovered that Sallow would often mumble phrases aloud from his dreams and visions while staring at his TV screen. These phrases, although still somewhat obtuse, helped Assentia to partially interpret several of the visions.

After experiencing the power and truth of Sallow's visions, Assentia vowed to keep the young oracle with her and help him overcome the mental block that keeps Sallow from fully embracing his mystic abilities. Assentia and Sallow are now quite close, each protective of the other. They travel the country in Assentia's RV,



equipped with a large-screen TV (no satellite dish; the TV only receives static in most places). Although some Dreamspeakers frown upon any reliance on technological devices, Assentia believes true oracles cannot be judged.

Image: Sallow is a tall, lanky young man with tangled brown hair and slightly crossed brown eyes. He usually wears pajamas, preferring never to wear street clothes save when absolutely necessary. Sallow suffers from mild jaundice, the onset of which coincided with the first of his prophetic dreams. Despite his rumpled appearance, Sallow has a strangely compelling aura most accurately described as that of an ancient child.

Roleplaying Notes: Sallow rarely makes complete sense when he speaks, unless one listens very carefully or in just the right way. Assentia often interprets for him and will never let anyone else speak to him without being present herself. Sallow always appears as if he could slip off to sleep — or perhaps to another dimension — at any moment.

Story Hints: The seer's dreams could involve player characters. Other mages have heard of Sallow. Some covet him as a useful information font (perhaps kidnapping him, in which case Assentia will be desperate to rescue him), while others might point characters in need of an oracle to Sallow for aid. Sallow may be encountered anywhere, since Assentia always keeps them both on the move.

Acolytes

The Way means inducing the people to have the same aim as the leadership, so that they will share death and share life, without fear of danger.

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Reynolds

Nature: Caregiver
Demeanor: Perfectionist
Residence: Haven House
Affiliation: Tradition (Order of Hermes)
Type: Acolyte (aware)
Concept: English butler
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1, Subterfuge 2
Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette (servant/master relationship) 4, Firearms 1, Meditation 1, Melee 2, Research 1, Security 2, Stealth 1
Knowledges: Enigmas 1, Finance 2, Investigate 2, Law 2, Linguistics (French, Italian) 2, Occult 2
Willpower: 5
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Mentor 2, Resources 3
Special Advantages: None
Merits and Flaws: Fast Learner (+ 3)

Background: Born to a middle class family in London, Terrence Reynolds always dreamed of one day living in a fine, big house and having lots of servants at his beck and call. He got his wish in a roundabout way. His mother wanted him to have chances his father never did, so she saved for years to pay for his elocution lessons and etiquette classes. Knowing that the key to his dream lay in leaving his accent behind him, Terrence cooperated. The job market didn't.

Terrence found himself in his early 20s with no real desire to work in any given field and few opportunities had he chosen to pursue them. Then he read an article about a school that trained butlers and gentlemen's gentlemen. The article indicated that many wealthy clients would pay handsomely for such services. Though it seemed a little outmoded to him, Terrence applied and was accepted. Feeling that a butler should be well versed in a number of areas, Reynolds went beyond the normal course and did several independent studies, particularly on servant etiquette.

His abilities and hard work did not go unrecognized. One of the sponsors of the school, Sir Rodney Haversham, was so impressed by Reynolds that he hired him as assistant butler to his own. When the older man retired, Reynolds took his place, was made privy to the master's secrets, and has ruled Haven House ever since. He lives in



a fine house and oversees a staff of over 30. Though the house lies within a Horizon Realm, he is a contented man.

Image: The quintessential English butler, Reynolds is in his 50s, but still keeps his trim, upright figure. His dark hair is graying, giving him a dignity to match his manner. Reynolds is never less than impeccably dressed.

Roleplaying Notes: Though he is very much satisfied with his position in life, Reynolds is bemused by Sir Rodney's views on other mages. He feels that the Traditions ought to cooperate more extensively with each other and the Orphans (though many of them are dreadfully dressed and lack any manners whatsoever). To that end, he is a member of the Crossovers.

Story Hints: The characters could interact with Reynolds in his role as a member of the Crossovers. If something happened to Sir Rodney, Reynolds might seek out the characters to assist him.

Dr. Shayna Reed

Nature: Architect
Demeanor: Director
Residence: Raleigh, NC
Affiliation: Tradition (Euthanatos)
Type: Acolyte (Unaware)
Concept: Forensic Pathologist
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Intuition 3, Instruction 3, Scan 2
Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Research 4
Knowledges: Investigation 2, Law 3, Medicine 5, Poison 4, Science
Willpower: 4



Backgrounds: Allies 1, Influence 2, Resources 4.
Special Advantages: None.
Merits and Flaws: Compulsion (Perfection) (- 1), Higher Purpose (+ 1)

Background: Dr. Shayna Reed is a brilliant forensic pathologist, a medical doctor with a law degree as well. From her origins as the oldest child in a poor family, Dr. Reed used her academic ability to accomplish great things. A gradate of Georgetown Law School and Georgetown Medical School, Dr. Reed specialized in forensic pathology — the science of interpreting the effects of trauma, disease and decay on the body.

Unconsciously driven by memories of her helplessness during her father's painful death from cancer, Dr. Reed has risen to become the Chief Medical Examiner for her state. She also lectures at local universities and seminars across the country and is a consultant for the Violent Crimes Task Force of the FBI.

It was in this role that she came to the attention of the Euthanatos. While Dr. Reed is completely unaware of the connection, and would find the very idea of magick absurd, she has occasionally benefited from the protection and assistance of Euthanatos agents during her career. In turn, the Tradition mages use her research, writing and certain individual cases to further their own studies of death and dying.

Image: Dr. Reed is an attractive, trim blonde in her mid-40s. She is very intense and can be intimidating when angry. While she is pleasant and polite, she often is preoccupied with her work to the detriment of personal relationships.

Roleplaying Notes: Dr. Reed is a very intelligent, very intense professional. She works hard and rarely relaxes, seeking to impose reason and order on a chaotic world. She is driven both to enhance her own scientific expertise and to find the truth about the deaths of her "patients" and bring killers to justice. She often appears distant and a bit cold, but is actually a woman of great passion. She strives to keep herself and her emotions under rigid control at all times.

Story Hints: Players could encounter Dr. Reed in any number of ways if they are involved in a story dealing with a death. She is equally as formidable as either an ally or an adversary.

Cody

Nature: Martyr
Demeanor: Deviant
Residence: (Secret)
Affiliation: Tradition (Verbena)
Type: Acolyte (aware)
Concept: Bodyguard
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Intuition 2, Streetwise 2
Skills: Drive 2, Firearms (submachine gun) 5, Melee 3, Security 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Technology 2
Knowledges: Investigate 2, Law 1, Linguistics (Spanish) 1, Occult 2
Willpower: 7
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 2, Mentor 3, Status (mage/custos society) 2
Special Advantages: None
Merits and Flaws: Code of Honor (+ 1), True Love (+ 1)

Background: Originally from the east Tennessee mountains, Cody was a farm boy. He grew up next door to Ella Claire Monroe, the prettiest girl in the mountains. Ella Claire was rumored to be a witch, but Cody didn't care. He loved her heart and soul. He asked her out twice and was on the verge of asking her again when their lives changed radically.

While he was out hunting with his daddy's shotgun, he heard a scream. Rushing over to investigate, he found two strange men dressed in black forcing Ella Claire into a black car. He called out for them to stop, and one of them turned toward him, pulling a gun. Cody shot him first. Ella Claire broke away from the other one, and Cody blasted him too, but not before he himself was shot.

The next thing he knew he was looking up at Ella Claire. She had blood all over her arms — his blood — but he only felt a little pain, as if from a healing wound. Cody didn't understand everything that was going on, but he knew two things: they had to get out of there, and he was damned if he was going to lose her, witch or not.



Forty years later, he's now a professional bodyguard. He's never stopped loving Ella Claire, though he's never told her so.

Image: Cody is pushing 60, and his once-red hair has grown sparse and dulled to a reddish brown. He is still tall and muscular and moves as if he were far younger — the result of Ella Claire's magick, which has extended his lifespan. His face looks as though it was pasted together from wildly different sources, making it look a little like a scrunched-up freckled pig. The shadow from the brim of his hat hides most of his face. Most people don't notice what Cody looks like after a while in his presence and are sometimes startled when a stranger reacts to his looks. He wears a black leather duster under which he hides his ever-present submachine gun.

Roleplaying Notes: Cody is a down home, laid-back, lazy country boy — until he needs to take action. Then he's at the forefront, ready to respond to whatever threat there might be. He takes his job seriously and usually extends it to include guarding anyone who seems unable to guard themselves (children, expectant mothers, clueless idiots), often making himself a target by getting between them and danger. He's a friendly cuss, always willing to chew the fat. Someday that may prove his undoing as he often says a little too much when unfriendly ears might overhear.

Story Hints: The characters might interact with Cody in his capacity as a recruiter for the Crossovers or might suddenly be helped by Cody while embroiled in a dangerous firefight or magickal battle.

The Reverend Lonnie Ray Singer

Nature: Architect
Demeanor: Fanatic
Residence: Church of Spiritual Renewal
Affiliation: Traditions (Celestial Chorus)
Type: Acolyte (aware)
Concept: Traveling evangelist
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 3
Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Fast-talk 4, Firearms 1, Meditation 2
Knowledges: Computer 1, Enigmas 1, Finance 3, Law 1, Linguistics (Latin) 1, Occult 1, Theology 3
Willpower: 3
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Fame 1, Influence 2, Mentor 1
Special Advantages: None
Merits and Flaws: None

Background: Lonnie Ray Singer was born in Texas, and he was raised to get right with the Lord. Fundamentalist to the core, his parents dragged him to every tent revival and meeting from Georgia to California and back. Along the way, little Lonnie learned a little about religion, a goodly amount about finances, and a lot about showmanship.

By the time he was nine, Lonnie Ray was doing guest appearances at revivals, thumping his Bible and screaming out denouncements of the sinners. His parents pocketed the money and gave him candy, but what he really performed for was the adulation of the audience. He grew into a handsome young man with silky manners that wowed the ladies.



About that time, he received his first visit from a charismatic member of the Celestial Chorus who stayed up all night talking with the young preacher and questioning his beliefs and practices. After a night of examining his conscience, Lonnie Ray was shaken and deeply ashamed by his selfish acts. God, he realized, walked in the hearts of all faiths. He determined that night to change his ways and bring folks to the One through gentler means.

Lonnie Ray's powers of persuasion are quite sufficient to sway the hardest heart and to gentle the wildest maniac. He travels the tent circuit, bringing words of comfort and compassion to all who attend his meetings. In each town, he takes half the money he collects and gives it to local charities. When not moving on to the next town or preaching, Lonnie Ray can be found helping out at homeless shelters and soup kitchens or visiting people in hospitals and nursing homes. Many of those who have been the recipient of Lonnie Ray's kindness have joined his caravan and become part of the Celestial Chorus' network of good Samaritans.

Image: This handsome young man (early 30s) has blond good looks, a winning smile and a handshake and "Bless you" for just about everyone he meets or who attends his revival meetings. He wears inexpensive, well-tailored clothing.

Roleplaying Notes: When not in the pulpit, Lonnie Ray seems straightforward and level-headed and is obviously quite intelligent. He is generous to a fault and would literally give someone the shirt off his back. Once involved in his sermons, he's a mesmerizing speaker, almost compelling those in the audience to believe in the One. In his own quiet way, Lonnie Ray is as fanatical in his desire to save souls as are the more bombastic, hate-mongering evangelists who can't understand the appeal of his message of love and neighborly generosity.

Story Hints: The characters (or those they care about) might be singled out by Lonnie Ray as people who look like they could help him in some task (such as delivering 30 Thanksgiving baskets to the poor who live in the worst part of town) or they might come upon a fight in which Lonnie Ray is the victim. If they attack his attackers, he would be grateful for their assistance, but would try to dissuade them from seriously injuring those who might have killed him. This might develop into an interesting chronicle if they befriend Lonnie Ray and abide by his good advice.

Consors

You and I, we reject these narrow attitudes
We add to each other like a coral reef
Building bridges on the ocean floor
Reaching for the alien shore
— Rush, "Alien Shore"

Some of these powerful allies draw belong to other supernatural groups. Details about vampire clans, Gypsies, the Bastet werecats, or their game specific Traits (Blood Pool, Rage, etc.) can be found in the following books: **World of Darkness: Gypsies**, **The Werewolf Players Guide**, and **Vampire: The Masquerade** and **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**.

Shard (Vampire)

Clan: Brujah
Sire: Mayday
Generation: 11
Blood Pool: 12
Nature: Deviant
Demeanor: Rebel
Residence: Haven (abandoned warehouse)
Affiliation: Orphans (Hollow Ones)
Type: Consor
Concept: Vampire (Brujah Anarch)
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2
Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Security 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2



Knowledges: Investigate 1, Linguistics (Greek), Occult 2, Politics 1
Willpower: 4
Humanity: 7
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Generation 2, Herd 2, Mentor 1
Special Advantages: Vampiric Disciplines — Celerity 1, Potence 2, Presence 1
Virtues: Conscience 3, Self Control 3, Courage 4

Background: Shard was born Sharilyn Polopolis twenty-one minutes before her fraternal twin sister Lorilyn. The sisters like to explain that they lived boring, little lives in a boring, little town where only boring, little things ever happened. Naturally, then, it attracted some attention when Lorilyn accidentally set the community center ablaze with her newly Awakened magickal powers.

The sisters were only 15 and already had acquired reputations as hellions. They ran away and made for the big city. Lorilyn changed her name to Lorelei, and Sharilyn changed hers to Shard. For a while they earned money as exotic dancers, but eventually Lorelei made contact with others like herself, Orphan mages who called themselves Hollow Ones. Shard followed along, but lacking powers of her own, felt that she didn't fit in very well.

Then she met Mayday. The handsome vampire recruited her into his gang and made her a ghoul (one who acquires strange abilities by drinking vampire blood). Dangerous as it was, her new life agreed with her. When she was critically injured in a shoot-out a few months later, Mayday Embraced her. After letting her get herself together and explaining a few things, he told her he was moving elsewhere. She didn't want to leave her sister and decided to stay behind and start her own gang. Meanwhile, she remained her sister's shadow, watching over her and trying to keep Lorelei (who thinks it's kind of cool that her sister's a vampire) from getting hurt.

Shard learned of the Crossovers and felt that she should be one of them, even though the Hollow Ones don't believe in Ascension much. Like any good gang member, she reasoned that there's safety in numbers. Besides, she doesn't mind having a special group of her own.

The consor has an acolyte of her own. Church was a runaway who met up with the wrong crowd. They left him for dead. Shard happened to be passing and Embraced the good-looking young man (since he was technically already dead). Now Shard is discovering the joys of raising her childe.

Image: Shard is an attractive young woman apparently in her very early 20s. She has short dark hair, icy blue eyes and a pallid complexion. Her black leather and lace garb fits the typical Hollow One fashion.

Roleplaying Notes: Shard has been different from everyone else (except Lorelei) for as long as she can remember. Now she's finally found people like herself. She enjoys the city and all its diversions, and has made it her business to know the people she needs to know to survive and guard her sister. She would kill (or die) to protect her twin. She pretends to be tougher and less sentimental than she actually is.

Story Hints: A typical late-generation vampire, Shard flits across the night scene like she was born to it. Although not a bad sort, Shard still drinks blood to survive. She might try to feed from a character or may be caught in the act by one. Wherever she may be, her Orphan mage sister will be close by.

Zorro (Zoe Rowell)

Nature: Architect
Demeanor: Visionary
Residence: Crossovers
Type: Consor (aware)
Concept: Bartender
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Carousing 2, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 2, Intuition 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1
Skills: Etiquette (Bartending) 4, First Aid 2, Firearms 1, Research 1
Knowledges: Alchemy 3, Enigmas 2, Finance 1, Investigate 2, Linguistics (Spanish) 1, Medicine 1, Poisons 1
Willpower: 4
Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Influence 1, Resources 2
Special Advantages: Path of Herbalism/Brewing 3
Merits and Flaws: Albino (odd appearance) (- 1)



Background: Zorro was born in Spain to a family of alchemists. As an albino, she was of great interest to her mother's friends, and she grew up while being tested and learning alchemy herself. She has always known that she would remain with the group (even if just on the fringes), though she herself lacks magickal abilities.

Tiring of the mages' attempts to Awaken her Avatar and impatient with their seeming superiority, Zorro came to America to meet and talk with other mages. She was bitterly disappointed to learn that they were so busy defending their own views of Ascension that they had no interest in working together. Believing that this might be the result of hubris getting in the way of common sense, Zorro appealed to their acolytes, consors and familiars and found herself being instrumental in founding the Crossovers. Between acting as a clearinghouse for Crossover information and running her bar, Zorro is too busy to miss being a part of a Chantry any more.

Image: Zorro is an albino in her late 20s, with short, spiky white hair. She prefers pale colors which she believes don't accentuate her pallor. Her eyes are pink. She took the name Zorro because it was close to her own name and because she wanted to acknowledge her Spanish upbringing while calling attention to her secret rebellion.

Roleplaying Notes: Zorro doesn't suffer fools gladly. She is intelligent and articulate and believes she is doing the best thing she can to help people fight the stranglehold of the Technocracy. She is friendly almost to a fault, but speaks passionately about any subject (like unity or stupidity) that strikes near her idealistic core.

Story Hints: This consor is a headstrong sort. Her arrogance often leads her into situations beyond her ability to handle. She could be taken hostage and the characters roped into helping find her.

Alternately, a player character (or a friend of one) could be poisoned with a compound which defies normal magickal healing and might hear that Zorro could help.

Kiril Zlatten

Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Bravo
Residence: Here and there
Affiliation: The Rom (Gypsies)
Type: Custos
Concept: Brooding cultural hero waiting to happen
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Streetwise 2
Skills: Drive 2, Fortune-Telling 3, Knife-throwing 4, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Talith 3
Knowledges: Mage Lore 1, Romany Lore 2, Occult 3



Willpower: 4
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Destiny 1, Talismans 2
Special Advantages: The Sight 2, Dance of Knives 3 (both from **WoD: Gypsies**), Path of Cursing 1
Merits and Flaws: Curse of the Rom (- 2), Whimsy (- 1)

Background: Kiril is a young Gypsy just entering the prime of his life. A member of the small Zlatten family, he grew up traveling between various American cities with his relatives, stopping for up to a year in any one place before moving on again. He is well aware of the way most *gaje* feel about Gypsies, and Kiril is still young enough to tweak non-Gypsies by looking and behaving like a bad Romani stereotype.

However, there is far more to Kiril than one might first think. At the age of 14, he began training with his great-aunt by marriage, a highly skilled Gypsy mage named Varra. She taught Kiril how to use his natural gifts to very good effect. Soon the young Romani could truly look into the future with his Tarot cards and could wield knives with preternatural skill.

Varra and Kiril traveled together for a handful of years while she taught and he learned. In addition to helping Kiril hone his talents, the Mentor taught him much of the old lore. She foresaw that Kiril was meant to play some important part in the world (as many Romani are destined to do), but that his part was to be played among the gaje. Kiril did not meet this declaration with good grace, protesting that he loathed the stodgy gaje, but Varra was adamant.

Several more years passed before Kiril finally accepted the old woman's point of view on that one matter; in everything else he was a paragon of respect. Finally, Kiril decided that if his fate was among the gaje he had better learn more about them, and so he did. Setting off on his own, he finally encountered a small group of lackadai-

sical, black-clad youths, who seemed to devote their lives to hanging around in cemeteries and churches listening to dreary music and carping at each other. Normally, Kiril would have paid them little attention, had he not seen their faces in the cards.

Since that day, Kiril has insinuated himself into the society of the Hollow Ones. He still travels from place to place, but now he often carries messages and aids communication between various mages. Kiril is certain there is something he must do or learn, and that this something involves the Dark Orphans. Until the cards come clear on this matter Kiril waits patiently, his knives dancing.

Image: Kiril is a very handsome young man, dark and dashing with that hint of danger that young girls find so appealing. His frame is lean and muscular, and he stands almost six feet in height. Kiril usually wears multiple earrings, but no other ornaments. The Gypsy's voice is deep and scratchy, and he is quite soft-spoken — although his words can be heard in even the loudest of crowds.

Roleplaying Notes: Kiril always looks directly into the eyes of whomever he converses with. He appears at ease in almost any situation, yet conveys an impression of energy barely contained. Kiril often twirls his knives while lounging about, and he is rarely still for long periods of time.

Story Hints: This handsome rogue could be encountered almost anywhere in America, particularly in conjunction with Hollow Ones. Kiril might look into his cards and discover that he must help (or hurt) certain player characters. He will not, however, kill someone simply on the portents found in the cards.

Nneka

Nature: Judge
Demeanor: Traditionalist
Residence: None, currently
Affiliation: Bata'a (Hedge Magic & "Orphan" group)
Type: Consor
Concept: Voodoo Spirit Medium
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Dodge 1, Expression 2, Intuition 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1
Skills: Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Meditation 2, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Herbalism 2, Linguistics (French, English) 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Theology 1
Willpower: 5
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Mentor 2
Special Advantages: Path of Ephemera 3 (all Rituals), Path of Herbalism/Brewing 3, Path of Healing 1
Merits and Flaws: Higher Purpose (+ 1), Spirit Magnet (-2)



Background: Born into the oppressive atmosphere of Haiti, Nneka received very little formal education (her family spoke French as their first language). Most of her learning centered around voudoun, an ecstatic religion much misrepresented in popular culture. Surviving into adulthood despite repeated assaults against her family and neighbors, Nneka asked to join the congregation.

She was accepted and taught the beginnings of the rites. A few months later, as she danced to the drumming, a loa entered her and spoke to the congregation. Afterwards, she was told more of the secrets of the cult and began her training as a medium. The spirits have spoken through Nneka many times since then. Though her Avatar is not Awakened, the spirits impart much knowledge to her and occasionally manifest powers through her.

Recently, (before the American invasion) she was sent (smuggled over) from Haiti to contact some Bata'a living in America. She now wanders the country on various errands, learning all she can from these strange new mortals and spirits.

Image: Nneka has a mane of curly black hair, smooth coffee-colored skin and dark eyes. In her late 20s, she favors the dresses and ornamentation known in popular culture as "the voodoo queen look."

Roleplaying Notes: Nneka is very self-possessed (as well as being otherly-possessed) and not easily swayed. She believes that the spirits know the answers to everything and that they will eventually make known what they want humankind to know. She strongly believes in freedom from injustice for everyone.

Story Hints: This consor is not bound to any group or place; she could be met almost anywhere her inquisitive nature leads her. Nneka might ask the characters

to help her find the people she's looking for or to hide her from Immigrations officers. She might be visited by a loa and give the characters a clue concerning something they are currently doing (cryptically, of course).

Safira (Bastet)

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Conniver

Residence: Condos in San Francisco, Monaco, and Everglades City, Florida.

Affiliation: Orphan

Type: Consor

Concept: Sensation-addicted warrior

Physical: (Numbers in parenthesis indicate cat-woman and cougar forms) Strength 3 (6/4), Dexterity 5 (8/8), Stamina 3 (6/5)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4 (1/1), Appearance 4 (6/4)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Mimicry 1, Seduction 3

Skills: Acrobatics 3, Blind Fighting 3, Firearms 3, Hunting 4, Survival 5, Tracking 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Everglades) 4, Enigmas 2, Occult 1, Rituals 2

Willpower: 4

Rage: 5

Backgrounds: Mentor 1, Talisman 2

Special Advantages: Den-Realm (in Umbra) 2

Merits and Flaws: Danger Addiction (- 3), Overconfident (-1), Acute Senses (+ 1), Animal Magnetism (+ 1), Perfect Balance (+ 3)

Background: Safira is a Homid member of the Pumonca (Cougar) tribe of the Bastet. These shapechangers can move between human and feline forms, in Safira's case that of the cougar. Unlike the vast majority of her kind, Safira is fondly drawn to human society.

From an early age, Safira rejected her mother's Native American culture. By the time she learned of her true nature, Safira was already preparing to run away from her home in northern Florida. The revelation of her true abilities and nature was wondrous, and Safira reveled in the new physical sensations and heightened senses she soon discovered in herself. However, once she learned all she could from her Bastet relations, Safira left home for good.

After traveling the world for several years, first as a courier and then as a bounty hunter, Safira met up with Andrew Grieg. It took all of two hours before Safira and Grieg became lovers. Within three hours, they came within inches of killing each other. The relationship has progressed along the same lines ever since.



Grieg soon began to tell Safira about the Traditions, the Technocracy, Marauders and Nephandi. His information, however, was spotty. Grieg was an Orphan and only vaguely aware of mage society. He had long ago sworn off allegiance to anyone save himself, just as Safira had given up all ties to her people, human and feline alike. Her instinctual attraction to Grieg fascinates and appalls Safira equally, and she suspects he feels the same way about her. This consor watches her back constantly. Safira is determined that when this partnership ends, she will be the one licking the blood from her paws!

Image: In human form, Safira appears as a tall, muscular woman with golden eyes and a buzz-cut of thick, dark hair. She has sharp features, and the shape of her face echoes her Native American heritage. In feline form, Safira appears as a strangely dark and small cougar with huge golden eyes. Her preferred form is the Crinos aspect, in which she appears as a beautiful, sleek, black-furred woman-cat.

Roleplaying Notes: Safira is a huntress who most enjoys hunting danger. Nothing equals the moment when she teeters only a whisker's breadth from death. However, Safira is also a hedonist who enjoys intense experiences of all kinds. She is fairly knowledgeable about the supernatural creatures of the world, but not nearly as knowledgeable as she believes.

Story Hints: Safira might be encountered while on the hunt (for player characters or others), or in a bar, nightclub or other spot near one of her condos. Safira and Grieg are both independent operators who could appear on any side of a conflict.

Familiars

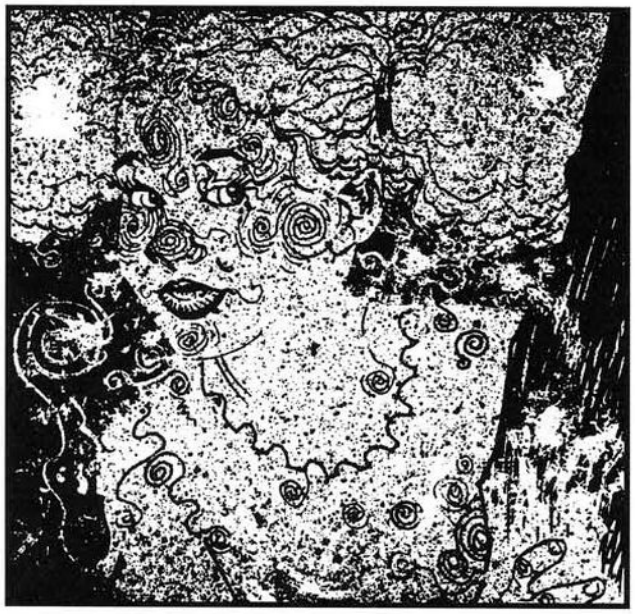
I've been cursed, I've been despised
As a witch with darkest powers
— I sall goe until a hare —
I've been hunted, trapped and punished
In these my darkest hours
— Wi sorrow and such mickle care —
— Maddy Pryor, "The Mythic Hare"

Many of these alien spirits resemble other kinds of allies — creations, ghosts or simple, if intelligent, animal companions. Familiars are always far more than they appear to be, however. Storytellers should remember that these allies have their own enigmatic goals and motivations.

The characters below are familiars of unusual ability and power. Mages wishing to purchase familiars like these will be paying four or five points for the privilege.

Suzi

Nature: Child
Demeanor: Child
Residence: Oak Street
Affiliation: Orphan
Type: Familiar
Concept: Imaginary playmate
Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Intuition 2, Subterfuge 3
Skills: Research 3, Stealth 1, Survival 1
Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigate 3, Occult 3



Willpower: 3
Backgrounds: Umbral allies 2, Umbral contacts 3
Special Advantages: Intangible, Symbiotic Knowledge, Information Font, Hazardous "Breath" (death magic, 3 dice)
Merits and Flaws: Thaumivore (-5)

Background: Suzi used to live in the Umbra with others of her kind. Since they are intangible, she often felt very lonely. She was a very young creature. When she heard a little girl crying her name, she went to investigate and found that she had crossed over the Gauntlet. Oops! She agreed to be the little girl's (whose name was Cindi) playmate in exchange for yummy food (Quintessence). She also demanded the right to live inside Cindi's teddy bear whenever she wanted to be petted and hugged.

She has been with Cindi about three months now. Already she has used her magics to help Cindi kill a would-be child molester. Cindi is going to be very special someday; Suzi can tell. Suzi knows that being Cindi's friend will work out very well. More yummy food, more friends to play with, more funny puzzles to solve and better games to play.

Image: To those who can actually see her through magick, Suzi looks like an insubstantial child in a frilly dress. Her hair and eye color changes to fit whatever the viewer likes best.

Roleplaying Notes: Although she is an Umbral spirit, Suzi is very young. She tends to think and react like a child, responding well to friendliness and praise, becoming impatient with scolding, and being thoughtlessly ruthless when it comes to protecting herself and Cindi or getting what she wants.

Story Hints: The characters could run into Suzi (and Cindi) while she's out trick-or-treating, or they might follow a Technocracy recruiter to Cindi's house.

Squeek

Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Conformist
Residence: Chicago
Affiliation: Technocracy
Type: Familiar
Concept: Enhanced Laboratory Rat
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 4, Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Instruction 3, Scan 3, Search 3, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Climbing 2, Fast-Talk 3, Research 2, Stealth 5
Knowledges: Cosmology 3, Enigmas 2, Occult 3, Sciences (lots) 3
Willpower: 3
Backgrounds: Umbral Allies 4, Arcane 2



Special Advantages: Symbiotic Knowledge, Paradox Nullification (3), Information Font, Size (8)

Merits and Flaws: Curiosity (- 2), Eidetic Memory (+ 2), Lightning Calculator (+ 1), Thaumivore (-5)

Background: Squeek is the name given to a wandering spirit of the Umbra who is now a familiar of a Technocracy mage. He takes his name from the form he now inhabits — a genetically enhanced laboratory rat, a shell often used by Technocracy mages for their familiars. Squeek was attracted to the Technocracy because he understands their particular take on reality and because the roles of spy and information-gatherer suit his own interests and abilities remarkably well.

In his spirit form, Squeek lived contentedly in the near Umbra, roaming the fringes of mortal and spirit society. His quest was to learn all he can about the puzzling works of humanity. When the scientist-mage Michael R. Hanson called him into partnership, Squeek got his chance. Since that day, he has aided the Technocracy by gathering information and has made use of their vast resources and libraries for his own research.

Image: Squeek takes the form of a sewer rat on steroids, almost two feet long and weighing in at nearly fifteen pounds. His coat is gray and sleek, and his dark eyes are more intelligent than those of any normal rat (and most humans). He chatters and darts about from place to place a great deal, but is also capable of remarkable stealth when necessary. His speaking voice is rather high, and he gets exasperated with people who can't comprehend that a rat is talking to them at all.

Roleplaying Notes: This super-rat is insatiably curious and has a mind like a steel trap. He never forgets anything he hears or sees. This makes him both very useful and very dangerous to his Technocracy associates. He loves to learn and to teach as well. He will often take a great deal of time to explain concepts to scientists and mages and genuinely enjoys enlightening people.

Story Hints: Players who ask Squeek intelligent questions and listen carefully may learn a lot and will favorably impress the spirit. He will often instruct even those not associated with the Technocracy, if so inclined.

Squeek often plays the role that people expect of a rat— breathless, brainless and scurrying, but this is his standard ploy to disguise his true abilities and intellect. Above all, Squeek is a survivor, and he is determined that he will be around long after all else has crumbled to dust. He is a master manipulator and will use his considerable intellect, charm and skill to get what he wants from the players. Squeek has connections everywhere, and he is very good at making friends. It is possible that Squeek would betray his Technocracy mage, Michael R. Hanson, if Dr. Hanson does not give the insatiable rat sufficient access to Technocracy information.

Henry

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Follower

Residence: The Net

Affiliation: Tradition (Virtual Adepts)/Technocracy (Iteration X)

Type: Familiar

Concept: Artificial Intelligence

Physical: Strength 3 (crash-resistant), Dexterity 2 (program speed), Stamina 3 (resistance to viruses)

Social: Charisma 2 (interaction with others in the Net), Manipulation 3 (user-friendliness), Appearance 1 (graphics)

Mental: Perception 3 (sophistication of program), Intelligence 5 (stored data and memory), Wits 2 (Net navigation, rerouting)

Talents: Alertness 3, Expression 2, Instruction 1

Skills: Etiquette 3, Research 3, Security 3, Speed Reading 2

Knowledges: Computer 5, Computer Hacking 3, Cryptography 1, Enigmas 1, Finance 2, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Science 2

Willpower: 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Resources 3

Special Advantages: Information Font, Paradox Nullification (2)

Merits and Flaws: Eidetic Memory (+ 2), Double Agent (- 2), Thaumivore (-5)

Background: Henry is a double spirit, two halves of a single being. When he/they received a summoning from a Virtual Adept and an Iteration X mage at the same time, he/they split themselves in two and each answered one. Thus they became ghosts in the machine. Each requested



his/their own private quarters within the Net where even the mage was not allowed to visit and a certain amount of time during which he/they could pursue his/their own goals.

They share all the information which they gather, including knowledge of secrets imparted to them by their mages. They also switch off, with one entity staying with the Virtual Adept for awhile, then being replaced by his other half and vice versa. There have recently been more leaks among both the Adepts and Iteration X. No one can figure out what's going on.

On his/their own time, Henry likes to interact with people online. He/they also have a particular fondness for creating computer viruses and holding races with them.

Image: Henry looks like a lot of bright lines and weird symbols. He/they can generate a normal-looking body in virtual reality whenever he/they bother.

Roleplaying Notes: Henry is a curious spirit housed in a computer program. He likes to play games and loves to unearth secrets which he can tell to himself (uh, his other half, that is).

Story Hints: The characters might encounter Henry in virtual reality or they may know Henry's "familiar," the Virtual Adept (or the Iteration Xer). Uncovering the familiars' secret allegiance would be a daunting task.

Stoneheart

Nature: Bravo
Demeanor: Curmudgeon
Residence: Seattle
Affiliation: Nephandi
Type: Familiar
Concept: Demonic Corrupter
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Intuition 2, Subterfuge 3
Skills: Stealth 3, Survival 2
Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigate 1, Linguistics (Infernal secret languages) 2, Occult 3
Willpower: 4
Backgrounds: Infernal Allies 2, Infernal Mentor 3
Special Advantages: Claws & Fangs, Hazardous "Breath" (poison, 3 dice), Information Font (and hell, *no*, I'm not Nullifying any Paradox for you, monkeyboy!)
Merits and Flaws: Thaumivore (-5)

Background: Stoneheart is an Infernal spirit. Born of corruption and trained to spread its taint to everyone he touched, Stoneheart earned his name ten times over. When Gregor, a young Euthanatos, performed a summoning, the call was intercepted by some corrupting entity/entities, who for reasons of their own sent Stoneheart. He entered the form of a stone gargoyle which had been prepared for him.

The Euthanatos intended for his familiar to serve as a Chantry Guardian along with his other duties. The Nephandi-Lords decided otherwise. Stoneheart plays along with his Guardian role, sitting quietly and causing no trouble. He engages in philosophical debates with Chantry residents, however, and has succeeded in persuading a number of them to touch him "for good luck" whenever they pass. This, of course, allows him to exude the poison within him and corrupt them a little more each time. Eventually, their hearts will be so blackened by his poison that they will fall easy prey to the Nephandi. No one has noticed yet that they seem angrier and less caring after touching Stoneheart. Arguments break out more easily among those who routinely caress the gargoyle as they pass.



Additionally, he has bonded to Gregor, the mage who summoned him as a familiar. Though he will not harm Gregor directly, his arguments subtly corrupt the mage. Unbeknownst to his "master," Stoneheart can animate and inflict aggravated wounds with his claws. He has committed one murder already (a test run) and plans to covertly slay Chantry members, hoping to cause rifts within the group as each tries to figure out who gave the victim the Good Death.

Image: Stoneheart looks like a winged and clawed stone gargoyle about eight inches high.

Roleplaying Notes: Stoneheart gripes a lot. He complains about his perch; he whines about the poor quality of the Quintessence. Gregor does what he can to quiet this "wise" familiar, but nothing works for long.

Story Hints: The familiar's plan could form the heart of a good murder mystery. He is not stupid and will make any killings he commits look like the work of someone else — like a player character. New guests of the Chantry also make good subjects for corruption or additional "test runs." Any witnesses to the gargoyle's true activities will be added to his list of targets and may incur the wrath and disbelief of the Chantry mages as well.

Strange Beasties

Have you seen the Jack-in-the-Green
With his long tail hanging down?
— Jethro Tull, "Jack-in-the Green"

These creatures may be too fanciful for some **Mage** chronicles. Many have humorous potential and could shift a serious game into silly territory just by showing up. Storytellers might want to consider the effect such bizarre creatures could have on the tone of their game.

Many such obscure consors hail from Horizon Realms and are rarely, if ever, seen in the material world. Paradox, in the form of unbelief, might cause extraordinary creatures to sicken or die on this side of the Gauntlet (see **The Book of Madness**). Mages who ally with strange beasties ought to bear their friends' well-being in mind.

Persephone

Nature: Jester
Demeanor: Martyr
Residence: Oscarland
Affiliation: Marauder
Type: Consor
Concept: Weird Umbral Critter
Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Intuition 2, Subterfuge 1



Skills: Etiquette 2, Meditation 2, Research 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Knowledges: Enigmas 1, Investigate 1, Linguistics 2, Occult 1
Willpower: 4
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Mentor 3
Special Advantages: Animal Form, Size (2), Umbral Travel (8), Symbiotic Knowledge
Merits and Flaws: Alien Appearance (- 3), Thaumiovre (-5)

Background: It's not easy being a squirrel-tailed, fanged zebra with a talent for the theatrical. Persephone is an odd Realm-creature who escaped her original home to look for playmates. She found Oscar and his group. The Marauder helped her construct a special neck-harness and voice-activated video camera that allows her to fulfill her part in their team. She has developed a keen eye for finding the best camera angles in the oddest places.

While Persephone enjoys their jaunts (which Oscar calls "going on location"), she realizes that they serve a higher purpose. She is convinced that if the Gauntlet isn't breached on a regular basis, it will solidify, cutting off both worlds. She believes that should that happen, both will wither and die.

Even among Marauders, Persephone is a stranger in a strange land. She is endlessly puzzled by humanity's warlike tendencies and finds art preferable to violence. She can fight when need be, but would rather engage her opponents in debate while using her innate magicks to stay out of reach.

Image: The description given above is fairly accurate. Did we mention that her stripes are maroon and black and glow in the dark?

Roleplaying Notes: Persephone is basically a happy creature. She enjoys conversing with people she likes and performing a job she believes needs to be done. She is the sanest member of her group and tends to act to tone down their psychoses when the group is ensconced in Oscarland, their Umbral retreat.

Story Hints: The characters could meet Persephone when they travel to the Umbra. She could meet them during "filming on location." The Ascension War, and even the concept of Ascension itself, are endless enigmas to her. Her questions might lead warlike mages to doubt their own violence or spur them into frustrated rage!

Zaphrak (Familiar)

Nature: Deviant
Demeanor: Curmudgeon
Residence: Deep Umbra or New York City (who can tell?)
Affiliation: Marauder
Type: Familiar
Concept: Twisted Diabolical "Servant"
Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5
Talents: Alertness 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 3
Skills: Melee 2, Research 4, Stealth 4
Knowledges: Cosmology 4, Enigmas 3, Occult 4
Willpower: 8
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 3, Talisman 2
Special Advantages: Fangs (3), Cause Insanity (5 dice), Paradox Nullification (4), Umbral Travel (8)
Merits and Flaws: Bizarre Hunger — Auras (- 2), Curiosity (- 2), Disfigured (- 2), Iron Will (+ 3), Short (- 1)

Background: Rising from out of the Umbra, the creature known as Zaphrak has come to the Tellurian in response to the call of a Marauder master. Zaphrak had long roamed the Umbra and other realms of existence, exploring their secrets and puzzling over the true nature of reality, when he first felt the tug of a human mage calling him to the Tellurian. He ignored many of these summons, but eventually responded (more out of curiosity than anything else, or so he says). Zaphrak now finds himself enmeshed in a bizarre relationship with a mortal, but with a whole new world to explore.

Zaphrak is a powerful being in his own right and has negotiated a very complex agreement with his pet mage, one that leaves little doubt who really controls the mage-familiar relationship. In return, Zaphrak eagerly contributes his considerable gifts to the Marauder cause. After all, he finds most of the assignments his mage (whom Zaphrak so far refuses to reward with a name) sends him on eminently enjoyable. The essences of mundanes and mages alike are very tasty, and Zaphrak considers himself a true gourmand, preferring those whose essences are on the verge of corruption. (In game terms, the beast eats personal Quintessence, at a rate of one point per turn, like the Prime 3 **Channel Quintessence** Effect.)

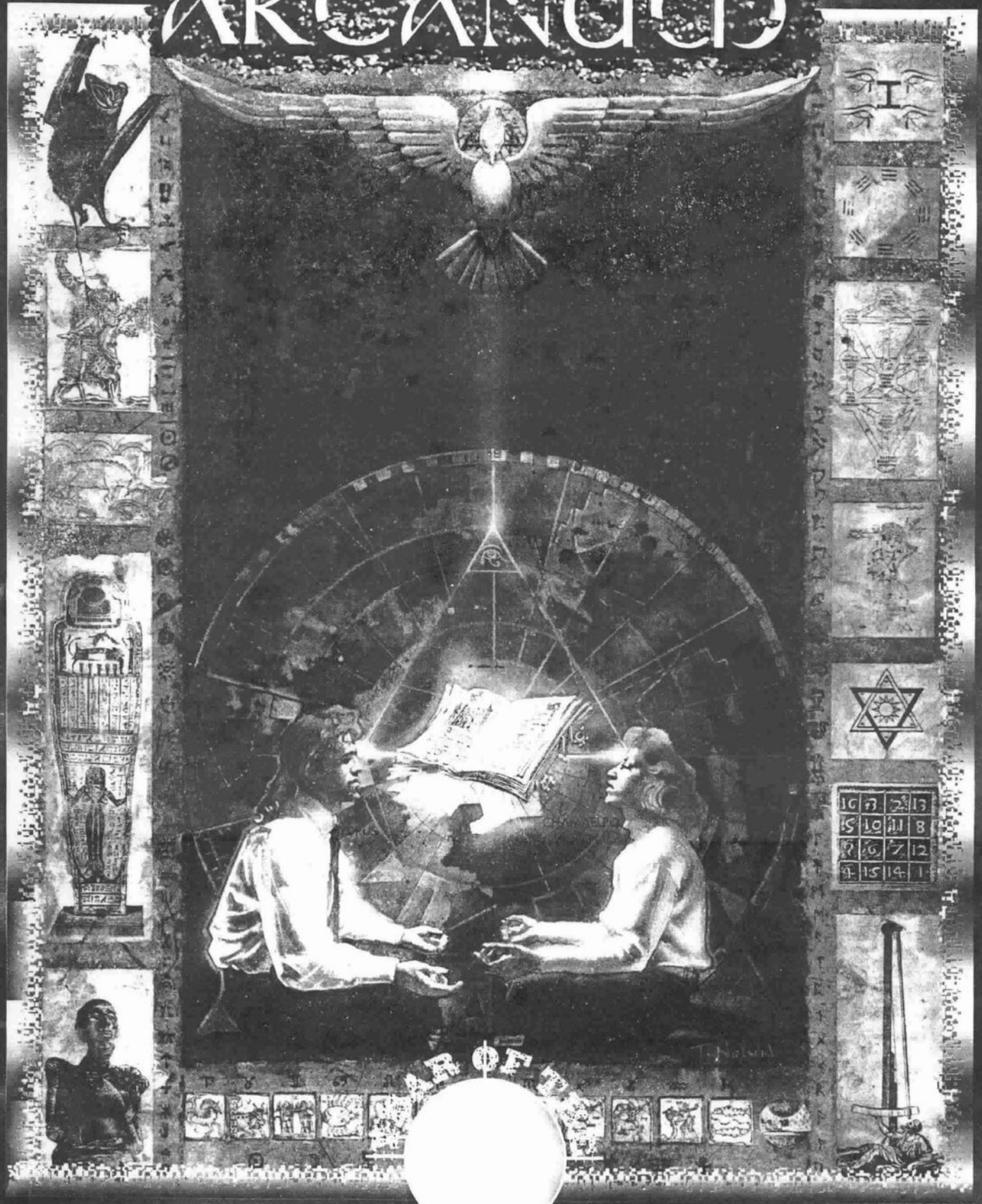


Image: Zaphrak is a truly hideous creature with bright green eyes and a twisted and gnarled form reminiscent of a demon from a classic medieval text. His nose is really just a pus-filled slash carved into his face, and Zaphrak's mouth is particularly wide. He is approximately three feet tall, but his diminutive stature masks surprising physical power.

Roleplaying Notes: Zaphrak is a garrulous, crabby, critical and amazingly stubborn being. He is intensely curious and truly enjoys a good philosophical, magical or scientific debate (though he will usually blister his adversary with the most vile insults imaginable during their discussion). In addition, Zaphrak truly enjoys the effect his appearance has on people. He activates his **Cause Insanity** power by manipulating his hideous form, reaching into his mouth with both hands and turning its body inside out! This grotesque sight displays Zaphrak's innards as well as numerous Umbral spirits and parasites crawling about his guts and often provokes mental disorders in witnesses (much to Zaphrak's glee, of course.)

Story Hints: It is important to remember that while Zaphrak is a familiar, he is an intensely proud and independent being. He considers himself to be a free agent, acting on his own volition, and will almost never simply "do as he's told."

HALLS OF THE ARCANUM



HUNTER



Pilgrims of the Glittering Path

By James Estes

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Finally, **Halls of the Arcanum** is dedicated to my parents, George and Evelina Estes, for starting me on the Journey and encouraging me along the way. It all started with the *Great Books* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. With love and gratitude, your son.



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Prelude: Fragments from a Diary of an Unnamed Scholar

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own home, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, "What shall I do?"

— John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*

I am an old man now, my bones dry and brittle, about to snap under the pressing weight of my discoveries. Some critics have warned that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing: I would posit that more knowledge is a terrifying thing. I have spent much of my life in the Arcanum, cloistered away in this monastery, dedicating my life to the pursuits of the arcane. While those of my generation are prepared to retire, surrounded by the love and support of family members, I am alone, with only the company of others like myself — the numb comforting the numb. The Arcanum is my family now, and I must wonder if it was worth the cost. My eyes are dim from reading, my hands ache from writing, and I see a brood of vipers in my family's very den.

I first joined the Arcanum as a ruddy-faced youth, fresh from years of schooling in England's finest institutions. I was nursed on Greek and Latin: Odysseus was my father, Athena my mother, Aeneas my brother. I always thought that when I entered university, I would begin formal training in the Classics, for an academic career of teaching and research in the literatures of Greece and Rome.

When my formal studies began, however, they took a new direction: A fellow student introduced me to Persian and Sanskrit, and my imagination was rekindled. The sacred texts of Iran and India were opened to me; the Avestas and the Vedas were my new den, the *Mahabharata* and the Persian *Epic of Kings* my new playground. I began a comprehensive study of the myths and epics of the Indo-European heritage. My mind was voracious, my intellect expanding beyond bound.

I learned then that my talent for languages was rare; what took others years of study took me only months, sometimes even weeks. Gaelic, German, Catalan — by the time I earned my doctorate, I could have taught in almost every language programme at Oxford or Cambridge. With language comes thought, and with the acquisition of these languages I studied their cultures, their beliefs and mythologies. My pursuits were fickle, yes — one day I was inquiring into the rituals of the Scythians and the Medes, and another day I sought to understand the mythology of the Celts. I searched for links between the thoughts and languages of otherwise disparate peoples, and glimpsed an element of universality through them all, a phenomena which has largely gone unnoticed or ignored.

(I must confess briefly that the languages of the Far East, strangely, held little appeal to me. Although my Mandarin and Tibetan were adequate, I felt little need to study the cultures of these regions. But I digress.)

It was because of my linguistic dexterity that I first came to the attention of the Arcanum. Having just graduated, I was facing the grim task of seeking employment. My fluency in a passel of tongues offered me prospects as translator or teacher, but I felt that my destiny lay elsewhere. It was, in fact, one rainy Sunday afternoon, as I was contemplating my options (which thus far were none) while sipping tea in my garden-view window, that I heard a knock on my door. My visitors were two of my former professors, scholars in Old Persian and Sanskrit.

We spoke for hours, the gray afternoon sliding gently into the soft sable night. I joined the Arcanum that evening.

Oh, the years of exploration and adventure! Voyagers abroad, my fellow Journeymen and I traveled the world. One month in Cairo, another in Lima; we were a happy band of scholars and investigators. Ascending the mist-shrouded Andes or burrowing through ancient cavedwellings in Cappadocia, debating philosophy or reading ancient texts to all hours of the night — these were the happiest times of my life.

But such happiness could not live forever. Our lodge eventually grew apart: some colleagues embarked upon personal quests, and devoted less and less time to cooperative efforts, while others retired to raise families, and still others died.

What did I gain from this? I have uncovered the truths behind so many events commonly overlooked, and I have learned things lost to human history. I have read the Poison Book, and have learned the secret of the White Tower. I know the truth behind the massacre of 30,000 Calvinists by the French crown on St. Bartholomew's Day. I know why the hearts and bodies of the Hapsburgs are buried separately in the Loretto Chapel. I have seen what secrets lie behind [illegible] versions of Allegri's *Miserere*, and [illegible] fate of [illegible] and what riddles lay locked in [illegible] of Notre Dame.

How sad that [illegible] years of study and travel, much of which proved ruinous to my health, to learn that the truth which I so eagerly sought could be found within me. The experiences which defined my life, however powerful, however utterly real and significant (and frightening in light of what contemporary man believes to be "the real world"), are meaningless. True, I have seen and understood much beyond the pale of commonly accepted world views. I have dined with magi and seen the fay folk dance by moonlight. I have learned that death is only a milepost on the highway, and not a terminus. But these experiences were ultimately tangential to my true quest.

The soul is cloaked by a lifetime of experiences and encounters which serve not to enrich this essential core of humanity, this fragment of divinity, but rather to shadow and obscure it. Only by cutting through the many layers of facades and imposed ideologies that develop through time may we come face to face with our true selves. Both the Journey and the destination can be painful, but the specific path one travels is of little import. Whether one chooses the shamanic practices of tribal societies, the meditations of Orthodox monks atop Mount Athos, or the clinical processes of modern psychotherapy, the final goal is the same: to learn how to slice away the many layers beneath which the soul buried. This is a painful process, for we build these layers to protect ourselves from the truth, a truth which is more painful, at times, than fiction. "The truth hurts" is a profound statement, though it is bandied about as a trivial cliché.

I look now at my own home. The Foundation House of the Arcanum is honeycombed with hidden passages — as many secrets as may be found in the Arcanum itself. And what of these secrets? The Arcanum is dedicated to the unraveling of mysteries, but what other truths is it hiding? Is this where the questions begin, or where they end?

I am an old man now, too old to begin another quest, and I have learned much, perhaps more than I was meant to know. Some dismiss my musings as the prattling of a doddering old fool — but they are more the fool for believing so. I will let the secrets come to me, or they are unworthy of my attention. I see new generations of scholars preparing to embark upon the Journey, and I fear for, as well as envy, them. They are about to undertake the greatest quest anyone can imagine. Though some will fall by the wayside, others may eventually achieve their goals. And some may learn, as the Sufi parable teaches us, that in all our searchings, ultimately we are the sought and Heaven the seeker.

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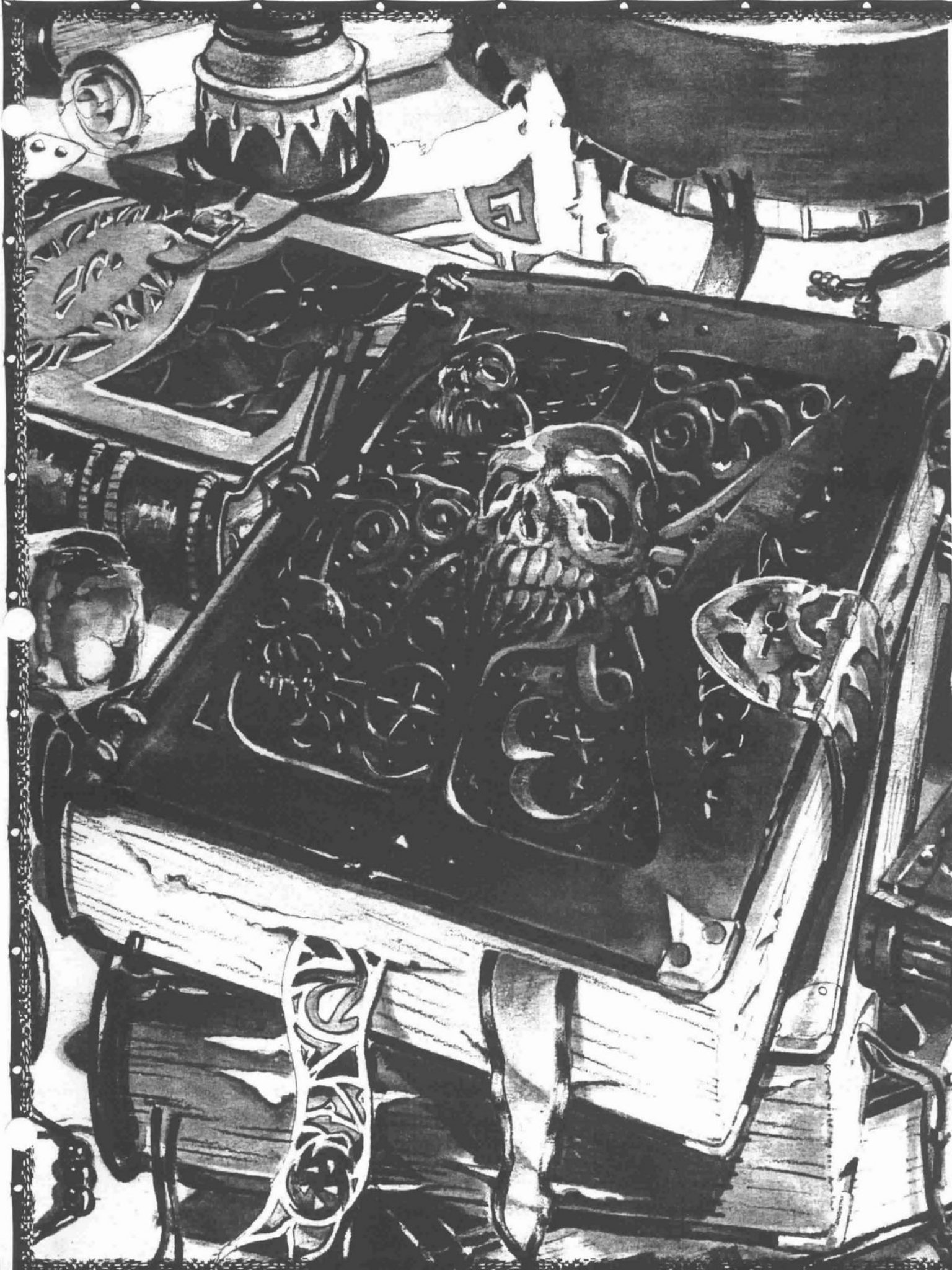
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Introduction

There are some areas of the human mind, and indeed of the world we live in, that were never meant for investigation. There are always those who delve into the darker worlds of knowledge, and many pay with their sanity for their interest...

— Intro to *Hayward Sanitarium* (A Last Minute Productions audioplay)

Halls of the Arcanum is a book — or, more properly, three books — detailing the organization known as the Arcanum, a mortal society dedicated to the pursuit and acquisition of arcane knowledge.

The Arcanum's goal is both academic and religious; it exists in the middle-ground between mystic quest and scholarly activity. Its members (over 500) come from all walks of life, but it is known to attract intellectuals: linguists, archeologists, philosophers, historians, etc. But no matter what the profession or avocation of its members, they are united by a common purpose: the search for enlightenment.

We live in a sanitized world, where the true meaning, the richness of life, is stripped away by the antiseptic nature of contemporary society. The Arcanum looks back to a time when the cosmos held some significance; everything had a purpose, nothing was coincidental, and the world was a representation of the divine. For some, this means the investigation of supernatural mysteries long ignored by common man. For others, it means the quest for immortality and purification: the Philosopher's Stone, Excalibur, Shamballah.

How to Use this Book

Halls of the Arcanum is divided into three sections:

- The first book, **The Neophyte's Guidebook**, is a basic discussion of the Arcanum — its history, its politics and its members.
- The second book, **The Journeyman's Guidebook**, presents information about creating Arcanum characters, as well as prominent individuals that beginning Arcanists may one day meet.
- The third book, **The Mystagogue's Guidebook**, hints at some of the Arcanum's mysteries. Many of these suggestions are deliberately left sketchy to subvert player foreknowledge. Even so, this book is designed for Storytellers, and players are advised not to read it.

Theme

To the seekers of the Arcanum, knowledge is its own reward. The thrill of uncovering a vampire's daily habits far outweighs the risk or implied monetary value that might come with that knowledge.

Learning, however, does not always equal wisdom. With such knowledge comes pride, often foolish — sometimes fatal. This pride blinds the seekers to the dangers not only without, but within. There are forces working inside the Arcanum, guiding it like some pawn of unknown purpose. The things its investigators uncover may be turned against them someday.

Mood

The Arcanum is not a combat corps; its methods and adventures are far more subtle than the average Ascension conflict. Arcanists, moreover, are often in the dark about many of the things they seek to uncover: they know little of the fierce games the supernaturals play, or of the stakes involved. Still, the echoes of those conflicts are felt in the investigators' discoveries. Imagine, if you will, searching in dim light for a precious treasure you know to be just out of reach. The mood of Arcanum adventures should be apprehension mixed with wonder. The tales of Lovecraft, Derleth, Poe and Campbell sum up this heady brew quite well.

Enter, observe, and wonder.



Book I: The Neophyte's Guidebook

Chapter One: The Way of the Pilgrim (Joining the Arcanum)

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further: it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea,
White on a throne or guarded in a cave,
There lives a prophet who can understand
Why men were born; but surely we are brave,
Who make the golden journey to Samarkand.
— James Elroy Flecker

Istanbul, Turkey

The Kapali Charshi, the Grand Covered Bazaar, was crowded, but this was not unusual. No one seemed to mind the fact that elbow room was at a premium; as long as you didn't hit your neighbor with the heavy bundle you were carrying, everyone was satisfied. But it was thinning now, the afternoon siesta beginning to draw the shop keepers and tourists away from their stalls and booths to the comfort of their homes and hotels, a warm meal and a soft bed.

They met their contact in the Covered Bazaar, as she had instructed them. Sipping thick-brewed Turkish coffee, the young woman had been waiting; she turned her dark, guarded eyes in their direction and gestured for them to sit with her. A small boy came almost immediately, bringing more coffee in intricate demitasse cups.

"You brought what I asked of you," she said in her thick accent. It was less a question than a statement.

Helen nodded, and withdrew a small bundle from her backpack. She slid it over to their contact, without removing her hand from the package. John glanced around uneasily. This looked too much like a drug transaction, and he did not want to spend any time in the Turkish prisons-of-ill-repute. He'd seen *Midnight Express* one too many times.

The Gypsy reached expectantly for the bundle. Helen's hand pressed down on it quickly. "Not yet," she said in Turkish. "Where is our information?"

The woman reached beneath her shawl. John tensed, his fingers inching closer to the handgun he had concealed. *Oh God, a shoot-out in a public place at midday*, he thought. *I'm never going home.* A sheen of perspiration beaded on his forehead.

The Gypsy laughed at John, a light-hearted trill with a slight note of mockery. She withdrew her hand from the shawl, clutching a folded piece of paper between her fingers. She flipped it open to reveal an address. "This is your next destination." The woman slid the paper across the table to Helen, who reached for it eagerly. John glanced over her shoulder to read what was written: the address was only a few blocks away.

He looked up. The Gypsy was gone, along with her payment.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
— Robert Frost, "The Road Less Traveled"

Dear Mr. Lewis:

I am delighted that you have taken up my offer to pursue full membership in the Arcanum. The research you have undertaken as an Associate of the Arcanum has been of great value to us; your contributions to the discipline are both noted and appreciated. (The fact that we are both Cambridge men might, I admit, cause some small bias in my evaluation.) I can offer my assurances that your association with the Arcanum will be invaluable to you.

From our earlier correspondence, you already know of my respect for your work in early modern European history. Although I confess that I disagree with a few of your interpretations, I cannot fault your scholarship or your intellect. I believe that in time, you may modify your views. I came to many of the same conclusions you did at the beginning of my academic career, but Time has a way of changing things.

I have watched your career develop over the past year, and more importantly, I have seen some of your personal growth as well. I believe that you no longer view knowledge as merely the accumulation of "information," a commodity to be bartered or purchased in today's quantified information society. It is apparent from our recent conversations that you have begun to understand knowledge's intrinsic value and innate importance. It is my own belief that the search for knowledge is a sacred quest, a path which is a rough, but in the end rewarding, Journey. As a new member of the Arcanum, you yourself will soon embark upon this Journey.

You will learn much about the Arcanum and the world on this Journey. This is no mere formal proceeding; the Journey itself is as real as the destination. There are, however, a few things you should understand:

• The Arcanum is not simply a scholarly society; it is a fraternal organization dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of wisdom. As such, we are bound by certain rules and philosophies.

• After your Induction, you will be a Neophyte, one who has begun the Journey. Your role as Neophyte is that of a student: you shall learn our history, our means of operation. You will only learn, however, what we show you; there is much that we cannot reveal until you are ready.

• The Neophyte is mentored by an Elder Brother. I shall be such to you. I am here to act as Guide, as well as to Guard you. As a Neophyte, you do not have a full voice in the Arcanum: I will speak for you. Likewise, the wishes of the Arcanum will be revealed to you through me. The importance of trust in our relationship cannot be more greatly stressed.

• You will be Tested throughout the Journey. Some Tests will come from the Arcanum, planned encounters to see whether you are truly the caliber of person we can count on. There will be other Tests of character, however, and these will be spontaneous. If you believe in coincidence, then you may discount them; they will, however, be real Tests.

• You are never alone on your Journey. In addition to my guidance, there are other Neophytes who will join you. Regard them as your family; they will be your companions on your Journey, and you shall come to count on them for your very life. Never dismiss the bond that will develop with your associates, for they will be your Brothers and Sisters.

• Once you begin the Journey, you truly cannot turn back. The road you will embark upon, though unseen by many, is quite real, and when you set foot upon it, it will forever change the way you see the world. Many will fall by the wayside, unable to complete the Journey, but even so their lives will never be the same.

Some of what you learn will push the boundaries of your world view. If I may use the metaphor of a tapestry, your world view will slowly unravel. At the end of the Journey, however, you will have developed a new perspective, one much richer than you would otherwise have known, with a broader variety of threads and a greater multitude of colors than you can now imagine.

I will call you soon so that we can schedule our first meeting together. In the meantime, feel free to call on me for any reason at any time.

Yours,
Geoffrey Truesdell
Journeyman & Elder Brother
The Arcanum
Washington Chapter

TO: Geoffrey Truesdell <gtruesdell@pico.gtown.arcanum.com>

FROM: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

RE: The Arcanum

I received your letter yesterday, and I'm writing to thank you for your invitation. I have valued our correspondence and communications, and I believe that joining the Arcanum will be a positive step for me, both professionally and personally.

I am somewhat confused about this "Journey" you keep referencing. I realize that you're speaking allegorically, and not in terms of a real trip — although I would like to visit "HQ" in London! — but your meaning is unclear.

I had always thought of the Arcanum as a clearinghouse of sorts, a professional society for those of us with interests in the more... arcane? unusual? ...facets of history. I realize that it sponsors incredible scholarship and research into fields that are typically neglected by most institutions of higher learning, and that this material is exclusively the province of full members of the Arcanum.

My decision to join the Arcanum may not be quite so noble or high-minded as you believe. As an Associate, I have only marginal access to research materials, and limited contact with the Arcanum; I felt that by becoming a full

member, or "Journeyman" to use your parlance, I would have available to me the whole of voluminous research in which the Arcanum has been involved. I did not request to join based on any deep "spiritual" conviction, as you seem to imply.

I'm actually a little nervous about the way you discuss the Arcanum; you almost make it seem like a religious order of some sort.

Well, I'm only expressing these fears so that we may start out with no misconceptions. You did say that I will need to realize the importance of trust, and I wish to be completely honest with you. If you have any questions, feel free to write or call.

Later.

TO: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

FROM: Geoffrey Truesdell <gtruesdell@pico.gtown.arcanum.com>

RE: The Arcanum

Jonathan, do not worry.

I did not misunderstand your motives for wishing to join the Arcanum. What you spoke of is quite common; many of our members begin as Associates, performing limited research for us in exchange for either monetary payment or similar services rendered in turn. I am fully aware of your stated reasons for wishing to join the Arcanum.

However, we have spoken often, and many times I have "seeded" our conversations with various statements or viewpoints primarily as a means of testing your ideology and personal philosophies. At the risk of sounding pretentious, I believe I may have figured out a few details of your personality to which you yourself are still blind.

There is much, much more to the Arcanum than you are now aware of. Some of this shall be taught or revealed to you throughout your period as Neophyte; the rest you shall simply learn from experience.

Everyone's schedule has been coordinated, and the Induction date is now set for 1 October, at 7 p.m. Park your car on the street and meet your fellow Neophytes at the gates; you will be summoned when we are ready.

BTW — I am advising you, as I have your fellow Neophytes, to begin a Journal. You are embarking upon a Journey, and you should record your thoughts as you progress further and further along the path. (Remember, after all, that the terms "journal" and "journey" share the same etymological root.)

Yours,

GT

TO: Geoffrey Truesdell <gtruesdell@pico.gtown.arcanum.com>

FROM: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>

RE: Stuff

>>However, we have spoken often, and many times I have "seeded" our conversations with various statements or viewpoints primarily as a means of testing your ideology and personal philosophies. <<

Crafty devil!





Well, this all sounds fascinating. I'll see you soon.

Jonathan

The Journal of Jonathan Lewis

1 October 1994

Tonight was my Induction into the Arcanum. I'm not quite sure what to make of it.

To begin: I followed Geoffrey's instructions, and arrived at 7 p.m. I couldn't see much of the House, hidden as it was behind enormous vine-covered walls; in any of my dealings with the House, in fact, I've always met Geoffrey at a library or coffee shop, but I've never set foot on the grounds.

Regardless, I met my fellow "Neophytes" while waiting:

Nahar Khan, a Bengali-American woman in her late 20s, is a licensed psychologist as well as a practicing parapsychologist. Her primary interests are split between the "unexplored dimensions" of the human mind and "paranormal activities," by which she is referring to ghosts and hauntings.

I asked why she joined the Arcanum. She came to their attention a few years ago when she created the Foundation for Paranormal Studies, a small private organization dedicated to the research of "the psychic and paranormal." The FPS managed to attract a number of like-minded researchers, and started an annual journal (*The Proceedings of the Foundation for Paranormal Studies*), but unfortunately the foundation lacked the funding to grow.

A few months ago a researcher for the Arcanum contacted Nahar to discuss the possibility of her joining the Arcanum and conducting research on its behalf, while the Arcanum privately funds the FPS and its journal — provided that Arcanum research was never released. Facing little more than bankruptcy and a scholarly dead-end, Nahar enthusiastically agreed to join.

William Barron, a friendly but somewhat reserved man in his early 20s, is a linguist who claims to be fluent in Sanskrit, Coptic, Persian, Syriac, Aramaic, and Arabic — "in addition to 'a passel of classical and modern European languages.'" Also an Associate member of the Arcanum, he has assisted them with translations of numerous manuscripts recently uncovered in the Middle East. I was greatly surprised when he revealed that most of his training was through independent study; he never finished his undergraduate degree in English, having found most academic study to be too regimented and constrictive.

Paul DeLevie was an unusual fellow. I wasn't sure what to make of him: tall and easy-going, he seems as rugged and "outdoorsy" (to use the vernacular) as they come. He identified himself as a jack of all trades and "a reservoir of manly knowledge," and although the last comment was said tongue-in-cheek, I don't think he was lying. He finally revealed that his training was in engineering, but that he had been hired by the Arcanum on other occasions as a "special consultant," though he would not say specifically what he consulted them on — probably "tough-guy" things. Whatever.

So it appears Geoffrey was right: what I had expected to be a scholarly society was a gathering of individuals with their own unique talents and skills. "Everyone has something to contribute," Geoffrey remarked to me later that night.

But contribute to what exactly?

Finally, a young lady opened the gates for us; she was dressed in a formal business suit, her dirty blonde hair drawn back from her rather pretty face. Before we could say anything, she spoke:

"I am the Gatekeeper. Are you prepared to begin the Journey?"

"Sure," Paul said, the first to speak. I shrugged, and the others nodded assent.

"The Gatekeeper" escorted us through the entranceway. The Chapter House was an elegant brick Ewardian manor, beautifully lit. We were led in silence down the driveway to the house's main entrance. As we walked, Paul pointed out things I never would've noticed: cameras, alarms, and other rather extreme security devices craftily hidden throughout the grounds. He was shushed by the Gatekeeper — whether because his casual chatter was spoiling the decorum, or because such equipment should not have been so easily spotted, I don't know.

We climbed the steps to the smallish front porch, where the front doors were opened by a tall, imposing man in a severe gray suit, who looked as though he should be protecting the President, not answering doors for scholarly societies. Paul leaned over my shoulder and whispered, "If you bet that he's armed, you'll win."

As our group moved through the foyer, I had a chance to peek around: the parlors on both sides of the entrance were elegantly appointed, and lit only by candles (although I saw light switches on the walls). We were taken to a set of double doors that stood closed before us.

The Gatekeeper gestured us aside and came forward to open the doors. Beyond the entrance, I only saw darkness; the dim candlelight from the parlors did nothing to penetrate the shadows that lay within.

The Gatekeeper, her back to us, called into the darkness: "The Neophytes are prepared to begin their Journey. Who will guide them?"

"I will," answered a voice from within the chamber, which I immediately recognized as Geoffrey's. His figure appeared from out of the darkness, faintly illuminated by the candle he had just lit.

"Geoffrey Truesdell, will you be the Elder Brother for these Neophytes?" the Gatekeeper asked.

"I will," Geoffrey repeated.

Our Gatekeeper stepped aside, and Geoffrey approached. I saw then that he wore a tuxedo, with a black mantle on his shoulders. A blue sash crossed his breast, and on the sash was pinned a small silver owl. "Neophytes," he said, impassively, "the Journey awaits. Are you prepared?"

"Yes," we said almost in unison. (It was kind of bizarre, actually).

The rest of the ritual seemed fairly standard — invocations of "the Creator" (Geoffrey never said "God"), vows of secrecy and silence, obedience to the mission and regulations of the Arcanum, etc.

We were each awarded with a small silver owl pin, similar to Geoffrey's. Geoffrey said that the Owl was the symbol of the Arcanum. According to Christian tradition, the Owl is a sign for bad and evil things: blindness to faith, the ensnaring of souls, the devil, witchcraft, you name it. The Arcanum keeps with a more classical interpretation of the owl, a creature which hunts its prey at night, and which sat upon Athena's shoulder: "the Owl and the Arcanum," according to Geoffrey, "are both hunters of the hidden, whether it be prey or knowledge. Do not be mistaken, we are not armchair scholars. We actively pursue the truth, in whatever form it takes."

Motives

7 October 1994

We gathered on the second floor of the Chapter House in Georgetown, where "Elder Brother" Geoffrey Truesdell will hold weekly meetings to discuss the history and beliefs of the Arcanum. The library covers almost the entire second floor of the house, and is filled with an incredible collection of tomes. Geoffrey told us that many of the books had been

Publications

Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum

The Arcanum started an annual journal, the Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum, in 1912; this periodical highlights the year's best scholarship in the history of the occult sciences. The articles are carefully written and edited to conform to the scholarly standards of any academic journal, and do not reveal any of the Arcanum's particular biases or activities.

The submissions are subject to peer review and criticism; once a piece is accepted, it is then scrutinized to make sure that any knowledge or research which is not yet widely known — meaning, not yet released outside of the Arcanum — remains that way: the Arcanum reveals its secrets only when it is ready to do so.

Sometimes individuals who are not members of the Arcanum submit articles for publication; although the Arcanum prefers sponsoring and supporting its own scholarship, it will not ignore the efforts of others.

Arcanum Press

The Arcanum also began its own private imprint, dedicated either to releasing important new pieces of scholarship or keeping in print classics in the occult sciences. It publishes, on the average, two books per year. Each volume is clothbound and Smyth-sewn, utilizing acid-free paper and conforming to international printing standards of durability and permanence. The Arcanum Press has been working for over seven years on the production of a large multi-volume Encyclopedia on the occult sciences.

Both the APA and the Press are published and edited out of offices in London.

The Syllabus, c. 1878

1. The Arcanum is an organization dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. We, the members of the Arcanum, seek our own enlightenment and the enlightenment of our Brothers and Sisters, and ultimately wish to aid in the enlightenment of all humanity.

2. The Arcanum posits that there exists another world, one in which the supernatural and mythological teachings of the Ancients bear truth. We believe that this world conjoins with our own, and that it is our duty to understand its secrets. We shall seek this knowledge in the places of mystery, through the pages of history, and in the lore of all peoples. As the Ancients understood, so, one day, shall we.

3. The Arcanum believes that only through scholarship and learning can one separate fact from fiction, and can mere superstition be shorn from supernatural truth. Myths and folklore speak of higher truths, and it is through diligent study and investigation that these higher truths may be revealed.

4. The Arcanum exists to learn, not to manipulate. We are objective observers, and not judges. The Arcanum does not evaluate the "morality" of the supernatural simply in light of the fact of its existence, nor does it take action against the supernatural based upon any predetermined system of ethics.

5. What the Arcanum studies and learns, it does so for its own benefit. The resources of the Arcanum are not to be shared with anyone outside the Arcanum, nor shall the precious knowledge earned by our studies be spread without the consent of the Executive Committee. When it is time, we shall teach others; for now, it is our duty to safeguard this knowledge, to protect it from a humanity that is not yet ready to receive it.

recovered from "the Boston fire," which we would learn about in time.

I took some time to survey the library; its organization made some sense, but I wasn't able to fully piece together the scheme. Although I've never had any professional library training, it doesn't take much to figure out most library classification schemes; even if I can't anticipate where a book may be placed, I can usually understand the scheme *ex post facto*.

Not so with this library — books of seemingly no connection were placed side by side. For example, one entire cabinet contained books on linguistics and magic theory. I pointed this out to Geoffrey, who indicated that the library used a uniquely modified medieval scheme shared by all Chapter Houses of the Arcanum. The scheme was first used in the Axis Mundi, the Arcanum's central library in London, and it has never been changed.

"Grammar and magic belong together," according to Geoffrey, "because they were both related; they were associated with education and learning."

Barron, our linguist, chimed in then: "Their etymological histories even bear this out: reference *grammar* and *glamour* in any good dictionary."

"Why not change the scheme to something more... universal?" Nahar asked.

Geoffrey replied, "Our scheme may seem arcane, and it is. However, this system works on a number of levels, addressing higher truths that are not always evident in contemporary divisions — or more precisely, fragmentations — of knowledge.

Geoffrey eventually began our introductory session. He said that our training would be run very much like a graduate seminar — at which William visibly winced. We would all be given the same packet of readings dealing with particular periods in the history of the Arcanum, and we would then be assigned individual areas to discuss. Each week, we would read the common materials, and make presentations based upon our independent research.

Most of the common readings were photocopies from notes compiled by Seneca Hunt, the recently deceased historian who had begun researching a thorough history of the Arcanum. He had only gathered marginal notes and basic materials — including primary research from journals and correspondence — before he suffered a heart attack. (Geoffrey said that no one had been chosen yet to replace Hunt, an expert in Elizabethan studies, in his work.)

Mission

Our first session was a discussion of the basic structure of the Arcanum, a society just over 100 years old that is dedicated to the research and study of somewhat esoteric fields. All members of the Arcanum are guided by a loosely defined set of principles, which were established in 1885, and have been modified slightly through time. The last official revision was in 1978.

The Arcanum is known to the academic community, but only as a scholarly society. The more personal interests of the Arcanum's members, and the views officially endorsed by the Arcanum's leaders, are not revealed to the general public.

Recruitment

We also discussed the Arcanum's recruitment methods. The methods vary from place to place, but a few common themes emerged. Typically, when potential recruits are discovered, they are first offered Associate status, so that time and further contact may allow for a more careful determination of whether the individual truly merits membership.

When enough potential members are recruited (at least three, normally), then a new Neophyte class is established. A Neophyte's training may vary somewhat from Chapter to Chapter, but it typically lasts for about two or three months.

Associations

Many Arcanists are also, by nature of their occupation, members of other professional societies and organizations. Arcanists always keep an eye out for potential recruits among these various groups. An individual's membership in the Arcanum is typically not considered a secret issue, and Arcanists are often approached by colleagues interested in the possibility of joining our fellowship.

The Arcanum also uses its annual proceedings as a means to target possible recruits. Even if an article is not deemed worthy of publication, it may still alert the Arcanum to the existence of an individual with common goals, who could prove a valuable resource for the Arcanum as well as benefit from it himself.

The Arcanum's Hierarchy

Associate: This category includes junior scholars, researchers or investigators who wish to work with the Arcanum, but not be fully bound by its dictates. Associate Members do not receive the privileges accorded to full members, including access to many of the Arcanum's resources, holding offices, etc.

Neophyte: Neophytes are those who have decided to embark upon the Journey and become full members of the Arcanum; many of them began as Associates. Neophytes are viewed as those who seek enlightenment, and not just research; as such, they are always assigned a mentor, a senior member of the Arcanum who guides them along their path. They are allowed access to Arcanum literature and resources, but only at the discretion of their Elder Brother. Neophytes are often treated as "children" by other members of the Arcanum — they are to be seen, not heard.

Journeyman: Those who successfully complete the period as Neophyte, which is concluded by examination and ritual, go on to the next level of Journeymen (or Journeywomen, as female members have begun to call themselves) and are considered full members. They are granted all the rights and privileges thereunto. Journeymen often address each other as Brother or Sister; whether this developed from the fraternal model of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day (the occult fraternity from which many of the Arcanum's founders hailed), or more ecclesial models, is not known, but the earliest members of the Arcanum are seen in their correspondence to use "Brother" as a standard vocative.

Elder Brother: This is an honorific title, one granted to members who have shown themselves to be of good counsel and temperament, and have often been called upon for advice on any number of matters. Most Neophytes' Mentors come from this rank of distinguished members.

Women were inducted into the Arcanum as early as 1893; after an initial period of treatment as less-capable members, they soon achieved equal consideration from members. Many women have been granted the title and responsibilities of Elder Sister.

Publications

Most within the Arcanum are voracious readers, and they keep abreast of the professional reading in their fields: journals and new books attract most attention, since magazines are normally deemed "too mundane" and lacking in sophistication. Individuals who publish articles of note may be contacted by Arcanum recruiters for personal interviews.

The Internet

The Arcanum is now exploring a new medium of communication: the many listserv and Usenet discussion groups to be



found on the Internet, a system which links up businesses, universities, and organizations across the world. Individuals who might have valuable things to say and lack the proper forum for communication suddenly have a chance to be heard, and there are a number of discussion groups dedicated to the scholarly study of the supernatural.

Unfortunately, giving everyone a voice often means everyone has something to say, and wading through the daily swill that accumulates on the Internet is a daunting task for any potential recruiter.

But at least a few new recruits have been found through the Internet, and this forum has not yet been totally discounted. Some in the Arcanum are actually thinking of establishing a public Arcanum-list, serving a function similar to that of the *Annual Proceedings*, and also using it as a means to observe possible recruits.

Observers & Professional Contacts

Frequently, new members are found through the regular business of the Arcanum. More than one member started as little more than a witness — or even a victim — of an occult event or paranormal phenomenon, and ended up becoming more and more involved in a particular investigation. By the end of the investigation, these individuals may be approached regarding membership, particularly if the individual has been shown to have some psychic or other paranormal talents, which are always welcome.

Other Contacts

Of course, a common means to discover potential recruits is through informal contact. Arcanists will often come into contact with likely prospects in the course of daily business, or through coincidence. For example, a member may learn that one's cousin is studying Islamic mysticism, or that a childhood friend has become a private investigator. These leads are often approached individually, and may be given a job as an "independent contractor." If their services are considered valuable, then they are approached about Associate status, and so on.

Membership

The Journal of Jonathan Lewis, 21 October 1994

The Arcanum is more than just a scholarly society: it draws upon the work of historians, philosophers, genealogists, psychologists and parapsychologists, private investigators, and a variety of other professionals, without regard to academic credentials, how much one has published, or how many languages one can read. Certainly, these are all important factors, but there is much more to life than the Ivory Tower.

In rereading these notes, I have to wonder: am I just repeating what I heard Geoffrey say, or am I starting to buy into his line?

The Foundation House

The Arcanum's Foundation House is in England, "near London." (Geoffrey would not be more specific.) The Grand Chancellor, the director of the Arcanum, resides there, and it is from London that the Executive Committee runs the business of the Arcanum. A number of Journeymen have their permanent residence in the Foundation House, and engage in full-time sponsored research as Fellows of the Arcanum, typically utilizing the Axis Mundi.

"Axis Mundi" is not just a boastful title; this library is one of the most complete and comprehensive libraries dealing with the history and manifestation of the arcane, be it Renaissance alchemy or contemporary parapsychology. The library itself predates the founding of the Arcanum, Geoffrey said, but we would learn more about that later, when we discussed "our" history more thoroughly.

Chapter Houses

The Arcanum is spread out across the globe, like a magnificent spider web, with a "port of call" on every continent, in a number of major cities. These ports of call are Chapter Houses, micro-headquarters to which local Arcanists report or turn for support. The administrator of each Chapter House, or Chancellor, makes regular updates of his Chapter's activities to the Foundation House. Various members of a Chapter House might have different duties, e.g., Financial Officer, Secretary, Serjeant-at-arms (in charge of the Chapter's security), etc., but the organization often varies from place to place, "according to local custom," as Geoffrey puts it; in other words, each Chapter has some autonomy in deciding its own leadership and management, but the Chancellor ultimately makes final decisions (and takes the heat if something goes wrong).

A Chapter House is an Arcanist's visible link to the Foundation House and the Grand Chancellor. Every Arcanist is ultimately attached to a particular Chapter House; this affiliation provides us with a number of benefits: at the very least, we are given a place to receive mail and messages, a computer for e-mail and word-processing (some computers at Chapter Houses have more advanced set-ups for research and telecommunications), a library in which to study at any hours of the day or night — the Chapter Librarian also acts as a liaison to the Axis Mundi, and can sometimes request that books be sent between Chapters — and a place to call when "in need."

In need of what? I wonder. I assume extra funding, research, etc.

Larger Chapter Houses can also provide lodging for Arcanists, although there is typically a waiting list since there tend to be fewer rooms than there are Arcanists. Chapter Houses will also sometimes arrange lodging for visiting Arcanists — either on the premises, if possible, or at nearby hotels — for a short duration.

All members of the Arcanum must be officially "posted" to a Chapter House near their home of residence; even if they do not live in the immediate vicinity of the House, they are still registered there. Transfers can be requested in writing, and are usually approved, but some Chapter Houses have more Arcanists than they can hope to reasonably support.

The Georgetown Chapter House is the primary American Chapter House. All other American Chapter Houses

report to the Georgetown Chancellor, who in turn reports to the Foundation House.

Colonies

The next administrative unit is called a colony. According to Geoffrey, colonies are typically Chapter Houses-in-training. They are usually a gathering of Arcanists working in an area together, but without any real autonomy: they have no independent funding, and they have to report to the nearest Chapter House. Colonies are treated as Chapter House extensions. If a colony exists in an area long enough, and the area proves a regular demonstration of "supernatural activity," colonies may be given Chapter House status.

Members may work independently, but the Arcanum has long supported the idea of Arcanists working together. If the issue is merely a matter of research that can be conducted in a library, then of course a single individual is all that is necessary — although the more, the merrier, in my opinion.

Lodges

However, according to Geoffrey, "field research" — and I assume he means investigations of alleged hauntings and other paranormal occurrences —is typically accomplished in groups: this is to provide witnesses and assure safety. Often Arcanists will choose to operate regularly with a collection of peers. Such alliances are called lodges.

Lodges are often formed as classes of Neophytes grow together; for this reason, Neophytes are rarely chosen independently: they must learn that trust and cooperation are necessary elements in the Arcanum. Geoffrey pointed out that if our class remained for the entirety of our program, we would most likely end up acting as a lodge.

"Even if we have such radically different interests?" Nahar asked. "A Renaissance historian and a parapsychologist?"

"Indeed, in spite of such disparity," Geoffrey assured her. "Like any friendship, you will come to recognize common elements, and you will learn what your individual strengths and weaknesses are, and how they can blend into a much greater sum. Lodges are rarely groups of people with exactly similar interests; such homogeneity is stifling. Certainly you will make allies in your own related fields, but you will come more and more to depend upon your lodge. Even when you give up the more investigative phase of your career, and your lodge brothers and sisters move on, you will still remain in close contact."

Some Chapter Houses are so small, they contain only one lodge; other, more influential Chapter Houses may have anywhere from two to five lodges in operation.

Lodges typically have some measure of autonomy; while they must abide by the Syllabus and report all their findings to their Chapter House — which, in turn, sends monthly updates to the Foundation House — they are normally free to determine the course of their own research and investigations.

Colleges

Geoffrey's previous discussion of the Arcanum's structure dealt exclusively with the hierarchy of the society, from HQ down to the little lodges. But there are other groups, as well, which cut across the various administrative units. Although officially Colleges, these units sometimes take other names, such as "Programmes" or "Divisions," depending on the whim of the members.

Colleges represent the various interests of the Arcanum; anyone can apply to form a new unit, although the Executive Committee has final approval. Typically, a College (or similar unit) must have a minimum of six members.

Colleges provide a means for scholars of the same discipline to communicate with each other. While lodges are groups of people who operate together, their bonds tend to be experiential and emotional rather than intellectual. They live and work together, but they may actually pursue very independent goals. Colleges may meet regularly (as possible), correspond, teleconference, put out newsletters, and do whatever they choose to keep in touch.

These Colleges play a major role within the Arcanum: they help determine research needs, including the allocation of budget and resources. Although the units themselves do not have the ultimate word — such decisions being within the province of the Executive Committee — their voices are an important factor in the Executive Committee's decision-making processes.

Each College is chaired by a "Dean," who handles any administrative concerns. Periodically — about once each season — the Deans meet for a Senate, in which they update each other on the research and activities of their particular divisions. Yes, these amount to little more than boasting sessions. However, the Senate also meets with the Executive Committee, which then determines what future budgetary needs will be.

There are many Colleges within the Arcanum, but the most prominent ones are the Colleges of Thaumatology, Egyptology, Parapsychology, Shamanic Studies, Lycanthropic Studies, the Division of Extra-Terrestrial Studies, the Hermetic Studies Programme and the School of Mythoarchaeology.

Membership in any College is voluntary, but only College Members may apply for the research grants and fellowships which are sometimes made available with College funds.

Chapter Two: The Darkling Road (The World Within and Without)

Saloman hung down her head
Laid bare her heart for the world to see
She craved for intimacy
Through darkened doors
Her aspect veiled with indecision
Gazed out to sea
She craved lucidity
— Dead Can Dance, "Enigma of the Absolute"

Part One: History

In the Beginning...

Correspondence of Benjamen Holmscroft, 31 October 1885:

Dear Sir:

Our many correspondences in the past have proven you to be an insightful and well-reasoned gentleman with concerns not unlike my own.

I have been in touch with you and a number of our colleagues to discuss the nature of occult learning as it is now generated. We are all, it would appear, dissatisfied with the breed of occult societies of which we have either been members ourselves or have had contact with. While the exercise of imagination is a valid endeavor, particularly as a means to break free of the rigid pursuit of knowledge which is the hallmark of our present society, this process should be well-tempered, and not cultivated to grow like weeds in a cognitive garden. Too many occultists or esoterists of our day have fallen victim to fanciful imagining, and have not learned to root their beliefs in valid paths of enlightenment. An exotic medley of heretical Christian teachings and Sanskrit philosophy do not, alas, a spiritual discipline make.

Even worse than this trivialization and absurdification of the esoteric are the self-aggrandizing tendencies of so many alleged occultists. While the esoteric path may indeed engender the development of genuine paranormal abilities, whether psychical or magical, these should not be the goal of any spiritual path. All too many individuals, alas, have become wrapped up in the quest for personal power that such philosophical teachings often promise.

A third dilemma which has become rather apparent is the scarcity of genuine instruction in these fields. We have all, at one point or another in our lives, been subject to the teachings of individuals not qualified for the title of "master" which they claim for themselves. Whether such individuals were deluded or dishonest is irrelevant at this point; the line between *fakir* and



fake is too easily crossed, and many innocents have been led astray in consequence.

Surveying the scene as we now have it, it would appear that I am presenting a most bleak picture: the world of the esoteric is filled with delusional, ill-intentioned, power-hungry people. I have certainly learned this from my own fruitless days with the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day. Such, I fear, is the truth we must contend with; but it is not the only possible truth.

I have come to realize, from my own experiences and through the experiences of others, that there is much that can still lies unexplored beyond the veil of the mundane world. What I propose is rather simple: as I have learned from my experience, so others have learned. What knowledge I lack, another might teach me, as I may be able to impart to others what they seek to know.

Let us gather, and form a new society; one patterned after many other societies, but based upon the mutual acquisition of knowledge. Let us instruct each other; let us walk the path to illumination together, and pave the way for others who come behind. Let our intellectual scrutiny be far-reaching, from the scientific to the literary, from the mundane to the celestial, from the normal to the paranormal. Let us initiate our own Orphic mysteries. Let us delve into the secrets of the universe.

I am inviting you, and a number of our colleagues, to meet with me next month, the date to be mutually agreed upon. We will gather at my estate for a weekend of symposia and dialogue. I hope that you will accept my offer — if not to join us in future fellowship, then at least for this preliminary gathering.

I pray I have not misjudged your intentions, and if I have, gentle sir, please pardon me; I meant no insult.

In the hopes of a positive answer, I remain

Yr. most humble & obedient servant,

Benjamen Holmscroft

Vannever Hall, London

From the Diary of Winthrop Murray:

24 November 1885: I met Holmscroft per his invitation, at his manor in London. Ten other individuals were present for the occasion.

Holmscroft's is a large and venerable manor. He referred to it as his family home, but something about his claim struck me as perhaps a bit specious. He was very much at home in the manor, and the house showed signs of a long, unbroken occupancy, with a distinctly traditional feel. But family? No. I could not finger the cause for on my suspicions, but I've learned to trust my intuition, however illogical or even ridiculous its notions may at first appear.

Prior to dinner we were all shown to our rooms — the manor is inestimably large and could easily lodge scores of people without difficulty — and we were left to relax and mingle amongst ourselves. The French occultist Etienne DuLac was there, as was the Reverend Jebediah Spector Brown, an Anglican clergyman who is a scholar in the ways of the Undead. Brown is a quiet, God-fearing man with some hidden purpose. I do not like him.

Also present were the American thanatologist Jonathan Kelvin, and the poet Liam McPhee — why that arrogant Irish bastard was invited is beyond me, but I trust that Holmscroft had his reasons. There were a handful of others, none whom I knew.

Holmscroft mentioned that some of those invited had refused to attend, for reasons which he would not divulge.

After dinner, which was quite a sumptuous feast, we all retired to his library — a more magnificent collection of books in one man's house I have never seen! — at last to discuss Holmscroft's proposal.

Holmscroft was correct in assuming one thing at least: we all felt those of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day and other such "occult fraternities" to be a bunch of carnival-costumed fools who would not know real magic if it thrust itself in their faces — which it often has. All their posturing has revealed itself to be the juvenile ravings of decadent poets and would-be cognoscenti, disenchanted with sterile reality, yet obviously unprepared for the reality they pretend to seek. Those who remained with the Order after Holmscroft quit three years ago were able to verify that the Order has not progressed in its search for knowledge, but instead indulges in yet more fanciful imaginings. The Reverend Brown was not a member of the Order. Claiming that such occult trafficking was not his forte, the Reverend made his discomfort — or even antipathy — toward the modern-day ritual magicians quite apparent.

Those of us present at the meeting have had our own experiences, enough to know that there is much more to the "world of shadows" — a term which Holmscroft used, and I suspect he meant more than just Plato's Allegory of the Cave — than most believe. Brown was quite convinced of the existence of vampyres, an assurance which could not be easily swayed. I myself have conversed with one fellow who claimed to be an immortal from the lands of the Nile; he revealed to me much of the workings of his sorcery. I offered this tidbit to the group, and was answered with not a single note of mockery or even doubt from any of my listeners. McPhee has been said by some (including himself, in typical Gaelic humility) to have the blood of the faeries in him; he looks to be in his very early 20s, but is well into his late 40s. His behavior is sometimes inexplicable, and his poetry does have an otherworldly quality to it.

I took the time to observe Holmscroft during the conversation that ensued. In person, he is not very different from the way he comes across in his correspondences, and I found him to be much as others have described: at times aloof, at times warm, but always keenly observant, rather like a hawk. After his initial discussion — and I believe monologue might be a more appropriate term for it — he contributed little to the conversation; but still it seemed that he was orchestrating its direction through his occasional artfully placed questions or comments. For all appearances a mere observer, he was truly the one in charge. Often, he would fix his penetrating gaze upon a speaker, as if he could see through their exterior to read the person's soul; but always his own expression remained serene, implacable, revealing nothing of his thoughts. At times, his silence and his predatoriness struck me as owllike; only later did I notice that a large black statue of an owl sat on the table beside him.

We agreed — after much heated debate, and one characteristically Irish outburst by McPhee — that we should join together to free ourselves from the childish phantasies of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day, and use our shared resources to more fully explore the truths buried in the hidden world. The cooperation and support of many like minds shall take us much further than we have come through our individual efforts.

Influential Societies

The Hermetic Order of the Rising Day

One of the many occult groups that came to life in the late 19th century, the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day — or the HORD — was short-lived and remained obscure throughout the duration of its existence. In its time, however, it boasted some of Britain's most distinguished occultists and scholars of the arcane.

Founded in London in 1879, the HORD sought direct and pragmatic occult knowledge, primarily as manifested in ritual magic. The organization alleged that it was in possession of the secrets of the Rosicrucians. Any such mention of this enigmatic Brotherhood was bound to draw the curious, and thus a number of individuals were attracted to the HORD. The group claimed for itself exacting standards of research and knowledge, and created a very formal hierarchy, clearly differentiating it from the plethora of spiritualist societies currently in existence. By 1882, however, HORD had become little more than a mockery of magical ritual, its members dressing in outlandish garb and repeating nonsensical phrases that "resonated with the harmony of the spheres."

In 1887, with the founding of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, yet another society that claimed to have inherited the Rosicrucian tradition, the HORD faded into obscurity. However, many of its members migrated over to the Golden Dawn, bringing with them the HORD's scholarly standards and hierarchic structure.

The majority of the early founders of the Arcanum were disgruntled and dissatisfied members of the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day (and later on, refugees from the Golden Dawn as well). The structure and many beliefs of the Arcanum, although much broader than the HORD, bear a discernible similarity to its progenitor.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

The Rosicrucians

Part I: *The Fama Fraternitatis*

The Rosicrucian Brotherhood was a secret society which traced its origins to the theological and intellectual upheaval of the late Renaissance and the Reformation. The Rosicrucians are often cited as the founding source for many of the occult groups that were created from the 19th century to this day; claims to possess the "secrets of the Rosicrucians" were a common trademark for these organizations.

The earliest document that has been associated with the Rosicrucians, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, was circulating in Germany in 1610, with the first printed edition appearing in 1614. This publication enjoined readers to reform the world; those who truly desired membership would be recognized as the Rosy Cross Brotherhood.

The *Fama Fraternitatis* cites Christian Rosenkreutz as the founder of the Brothers of the Holy Cross. The document narrates his life and details the early history of the Rosy Cross Brothers. It is the major reference on the known or alleged works of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

Holmscroft played a key role in arranging this agreement. At his suggestion, we shall call ourselves the Arcanum: a hidden thing, a profound mystery, an alchemical secret of nature. After further deliberation, we drafted the mission statement of our new brotherhood, which henceforward shall be called The Syllabus.

Notes of Seneca Hunt, Arcanum Historian:

The Arcanum was founded on 24 November 1885 by a small collection of disillusioned occultists and esoterists, many of whom had previously been members of the once-prominent Victorian occult fraternity Hermetic Order of the Rising Day (HORD).

Many members of the HORD were dissatisfied with the organization's belief system. One such dissident was Benjamen Holmscroft, an Englishman whom even now few of his peers would claim to know well. He quit the society after five years of membership, and retired to mull over the state of things. In the following three years, he withdrew from the rest of society, maintaining frequent correspondence with the few other occultists whom he felt he could trust.

Finally, in 1885, he invited them to discuss the formation of a new society, dedicated to a scholarly pursuit of the occult, the esoteric, and the metaphysical, free from the delusions of the HORD and other such groups. The majority of his correspondents accepted the invitation, and met with him at Holmscroft Manor; after one long evening of discussion (and apparently much argument), this cabal agreed to form the Arcanum. The majority of that weekend was dedicated to the establishment of the tenets of the Arcanum and the ensuing binding rules that would be called the Canon. The French occultist, Etienne DuLac, disagreed with a number of the proposed tenets, and angrily withdrew from the fellowship. He resurfaced ten years later in Morocco, siring a society of his own, one much smaller and even more secretive than the Arcanum.

Most importantly, the members of the new Arcanum agreed that their purposes would best be served by a full sharing of resources. They deposited large amounts of money in a variety of trust funds, and Holmscroft himself offered his manor — which he originally alleged to be his family home, though later research has proven this to be untrue — to the new society to serve as the Foundation House. Within several months, most new members moved into Holmscroft manor, establishing a community for the purpose of mutual scholarly support and encouragement.[1] They had agreed to join their library resources as well; the manor already had a most expansive collection of its own, and this repository, combined with the libraries of the other founding members, produced one of the finest scholarly collections on the occult and the esoteric in the entire world. The library was so impressive that it was ultimately christened the Axis Mundi.

The Diary of Winthrop Murray, 1 December 1885:

Finally, after many grueling hours of meetings and discussions, we agreed upon the formal structure of the Arcanum. Our goals include the ultimate expansion of our society beyond London — after all, a number of the Arcanum's founders do not even reside in the United Kingdom — to all of Europe and even beyond the continent to America and elsewhere. We estab-

[1]The only exceptions to this were the clergyman Brown, who preferred to live in the rectory at St. Basil's, in London, and those founders who lived outside the United Kingdom.



lished that Holmscroft Manor would be the foundation of the entire society, while its tendrils would snake out into smaller houses across the world. The first few houses have yet to be established, but candidates include Dublin (as suggested by McPhee, of course), Budapest, Paris, Boston, and Istanbul. Unfortunately, until the membership of our Arcanum increases, such broad plans cannot be put into effect.

On the issue of membership, our "founders" now officially include:

Benjamen Holmscroft, of London
Jebediah Brown, of London
Roger Corwin, of Salisbury
Peter Harker, of London
Stewart Heath, of Manchester
Winthrop Murray, of Kent
Liam McPhee, of Dublin
Jonathan Kelvin, of Boston, U.S.A.
Massimo Linarelli, of Rome, Italy

DuLac, of course, left us in a huff, while George Kenealy and Thomas Sullivan ultimately turned down Holmscroft's offer. Upon reflection, it seemed to amuse Holmscroft that there were nine founding members of the Arcanum; whatever the significance of this was, however, he would not reveal. We have not yet decided whether there are to be varying levels of membership status, as is common in other occult fraternities.

It was ultimately decided that each member would undertake administrative responsibilities in addition to their personal goals. Holmscroft, of course, was unanimously voted the director. I volunteered to be secretary, as writing is second nature to me. Some members chose to direct various academic disciplines: McPhee showed an interest in faerie lore, Brown had already proven interest in vampyre study — although his fascination seems to me to be more of an obsession than an intellectual curiosity — and Kelvin has expressed interest in the study of hauntings and ghost lore.

Unfortunately, Linarelli and Kelvin chose not to join us at the Manor, but rather preferred to return to their homes. They are willing to travel on the Arcanum's behalf as often as necessary, however, and both would like to see Chapters of the Arcanum established in their homelands. They also graciously offered to provide lodgings for any Arcanum members traveling through their countries.

Brown seems to prefer his Episcopal residence to that of the manor, claiming that the manor made him uneasy — "too much witchery," I heard him mutter once. The rest of us have agreed to make the move to Holmscroft's manor as soon as feasibly possible. Since I currently maintain residence at a gentleman's club, I will be able to move to the manor quite easily and expeditiously.

Notes of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

In early December of 1885, the formal structure of the Arcanum was decisively established. A number of options had been considered:

Ecclesial: Some members believed in a strong hierarchy based upon the Episcopal model, complete with the adoption of clerical titles. This was originally considered because of the sacred quality of knowledge and the quest for enlightenment.

Fraternal: The majority of the Arcanum's founders had come from the HORD, and of course it was not unusual to suspect that this would serve as an organizational model. Most such societies, whether the Freemasons — and to deny the occult origins of this group is facile — or the HORD developed a progression of stages of membership, often called degrees. For some, however, such a structure was too stratified, and not conducive to the sense of cooperation that Holmscroft hoped to facilitate.

Collegial: This model was based, obviously enough, on the models of higher education which most of the founders had passed through.[2]

Professional: This model was based upon the formation of professional societies, with a board of directors and an executive officer. However, an exclusively "professional" model was much too staid and sterile for an organization that is dedicated to self-advancement.

Ultimately, it was decided that a combination of the above models worked best. For example, while the various degrees of the fraternal model seemed appropriate, the excesses to which some organizations took this system were to be avoided. The Arcanum was to be a brotherhood of scholars, a hermetic university, and a professional society all at the same time. The

[2]Interestingly enough, Holmscroft was privately educated, and never attended any of the higher schools. At least, he never indicated such a background, and no research has uncovered records of a Benjamen Holmscroft at any educational institution anywhere, in Europe or America.

The Rosicrucians

Part II: Christian Rosenkreutz

Christian Rosenkreutz, attributed with founding the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, was born in 1378 to a family with a noble title but little money. By age five, he was placed in a monastery, where he studied both Greek and Latin.

Christian and another monk took a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; his companion died in Cyprus, and Rosenkreutz went on to Damascus alone. Skilled in healing and medicine, Christian soon came to the attention of the wise men of Damascus. Abandoning his earlier itinerary, he took up the study of science and mathematics, and ultimately decided to seek the very source of Arabia's arcane sciences: the city the sages named Damcar.

Arriving in Damcar, Rosenkreutz found himself not only welcomed, but expected. He remained in this city — which still has not been identified in any historical records — and learned of the many secrets of the Ancients of Damcar: sacred mathematics, physics, alchemy, and the teachings found in the *Liber Mundi*, or Book of the World, a text said to contain the secrets of the universe. While in Damcar, he met members of the Prieuré de Solomon (so named because they were founded on the site of the Temple of Solomon), descendants of a group of knights that had broken from the Knights Templar in the early 14th century. These white-mantled priests claimed to possess many secrets, and they revealed them to Christian.

After his sabbatical in Damcar, Rosenkreutz journeyed to Egypt, then Morocco. He studied the metaphysics of Hermes Trismegistus, and learned the Kabbala of the Jews. Throughout his travels, Rosenkreutz encountered many who regarded study and the exchange of knowledge as crucial for the advancement of humanity.

Returning at last to Europe — first Spain, then Germany — Rosenkreutz found his new wisdom to be an object of hostility and mockery. Ultimately, he decided that humanity was not yet ready for the moral and philosophical reformation which he had hoped to inaugurate, but he did not wish to abandon all that he had learned and accomplished. He decided to record his knowledge and secret it away until the world was ready. Rosenkreutz recruited three boyhood friends from the monastery where he grew up, and formed a new semi-monastic order, the Brothers of the Holy Cross, which was dedicated to both healing the ill and leading others to enlightenment.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

fellowship would be administered by an Executive Committee, and final authority rested with the Grand Chancellor, who was granted near total decision-making power.

The nine founders of the Arcanum decided to act as the Executive Committee for the body, and Holmscroft was asked to take the position of Grand Chancellor.

Although there were no new members of the Arcanum as of yet and the Executive Committee was composed of leaders with no one to lead, Holmscroft was secure in his conviction that the Arcanum would, in time, grow.

The First Ritual

The diary of Winthrop Murray, 25 December 1885:

It is a well-known fact that rituals exist to serve many purposes. On the social level, the practice of rituals helps to maintain a sense of continuity, a feeling of tradition: as we do now, so have our forebears done, and shall our successors do. Ritual is a visible link between generations.

Many truths are symbolically expressed through ritual, for these simple acts may often clothe the ideals and beliefs of an organization. Ritual is the vehicle through which man may travel beyond the realm of his immediate experience.

Holmscroft knew these things when he created the Rituals of the Arcanum. I fully suspect that the Rituals he presented to us had been in practice since long before the formation of the Arcanum. I saw much that had been adopted from the HORD's system of rituals, but much of what Holmscroft initiated was of origins unknown to me. Holmscroft, when questioned, answered with complete candor that these rituals had descended from the Mysteries of Eleusis and Orpheus, from the sacred cults of Isis and Osiris. This, of course, must have been some fabrication — or perhaps embellishment is a more appropriate term? — on his part, for such rites were oral, and have been lost through time.

Regardless, Holmscroft has insisted that the Rituals of the Arcanum remain oral as well; it is unlawful to write them down or repeat them outside of their context. Tonight he shall officiate at the first Ritual — our initiation into the Arcanum. Thus we shall become something more than merely an intellectual venture.

26 December 1885

I write this after having returned from our Initiation: a truly moving and powerful event; I would almost believe the Muses themselves were invoked this night.

Brown, however was absent; whether he had Yuletide activities to attend to, as would be expected of one of his office, or whether he refused to participate in a clearly pagan activity, has yet to be seen.

On a lighter note: Holmscroft announced that news of our venture has been spreading through the occult community, and a number of other scholars and students have expressed interest in joining our fellowship.

The Early Years

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

The first fifteen years of the Arcanum were marked by a slow but steady increase in membership. More than a few of these members were eminently qualified scholars. More importantly, some new members were not mere scholars but also occult practitioners: quite a few, in fact, possessed strong psychic talents or even dabbled in the magical arts. Holmscroft actually went out of his way to recruit such members, though whether this was for his own purposes or for the benefit of the Arcanum was not at that time clear.

The Mysteries

The Mystery cults of the Classical [illegible] the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries, the cults of Isis and [illegible] Mithraism, etc. — flourished between the sixth century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. They spread across Europe, from Greece to Italy and even into the Near East. These cults bore a number of themes in common and drew many followers.

The very word, "mystery," comes from these cults: musterion [*musterion*], meaning "secret rite" — such knowledge that could only be revealed to an initiate. These secrets often included dramatic initiation rites, most of which trumpeted the symbolic death and rebirth of the initiate. Mystery cults were paths of ecstasy, which filled emotional and spiritual needs often left unfulfilled by the civic rituals of Greece and Rome. These cults promised immortality, and even resurrection from the dead — themes more fully developed in later religions. (In fact, Christianity itself was once viewed as little more than a Near Eastern mystery religion.)

The mystery religions of ancient Greece believed there were three types of knowledge: maqhsis [*mathesis*] (knowledge which can be learned), gnwsiV [*gnosis*] (a recognizable or experiential knowledge), and paqhsiV [*pathesis*] (suffered knowledge). Mystery religions attempted to experience all three forms. Many rites had both exoteric aspects for the populace at large, and esoteric elements, revealed only to those trusted few who had been sworn to secrecy. The role of secrecy in mystery religions cannot be overemphasized: all initiates were obligated to take a vow of silence, and no records exist of any violation of these oaths.

The cults themselves eventually died out, and many of their mysteries died with them. There are some rumors, however, that these religions have survived to this day, practiced in complete secrecy by a select few — but this cannot be verified.

In the course of this research, I came across a single reference to the White Veils of the Temple, a small sect of priests who lived in the Holy Land in the time of Solomon (10th c. B.C.). This obscure following is believed to have been an early predecessor of the mystery cults, but unfortunately no other material about them could be unearthed.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

The Diary of Winthrop Murray, 15 March 1886:

All goes well. We are beginning to attract more and more qualified candidates, and the knowledge base of our cabal grows steadily. Our membership is now just over 25. We have even been contacted by two women who desire to join our fellowship as well — a notion that I find absurd! Even more absurd, however, is Holmscroft's apparent inclination to initiate them into the Arcanum.

The Reverend Brown continually grows more distant. His attendance at our biweekly business meetings is sporadic at best, and he rarely participates when he does attend. Though

Holmscroft has spoken with him at length about this, he has been unable to resolve things. I believe he is still vexed about Brown's absolute refusal to participate in our Rituals, even though Holmscroft has amended the wording of the invocation of the Deity so that any Christians among our group will not be unnecessarily offended.

24 November 1886

This day marks the completion of our first year in existence. In retrospect, we have made great strides: we are now 48 Journeymen strong, with a full 29 of these residing at Holmscroft Manor. We have an additional five Associates.

Holmscroft's role is evolving. He has ceded all financial management to the Executive Committee and our new Treasurer. The only activity which is still very much in his province is membership. Otherwise, he can usually be found sitting in the library, reading through the research and writings of our members.

His leadership, though understated, is still a strong force in the organization. Although he never coerces or demands, and always takes into account the will of the society as a whole, Holmscroft is clearly the one in charge. Little transpires without his knowledge or approval: though it may not appear at first to be so, he is almost always proven to have had a hand in everything that occurs in the Arcanum.

A case in point: Last month, Massimo Linarelli, our Italian Journeyman, was in private communiqué with a French Catholic clergyman in Rome who appears to be an expert on demonology. Linarelli was privately considering him as a candidate for membership in the Arcanum. He claims to have spoken to no one about his intentions, until he received a telegram from Holmscroft:

> *The priest is with the Society of Leopold. Attempting to infiltrate. Do not offer membership. B.H.*

Linarelli approached me about this, quite perplexed as to how Holmscroft could know of his intentions and the priest's possible affiliation. I, of course, had no answer.

Our society now represents quite a diverse array of fields of expertise:

Brown is the most knowledgeable about vampire-related issues. Some of our members scoff at him, accusing him of falling victim to Christian paranoia and arguing that that any vampire tales must surely be allegories. Brown, however, remains steadfast in his claims.

My own training is in Egyptology. My interest began with Egyptian magic, and this has since broadened to the study of ritual magic all across the world. I have been researching the theory and practice of magic as it has developed throughout history.

McPhee is well versed in the faerie lore, though one can never be sure whether he truly believes faeries exist. McPhee himself is rather fay: while no one doubts his sincerity, there may be occasion to question the persistence of his convictions.

Jonathan Kelvin is quite the expert on the Afterlife, and has embarked upon a scientific study of hauntings and related phenomena. I do wonder, however, whether his obsession with "after-death" stems from a personal fear of death, and where this may ultimately lead him.



Roger Corwin has been actively collecting lore on lycanthropy from all across the world. The majority of his accumulated knowledge relates to werewolves. Corwin, ever the alienist, believes that lycanthropy is merely a psychiatric condition in which the victim suffers delusions of transformation into psychotic monsters capable of great crime. The fact that there have been no witnesses to the phenomenon, while there have been many witnesses of random individuals going berserk and mindlessly attacking others, lends some testament to this notion. Irregardless, Corwin is a thorough scholar, and has traveled extensively in his search for some evidence that will disprove his theory.

Holmscroft, typically enigmatic, seems to know much but offers little.

On the other hand, I must admit that I have seen scant evidence of anyone progressing on this "journey to enlightenment" which Holmscroft spoke of so eloquently. While I can hardly expect to see any real physical manifestations, and such progress is usually a subtle development, it seems that the majority of our members are more concerned either with the operation of the Arcanum or with their own academic research. Little "new ground" has been broken; we appear only to be collecting what research has already been written, and discussing theories that have already been proven. Still, the Arcanum is only in its infancy, and it must learn to crawl before it can tread the difficult journey ahead.

15 January 1888

We learned today the reason for Brown's absence from our last regular meeting. A representative attempted to visit him at St. Basil's in London, but was informed that he had moved out, suddenly and without explanation, the week before.

Holmscroft is quite incensed — in fact, I have never before seen him in such a state. In private conversation, he confessed to having long suspected the clergyman's motives, but he allowed him to remain for his contributions in the area of vampire lore. Holmscroft described Brown as one who does not scare easily — in fact Holmscroft has never detected any trace of fear in him.

We cannot believe that his departure was forced upon him; it was inarguably one of his own choice. This can only mean that he was simply using us for his own purposes and has now proceeded along to another part of his plan, whatever that might be.

A Time of Growth

Correspondence of Jonathan Kelvin to Benjamen Holmscroft:

15 July 1888

I'm so glad that we have agreed that it is time for the Arcanum to move globally. However much I enjoy the trips to England for our meetings, I often feel at a loss here in America. How soon before other Houses will finally be opened? The Manor, of course, shall always be the Foundation House of the Arcanum.

I am particularly grateful to you for having chosen me for directorship of the Boston Chapter. I shall endeavor to follow the example of your leadership.

The Rosicrucians

Part III: The Brothers of the Holy Cross

Christian Rosenkreutz and the first Brothers of the Holy Cross, ready to begin their work, retired to a temple which they named the Domus Sanctus Spiritus. They collected a library with resources on virtually every subject of the arts and sciences. This done, they decided to separate and travel the earth, healing the ill for no pay or profit. They agreed to reunite once a year at the Sanctus Spiritus on the "Day of C" — the date of which is unknown, but is suspected to be the Christian feast of Corpus Christ, which takes place on the Thursday after the eighth Sunday following Easter — in order to renew their bonds. The identity of the fraternity was to remain secret until the brotherhood received a sign that it was time to reveal itself. For decades, the brothers quietly performed their duties.

According to the *Fama*, Father Christian died in 1484 at the age of 106: "oppressed by no disease, which he had neither felt in his own body nor allowed to attack others, but summoned instead by the Spirit of God." Father Christian was buried by two of his followers, who swore never to reveal his burial place.

In 1604, several Rosy Cross brothers, including the author of the Fama, found a concealed door at a hidden location — probably Germany. Inscribed upon the door was a Latin phrase: *Post Centum Viginti Annos Patebo*, or "after 120 years I will reappear."

Behind the door was a seven-sided vault, with an altar in the center. The room was brilliantly illuminated, although there was no known way for sunlight to enter it. Each of the seven walls contained many compartments, all of which held wondrous things: copies of all the ordered books, the *Vocabularium* of Paracelsus (a Swiss alchemist, born a good decade after Father Christian's burial), the journal of Father Christian's life and travels, as well as mirrors, bells, and lamps.

Beneath the altar itself was the body of Father Christian: "fair and worthy ...whole and unconsumed." Father Christian's hands clasped the *Liber T* — described in the *Fama* as the Rosicrucians' "greatest treasure next to the Bible."

The brothers sealed the vault, confident that this was the augury needed to announce their presence to the world.

The Rosicrucian heritage has been trumpeted by a score of occult societies, many of which incorporated the Rosy-Cross theme into their name or symbol. They have all proven fraudulent, and most scholars doubt the veracity and integrity of the *Fama*, claiming it is little more than Reformation propaganda — echoing the Catholic critics who derided the Rosicrucian movement from the beginning.

There are many within the Arcanum, however, who believe that the *Fama* spoke either allegorically, or even literally; that somewhere lies the undisturbed tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz, and that the Wise Men of Damcar still teach their secret lores.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

By the way — Peter Carroll, an agent of mine, claims to have seen J.S. Brown in New York. I am investigating this.

Yours,

J.K.

* * *

1 August 1888, telegram:

Peter Carroll is now missing. J.K.

* * *

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

The second and third Chapters of the Arcanum were established in 1888. During the fall, Holmscroft and other officers traveled to America to preside over the opening of the Boston Chapter. Kelvin was appointed Chancellor of the Chapter, five Associates were initiated as Neophytes, and three new Associates were appointed.

Kelvin and Holmscroft had worked together in the preceding months to ensure that the second chapter of the Arcanum would be worthy of the honor. The organization purchased a large Colonial building from a group of Freemasons in financial distress: this became the offices and library of the Boston Chapter, while the residence adjoining it, also included with the purchase, became the domicile for the chapter members.

The third chapter was opened later that winter in Vienna. A magnificent Baroque structure became the joint office-cum-residence of the Vienna Chapter. Roger Corwin, whose research inevitably took him to the Germanic countries, was appointed Chancellor, while four newer members relocated there as well. Two Austrians were initiated as Journeymen, and a new class of Neophytes (four at first, though one withdrew two weeks after the initiation) joined the chapter.

The years 1889 – 1900 marked the first great expansion stage. Although more Chapter Houses were established in later years, those founded during this period have proven to be the most influential in the Arcanum's history. Houses were opened in both Europe and the United States.

Although the Arcanum was founded and managed primarily by Britons, it was not limited to the British Empire. In addition to the Chapter House established in Vienna, the very heart of the Austrian Empire, a House was opened in Paris. The opening proved to be quite a spectacular event, as befits the City of Lights. A series of other Chapter Houses opened across the Continent in quick succession: Berlin, Prague, Budapest, and St. Petersburg. The early philosophy of the Arcanum was to root its Chapter Houses into places of political and intellectual weight; the early European Chapter Houses tended to be in magnificent buildings, often enormous Baroque homes or medieval estates. This proved unfortunate during the war years of the 20th century, as such properties were often seized by the government or simply destroyed in the course of the conflict.

Closer to home, a Chapter House was opened in Dublin, and Liam McPhee was chosen to serve as Chancellor — to no one's surprise. Massimo Linarelli pushed for a House in Rome, but his arguments went unheard. Holmscroft was most likely wary of maintaining a presence so close to the headquarters of the Catholic witch-hunters known as the Society of Leopold.

Progress was slower in the United States. The Boston Chapter House thrived, and plans were made for Houses in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, although these took longer to establish.

The expansion of the Arcanum was somewhat limited by the Victorian mindset of that period. Few Chapter Houses were opened in South America, Asia or Africa. Although Holmscroft did appear to have an interest in spreading out to other regions, he could find little administrative interest or support. He had the authority to open Chapter Houses at his discretion, but was wise enough to know that they needed dedicated Journeymen in order to thrive, or simply survive. The Arcanum certainly had scholars interested in these more remote areas, and some members did travel to such locations, typically residing in cities where the British Crown was firmly rooted, such as Baghdad, Cairo or Calcutta. However, few formal Chapter Houses were established during this period.

By the late 1890s, the leadership of the Arcanum was slowly changing. Of the original nine members, two had died of natural causes, one died mysteriously — his body found in a London alley — and one had retired from the Arcanum's activities. The Committee included the following original founders: Holmscroft, McPhee, Linarelli, Murray and Kelvin. Many newer members preferred to join the Executive committee only for a few years, ultimately stepping down to return to research and study.

The Boston Fire

From the correspondence of Jonathan Kelvin to Benjamen Holmscroft:

15 July 1910

Benjamen:

I write this at dawn, after a lengthy and disturbing discussion with Journeyman Robert Brooks. Allow me to start at the beginning:

My monthly reports have kept you relatively up-to-date on the activities of Brother Robert, but should the details have slipped your mind, I shall summarize.

The smaller towns of Massachusetts have particularly old and confusing histories, often tangled with the dark thread of witchcraft: Robert Brooks, one of our newer Journeymen and a native of this city, is convinced that there is much witchcraft practice still going on in New England. It has long been his opinion that the witch trials of both our country and the Old World were not based entirely on paranoia and superstition, but that there were some grains of truth to the accusations. Furthermore, he maintains that dark cults still thrive in this area. He was intent on gathering proof.

After some months' persistent research, Mr. Brooks not long ago managed to make contact with a society that claims to routinely commune with a dark deity — whom they say is not Satan nor any other Luciferian entity, but is equally powerful — in order to offer blood sacrifices. More important than these particularly grisly details, Brooks' contact reported that this "entity" has displayed a remarkable range of superhuman powers, including the ability to merge with the earth itself. Brooks hoped to "join" this cult, for the purpose of learning more about the supposed deity, and in the hopes of determining whether there is any supernatural verity to these reports.

Mr. Brooks effectively "disappeared" a few weeks ago in an attempt to infiltrate the society. He indicated that he would initiate contact as soon as he was able: he feared that upon announcing his intention to join the cult, he would be shadowed for a short time, and he did not wish to reveal his ties to the Arcanum.

I had retired to my study late this evening to work on some private research — as you know, positions of leadership often leave one little time during the day for personal projects — and ultimately fell asleep at my desk, when a frantic knock on the door roused me. A quick glance at the mantel clock showed it to be five o'clock in the morning.

Answering the summons, I found Robert Brooks and our night Steward; Brother Robert was pale and weak, his clothes torn and bloody, and he reported that he had an awful tale to tell. I poured him some brandy as the Steward went for medical assistance and a secretary to record the transcript of Brother Robert's tale, which is here recorded (in a somewhat abridged form) for your benefit:

"I was successful in joining the cult, which I was told took the name the Children of Hecate; they claimed to worship none other than the undying goddess of hidden magic. The cult currently numbers eleven members, mostly men. One member had recently 'quit' the Children — it was implied that she lost interest in it, but I fear now that something far more terrible was involved — and I was offered her place. I planned to attend four meetings, and if nothing of import or value occurred, I would find a way to extricate myself from the society.

"I was present for two of their weekly meetings, held in a remote grove outside Boston; there, I and the other followers engaged in little more than ritual debauchery. The Children of Hecate claimed that sex magic was one of the most powerful forms of magical practice, and their activities were designed not to satisfy the loins but to temper the soul for the work that would be done. My disappointment was nearly as great as my disgust for the random carnality of the event.

I attended the third meeting — earlier this evening — expecting more of the same. It began accordingly, and proceeded apace to another night of ritual fornication, men and women coupling madly with whomever was their assigned ... 'ritual partner.'

In the midst of all this, however, the ground literally *shifted* beneath me, and within mere seconds, an ebon-skinned woman had risen through the earth to join me and my ritual consort in our activities. All the other Children of Hecate broke off from their coupling, quite literally a *coitus interruptus*, and encircled me, my consort, and the Dark Lady.

"I was already amazed and terrified at the woman's ability to rise from the earth: she was not merely covered by a light scattering of dirt, but truly broke free from the ground. But her beauty was overwhelming, and incomparable; I could scarcely resist the desire to look at her, touch her, taste her.

"As this *ménage à trois* continued, the encircled cultists began a low chant. It was some bastardized Greek, but I confess I was too ...preoccupied... to pay attention to the words. The name Hecate was repeated in the refrain, though, and it was apparent that this Dark Lady was their Hecate. Soon, they were all engaged in yet another orgy, and the Dark Lady roamed about the group, taking her pleasures with whomever she chose.

"It was at this point I realized that I was bleeding: a number of her love bites drew blood, but I was so enrapt in the pleasure of it all that I must not have noticed. Across my body were little gashes, where she bit into my flesh.

"I turned and saw her bent over another of her followers, suckling from him and obviously giving intense pleasure. And then, she looked up, and..."

For the record, I would like to add that at this point Brother Robert wept inconsolably. When he finally calmed, he continued his narrative.

"Her love bites were not mere tuggings of flesh: Hecate was biting into her followers and drinking the blood that sprang forth. Her victims' pleasure was orgiastic. Other Children waited, begged to be chosen next, or lay there, spent in their sexual frenzy. Her strength was enormous: she would pick up even her most ungainly followers and carry him in her arms, with no more difficulty than a mother might hoist her child.

"Stifling the scream which was begging to erupt, I crawled to my clothing; under cover of night, I fled through the woods, and finally made my way back here."

This obviously bears further investigation.

Yours,

J.K.

P.S. I have more disturbing news to report before putting this in the morning mail. One of our Journeymen was on the widow's walk last night, engaged in some astronomical observation, and he detected a number of individuals roaming through the grounds. Examination this morning revealed several sets of footprints; it is possible that Brother Robert led the Children to our door. I shall have to consider security for our house.

The Journal of Winthrop Murray, 17 July 1910

Tragedy.

Jonathan Kelvin telephoned to inform us that the Boston Chapter House has been destroyed in a conflagration. Much of the library was destroyed, but our Brothers and Sisters valiantly braved the flames to rescue as many books as could be saved; it is estimated that over 500 books were destroyed, including almost 100 rare works. In addition, the Chapter House's archives were destroyed.

The fire, incidentally, also claimed three lives.

Kelvin feels the "Dark Lady" was at fault; he spoke with Holmscroft at great length, but little more has been revealed to us.

1 August 1910

The Boston event has forced us to consider the issue of security, a matter which we had never taken very seriously in the past. Considering ourselves to be scholars and mystics, we believed that we were free from any real danger. We have learned better now.

After serious consideration, the Executive Committee has at last declared that each Chapter House should appoint one of its members to the position of Warden, the primary administrative duty of which will be to maintain the House's security.

This decision to implement security measures is one that has long been under consideration, but too many of us felt that as gentlemen and women of erudition and enlightenment, such a banal matter was beneath our concern. The tragedy in Boston has taught us a valuable lesson.

* * *

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Historian:

In November of 1910, the Arcanum finally opened two new Chapter Houses in the United States: San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. The development for the Houses had been underway for a number of years, particularly as U.S. interest in the Arcanum — and the Arcanum's interest in the U.S. — grew. Plans were made for a grand celebration of the new American expansion.

Their opening, however, so close on the heels of the Boston fire, was shadowed by tragedy. The Chapter was to be rebuilt, but this required time and money that had not originally been included in the budget, progress on the two new American Chapter Houses being too close to completion. A new House was under construction for the Washington chapter, and a relatively new building would be purchased for the San Francisco location.

The Arcanum still arranged to hold a celebration at each new Chapter House, on 24 November — the anniversary of the Arcanum's founding. Members of the Executive Committee

Benjamen Holmscroft

Little can be said with any certainty about Benjamen Holmscroft, the enigmatic founder of the Arcanum. Lacking any physical records of his life, one can only make assumptions as to his age at death: he indicated that he was 33 years old at the founding of the Arcanum, in 1885; this would make his 62 when he died in 1914.

No records of Holmscroft's birth or education have ever been found, nor has anyone who knew him prior to his brief foray into the HORD in 1879. He is remembered by HORD associates as a strong figure, who was not easily swayed by the volatile temperaments of many of the organization's members. His primary interest was the teachings of the Rosicrucians, and when it became apparent that the cult was a fraud, he left disillusioned. He retired to his family estate in London and kept in touch with only those few colleagues whom he considered to be of a like mind.

Even when he formed the Arcanum and was surrounded by a large circle of colleagues and friends, few could claim to know him. Winthrop Murray, his Secretary, was most likely the closest to him, but little remains of Murray's prodigious writings.

Contemporary chroniclers of the Arcanum indicate that Holmscroft appeared to be in his mid-to late-40s when the Arcanum began. He was stubbornly reluctant to allow photographs to be taken of him; although a few pictures are said to exist, these have disappeared into the bowels of the Foundation House's archives.

For a man said to look much older than his reported age at the founding of the Arcanum, he also allegedly appeared much younger than his reported age at his death. He was described as looking "not much older than 40ish" when he was last seen in public, in 1911.

Winthrop Murray and Clifford Parker, then Grand Chancellor, witnessed Holmscroft's death. His wake was closed-casket, as per his request. Journeymen from across the world attended the funeral, held in the private cemetery behind the Foundation House.

Winthrop Murray, the first Secretary of the Executive Committee, and Holmscroft's personal Secretary as well, was the Chancellor's closest colleague. Murray's extant writings deal almost exclusively with the history of the Arcanum. He was known to be a dedicated diarist, but his personal writings did not survive his death, only four months after Holmscroft's burial. Murray's funeral was a quiet, private affair, although he too was buried in the Arcanum cemetery.

— Private research of Jonathan Lewis



(except Holmscroft, Murray and McPhee, who became more and more reluctant to leave their own Houses) visited each new House, and took this opportunity to make a startling announcement: having analyzed the surge of interest in research in the United States, the Executive Committee had elected to grant the American Chapters their autonomy. The Boston Chapter already enjoyed some measure of independence, and with the development of several more Chapter Houses, the Committee determined that it would serve the organization to establish a central Chapter House in America. Jonathan Kelvin would be given jurisdictional authority over the United States.

Even more surprising was the announcement that Jonathan Kelvin would be moving to the Washington Chapter House. This new House would thus become the most important in the country.

Kelvin, it should be noted, never quite recovered from the Boston fire. Although he was not physically harmed, and his managerial skills never faltered, he was obviously disturbed by the events. He intensified his research into thanatology and afterlife beliefs, and became ever more reclusive.

The Thule Gesellschaft

Adolf Hitler proved a particular threat to the Arcanum, and the Arcanum's greatest loss came at his hands.

The Arcanum knew of Hitler's obsession with the occult and his involvement with the *Thule Gesellschaft* (the Thule Society, a group of German nationalist-mystics) and this gave many reason to worry. The organization wisely maintained its low profile, and some Arcanists infiltrated the Thule Gesellschaft in order to gather information. The Berlin Chapter, unfortunately, had a few National Socialists — or rather, "loyal citizens" — in its midst, and these ultimately contacted Hitler, revealing to him the Arcanum's presence and their mission into the heart of Germany.

Needless to say, Hitler was more than happy to have another group of occult scholars volunteer its services — particularly one with the resources of the Arcanum. The entire Berlin Chapter House thus came under Hitler's control: everything that belonged to the Arcanum in Berlin became the property of the Nazi party, and the German Arcanists were conscripted into their service.

The Arcanum reacted swiftly: loyal Arcanists removed what they could of the Berlin Chapter's private records. Unfortunately, there was not time enough to rescue everything, and Hitler was left with a veritable gold-mine of occult research at his disposal.

Other Chapter Houses under Germany's control also took action, as the news spread through their information channels. Anything of value was spirited away from the Vienna and Prague Houses almost overnight; when Germany encroached upon France's borders, the Arcanum removed the Paris Chapter House's resources as well. These never traveled far — usually to basements and attics of those secretly allied to the Arcanum — but they stayed out of Germany's reach.

The Berlin House was ultimately destroyed in the final years of the war. After it was all over, and the city was divided, the Arcanum decided not to rebuild.

— Research notes of Jonathan Lewis

The World at War

From the Papers of Seneca Hunt, Archivist:

The years encompassing the two World Wars proved to be as dramatic for the Arcanum as they were for the rest of the world.

Benjamen Holmscroft died in 1914, with the beginning of the Great War. After the opening of the three new American Chapters in 1910, he retired as Grand Chancellor, and a new candidate was chosen from among the Executive Committee. In the years prior to Holmscroft's death, he had become almost entirely a recluse; he was not seen by anyone other than the new Grand Chancellor, or Winthrop Murray, who remained Holmscroft's private assistant.

By 1915, the leadership of the Arcanum had almost entirely overturned; it is surprising to some that the tenure of the founders lasted almost thirty years — an impressive period indeed.

The First World War sparked some real tension within the Arcanum, as many Chapter Houses fell on opposing sides of the battle lines. The Houses of Prague, Berlin and Vienna were hardest hit, as they were located in what the rest of the Arcanum considered to be "enemy territory." Though political issues were for the most part kept out of Arcanum discussions and operations, nationalistic sentiments are difficult to resist. Furthermore, with all of Europe ignited by war, much of the Arcanum's research and "field work" came to a standstill.

The loss of the St. Petersburg Chapter House in 1917 was a disheartening blow. Enemy soldiers seized the House itself and destroyed most of its records and books. The Russian Journeymen either fled the country — taking with them what books or research they could — or were killed in the process. It is not known how many materials were destroyed, and how much fell into the hands of the new Soviet leaders.

The Second World War proved even more catastrophic. The Foundation House — along with the rest of London — lived under the looming threat of German bombs, while a number of Chapter Houses fell into Nazi territories. Many of the Arcanum's Journeymen found their investigative and research skills to be useful in the war as well, and either enlisted or served in Intelligence for the Allies. The majority of members, whenever possible, continued their work as usual.

The first half of the 20th century, in spite of the many political changes that affected the Arcanum, was also one of the most fruitful periods for research and exploration: the world literally opened up, as membership expanded and new frontiers were broken.

The Cold War

The dramatic political changes brought about by both world wars threw many Chapter Houses into chaos. The Arcanum began a new expansion phase after the War years, deciding that while well-established Chapter Houses were important, the network of the Arcanum should be more broadly based, in order to change with the changing world.

Chapter Houses were not abolished, but a new classification was invented: Colonies. These were groups of Arcanum scholars who worked together in an area that lacked the full financial or administrative support of the Foundation House. Colonies typically had little funding, and no permanent prop-

erty in the Arcanum's name. They flourished in a variety of cities across the world, foraying into regions not yet explored, including previously unexplored parts of Africa and South America, and finally venturing into the Far East. Places that had been informal homes to Arcanum scholars and had frequently been centers of scholarly activity — Hong Kong, Calcutta, etc. — finally received official status.

The "Colony" concept had actually existed for quite a while, though it had not been recognized officially. The lack of an Arcanum Chapter House in an area did not necessarily mean that that area did not receive attention; frequently, Arcanists who lived in these places would open their homes to visiting colleagues. Likewise, the Arcanum had actually maintained such unofficial centers in Rome, Istanbul, and other places where it proved difficult to establish a formal Chapter House; these, however, were covert in nature and virtually unknown to most members. With no property or formal holdings in the name of the Arcanum, colonies could appear or disappear overnight. The "Colony" category, it turned out, was just old wine in a new skin.

Colonies were also good testing grounds for future Chapter House sites. Indeed, some areas that were given colonies finally earned the coveted Chapter House status.

The Arcanum in the Modern Day

The Arcanum has changed little from its earliest conception. Although administratively the organization has had to adapt itself to changing times, its core mission remains unaltered. It has learned from experience, to be sure, and has made some changes in order to allow for growth. There are at present approximately 300 Journeymen and women of the Arcanum, and another 200 Associate members — loosely allied researchers and investigators who aid the Arcanum in its mission.

Journeymen of the modern day are inheritors of the mission of the first Founders of the Arcanum. We are proud to call ourselves Journeymen, to know that we share the Rituals of Holmscroft and Murray, that we walk the same road.

The shadows beckon; let us enter and learn.

— Lecture notes of Geoffrey Truesdell

Part Two: The World of Shadows

Would you like my mask?
Would you like my mirror?
Cries the man in the shadowing hood.
You can look at yourself
You can look at each other
Or you can look at the face of your god.

— Loreena McKennitt, "Marrakesh Night Market"

"Why does the Arcanum study the supernatural?" Nahar asked.

Geoffrey looked at her, thoughtfully. *Always the simplest questions are the most profound.* "We study the supernatural because in it we may find the keys to the nature of man." He saw her cock an eyebrow, ever so slightly, and he corrected himself: "The nature of humanity."

He continued. "What is the world in which we live? If, as Plato would have it, we are in a cave, and we see only the shadows of reality flickering on the wall, then it is our duty to learn the entirety of the cave and those things which cast the shadow, as well as the source of the light itself. And, if I may go one step further, we should study that which is hidden in the shadows, that which is not immediately apparent." He could see he was losing the Neophytes.

"Nahar, why do *you* study the paranormal?"

She stared contemplatively at the table-top for a few moments, as if divining an answer from the intricate swirl of the wood-grain surface, and then looked up. "Because it represents a higher reality to me, something which is too often ignored. I am not content with gauging only what people have done, but would seek to know, rather, what they are capable of, even if previously unimagined."

Geoffrey nodded. "So you study for your own advancement."

"Right," she agreed. "And ultimately, to use what I learn to benefit others."

Curriculum of the Enigmatic

A number of mysteries, whether enigmatic places or unusual events, perennially catch the attention of Arcanists. Recent symposia and seminars have included the following topics:

Damcar, the City of the Ancients

Damcar, the missing city of the Ancients who instructed Christian Rosenkreutz, is a perennial favorite. Damcar is believed to be more than just a "lost city," — it is believed to be a hidden but thriving place, where the Ancients still teach their mysteries, a Shangri-La of occult knowledge and wisdom.

The Arcanum actively solicits any information on the possible location of Damcar. Any Arcanist who comes across references to it in any of their investigations or research is required to report such information to the Grand Chancellor immediately.

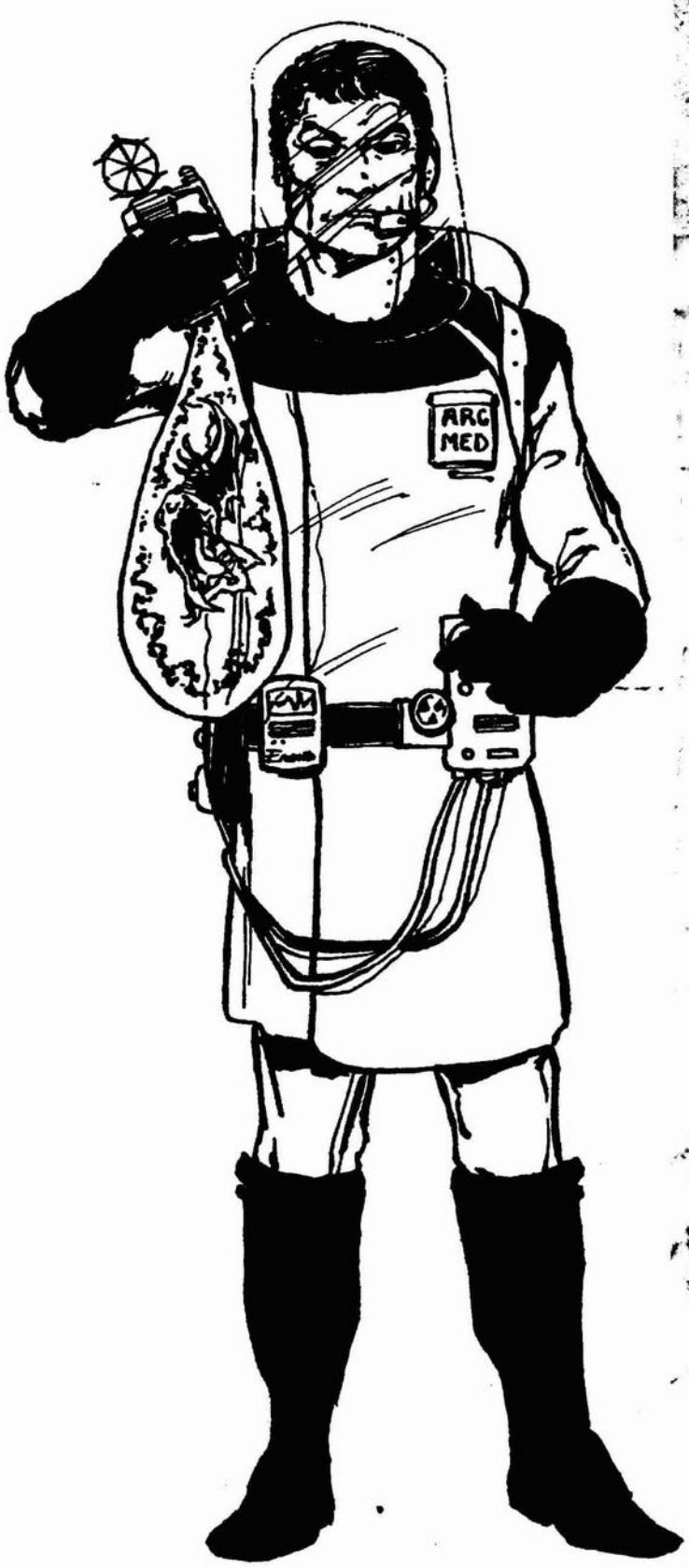
The Wise Men of Damcar, who instructed Christian Rosenkreutz, were said to practice magic, and some within the Arcanum see Damcar as a refuge of magic; if this city can be found — somewhere in Persia or Arabia, most likely — then these mystics may have much to offer.

In the 1920s, the Arcanum sponsored one trip to the deserts of Arabia, following what they believed were clues to the whereabouts of Damcar. The expedition never returned.

The Lost Colony

Another perennial favorite is the mystery of the Roanoke Island and the Lost Colony, the first English colony established in the United States.

Roanoke Island, part of North Carolina's Outer Banks, was settled in 1587 by explorer John White, who brought 120 men, women and children with him from Plymouth, England. Governor White left his colony in the autumn to return to England for supplies and to transport more colonists, but was held up by the Spanish Armada and was unable to return until 1590.



Upon his return, White found the colony deserted, the settlers disappeared. The only clues were the words CROATAN; CRO, carved into trees near the abandoned village.

The fate of the colonists remains a mystery, although Arcanists, scholars and scientists all have their theories, most of which involve the missing colonists joining up with friendly Native American tribes. A number of members suspect that something more was involved — just what, however, they have yet to agree on.

Alchemy

The first point: Alchemy is *not* merely a superstition-laden predecessor to chemistry. Alchemy is a science, but a sacred science, with roots in both metaphysics and the natural sciences.

The second point: the main function of alchemy is *not* to change lead into gold. While some alchemists ("puffers" or "charcoal-burners" as they were known) were concerned with this more base application of its principles, the art and science of alchemy is neither limited to nor defined by this singular goal.

Alchemy is the science of immortality, wherein the physical is understood to be a manifestation of the spiritual. The crucible is the human soul; the act of transmuting lead into gold represents the perfection of the human spirit. Alchemy is one of the traditional western sciences, practiced by both Christians and Muslims. The tradition is also taught in the East, in China and India. Even to this day there are still many who claim to be practicing alchemists.

Alchemy has long been an area of focus among those who study the occult. Allegedly, the science was known to Christian Rosenkreutz. The Arcanum's founder, Benjamen Holmscroft, was also said to have some interest in alchemy, though most doubt that he was actually a practicing alchemist.

There are those among the Arcanum who attempt to study this art, but thus far have had few important successes. If there are true Alchemists, they remain hidden from view.

Poltergeists

One must be careful to distinguish between poltergeist activities and classical hauntings.

The term poltergeist, meaning "noisy ghost," refers to unexplainable noisy rattlings, movement of objects (from furniture to knickknacks), and other such disturbances. However, most poltergeist incidents, upon examination, seem to occur in the vicinity of a young man or woman who lives or works in the affected area. In these cases, the poltergeist is in fact the psychokinetic manifestation of a turbulent mind — and what adolescent mind is not turbulent? Poltergeist phenomena is typically short-lived, while true hauntings may go on for years, decades, or centuries.

It is not uncommon for Arcanists investigating a possible haunting to turn their notes over to psi researchers when they realize the true nature of their case. Unfortunately, the individuals responsible for the poltergeist usually do not develop full-fledged PK abilities.

Of course, some poltergeist activity has been proven to go on for years, still centered on one person, and whether this is the case of a possessive spirit or an unrefined and uncontrolled PK ability is not always clear.

"That is what the Arcanum does, multiplied a thousandfold. We are not just historians, nor are we just parapsychologists, or private investigators. We are all of the above, working in concert, and teaching each other what we can."

"So why bother learning about 'vampires,'" interjected Jonathan, "assuming I even acknowledge that they might exist, that is."

Geoffrey said, "Call it one part scientific altruism, learning for its own sake, and one part selfishness. If we seek to unlock the keys to the past, then who better to speak with than one who lived through it?"

"Perhaps I should break this down a little more categorically," he said, sensing his pupils' internal struggles. "Let's start at the beginning..."

Lesson 1: Places of Mystery

Dolmens, enchanted isles, ley lines, lost lands, abandoned cities, mythical temples — all these have fired the imaginations of the Arcanum's investigators and researchers from the organization's inception. If humanity once possessed a secret knowledge which is now lost, it is most likely to be found in the ruins of our ancestors.

Many Arcanists are archaeologists and cartographers of the mythic, seeking out those historic places that have ever been surrounded by mystery. Some are content to research areas that are commonly known, but may still hold the keys to further mysteries: Mohenjo-Daro, the Great Pyramids, the stone circles, Tikal, Petrus, Masada and other points across the globe. Arcanists believe the mysteries of the Ancients may be found here.

Other Arcanists explore an even more mythic landscape, searching for lost lands and vanished civilizations: Damcar, Atlantis, Shamballah, the Hollow Earth, Lemuria, Mu, Lyonesse, the Hyperborean continent, White Cathay, Camelot, the kingdom of Prester John, and more. These places, spoken of only in lore and occult speculation, are often the focus — nay, even the obsession — of many an Arcanum scholar. They are more than the key to ancient mysteries: they are the treasure box.

Mysteries of Space

The very concept of "alien visitors" has in the past met only with derision in the Arcanum, though at present this atmosphere has begun to change.

From the beginning, a few Arcanists toyed with the notion of extraterrestrial visitors, but neither their concerns nor their suggestions were given much heed. During the 1970s, when the world seemed to be in a "UFO heyday," interest in the topic peaked. However, there was soon a backlash against the perceived fad, and interest waned dramatically.

Within the past few years, interest in the extraplanetary has slowly been on the rise again, and the subject has finally been given some respect. Unfortunately, the Arcanum has been unable to prove anything decisively about visitors from space. The official line is, for now, UFOs are just that — *unidentified* flying objects.

There are rumors that we secretly court astronauts and NASA scientists, and that the Arcanum's photo-archives contain numerous satellite-photographs of both the earth and distant locations in space, but these rumors are typically discounted as the wishful thinking of conspiracy-theorists gone cosmic. In any case, we know links exist between the otherworldly, the mundane, and the just plain lost. It's our job — our *quest* — to uncover those links and find the pattern.

Lesson 2: Items of Power

Arcanists constantly collect lore and study or search for on relics of the past and of legend — Excalibur, the Grail, the Philosopher's Stone, the Ark of the Covenant, and more. Those Arcanists who seek these items do so religiously, more wandering mystic than researcher, and they are admired (if sometimes avoided) for their dedication.

The Arcanum has managed to collect many smaller relics, items that have been important or which have some supernatural connection: the medicine pouch of a famous shaman, the skull of a gargoyle, and other similar pieces — but for the most part regards these as tangential evidence. They provide some proof for the higher truths which the Arcanum seeks, but the true relics *are* those truths.

Hermes Trismegistus

If you possess true knowledge [illegible] O Soul, you will understand that you are akin to your Creator.

— Hermes

From the journal of Jonathan Lewis:

"Who is Hermes Trismegistus?" Paul asked.

Geoffrey left our conference table momentarily and returned with a series of books, which he identified as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. "Hermes, the Greek messenger god, became transformed early in the Christian era — the 2nd century, to be more precise — to something far greater: Hermes Trismegistus, or Hermes the Thrice-great."

A number of magical writings are attributed to Hermes — or to Thoth, as he was called by the Egyptians. These writings vary little from the countless other magical papyri popular in Egypt during the time of Christ, but they are among the most important documents in the history of European occultism.

"These Hermetica were given a place of prominence in the Renaissance revival of pagan magic, and Hermes Trismegistus is often a symbol of the occult tradition. The Hermetica serves as the root of most occult philosophies in the west, and is made of tracts on alchemy, astrology, magic, and correspondences, or 'occult sympathies' — secret links between seemingly disparate facets of creation."

William, our friendly neighborhood linguist, chimed in here. "And, of course, when we speak of something as hermetically sealed — or airtight — we are drawing on the Hermetic tradition, and the belief that Hermes invented a magic seal that kept things airtight."

"Oh," Paul said. "So you're saying that Hermes invented Tupperware?"

Lesson 3: Magic

Magic is real, but it is a minor and rarely seen phenomenon. Many within the Arcanum — particularly *thaumatologists*, those who study the history and theory of magic — believe that magic was once a potent and thriving force in our world. These thaumatologists argue that much evidence exists of magical activity occurring throughout the Middle Ages, evidence which cannot be summarily dismissed as mere superstition. Records indicate that there were thriving communities of individuals who were believed by the general population to work magic.

The medieval wizards, according to chroniclers, worked together under a compact, and named their alliance the Order



of Hermes — no doubt in reference to Hermes Trismegistus. The magi of this Order were often publicly acknowledged by local townsfolk as sorcerers and wizards, and the Arcanum has uncovered many vignettes about their encounters and adventures.

However, according to the theory of the thaumatologists, magic — in its most powerful form — disappeared from our world soon after the Middle Ages; multiple theories have been advanced to explain this, from astrological conjunction to astronomical phenomenon to the will of the Creator. The communities of the Order of Hermes disbanded or died slowly of attrition, and no further proof of magical activity on such a widespread scale has been found.

Many within the Arcanum have dedicated their lives to the rediscovery of this lost magic. The Arcanum has gathered countless tomes on magical theory, compendia of incantations and rituals, and more, and some members have even dabbled in the practice of thaumaturgy.

Make no joke of this: magic is real, and we have those in our midst who can prove it. However, even the smallest of magical effects may take years of study and hours of application, and the acquisition of such skill is often seen as pointless.

One of the most perplexing characteristics of magic is that it simply cannot be proven to total skeptics. Experiments and experience have repeatedly shown this to be true; any time magic is attempted before a genuine skeptic, it inevitably fails. Although there are cases in which it *has* been performed successfully in the presence of self-professed skeptics, these examples do not invalidate the theorem, but rather cast doubt on the witness's alleged skepticism. Many claim to be skeptics simply because they fail to acknowledge their own secret beliefs.

Thaumatologists have begun to study magic in primitive societies. They seek to answer the question of whether magic has declined in certain cultures, particularly "primitive" cultures which operate within a non-scientific world-view. The magic of the Kahunas, of Santeria, and the shamans of the numerous tribal societies are currently objects of serious investigation. Many of these cultures believe magic to be the operations of spirits, which shall be discussed elsewhere. In addition, thaumatologists are investigating the practitioners of Wicca and the alleged ritual magicians of today, seeking to determine whether these are the heirs of the magical tradition.

The magic which we do possess has its merits, of course, as it may sometimes prove useful in the course of difficult field research. Even more important, however, is what this magic represents, for it is the only existing evidence of something far greater, which is now lost to us.

The "Wise Men" of lore — fakirs, holy men, magi, and others — all probably were practicing magicians. Some may still exist hidden away on remote mountain tops, but for now they remain undiscovered.

Lesson 4: Miracles

Closely related to the study of magic is the study of miracles.

The question, of course, frequently arises: what is the difference between magic and miracles? Are they not both characterized by the supernatural manipulation of the natural world? Though each has been so described, there is, of course, a primary difference between them. Miracles occur through the

will of God, while magic operates by the will of man. According to traditional hagiography, God cannot be compelled to work miracles, thus such phenomena are never guaranteed to come about when needed.

Magic, although it involves an alteration of the natural system by supernatural means, is more akin to a science. It has rules, restrictions, requirements, and a set formula and procedure which must be followed in order for it to succeed. Of course, it is the will of the magician that causes it, but unfortunately — or fortunately, God bless our souls — magic does not simply operate according to the Mage's whim.

Wherever there is news of a reported "miracle," the Arcanum sends its scholars. These "miracles" are catalogued and, if possible, verified. We are reluctant to believe that the hand of God is behind every unexplained act; on the other hand, we are, in some cases, willing to accept the possibility of divine intervention.

Humankind is now past the Age of Miracles. While we are constantly receiving reports of appearances of the Virgin or other religious figures, these too often prove to be little more than religious hysteria. Faith healing is often psychosomatic — or fraudulent.

It has been argued by some that the true power behind miracles comes equally from the hand of God and the mind of the believer. Simply put, disbelievers are unable to perform miracles, even if they were inclined to do so.

Unfortunately, the general consensus is that miracles, like magic, are a thing of the past.

Lesson 5: Spirits

A number of cosmologies depict an intermediary world, one between Heaven and Earth, which is filled with all manner of creatures. This collection of beings falls under the general designation of spirits.

Spirits, as we refer to them, do not include the souls of the dead; we differentiate here between spirit-workings and spiritualism.

Traditional cosmologies depict spirits as basically neutral entities; while some may be more malevolent than others, and some may be regarded as beneficial, we prefer to avoid the distinctions of "good" and "evil."

Arcanum Journeymen have traveled across the world in their search for genuine shamanic experiences and spirit lore. We have studied Candomblé in Brazil and Voodoo in Haiti; we have visited countless medicine men and women of the Native American tribes. More than a few of our members have actually been apprenticed to shamans and priests of these cultures. What begins as research often becomes a true vocation. Some shamans' apprentices return to the Arcanum, bringing us their new knowledge and abilities; but many ultimately leave the Arcanum, as their Journey leads them down a new path.

While we mourn the loss of members in this fashion, we honor the road they have chosen in their personal quest for enlightenment.

Lesson 6: Demons

We must first make a clear distinction between demonology and demonolatry. Demonology is the study of demons and demon-worship, while demonolatry is the worship of demons.

The Arcanum acknowledges the existence of demons and devilish spirits. While we prefer to remain neutral, free of the considerations of "good" or "evil," we still accept the traditional classification of demons as destructive spirits. While not all members of the Arcanum follow one of the Abrahamic traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — we feel that "demons" are not solely a Western conception. Many Eastern traditions speak at great length about the nature and existence of demons, and while not all of them are considered evil *per se*, they are still dangerous creatures.

A number of demonologists exist within the Arcanum, and the Axis Mundi has a collection on demons and demonology that we believe rivals the Library of the Society of Leopold in Rome.

Demonology is a field fraught with difficulty, of course; demonologists ultimately come into contact with those who worship the Infernal, and such individuals can be... dangerous. Likewise, demonologists have at times, in the course of their research, come to the attention of those entities they study.

On the other hand, demon and devil worshippers present themselves as fascinating case studies. They often engage in the most extreme behavior only to draw attention to themselves, and when given the opportunity, they will demonstrate their supernaturally gifted prowess — particularly if it can be used to terrorize or victimize someone. They typically possess a whole range of unusual abilities, and many interesting investigations of demon-cults have been recorded in our archives.

As far as engaging in demonolatry, I can only say this: it is a dark and deadly path, and should be avoided. It is one of the few activities for which the Arcanum will expel a member.

Lesson 7: Psychic Phenomena

Psychic research is a relatively new field in the history of the occult, "psychic phenomena" previously having been lumped together with magic and miracles. It is only in the 19th century that the field of "psychical studies" came about as an attempt to scientifically quantify the paranatural abilities of humankind. One of the earliest organizations to formally study psychic phenomena, the Society for Psychical Research, was founded just before the Arcanum in 1882, in London. A number of our own early members received their training and introduction to the subject matter in the SPR.

Much of what falls into the current category of psychic abilities, or *psi* (as parapsychologists prefer to call it) includes behaviors and activities that might in earlier days have been considered magic or witchcraft: psychokinesis (or PK), telepathy, clairvoyance, and a whole range of other talents. As such, the history of psi is difficult to gauge effectively, and is not a field that has been given much attention.

The nature of psi, however, is of great interest to the Arcanum. A number of Arcanists dedicate themselves to the study and development of psi talents, and have established programs for psi-testing.

Incidentally, more than a few Arcanists have been proven to possess some measure of psi-talent. Our founder was the first to consider actively recruiting members of the Arcanum based simply upon their psychic talents. While we have heard rumors — and seen some proof — of individuals who are powerful psychics, the majority of our members have only minor talents,

skills which prove useful in field research. True psychics are almost always welcome within our ranks.

We have not been very successful, however, either in attracting truly powerful psychics or in developing already existing psi-talents.

Lesson 8: Ghosts

Restless dead, avenging spirits, haunted houses and more: the Arcanum has long had an interest in spiritualism and the study of ghosts. From the beginning, Jonathan Kelvin, the first American Chancellor, amassed a great deal of data on the rumored hauntings and ghost-sightings he learned of in his studies.

Ghost lore is international, and hauntings are among the easiest supernatural phenomena to investigate. Haunted houses (and if I might add a linguistic note, the words "haunt" and "house" come from the same Indo-European root word, *tkei*) do not go anywhere, and it is a simple matter to set up operations in them. Unfortunately, very few of the hauntings we have investigated have proven to be true cases of the phenomena.

The study of hauntings is one part science, one part history. Arcanists who engage in "ghost-hunting" often tinker with a wide spectrum of electronic devices, designed for the purpose of "recording" ghostly activity. Likewise, they must be skilled researchers, able to compile current and historical data about both the location allegedly haunted and any residents or occupants of the site. The key to knowing who a ghost is, or was, is often a vital element in the attempt to make contact.

Of course, ghost-hunting has its own share of dangers, particularly when the haunting spirit is vengeful or capricious. Our investigators have been tricked, attacked, and on occasion, even possessed.

Lesson 9: The Undead

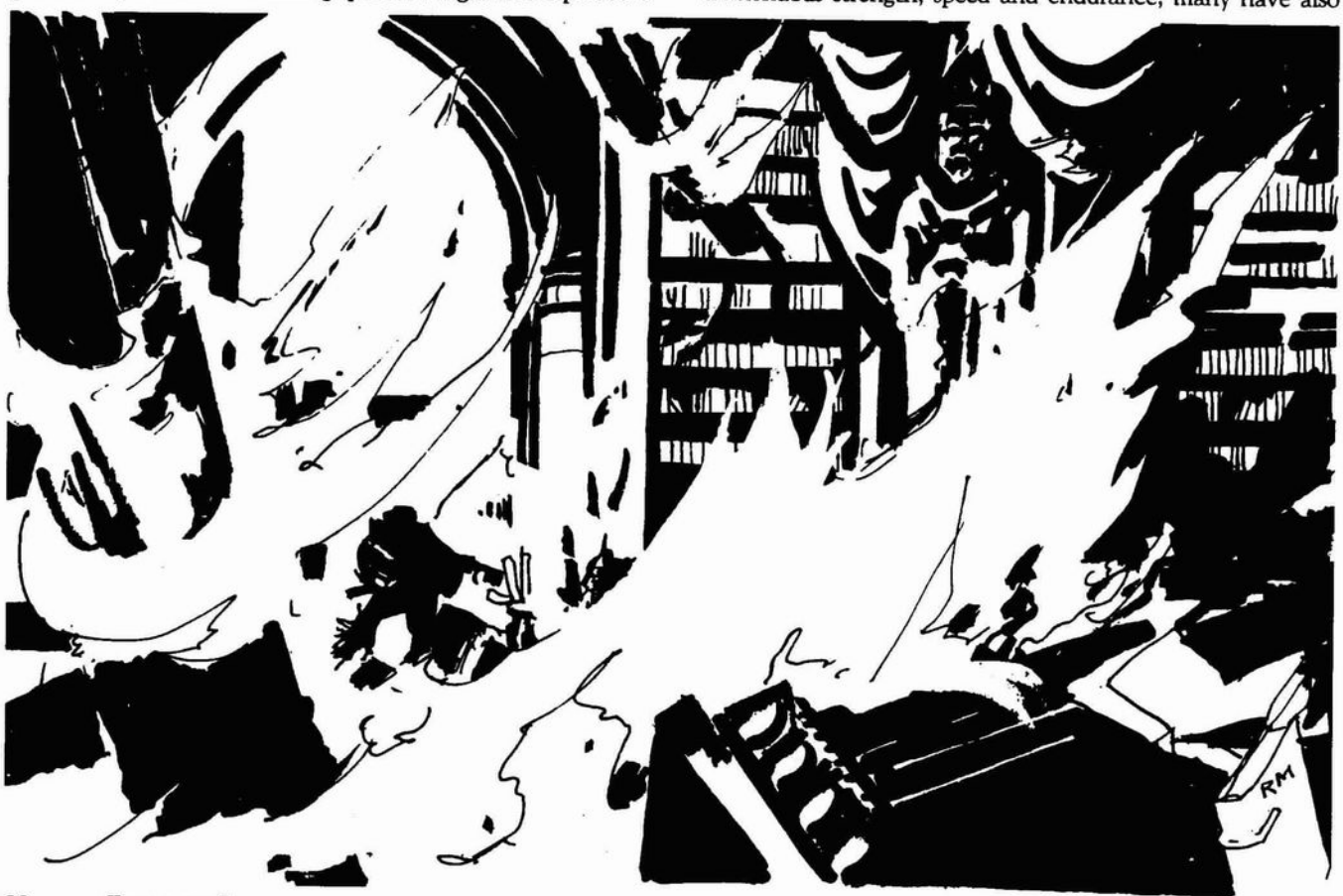
The discussion of the Undead often poses a problem for Neophytes. While many individuals are willing to accept the possibility that magic exists (or existed), that miracles are real, and that spirits and demons are verifiable entities, the mere suggestion of vampires is often too much of a stretch for the imagination. I personally believe that this is because recognizing the existence of vampires also involves coming to accept our own precarious place in the world. Humans have long believed themselves to be at the top of the food chain, and it can be threatening to be displaced by creatures even more powerful.

Let me begin by saying this: the Arcanum knows for a fact that vampires are real.

Our first expert on vampire lore was the Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Jebediah Brown. He is better known for his treachery, but to his credit, I will add that he was the first to contribute to our understanding of vampires.

Our files have countless records of vampire contacts and sightings, and we have in our annals eyewitness testimonies of the incredible supernatural abilities of the Undead. We also have... acquired... some records of the activities of the Society of Leopold, which keeps detailed reports on every witch-hunt in which it is engaged.

Our investigators have, on more than one occasion, observed one of the Undead in action, and we have catalogued many of their powers. The Undead almost always possess tremendous strength, speed and endurance; many have also



demonstrated individual abilities, ranging from shape-shifting to telepathy.

The origins of vampirism are not known. It is believed that vampires are at least as old as humanity, and some posit that vampires may even predate the human race; other Arcanists disagree, pointing out that most vampires can be proven to have been humans at one point, and as such, cannot "predate" humanity.

It is believed that vampirism is spread much like a virus or plague — sharing the blood of a vampire may lead to contraction of the infection. Some humans, for example, do not display the full range of vampiric abilities; these are most likely individuals who contracted only a lesser form of the disease, while other individuals suffer the full condition of vampirism. Those who contract a minor form of the disease, for example, are still mortal and can be killed through a number of methods — not that we have done so, mind you! — and can move about unhampered by daylight. These "lesser vampires" are often perform services for the true vampires.

We have also catalogued a number of ways in which vampires can be destroyed, although their destruction is not our mission. We know, for example, that sunlight and fire are anathema to the Undead, and driving a stake through a vampire's heart will slay it as well. For reasons unknown, some vampires seem immune to the powers of the cross and other holy symbols, while others will flee in terror. It is possible that only those vampires who were religious in their human incarnations will be affected by sacred objects.

There is, of course, an inherent danger to this line of study. We, as mortals, are basically an element of the vampiric food chain; these creatures subsist on us. Furthermore, vampires are a secretive group, and for good reason — they realize full well that the mortal world would not condone the existence of such predators. Arcanists who study the Undead world of vampires tread a path as dangerous as the demonologists.

For this reason, we know very little about vampire society — it cannot easily be infiltrated. This is the greatest loss; for we could learn so much of history from the Undead! We look forward to the day when we can approach a vampire in peace and study what he or she can teach us.

On the other hand, a movement is rising within the Arcanum, initiated by members who believe that our scholarly interest in vampires is immoral. The Undead, to these Arcanists, are the ultimate fulfillment of predatorial instinct combined with human malevolence, and their very existence endangers all of humanity. If we have catalogued their inhuman activities — which we have, and they are many — and we allow vampires to exist, then we are accomplices to genocide.

Lesson 10: The Undying

There are among us a group of immortals whom we know very little about, though what we do know is quite fascinating. For lack of better appellation, we simply call them The Undying Ones, or the Undying.

Our knowledge of the Undying comes from two sources. The first is Winthrop Murray, the Egyptologist who served as Benjamen Holmscroft's secretary. A number of Murray's extant writings refer to a collection of Egyptian immortals, who live in a constant cycle of life-decay-rebirth: a very tangible form of reincarnation. The second source is in fact one of these beings.

This individual — who refuses to give his original name, or even a current pseudonym, but allows us to call him "Jacob" — first visited the Foundation House in 1889. He met with Winthrop Murray and Benjamen Holmscroft; although the meeting was private, some notes have been released into the records. Jacob insists that he was born approximately 100 years before Christ; he, and others like him, were magically transformed via a mysterious ritual unknown to them — and now lost entirely — into a state of immortality; their bodies constantly live in a constant cycle of decay and renewal, and between each phase, their spirits roam through the spirit world. He claims to have been witness to many significant events, from the Crucifixion to the crowning of Charlemagne. After he gave his testimony, he bid Murray and Holmscroft farewell. Whether they believed his tale, or whether his testimonies were considered those of a madman, is not known.

He returned again in 1899, appearing no older than before. He met with the Executive Committee, and then Holmscroft and Murray privately.

"Jacob" returned again in 1909, still looking just as youthful. He conferred with anyone he had met before, and again with the Executive Committee. Of course, by this time, some credence was lent to his allegations. He never again appeared openly to the Arcanum, although some suspect that he maintained frequent correspondence with Winthrop Murray.

In these meetings, he reportedly discussed current events, and sometimes he would draw them back to historical antecedents. He rarely discussed elements of his society, and he avoided discussion of other supernaturals. Holmscroft and Murray left records of their private meetings with "Jacob," but we suspect that they are incomplete.

The opportunity to discuss history with these Undying, of which we hope to avail ourselves one day, would prove extremely valuable.

Lesson 11: Werecreatures

Many are the creatures that change their skins; werewolves are not the only shapeshifters known to the Arcanum.

The first Arcanum scholar to study lycanthropy lore, Roger Corwin, was a psychiatrist — or an "alienist" as the profession was known in his day —who felt that lycanthropy was purely a psychiatric condition. At some point later in his career, however, he "changed tracks," and came to regard it as a very real phenomenon.

We have uncovered many records of lycanthropic activity — eyewitness accounts, correspondence, and other documents — but none are recent. It is possible that at some point in the past, there were a multitude of lycanthropes. This would explain the preponderance of late medieval folklore about the werewolf. But now? There have been very few eyewitness accounts of werewolves; the creatures are most likely dying off, the last of a wild herd.

We have a few theories regarding lycanthropic origins and behavior, based upon the scant few eyewitness accounts we do have in our records.

Although the origins of lycanthropy are a mystery, two hypotheses predominate. The first is that werewolves and other shape-shifters are actually another species entirely, one that is neither human nor beast, but somewhere in between. As such, they may in fact predate humankind, and thus have existed in the shadows of human society since its beginnings.

Another hypotheses is that lycanthropy, like vampirism, is contracted like a plague. The famous "werewolf's bite" theory is common, but those who study the lore of lycanthropy do not find it entirely satisfactory. If anything, the "werewolf's bite" will simply leave a corpse, and not an incipient lycanthrope, if one believes the accounts of these creatures' ferocity.

Some scholars have actually proposed capturing a lycanthrope for the purposes of experimentation. This has, thus far, been denounced as inhumane and inhuman activity; although the Arcanum does not have a formal statement on vivisection, the Grand Chancellor has always come down hard upon any rumblings of scientific experimentation on live victims.

As for other werecreatures, the lore of other cultures, from traditional Japanese to native American to South Asian, mentions coyote folk, fox people, and cat-creatures. Some within the Arcanum have begun to explore these areas as well. As with werewolves, however, few can report having seen such a being in its full glory.

Lesson 12: The Fay

Liam McPhee, one of our founders, and the first Chancellor of the Dublin Chapter House, was the first Arcanist to delve deeply into faerie lore. According to his contemporaries, Liam was always an odd fellow, but his research in faerie lore was impeccable.

Let me start with etymology: the homonyms "fey" and "fay," although similar, are not interchangeable. "Fey," from Middle English *feye* and Old English *fæge* mean "fated to die," "marked by a foreboding of death," and from it, "marked by an otherworldly air; visionary." "Fay," from the Middle English *faie*, and the Old French *fae*, means "an elf or fairy," or "resembling an elf."

The majority of what we know of the fay folk comes from Celtic mythology and Irish and English folk tales. Many in the British Isles still believe in the fay folk, but we have no evidence for their existence. It is quite likely that if the fay people ever did exist, it was in the distant past.

When Liam McPhee began his study of faerie lore, he was very much a singularity in the Arcanum. Only a few other scholars in the years following McPhee — whose disappearance was as dramatic and enigmatic as the rest of his life — have taken the mantle that he lay down.

In the past decade, though, there has been a revival of the study of faerie lore; the sudden interest in the fay folk must have some significance in and of itself, but what? We cannot yet guess.

A number of our modern scholars also tie together similarities between the Celtic tales of the fay and other cultural stories of like-creatures. Only recently have we begun to see the fay folk as a more global phenomenon; although treated differently by different cultures, there is still a common thread between all the tales of otherworldly folk that coexisted with us, helping or harming us according to their whims.

Lesson 13: Other Creatures of Legend

The Arcanum takes rumors or reports of sightings of legendary creatures very seriously; many an Arcanist has dedicated his or her life to the pursuit of any one such mythical creature. Whether these are ancient legends or modern urban rumors — unicorns, the yeti (Tibetan for "demon of the snow"), the Loch Ness monster, sea serpents, deformed radiation monsters, what have you — the Arcanum has field researchers scattered across the globe investigating.

These mythic beasts, like the werecreatures, are elusive in the extreme; although field reports do indicate occasional contact with bygone creatures, we still have little material proof of their existence — a horn here, a hoof there, a collection of photographs and videos that could just as easily be trickery — but the eyewitness accounts of members throughout our history indicate that some creatures of legend undoubtedly exist. Some, I have heard, have forbidding aspects and dark purposes. Ours is a risky quest, and many hunts for mythic beasts end in mysterious disappearances or incurable madness.

Lesson 14: Mortals

We are not the only mortals who seek to explore the world of shadows, to delve into its many mysteries, and to solve its riddles. Other groups exist as well, with the same purpose, but sometimes with far different goals. Never quite allies, often antagonists, these are groups with whom we share much in common; perhaps this is the reason for our antagonism.

In addition to the many mortal societies which gather themselves into cults, venerating whatever supernatural entity has presented itself to them in exchange for a little secret knowledge or inhuman power, there are other organized forces which must be faced.

Les Frères de la Rose Croix

Our own origin is tied closely to the formation of the Brothers of the Rose Cross, as this fraternity calls itself. Founded in Morocco in 1893 by Etienne DuLac, the French occultist who refused to participate in the founding of the Arcanum, it is a highly secretive group of visionary mystics who care less for scholarship and study than they do for the mystical experience.

DuLac was unwilling to cooperate as an equal with so many others, so he formed an order that would be utterly subservient to him. Some critics of the occult say that people turn to the occult to fulfill some need for power and control; if this theory is true, then it reached its fruition with DuLac and his followers.

Many of the Frères' goals are the same as the Arcanum's: both organizations seek enlightenment and wisdom. However, where the Arcanum does so through discipline and self-determination, the Frères are not above thievery and chicanery. The Arcanum reserves its knowledge and findings until mankind is ready, while the Frères care little for anyone outside their secret society. Some believe that the ultimate goal of the Frères is to locate Damcar and plunder its secrets for their own gain.

The Frères is a small society, numbering less than 100 followers across the entire world; its headquarters are unknown, but we suspect that the order is centered in Morocco, where the Brotherhood first appeared. Its beliefs — or what little we truly know of them — are a syncretic blend of Sufism and Rosicrucianism. While the Rose Cross Brothers should be

working together with the Arcanum, too often we are in competition, and dangerously so.

The Society of Leopold

The Society of Leopold is the oldest organization in the world dedicated to the study of the supernatural and the occult. It presents itself as little more than a clearinghouse, a source for research on occult lore, much like the Arcanum, but its goals are far more ruthless.

The Society represents the modern-day heir to the Inquisition of the 13th century, having adopted its goals and motives. No longer concerned with heretics, it seeks the elimination of all supernaturals from the face of the earth, believing them to be creatures of the devil.

Inquisitors tend to be rather apocalyptic, and act as though they are soldiers in a new crusade. This makes them very dangerous. To date, they have not initiated any conflict with the Arcanum, but they have little reason to suspect us of anything. They are not aware of the fact that we encourage the study of magic. Should they come to realize this, they will no doubt find fault with us.

We have it on good authority that the Society has engaged in many successful witch-hunts — or *autos-da-fé*, to use their parlance — and that each of these is carefully documented. While we mourn the meaningless violence they have committed in the name of a higher being, their data is probably very revealing. A few of their records have come our way, and the information in them is only a hint of the amount of material secreted away in the Society's holdings.

The Society of Leopold represents perfectly the reasons why the Arcanum does not wish to reveal our precious knowledge until the world is ready: there are too many latent Inquisitors — those who would merely take up the torch and sword, instead of the lamp of truth.

Bear in mind, as well, that the Society of Leopold is not the only group of witch-hunters in existence, nor are all witch-hunters members of any organization. Of the latter, we hold particular scorn for the Reverend Jebediah Brown, who used our resources to further his own private, hidden crusade against the supernatural.

The Order of St. Hermes

This little-known order began within the Church of the Middle Ages, and consisted primarily of Benedictine monks dedicated to keeping the knowledge of antiquity — particularly alchemy — alive in a time of relative ignorance. With the Reformation, the Order broke off from the Church. Composed entirely of heterodox Christians who have elevated Hermes Trismegistus to sainthood, the Order believes that Christ's Apostles were all alchemists and that the Gospels (which the Order numbers at six, not four) are alchemical manuals. Most members are believed to be practicing alchemists.

The Order of St. Hermes maintained two monasteries, both of which are alleged to have fabulous libraries, jewels of learning in all of Christendom. Unfortunately, the library of one of the monasteries, in northern Italy, burned to the ground in a horrible accident in 1327. Although the Society of Leopold maintains that the events that occurred had nothing to do with them, and that the only Inquisitor present, Bernard Gui, was not a member of their Society, some in the Arcanum still suspect they had a hand in the disaster. The location of the second monastery is a secret, but we suspect it to be in the Al Jabal ash Sharqi mountains of Syria.

Journeymen have met with members of the Order on occasion, but ideological differences often keep them from working closely or for very long. Still, a glimpse at the library in Syria would be worthwhile, if the occasion ever arises.

Gypsies

What can be said about the Gypsies? Much.

What can be verified about them? Little.

Gypsies are an enigmatic, nomadic folk, and we believe that they hold many secrets close to their heart. That which we seek, they seem intuitively to *know*. However, they are not allies in our quest for truth and understanding.

Do not be mistaken — they are not our opponents either. They are more impartial observers, witnesses to us and our activities, and — if an oxymoron may be used — silent commentators.

We have long felt that there is much to be learned from the Gypsies, but they refuse to teach us. What one Gypsy will tell an investigator one day will be contradicted the next by another. They enjoy misleading us and taunting us with what they know and what we desire.

We have also courted them, hoping to encourage at least one Gypsy to join us; this way, perhaps we can form bonds of trust, and share our secrets.

Crucible Genetics Amalgamated

It might seem unusual that I refer to this company, a little-known pharmaceutical manufacturing firm. However, I end my discussion with CGA as a warning of what the unchecked quest for knowledge can be like when combined with a personal obsession.

Crucible Genetics Amalgamated does more than merely produce aspirin-free pain relievers or try to create the perfect garden fertilizer. CGA is the descendent of a biochemistry company created by a religious zealot who has turned to science to further his own goal: the ultimate annihilation of the supernatural from the earth. Not content with the conventional lore with which the Arcanum deals, he embraced modern science instead. CGA routinely hunts supernaturals — or alleged supernaturals — and exposes them to an array of scientific experiments, including torture and vivisection. The founder of CGA was none other than the Reverend Jebediah Brown, who allegedly has also used the results of his experimentation to further his own life span.

Much of our information comes from our own attempts to infiltrate CGA. Many Arcanists died in these missions.

There is another warning which you should heed — CGA seems closely tied to the Arcanum in ways we still cannot fathom. It is possible that CGA has spies in our midst. More than one of our investigations has ultimately been ruined — conditions destroyed, research stolen, investigators harassed, etc. — by CGA technicians.

This is the possible price of our Journey: assault, ridicule, disappearance or worse. It is not an easy road we carve through the forest of blindness. Still, for all its perils, the Journey, I feel, is all the sweeter for the constant search for light.



Chapter Three: Through a Glass, Darkly (Politics and Workings)

Jesus said: Blessed is the lion which the man eats and the lion will become man; and cursed is the man whom the lion eats and the man will become lion.

— The Gospel of Thomas

From the journal of Jonathan Lewis, 10 December 1994

It has been two and a half months since my entry into the Arcanum, and my mind is afire.

So much has transpired in these past weeks. Can it really have been only ten weeks since I first met my fellow Neophytes? I feel like I've known them forever, like they have always been a part of my life; I can scarcely remember what my life was like before we were brought together. We have been through so much: the weekly seminars at the Chapter House, a road trip to Philadelphia — I still have to transcribe the voice-diary recording I made of our weekend in that allegedly haunted house. No, strike "allegedly" — something was there; I am sure that I perceived a powerful presence hovering somewhere just beyond the periphery of my five senses.

And the camping trip, in which we huddled together in the dark hills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, relying upon Paul's know-how to build a fire and set up camp. I was so angry when Geoffrey drove us into the mountains, and then ordered us out of the car and took off, leaving us stranded until the next morning. We knew we were going for a "retreat," but we expected a log cabin, not a makeshift tent.

What were those howls we heard that night? Surely they could not have been mere wolves.

But I can see now the purpose behind these activities: they taught us our strengths and our individual capabilities. Nahar, always the quiet, contemplative one, took charge in the Philadelphia House, while Paul demonstrated both his intelligence and common sense in the mountains. (I did not know that he habitually traveled with two concealed firearms, either, until that night.)

But now? We face initiation this month. What will it be like?



Politicking in the Arcanum

FROM: Jonathan Lewis> <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>
TO: Nahar Khan <khan@kahuna.fps.com>
RE: Politics in the Arcanum

It looks like your Parapsychology conference has kept you in Richmond longer than you had expected. Since you missed tonight's class, I'm forwarding to you a typescript of my notes. If you have any questions, please call.

begin text

Geoffrey: Up until now, I have been speaking of the Arcanum as a unified front. At this point in time, as your group has forged a bond and you have proven some sense of commitment to what the Arcanum represents, I feel that it is time I taught you a little about the real inner workings of the Arcanum.

You have already learned of the various divisions within the Arcanum, such as Chapter Houses and Colleges. Unfortunately, there are less formal — and frequently frowned upon — divisions as well, which represent the various ideologies with which Arcanists may ally themselves. A partial list follows.

Seekers

The "Seekers" are Arcanists who emphasize the "personal enlightenment" aspect of their job. For them, everything becomes a quest for the Holy Grail or the Philosopher's Stone. However, they trivialize anything that does not fall within the realm of what they consider to be "the sacred." While their convictions are certainly noble, and deserving of some respect, the Seekers are often viewed as little more than religious madmen or wandering mystics, with their own enigmatic agendas.

Templars

These Arcanists merely take the name of the venerable Knighthood; to the best of my knowledge, they haven't the audacity to claim any historical link to the Knights of the Temple.

The Templars feel that the basic mission of the Arcanum is sound, but the Syllabus is in error in one respect: the relative "good" or "evil" of the supernatural *is* worthy of consideration. If something is judged to be evil, then it should be destroyed; otherwise we are ourselves evil for allowing it to exist.

They do, of course, speak from a viewpoint that is not entirely without merit. When good people allow evil to continue, they argue, they become participants in that evil. However, these self-professed Templars appoint themselves as judges, and in truth are little better than the Inquisition.

The identity of the Templars is unknown: they communicate through untraceable faxes, e-mail, and public postings, daring the Arcanum to reform before reform is forced upon it.

Progressivists

To quote one notable Progressivist: "The Arcanum is full of crap. It is an antiquated neoVictorian/pseudo-occult/secret-society, good old boys lounging in wing-chairs puffing on cigars while reading some nice little Latin text and pretending to be better than everyone else.

"We should do away with the Victorian dressings of this little 'gentleman's club,' and reform it in line with a progressive 1990s institution. We have had enough of the secrets and the decrees-from-on-high."

Unfortunately, the Progressivists do have some justification for their radical beliefs. For example, while lodges and Chapter Houses have some autonomy in their Investigations, every now and then, a fax or phone call will arrive from the Executive Committee, insisting that a certain case be dropped — usually based on the argument that the case is "trivial" or an "extravagant waste of funds" or for some other spurious reason. The Arcanum is not an open society, and there are secrets buried within its vast corridors.

On the other hand, I am opposed to the radical destruction of the social order the progressivists threaten; I prefer to see the corrections come from within, slowly and surely.

*** end text ***

An interesting anecdote to follow this:

At the end of class, I overheard William and Geoffrey talking. William said "What about the White Monks? What political faction are they?"

I've never seen Geoffrey look so angry; his hands started to tremble and his face reddened. (You could almost see the steam rising from his starched white collar.) "How did you hear about *them*?" he said.

William looked surprised, and then pulled a folded piece of paper from his briefcase. "I received this in the mail." Carefully unfolding the sheet, he revealed large hand-scrawled writing on Arcanum stationary:

BEWARE THE WHITE MONKS

Geoffrey's eyes almost popped. "There. Are. No. White. Monks." he said. "They are a myth, a rumor concocted by those who see occult conspiracies everywhere and secret masters behind everything. Forget you ever received that propaganda."

Interesting, huh?

15 December 1994

I just spoke with Geoffrey. The news is incredible.

The Grand Chancellor has invited our class of Neophytes to the Foundation House for our Initiation. The Neophytes of other Chapters — I recall hearing mention of Seattle and Chicago — will be present as well. It appears that this year has seen a larger class of Neophytes than any other in the past decade; over 30 new Arcanists will be initiated.

Not only are Arcanum operatives arranging incredibly cheap airfare, the Georgetown Chapter is paying for half of it. I'm sure I can scrape up the difference, and we're leaving just before Christmas, so those of us in school —either





teaching or studying — can finish their academic requirements.

At least on the plane I can catch up on my Arcanum readings, which I missed thanks to the academic senate I had to attend...

Atlas of the Arcane

TO: Jonathan Lewis <jlewis@gwis.circ.gwu.edu>
FROM: Nahar Khan <khan@kahuna.fps.com>
RE: The "Atlas of the Arcane"

Jonboy:

Here's the transcript from the class you missed. It is more or less what Geoffrey said, although I couldn't help but add my own comments in brackets!

Traditional Geography

The Arcanum uses a somewhat arcane [and rather archaic] geography, which considers the Holy Land to be the center of the world: all lands and countries east of Jerusalem are the Orient, and all nations west of Jerusalem are the Occident.

This geography is frequently disputed by newer members, who prefer more inclusive terminology, such as "Asian" over "Oriental," and would rather have a world-view which is not so dependent upon the Holy Land. Furthermore, such a division is nonsensical, splitting some territories apart into "Oriental" and "Occidental" sectors. [speaking as an "Oriental," I agree!]

However, the Executive Committee has remained firm in its conviction that this geography, established with the creation of the Arcanum, shall remain fixed.

The Holy Land

The Holy Land is a region that comprises parts of Palestine and Israel, including Jerusalem. There are many Arcanists who seriously question this religiocentric focus on the part of the organization, which will refuse members on the basis of their religious conviction; but for the time being, it looks as though there will be little change.

The Holy Land's only Chapter House is in Jerusalem; it was established within the Arcanum's first 15 years of operation, and has attracted scholars whose primary interest is in the mysteries of the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures. [I'd say that this is just a little Judeo-Christocentric, wouldn't you?]

The Occidental Houses

The Arcanum has spent the majority of its funds on and given most of its attention to developing houses in the Occidental world; of these, it has historically focused on Europe and America, although the Order's spheres of interest are expanding daily.

The British Isles

England is the spiritual and physical home of the Arcanum. The Foundation House is located some 100 miles

north of London, in the Fens of Cambridgeshire. A separate Chapter House in London, located in a large and elegant Georgian Townhouse, controls the business end of the Arcanum's workings. On those rare occasions when the Executive Committee meets with non-Arcanists, they come to this Chapter House, which is listed as the Arcanum's business address.

There are other Houses in the British Isles, of course: the Dublin Chapter has attracted a number of scholars interested in the lore of the fay folk, and various colonies or lodges have investigated the Arthurian tradition, along with other aspects of Welsh and Celtic lore, ever hoping for clues to such mythological treasures as Camelot, Excalibur, and the tomb of Arthur — which one Arcanist claims, prior to her disappearance, to have found. [And think of all the ghosts wandering around, too...] The many mysteries of Britain are waiting to be solved, from the lost Isle of Lyonesse to the mysteries of Stonehenge and the secrets of the Druids.

The European Continent

The earliest expansion of the Arcanum was across Europe, with the founding of Chapter Houses in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Prague, and other important cities. Progress across the continent has been slow, but sure, with the establishment of Chapter Houses in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Madrid, Stockholm and other prominent cities.

Rome, it turns out, has always had a Chapter House, but a very secretive one: no roster can be found of its membership, and on paper it simply does not appear to exist. But various Arcanists claim to have met operatives for the Rome House. The Rome Chapter must, of necessity, operate in secrecy: the presence of the Society of Leopold, headquartered there, is considered a threat by many in the Arcanum. [That wouldn't be because they are a bunch of religious fanatics, now would it? Of course, the Arcanum doesn't have much room to talk sometimes....]

Most of the European cities have their own mysteries and occult traditions; For example, a number of occultists and alchemists flocked to Prague during the 16th century, attracted by the generous coffers of Emperor Rudolf II, whose personal inclinations leaned toward the arcane. Some still consider Prague to be a "metropolis of alchemy," albeit now in a very secretive manner.

Many American Arcanists ultimately wish to be posted to European Chapter Houses, as their research often draws them to the Old World. European Arcanists live conveniently close to the heart of the subjects they research.

North America

The next big phase of expansion was in North America. The oldest Chapter Houses on the continent are in Boston and San Francisco; after the Second World War, a new spate of North American Chapter Houses opened as well, including a few Houses in previously ignored Canada.

North American Arcanists historically focused on American occult history, particularly that of the colonial years, or evidences of hauntings or psychic activity; the Boston House, even after its rebuilding, was a strong center for research in the New England area, which has a whole history of its own. Those Arcanists who researched magic and alchemy were ultimately drawn to Europe, where the recorded history of such activity is obviously much longer.

This continent is also becoming the focus of research on Native American mythology and lore, as more Arcanists are beginning to appreciate the wisdom of tribal peoples. The New World has many secrets of its own which have yet to be uncovered. The powers of the Hawaiian Kahunas, Zuni fetishes, Kachina dolls, and other such objects of mystery are all drawing the attention of curious Arcanists.

The Mexico City Chapter House is quite prominent, coordinating research activities for all of Central America and the Caribbean. It is particularly important for scholars of Mesoamerican history, mythology, and folklore; the mysteries of the Aztecs and the Mayas are slowly being uncovered and pieced together, and Arcanists have found some evidence that the shamanic practices of the Maya peoples may still exist to this day. The Mexico City Chapter House has many lodges and colonies extending outward, looking into the Santeria cults of Mexico as well as the Voodoo practices of Haiti.

Occidental Africa

The Arcanum has been present in Egypt almost from the time of the society's founding, when Winthrop Murray, a prominent Arcanum Egyptologist, purchased a townhome in Cairo. After his death, he willed his house to the Arcanum, and they turned the property into a Chapter House. That House was one of the few early Occidental Chapters established outside the European-American hegemony, and it instantly attracted Arcanists studying ancient Egyptian magic, Coptic rituals, and the mysteries of the pyramids. Likewise, a small Chapter House in Alexandria has been working to uncover the lost secrets of the famous Alexandrian library.

Since the 1950s and 1960s however, Colonies or Chapter Houses have been springing up across the continent, reflecting the Arcanum's growing interest in sub-Saharan Africa: targets that have been expanded recently include Kinshasa (Zaire) and Lagos (Nigeria). Arcanists are no longer looking for "lost Roman outposts" — not that they may not still exist, according to some — but instead are studying the native mysteries of the Continent, such as Great Zimbabwe.

South America

The chief Chapter House in South America is in Lima, Peru; this House sponsors countless expeditions to Macchu Picchu. The lost sacred mysteries of the Incas have attracted many an Arcanist since the House's establishment in the 1960s.

Due to its relative proximity, the Lima Chapter House also coordinates research trips to Easter Island, where Arcanists try to piece together the lost culture that placed the enigmatic statues the Island is famous for.

Many would-be shamans seek to uncover the secrets of the emerald forest, and the Arcanum's scholars are there as

well, studying among the Guarani and other native peoples of South America.

The Oriental Houses

Houses in the Oriental sector have historically been less wealthy and not quite as populous as their Occidental counterparts. However, the current Grand Chancellor, herself an Orientalist, has worked to increase funding for and attention to the Oriental Houses — much to the dismay of the Occidentalists, and to the delight of the traditionally neglected Orientalists. [Jon, I guess I'm probably an Oriental Occidentalist :P]

The Middle East & Oriental Africa

This region has always been a thriving center of research activity for the Arcanum. It is also, unfortunately, an area of incredible political instability. The Baghdad, Riyadh, and Tehran Chapter Houses have been undercover for quite a while, and have only minimal staffing. Mesopotamia is the very cradle of civilization, and the secrets of the Ancients are believed to be buried beneath these sands. Persian and Arabic legends and folklore are rife with tales of sorcery and the djin; the very term, *Magus*, is ultimately of Persian

The Foundation House

From the Private Notes of Jonathan Lewis

Vannever Hall

What was it — I paused to think — what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered.

— Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"

The manor on the Fens of Cambridgeshire which became the Foundation House of the Arcanum was originally called Vannever Hall. Benjamen Holmscroft claimed that it was his "family estate": this turned out to be a bit of an exaggeration on Holmscroft's part, or, if you prefer, an outright lie.

Research undertaken in the early 1930s proved that Vannever Hall was originally built in 1605 by Sir Thomas Scott, a reclusive aristocrat who was an avid collector of history and geography. He did not marry, living instead with a bachelor companion, Andrew Saint-George, who is reported to have traveled widely and been interested in the "historie and languages of the ancients." Built on one of the few natural islands of the Fens of north Cambridgeshire, Vannever Hall was a secluded and forbidding estate.

The two associates disappeared in 1612 on a trip to the Holy Land; Vannever Hall and all its properties were deeded to a young gentleman of London, Bryon Hartswicke, who subsequently took up residence in the estate. Little is known about Bryon Hartswicke, who was reportedly also a recluse. After a number of years in Vannever Hall, he closed up the manor and traveled across "the Orient" — sources did not specify exactly where — until he took ill and died; his burial place is not mentioned.

There are no later details on the history of Vannever Hall until Benjamen Holmscroft's first recorded appearance, in 1879, when he joined the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day. It effectively disappears from history for some 250 years. In legal documents, the manor is still called Vannever Hall, but this name is typically eschewed by Arcanists, who use the more familiar "Foundation House."

The Axis Mundi

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore...

— Edgar Allen Poe, "The Raven"

The Axis Mundi is the true heart of the Arcanum's Foundation House. Covering a major portion of the second floor of the manor, it rivals many college libraries: its collection numbers over 75,000 volumes and 15,000 manuscripts. The library is not contained in a single room, but is spread out over a dozen, a sequence of irregularly shaped chambers, one after another, filled with books and volumes from floor to ceiling. The Axis Mundi is an eidolon of scholarship and learning.

The Axis Mundi retains the traditional wooden card catalog that most libraries have now replaced with cold plastic and glass computer terminals. The collection is organized according to the classification scheme created by Benjamen Holmscroft; it is by this scheme that the library's original holdings were arranged (although the library itself was much smaller then, having been renovated and expanded recently), and it was this scheme that Holmscroft insisted be used for future acquisitions: "It speaks of many truths, on many levels."

It is here that most of the Arcanists could be found, deeply involved in their varied studies — scribbling at any of the enormous ornate worktables, or reclining in one of the numerous leather wing-chairs or couches scattered about the library. The collection includes volumes on the occult, the supernatural, and the paranormal, in addition to core reference works on history, religion, philosophy, geography, science and linguistics. One room of the library, adjoining the Librarian's office, is a climate-controlled vault which houses the many rare books and manuscripts in the Arcanum's collection.

Only Arcanists are allowed access to the library. On some special occasions books may be sent to other Chapter Houses, but never through regular mail; they are carried via courier to their destination, and returned in the same manner. The Library is open 24 hours a day, with either the Librarian or any of his assistants on staff. As with many special libraries, Arcanists are instructed to leave any bags or similar belongings in the antechamber before the library. Only pencils and notebooks (or laptop computers now) may be taken inside.

One room of the library is dedicated to preserving the many old texts which the Arcanum has come to own; while many of the older printed books and hand-written manuscripts are actually faring rather well, books from the early 19th century — with the advent of machine-made paper — are becoming victims of the "slow fire": acidity and deterioration. The Arcanum's preservationists work constantly to restore damaged volumes and preserve those in danger, sometimes finding it necessary to scan the books onto microfilm. The option of scanning onto laser disks is now being considered as well.

origin, after all. Arcanists still seek the alchemists and astrologers that live in the Zagros Mountains, although they rarely return satisfied.

Ethiopia, thought to be the possible home of Prester John, as well as the source of legends of the Ark of the Covenant and countless magical papyri, has also been a favored site for research, though it, too, suffers great internal instability.

Asia

Asia was somewhat a *terra incognita* for the Arcanum. To be sure, various Arcanists from the society's founding onward have had an interest in Oriental studies, but the foundation as a whole neglected traditional Southeast and Far East Asia. Since the 1960s, however, more scholars have turned their eyes eastward, and full Chapter Houses have been opened in Bombay, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other cities of note, where once there had only been informal centers of study.

The Far East is rife with material that has yet to be fully explored. Chinese alchemy is finally receiving the attention of those who had previously only been interested only in Classical western alchemy. The powers of Chinese *qigong* masters, the mysteries of *feng shui*, or Chinese geomancy, the secrets of Tibetan adepts, Japanese folklore, and the many worlds of Asian philosophies and mythologies are finally receiving the attention that many feel they deserve. The snows of the Himalayas are said to conceal much.

Southeast Asia is likewise rich with mystery: the Indian alchemists and *fakirs*, the secrets of the Vedas, Hindu ascetics and holy men. The Arcanum does not study these not as anthropologists or historians might, but rather views them as real phenomenon, providing clues to great truths. The teaching of magical incantations was never stigmatized in India the way it was in the Christian west, and many see the Indian occult tradition as the greatest and longest-lived system on the earth. [I'll bet that there isn't a colony or even a lodge in Bangladesh, huh?]

Australia

The Arcanum's presence in Australia is rather new, with the establishment of Colonies and Chapter Houses in each of the nation's territories or states. The Arcanum has relatively little interest in Australia, however, except for those few Arcanists who have begun to study the complex cosmology of the Aborigine, particularly the mythology of the Dreamtime.

end text

Well, Jon, there it is. Enjoy. There's a test next week, ha ha.

love,

nk





The Foundation House

24 December 1994, London

My God, it is incredible. I have returned home.

My first sight of the Foundation House will be burned forever into my memory, like a searing brand on a fatted calf: as we traveled along the uneven country road, we saw it in the distance, turreted and spired, lit up like a beacon in the fog-curled dusk, a refuge for travel-weary souls. As we approached, its gray stone towers loomed over us, a comforting monolith in a penumbral sea of mist.

We have just arrived at the Foundation House of the Arcanum. I have been to the Fenlands of Cambridgeshire, of course, but I had never seen the Foundation House before. And yet, I almost feel as if this were my birthplace, and that I truly belong here.

Although we were all exhausted from the long trip — D.C. to New York, then on to London, and then by private car to the Fens — we readily agreed to a tour of the House. Our tour, however cursory, was still incredible.

The size of the Foundation House cannot be exaggerated, and it cannot be emphasized enough: we were told that the Foundation House has 100 rooms, and I believe it. Our host escorted us through the major parts of the House, pointing out details of various wings or rooms as necessary.

The first floor of the House contained offices, a chapel, a kitchen and pantry facilities, and two dining halls, as well as a number of small, formal rooms and a larger common room — the Great Hall — and servants' quarters and other utilities which we did not, of course, see.

The second floor houses the Axis Mundi and the Librarian's office, as well as private study rooms and meeting chambers, and a computer center specifically designed for researchers' use. In addition to its own Internet node, the center has dial-in access to a number of online research services, from OCLC to RLIN, as well as the great national libraries of the world, from the National Library (of Britain) to the Library of Congress. The House's many seminar and conference rooms can also be found on this floor.

The third and fourth floors contain the sleeping quarters of resident Arcanists and guests. The hallways here stretch onward for some distance, their gray interiors broken only by the repetition of wooden doors that lead to the private quarters. The rooms here are not simple bed-chambers: some are entire suites, and are larger than many small apartments.

There are also a number of "outbuildings": a small facility with laboratories, a few garages, etc. I hope to walk the Maze tomorrow.

I'll just bet this place is crawling with secret passages, some of which probably haven't ever been found. Who knows what these stone walls conceal? And of course there are crypts and cellars, as well as the attic — which I heard mentioned, but which was not on our tour. I must sound paranoid.

Initiation

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.
— J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Road Goes Ever On"

I am, even now, sitting before a window, overlooking the Hedge-Maze and gardens that occupy the back property of the house: with the advent of winter, the gardens are now brown and dead, but I can imagine how beautiful they look in the spring. I feel as though I have stepped into another world, another age. I am drawn to the Maze — I hope I can walk it tomorrow.

I just finished drinking a late herbal tea with my fellow Neophytes in a fourth floor lounge, and I had a brief opportunity to meet the Neophytes from other Chapters. They seem like a nice group of people, and I look forward to working with them in the future. One Neophyte told me he had heard that Geoffrey was to be our Mystagogue in the Initiation — the one who would initiate us into the secrets of Arcanum.

The Initiation is tomorrow. I wonder what to expect. I look forward to the day with a sense of drowsy anticipation, as the heavy burden of our long travel finally begins to take its toll. My chamber is cold and drafty; the fire in the hearth does little to dispel the chill settling in my bones.

I am drawn to the Maze. I hope that I can walk it tomorrow.

* * *

I was walking the Maze, naked, my feet sluggishly trudging through the white snowy blanket that covered the ground. It was daylight, although the barren gray sky offered no warmth or comfort. In the distance, I saw the Foundation House, its towers rising through the mists. How did I come to be here, in the Maze?

I continued through the Maze, turning right and turning left, ignoring some intersections as if I knew the path before me, my feet frozen, my body shivering from the chill. Finally the Maze broke, and I stood not behind Vannever Hall, but at a precipice: behind me the maze was gone, and there was only a wasteland.

Overlooking the precipice, I knew this to be a dream; the ground shrank below the cliff-face, dark and far away. Knowing that I could only go forward, that behind me lay the wasteland, I stepped off the precipice, expecting perhaps to find solid footing in the thin air.

I plummeted, and I screamed.

Then the Owl came, flying to me. Surely it will rescue me, I thought.

Its talons and beak tore into my flesh, rending and biting. My blood poured freely from my flayed skin. The pain was overwhelming. Still my mangled form plummeted.

"What do you seek?" the Owl asked.

"The Answers!" I cried back.

"What do you seek?" the Owl repeated. Still I fell, the ground no closer, but my fear growing. The Owl bit into my mouth, tearing my tongue from me.

"What do you seek?" the Owl said, again.

"The questions," my tongueless form cried back.

And then I was the Owl, and I flew...

* * *

When I awoke, I was naked, in a coffin. I could scarcely move and could not see, but I knew that it was a coffin. I tried to knock at the wooden covering, to claw at the sides, but I could barely move in the tight space.

What had happened? Had our tea been drugged? What time was it? Where was I?

The lid of the coffin was lifted off, and I stood in relative darkness — I could see that I was in a large cavern, filled with black-mantled men and women of the Arcanum. I was on an isle of sorts, with the other Neophytes; we were all similarly unclothed. The isle was surrounded by water, its languid surface reflecting the many lit tapers held by the ritually garbed Arcanists who stood on the opposite shore.

On our isle were two more Arcanists, opening the coffins and freeing my brothers and sisters. When we all had emerged, one figure stepped forth from the crowd across the water.

"New Brothers and Sisters of the Arcanum, you have died and been reborn. Now cleanse yourselves and join us." It was Geoffrey, and he pointed to the waters before us.

Hesitant lest it be too deep, we all plunged into the surface,. The water came up to mid-breast on me, and we waded across, some of us helping those who were still too dazed. We had probably been drugged.

Emerging from the cold waters, we were greeted by Journeymen with warm Turkish towels to dry us, and thick mantles to garb us.

We are the Arcanum.

We hunt the Night.

We seek the lost knowledge, the hidden things, the secret ways.



Book II: The Journeyman's Guidebook

Chapter Four: Character Creation

All has reached perfection, and becoming a true person is the greatest perfection of all. It takes more to make one sage today than it did to make the seven of Greece. And you need more resources to deal with a single person these days than with an entire nation in times past.

— Balthasar Gracián, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*

The Ethiopian Highlands:

Her fingers bled, shoved into the tiny crevices that furrowed through the rock surface; looking down briefly, she estimated maybe a hundred-foot drop.

"You all right?" Keith called from above.

Looking up, Christine tried to see her partner; instead, all she got was an eyeful of sunlight overhead, her associate's form barely eclipsing the bright glare. Sweat rolled down her face and into her eyes, the hot salty liquid momentarily blinding her. "'M okay," she called back. "How much further?"

"Just a little bit," he replied overhead. Same old answer. "We're almost there."

"Join the Arcanum. See the world. Go rock-climbing. All this for a long-lost church," she muttered to herself. It's not like anyone forced her into it, she would be the first to admit, and she was secretly excited at the prospects. But this sort of stuff happened only in movies. At least her colleague was better prepared for the task; without his skills, she'd still be at the bottom, looking up.

This was going to be a very long day.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
We are trav'lers on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.
— Richard Gillard, "The Servant Song"

Arcanists are mortals, and should be created using different guidelines than standard **Mage** characters; although "mortal" themselves, the Awakening alters a mage's life in countless ways. Roleplaying mortals is also discussed in **Ascension's Right Hand**, **Hunters Hunted** and **The Inquisition**, supplements for **Vampire: the Masquerade**. Members of the Arcanum (and other mortal characters) are created using the same general method as all Storyteller game characters, but the point allocations are different, and non-mages do not have access to the Spheres.

Storytellers and players should always consider the following rules as guidelines. They are meant to be aids to storytelling and character creation, not straitjackets. Character concept is always more important than mechanics. While the rules should not be arbitrarily ignored or discarded, don't let them interfere with solid character creation; Storytellers should be willing to give some leeway for good character concepts.



Character Creation Outline

Step One: Character Concept

- Choose Concept: What did you do before joining the Arcanum?
- Choose Motivation: Why did you join the Arcanum?

Step Two: Select Attributes

- Prioritize your three categories: Primary 6, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3
- Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Stamina & Dexterity
- Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation & Appearance
- Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence & Wits

Step Three: Select Abilities

- Prioritize your three categories: Primary 11, Secondary 7, Tertiary 4
- Choose Talents: What you can do naturally
- Choose Skills: What you are trained to do
- Choose Knowledges: What you have studied

Step Four: Select Advantages

- Choose Background Traits (5)

Step Five: Finishing Touches

- Record Base Willpower (3)
- Spend your 21 Freebie Points to purchase Merits & Flaws, to improve Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds or Willpower, or to purchase Numina
- Figure out Personalia: Appearance, Home, etc.

Creation

Step One: Character Concept

Character creation should always begin with a sound concept. It does not have to be very detailed at first; details develop with the creation process. It should, however, be strong enough to carry the character through the rest of the creation process. Concept is the kernel of your character.

Concept

Character concepts include your character's personality, Nature, and Demeanor, as discussed in **Mage**. Many members of the Arcanum will be scholars, but not all of them need be. The Arcanum does not recruit scholars and researchers exclusively: anyone who has been touched by the supernatural or the World of Darkness may join, from college students to lawyers to social workers. Any of the sample Concepts listed in **Mage** are suitable for Arcanum characters.

Motivations

Why is your character a member of the Arcanum? What is it that makes her seek out the mysteries of the unknown? The Arcanum is, in many respects, a cloistered society, shut off from the rest of the world; why does your character choose to belong to such a closed society, and one with such arcane interests? And don't forget — sometimes those interests can be very, very dangerous.

The Arcanum's roster is made of seekers and wanderers, scholars and visionaries, scientists and mystics. What is it that ultimately drives anyone to seek the unknown? A sense of longing, perhaps, or a desire to understand? Each member of the Arcanum will ultimately have his or her own answer, and you should give some thought to this when creating a character.

Personality Archetypes

Arcanist characters choose Natures and Demeanors, according to **Mage**. However, since their Avatars are rarely Awakened, they do not choose Essences.

A number of Archetypes are appropriate for members of the Arcanum: the more scholarly, investigative types might choose Architect, Curmudgeon, Judge or Traditionalist. Those with a more religious or mystical orientation might choose Loner, Fanatic or Visionary. These are only suggestions — scholars might be Bravos, religious mystics may be Jesters, etc.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Although both mages and Arcanists are mortal — more or less — Arcanum characters start with fewer Attribute points than do **Mage** characters.

Attributes are broken into three categories:

Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina) are those which govern a character's muscle power, speed, dexterity, and endurance.

Social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation, and Appearance) control a character's appearance and social skills.

Mental Attributes (Perception, Intelligence, and Wits) represent a character's mental abilities, memory, perception, and cognitive faculties.

Arcanists start with one free dot in each Attribute — the minimal rating possible. The player then rates her character's Attributes (into Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary); this ranking determines point allocation. Your mortal starts with 6 dots for Primary Attributes, 4 dots for Secondary Attributes, and 3 dots for Tertiary Attributes.

Arcanists are a varied lot. While most will, undoubtedly, have Mental Attributes as their primary characteristics, other Arcanum characters may have Physical Attributes, or even Social Attributes as Primary. The Arcanum is careful to recruit a mixed batch of individuals, and likes to have such variety operating together in lodges; the palsied old scholar observing werewolves in the forest may very well need the protection of a burly young man.

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities must be prioritized according to Talents, Skills, and Knowledges. Once again, though, initial point values are different; Arcanists start with 11 dots for Primary Abilities, 7 dots for Secondary Abilities, and 4 dots for Tertiary abilities.

Common Abilities: Knowledges are often Primary Abilities, but the Arcanum is diverse, and contains more than just scholars. Common Abilities include Research, History, Theology, Languages, various Sciences, and Cryptography, as well as the new Knowledges introduced in the "New Traits" section.

Step Four: Advantages

Mere mortals are the weaklings of the World of Darkness, lacking access to Spheres, Disciplines, Gifts, or any such intrinsically powerful abilities. However, Arcanists do have a few benefits of their own, which may aid them in their quest for knowledge, and protect them along the road to understanding. These benefits are called Numina, and represent the manifestation of a partially awakened Avatar. Numina is purchased with "Freebie Points, " discussed elsewhere.

Backgrounds

Every mortal character gets five points to allocate across the various Background Traits. Based upon your Chronicle, some Backgrounds may be limited; your Storyteller will let you know if this is the case.

Background Changes for the Arcanum

Some Backgrounds listed in **Mage** are obviously irrelevant to Arcanists; other Backgrounds require some explanation or modification. Details can be found under "New Traits," later in this chapter.

Step Five: Last Touches

In the final stage of character creation, a player determines his Arcanist's Willpower and Humanity ratings, and gets to spend "Freebie Points" on Merits, Flaws and Numina (see below).

Willpower

An Arcanist's base Willpower is three; it can be raised by spending "Freebie Points," at two Points per Willpower dot.

"Freebie Points"

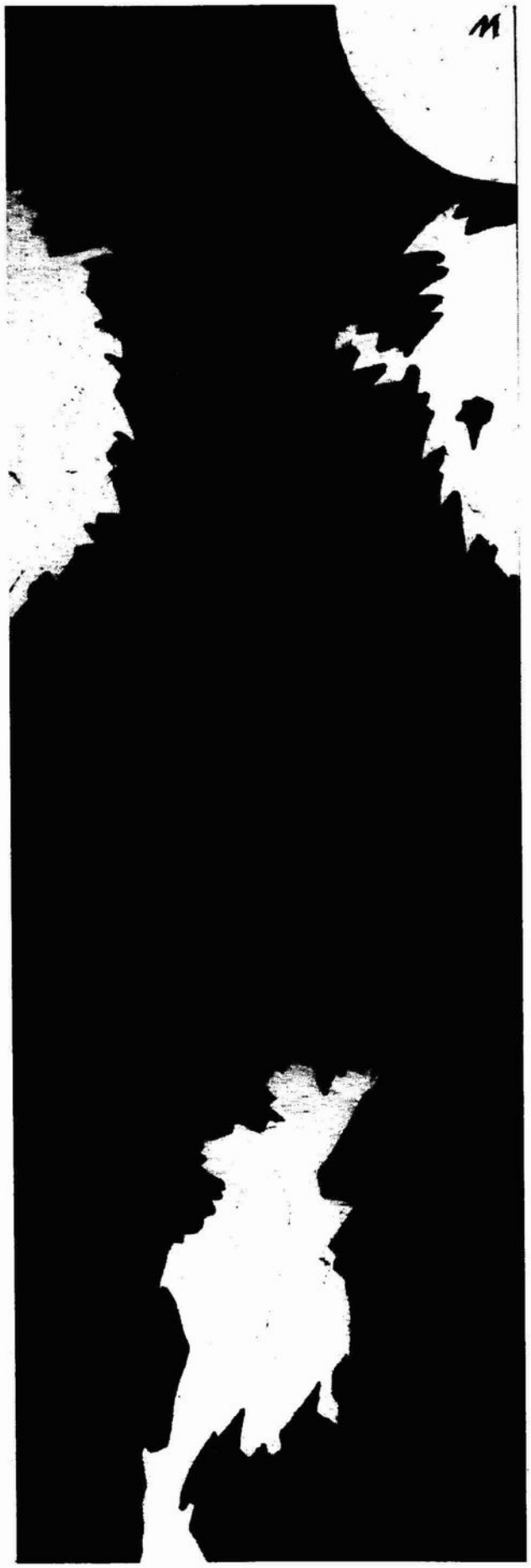
Mortal characters start with 21 "Freebie Points," which can be used to purchase Merits & Flaws, or to raise Traits (Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds). Attributes cost five points a dot, Abilities cost two points a dot, and Backgrounds cost one point per dot. These "Freebie Points" can also be used to purchase Numina, as discussed elsewhere.

Merits & Flaws

Merits and Flaws were introduced in **The Book of Shadows**; these Traits add further depth to characters, as well as some unique abilities and limitations. Merits and Flaws are purchased with (or their values added to) "Freebie Points." Merits and Flaws are optional; a Storyteller may disallow them for whatever reason. She may also allow them, but severely limit those which will be available in her game.

Many of the Traits listed in **The Book of Shadows** are available to Arcanists as well; those designed for mage characters, such as Blatancy or Chantry Politics, are obvious exceptions. Certain Merits or Flaws may even be common for Arcanists, such as Higher Purpose or Concentration.

Some new Merits and Flaws are offered under "New Traits," later in this chapter.



Personal Background

Finally, you must breathe some life into your character; if you are working from a strong Concept, then this should be a relatively easy task. You should consider your Arcanist's Appearance, Allies (Major and Minor), Specialties, and important Equipment.

Lodge

You should also give some consideration to your character's lodge, the group of allied Arcanists who research and investigate together. How long have you been working together? Is this your first lodge? How do you feel about your fellow Arcanists? What relationships, rivalries or romances might be operating within the group?

Prelude

Mortal characters, including Arcanists, do undergo a Prelude just as other characters in Storyteller games. This will give you an opportunity to consider and reconsider various facets of your Arcanist, and give you a feel for playing your character. A good Storyteller will find ways to tie your character's Background, Merits and Flaws, Lodge, and motivations together in her Prelude. The following questions should be considered and answered by the end of your character's Prelude. If, for some reason, your Storyteller does not run your character through a Prelude, then do it yourself, using these questions as a guideline.

- **What was your life like before the Arcanum?**

What was your daily existence like? What was your occupation? What were your dreams? In short, you should consider the character's life before becoming an Arcanist — was she always a dreamer of lost lands and hidden temples?

- **What was your first encounter with the Supernatural?**

What was your first brush with the unseen world? Were you visited by the ghost of a long-dead relative, or did you see the fae folk dancing in the woods? Was this before you joined the Arcanum, and was this a compelling reason for you to join it? You should consider how the character first became aware of a world long denied or hidden to the common folk. It need not have been an unpleasant event; supernatural occurrences may be as pleasant (if a bit unsettling) as they are unpleasant.

- **Were you a lone researcher before joining the Arcanum?**

Were you recruited early in your career? Did you find them, or did they find you?

- **How did you join them?**

What drove you to seek to uncover the mysteries of the world? This may have been the same event as your first supernatural encounter, but it may also have be different.

- **What are your attitudes toward the Arcanum?**

Is it too traditional (meaning: old fashioned) or is it right on course? Do you think it may be a little too secretive? Do you think it should be more secretive? How do you feel about the Arcanum in general?

Character Journals

So rescue yourself from these general themes and write about what your everyday life offers you; describe your sorrows and desires, the thoughts that pass through your mind and your belief in some kind of beauty — describe all these with heartfelt, silent, humble sincerity and, when you express yourself, use the Things around you, the images from your dreams, and the objects that you remember. If your everyday life seems poor, don't blame it; blame yourself...

— Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

Members of the Arcanum are on a threefold Journey: physical, spiritual and mental. It is not uncommon for them to keep a diary or journal of their daily activities, which contributes to their growth both as an Arcanist and as a person.

Players: you are encouraged to keep a journal of your Stories: describe what happened, and what it means to your characters. These don't need to have great literary merit, nor do they have to be lengthy treatises. Put as much time into it as you can; it should be a pleasurable, and not a burdensome, process. In the long run, rereading the past adventures and reflections of your character will make her Journey that much more real and meaningful.

If players manage to keep a Journal of an entire story, then generous Storytellers might be persuaded to award an additional experience point for the time and effort.

• Where is your Chapter House, and how did you join it?

Is the character part of a new Chapter House, or one with a long-established history? How do you get along with the others there?

• What was your Induction like?

Was your Mentor kind and generous, or did he treat your relationship as formality at best? Did you study for only a short amount of time, or were you forever deemed ineligible to graduate?

• Are you a member of any factions or sects within the Society?

Do you have any particular ideology that allies with other factions, or are you a generalist, trying to stay as mainstream as possible? Do you belong to any of the Colleges?

• Do you attempt to lead a normal life?

Do you pretend to live a normal life as part of the mundane world? Is your involvement in the Arcanum kept secret from your family? Some thought should be given to whether the character has devoted the whole of her existence to the Arcanum, or whether her involvement is a limited activity. The difficulties of attempting to live a normal life separate from that of a full-fledged Arcanist are obvious. Those who want to retain at least a semblance of normalcy had best remain Associates.

• Who are the people in your life, outside the Arcanum?

Who are your family, friends, lovers, etc.? What are they like, and how do you relate with them today? How do they view your career choice? Do they think you're insane? Do they worry, or are they even aware of what you do? Did your father introduce you to his "friends?" Was your grandmother "in the know" about the shadow world? Were you intrigued by some attractive person who led you either to the Arcanum or to an as-yet unexplained experience which started you on your Journey? Every person we meet makes some kind of contribution to our lives. Who influenced you, and how?

New Traits

The following Traits are treated like other new Abilities, Merits, Flaws and such from **The Book of Shadows**; most Traits in that book may be chosen as well, if applicable. Some of these listings modify existing Traits, to reflect the difference between Arcanists and regular **Mage** characters.

Abilities

New Talent: Lucid Dreaming

You are the master of your own dreams and visions. At lower levels, you have some control of dream recall and initiation. At greater skill levels, you can attempt to gain conscious awareness during any of your dreams with a Perception + Lucid Dreaming roll (difficulty 9). Success allows you to consciously control your own actions; you can even try to manipulate your immediate dream surroundings (difficulty 6+). This Talent can also be used while in trances or while meditating: it allows you to enter the borderlands between waking and dreaming, where reality and phantasm intermingle. This is a useful tool in puzzling through riddles which you're trying to solve, understanding visions, etc.

- • Novice: You can try to remember with detail and clarity a previous dream.
- •• Practiced: You can try to bring upon a dream of your own choosing.
- ••• Competent: You have limited control over your own dreams.
- •••• Expert: Your dreams are familiar territory to you, and you frequent them for subconscious understanding, and advice from your "inner self."
- ••••• Master: You know the byways of the dreaming, which sometimes seem more real than the waking world.

Possessed by: Shaman, Dream Researchers, Idiot Savants, Artists, Latent Psychics

Specialties: Dream control, waking from nightmares, visionquesting, dream combat

New Knowledges

Arcanist characters do not have access to the Cosmology Knowledge at character creation, and only a rare few Arcanists will ever learn it. This reflects an important fact which Arcanum players must keep in mind: no matter which Storyteller games you are conversant with, your Arcanist character will not know any "inside information" about the World of Darkness! What she knows will be limited to the Arcanum's teachings, her personal experiences, the Occult Knowledge, and what the Storyteller tells her.

Instead of the Cosmology Knowledge, however, many Arcanists learn Mythology Lore (below). Other types of Lore (Kindred, Garou, etc.) are secrets *tightly guarded* by the respective creatures; the Camarilla and Garou tribes have very strict rules against revealing these facts to humans, *especially* to members of the Arcanum! Arcanist characters should not be allowed to purchase any of these Lores during character creation, and may only learn them through exposure to the truth (assuming they survive the experience!).

Lore: Arcanum

You know the history of the Arcanum, from its founding to the present day. You know about the group's leadership, activities, history and beliefs. It is recommended that all starting Arcanum characters have a minimum of one dot in this Ability.

- • Novice: You know the basic facts.
- •• College: You have learned a few unusual details of interest.
- ••• Masters: You are well-versed in the history of the Arcanum
- •••• Doctorate: You know as much as most learned Arcanists
- ••••• Scholar: You think you know all there is to know about the History of the Arcanum

Possessed by: Arcanists, Vampires

Specialties: History, Rites, Organization, Regulations

Lore: Mythology

Mythology is the study of hero and god stories of particular societies. Myths, like legends and fairy tales, are stories which give societies their sense of reality and meaning. The concept of "myth" is relative; what is "myth" to one society is truth to another.

- • Student: You've read a myth here and there.
- •• College: You understand the meaning of a few myths.
- ••• Masters: You are well-versed in many mythologies.
- •••• Doctorate: You understand oft-unseen patterns.
- ••••• Scholar: Joseph Campbell.

Possessed by: Anthropologists, Mystics, Storytellers

Specialties: Creation Myths, Cosmologies, Eschatologies, Soteriologies, Navajo, Celtic, Persian

Lore: Supernatural

Much of what the Arcanum teaches is speculation, not the "truth" as the various constituents of the World of Darkness know it. Even those Arcanists who eventually



learn more about the supernatural do not necessarily share their information: everyone has their secrets.

The collected tomes of the Axis Mundi are not brimming with accurate truths. Nor are Arcanists immune to the Garou-induced Delirium, vampiric Domination, magickal manipulation, fae enchantment or ghostly possession; these factors alone limit the scope of many Arcanists' insights. Not that occasional madness or amnesia deters these seekers of shadow; still, it does put a damper on their research.

Those players who want their characters to be well-schooled in a number of related fields should start with Occult or Occult Sciences and slowly build up their Supernatural Lores through personal experience. This should be hard, but not impossible, to accomplish.

Occult (Arcanum addendum)

Remember that the "occult" is a very inclusive field: the Occult Knowledge need not necessarily be limited to vampires, ghosts, or other seemingly-malefic creatures. It merely represents a secret tradition, knowledge that has been lost or is unknown by modern humanity.

New Occult specializations include:

- Lost Civilizations (e.g., Atlantis, Mu)
- Relics (e.g., Excalibur, the Holy Grail)
- Numinous sites (e.g., Stonehenge, Delphi)
- Legendary creatures (e.g., the Yeti, Unicorns)
- Ancient texts (e.g., Tablets of Mu, Chronicles of Enoch)
- Cults or Secret Societies (Rosicrucians, Templars, Assassins)

Occult Sciences

The sciences that fall under this rubric represent fields of learning with regard to the western occult tradition, particularly the "secret tradition." These disciplines are believed to contain clues to the mysteries of the universe. Knowledge of any of these sciences includes a history of the field, and basic understanding of the symbolism, language, lore and mysteries associated with it. Some sciences (e.g., alchemy) may be aimed toward producing specific, tangible results; however, scientific knowledge remains in the realm of the theoretical — the knowledge alone will not produce said results, though it may prove a good starting point.

A number of disciplines fall within this category. Briefly described, these include:

- **Alchemy:** the method of transmuting metals and the human soul. The techniques of alchemy are described more fully elsewhere in this book; it is also described as a Knowledge Trait in the **Players Guides** for **Mage** and **Vampire**.
- **Astrology:** the method of divining the influence of the heavens on the earth, particularly human personalities. Astrology Knowledge is described with more detail in the **Players Guide** for **Mage** and **Vampire**.
- **Gematria:** the method of divining hidden meaning from names and words, particularly by converting words into a numerical equivalent. This science is often used in conjunction with sacred texts, particularly the Bible and the Quran.
- **Numerology:** the method of determining the essence of an object or name by reducing it to its numerical meaning; everything is a number, and this number is a key to understanding it and its future.
- **Sacred geometry:** the method of divining secret knowledge from the dimensions and shapes of both man-made and natural structures, including the human form. The builders of the pyramids and the gothic cathedrals are said to have been masters of sacred geometry.

Occult sciences are often used in conjunction. For example, a team of Arcanists examining a hidden chamber beneath Chartres Cathedral may require knowledge of sacred geometry (to analyze the chamber's layout), astrology (to understand the astrological symbolism on the mosaic ceiling), and alchemy (to perceive the alchemical symbolism of the bas-relief on the surrounding walls).

- Novice: You understand very basic concepts.
- •• College: You have had some instruction in the field.
- ••• Masters: You have a comprehensive grasp of the discipline.

Reading Old Manuscripts

Well then: you've just found a hand-written book buried in a hidden cellar of a German castle, one which claims to instruct the reader on how to find the ancient city of Damcar. The book is clearly in Latin — a language you studied for eight years between high school and college. So you'll just flip it open, and start reading, right?

Wrong.

Most people who study classical languages read them in very sanitized form; they typically learn one variant of it, and the text is nice and clean in a language primer. Most people who study Greek learn Classical Greek, for example, and may be very unfamiliar with the sudden multiplication of prefixes found in Byzantine Greek. Likewise, most Latin students study classical Latin, not the medieval vulgate.

Furthermore, languages may vary according to region and period. Alphabets may be a little different, spellings may change, and grammar will not always be consistent. Early Greek, for example, was written all in capital letters, with no spaces between words and no punctuation,

LOOKINGLIKETHISWHICHISDIFFICULTTOREADDONTYOUAGREE?

Now, add to this the difficulty of using old and crumbling texts, and you may find yourself in quite a quandary.

Storytellers may choose to apply the following difficulty modifiers to any skill roll involving the reading of old manuscripts or books:

Modifier	Situation
+1	language variant is unknown (e.g., Byzantine vs. Classical)
+1	language variant is obscure (e.g., 6th century Greek in Syria)
+1	uses variant forms of producing letters
+1-3	text is in disrepair
-1	for every dot of Paleography that is possessed

The base modifier is 6, and should never be made easier. These difficulty modifiers are cumulative: a Latin text in a decaying codex written in an obscure variant of 12th century Latin would bring the difficulty from 6 to at least 9. Even if the researcher is a skilled enough paleographer and can bring the difficulty back down to 6, she should prepare for a very long reading session and a lot of aspirin.



••••Doctorate: You know things that are not written.

•••••Scholar: You are a master of things hidden and arcane lore.

Possessed by: Hermeticists, Scholars, Kabbalists, Ritual Magicians

Categories: This Knowledge must be chosen separately for each category of Knowledge: Alchemy, Astrology, Gematria, Numerology, and Sacred Geometry.

Parapsychology

You are familiar with the scientific study of the paranormal, from theory to application. You know the basic methods, techniques and equipment used in parapsychological study. Unfortunately, your field tends to be viewed with disdain in most academic communities.

- Novice: You understand the very basic concepts.
- •• College: You have had some formal instruction in the field.
- ••• Masters: You have a comprehensive grasp of the discipline.
- •••• Doctorate: You have accomplished much research and contributed to the field.
- •••••Scholar: You are a recognized authority in the field.

Possessed by: Parapsychologists, New Agers, Amateur Ghost Hunters

Specialties: Hauntings, psychic powers, ley lines

Paleography

The science of reading ancient manuscripts (primarily Latin and Greek) and assigning an origin to them. Paleography may also be used to determine if a manuscript is a forgery. Note that this Knowledge does not give you the ability to read Greek and Latin — you must purchase those separately! With Paleography, however, you can try to read texts in their original form, not cleaned up and presented in easy textbook fashion.

- Novice: You can try to read a difficult document.
- •• College: You can identify basic elements of the manuscript.
- ••• Masters: You can guess the approximate century and region of the manuscript's production.
- •••• Doctorate: You can pinpoint when and where the manu script was written.
- ••••• Scholar: You know almost certainly everything there is to know about the document, including production ma terials and perhaps even who scribed it (assuming it isn't already indicated).

Possessed by: Professors, Antiquarians

Specialties: Greek (Homeric, Classical or Byzantine), Latin (Classical or Vulgate)

Note: Variants of Paleography which should be chosen separately include Bibliography (the study of the printed book), Diplomatics (the study of documents), Epigraphy (the study of monumental engravings), and Sigillography (the study of seals and sigils)

Sacred Scriptures

You have studied religious scriptures extensively; based upon your particular inclination, you may have studied

them in their historical context, or as direct divine revelation. You will have to choose this Knowledge separately for each broad Scriptural category.

- • Novice: You quote freely, but not accurately.
- •• College: People ask you questions you can answer.
- ••• Masters: You are not just well-read in the scriptures, but about them as well.
- •••• Doctorate: You possess a wide body of knowledge in the sacred scriptures.
- ••••• Scholar: You have read meanings never before considered or discovered.

Possessed by: Witch-Hunters, Scholars, Believers

Categories: Islamic (*Qur'an*), Christian (*Old Testament, Apocrypha, New Testament*), Jewish (*Torah*), Hindu (*Rig Veda, Upanishads, Bhaghavad-Gita*), Zoroastrian (*Zend Avestas*)

Backgrounds

Allies

Arcanists often live rather insular lives with little room for friendships outside their fellowship. Arcanists do, however, meet many people in the course of their studies and explorations, sometimes aiding them, sometimes asking them for aid. These ties are often binding and long-lived. Such Allies will almost always be mortals, though supernatural Allies are possible.

Allies do not just appear at your every beck and call, but they will aid you as best they can; naturally, they will expect the same from you. It bears noting that the various supernatural societies know of the Arcanum and would be *very* angry at any "cousin" who slipped secrets to some Arcanum dweeb. Garou have been known to kill such informers (and the Arcanists) when they discover such treachery. The vengeance of Kindred whose secrets have been exposed could turn a hardened researcher's hair stark white.

- • One Ally, of moderate power.
- •• Two Allies, or one more powerful Ally.
- ••• Three Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power.
- •••• Four Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power.
- ••••• Five Allies, or fewer Allies of correspondingly greater power.

Arcane

It is rare for a mortal to have the Arcane background; unless they are partially Awakened — having one of the three Numina — they cannot choose this background.

Artifact

Artifacts are items which are strong in supernatural potency. This Background Trait allows you to begin play with an Artifact in your possession. Either it was a family heirloom, or a Mentor in the Arcanum bequeathed it to you, or you found it early in your career and the Arcanum has not yet requested it. The Storyteller should create something suitable for you; although you should feel free to make suggestions, the final decision is up to the Storyteller, who will also determine the item's value. Characters cannot





create their own such relics. Truly mythic Artifacts, e.g., Roland's sword Durandal or the chalice of Kai Khusrau, are the objects of great quests and cannot be purchased with this Trait.

Sample Artifacts are included in Appendix Two: Artifacts, and the books **Hunters Hunted** and **The Inquisition**. Storytellers are advised to be careful when allowing players to purchase Artifacts; the Storyteller who distributes these items too freely deserves every headache she will undoubtedly incur as a result.

- • A minor Artifact (Mentat Stone)
- •• A useful Artifact (Shadow Cloak)
- ••• An Artifact of significant power (Faerie Ring)
- •••• A much-sought Artifact mentioned in many legends (Silver Chalice)
- ••••• An Artifact of incredible power (Crusader's Sword)

Contacts

You know people from many different walks of life, and they comprise a system of information and aid that could come in very handy some day. You may have met these people through the Arcanum, or they may have been colleagues before you joined the organization — fellow graduate students, faculty, etc.

You can count on Contacts for accurate information. Minor Contacts may be found in any reasonable location: various universities, libraries or research centers across the world. Major Contacts should be described as complete characters. If you wish to get in touch with a Minor Contact, roll your Contacts rating (difficulty 7); each success means you have gotten in touch with a Minor Contact. They will not just willingly offer information, however: you will need to entice it out of them, or offer a trade.

- • One Major Contact
- •• Two Major Contacts
- ••• Three Major Contacts
- •••• Four Major Contacts
- ••••• Five Major Contacts

Library

Arcanists often devote their entire lives to research, and build up tremendous libraries over the course of their

careers; those who live near Chapter Houses with long-established and well-developed libraries do even better. Arcanists who have to research a particular fact in libraries have their research efforts reduced by this Background.

- • Difficulty reduced by 1
- •• Difficulty reduced by 2
- ••• Difficulty reduced by 3
- •••• Difficulty reduced by 4
- ••••• Difficulty reduced by 5

Mentor

Your Mentor — your Elder Brother or Sister — is the person who initiated you into the ways of the Arcanum. The higher your Mentor's rating, the more influence she has among other Arcanists, and the better your initial reputation. A low Mentor rating could equally mean a powerful Mentor who is not often available to help you.

Resources

(from **The Book of Shadows**)

The Arcanum may provide housing and a small allowance for its new members — typically no higher than a rating of one dot. Anything more must come from a member's family, another job, or some other source of income.

Status

A character's reputation in the Arcanum depends upon a number of factors: scholarly efforts (including publication history), apparent intelligence, Chapter membership, lodge history, etc. The higher an Arcanist's Status, the better she is treated by other Arcanists; likewise, it enhances her dealings with the leadership of the Arcanum when attempting to procure funds or justify the accidental destruction of a company car.

- • Known
- •• Creditable
- ••• Respected
- •••• Admired
- ••••• Revered

Merits and Flaws

The following new Merits and Flaws are available to Arcanists and other mortals.

Isolated Upbringing: (2 pt Psychological Flaw)

From your childhood, you were raised in the Arcanum; your parents were both Arcanum scholars, and you practically lived in a Chapter House, having little contact with the "real world." Unfortunately, you have only limited understanding of the mundane world, and whenever you are in a non-Arcanum setting, you have a 1 die penalty to all social skills.

Iron Will (from the Players Guide): (4 pt Mental Merit)

This Merit costs one extra point (for a total of four) for an Arcanist's immunity to Dominate or Thaumaturgy.

Natural Leader: (1 pt Aptitude Merit)

You are a natural born leader. While not everyone will simply surrender authority to you, they will consent to "follow your lead." Reduce the difficulty level of any situation directly related to leadership by 3.

Light Sleeper: (1 pt Physical Merit)

You need less sleep than other mortals: you can function quite well on four hours a night. If the Storyteller imposes penalties on other mortals for sleep deprivation (one or two dice penalties are suggested), then you are exempt. Needless to say, this allows you to accomplish a lot more with your daily activities, regardless of whether you are an Arcanist or a freelance writer.

Aging: (3 pt Physical Flaw)

You are not as spry as you used to be; any one Physical Attribute score (your choice) must be lowered by one point. This Flaw may be taken once per decade above forty years old.

Research Grant: (2 pt Social Merit)

You are the recipient of a prestigious Research Grant from some university or research center, which frees you from the burden of a regular job. The Grant provides a minimal stipend ($1000 a month in most cases), as well as credentials which will allow you into a number of exclusive libraries and research centers across the world.

Arcane Heritage: (2 pt Social Merit)

Your bloodline has been gifted in the eyes of the Arcanum. You might have had a distant ancestor who was said to be the village witch, or your grandmother was one of the fae, or lycanthropy may be said to run in your blood. Whatever the case may be, the Arcanum believes that your bloodline is gifted, and that you may one day pose a danger as well ("The sins of the Father," after all...). Even if your heritage has no other effect on you, in terms of Merits and Flaws, Attributes, or otherwise, you are well-received by other Arcanists.

Supernatural Merits and Flaws

The following Merits and Flaws are particularly rare, even in the Arcanum. Your character should not become a walking compendium of Supernatural Merits and Flaws; for Arcanum characters, however, the suggested limitation of one or two Supernatural flaws is raised to three or four, at the Storyteller's discretion. Regardless, the Storyteller has the right to determine the amount and potency of such Traits.

Supernatural Companion: (1-5 pt Merit)

You have a friend who is a vampire, werewolf, fae, mummy, or other such creature This does not mean that you are privy to their secrets, however — only that you have somehow met and befriended them. The Arcanum should probably remain in the dark about this, and your companion's own associates may not necessarily know or approve. Arranging communication or meetings may be difficult. You may occasionally call upon your companion for assistance, but the opposite will be true as well (see "Allies"). Although you can determine the basic nature of the Companion, the Storyteller will create the character, and



will not reveal its full capabilities to you. The more powerful the friend, the higher the cost of the Merit.

Innocent: (1 pt Merit)

You are always thought of in the most positive light, unless evidence exists to prove otherwise. If you do something wrong and the act is not easily attributed to you, it will most likely be blamed on someone else. This does not mean that you *are* "an innocent" — it just means everyone *thinks* you are.

Burning Aura: (2 pt Merit)

Your aura, no matter what color it takes, is unusually brilliant to those who can see it; you are practically a beacon among other mortals, burning with a mystical fire. Even those who cannot see auras are immediately drawn to your presence. Some supernaturals will find this a positive aspect; others, particularly vampires, may likely be hostile to you. Many will believe you to possess great power (regardless of whether you truly do), and will be appropriately respectful of you.

Psychic Awareness: (3 pt Merit)

You have an intuitive awareness of psychic activity. Even if you yourself display no other talent, you can determine if any psychic phenomena have recently been operating within a 10-foot radius; this includes the vampiric Discipline, Auspex. How much you determine about what is or was in use depends upon the number of successes rolled on Perception + Occult

Numina and the Arcanum

Oh, thrice blessed the mortals, who, having contemplated these Mysteries, have descended to Hades; for those only will there be a future life of happiness — the others there will find nothing but suffering.

— Sophocles

Many Arcanists have developed some Numinous abilities; in fact, the Arcanum sometimes seems to go out of its way to attract members who possess such gifts.

While various Journeymen may conduct experiments involving Numina, the Arcanum itself does not offer formalized "training" in Psychic Phenomena or in Hedge Magic. Mentors may be found within the Arcanum who might be willing to teach a new student; the trick, however, is not just getting someone to agree to teach you, but finding someone who will admit to how much they actually know. Many Arcanists join with their own agendas; while loyal to the Arcanum, they will not willingly put all their cards on the table.

It is not known exactly how many practicing hedge wizards (who do not consider themselves as such, obviously), alchemists, or psychics there are within the Arcanum. Alchemists are the most secretive lot, since their very art is one couched in cryptic symbolism and hidden lore.

True Faith

O ye who believe! When you meet an army, hold firm and invoke Allâh much, that ye may be successful.

— *Qur'ân*, viii. 45

Faith is the living, breathing heart of a religious tradition. Faith can inspire, it can motivate, it can breathe life into the ailing soul. Of course, Faith in the hands of the narrow-minded can be dangerous; for these individuals it seems to also compel judgmental and even destructive behavior. Faith is a force which may either create, or destroy.

Very few within the Arcanum will have a Faith score, and even fewer will have a score above one. Although for many the Arcanum is almost religious in nature, True Faith requires a wholehearted commitment to a religious life.

This Trait runs on a scale from one to ten; most characters, mortal or otherwise, will have a zero rating in Faith. Faith costs seven "Freebie Points" per dot for mortals at character creation.

The Effects of Faith

True Faith has a multitude of effects at even the lowest levels. At its minimum, it can be added to a character's Willpower rolls. In times of great need, if a character is entirely out of Willpower points, she may call upon her Faith: Faith points can be substituted for Willpower points. When her Faith points are all gone, she's entirely out of luck.

Faith points lost in this manner are regained by acts of religious devotion. If the use of Faith as Willpower was successful, then lost Faith should return almost as easily as lost Willpower. If the use of Faith as Willpower was a failure, the character might seriously question her own beliefs. This has rich roleplaying possibilities.

The use of Faith as a weapon, both offensive and defensive, is particularly valuable against supernatural creatures. Its effects vary from the subtle to the splendid; in some cases it is predictable, but it is never mundane, and never taken for granted.

Each dot of Faith may be used as a die of countermagick. Likewise, a character with Faith may repel a vampire by rolling her Faith against the vampire's Willpower; each success indicates another step back which the vampire must take. For a detailed treatment of Faith, including more specific uses against vampires and other supernaturals, see Chapter Five of **The Inquisition** and Book One of **The Book of Shadows.**

(difficulty 8). A single success might inform you that some talent had been used nearby, while five or more would give you an impression of a long-departed psychic, including her strength, mood, and intent at the time.

Soothing Voice: (3 pt Merit)

Your voice is calm and soothing, almost entrancing. You may add two dice to all rolls that directly include use of your voice — singing, preaching, leadership, etc.

Precognition: (4 pt Merit)

You occasionally have glimpses of the future. Although these visions ordinarily come unbidden, you can, on occasion, attempt to see things on your own initiative. The Storyteller will usually let you know when you have such a vision — essentially it is a good technique for Storytelling. You can try to seek out such knowledge by rolling Perception + Meditation (difficulty 8), at a cost of one Willpower point; in this case, the clarity of the vision depends upon the number of successes. A botch indicates a misleading vision or interpretation of future events. Either way, visions are not necessarily guarantees of future events or actions, but just reflect probable outcomes. Divinatory aids, e.g. Tarot cards, scrying pools, etc., lower the difficulty to 7, but take a full half-hour at least.

Clear Sighted: (5 pt Merit)

You can see through all levels of Kindred Obfuscate, Chimerstry, and other related Disciplines or Gifts, with a Perception + Alertness roll against the opposing power's level + 3.

Supernatural Enemy: (1-5 pt Flaw)

Due to an incident in your past, you have an enemy who is a vampire, werewolf, or other such devilish creature. It will not be a constant threat, but it will appear to bedevil you and your companions. The more powerful the enemy, or the more frequent his appearance, the more powerful the Flaw. You must determine who your enemy is (although the Storyteller will create him), and how you became enemies; this can easily be worked into your character's Prelude.

Offensive to Animals: (1 pt Flaw)

For some reason, animals cringe from your touch, and are uneasy in your presence. Perhaps you have been touched by *something* in the course of your arcane research, or perhaps they just dislike your smell. For whatever reason, animals are jittery around you. You have a two die penalty in any actions involving animals.

Numina

If your Storyteller permits it, your mortal Arcanist may also use "Freebie Points" to purchase a variety of supernatural abilities open to humans; these Special Advantages are grouped together under the loose category of "Numina." Although rare, they are not unheard of in the Arcanum's ranks.

Numina are broken into three broad affinities:

- **Hedge Magic:** A static form of magic without the flexibility or power of True Magick. Hedge Magic is broken into various Paths, each of which represents a different focus; one such Path includes Alchemy, which is discussed in this book's Appendix.
- **Psychic Phenomena:** These are the various abilities of the trained and focused mind, from Telepathy to Telekinesis. A number of Arcanists have at least some psychic talent.
- **Faith:** With Faith, a believer can move mountains: it is the full manifestation of Heaven, working through the hands and soul of the faithful. Some Arcanists possess True Faith, but it is rarely developed to any degree.

The three Numina Affinities are treated more fully in **Hunters Hunted** and **Ascension's Right Hand.**



Chapter Five: Trav'lers on the Road

"Perhaps I know more about these pursuers than you do. You fear them, but you do not fear them enough, yet. Tomorrow you will have to escape, if you can. Strider can take you by paths that are seldom trodden. Will you have him?

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The common image of the Arcanum — among those who know of it — is a company of befuddled reclusive old scholars. While there is some element of truth to this stereotype, it is hardly representational of the entire membership of the Arcanum.

The foundation was begun by proper Victorian gentlemen, it is true, and it does cater to a scholarly attitude. However, it serves the needs of many people and draws upon a wide variety of talents to fulfill its missions. Some people approach the Arcanum for membership; others are approached themselves. Some members are "mere" scholars, while others possess unusual abilities.

The following chapter presents seven templates for Storytellers and players to use, either as beginning characters or for "inspirational" purposes — to give an idea of the types of people who might join the fellowship. The character statistics can be modified as the Storyteller sees fit.

Following the Templates are descriptions of five notables within the Arcanum, individuals of current importance who might play some part in a Storyteller's chronicle.

The Aspirant

On my first pilgrimage I saw only the temple; the second time, I saw both the temple and the Lord of the temple; and the third time I saw the Lord alone.

— Bâyazîd al-Bistâmî, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyâ*

Quote: I seek the hidden places; the sacred is everywhere, but concealed behind the veil of mundanity, which I strive to pierce.

Prelude: Since your childhood, you have felt a sense of longing, a desire for something *other*. At first, this desire was for things common and trivial: new friends, a new school, new playthings. As you grew, your desires changed: you began to seek the perfect companion, the perfect job; there was always something missing from what you had.

You matured, though, and you began to learn that what you desired was wholly Other, something you could not possibly find in the material world: you sought the kiss of the Sacred, the touch of the Divine. Your search began while in college, as you took courses in mythology, religion and philosophy.

When you graduated, you prepared to shock your parents with your announcement that you were forswearing graduate school in favor of traveling the world. You were prepared to be thrown out and disinherited; abandoning material goods was the first step, after all. Instead, your parents just shrugged — they were, by now, used to such eccentric behavior from you, and they had decided there was nothing to be done about it.

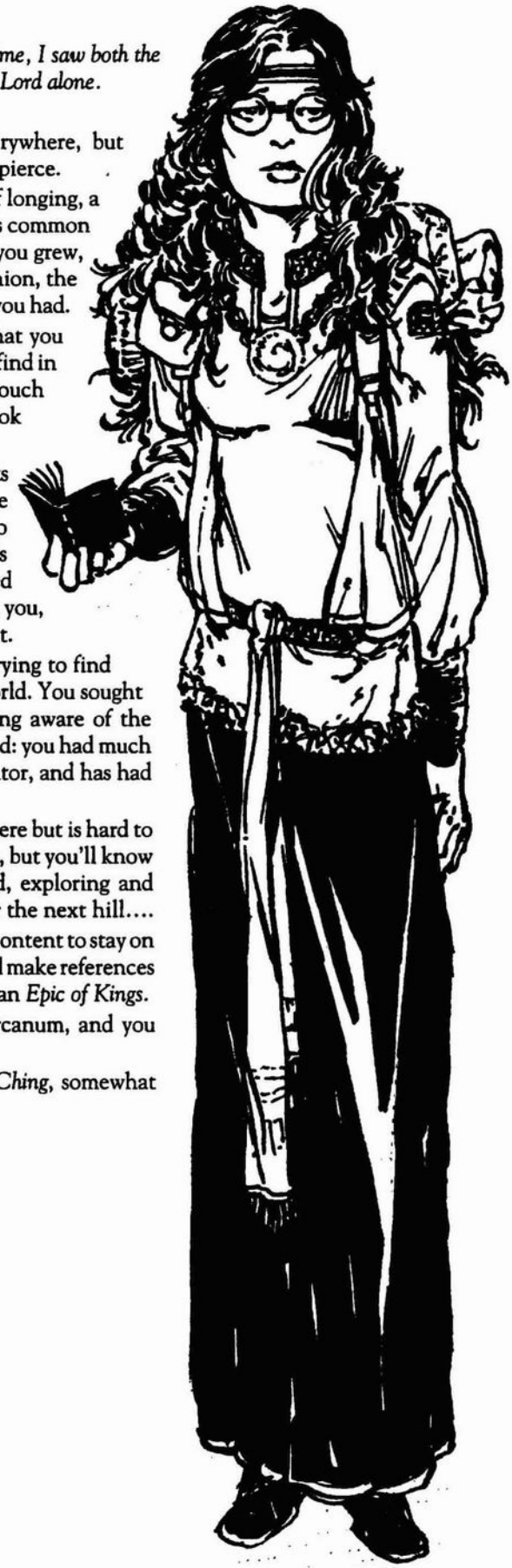
You traveled across Europe, North Africa, and Asia, trying to find fragments of the divine seeded in the mythologies of the world. You sought the mythic sites and secret places, in the process becoming aware of the Arcanum. When you asked to join, you were eagerly accepted: you had much to offer them. Your Elder Sister has been an incredible mentor, and has had much to offer you as well.

Concept: You seek the sacred, which is hidden everywhere but is hard to find. To be honest, you're not quite sure what you're seeking, but you'll know it when you find it. Until then, you will travel the world, exploring and learning the meaning of life. It always seems to lie just over the next hill....

Roleplaying Tips: You are intellectually restless, never content to stay on one topic too long. You like to quote from obscure mystics and make references to lesser-known mythologies, like the *Shahnamah*, the Persian *Epic of Kings*.

The Arcanum: There is much hidden within the Arcanum, and you appreciate that. You will learn its secrets too, one day.

Equipment: Notepad, a battered copy of the *Tao Te Ching*, somewhat ragged clothes, Birkenstocks.



Tales of the Ranger

Name:
Player:
Chronicle

Nature: Visionary
Demeanor: Deviant
Concept: Aspirant

Motivation:
Chapter:
Lodge:

Attributes

Physical

Strength	●○○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○

Social

Charisma	●●●○○
Manipulation	●○○○○
Appearance	●●○○○

Mental

Perception secrets	●●●●●
Intelligence	●●○○○
Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness	●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○
Awareness	●●●○○
Brawl	●●●○○
Dodge	○○○○○
Expression	●○○○○
Intuition	●●●●○
Intimidation	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○

Skills

Drive	○○○○○
Etiquette	○○○○○
Firearms	○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○
Meditation tai chi	●●●○○
Melee	●●○○○
Research	●●○○○
Stealth	●○○○○
Survival	●●○○○
Technology	○○○○○

Knowledge

Computer	○○○○○
Cosmology	○○○○○
Culture	○○○○○
Enigmas	○○○○○
Investigation	●●○○○
Law	○○○○○
Linguistics (see below)	●●○○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	●●○○○
Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits

Mythology	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
Languages:	○○○○○
-French	○○○○○
-Arabic	○○○○○

Background

Mentor	●●●○○
Resources	●○○○○
Allies	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Merits & Flaws

Willpower

●●●●○○○○○○

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-2	☐
Wounded	-3	☐
Mauled	-4	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Numina

	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○

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Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty
STR+3	Staff	4

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Bibliothecary

What wild desires, what restless torments seize
The hapless man, who feels the book-disease.
— John Ferriar, "The Bibliomania"

Quote: You think this text is authentic? Ha! You obviously can't tell a forgery when you see one. Look — this typeface wasn't designed until four years after the alleged publication date!

Prelude: When you were a child, your parents bought the "Great Books" series. Perhaps even better than the information they contained was the way they looked to your infant eye: so pretty and shiny, with matching covers and gilt-edged pages.

Your tastes have matured greatly since then, and your convictions are now more refined. But your basic tenet — one not often agreed with or appreciated by your colleagues — is that the form a book takes, its *artifactual* nature is as important as the material within it.

Your education was broad-based and liberal, concentrating more on the role of books and literacy in culture and history than on the content of specific texts. You wonder, for instance, how many people truly appreciate the impact of the printing press, which allows for the widespread dissemination of thought and ideology, on the Reformation.

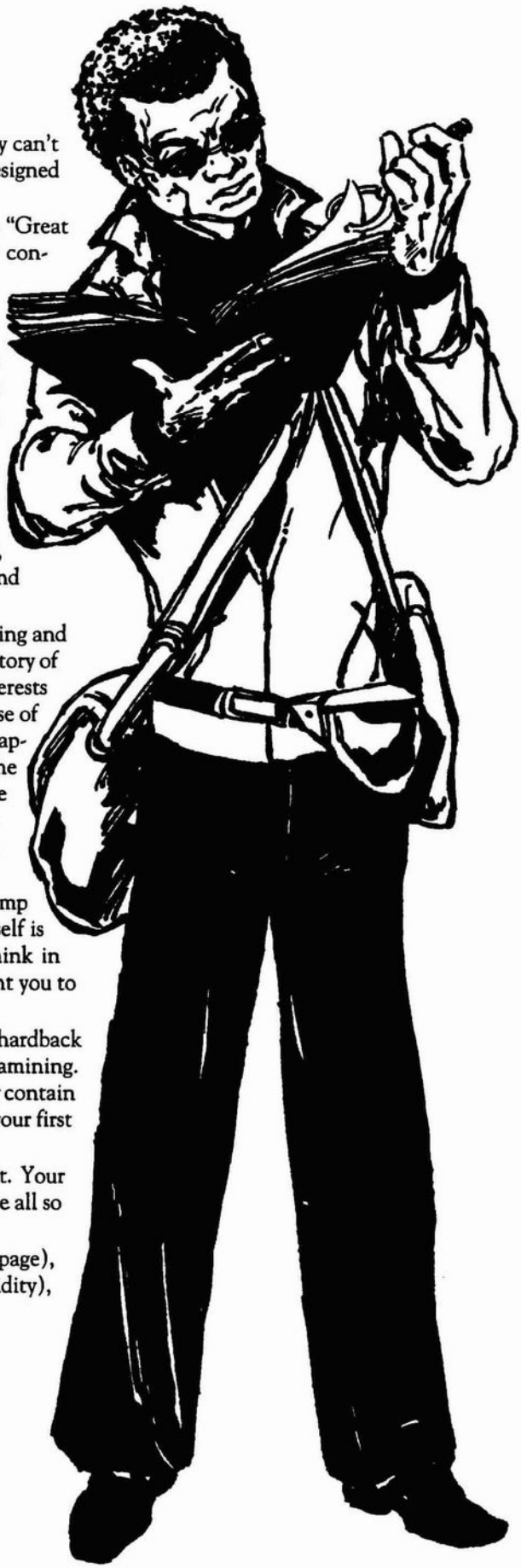
After your undergraduate education, you studied bookbinding and conservation, and became an expert in book analysis and the history of book production from the beginning of the print era — your interests do not lie as much with hand-written manuscripts. It was because of your trade as a book analyst and conservator that you were approached by a local Chapter House of the Arcanum to verify the authenticity of a particular text. This happened more and more frequently, until finally you were intrigued enough to join the Arcanum yourself. Since then, you have had occasion to see books that are beyond your imagination....

Concept: Books mean more to you than people. You will jump at the chance to see a new variant of a text, even if the text itself is rather mundane. Your academic training has taught you to think in broad intellectual terms, while your technical training has taught you to see things with a more careful eye than most.

Roleplaying Tips: Never play without a book in hand (a hardback preferably), which you are constantly flipping through and examining. Show real excitement only over books, not so much the ideas they contain — which may be exciting in and of themselves, but will not be your first interest.

The Arcanum: You're still not sure how you feel about it. Your association with it has proven to be valuable, but its members are all so — weird.

Equipment: Vernier calipers (for measuring thickness of a page), magnifying glass, metric ruler, pH pen (for measuring paper acidity), penknife.



Tales of the Mancer

Name:
Player:
Chronicle

Nature: Fanatic
Demeanor: Critic
Concept: Bibliothecary

Motivation:
Chapter:
Lodge:

Attributes

Physical

Strength	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○

Social

Charisma	●●○○○
Manipulation	●●●○○
Appearance	●●○○○

Mental

Perception	●●●○○
Intelligence	●●●●○
Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness	●●●○○
Athletics	●○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○
Expression	●●○○○
Intuition	●●○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○

Skills

Drive	●○○○○
Etiquette	●○○○○
Firearms	●○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○
Meditation	○○○○○
Melee	○○○○○
Research	●●●○○
Stealth	○○○○○
Survival	○○○○○
Technology	●●○○○

Knowledge

Computer	●○○○○
Cosmology	○○○○○
Culture	●●○○○
Enigmas	●○○○○
Investigation	●●●○○
Law	○○○○○
Linguistics (see below)	●●●○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	●○○○○
Science	●●●○○

Advantages

Other Traits

	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
Languages:	○○○○○
-Latin	○○○○○
-French	○○○○○
-Greek	○○○○○

Background

Resources	●○○○○
Library	●●●●○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Merits & Flaws

Numina

	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○

Willpower

●●●○○○○○○○

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Health

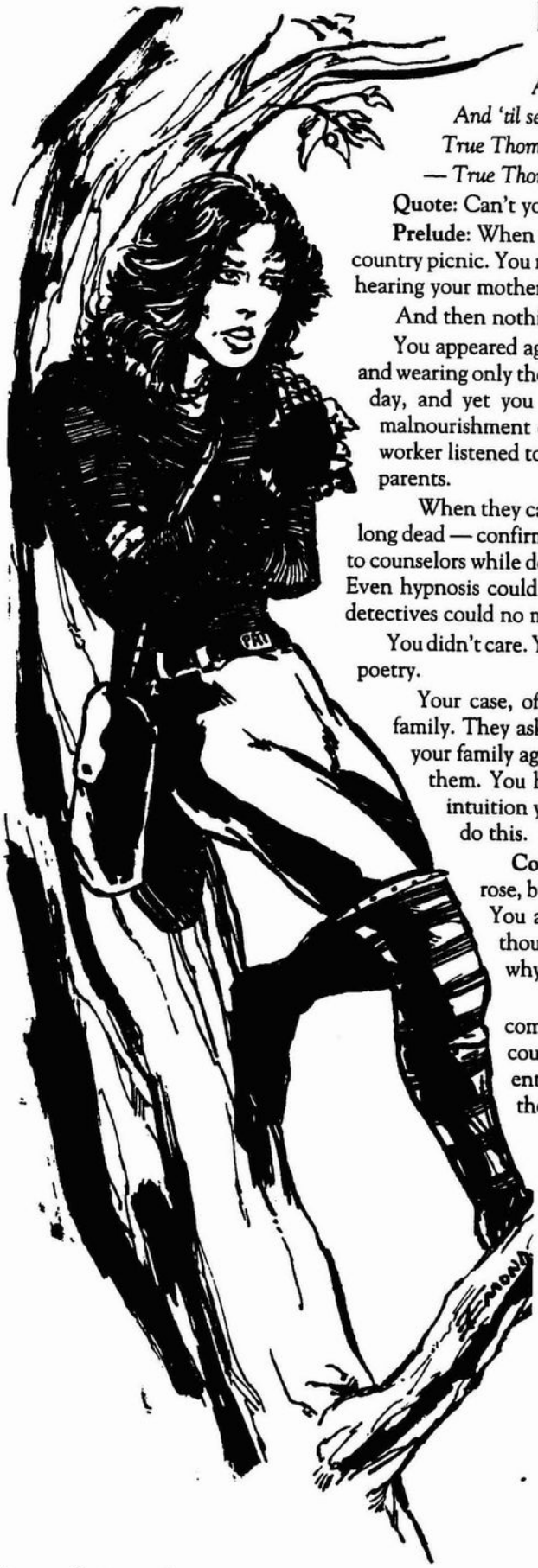
Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-2	☐
Wounded	-3	☐
Mauled	-4	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty
4	LT. Pistol	6

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)



Fey Poet

He has gotten a coat of the elven cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And 'til seven years were past and gone,
True Thomas on Earth was never seen.
— *True Thomas, or Thomas of Erceldoune*, Scottish-English border ballad

Quote: Can't you hear the music playing? In the distance?

Prelude: When you were a child, almost a teen, you went with your parents on a country picnic. You recall laughing and running through the trees, and you remember hearing your mother call out, "Be careful!"

And then nothing.

You appeared again across the country, seven years later, without identification and wearing only the barest scraps of clothing. You could remember nothing past that day, and yet you were a tall, handsome youth, without the slightest trace of malnourishment or abuse. You were taken to a homeless shelter, where a social worker listened to your story, and with some appropriate disbelief, contacted your parents.

When they came to the shelter, your parents — who had by now believed you long dead — confirmed your identity, and joyfully took you home. They brought you to counselors while detectives set about once again to determine where you had been. Even hypnosis could not produce any recollections of those missing years, and the detectives could no more trace your fate than they had before.

You didn't care. You were content to sit up at night, watch the starry sky, and write poetry.

Your case, of course, made the newspapers. The Arcanum contacted your family. They asked to continue the research abandoned by the detectives, and your family agreed. Intrigued by these strange investigators, you asked to join them. You have since amazed them with the bits of arcane knowledge or intuition you casually toss off, and you delight in their reaction when you do this.

Concept: Your attention span varies: you can stare for hours at a rose, but will listen for only a few moments to someone's conversation. You are curious about your past, but you feel strangely content, as though you will learn in due time what you had forgotten. Until then, why worry?

Roleplaying Tips: Make people think you're flighty — inane comments, short attention span, etc. You're not really flighty, of course, you just have a different way of dealing with things. You are entranced by natural beauty and physical sensations. Every now and then, say something enigmatic. Act both young and old.

The Arcanum: Some if its members are nice, but they're not very much fun to be around. They don't like to just sit and enjoy things. They always have to *analyze*. Blech.

Equipment: Diary (with many poems), drawing pad, recorder (the wind instrument, that is, not the mechanical device), dagger.

Mists of the Moon

Name:
Player:
Chronicle

Nature: Loner
Demeanor: Deviant
Concept: Fey Poet

Motivation:
Chapter:
Lodge:

Attributes

Physical

Strength	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○

Social

Charisma Compelling	●●●○○
Manipulation	●○○○○
Appearance Elfin	●●●●○

Mental

Perception	●●●○○
Intelligence	●●○○○
Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness	●●○○○
Athletics	●●●○○
Awareness	●●●○○
Brawl	●●○○○
Dodge	●●○○○
Expression Poetry	●●●●○
Intuition	●●●○○
Intimidation	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○

Skills

Drive	○○○○○
Etiquette	○○○○○
Firearms	○○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○
Meditation	●●○○○
Melee	●●○○○
Research	○○○○○
Stealth	●●●○○
Survival	●●○○○
Technology	○○○○○

Knowledge

Computer	○○○○○
Cosmology	○○○○○
Culture	○○○○○
Enigmas	●○○○○
Investigation	○○○○○
Law	○○○○○
Linguistics	○○○○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	●○○○○
Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits

Mythology	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Background

Mentor	●○○○○
Allies	●●○○○
Status	●○○○○
Resources	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Merits & Flaws

Numina

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	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Willpower

●●●○○○○○○○

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty
STR + 2	Dagger	4

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-2	☐
Wounded	-3	☐
Mauled	-4	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)



Hermetic Scholar

I have seen the Green Catholic Lion, and the Blood of the Lion, i.e., the Gold of the Sages, with my own eyes, have touched it with my hands, tasted it with my tongue, smelt it with my nose.
— Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum Aeternae Sapientiae*

Quote: [enigmatic silence]

Prelude: You've been fascinated with tales of the occult and the arcane since you were a child. Your parents were a little frightened of this: at the very least, they feared that you were just weird; at worst, they fell victim to paranoia and imagined you sacrificing animals in your backyard.

It was never quite that bad: you did have a voracious imagination, reading about the pyramids one day and alchemy the next. It also inspired you to begin to study history and other languages, in order to supplement your own pursuits. Unfortunately, your resources, limited to the public library, were not terribly erudite. You decided that when you went to college, you would attend a university that had a large library and was located in an urban metropolis, so you had other libraries and bookstores to explore as well.

When you were finally enrolled in college (*a history major?* groaned your parents), you found a suitable vehicle for your interests. While in your second semester, you discovered a previously unknown used book shop tucked away on a narrow side street, and your life subsequently took a dramatic turn.

You entered the shop, ignored the clerk, and strolled about, finally locating the occult section. It held the usual claptrap, but you perused the shelves nonetheless, hoping to find something interesting.

"What you seek is not here," said a voice behind you.

Turning, you saw a tall white-haired gentleman, draped in a thick black winter coat, his hand on a sturdy cane. A kook, you decided.

"You seek the Philosopher's Stone," the man said again, this time stating your name. "I am here to guide you."

The gentleman took you home; at first you feared — or hoped for — a romantic tryst, but instead he showed you his library, which contained more occult tomes than you had ever imagined to exist. He began tutoring you in the Hermetic sciences, and encouraged you to remain in college even though you were now ready to drop out. You learned many secrets from him.

One day he disappeared, his library left empty. You have no idea what happened to him — all that was left was a note, in your name: "Seek the Arcanum. Follow the Owl," with an address and phone number.

Although the Arcanum had no idea who your mentor was, it welcomed you into its folds. You "follow the Owl" now, gladly, although hoping to discover both your Mentor's whereabouts and the secrets you never learned.

Concept: You are young and inexperienced, but quite knowledgeable. You are a tad bit arrogant, believing your areas of expertise to be the Supreme Sciences, but this is only a product of your youth. Still, you show wisdom beyond your years.

Roleplaying Tips: Say little, and only things of import; when you do speak, people will listen.

The Arcanum: It is using you, you are convinced, but you are using it too. Will you be able to get out before it is too late?

Equipment: Alchemical laboratory, your mentor's sword-cane, black overcoat, occult library.

Laws of the Night

Name: [illegible] **Nature:** Loner **Motivation:**
Player: **Demeanor:** Traditionalist **Chapter:**
Chronicle **Concept:** Hermetic Scholar **Lodge:**

Attributes

Physical
Strength ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●●○○
Stamina ●●○○○

Social
Charisma ●○○○○
Manipulation ●●○○○
Appearance ●●○○○

Mental
Perception ●●●○○
Intelligence ●●●○○
Wits ●●●○○

Abilities

Talents
Alertness ○○○○○
Athletics ●○○○○
Awareness ●●○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Expression ●○○○○
Intuition ●○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

Skills
Drive ○○○○○
Etiquette ●○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Meditation ●○○○○
Melee Fencing ●●●○○
Research ●●○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ○○○○○
Technology ○○○○○

Knowledge
Computer ○○○○○
Cosmology ○○○○○
Culture ○○○○○
Enigmas ●●○○○
Investigation ●●○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ●●●○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ●●●○○
Science ○○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits
Mythology ●●○○○
O.S.: Alchemy ●○○○○
O.S.: Astrology ●○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Backgrounds
Library ●○○○○
Mentor ●●○○○
Status ●○○○○
Resources ●○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Merits & Flaws
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Numina
Alchemy ●○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Faith
○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower
●●●○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty
STR + 3	Sword-cane	6

Health
Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -2 ☐
Wounded -3 ☐
Mauled -4 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Psychic Investigator

We live in the midst of invisible forces whose effects alone we perceive. We move among invisible forms whose actions we very often do not perceive at all, though we may be profoundly affected by them.

— Dion Fortune, *Psychic Self-Defense*

Quote: Yeah, it is fairly clear here: there are many spooks, and they're pretty pissed off at *something*.

Prelude: The case was simple: you had the culprit in a corner, he had dropped his gun and kicked it away just like you told him, and his hands were raised. You were just waiting for back-up.

And then a noise from behind...

... and a fire in your head...

... and you awoke in the hospital four months later, emerging from a coma.

Your culprit had an accomplice, who apparently struck you in the head with something heavy. You almost died. You knew this before the doctors mentioned it; you recalled hovering over the emergency room, and seeing other sad-looking spirits also floating about. You almost found peace, but then something drew you back to your body.

Only now, things are very different. You can still, with some effort, see the many types of spirits that move across the world. Something awakened a new sense in you, but you don't like it; there are times when your new-found vision asserts itself beyond your control, and the spirits appear more real than the "real world" does.

You were kicked off the force — you never should've told your partner what you thought you could see — and your case hit all the tabloids. "Ex-Cop sees the Dead!!!!" But that's how the Arcanum found you, and now you work for them. You find that your investigative and law-enforcement skills are just as valuable in the Arcanum as they were in the police force.

Concept: Tough-as-nails street cop, who normally doesn't buy occult malarkey. Your experiences have forced you to broaden your horizons, however. You lack some intellectual refinement, the occult sciences hold no appeal for you, and your "technical vocabulary" is pretty slack, but you're appreciated nonetheless.

Roleplaying Tips: You're calm under fire, but still pretty unsettled by your new abilities.

The Arcanum: It provides you a home, and it accepts you for what you are. You are loyal to it for these reasons; if it has its secrets, that's fine. You don't have to know everything.

Equipment: Beretta Centurion 9 mm, trench coat, notepad.

Note: Your use of Ephemera does not require any first-level rituals, only a brief bit of concentration. However, it can overwhelm you, and you lose control of your ability at times. For those without **Ascension's Right Hand**, this Hedge Magic Path draws ghosts to you and allows you to sense them (and sometimes bar their presence with simple folk rituals).



Rules of the Road

Name: | **Nature:** Traditionalist | **Motivation:**
Player: | **Demeanor:** Survivor | **Chapter:**
Chronicle | **Concept:** Psychic Detective | **Lodge:**

Attributes

Physical

Strength	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○

Social

Charisma	●●○○○
Manipulation	●○○○○
Appearance	●●●○○

Mental

Perception	●●●○○
Intelligence	●●○○○
Wits Uncanny	●●●●○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness	●●○○○
Athletics	●●○○○
Awareness	●●○○○
Brawl	●●●○○
Dodge	●●○○○
Expression	○○○○○
Intuition	●●○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○
Streetwise	●●○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○

Skills

Drive	○○○○○
Etiquette	●○○○○
Firearms	●●●○○
Leadership	●○○○○
Meditation	○○○○○
Melee	○○○○○
Research	○○○○○
Stealth	●●○○○
Survival	○○○○○
Technology	○○○○○

Knowledge

Computer	○○○○○
Cosmology	○○○○○
Culture	○○○○○
Enigmas	○○○○○
Investigation	●●●○○
Law	●●○○○
Linguistics	○○○○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	○○○○○
Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Other Traits

	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Backgrounds

Contacts	●●○○○
Recources	●●○○○
Allies	●○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Merits & Flaws

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Numina

Ephemera	●○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Combat

Damage	Weapon	Difficulty
4	Pistol	7

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-2	☐
Wounded	-3	☐
Mauled	-4	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 Abilities: 11/7/4 Backgrounds: 5 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1)

Notable Persons

These larger-than-life Arcanists are known throughout the fellowship for their contributions and high-ranking position. Investigators who wish to make a good impression should be familiar with these scholars' works, and may even make their acquaintance if circumstances permit. These are the prime movers of the Arcanum and wield influence beyond their personal reach.

Jermyn Talbot

This elderly gentleman is one of the world's preeminent Indo-European linguists; his mastery of a dozen languages — and fluency in a dozen more — in addition to his skill in the field of linguistics make him one of the most sought-after scholars in the world. He can, with minimal thought, identify previously unknown correspondences between seemingly disparate languages, and establish possible theories for the connection.

However, since his Initiation into the Arcanum, fresh after graduating with his doctorate, he has dedicated his services almost exclusively to the foundation. On some rare occasions, he has assisted individuals outside the organization, but this was usually at the request of the Grand Chancellor.

Dr. Talbot seeks to reconstruct "the primal tongue," the protolanguage now commonly labeled proto-Indo-European, seen to be the ancestor of a large number of European and Asian languages. He believes that the true form of this language will reveal some clues to the most sacred ancient mysteries; if language controls thought, as he argues, then reconstructing the Ancients' linguistic paradigm is the first step to unraveling the origins of the sacred mysteries.



Curriculum Vitae: Jermyn Talbot

Education:

B.A., University of London, Linguistics (London, England, 1942)

Ph.D., Oxford University, Linguistics (Oxford, England, 1948)

Academic Experience:

Instructor (Latin), School of St. Anne-on-the-Hill (Oxford, England), 1943-1949

Instructor (Greek), School of St. Anne-on-the-Hill (Oxford, England), 1946-1949

Tutor (Persian), University of London, 1966-1968

Arcanum Experience:

Journeyman, London Chapter House, 1949-1968

Chancellor, London Chapter House, 1958-1968

Dean, College of Linguistics, 1956-1960, 1973-1985

Publications:

"The Primal Tongue and its Significance," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. XLIV (Winter, 1956)

"Beyond Proto-Indo-European," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. XLIV (Winter, 1956)

"Sanskrit Inscriptions in a Celtic Barrow: the Implications," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. XLIV (Winter, 1956)

It has always been his opinion that any scholar worth his merit — no matter what his field of inquiry — will know Greek and Latin. He unsuccessfully attempted in the 1970s to lobby for a regulation requiring all Journeymen to know Latin. He has only recently come to accept the fact that fewer and fewer students study this language. Nonetheless, should you call upon him, be prepared to face a conversation in Latin or Greek: "They're no more dead than I am!"

Although originally attached to the London Chapter House, he spent many years traveling through Europe and Asia. He finally settled into the Foundation House for further study and some teaching.

Lynne Stanhope

Miss Stanhope had hoped that her career as a journalist would be off to a fabulous start with a job at the *Financial Times* or the *London Times*; instead, after months of fruitless job hunting, she finally landed a position at the *Daily Mirror*, one of England's more sordid tabloids (as if there could really be any other type). Nonetheless, she diligently performed her duties, reporting on every royal scandal and bizarre incident to which she was assigned.

After three years of unsatisfying journalistic experience — during which, on and off, she would attempt to begin writing her *magnum opus*, the subject of which has yet to be resolved — she was contacted by a gentleman who claimed to be possessed by the spirit of his long-dead abusive father.



Although she could not condone journalistic investigation into something so patently absurd, she was nonetheless curious enough to do some background investigation on the history and beliefs of "possession," in the process, she came in contact with various scholars who directed her to the Arcanum.

The gentleman was later convicted of child abuse — still claiming that his father was at fault — while Lynne became a close associate of a number of Journeymen, actually assisting them in some of their research endeavors. Within a year after contacting the Arcanum (which now has psychiatrists and parapsychologists working on the case of the unnamed convict), she was offered the position of managing editor of the *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, a job she cherishes. She works closely with the Editorial Board to maintain the journal's high standards.

Curriculum Vitae: Lynne Stanhope

Education:

B.A., College of St. Paul and St. Mary, Journalism (Cheltenham, England, 1988)

Arcanum Experience:

Journeyman, London Chapter House, 1990-current

Editor, *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, 1991-current

Publications:

[too many to list and mostly irrelevant dreck anyway, omitted here for space purposes.]

Helga Sørensen

Helga Sørensen is a tribute to self-education. She never sought further education after high school, instead marrying a merchant in her hometown of Oslo, Norway. However, her parents had raised her to appreciate the value of learning and education, so even though she could not continue her formal schooling, she still spent as much time reading as she could find reading, in between her busy duties as wife, mother, and homemanager.

Helga frequently visited her grandmother, who was wise in the ways of many things; grandmother warned her to ever be mindful of witches and ghosts, and taught her the lore of the Otherworld. Helga believed everything her grandmother said, for the old matron was neither insane nor a liar. The warnings and precautions were not just anti-pagan superstition, either; her grandmother had a bit of the "neopagan" about her (although she would not have known the term, and would have laughed at the silliness of the label), and spoke from much wisdom.

Helga's children grew up and moved on to England and America, and her husband died a fairly wealthy old man. The business he began had prospered, and Helga was left with a sizable inheritance with which to take care of herself. She decided to attend the University of Oslo, and registered for a course, but withdrew after the first session: there was nothing there that she did not already know. She continued her private readings, although she would often join discussion groups sponsored by the University.



Curriculum Vitae: Helga Sørensen

Education:

Course work at the University of Oslo (Oslo, Norway, 1990-1994)

Arcanum Experience:

Associate, Oslo Chapter House, 1991-92

Journeyman, Oslo Chapter House, 1992-current

Chancellor, Oslo Chapter House, 1994-current

Publications:

"Magic in Norwegian Folk Traditions," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXXI)

"Witchcraft in the *Kalevala* and other Finnish Literatures," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXXII)

Sørensen was approached one day by members of the Arcanum, who wished to speak with her about her knowledge of witchcraft. Entertaining her visitors over tea and cookies, she also enlightened them with much of her lore. The visitors came again the next week, and the weeks following. She joined the Arcanum soon after — at 61, one of the oldest Neophytes in the Arcanum's history. She advanced through the ranks quite rapidly, and was eventually appointed the Chancellor of the Oslo Chapter House. Helga is still contacted by Journeymen who seek information on witches and witch cults, particularly in the nations of Norway, Finland and Sweden.

Although she is still predominantly self-educated, Helga has taken further classes at the university to increase her linguistic skills and improve her scholarly writing. Although she is not concerned with academic credentials, she does not like her writings to seem amateurish in their tone or content.

Helga cherishes her background as a mother and wife, and is always a splendid host to any Journeyman who visits the Oslo Chapter House. Many Journeymen travel there seeking her knowledge, but are often more in need of her mothering, instead. She willingly provides both.

Aside from her habit of smoking cigars and her low-level diabetes, she is in otherwise splendid health for her age. She credits it to clean living and a now much-improved diet, as well as visits from her grandson in America.

Sandeep D'Souza

One of the intellectual luminaries of the Arcanum, D'Souza currently holds the Chancellorship of the New Delhi Chapter House. His intellectual career has taken him across the world, and it will surprise no one if he is chosen to be the next Grand Chancellor.

Sandeep was born in New Delhi; although his family was unable to afford college, his grades in school were high enough to earn him a scholarship to Harvard University. His studies began in intellectual history, but slowly coalesced into the more tightly defined field of occult history; his learning is comprehensive, encompassing the scope of linguistic, religious, and



historical studies. His many books and articles on occult theory and history are part of the academic canon; it is through these writings that he came to the Arcanum's attention.

Dr. D'Souza has observed that the syncretism of the occult has borrowed much from Asian philosophy and mythology, but has not come to appreciate it on its own. While it is easy to speak in terms of "karma" or "chi," too often these ideas are appropriated while the remainder of their respective traditions are ignored.

D'Souza's current duties include a position as editor-in-chief of the *Encylopaedia of the Arcane*, the 14-volume compendium of the occult and supernatural, which is slowly nearing completion. He has the highest standards for the publication, and it promises to be a landmark in scholarly publishing.

Curriculum Vitae: Sandeep D'Souza

Education:

B.A., Harvard University, History (Cambridge, Mass., 1965)

M.A., University of Wisconsin, Asian Studies (Madison, Wisc., 1969)

Ph.D., Columbia University, History (New York, 1975)

Academic Experience:

Instructor (Sanskrit), University of Wisconsin (Madison, Wisc.), 1966-69

Assistant Professor (Asian History, Sanskrit), Columbia University (New York), 1975-1976

Associate Professor (Asian History, Sanskrit), Columbia University (New York), 1977-1979

Professor (Asian History), Columbia University (New York, Sanskrit), 1980-1984

Arcanum Experience:

Journeyman, New York Chapter House, 1983-1985

Journeyman, Calcutta Chapter House, 1985-1988

Journeyman, New Delhi Chapter House, 1989-current

Dean, College of Oriental Studies, 1985-1988

Chancellor, New Delhi Chapter House, 1992-current

Editor-in-Chief, *Encyclopedia of the Arcane*, 1988-current

Publications (selections):

"Sanskrit Magic Invocations," *Journal of Intellectual History*, 43:1 (January, 1967)

"Alchemy across the Himalayas: Chinese-Indian Transmissions," *Bulletin of Asian Studies*, 14:4 (December, 1968)

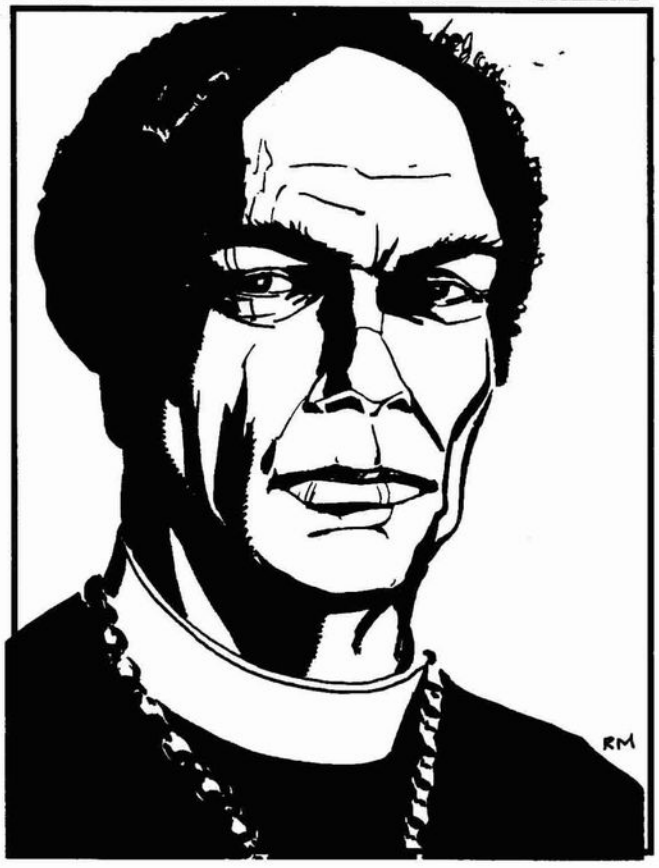
"Victorian Occult Syncretism and Oriental Sources," *Journal of Victorian Studies*, 28:3 (September, 1969)

"The Crime of Orientalism," *Bulletin of Asian Studies*, 15:2 (April, 1969)

"Pre-Islamic Persian Alchemy," *The Orientalist*, 35:4 (November, 1973)

"Alchemy in Asia: New Perspectives," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXVII

Rasayana Today: Alchemy in Modern Southeast Asia. London, Arcanum Press: 1989.



Curriculum Vitae: The Rev. Montague Winters

Education:

B.A. Liberal Arts Program, St. John's College (Annapolis, MD., 1979)

M.A., Religion, Princeton University (Princeton, N.J., 1982)

M.A., History of Science, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass. 1984)

D.Div., Westminster Theological College (Boston, Mass., 1989)

Academic Experience:

Instructor (Church History), Westminster Theological College, 1985-86

Instructor (Theology), Westminster Theological College, 1988-89

Arcanum Experience:

Associate, Boston Chapter House, 1992-93

Journeyman, Boston Chapter House, 1993-current

Dean, College of Hermetic Studies, 1993-current

Publications:

"Christ: the True Philosopher's Stone," in *Episcopal Studies*, 29:3 (October 1991)

"The Order of St. Hermes and Post-Reformation Esotericism," *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*, Vol. LXXXII

Montague Winters

The Rev. Montague Winters is one of the preeminent scholars of the Hermetic tradition. Although ordained an Episcopal priest, he is also an avidly-avowed practicing Hermeticist; he feels that Christianity and Hermeticism are not irreconcilable, and it has long been his personal and professional quest to prove this. The fact that his intellectual inspiration, the Dominican philosopher Giordano Bruno, was burned at the stake for heresy in 1600 does not give him a persuasive advantage when dealing with other churchmen.

Montague's interest in religion began early in his life; although he long suspected that he was headed toward ordination, he still felt as though something was missing from his own spirituality. He credits his initiation into the Hermetic tradition to "a stranger in a park," who approached him by name and "spoke to [his] soul."

Montague pursued religious education — biblical studies, homiletics and theology, a course of studies befitting any up-and-coming cleric — but always managed to maintain his own arcane interests as well; he claims that he was a practicing alchemist by the time of his ordination. More than once, he has been reprimanded by the Episcopal Church for his more heterodox views and pronouncements; his reprimands are what ultimately brought him to the Arcanum's notice. However, he prefers to "work" in complete privacy, and he has yet to take on a student or apprentice, although many hopefuls have approached him.

Regardless, his expertise in the Hermetic tradition — particularly how it intersects with esoteric religious studies — is, without a doubt, unparalleled.



Book III: The Mystagogue's Guidebook

Chapter Six: Behind the Veil

Yet mystery and manifestations
Arise from the same source.
This source is called darkness.
Darkness within darkness.
The gateway to all understanding.
— Lao-tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

Germany:

It had taken three hours to get this far, and that was three hours too long. Getting lost on that country road didn't help any — the castle was not on any map they could find, and no one they asked, it seemed, was willing to help them.

Finally, they found a school-boy who would lead them for money. The tall, bright-eyed blond did not seem to share any of the other villagers' fears or reluctance to discuss the ruins: until they'd met up with Josef, the travelers had been unable to find anyone even willing to hear mention of the castle.

Phil, at the wheel of the Jeep, did not seem to mind having taken on the role of chauffeur for the trip, and handled the rough terrain admirably. Lydia was silent, dragging contentedly on a cigarette in the back seat.

Terrance's dissatisfaction with this course of the trip was made evident by the stream of profanities that spilled from his mouth. "I still don't understand why the Committee sent us here instead of any of the German Lodges. This isn't even our case or anything." He was fuming, and his ire was beginning to strain his voice, making his next stream of profanities sound that much more unpleasant..

"We're almost there," Josef said, his big dumb smile unchanged. Riding shotgun, he pointed ahead down the road. "Very soon..."

Turning & turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold...
— W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

Players, take note! This section is intended for Storytellers only. The information contained herein details some of the secrets of the Arcanum, secrets which you will learn when it is appropriate. Reading this section will ruin the pleasure of playing Arcanum characters.

This chapter delves into some of the more hidden aspects of this fellowship of scholars. Many of the details are left deliberately vague to allow you to customize the truth to fit your own chronicle. The implications of these secrets should fill any Arcanist with paranoiac dread; the creatures outside the Chapter House walls are bad enough, but when strange things happen within this trusted fellowship....

Storytellers should be subtle if they choose to include the ideas in this chapter; conspiracies should not drop from the ceiling onto the characters' heads. Foster, instead, a growing atmosphere of distrust and concern, a feeling that

something significant is going on just behind the oaken door... The truth, if it ever appears, should remain shrouded in mystery. The Arcanum, after all, is a fraternity of searchers. Anyone who expects to keep a secret here had better be damned clever and damned careful....

Inner Questions

He who hungers for the past will be fed on lies.

— Samuel Barber, *Vanessa*

Bah. Wood-cutters and charcoal-burners.

That is all the Arcanum consists of nowadays: fools who chop away at the Tree of Life, marveling at the splinters they produce and oblivious to the source. They do not understand meaning or truth; scientia sacra is lost upon them. They bustle about like worker ants, following the dictates of the unseen White Monks.

They have lost their way on the Road, and should either be destroyed or gently corrected. Let the fires of the enlightenment burn away the detritus that has gathered. If the Arcanum has failed, than so have I, and I must take actions to redress this failure.

— Benjamen Holmscroft, 24 November 1994

Observations on the History of the Arcanum

A talk offered by Andrew Taylor, at the 1992 Cordova Convocation of the Order of Hermes:

The Arcanum still represents an enigma to the mages of all the Traditions, but we of the Order of Hermes are the most perplexed —possibly because of our own similarities with this band of Sleepers and the semi-Awakened. But perhaps, before discussing these similarities, I should examine its history from the beginning.

As is well known, many of the Arcanum's members came from the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day, which members typically included artists, poets, scholars and bored aristocrats caught up in the nouveau-occult movement of the day. It was prone to wild imaginings, finding lost civilizations behind everything, and detailing "hidden" correspondences between any number of occult activities and interests — the Tarot, the Qabala, Numerology, *et al. ad infinitum*. Only occasionally would the order stumble upon some esoteric truth. A number of the members of the Order were actual magi, shapers of reality; but they had little to do with the HORD's turn toward speculative whimsy. Few true Awakened were members of the Order for long. Most joined merely out of curiosity, and quit soon after, usually quite amused. The majority of those members of the HORD (and other similar societies) who had a talent for magic were nothing more than hedge magi, who, amusingly enough,



quite often believed their art to be the pinnacle of all magical craft.

And so on with other occult societies to the present day: always seeking, sometimes finding, and typically losing.

But what of the Arcanum itself? From the beginning, it was shrouded in secrecy. George Kenealy, himself a magus of the Order of Hermes, was one of the original invitants to Holmscroft's gathering at Vannever Hall — of which I have much to say as well, later — and he felt that the proposal of the Arcanum, while noble and noteworthy, was of little significance.

Kenealy's own blindness to Holmscroft's true nature is an indication of just how singularly powerful Holmscroft can be. Regardless, I digress.

The Order periodically kept track of the early activities of the Arcanum, watching its members muddle through their scholarly-mystical journeys. Certainly, we learned that a number of the semi-Awakened had joined the Arcanum: hedge magicians, psychics, novice alchemists, and so on — but it seems as though one day we looked to discover that they had formed a veritable army of investigators, and were probing into a wide array of matters of which we had not thought them capable, including our own Order.

This is when we began to treat them a little more seriously. We decided then to study the Arcanum as thoroughly as they try to study us....

The Rosicrucians

We know, from conversations with early Arcanists, that the early founders of the Arcanum were quite interested in — one might say obsessed with — the legends of the Rosicrucians: the city of Damcar, the Domus Sanctus, the tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz — all landmarks of a mythic history.

What do we know of the Rosicrucians? I confess that once again I must admit a partial ignorance. It is most likely that "Father Christian" was a true alchemist, if not a full mage, which would account for his longevity, but his historical identity is unknown to us. His name itself would seem to be nothing more than a cobbling together of symbols: "Christian Rosy-Cross," I am confident, is not a true name, but was adopted, most likely as part of an initiation rite.

The Rosicrucians of legend are close in ideology with the Order of Hermes: both believe in a secret wisdom that must be protected from humanity, and aim to guide this knowledge toward perfection. For the Order, this perfection is Ascension; for the Rose-Cross Brothers, it is Reformation: same idea, different clothing. The Rosicrucians-proper (vs. the spurious Rosicrucians — yet another subject I will address) were practicing alchemists and healers. The truth which they safeguarded was, like alchemy, couched in intricate symbolism and mystical language.

There are many who have claimed to be inheritors of the Rosicrucian tradition, including the HORD and the Order of the Golden Dawn, as well as a host of pseudo-mystical societies of dubious merit. Strangely, for all the Arcanum's fascination with the Rosicrucians — and we know for a fact that they actively seek any clues to them that they can find — the Arcanum never claimed itself to be an heir to that grand tradition.

Benjamen Holmscroft

Benjamen Holmscroft remains one of the greatest riddles of the Arcanum: who was — or *is* — he?

So little is truly known about Benjamen Holmscroft. He first appears among Sleepers in 1879, with his entry into the HORD. There are no records of his existence prior to that year: no birth certificates, school records, tax forms, or any other civic or personal documents make reference to him prior to 1879. It is likely that the name Holmscroft is an alias, a pseudonym created for his debut in the occult community.

There is reason to wonder whether he was, in fact, a mage, as evidenced by the fact that there are no early records of him, that he became very reclusive, and that his alleged death — again, more on that later — is shrouded in mystery. He certainly has more than a minor touch of the Arcane about him. If this, indeed, is true — though we unanimously believe it to be unlikely — then he was anonymous, an Orphan without a Cabal or Chantry.

There are some in the Traditions who suspect that Holmscroft is one of the Awakened, but if so, he is unlike any we have seen before: neither a mage, nor one of the Undead, but simply Undying. Some have suggested that Bryon Hartswicke, the first "inheritor" of Vannever Hall, was in fact Holmscroft; although there is little documentary evidence to prove this, one Leech claimed to have a portrait

The Ancients of Damcar

Fear spoke from the age-worn stones of this hoary survivor of the deluge, this great-grandmother of the eldest pyramid; and a viewless aura repelled me and bade me retreat from antique and sinister secrets that no man should see, and no man else had ever dared to see.

— H.P. Lovecraft, "The Nameless City"

As far as the Ancients of Damcar are concerned, again we can claim no knowledge. But there is much speculation: if the city of Damcar is (or was) located near the Holy Land, then it would have fallen within the sphere of influence of the Ahl-i-Batin. Although the Subtle Ones have been our allies — however reluctantly — they were not forthcoming with all their secrets.

Not only would the location of Damcar have been within the geography of the Ahl-i-Batin, but the history of "Father Christian" and the Ancients follows a similar pattern with the Batini, indoctrinating heterodox mystics and gnostics of mainstream religions.

It is thus the theory of many that the Ancients were Ahl-i-Batin. Damcar may very well have been Mount Qaf, or it may even have been another location entirely — perhaps now a Horizon Realm? Even with the magicks available to us, we have not been able to penetrate the veil of mystery surrounding Damcar. The Subtle Ones, of course, refute all of the above.

Suffice it to say, the Order of Hermes is as interested in establishing the location of Damcar as is the Arcanum.



Vannever Hall

Dear Elena:

You have written to request further information on Vannever Hall, the Foundation House of the Arcanum, which we both know was once a Chantry House of the Order of Hermes. It has many secrets; some are known; many more have been forgotten.

Its original occupants were publicly recognized as gentlemen and ladies of high breeding and good taste with perhaps a bent toward the intellectual — collectors of maps and manuscripts, books and mementos from across the world. The house was owned, ostensibly, by Sir Thomas Scotte, but his companion, Andrew Saint-George, was most likely the Chantry leader. Saint-George and Scotte, along with their companions (magus and custos alike), disappeared while traveling in Asia: their fate is entirely unknown, as is often the lot of mages.

Although the building was enormous, relatively few mages had residence there. It cannot be said for certain why Scotte had so large a Hall built; perhaps Saint-George anticipated more residents in the future.

The site of Vannever Hall is believed to have been a powerful source of Quintessence, perhaps even before the construction of the building. The Axis Mundi, the Chantry's library, is believed to have been the Node, though this is no longer a source of Quintessence. Of course, according to rumor, there is still much that is strange about Vannever Hall: perhaps a touch of Tass remains, for an unearthly quality assuredly lingers there.

The Axis Mundi

The Arcanum's library is magnificent, even by our standards, although it is lacking in texts of true magick. Saint-George — quite a bibliothecary if his scant biographies are true — began the original collection, and it has been expanded ever since by the subsequent residents — or "resident" — of Vannever Hall.

Yours in the Order,
Andrew Taylor

painted of Hartswicke that bears an uncanny resemblance to Holmscroft. However, this vampire has since disappeared, either drowned in the politics of his kind or fallen under the blade of an Inquisitor.

If Holmscroft — for whatever his True Name is, we know him only by this name — was indeed the inheritor of Vannever Hall from the 17th century onward, then he has lived a long, slow life, aging at a snail's pace. Perhaps his quest for wisdom kept him alive, or perhaps he was aided by some outside factor. Bryon Hartswicke is said to have trav-

eled to the Orient; perhaps in the course of his travels he stumbled upon the secret to his immortal transformation, and learned how to cloud minds, so that he would effectively disappear until he emerged in his Holmscroft persona. He is clearly not a vampire, and I doubt that he is a mummy. However, the Dreamspeakers have tales of some humans, infused by Gaia's energy, who have become almost living avatars of some Gaian aspect: vengeance, love, or in this case, wisdom. Of course, not having the liberty to speak with Holmscroft on the issue, these theories remain purely matters of conjecture.

Finally, we come to Holmscroft's death. One witness to a hermit's death, and a closed-casket funeral? Surely only the most gullible individual would truly believe that Holmscroft died as rumor told. (As far as that witness's credibility, we know for a fact that Winthrop Murray underwent his own transformation, and lives on to this day, although he is rarely seen or heard from.) Holmscroft disappeared in 1914, to be sure, because his longevity was becoming too apparent. However, rather than maintaining behind-the-scenes and control of the Arcanum, he appears to have left behind the society which he founded.

As far as Holmscroft's present whereabouts, and the reasons he left the Arcanum, these questions still remain a mystery.

The White Monks

Forget all this nonsense about Grand Chancellors and Executive Committees: the true leadership of the Arcanum lies with the cabal known as the White Monks. This group is believed to control the Executive Committee — not every member, but enough to sway the Committee's decisions on certain matters — as well as to choose (and direct) each Grand Chancellor.

Rumors of the White Monks first appeared in the early years of the Arcanum; whether Holmscroft was influenced by them, or was himself a member, has yet to be ascertained.

This much we know; anything else is pure conjecture, particularly when addressing the issue of who the actual members of the White Monks are. As of now, there are four theories.

Argument 1: Umbral Lords

Some have proposed that the White Monks are nothing less than the Umbral Lords. While the Arcanum's interest in Hermetic mysteries would lead one to the believe that they have some connection to the Western Court — or even the Egyptian Court — this is, of course, absurd; the Umbral Lords do not typically deal with mortals, and when they do, it is with us. What use would they have for a mortal organization that does not actively worship them?

Argument 2: Oracles

Others have proposed that perhaps the White Monks of the Arcanum are actually Oracles, directing mortals from their sanctuary Realms. This is an interesting theory, but it, too, ultimately fails. The Oracles have duties and roles that are far more pressing than the shepherding of a group of children who dabble in the occult.

Argument 3: Awakened

It has been put forth that the White Monks are an alliance of Awakened, primarily mages and vampires, but perhaps including mummies as well. While it would be in keeping with the Awakened — particularly Leeches — to manipulate mortals for personal gain, most likely the gathering of information, this theory ultimately falls apart as well. Very few mages and vampires have been able to act together in concert, and I cannot see a consortium of mixed Awakened successfully controlling mortals for over a century without making their presence more visible.

Argument 4: Sleepers

This leads us to our last argument: the White Monks must be a group of mortals. Some have theorized that the White Monks are but a new incarnation of a mysterious priesthood begun under Solomon, known only as the White Veils of the Temple. (I will not at this point go into the ridiculous allegations that the *Prieuré de Solomon* are descendants of the White Veils). According to these theorists, the White Monks are alchemists and hedge magi — some of them incredibly ancient, thanks to their magical workings.

This entire theory is ultimately preposterous: that any one group of mortals could occult themselves out of our collective attention for 3,000 years is beyond possibility.

Conclusions

So there we have it: four theories on the identities of the White Monks, all refuted. I admit that I have used only argument, and not evidence, to discount them; however, I will point out in my defense that no evidence has been offered to support these claims either.

This much we do suspect: whomever the White Monks may be, they are using the Arcanum to further their own goals and research. As the Arcanum traverses the globe, unraveling mysteries and bringing data and relics home to the Foundation House, the White Monks' own work advances: they have the toil and effort of scholars throughout the world to manipulate and draw upon.

Finally, we must question the motives of the White Monks. Do they work to manipulate the Arcanum in hopes of directing it to a greater good? Some speak of a Revelation, when the doors to the Arcanum will be flung open and the knowledge of eons will spill forth.

Or do the White Monks manipulate the Arcanum only for their own purposes?

What should happen if Damcar is discovered? Or if one of the truly powerful relics which the Arcanum seeks is found? What will the White Monks do with it then?

There are layers upon layers of secrets within the Arcanum; it is doubtful that any know the truths behind them all.

The Red Monks

Wrapped in even more ambiguity are the rumors of the Red Monks, a cabal said to oppose the White Monks. Although not directly opposed to the original mission of the Arcanum, they have come to view the Arcanum as a tool of self-serving individuals, and now work to thwart the activities of the White Monks whenever possible. This we have from self-professed agents of the Red Monks, both inside and outside the Arcanum, mortal and supernatural alike; however, we have little confirmation of the identities of the Red Monks as well.

A few suspect that Winthrop Murray reappears on occasion to recruit Arcanists for some hidden cause, possibly in the service of the Red Monks. Whether Murray works for Holmscroft, or whether Holmscroft is part of the Red Monks, is not clear.

Conclusion

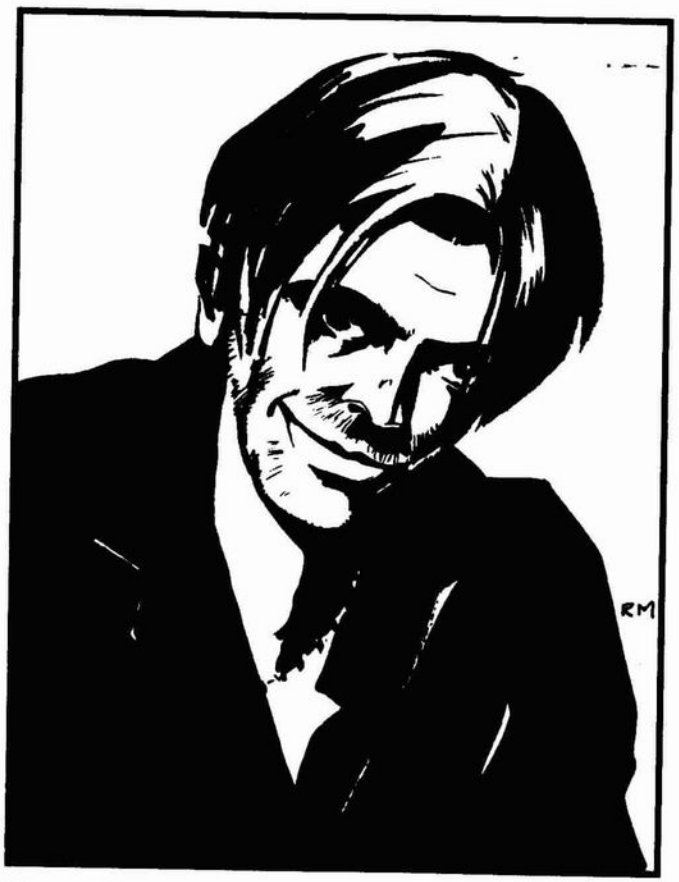
In one sense, the Arcanum is the fulfillment of what the Order of Hermes has espoused: it studies the mystery traditions of the ages, seeking the truths hidden in the arcane formulae of numbers and symbols which make up the occult sciences. The Arcanum's collective belief in that which we proclaim helps to enforce the walls of *our* reality and strengthen the paradigmatic bulwark against the Technocracy.

Many already believe that the Arcanum is a front for the Order of Hermes; while it is true that a number of our own acolytes and apprentices are recruited from the Arcanum, we have no more control over the order than does any other Tradition.

What does the Technocracy think of the Arcanum? It is likely that it allows the Arcanum to exist as a fringe organization: as long as the collective populace does not believe in ghosts or sorcerers, then the Arcanum will be little more than a body of scholarly eccentrics. If the Technocracy ever comes to view the Arcanum as a tool of the Order, it may decide to crush it. I suspect that when and if this should occur, the stored, collected knowledge of the Arcanum will be revealed, and the Technocracy will face a greater fight than they expect.

If, one day, the Arcanum does release its findings, which prove the existence of the supernatural and refute some of the claims of modern science, then the Technocracy may have cause to worry. It is unlikely that this Revelation will occur any time soon, and one cannot say for certain what will happen when it does. If the timing is wrong, then the Arcanum will bear the brunt of universal mockery. If the timing is propitious, however, the Technocracy's paradigm may find itself quaking just a bit, and we will be ready. In this event, the Arcanum, never a tool, may become an ally. For now, they are just children, playing with fire: but a fire which may one day prove useful.

Until then, we will wait, and we will watch.



Characters

For here, in the New Orleans home of this continent's greatest mystic, mathematician, and orientalist, there was being settled at last the estate of a scarcely less great mystic, scholar, author, and dreamer who had vanished from the face of the earth four years before.

— H.P. Lovecraft, "Through the Gates of the Silver Key"

The following characters are presented for a variety of purposes. Some were important in the history of the Arcanum, and may still play a role in its future; others have yet to leave their mark upon it. Still others are simply personalities that may be found within the Arcanum and may leave their mark on a more personal level. The way your players interact with these personages is left to you and to the dictates of your own chronicle.

Mark Wayne

Secretary

Nature: Conformist
Demeanor: Avante-Garde
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Dodge 1, Expression 2
Skills: Drive 1, Leadership 1, Research 2, Technology 2
Knowledges: Culture 1, Linguistics 1
Backgrounds: Allies 1, Resources 1



Willpower: 4

Background: Mark Wayne is young, he's cute, and he's a French major — which pretty much means he's unemployable. But thankfully his uncle pulled a few strings, and now he answers the phones and does some typing for a local scholarly society.

Sure, they've got some really weird books, but the building is nice, you get to use the phone whenever you want, you can read at the desk, and they let you use the basement gym as well. It's not much as far as jobs go, but it's a start.

Image: Mark Wayne is a handsome young fellow whose idea of dressing up is wearing a button-down instead of a T-shirt.

Roleplaying Hints: You're enthusiastic, always ready to help, but a little bit clueless as far as real office work goes. But hey, you can read French!

Sylvia Dorn

Security Consultant

Nature: Jobsworth

Demeanor: Bravo

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1, Streetwise 1

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 4, Leadership 1, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Technology 3

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Law 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Contacts 1, Resources 2

Willpower: 6

Background: Sylvia was just a security guard who saw something really weird one day (it was just a little UFO, after all), and the next thing she knew she was in all the tabloids. Well, so much for anyone wanting to hire her again.

Then the Arcanum came along. First they investigated her background, then they questioned her about what she saw. Not only did they believe her, they offered her a job at a Chapter House, managing security operations. She's seen even weirder things since then, but after all, it's just a job.

Image: A trim black woman of about 30, short and petite, but all muscle beneath her business suit. Sylvia wears dark glasses whenever possible.

Roleplaying Hints: When it comes right down to it, you're paid to act paranoid, but you're also efficient. The Arcanum was there for you and you'll be there for it.

Mr. Parks

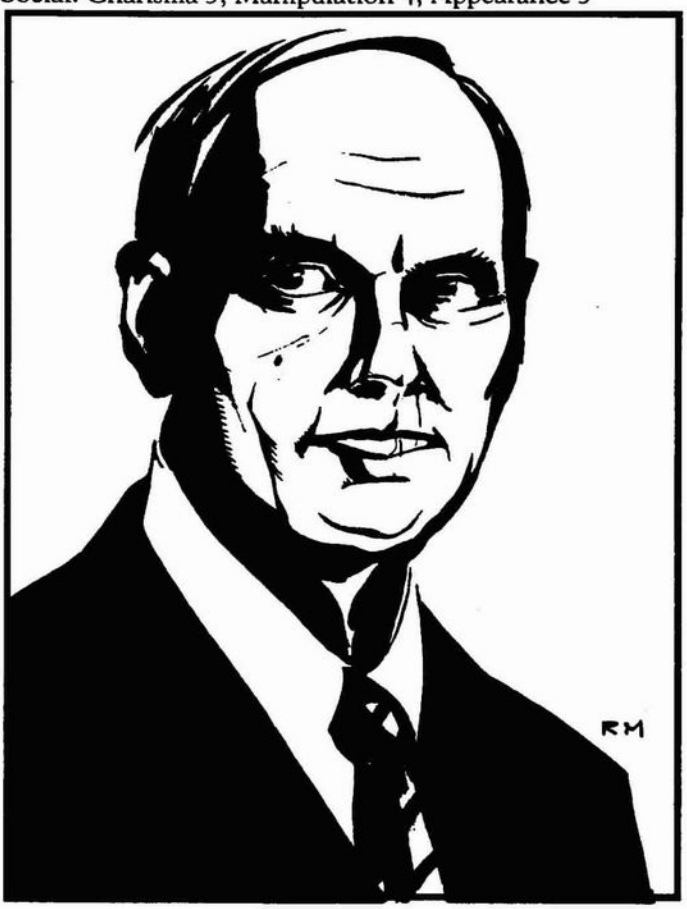
Steward

Nature: Jobsworth

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3



Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 3, Diplomacy 3
Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 5, Firearms 2, Leadership 2, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Technology 2
Knowledges: Arcanum Lore 5, Investigation 3, Law 2, Medicine 1, Occult 4
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Resources 3
Willpower: 5

Background: Edward Parks — simply "Mr. Parks" — is part of a long-standing tradition at Vannever Hall: the stewards of Vannever Hall have come from the Parks family for generations, even when Vannever Hall was "unoccupied." Now he manages the Foundation Hall's large domestic staff.

Mr. Parks is a dedicated servant of the Arcanum. While he is universally trusted as the Foundation House's manager, few people are aware of just how much he really knows. He is well-versed in the secret byways and passageways of the Foundation House, many cellars that are still undiscovered, but he is content "to remain a domestic." He has his job, like his father before him, and he will do it well.

Image: A dignified, middle-aged white man with a brisk Queen's English accent. Mr. Parks is neatly shaven, wears a crisp suit and walks a steady pace: never rushed, but never late.



Roleplaying Hints: You are there to facilitate the daily activities of the Arcanum. You expect the same respect that is given the Grand Chancellor, and if any young Journeyman starts to take an attitude with you, you'll snap him back to reality without a moment's hesitation — or a single ungentlemanly word.

Madeleine Beaucourt

The Grand Chancellor

Nature: Visionary
Demeanor: Bully
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Expression 4, Intuition 3, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 1
Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Leadership 4, Meditation 1, Research 3, Technology 3
Knowledges: Arcanum Lore 4, Computer 1, Enigmas 1, Investigation 1, Linguistics 4, Mythology 5, Occult 3
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 4, Library 5, Resources 3, Status 5
Willpower: 7

Background: Madeleine Beuacourt was educated in the finest universities in France, and is one of the world's most noted Indologists. Unbeknownst to her, her career in the Arcanum was groomed by the White Monks almost from the beginning: she was immediately perceived to be a very forceful women, and the Monks agreed that her strength of character could be put to use in their service. Her rise through the ranks was genuine, given her career and activities, but the Monks facilitated things so that she always had the best opportunities to shine.

By the time she had been voted Grand Chancellor, Beuacourt had already been in touch with the Monks for three years; they made her privy to much of their own private information, and she does their bidding on the rare occasions when they ask: policy decisions, budget considerations, etc.

She has never once seen the White Monks; all communication is conducted through private meetings with nameless liaisons, telephone calls, even private e-mail (which automatically purges after she reads it and cannot be saved or forwarded).

Madeleine is fanatically loyal to the White Monks and the Arcanum: for her, the two are synonymous.

Image: A short French woman in her late forties, smartly dressed in business suits, Madeleine is the consummate professional.

Roleplaying Hints: Be direct, be firm. If you speak to anyone, it is because you think they are worth your time. If anyone has problems with the Arcanum, you'll listen — and then you'll refute each and every argument.



Andrew Taylor

Nature: Judge
Demeanor: Critic
Tradition: Order of Hermes
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Expression 4, Intuition 3
Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 3, Leadership 3, Meditation 3, Research 4, Stealth 2, Technology 1
Knowledges: Arcanum Lore 4, Cosmology 3, Culture 2, Enigmas 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics 4, Occult 3
Backgrounds: Arcane 1, Avatar 3, Influence 2 , Status 3
Spheres: Correspondence 1, Forces 4, Life 2, Matter 2, Mind 4, Prime 3, Spirit 1
Willpower: 8
Arete: 6
Quintessence: 12
Paradox: 3

Background: Andrew Taylor began as a Journeyman with the Washington, D.C. chapter. Over the course of his career as an Arcanist, he met up with a Magus of the Order of Hermes, who selected him to be his apprentice. To this day, Andrew believes that he was chosen less for his personal merit than for his background.

Although Andrew quit the Arcanum a number of years ago, he never quite left it; he has been preoccupied with the origin and true nature of the Arcanum for some time, and does whatever he can to attempt to resolve its many enigmas.

Image: Andrew Taylor is a pleasant young man who enjoys the life of the scholar and the academe, dressing the part to the hilt: brown trench coat, tweed jacket, Oxford shoes, and a worn leather satchel. His face is handsome but not threatening, although at times he looks rather severe. Round spectacles finish off his image.

Roleplaying Hints: You are quiet in public, except for scholarly convocations and gatherings; when you speak at such occasions, you are quite eloquent. In private gatherings you say little, however, preferring instead to watch and listen.

Winthrop Murray

The Undying
Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Architect
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Expression 4, Intuition 2
Skills: Etiquette 5, Firearms 3, Leadership 3, Meditation 2, Melee 2, Research 4, Stealth 2



Knowledges: Alchemy 5, Arcanum Lore 5, Astrology 5, Cosmology 3, Culture 3, Egyptology 5, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 5, Medicine 1, Mummy Lore 3, Mage Lore 2, Occult 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 3, Contacts 5, Library 5, Mentor 4, Resources 4

Numina: Alchemy 5, Ephemera 3

Willpower: 8

Background: Winthrop Murray was a prominent Victorian Egyptologist involved with the Hermetic Order of the Rising Day and then the Arcanum. He served as Secretary both to the Executive Committee and to Benjamen Holmscroft.

In the course of his involvement with the Arcanum, he met with an Undying Egyptian sorcerer, who was sufficiently pleased with Murray's knowledge. After many visits to the Arcanum, the Undying accepted Murray as an apprentice.

Murray staged his own death and went to study in Cairo, recreating the method used millennia ago to grant immortality to his mentor. Finally, in a fluke, he was able to create the Formulae which both restored his youth and made him ageless. Although he can be killed by normal means, his body will slowly regenerate while his spirit floats the Umbra.

Now he watches the Arcanum's progress from behind the scenes. He disdains the manipulation of the White Monks, and will counter it whenever possible. He is believed to be a contact for the Red Monks, but he neither confirms nor denies this. He does, however, occasionally contact Arcanists and give them covert aid — often without revealing his presence.

Image: Winthrop Murray is a proper gentleman, even in this day and age, always dressed in the crispest of clothing, with impeccable manners. He never insults — unintentionally — and maintains a pleasant facade no matter what he is thinking.

Roleplaying Hints: Be a polite chap, if somewhat condescending. Always act in a mannerly fashion: in addition to being proper, it helps cover your true motives.

Jebediah Spector Brown

Witch-hunter

Nature: Critic

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Expression 4, Intuition 3, Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 3, Firearms 4, Leadership 3, Meditation 2, Melee 4, Research 2, Technology 3



Knowledges: Alchemy 5, Astrology 3, Computer 1, Enigmas 3, Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Sacred Scripture 3, Science 3, Theology 3, Vampire Lore 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 3, Library 4, Resources 4

Numina: Alchemy 5

Willpower: 8

Background: The Reverend Jebediah Brown is a God-fearing — but sadly, not God-loving — man who feels his divinely ordained duty is to cleanse the earth of the supernatural evil with which it is infested. He will not join the Society of Leopold, which, being Catholic, follows the Whore of Babylon known as the Pope, and he will not indulge in simple hunt-and-stake missions on his own.

Brown has decided that the best way to rid the earth of this blight is to learn as much as possible about it (a lesson which the Society of Leopold would do well to learn). He began with an extensive study of vampire lore, which to this day remains his field of expertise. It was because of this knowledge that he was first contacted by Benjamen Holmscroft regarding the Arcanum; after a brief membership, in which he learned as much as he could about occult society of his day, he withdrew and moved to America.

Once there, he began the study of alchemy — which, he argues, is evil in itself but which God permitted him to study in light of his mission — with an old gentleman who claimed to have come to the country in the early 1700s. After wresting the secret of longevity (if not immortality) from him, Brown killed his mentor and used his funds to establish a lab in which he could alchemically study captured supernatural creatures.

Recruits and converts aided Brown in his mission, and over then next few years the Reverend founded what was to become Crucible Genetics Amalgamated. He still runs CGA from behind the scenes, using its facilities and supplies for both his own alchemical experiments and for further study of the supernatural.

The Reverend lives in seclusion, surrounded only by his most trusted associates and bodyguards. To facilitate his privacy, he "died" in 1902, according to the certificate hanging on his study wall. When he feels he has learned all that he needs to know, he plans to initiate a massive supernatural pogrom; to this end, he is gathering data and capturing "specimens" for his experiments and research. CGA has on occasion infiltrated the Arcanum, and vice-versa, in a macabre system of corporate espionage that is understood only by Brown and the Arcanum's Executive Commmittee.

Brown was once strong in Faith, but this dwindled as he committed more and more atrocities in the name of "God-driven science."

Image: A stocky man, Brown has a stern face with a strong aquiline profile. His long hair is peppered gray, pulled back from a high forehead and kept in a short ponytail. Brown looks to be in his 40s, although he is actually much older. Though he is no longer an an active clergyman, he continues to dress in the fashion of a minster.

Roleplaying Hints: You rarely laugh, smile, or show any emotion other than stern, pompous contempt and condescension. Quote Scripture when it suits you and serves your purpose, but fly into a cold rage when someone dares to send it back at you.

Appendix One: Alchemy, The Great Art

Gold is immortality
— Satapatha Brahmana, 8th c. B.C.
All that is gold does not glitter...
— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

I walked home late that night, contemplating the various formulae my master made clear to me throughout the day; these ideas, and many others, churned turbulently in my mind, each revelation and discovery building upon the other, to alter subtly my understanding of the way things were.

I looked up at the State building, as I am so often wont to do; there, upon the entablature, was a stunning revelation. What I had previously thought was little more than neoclassical sentiment or mythologized Americanism fixed in stone was actually the allegorical representation of a number of basic alchemical formulae. I stood and stared, my mouth agape — no doubt appearing to passers-by as an idiot or a madman.

A cold wind roused me from my rumination. Drawing my overcoat closer around me, I hurried home, wondering how many more occult truths are boldly emblazoned before the eyes of the ignornant.

The Great Art, Our Sacred Philosophy, the Divine Work, *Ars Chemica* — these are all terms which have surrounded the occult — some would say sacred — science/art of alchemy. But what was, or is, alchemy?

Alchemy is popularly known as a medieval proto-chemistry, a pseudo-science which sought to transmute base metals (e.g., lead) into gold. While such operations often are a part of the alchemical process, alchemy itself goes far beyond this. It is truly the science of transmutation and perfection, but it is a way of perfecting the human spirit. All the many varied physical results, no matter how dramatic, are tangential to the true work of the art. Alchemy as practiced in the west is the epitome of the Hermetic tradition, which draws together into its syncretism the myths of Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as the Biblical traditions.

Alchemy is difficult to discuss empirically or objectively; it straddles the border between art and science, between spiritual discipline and scientific pracitce. Spanning across Asia Minor and Europe, this discipline has been in practice for over 2,000 years. Description is limitation, and alchemy defies limitation.

A Brief Discussion of the History and Practice of Alchemy

Excerpts from the *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*:

Etymology

The etymology of the word "alchemy" has never been wholly agreed upon. The word itself is commonly acknowledged to have come from the Arabic *al-kimia*; *al* is the Arabic definite article, but the meaning and derivation of *kimia* is often disputed. Arguments tend to fall into two camps:

- Some believe that kimia comes from the Egyptian word *khem*, or "black," referring to "the black land"— the ancient Egyptians' own name for their country. Alchemy was once greatly practiced in Egypt, and it may very well have been considered "the Egyptian art."
- Others argue that the word comes from the Greek *kumeia*, which means to fuse or cast metal, often part of the alchemical procedure.

— Elizabeth Sandler (From Vol. V)

History

You ask me to summarize for you in four minutes four thousand years of philosophy and the efforts of a lifetime. Furthermore, you ask me to translate into ordinary language concepts for which such a language is not intended.

— an unnamed alchemist to F. Bergier, as described in *The Morning of the Magicians*

The roots of Alchemy may lie in the innumerable myths which speak of plants, fountains, or other substances that bestow immortality. In such tales, the crucial object may be found after a long quest, only to be lost again, as in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh finds the root of immortality growing deep below the sea, but loses it when it is eaten by a snake, who in turn gains immortality for the act.

The earliest surviving documents date alchemy to as far back as the 3rd century B.C. However, it was between the 4th and 7th centuries A.D. that it truly flourished. Alexandria, home to Persians, Syrians, Egyptians and Greeks, was at that time a cultural and intellectual melting pot; thus, many of the earliest alchemical manuscripts are Alexandrian in origin. Hellenistic Egypt was home to the Hermetic tradition, which infused alchemy and many of the western occult sciences. Prominent Greek alchemists included Bolos and Zosimos, whose works are now part of every alchemist's corpus.

In the 12th century, Europeans began to discover the intellectual heritage of the Muslims, whom they had assailed regularly in their Crusades. Spain, in particular, still under Moorish control, was a haven for the diffusion of Arabic knowledge to the European world. Much of this learning spread throughout Europe, particularly to monasteries, which served as centers for education and the preservation of knowledge. Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus contributed to the spread of alchemical knowledge in the late Middle Ages, and Sir George Ripley (a member of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem), Bernard of Treves, and John Destin all were noted alchemists of the time.

With the Renaissance, alchemy and the other occult sciences reached their zenith, as a new interest in ancient teachings — including those of the occult — spread across Europe. Athanasius Kirchner, Pico della Mirandola, and others trumpted the "secret wisdom" of the ancients. With this kind of support, the science of alchemy achieved new heights. Famous alchemists included John Dee, Helvetius, Robert Fludd, Lady Anne Conway and particularly Paracelsus.

However, as the Renaissance trailed into the 17th century, interest in alchemy become more scientific and less metaphysical. Although interest in alchemy has not quite disappeared, it certainly never reached the same heights in Europe as it had during the Renaissance. By the time of the Industrial Revolution, alchemy was popularly sneered at as nothing more than a pseudo-science, its true nature cherished in the hands of those few who practiced it in secret.

— Maximillian Wilhelm (from Vol. X)

Practice

The Philosopher's Stone is called the most ancient, secret or unknown, natural incomprehensible, heavenly, blessed sacred Stone of the Sages. It is described as being true, more certain than certainty itself, the arcanum of all arcana...

— Anonymous, *The Sophic Hydrolith*, 17th century.

The key to — and often the aim of — Western alchemical study is the Philosopher's Stone, sometimes simply called the Stone. Alchemy is full of paradoxes, and the description of the Stone is one of these: some alchemists say it is an actual stone, others claim that it is some other substance; it has been variously described as a tincture, an elixir, a wax, a powder. But the Philosopher's Stone is that substance which aids in the final alchemical processes of transmuting lead into gold, healing all ills, and granting immortality.

The alchemical art brings Nature to perfection. The *prima materia*, the primal material, is the substance which is turned, through a variety of processes, into the Stone. But even the nature of the prima materia is a mystery. Some alchemists believe it must be a base material: dog droppings, bones, blood, etc. — while others argue that the prima materia itself is a supernatural substance.

After a substance is chosen for experimentation, the next question to be addressed is what to operations to

perform and in which order. The number of processes varies. One may go by the number either of planets, the days of Creation (according to Genesis), or the signs of the zodiac. A knowledge of astrology is requisite in alchemy, as various planets control various metals, and knowing which days to perform which operations is essential.

The first step usually involves putrefaction, which culminates in *nigredo* (the black stage), when the substance is dead, or has been reduced to its first matter. The substance is then reborn in "The Peacock's Tail," a stage of many colors, followed by *albedo* (the whitening), when a white elixir is formed. Finally, the process concludes with *rubedo*, when the substance becomes a red tincture, elixir or powder: the Philosopher's Stone.

— Geoffrey Truesdell (from Vol. LXXIII)

Transmission

A most wonderful Magistery and Archimagistery is the Tincture of sacred Alchemy, the marvellous scince of the secret Philosophy... which men have never discovered through the labor of their own hands, but only by revelation and the teaching of others.

— Thomas Norton, *The Ordinall of Alchimy*, 1477

The Great Work is not easily learned. True, there are many works in print which claim to detail the secrets of alchemy, but these are often analogical reflections which cannot be comprehended without some initial understanding — and this innate knowledge cannot be gained through books.

The Sacred Craft is typically learned through the instruction of other alchemists — and finding a genuine alchemist is no easy task — or through "revelation," which most often takes the form of dreams or visions. One can read the vast alchemical corpus, but will truly grasp very little without proper instruction and initiation.

Alchemy is a sacred art, and a secret one: true alchemy, maintaining its own symbolic language and cosmology, is the province of the rare few who are initiated into its secrets.

— Margaret Fisher (from Vol. LXIX)

The Secret Language

VITRIOL: Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem.

(Visit the interior of the earth: in rectifying thou wilt find the hidden stone.)

— Alchemical adage

Alchemical works are laden with symbolism, metaphor and allegory, in addition to outright deception, and initiation into the alchemical tradition is a must if one is truly to understand any alchemical text.

Take, for example, the following instruction from the 17th century treatise *Twelve Keys*:

Take a fierce grey Wolf. Cast to him the body of the King and when he has devoured it, burn him entirely to ashes in a great fire. By this process the King will be liberated; and when it has been performed thrice the Lion has overcome the Wolf, who will find nothing more to devour in him. Thus one body has been found fit for the first stage of our work.

The Wolf is probably antimony, which easily alloys with — or "devours" other metals, and the process may be the purification of gold by repeated fusion with antimony sulfide.

One book, the *Mutus Liber*, printed in 1677, almost entirely eschews text and is instead composed of fifteen plates, each one detailing in sybmolic imagery the steps for the creation of the Philosopher's Stone.

In short, any text which is said to reveal all the secrets of alchemy in "plain English" is probably a fraud. The Great Work does not reveal itself to the masses in paperback form.

The Image of the Alchemist

Their clothes be bawdy and worn thread-bare...

— Sir George Ripley, *The Compound of Alchemy*, 1652

The public perception of alchemy has varied greatly throughout time. In the West, the discipline has at times been trumpeted as a great restorative, capable of curing ills beyond the limitations of science; while at other times it has been called the Devil's Art. Some have viewed alchemy as little more than fraud and the craft of swindlers, and regarded alchemists with scorn and disdain.

Many alchemists considered themselves Christians, and many Christian mystics dabbled with alchemical language: Christ Himself was held by some to be the perfect Philosopher's Stone. The established Church, however, frowned upon alchemy, as alchemists looked to their own art, and not to the church, for salvation.

Some argue that the word "gibberish" comes from the name Geber (the medieval rendering of *Jabir ibn Hayyan*), a Muslim alchemist whose works reached some prominence in Europe — evidence of the mockery to which alchemy has been subjected.

— Miriam Detwiler (from Vol. LXX)

Alchemy Across the World

My teacher used to say that if one wished for perpetual life one should diligently take the great medicines, and if one desired to communicate with the gods and spirits one should use solutions of metals.... One will also be able to enter the presence of the powers and principalities of the heavens, and the deities of the earth, as well as having the spirits of all the mountains and rivers in one's service.

— Ko Hung, circa A.D. 300

Alchemy is typically discussed in Western terms, using Greek or Latin vocabulary to refer to European or Classical western authors or alchemists, and incorporating Western philosophies in its teachings. The discipline is generally perceived in its Hermetic vehicle, born of Hellenistic Egypt. While it is natural for a western audience to accept this, it

should also be understood and appreciated that the practice of alchemy is not limited to the descendents of Greece and Alexandria. Alchemy's history goes back just as far — if not farther — in the Orient as it does the Occident.

Dar al-Islam: Alchemy has ancient roots in the Islamic world. Its origins can be traced from Adam to the ancient masters and prophets through Aristotle, Socrates, Galen, et al.; the art itself was endorsed by the Prophet, Muhammad, as a vehicle of grace. Muslim scholars helped preserve many Greek texts which would have otherwise been lost during the European Dark Ages. Muslim alchemists were responsible for many of their own interpretations and innovations, a number of which were transmitted to Europe in the 12th century. Alchemy is even now practiced as a traditional science in a number of the smaller villages of the Islamic world. (For more discussion of Islamic alchemy, q.v. Smythe, Vol. LX, and Davies, this Vol.)

India: In India, alchemy is called *rasayana* — the way of essences. Nagarjuna, the semilegendary father of Indian alchemy, is thought to have lived for 800 years. According to Vedantic philosophy, the gross elements of the manifest world are ultimately reintegrated into the Absolute, and the Indian alchemists strive to analogically mimic this within their laboratories. In addition to the typical mineral/vegetable substances used in most western practices, Indian alchemists also use semen and blood. Buddhist alchemy relies more upon internal processes than mercurial ones. (For more discussion of Indian alchemy, q.v. D'Souza, Vols. LXXIII, LXXV, and LXXVI, and references contained therein.)

China: Records of alchemical practices trace back to the second century B.C. Chinese alchemy is rooted in Taoist philosophy, *ch'i* (or *qi*), the breath of the universe, which permeates all things, as well as the reconciliation of opposites in *yin* and *yang*. Instead of the Philosopher's Stone, Chinese alchemy's goal was the Pill of Immortality, which not only conferred physical immortality but also ensured a place in the celestial hierarchy. Those who do attain the Pill become immortals (*hsien*), and still wander the earth, only recognized by fellow alchemists. Tai ch'i chuan, the Chinese martial art typically associated with the elderly — a gross misappreciation — is a Taoist yoga which cultivates the



Alchemical Study

As indicated, Alchemy cannot just be learned through books; it must either be taught by another or discovered through revelation. There must, however, be some intellectual foundation in order for the Alchemical Path to function.

In order to advance to a new level, alchemist characters must have, in addition to the Alchemy Path, both the Occult Science: Alchemy and the Occult Science: Astrology. These are both requisite knowledges; the former is the intellectual working of the Path, while the latter is necessary to determine the proper time for alchemical workings.

Alchemist characters must have Knowledge ratings in both Occult Sciences equal to the Alchemical Path level to which they aspire. A character wishing to rise to a Path rating of three must have Occult Science: Alchemy and Occult Science: Astrology three as well.

Rising in the Path of Alchemy is not easy, but then its goal is immortality.

The Alchemical Laboratory

Alchemy is a Path with extensive use of foci; any alchemist who aspires to mastery of the craft must have at least the following equipment:

- **Furnace:** The alchemist makes constant use of heat in her operations, whether distilling or smelting; the furnace may be self-regulating, or it may even be a simple open fire (which must be constantly monitored).
- **Distilling vessels:** Alchemists are often purifying substances using the process of distillation. An alembic is a common tool, in which a heated liquid causes vapor to rise to the cooling dome atop the vessel, to be directed down a long spout.
- **Mortar & pestle:** Alchemists must grind many ingredients, and the mortar & pestle are common tools for this purpose.
- **Measuring device:** Of course, an alchemist must measure the materials with which he is working, which requires the use of scales or a laboratory balance.
- **Altar:** Many alchemists insist that an altar must be present in the laboratory, for the Great Work is a Sacred art.

Even in the 20th century, most alchemists will use the same equipment that their medieval ancestors employed; the production quality may be better, but the technology remains the same. Some alchemists have begun to experiment with updating the laboratory to employ more modern tools and equipment.

The alchemist's lab may be located anywhere, but private places are preferred, in order to avoid both suspicious neighbors and general distractions. Attics or basements are common locations for an alchemist's laboratory.

ch'i; Tai ch'i is then a physical form of alchemy. (For more information on Chinese alchemy, see Chan, Vol. LXXVI.)

The relationship of the various non-western forms of alchemy to each other and to the west is debatable. Certainly, Islamic alchemical practice had an effect upon the development of European alchemy. Likewise, China and India are believed to have influenced each other, and the Islamic world as well. Although the various traditions grew up individually, dependent upon their own cultures and cosmologies, it would be naive to assume that there were no connections between the variations.

— Sandeep D'Souza (from Vol. LXXVII)

Game Uses and Costs

Alchemy is one of the Paths of Hedge Magic. Although the Hedge Magic system is discussed fully in **Ascension's Right Hand**, basic information is repeated below.

The Path of Alchemy, like other Hedge Magic Paths, has a dot rating from one to five. Each rating is a general indication of how much the alchemist comprehends and is capable of performing; it does not represent quantifiable abilities at the alchemist's command. These specific abilities are represented in Hedge Magic by Rituals; the Rituals of Alchemy are more properly called Formulae, with each Formula capable of producing certain reactions or effects. Formulae vary from tradition to tradtion, and indeed from alchemist to alchemist; Alchemy is a personal art, and its manipulations are often altered to correspond with the personality or desires of the alchemist.

Most Effects require extended rolls, or one to three days of work per level of the Formulae attempted. The difficulty of such rolls is the Path level + 4, and the amount of successes determines the purity (and effectiveness) of the result.

Alchemy costs only seven points to begin, and each new dot includes one Formula of that Path level. These Formulae cost three "Freebie Points" to purchase, and three times the level of the Path to buy with experience. A level three Formula would then cost nine points, while a first level Formula would only require three experience points. Each Formula requires one Willpower point to produce.

Effects

Although Alchemy is primarily the art of purifying the soul, many other effects have developed from its practice — some helpful, some harmful. Such products may have been developed intentionally or accidentally discovered. Remember that these elixirs and substances are byproducts; no matter how dramatic they may be, they are always ancillary to the true goal of the alchemist. See the Paths of Herbalism and Enchantment for other possible Effects.

Roll: Intelligence + Alchemy Costs 1 Willpower

- Minor substances can be created, such as simple poisons, tranquilizers, anesthetics or even stimulants —

nothing that is obviously "magical" or "supernatural" in effect. Lesser healing potions can be created. At each level of Alchemy, a more powerful healing Formula can be created, using the levels of the Healing Path, discussed in **Ascension's Right Hand**, as guidelines.

— A liquid which, when imbibed, removes minor Health Level penalties (through Injured) until the individual is wounded again or heals.

— A powder which, combined with an alcoholic beverage, allows one to instantaneously dispel the effects of drunkenness.

•• More powerful versions of level one Formulae may be attempted. Formulae which affect the consumer's insight may also be created, granting visions or dreams.

— A powder which grants the consumer a vision; the vision is always clothed in symbolic language, and may either portend future events or show previously unknown aspects of a current situation.

— A liquid which will allow the consumer to go an entire week with only one hour's sleep per night.

••• At this level, true "supernatural" effects can be attempted. For example, Alchemists can create substances which temporarily grant the consumer psychic abilities. Metals and other substances with obvious effects — typically either healing or damaging — may be created as well, although these will have limited lifespans.

— A metal may be altered so that a small weapon (either a dagger or a handful of bullets) will do aggravated damage against a supernatural creature.

— A liquid may be created so that the consumer has a Psychic Numina (different Phenomena require different Formulae) for the remainder of a scene.

•••• More powerful version of lower Formulae may be created, along with substances which temporarily increase an Ability or Attribute by one or two dots.

— A powder which, during the turn following its consumption, grants the consumer an additional dot to both Manipulation and Expression for the remainder of a scene.

— A liquid which, when applied to the eyes, grants the user the ability to see through the Shroud for one turn (see **Wraith: The Oblivion**).

••••• At this level, an alchemist can create substances which allow temporary replication of other supernatural abilities, e.g., vampiric Disciplines or werewolf Gifts. (The Spheres of True Magick cannot be duplicated, however.) More dramatic versions of lower Formulae may be created as well. These typically last for one turn per success and cannot exceed the second level of the Discipline or Gift.

— A regenerative powder which, when consumed, allows the user to regenerate levels of damage slowly (one level every other turn) for the duration of a story.

Alchemical Considerations

Formulae vary in form and in what they create. When creating Alchemical Formulae, keep the following considerations in mind:

• **Form:** Alchemical products may exist in a variety of forms: liquid, wax, powder, etc. In many respects, form is irrelevent, but since Formulae must often be ingested, a form suitable for consumption is best.

• **Lifespan:** Alchemical creations have varying lifespans. Theoretically, a product may last indefinitely, until it is used. Some, however, may last only moments — until the liquid cools or the wax hardens, for example. Remember that alchemists typically work for their own benefit: they are not mass-production facilities of arcane liquids and powders. The Arcanum does not have a storage cabinet filled with "magic potions" for its members use.

• **Duration:** The effects of Alchemical products vary in duration; some last only for a few moments, while others are permanent. Some Formulae may create elixirs or powders that have more intermediate effects, such as hours, days, or months, but these Formulae must be researched and experimented upon individually.

• **Components:** Some formulae call for very specific components, which may be rare, expensive, or quite difficult to get. Exact components are usually irrelevent for game purposes, but may prove difficult for alchemist characters to procure.

• **Creation Time:** The more complex the Formula, the longer it takes to create. Creation times vary, but most will be between one day and one month per Formula.

Do not get wrapped up in the systems of Alchemical Formulae; consider instead their place in stories. Instead of trying to determine the above considerations for each and every Formula, assume a default: liquid form, indefinite lifespan, instant effect, negligible components and one week to create. Variety should be provided to spice things up, not to make the mechanics difficult or time-consuming.

— An elixir (requiring at least five blood-points of vampire's vitae) which allows the user to use one of the Kindred's Disciplines for one turn per success.

Formulae "above" level five exist; they are the pinnacle of the alchemical tradition. These are the most mysterious and sought after Formulae, including the Philosopher's Stone, which is required for any attempts to attain immortality or transmutation. Whether the Formulae still exist in written form, or if there a teacher who knows them, is a mystery left up to the Storyteller.

Some argue that there are other high level Formulae which result in the Awakening of the Alchemist's Avatar; this is a true irony, because as one climbs in mastery of any Path, it becomes harder to Awaken the Sleeper. Only the highest Formulae, which both unify and transcend the workings of Alchemy, are capable of resolving this paradox.

Appendix Two: Artifacts

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
— The Gospel according to Luke 11:9

These bygone relics are highly sought by the Arcanum: not only are they often tangible evidence of the reality of myth, but they frequently possess great power. Such artifacts found on Arcanum missions are typically sent to the Foundation House, where they are catalogued and stored. Sometimes exceptions will be made; Arcanists do not always report lesser findings immediately.

Sample Relics

The following artifacts are graded according to their relative power — one through five, to correspond with the Artifacts Background. These can either be used as created, or can serve as guidelines for the creation of other such relics.

Mentat Stones

A variety of these stones are known to exist, each with different properties or strengths; they are all said to aid psychics in their mental workings. The most common stones are either Inhibitors or Matrices:

Matrix: This stone allows the psychic to better focus his abilities; carrying a Matrix lowers the difficulty of Psychic Phenomena rolls by 1.

Inhibitor: This stone interferes with psychic activity. Those carrying an Inhibitor are somewhat protected from

psychic interference: the use of any psychic affinity which would directly affect the bearer has the difficulty increased by 1.

Stones with different or more powerful effects may exist, but these would require higher ranks (•• through •••••).

•• Shadow Cloak

This black cloak makes the wearer almost invisible in darkness or shadow; she automatically has three dots (or three additional dice) of Stealth when traveling in dim light. Of course, wearing a cloak in public will draw attention to you, and Shadow Trenchcoats have not yet been created.

••• Faerie Ring

This intricately wrought silver ring indicates the blessing of the fae; whoever wears it is considered a friend of the fae folk and will be welcomed by them; likewise, the ring's bearer may be sought by the fae in times of need. The Faerie Ring increases the difficulty of fae magic (called Glamour) used against the wearer by 2.

•••• Silver Chalice

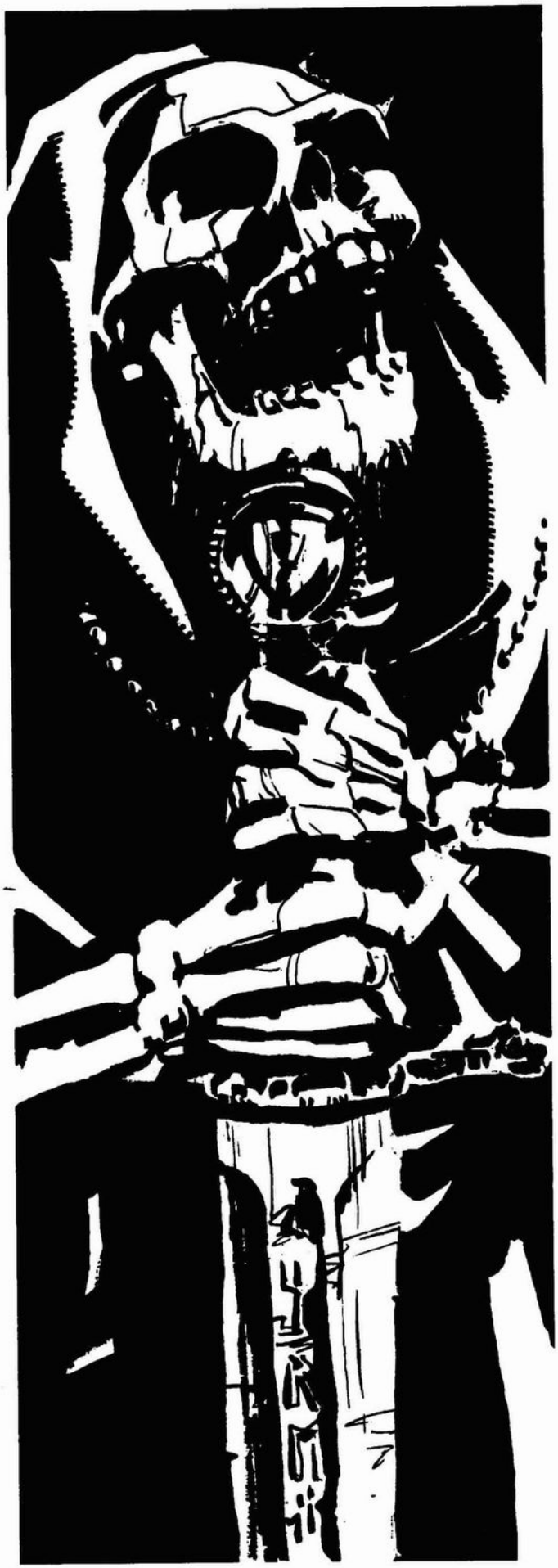
A small number of these Chalices have been found; each time, the finder usually believes he has discovered the Holy Grail. Although the Chalice's finders have eventually been disappointed, these are still powerful and important items.

Drinking pure spring water from a Chalice while standing on holy ground — of any religious tradition — will immediately heal all damage the drinker has sustained, aggravated or not. This may be done only once each full moon, however, and it is said that a man once healed by the Chalice can never benefit from it again.

••••• Crusader's Sword

A number of relics exist which fit this description, all created in the days of the Crusades. A bone-splinter from a saint is generally imbedded in the hilt of the sword. The reversed hilt and quillons of the sword count as a holy symbol when used by one of True Faith against the supernatural, channeling the power of Heaven and igniting the blade with holy power, adding one die of damage per Faith roll success. Wounds caused by these weapons, when wielded by one with True Faith, are aggravated. While bearing these blades, the Faithful also receive the Iron Will Merit, unless the wielder already has it. Such swords also provide a Faith bonus of + 1.

Crusaders' swords are medieval broadswords: a three-foot long blade with a nine-inch hilt. These heavy weapons require a Strength 2 to carry, 3 or better to wield (Difficulty 7). The weapon causes Strength + 5 damage, and this is aggravated damage in the right hands. The weapon radiates an aura of Faith that is immediately discernible to Kindred



who possess Auspex (appearing as a nimbus of golden flame). In close range of this sword, Kindred sweat blood.

The Arcanum owns five variants of the Crusader's sword; The Society of Leopold is believed to have three such swords in its possession. Others are known to exist, but cannot be accounted for.

Greater Relics

But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward: up I climbed a thousand steps
With pain: as in a dream I seemed to climb
For ever: at the last I reached a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
"Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail."
— Tennyson, "The Holy Grail"

Greater Relics are those items so powerful that they defy systems convention; Arcanists may devote their entire lives and careers to the quest for these.

The Quest for any Greater Relic should not be an easy task. The seeker must first prove herself by passing through a number of tests. She will ultimately be transformed by even the slightest glimpse of the Greater Relic, although in many cases the quest is more important than the goal itself.

The following represent some of the Greater Relics which are commonly sought:

The Holy Grail

This is the chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper, later used by Joseph of Arimathea to collect the Lord's blood as it dripped off the Cross. The Quest for the Grail is the focus of much medieval literature. A glimpse of the Grail is a glimpse of Heaven.

Durandal

Durandal was the sword of Roland, one of Charlemagne's Paladins. Hector of Troy once wielded the weapon, and it is so powerful that no metal has yet been created that can resist it. The sword disappeared sometime after Roland's death, and is said to be somewhere in Arabia.

The Cauldron of Annwn

There are many tales of the Cauldron, located in the Otherworld, which detail its powers of healing; a corpse placed in it was said to be brought back to life, although lacking the power of speech. Some tales link the Cauldron with the Grail; whether they are different manifestations of the same principle or two distinct items has yet to be resolved

Suggested Readings

Those who know do not say;
Those who say do not know.
— Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

Halls of the Arcanum is about knowledge, so we would be remiss in not providing some suggested readings:

Miscellaneous Books:

— **Knowledge and the Sacred**, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. This work, by a prominent Islamicist and proponent of the Perennial Philosophy, discusses the eclipse of the sapiential dimension and sacred knowledge.

— **Hamlet's Mill**, by Giorgio de Santillana, discusses the interrelation of myth and science in the transmission of cosmology and culture.

— **Alchemy**, by E.J. Holmyard, is a reliable (if somewhat dry) text on the history of the alchemical tradition.

— **Oriental Magic,** by Idries Shah and **Chinese Alchemy**, by J.C. Cooper, are useful books for anyone interested in the Eastern world of mysticism and magic.

— **The Magician's Companion**, by Bill Whitcomb, is a compendium of magical and occult symbols, ideas, and languages; with its illustrations and diagrams, it is a must for anyone who wants to bring more a visually authentic feel to their game.

— **Lost Continents**, by L. Sprague de Camp, discusses myths of Atlantis and other lost lands.

— **A History of Secret Societies**, by Arkon Daraul. A collection of historic secret societies which can be incorporated into the World of Darkness.

— Both **The Atlas of Legendary Places** and **The Time-Life Encyclopedia of Mysterious Places** are useful for anyone interested in the mythic or legendary landscape as well as places of archeological significance.

— **The History of Magic and the Occult**, by Kurt Seligmann, and **A History of Magic**, by Richard Cavendish, are both useful overviews of the field.

— For those interested in "secret histories," conspiracies, and assorted paranoiac readings, look at **Holy Blood, Holy Grail** and **The Sign and the Seal**.

— **The Encyclopedia of Mysticism and Mystery Religions**, edited by John Ferguson, and the **Encyclopedia of the Unexplained**, edited by Richard Cavendish, are essential reference works.

— **The Dictionary of the Khazars** is a fun and enlightening romp through history, myth and legend, presented in a unique format: three dictionaries, each with slightly different entries on the same subjects, each dictionary showing a Christian, Muslim, or Jewish bias.

Series or Collections:

— **Myths and Legends**. The importance of myth should not be forgotten, particularly in Arcanum games. Read

about mythology in general, through the works of Joseph Campbell, or read it directly: the Mabinogion, the Shahnamah, Parzival, Gilgamesh, the Mahabharata, etc.

— **The Encyclopedia of Religion**, edited by Mircea Eliade. A monumental reference work on all aspects of religion, from tribal shamanism to mainstream beliefs to the occult, this is the source to look for. Salient parts of this multi-volume work are excerpted in **Hidden Truths: Magic, Alchemy and the Occult**, edited by Lawrence Sullivan.

— **Man, Myth & Magic: The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown**. Edited by Richard Cavendish, the title of this multi-volume reference work says it all.

— **The "Elements of" Series**. This is a library of small but comprehensive books detailing a number of aspects of the mystery traditions. **The Elements of Alchemy**, by Cherry Gilchrist, is particularly useful, but other books discuss the Celtic tradition, Dreamwork, the Druid tradition, the Grail legend, and more. As in any series, some books are more reliable than others.

— **The Writings of H.P. Lovecraft.** Many of Lovecraft's works deal with the slow dawning revelation of a hideous knowledge. Almost anything of his is recommended. Beyond the obvious works ("The Call of Cthulhu" and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*), the following are useful: "The Tomb," "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and his Family," "The Nameless City," "Under the Pyramids," and a personal favorite, "The Statement of Randolph Carter." In fact, anything concerning Randolph Carter is useful reading.

— **Time-Life Mysteries of the Unknown**. This series of many volumes are not works of great scholarship. However, they are fun to flip through for ideas (as well as lots of visual clues from the photos and paintings), particularly:

- **Secrets of the Alchemists**
- **Ancient Wisdom and Secret Sects**
- **Eastern Mysteries**
- **Magical Arts**
- **Mystic Places**

— Encyclopedia sets (preferably **Brittanica**, **Americana**, or **Collier**). You'd be amazed at what you can find in so common a source.

Tone, Atmosphere and Inspiration:

— **Hayward Sanitarium.** This extended audioplay is a bit corny, but lots of fun. A well-executed labor of love by Last Minute Productions, *Hayward Sanitarium* sums up some of the more exciting possibilities of an Arcanum Chronicle. Available on a series of tapes, this audioplay can be ordered through Last Minute Productions, P.O. Box 217, Bloomington, IN 47402-0217, or by calling (812) 824-2400.

Roleplaying Games

— **Call of Cthulhu**, from Chaosium. The word on playing hapless investigators of the supernatural; the entire run is excellent, and main book offers valuable advice on setting the mood for supernatural-themed games.

— **Nephilim**, also from Chaosium; this is an excellent interpretation of the Western mystery tradition, and is useful for anyone interested in grand conspiracies, the occult, and secret societies.

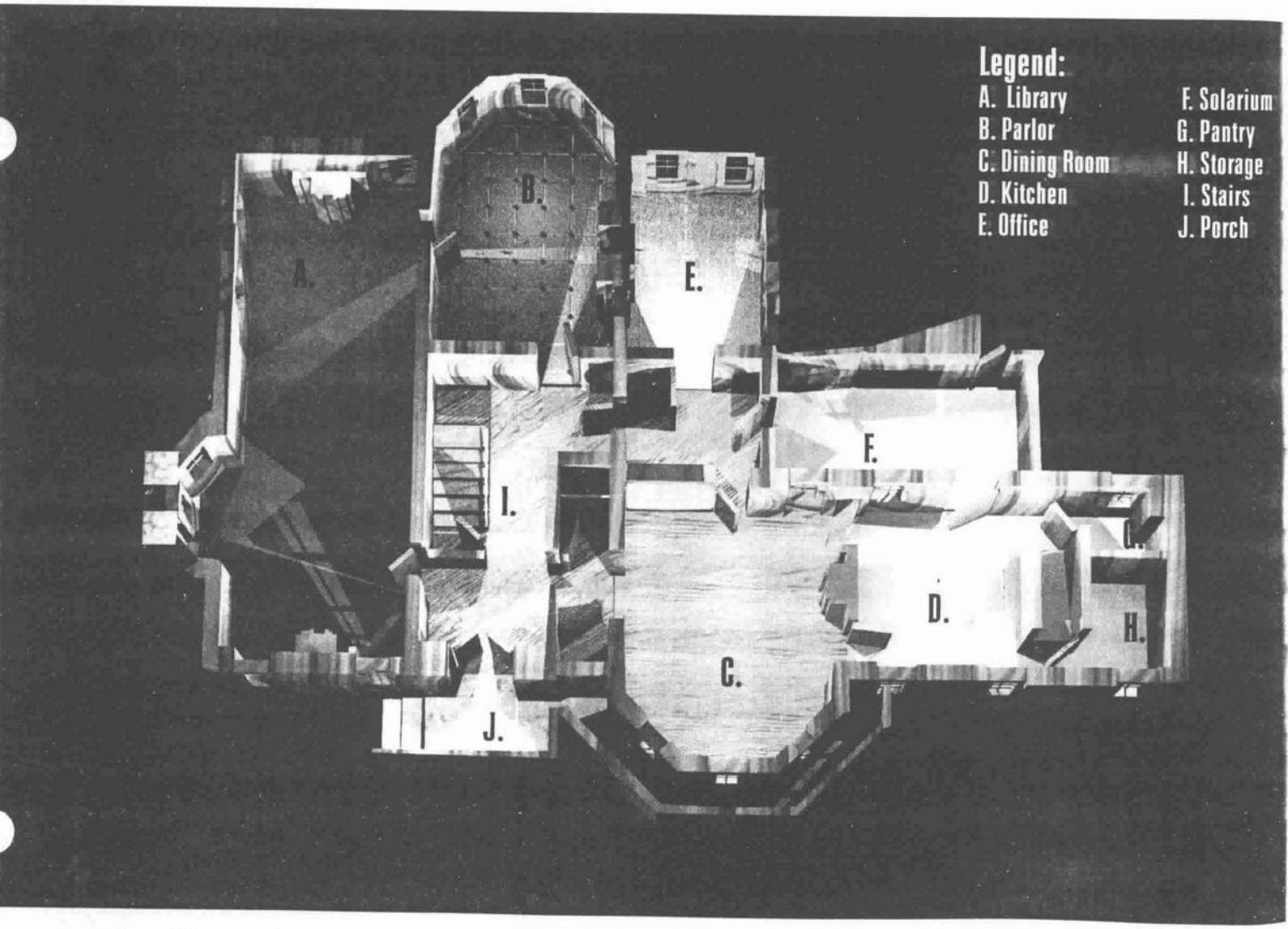
— **The World of Indiana Jones**, from West End Games, contains useful and interesting resource material on archaeology and world cultures, particularly during the 1930s and '40s.

— **Fables:** These include books that are neither entirely fact nor entirely fiction; they draw upon a variety of concepts, and use them to tell tales of personal significance and universal value.

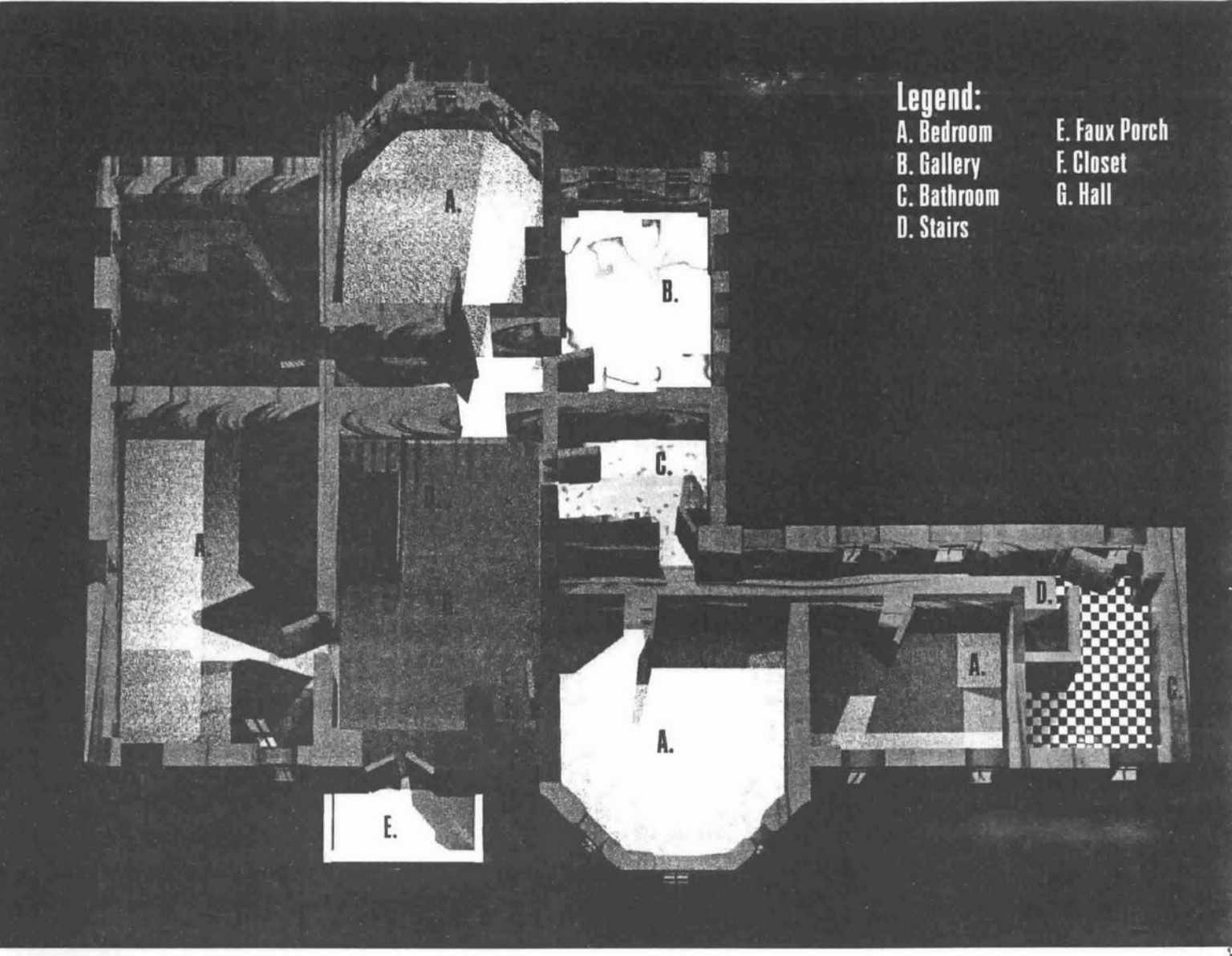
- **The Alchymist's Journal**, by Evan S. Connell
- **The Alchemist**, by Paolo Coelo
- **That Hideous Strength**, by C.S. Lewis (an interesting blend of theology and science fiction).



Small Arcanum Chapter House

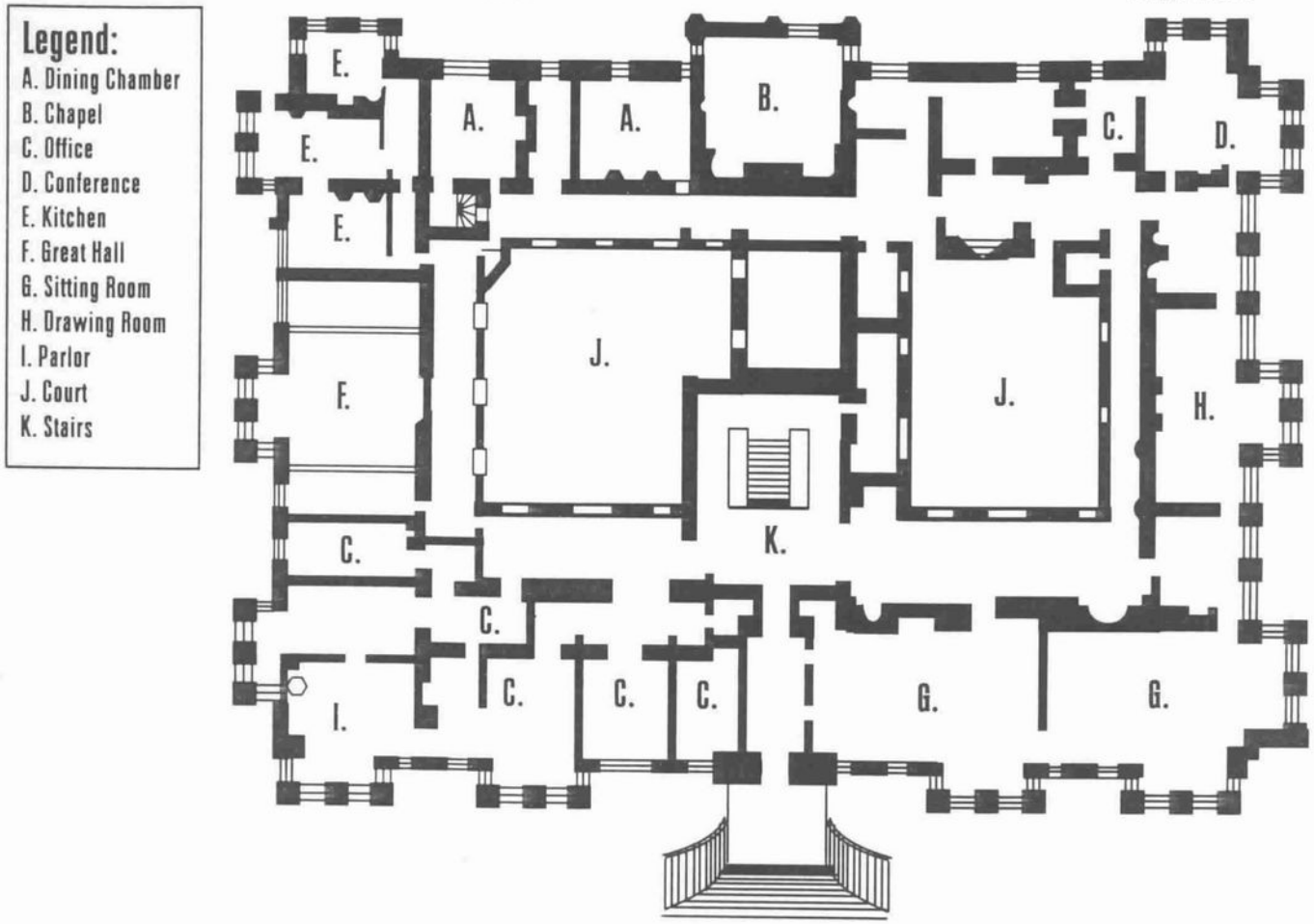


First Floor

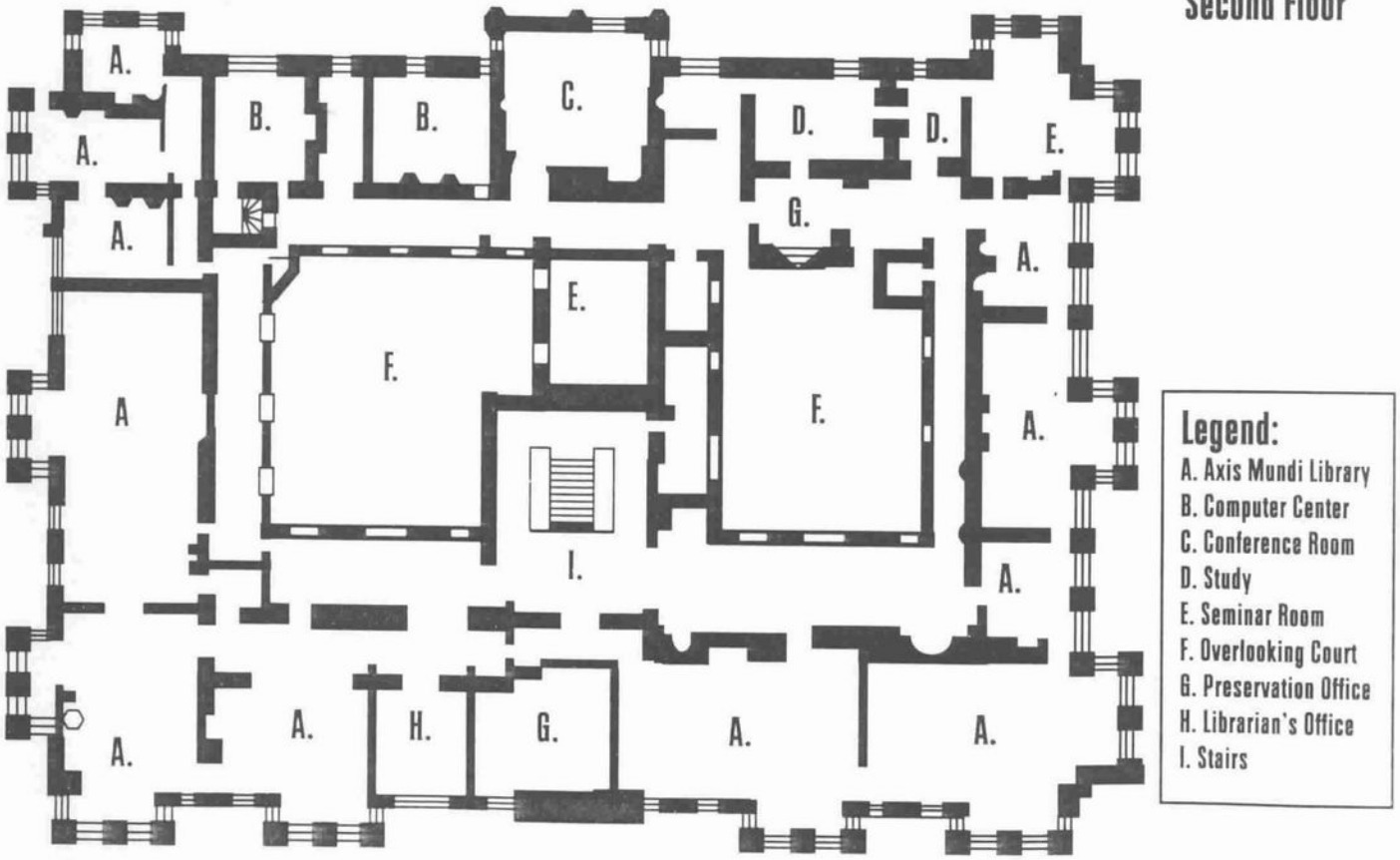

Legend:
A. Bedroom
B. Gallery
C. Bathroom
D. Stairs
E. Faux Porch
F. Closet
G. Hall
A.
B.
C.
A.
D.
A.
C.
A.
E.

Known areas of Arcanum Foundation House

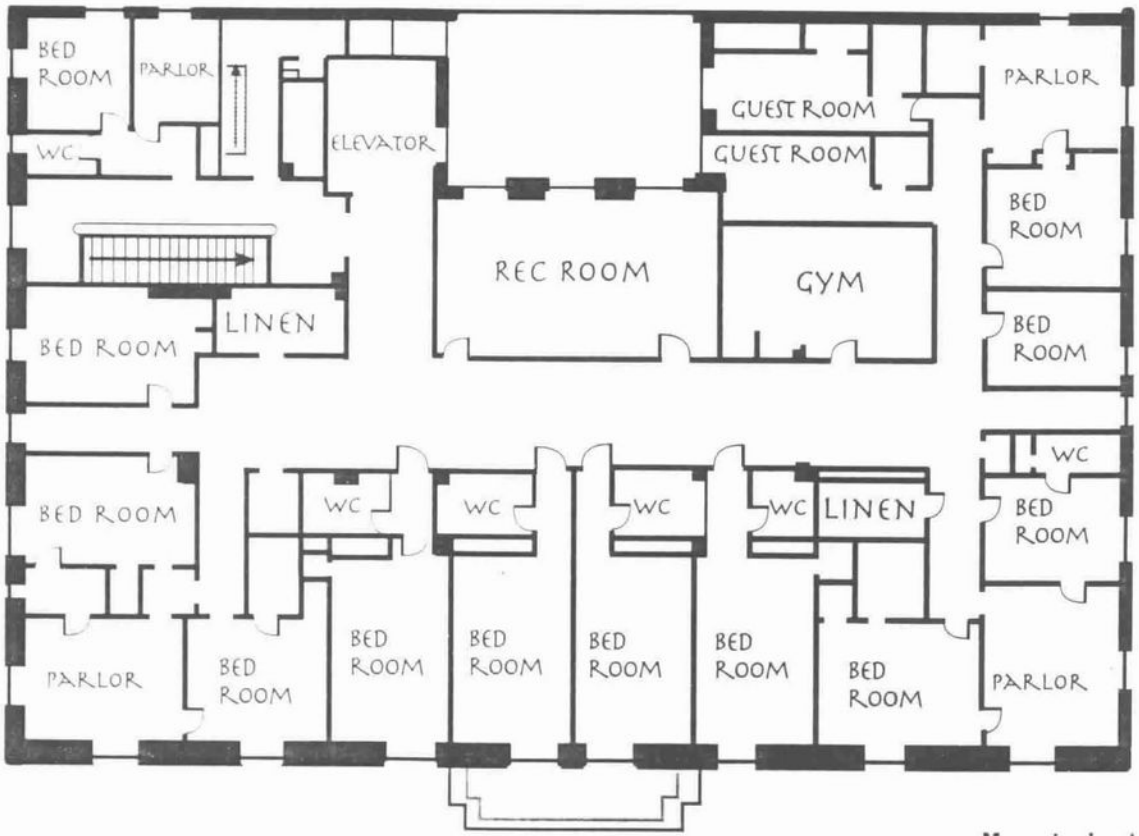
First Floor



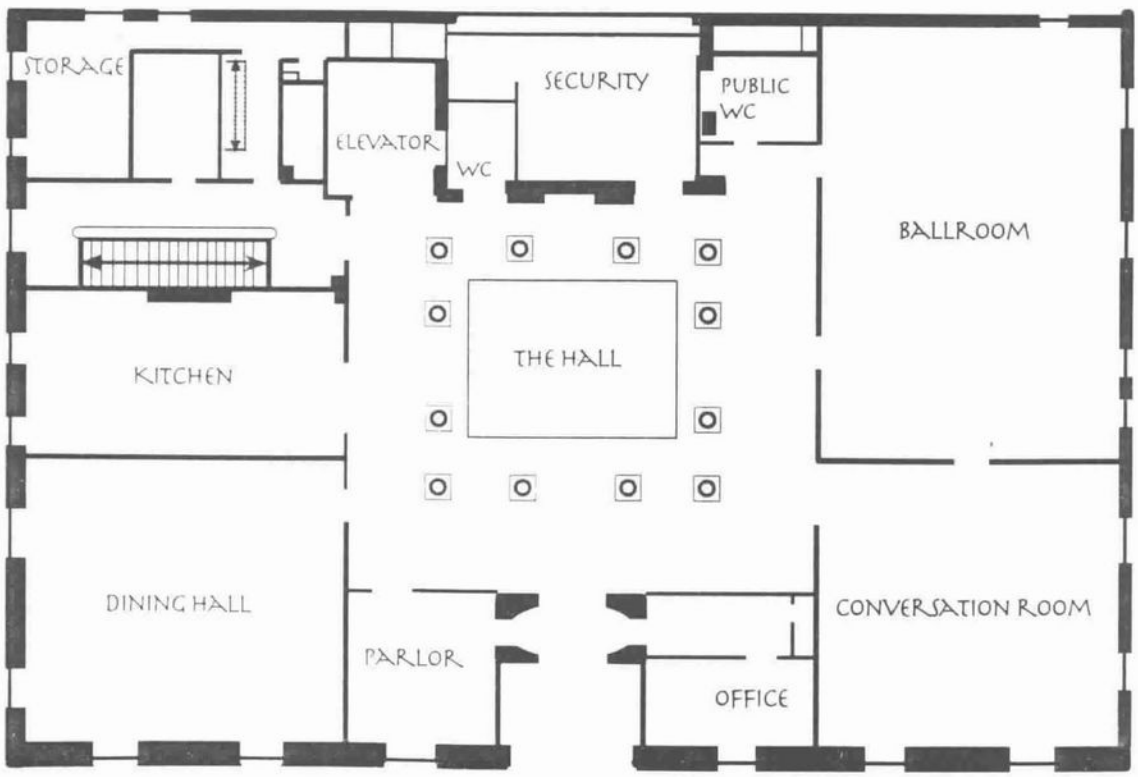
Second Floor



Large Arcanum Chapter House - New York City

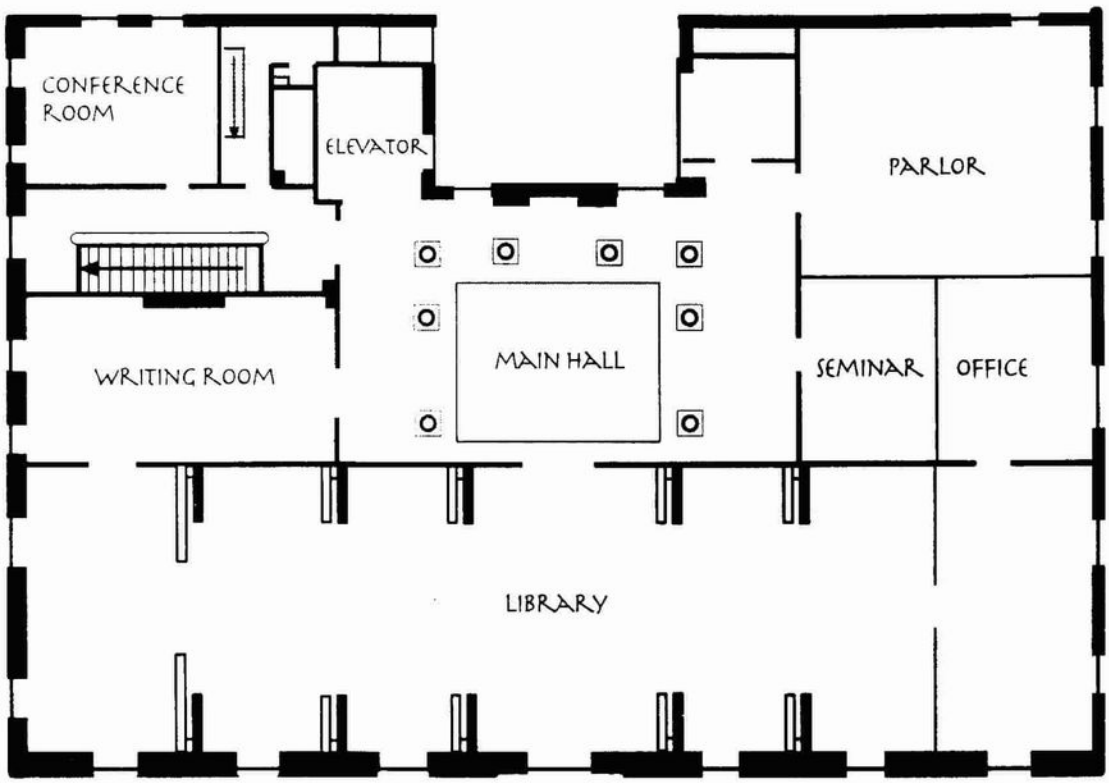


Mezzanine Level



First Floor

Large Arcanum Chapter House - New York City



Second Floor

Hidden Lore Uncovered:

The Missing Text from

Ascension's Right Hand

Faerie Companion: (3 pt Merit)

You have a faerie companion, a friend and associate who's one of the wee folk — the changelings. Perhaps he is a Muse of yours, or your creativity feeds his craving for dreams. In any case, this fae companion tends to stay out of sight to avoid the humans, but he has a number of minor magical abilities which he will occasionally use to your benefit when you're in a jam. Of course, your companion may well expect favors from you in return for his generous, if quixotic, aid.

The primary benefit of your faerie companion, however, is the advice he gives you and the access he can sometimes grant to the ancient faerie realms. In an extreme emergency, your companion might even hide you away in the faerie realms for a time! Beware this offer, however. One never knows the truth behind such an offer, and the price for the trip could be steep indeed!

Shapechanger Kin: (4 pt Merit)

By some quirk of fate, you are closely related to one of Gaia's Chosen, a werewolf, -cat, -raven, -bear or perhaps even one of the more mysterious breeds. The Changing Blood has not stirred in you, but it has left its mark. You are immune to the Delirium, the madness that claims those who see a werebeast's Crinos form in full Rage, and favored by those among the Changing Breed you're Kin to. This doesn't mean that you know their secrets, or that you can lead your mage to their sacred caern without retribution, but you have a certain edge when dealing with the Chosen that no normal mortal can match.

Aside from the immunity to the Delirium, this Merit has no special system significance. You have a good chance to know some Garou Lore, though, and may share some common contacts and allies. You will probably claim some degree of affection from your relative's tribe and some animosity from their enemies. Kinfolk from the other changing breeds have an especially hard time with this Merit. Highly prized as breeding stock, mortal relatives of the Corax, Bastet and Gurahl are so rare that their benevolent cousins often go overboard when protecting them — to the extent of forbidding them at claw's length from doing something dangerous!

Ghoul: (5 pt Merit)

At some point in time, a vampire fed you some of her potent vitae, possibly Bonding you into service. Somehow, you broke free (possibly with the help of your new master), but the blood's force has granted you some of your mistress' power. In addition to a vague knowledge of vampiric society (one dot of Vampire Lore), you age slowly, have an extra automatic success on any Strength roll you make, and inflict an additional die of damage with all hand-to-hand attacks. (If your game integrates the **Vampire** rules, you have a Blood Pool, a dot in Potence and the potential to buy and use other Disciplines).

This does not come without cost, however. You must continue to feed on vampire blood occasionally, otherwise you will regain your mundane mortality and crave forever the sweet rush of your former mistress' essence. Should you revert (after going a month or more without the sacred vitae), you will lose your supernatural might forever.

HALLS OF THE ARCANUM

We watch the shadows cast upon the walls...

Eccentric scholars or visionary mystics? Harmless seekers of ancient lore, or delvers into forbidden mysteries? Who are the detectives of the Arcanum, and what do they seek? Wherever the werewolf howls, the demon corrupts, or the vampire feeds, there the Arcanum can be found: its members are poets, dreamers, philosophers — anyone who has seen beyond the veil. Their motivations hidden, they are an enigma, with much to teach the World of Darkness... and much to learn.

But shadows sometimes bite back...

Halls of the Arcanum explores the history, beliefs, methods and suspicions of mortals probing secrets best left alone. It includes:

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