

Lords of GOSSAMER & SHADOW



Powered by



Erick Wijcik's Diceless Role-Playing

by Jason Durall





Rite Publishing Presents

Lords of Gossamer And Shadow

Author: Jason Durall

Consulting Developer: Christopher "Kit" Kindred

Editor: Perry Grosshans

Cover Artist: Jason Rainville

Interior Artists: Jason Rainville, Tommy Arnold (pg 63), Ian Greenlee (pgs 53, 95, 127, 158),
Gorden Napier (pgs 20, 50, 106, 108), Joe Shawcross (pgs 55, 159)

Cover Layout Artist: James "Devin Night" Hazelett

Interior Layout Artist: Marie Small

Trade Dress Graphic Designer: James "Devin Night" Hazelett

Powered by Erick Wujcik's Diceless Roleplaying Logo: Claudia Burgos

Publisher: Steven D. Russell

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Welcome to the Gossamer worlds. Adventure and glory await!

Introduction

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow is a new diceless role-playing game based on the system presented in *Amber Diceless Role-Playing* (1991), written and designed by Erick Wujcik and based on the ten-volume *Chronicles of Amber* novels by Roger Zelazny. Erick's revolutionary design had an important influence on contemporary game design, more than earning the dedication diceless gaming has achieved. Signature aspects include a character generation system open to player creativity and creating intense player rivalry, a quick and immersive tactical conflict resolution system, and an evocation of deep role-playing and player involvement during gameplay that carries on between game sessions.

Interestingly, according to Erick, the game didn't start out diceless. In the long and difficult road that led to *Amber*, Erick originally began with dice, but began paring them out of the design when they weren't necessary. At a certain point, Erick realized they were entirely irrelevant for the gameplay he was striving for, and that the use of dice actively worked against his goals. His publisher disagreed, and after a friendly parting of ways, Erick published it himself through his new imprint, Phage Press. Thus was born the first official diceless role-playing game.

Since its publication, *Amber Diceless Role-Playing* has been immensely popular, with regular conventions across the globe and an insanely dedicated fan base. It was followed by *Shadow Knight* (1993), a series of twelve *Amberzines* (1992-2005), and

little else. Phage Press' ambitious publishing schedule never materialized, with several projects cancelled, stalled indefinitely, or never getting started. The license changed hands more than once, and it seemed unlikely that Erick's brilliant design would see print again.

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow reverses that trend. In 2010, Steven Russell, head of Rite Publishing, approached Jason Durall about a new game, with an original setting, using *Amber's* critically-acclaimed diceless system. Jason had almost two decades of experience with *Amber*: he worked on *Shadow Knight*; contributed to *Amberzine*; co-created, wrote articles for, and provided art for an *Amber* fanzine called *Trump Call*; and he wrote the unpublished *Rebma* sourcebook for Phage Press. Jason was more than eager to pay tribute to the debt he owed Erick and Erick's creation of *Amber Diceless Role-Playing*.

What you see here is the result of that collaboration, a game using Erick's brilliant system with a setting designed specifically to evoke the same sense of wonder, player investment, and wild experimentation that *Amber Diceless Role-Playing* did two decades ago.

Unfortunately, Erick Wujcik left this world all-too-early at the age of 57. He left a legacy of incredible games and innovative design, his work inspiring countless game players, writers, and designers. He was an inspiration, a mentor, and a friend. This game is dedicated to Erick's memory.

Chapter One: The World of Lords of Gossamer & Shadow

Imagine your world, in all of its sprawling complexity and simplicity. Now know that it is but one of countless many, an infinitude of parallel-but-different existences, each real to those who dwell within it but made more substantial only by the intervention of true magical power. However, all of these many worlds are but veils of the faintest, most ethereal matter... as if made of gossamer. For this reason they are called the Gossamer worlds. Between them is only shadow and emptiness... utter nonexistence.

True power is what makes the Gossamer real, and lends substance to that which is without. There are two great and ever-opposed forces in the universe: stasis and entropy. Know these powers by their true names: Eidolon and Umbra. The Eidolon is form, the ideal structure of the universe ... a sublime organization of form. The Umbra is its opposite, a shifting, entropic disorganization which is pure chaos and ultimately... destruction. All of our world and all parts of the countless otherworlds exist solely through their collision and their collusion.

Because of the sheer, unimaginable power of these forces and their intricate interplay, the Gossamer worlds are both similar and dissimilar, and echoes of them ripple from one to the next, twist and grow strange, or echo with familiarity. For this reason, Gossamer worlds may resemble their neighbors in all but the most minute details, or they may bear no similarity at all. Those folks with power may occasionally glimpse other Gossamer worlds. The veils between them may be weak, and those worlds that inhabit your myths, come from your legends, even your flights of fancy... those places may be Gossamer worlds glimpsed and visited countless times throughout history and in the time before history.

Now imagine an immeasurably long, unimaginably complex, forked and branching staircase, a span of steps and landings and halls, corridors and by-ways of near-infinite complexity. That is the Grand Stair. All along it are Doors... Doors that open into the Gossamer worlds. The Grand Stair connects all of the Gossamer worlds through the Doors: some Gossamer worlds have many Doors opening into it, while some have few or but one... and some Gossamer worlds have no Doors and cannot as of yet be reached. Between the Gossamer worlds lies the Shadow, an unfathomable depth of void and emptiness... and the Shadow is active, claiming Gossamer worlds sometimes temporarily, sometimes forever.

It is not known whether the Grand Stair was always there, unknown and waiting for the first beings able to pass through its Doors and walk upon it between worlds, or whether it was made within recorded time. Its mysteries are yet to be unlocked, but its use was readily apparent. The Doors of the Grand Stair opened occasionally, allowing random souls to wander its span... sometimes a simple step between one world and another, sometimes affording a fragment of a glimpse of the myriad

of worlds it accesses. To those who could recognize what it represented, the Grand Stair represented the universe!

Before the Grand Stair made itself known, passage between the Gossamer worlds meant crossing the veil of Shadow, a rare and near-impossible feat, or an extraordinary freak occurrence. Now other worlds could be visited reliably, allowing privileged voyagers to amass secret knowledge about the hidden infrastructure of infinity.

The greatest of discoveries soon followed, outstripping even the notion of other worlds... these Masters became aware of the Eidolon and the Umbra, and earned the power to change reality itself by those dualistic, opposed principles. Quaint, barely-functional magical traditions were given newfound potency, and powers such as Invocation, Wrioting, Cantrips, and Sorcery were codified and improved. The dross of one Gossamer world could be priceless in another, and items and creatures with nothing remarkable about them revealed immense power in other worlds, artifacts to be sought, quested for, or wars waged to possess.

The most amazing benefit conferred by the Grand Stair was of a personal nature. Those who traveled its length were forever changed... they grew stronger, reflexes quickened, life-spans increased, and magic ability and force of will were magnified considerably. These gifts were sometimes passed along bloodlines, sometimes appearing anew with no prior heritage, but the constant was that it was the first walk upon the Grand Stair which activated this higher state of being. Those who could walk the Grand Stair appointed themselves the Wardens of the Grand Stair, and they used it to explore the countless other worlds it linked to, ruling as sovereigns of Gossamer and Shadow.

It would have been easy for these lords and ladies (self-dubbed the Gossamer Lords) to become the masters of the multiverse, but they were opposed... by the Dwimmerlaik, terrible savants of the Shadow. The Dwimmerlaik stalked the lengths of the Grand Stair, warring against its self-appointed Wardens, and sought to rule the Gossamer worlds themselves. The Dwimmerlaik's ways were strange, their motives unfathomable, and they had access to the same powers the Lords and Ladies of the Gossamer worlds had unlocked... and, perhaps, other secret disciplines.

Eventually, the Dwimmerlaik were driven from the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds, and an uncertain peace has since reigned. However, the Gossamer Lords are wary of the return of their ancient enemy. Though other threats have arisen, mysteries emerged, and secret wars raged across infinity, the Gossamer worlds are still marked by that ancient battle between Dwimmerlaik and all those who walk upon the Grand Stair.

The Gossamer Lords have grown strong, created safe Domains within the manifold worlds, and alternately seek allies to aid against the Dwimmerlaik (or their own, more private enemies),

or they actively strive against one another to achieve dominance throughout the Grand Stair. Some of these sovereigns began as legends in their own worlds, the truth of their origins unguessed at, while others have become legends, their reality reflecting like ripples across the Gossamer worlds.

It is into this setting your character has been plunged, and must survive against unimaginable, unfathomable enemies and challenges.

A Door has opened... will you walk through?

Terms and Concepts

This glossary covers a number of terms unique to diceless role-playing and gamemastering, and provides some quick definitions of the concepts original to the *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* setting.

Adventure: A story created by the gamemaster for players to experience and solve, containing elements of threat, story, setting, and some sort of resolution. Sometimes these are called scenarios. Adventures can be highly structured or loosely improvised. Generally, an adventure presents players with a rising threat, a mystery, or another conflict that must be resolved by the end. An adventure may take multiple sessions to play through, and one or more adventures can make up a campaign.

Attributes: Characters' abilities are described numerically in terms of four primary Attributes: Psyche, Strength, Endurance, and Warfare, which are ranked highest to lowest. When characters come into conflict with one another, the ranks of their Attributes are compared. In a simple contest, the higher-ranked Attribute wins. Making that contest less simple is the heart of diceless role-playing.

Attribute Auction: At character creation, players have a budget of points they can use to bid against one another to determine their initial Attributes. This builds player rivalry and determines initial ranking on the Attribute Ladder.

Attribute Ladder: A listing of all character (player and nonplayer) Attribute values ordered from highest (1st) to lowest. A character is considered to be superior in that Attribute to everyone below them on the Ladder, no matter what the actual Attribute values are. The Attribute Ladder is used to resolve conflicts using the same Attribute and determines the cost of Attribute advancement.

Campaign: A long adventure or series of adventures linked together to form a story using the same group of players and characters. Like a story, a campaign has a beginning and a middle, though the ending is much farther off. A campaign usually ends with a huge goal accomplished, but can continue for a few weeks to years in length.

Cantrips: Minor, instantaneous spells used to achieve quick, direct, and simple effects. Cantrips are usually powered by Psyche and cannot easily be countered, hence their usefulness.

Character: The player's representation in the game. There are two kinds of characters: player characters and nonplayer

characters. Player characters are controlled and (usually) created by the players, while nonplayer characters are usually controlled and created by the gamemaster. Player characters are described in terms of Attributes, Powers, and other aspects. Important nonplayer characters are usually described in those terms, while extremely minor nonplayer characters may only be a name and a quick physical description. Players can sometimes control minor nonplayer characters in casual situations.

Contribution: Players can earn more points to build their characters by agreeing to make campaign contributions. These can range from in-character journals, artwork, session logs, fiction or poetry, or other tangible efforts towards the actual experience of players gathering to play the game.

Death: Characters (player characters and nonplayer characters alike) can die in the course of gameplay. Unlike other games, death in diceless role-playing is always the result of direct conflict or controlled entirely by the gamemaster. It is never a random outcome for a situation. If a player character dies, it is time to see if death can be thwarted in some fashion, or to create a new character.

Diceless: Most role-playing games use dice (or some other random determiner like cards or a resource pool) to determine the outcome of character action or conflict. In diceless role-playing, outcomes of actions or conflicts are determined through comparing Attributes, powers, Stuff, role-playing, or a combination of those factors.

Door: Linked to normal doors, Doors (capital D) are entrances to and from the Grand Stair, allowing access to the infinite myriad of Gossamer worlds. Doors are used primarily by the Wardens of the Grand Stair, though the Grand Stair itself occasionally allows others to wander its corridors and steps. Doors can be created, destroyed, and manipulated by Wardens.

Dwimmerlaik: A mysterious and ancient race striving for sovereignty over all of the Gossamer worlds. Magically powerful and monolithic in their desire to control the Grand Stair, the Dwimmerlaik are the most powerful enemy faced by the Gossamer Lords.

Eidolon: The primal symbol of order, the Eidolon is essentially the cosmic blueprint underlying all of matter and energy. It permeates all reality and all change in the universe is a result of interplay between the Eidolon and the Umbra, the symbol of entropy and change. Characters manipulate the Eidolon with the power of Eidolon Mastery.

Gamemaster (GM): The gamemaster (GM) is a combination of director, writer, and orchestra conductor. The gamemaster runs the game, oversees character creation, devises the scenarios (and campaigns), describes the setting and environment, plays the part of the nonplayer characters, adjudicates conflicts, and determines rewards for play.

Gossamer Worlds: The infinite parallel universes accessed by the Grand Stair, brought into being through the interplay of the Eidolon and the Umbra. Every mythical place, fanciful otherworld, alternate history, every possible alternate universe is one of the Gossamer worlds. Our own world is one.

Grand Stair, The: An infinite network of hidden staircases and linked corridors, lined with magic Doors on either side, linking all of the Gossamer worlds. Wardens of the Grand Stair are attuned to it and can activate or deactivate new Doors or manipulate existing ones.

Icon: A magic device or symbol used for communication through and across the Gossamer worlds. Icons are created through the use of the Wrighting power. Icons come in many forms: paintings, cards, electronic images, statues, stained-glass windows, figurines, etc. and are idiosyncratic to their creator.

Invocation: A magic power concerned with the use of True Names, summoning and binding beings of power, or using their True Names to compel and manipulate them.

Player: The players of the game. Anywhere from one to a dozen or more players can play: usually a group consists of somewhere between three and seven players.

Points: Players are given a budget of points with which to build their characters. Points are bid in the Attribute auction and later to adjust ranking on the Attribute Ladder, and are spent on powers, artifacts, creatures, and other benefits. Players are given further points as a reward for completing scenarios and campaigns, and can use these points to improve their characters.

Rank: Characters are rated by their Attributes, with rank described in terms of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc., on a ladder-style hierarchy. At the bottom of the Attribute Ladder are three base levels, called "ranks": Paragon, Superior, and Average (lowest). Characters at the same rank are functionally equal.

Session: A single instance of play, when the players and the gamemaster assemble in person or online, for the purpose of

playing through all or part of an adventure. Sessions can be short (an hour or two) or very long (six or eight hours), and occur on a weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or other basis.

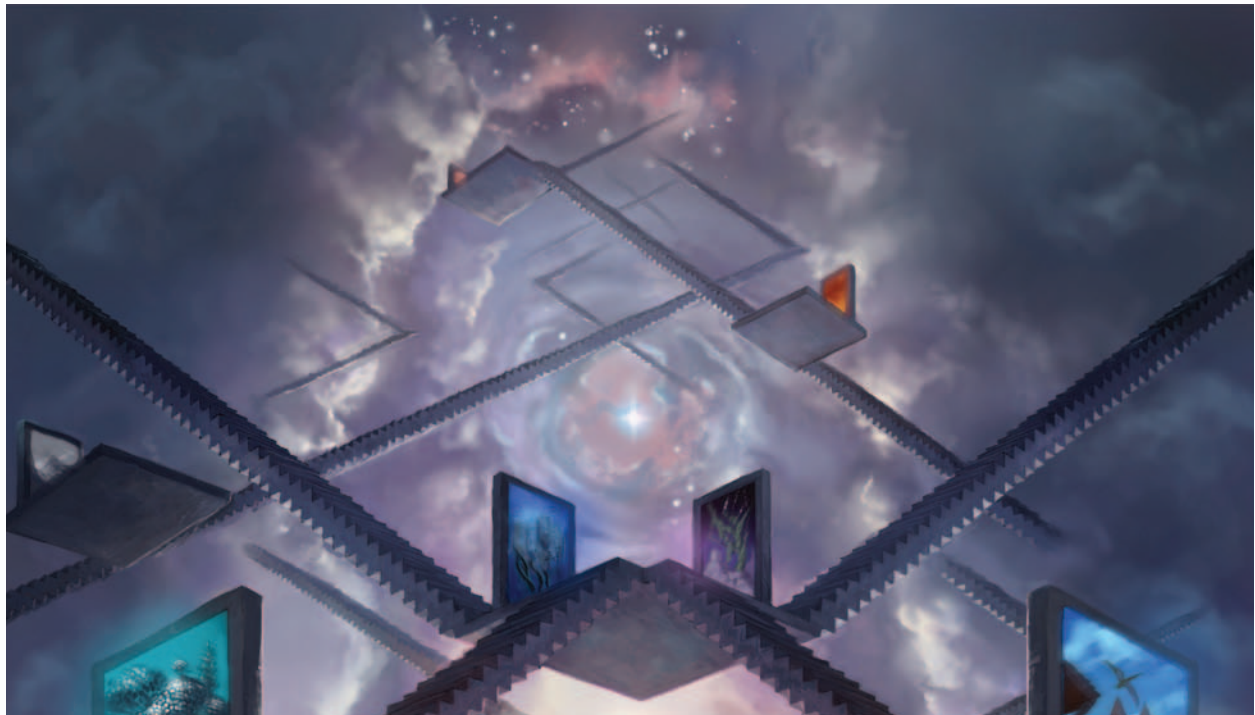
Shadow: The dark void between the Gossamer worlds, a murky, howling and infinite emptiness. Parts of the Grand Stair span areas of the Shadow, and if one tears the veil of a Gossamer world without linking it to another Gossamer world, they will see only shadow void between.

Sorcery: A magical power concerned with basic spellcasting, allowing sorcerers to create, store, and cast spells, as well as creating magic countermeasures. Sorcery also assumes a knowledge of spellcasting traditions, providing lore and information about different types of spellcasting.

Stuff: A game value roughly akin to karma, luck, or favorability. Good Stuff is a positive value and affects the character in a positive fashion, as if the universe likes them. Zero Stuff is neutral, while Bad Stuff means that the character has bad luck and is generally regarded as suspicious or even sinister.

Umbra: The primal source of entropy in the universe. The Umbra represents the decay and eventual disorganization of all matter and energy into base, chaotic forms. It permeates all reality, and all change in the universe is a result of interplay between the Umbra and the Eidolon, the symbol of stability and order, which opposes it. Characters manipulate the Umbra with the power of Umbra Mastery.

Wrighting: A minor magical power concerned with the creation of enchanted artifacts and creatures, and the magical communication means called Icons.



The Grand Stair leads to infinite possibilities.

Chapter Two: Creating Your Character

All role-playing games are ultimately about the characters you and your friends play, and for this reason you'll first need to create characters to play *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*. This section presents a simplified version of the character creation process.

Overview of Character Creation

You'll begin with a budget of 100 character points. With these points, you'll buy Attributes, powers, items, creatures, allies, etc. You don't have to spend them all, and there are ways you can get more points, but 100 points is the starting budget. With that in mind, here are the ways you spend those points.

Step One: Concept

This is the most important step of the entire process: deciding what sort of character you'd like to play. This can be an idealized version of yourself, or someone you think would be fun to play as. Is the character clever or impetuous? Fierce in battle, or a methodical user of mystic power? A leader, or a follower? Is the character inspired by someone from myth, history, or fiction? If so, what's different? What sort of personality does this character have?

You might want to write a short list of qualities the character will possess, or even write a sentence or two. The character you create can have many facets, but it's best to come up with a strong, clear impression to hang everything else from. No need to limit yourself at this time, but don't leave yourself without any idea where to go!

- Concept doesn't cost any points. You can read more about Concept in the section on "Lords and Ladies of Gossamer and Shadow" on page 116-117.

Step Two: Attributes

Your character is defined with four Attributes: Psyche, Strength, Endurance, and Warfare. You can spend some or all of your 100 character points in the Attribute Auction, bidding against the other players, or you can purchase ranks in these Attributes later, secretly. You can also reduce your starting Attributes to gain more points, but you'll be at a disadvantage. Attributes are the way your character is measured against everyone else, and remember that you've got to buy powers and extras with the same budget. You must stick to any bids you make in the Attribute Auction, so spend wisely.

- Attributes and the Attribute Auction are described on pages 5-8 and 8-11, and in **CHAPTER TWO: CREATING YOUR CHARACTER** and **CHAPTER THREE: ATTRIBUTES**.

Step Three: Powers

Powers determine what sort of amazing supernatural abilities your character has or can access. Powers are how your character uses the primal forces shaping all of reality. The big powers are **Warden Of The Grand Stair**, **Eidolon Mastery**, and **Umbra Mastery**, and the minor Powers are **Invocation**, **Wrighting**, **Cantrips**, and **Sorcery**.

- Costs and descriptions of the powers are on page 12, with full descriptions in **CHAPTER FOUR: POWERS**.

Step Four: Extras

Extras include things like special items, powerful creatures, allies, and even worlds your character owns. These are not normal possessions that can be taken, lost, or replaced: they're fundamental parts of your character's being, things that the character will be known for and can always get back.

- Costs and descriptions of artifacts, creatures, Domains, and allies are on pages 12-13, with full descriptions in **CHAPTER FIVE: CREATURES AND ARTIFACTS**, **CHAPTER SIX: DOMAINS**, and **CHAPTER SEVEN: ALLIES**.

Step Five: Balancing

Add up the points you spent on Attributes, powers, and all extras. If you lowered an Attribute, you can add the amount to the 100 character points you have to spend. You can also earn more character points by pledging character contributions. You may have to reduce the cost of some of your extras, or go without something you wanted. Any points you have left over become "Good Stuff" and are the equivalent of luck, or positive karma. Any points you're short become "Bad Stuff" which usually means misfortune and woe.

- Character Contributions are described on pages 14-15, and Stuff is on pages 13-14.

Step Six: Finishing Touches

Here's where you turn everything into an actual character, establishing background, skills or past history, any non-special gear, appearance, personality, and goals. Like concept, these elements don't cost any points, and make up the "character" of your character.

- To read more about these finishing touches, read "Background" on pages 15.

Attributes

Your character is special, picked by fate or birth and endowed with immense power, destined to be a mover and shaker in a

struggle across all of the Gossamer worlds. Because of this, your character begins with physical and mental gifts that set him or her apart from the rest of humanity, and are rated against others of their generation by Attributes, which are organized on the Attribute Ladder (described in more detail on page 3).

Though the Attribute Auction determines how the player characters are rated and gives players some idea of how they stand relative to each other, once their Ranks are determined they are added to the Attribute Ladder amidst the nonplayer characters. A character who is ranked 1st in one Attribute among the player characters may only be 5th or 6th when compared to all of the nonplayer characters. Eventually, though, it is possible for player characters to advance to 1st in an Attribute, if they survive long enough.

All player characters begin with Paragon-level Psyche, Strength, Endurance, and Warfare for free. You don't need to pay for those ranks, and you can spend points to improve them in an Attribute Auction or later. You can also lower any of those Attributes (if you haven't spent points on them in the Attribute Auction) by reducing them to Superior or Average rank. All of those ranks are described below, described from worst to best.

Average Rank. This ranking describes everyone who's merely mundane human-level in capability, from a toddler to Joe Average. It seems like a broad spectrum, but Average rank is the bottom of the barrel to those with real power, barely worth worrying about.

Selling an Attribute down to Average rank is a huge vulnerability, a weakness that will be exploited by any enemies who learn it.

- You can sell an Attribute down to Average rank to earn 25 extra character points.

Superior Rank. This rank represents the pinnacle of human perfection, along the lines of Olympic athletes, prodigies, or freaks of nature. The world's greatest military leader might have Superior rank in Warfare, and a professional power-lifter would have Superior Strength. A character with Superior rank in an Attribute will dominate almost any mortals they contest with, but will be at a disadvantage against anyone with Paragon rank. For a rule of thumb, a Superior ranked Attribute performs half again (1.5 times) as good as Average Rank.

- You can sell an Attribute down to Superior rank to earn 10 extra character points.

Paragon Rank. This is the default rank for player characters, and is pretty incredible compared to normal humans and even most of the denizens of the Gossamer worlds. Basically, an Attribute at Paragon rank puts your character in a class better than anyone in the world can naturally aspire to. Paragon rank is roughly equivalent to twice as effective as Average rank.

- Your character automatically begins with Paragon rank in all Attributes, for free.

Lords and Ladies of Gossamer & Shadow

Once you have the system-related aspects of your character defined, it is time to think of the character as more than the sum of their ranks, powers, possessions, and territory: it's time to think of them as a Lord or Lady of the Gossamer worlds, better than mere humankind, able to traverse worlds... a player in a game of universal consequence. You can choose to have your character be a relative newcomer, newly come into powers, experiencing the worlds of the Grand Stair with fresh eyes, or you can choose to play a character who has been around for a while (centuries, even!), with allies aplenty, knowing the ins and outs of infinity, a willing participant in the struggle for supremacy.

You can even play a complete outsider, a creature alien to humankind from one of the Gossamer worlds, with your own agenda. With the gamemaster's approval, there is no reason your character cannot be nine feet tall, six-armed, and covered with shimmering blue scales, or even a being resembling a race from myth or literature, such as elves, kappa, spider-centaurs, vampires, Morlocks, superheroes, even angels or demons. All of these races exist in some form among the Gossamer worlds, and there is no reason to constrain your choices to "human" when it comes to your appearance or origin.

The only restriction on this is that any special abilities you think your character might have based on an exotic race are only usable on your Gossamer world of origin. This extends to poison, water breathing, shape-changing, wall-crawling... all of it! However impressive that wingspan is, those wings just won't work away from home. Attributes and powers are the only eternal, working pretty much as they should across all of the Gossamer worlds (and even then with some exceptions). Your character may be a hulking rock troll, but if you only gave your character Average rank in Strength and Endurance, she will be a pushover for someone with a higher-ranked Strength.

Any of these wild character options are valid choices, and can bring exciting role-playing possibility to the table. Ultimately, though, this game is about the Gossamer Lords, a group of unique and powerful individuals and their struggles to survive and prosper in and across the worlds linked by the Grand Stair. Politicking between these sovereigns can be deadly, though it is the least of the challenges your character may face. Powerful beings from the Gossamer worlds scheme for domination and magical knowledge, taking no prisoners and offering no quarter. And beyond that... the ancient race known as the Dwimmerlaik may have returned, seeking to destroy those challenging their supremacy over the infinite worlds.



Not all Doors are equal. The Attribute Auction is your character's first step in traversing the Grand Stair.

Ranked. If you spend any points on an Attribute in the Attribute Auction (or later), your character is considered “ranked” in that Attribute. That means that your character is better than Paragon in that Attribute, and has a place on the Attribute Ladder, an ordering of Attribute ranks from highest to lowest. A character with even a single point more in an Attribute than another character is simply better, and all things being equal, will always win in any straight-out contest of those Attributes. A good rule of thumb is that the lowest rank of an Attribute is equivalent to four times as good as the equivalent Average rank.

- You can read more about the Attribute Ladder on page 3.

Secret Rank. After the Attribute Auction is complete, you can spend points secretly to increase one or more of your character's Attributes from Paragon rank or above. You can raise an Attribute up the Attribute Ladder by spending more points on it equal to the difference between your current rank and the desired rank, but if you match points with someone else who bid in the Attribute Auction to earn a rank on the Attribute Ladder, your character's Attribute is considered slightly below it.

You cannot spend points to put yourself partially between one rank and another once the Attribute Auction is complete: you can only match each rank on the Attribute Ladder by spending accordingly.

For example, Christopher spends the points for his character Lowen to become equal with the 2nd ranked Attribute on the

Attribute Ladder. Lowen is considered 2.5th in rank, better than 3rd rank, but not quite as good as 2nd.

You cannot spend points to make yourself first (or Dominant) in an Attribute. The best you can start with is 1.5 if you didn't bid first in the Attribute Auction. “Secret” doesn't necessarily mean that no one knows what your character's true rank is, but this is the only way to have a rank on the Attribute Ladder without anyone knowing. However, if the character (nonplayer or player) inhabiting the Dominant rank does not spend any points to advance that rank in the future, the gamemaster may allow an ambitious character who keeps spending advancement points to purchase above rank 1.5, eventually exceeding the Dominant rank. For more information on Advancement Points, see page 68.

Dominant Rank. Also called “First” rank, this Attribute is at the top of the Attribute Ladder. The dominant ranking character will always win any contests with this Attribute versus lesser opponents, even if the difference is a single point. Characters with Dominant rank are simply better than all other characters (player and nonplayer) when it comes to this Attribute. Only external forces, strategy, or unusual circumstances will allow someone else to overcome that Attribute. There is nothing above the Dominant rank: any additional points spent simply increase the cost for others to try to match (or beat) First rank, or the gamemaster can allow players to begin climbing any rungs on the Attribute Ladder held by nonplayer characters.

Tied Ranks. When the Attribute Ladder is determined, all player character and nonplayer characters are assigned Attribute rankings based on the points they have spent. The gamemaster should evaluate any nonplayer character Attributes that may be identical to those of a player character and determine which of them holds the actual rank and which is the .5 (slightly behind) ranking.

The Attribute Auction

The Attribute Auction is a bidding war where you and the other players will use your budget of 100 character points to establish a pecking order when it comes to Attributes. Each of the four Attributes—Psyche, Strength, Endurance, and Warfare—are bid for separately, in whatever order the gamemaster desires.

Ideally, all of the players will be present for the Attribute Auction. Missing out and spending points later gives you some more control over your character's place on the Attribute Ladder, but you lose the ability to dominate your rank and must wait until character advancement (page 68) for the chance to pull ahead of someone at that rank.

A gamemaster can potentially handle an Attribute Auction through e-mail or on a message board set up for the game, but this should be handled carefully to prevent missed bids. An easier online option is to handle an Attribute Auction through instant messaging or in a chat room, with all of the players "present."

Auction Rules

Following are the rules to all Attribute Auctions, face-to-face or online. The gamemaster should explain these rules before running an Attribute Auction so there will be no confusion later.

1. **All Players Begin with 100 Character Points.** There are three ways to begin with more points:
 - Reducing Attributes. You can reduce an attribute from Paragon to Superior for 10 points, or from Paragon to Average for 25 points. If you have reduced an Attribute, that's where it stays for the duration of the Attribute Auction. You cannot reduce an Attribute that has been bid on. Attribute rank descriptions are provided in the previous section.
 - Volunteering Contributions. You can offer to do things to help the play experience for the gamemaster and other players by offering Contributions. These range from in-character diaries, art, poetry, campaign logs or blogs, websites, fiction, or even mundane things like providing food or drink, handling background music, or something else. Contributions are described fully on pages 14-15.
 - Taking Bad Stuff. You can give your character some bad karma right off the bat by giving them Bad Stuff on a point-for-point basis. This is a devil's bargain: extra

points are always useful, but Bad Stuff can affect your character throughout all aspects of play, often more than the advantages the points may have provided. The gamemaster may put a limit on how many points of Bad Stuff you can start with, but keep in mind that every point increases the nature of the bad mojo coming your character's way. Stuff and its role in the campaign is described on pages 99-102.

2. **Every Bid Is Permanent.** Unlike a traditional auction, where only the winner has to pay, everyone who bids must pay. If you spend points on an Attribute in an Attribute Auction, that's where that Attribute starts. If you bid it, you bought it.
3. **Once Bid Upon, an Attribute Cannot Be Sold Down.** You can raise the Attribute later during character creation by purchasing a Secret Rank (see above), but you can't lower that Attribute or sell it down once you have bid on it.
4. **Everyone Bids for Themselves.** Only players present for the Attribute Auction can bid. The gamemaster can potentially bid on Attributes for an absent player, but it's generally discouraged out of fairness to those present.
5. **The Attribute Auction Winner Is the Best.** Among the player characters, the winner of the Attribute Auction is the undisputed champion in any contests relating to that Attribute. No one can spend points after the Attribute Auction to make themselves 1st rank... the best they can do is 1.5th rank.
6. **The Attribute Auction Determines the Ranks on the Attribute Ladder.** Once the Attribute Auction is complete, the gamemaster should organize all of the final bids from highest to least. Next to each bid, number them, starting at the top. The highest bid Attribute is ranked 1st, then 2nd, 3rd, etc. all the way down to Paragon (0 points), then Superior, and finally Average rank at the bottom.

If two players in the initial silent round of bidding bid the same amount for an Attribute, and do not increase their bids during the Attribute Auction or later, then those characters are at the same rank until one of them spends more points on that Attribute and moves up the Attribute Ladder.

For character creation and throughout the rest of the campaign, character advancement follows the values set by bids on the Attribute Auction. Matching each rank (or rung) costs the difference between that rung and the rung below.

For example, the Endurance Attribute Ladder ends up like so: 1st (32 points), 2nd (19 points), 3rd (17 points), 4th (5 points), and 5th (1 point). Marv's character Harrison, who came in 4th at 5 points, wants to increase his character's Attribute after the Attribute Auction, so the cost to increase the rank is set at those point costs. Marv cannot spend points to have Harrison's Attribute anywhere between those ranks. Marv must spend points in addition to the 5 he's already spent. Working his way

up the Attribute Ladder, for 12 more points Harrison can become 3.5 rank, for 14 more points he can become 2.5 rank, and it will cost 27 more points for Harrison to become 1.5 rank.

Even if a character is no longer in the same place on the Attribute Ladder, the rank and point value remain intact throughout the entirety of character generation. When all final Attribute purchases have been complete, the gamemaster should re-number the player ranks according to the new totals, keeping the information secret from the players.

Page 156 features a worksheet for the gamemaster to summarize the Stuff and Attributes of the nonplayer character Gossamer Lords and the player characters, including spaces for Attribute values and rank. Read in order of 1st rank to last, this worksheet can serve as the Attribute Ladder.

How to Run an Attribute Auction

Attribute Auctions run pretty much like normal auctions, but if the gamemaster and players aren't familiar with how auctions go, here's a quick primer. All players and the gamemaster will need paper and something to write with, to keep bids straight and to record the final bids.

Step One: The Introduction

The gamemaster should announce the Attribute being auctioned and explain what the Attribute covers. It's the gamemaster's job to "sell" the Attribute, by making it seem as if it's

the most important Attribute and that every player should want some. The descriptions of the Attributes on pages 17-21 provide all of this information. The gamemaster may wish to summarize the advice in "Bidding Tips" (below) for the players' benefit.

Step Two: Silent First Round

The opening bid is silent, where all players write them down on paper before saying anything. This gives everyone a chance to put in an initial bid, rather than one player instantly setting the amount to beat.

Step Three: First Round Results

When all players have completed their first bid, the gamemaster checks the results and announces the totals. The highest opening bid is where the rest of the Attribute Auction begins. If you aren't going to bid any more on that Attribute, you're done, and your bid is your Attribute score (for now).

Step Four: Open Bidding

The gamemaster should announce "Bidding is now open!" Everyone who wants to bid can now speak up. The opening bid must be higher than the highest bid from the silent first round. Each subsequent bid must be higher than the last, so everyone should pay attention to what's being bid. It's the gamemaster's job to announce periodically what the high bid is, so no one loses track. It's a good idea for the players to write down what their bids

An Alternative to the Attribute Auction

Character creation using the Attribute Auction is the default system for Lords of Gossamer & Shadow. Attribute Auctions usually create player characters with good knowledge of one another, and they are hard to beat for instilling a sense of fierce competition between players and their characters even before roleplaying begins. If the auction is eliminated, the gamemaster should allow players to spend points on Attributes freely, with the following guidelines:

- Players are given 100 points to spend, as if an Attribute Auction were being conducted.
- Players can spend these points among Attributes as desired, as if it were the silent auction stage of a normal Attribute Auction.
- This process can be done as a preliminary to further character creation, or the process can be combined with the rest of character creation (purchasing powers, items, Domains, allies, etc.).
- Points spent on Attributes at that time are final. There is no round of secret advancement.
- When players have assigned points to their Attributes, the gamemaster creates an Attribute Ladder based on the amounts of points spent.
- Attributes and their ranks on the Attribute Ladder are not announced to the player group.
- Because there is no subsequent round of points spent to secretly advance Attributes, the ".5" designation for ranks is not used, and player character Attributes can be tied on the Attribute Ladder.

Secret or entirely-silent auctions work well for creating characters when the players cannot meet for an auction, or when the focus of the game is not character conflict. This method is also ideal for generating characters who are strangers and whose abilities are secret. Without the competitive nature of the auction, this style of character creation can also foster a more cooperative play style.

are for each Attribute, both to keep track of the running total and also get a sense of where character points are being spent.

If the bidding is too fast and furious, the gamemaster should call a quick time-out to get a sense of the current bids, announcing where everyone is at.

Step Five: Final Results

When bidding has petered out for a particular Attribute, the gamemaster should announce the final bidder and total bid, saying something like *“Christopher, with 48 points, is the high bidder for Strength. Strength is going once... going twice... going... going... gone! Christopher is first in Strength at 48 points!”*

At the end of each phase of the auction, the gamemaster should announce the totals for all players for that Attribute, in order from highest to lowest (or no bid). The highest Attribute is ranked first, the next is ranked second, etc. all the way down to those who did not bid or sold their Attributes down. Players should keep track of what they’ve spent.

The Attribute Auction continues through each Attribute, until all four have been bid upon to completion. When all Attributes have been auctioned, the Attribute Auction is done. Players should mark their final bids, and total the points spent.

Bidding Tips

Not everyone knows what they’re doing in an Attribute Auction, and sometimes it’s possible to end up spending points in a way you’re not happy with, or end up not spending points when you wanted to. Following is some useful advice to keep in mind when participating in an Attribute Auction.

- **Think Before You Bid.** If you have a strong character concept in mind from Step One of character creation (described on page 5), don’t jeopardize it with bidding foolishly on an Attribute you don’t want to focus on.

Don’t get carried away and overspend, and don’t enter the silent bidding round so cautiously you’re priced out of the running for future bids.

- **Know What You Want.** If you’ve got a strong character concept in mind, or even know what powers you’ll want your character to use and excel with, spend points to support those powers. A character heavily invested in powers will need a high Psyche and a good Endurance, while a character who’s low on powers but is physically dominant will need a high Warfare, Endurance, and probably Strength. Nothing is worse than having a power but being unable to use it effectively due to a weak Attribute.
- **Bid Early or Hold Your Points.** The silent first round of bidding is the absolute best time to get a toehold into the Attribute Ladder cheaply, without spending a lot of points. If you want a low ranking in an Attribute, this is the time to bid, because it will only get more expensive. Cautious players may wish to bid 1 point just to be above Paragon rank without getting caught up in the subsequent bids.
- **You Bid It, You Bought It.** If you bid in an auction, you’ve spent those points. This is the only real difference between an Attribute Auction and a normal auction. Your bid purchases your rank, no matter where it is in the overall list of bids.
- **Keep Your Options Open.** Anything can happen in the course of an Attribute Auction, and sometimes an unexpected opportunity arises in a relatively low-bid auction. Being first in any Attribute is an incredible advantage, and if an auction is not very high, swooping in at the last minute might be worth the trouble to change plans. Remember that at this point, all you’ve committed to are the points you’ve bid, so you might rethink your character concept if an opportunity presents itself to be the best at something.

An Alternative to Rank-based Attribute Advancement

It is possible also to do away with the rigid advancement structure of rungs (ranks) on the Attribute Ladder, with the following guidelines:

- When it is time for advancement, the gamemaster may allow players to spend whatever they want on Attributes, allowing free advancement up the Attribute Ladder.
- When advancement wish lists are prepared, the gamemaster should simply ask players to be specific about how many points will be spent to advance any given Attribute, rather than asking players to spend points blindly to advance ranks whose costs are unknown.
- Once advancement points are spent, the gamemaster should adjust the Attribute Ladder based on the new Attribute totals.

Ranks will generally become more fluid at each advancement, with player character Attributes bypassing one another on the Attribute Ladder without the need to match the Rank ahead. This method will also allow Attributes to increase incrementally rather than a rank at a time.

- **All Bids Are Final.** You can't "take back" points spent on an Attribute Auction, or sell down an Attribute you've bid on. They can't be traded on something else, or shifted to another Attribute.

Pages 95-97 of **CHAPTER ELEVEN: GAMEMASTERING** contains further advice and techniques to help the new and experienced gamemasters with running Attribute Auctions, including variations and additional options for advanced play.

An Example of an Attribute Auction

The gamemaster has gathered Sarah, David, Scott, Margaret, Christopher, Stratton, Kit, Morgan, and Marv together for an Attribute Auction. This is the first auction, for the Psyche Attribute, one of the most popular Attributes for players who wish to do a lot with powers.

Gamemaster: Welcome, everyone! Psyche is the first of the four Attributes we'll be auctioning. As you know, you have 100 points to spend between your four Attributes, powers, and other things like artifacts, creatures, personal worlds, and allies. Any bids you make are binding, and the top bid will be the highest-ranked character among you. Each Attribute begins at Paragon rank, and you can sell Attributes down for more points.

Margaret: Only if we haven't spent points on that Attribute, right?

Gamemaster: Correct. You can also take Bad Stuff if you need to make up for over-spending, or do player contributions. So, back to the Attribute. Psyche is pretty important. It's the driving Attribute for almost all powers, and is the go-to attribute for psychic conflict. Any power involving force of will, psychic contact, or a struggle of minds calls for Psyche. Therefore, Psyche is clearly the most important Attribute. With that said, are you ready?

The players all agree.

Gamemaster: Remember to write down your bids as you make them. Let's do the first round as a silent auction, with everyone writing down their bid and announcing it. Okay, let's go.

Stratton: Five points.

Sarah: No bid.

Scott: One point.

Morgan: Twenty-five points.

Gamemaster: Wow! An impressive first bid. Everyone else?

David: Only ten points.

Kit: Thirty-seven points!

Margaret: Man... I bid twenty-one points.

Marv: Ten points.

Christopher: No bid.

Gamemaster: Okay, then in low-to-high order, we have: no bid, no bid, 1 point, two bids for 10 points, a bid for 21 points, one for 25, and the highest bid is a thunderous 37 points. Is everyone cool with letting Kit be the highest ranked Psyche?

Margaret: No. Thirty-eight!

Morgan: Thirty-nine.

Gamemaster: Do I hear 40 points? Anyone?

Kit: Forty-two.

David: Forty-three!

Marv: Forty-four.

Gamemaster: Christopher, Stratton, Sarah, Scott... you're being left behind. You want to jump in while it's still relatively cheap?

Stratton: Are you kidding? No way.

Scott: I have other plans.

Christopher: I'm saving my points for now.

Sarah: I'll pass.

Gamemaster: So where were we? Right... 44 points from Marv. Anyone for 45?

Morgan: Forty-five. I want this.

Gamemaster: It's still neck and neck! A few points more and any of you could be back on top.

David: Forty-six!

Kit: Forty-seven!

Margaret: So much for my retirement... forty-eight points.

Marv: Fifty!

Gamemaster: That's the spirit! Want to take it up to 55 or 60, anyone?

Kit: I hate you. Fifty-one points.

David: Fifty-two!

Kit: Sixty!

Marv: Dude!

Gamemaster: Kit's on top for Psyche at 60 points. Anyone want to top that? Anyone? Okay, going once... anyone?

The players all pass.

Gamemaster: Going twice... and done! Let me check the notes here. The final wrap-up is Kit with 60 points, David at 52, Marv at 50, Margaret at 48, Morgan at 45, then way down to Stratton at 5 points, Scott at 1 point, and Christopher and Sarah at no bid, or Paragon rank. After the auction, you can spend more points to climb the ranks, which means that you'll have to spend enough additional points to match the bid above yours. You'll be sort of the .5 rank: almost, but not quite, as good.

Here are the end results of the Psyche Attribute Auction, prior to player advancement which might increase the characters upward.

Since Sarah and Christopher spent no points on Psyche, they are the only players out of this group that can sell Psyche down to Superior or even Average rank, gaining additional points to spend on other Attributes or other beneficial aspects.

Player	Character	Points	Rank
Kit	Jessamyn	60	1st
David	Grendel	52	2nd
Marv	Harrison	50	3rd
Margaret	Natasha	48	4th
Morgan	Moreltheus	45	5th
Stratton	Reevard	5	6th
Scott	Taltos	1	7th
Christopher	Lowen	—	Paragon
Sarah	Cordelia	—	Paragon

Powers

Once you've completed the Attribute Auction, the next step is selecting your character's Powers. While the Attributes determine how powerful your character is relative to other player characters, nonplayer characters, and the denizens of the Gossamer worlds, Powers represent the mystic abilities your character has, abilities that can affect the very nature of reality.

The three most significant Powers in the universe are: the Eidolon and the Umbra, great forces of order and entropy; and the Grand Stair, the multidimensional pathway through the infinite Gossamer worlds.

Eidolon Mastery is the ability to manifest and control the Eidolon, the metaphysical blueprint that underlies all of creation. The Eidolon is about restoration, refinement, and alignment, allowing those attuned to it to guide matter into its underlying, highest forms. Eidolon Mastery costs 50 points.

Opposing the Eidolon is the Umbra, the utmost force of entropy and annihilation. Users of the Umbra are Umbra Masters, and their powers concern the deterioration of order, weakening of the stuff of reality, and destruction of matter itself. **Umbra Mastery** costs 50 points.

Those attuned to the Grand Stair are able to find and traverse its mysterious passages and steps, with countless Doors that open throughout the Gossamer worlds in secret, hidden places. The lesser version of the Power is **Warden Of The Grand Stair**, costing 10 points, and **Master Of The Grand Stair**, the advanced version of the Power, costs 35 points.

Other Powers exist, less primal in their importance but arguably just as useful. **Invocation** is the ability to name and bind living beings from throughout the Gossamer worlds by determining and utilizing their True Names, a Power that costs 20 points. **Wrighting** allows for the creation of magic talismans known as Icons, imbuing them with the ability to speak across worlds, at the cost of 30 points. At a cost of 15 points, **Sorcery** governs basic spell-casting, and **Cantrips** are easy-to-use words of power that cost 5 points for an initial array. Powers are described on pages 22-47. Future expansions to *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* will introduce additional powers, or advanced versions of existing Powers such as Eidolon Mastery and Umbra Mastery.

Artifacts and Creatures

Once Attributes and powers have been determined, the next step is to equip your character with artifacts or creatures to aid in facing the immense dangers the Gossamer worlds may present. Artifacts and creatures can be weapons, armor, mythical beasts, neat tools, resources, and loyal followers, or even immense armies. Examples of artifacts or creatures from myth, fiction, and pop culture abound: King Arthur has his sword Excalibur, Thor his mighty hammer Mjolnir, Robin Hood his Merry Men, and the Lone Ranger his white stallion, Silver. Not all characters need such trappings, but they can be invaluable tools and will bestow a certain style to those who possess them.

Though your character can pretty much begin play with almost any item or animal that can be found in our world or the Gossamer worlds, these items will, whatever quality they possess, be less effective when taken from their world of origin, and may be lost, stolen, broken, destroyed, or even co-opted and used against their owner. Things and beings are just stuff, transitory elements that can be lost or replaced without effort.

Paying points for these things turns them into artifacts or creatures, powerful and eternal elements that are attached to your character as surely as their own limbs. If an artifact is somehow separated from your character, it will be a simple matter to recover it. It cannot be destroyed or easily turned against your character, and cannot be claimed by anyone else.

Players can pool their points to purchase shared artifacts or creatures, using the Named & Numbered (or higher) quality to have multiples for double the base cost of the original item.

Guidelines for creating artifacts and creatures are in **CHAPTER FIVE: CREATURES AND ARTIFACTS**.

Domains

The power to walk the Grand Stair and visit the infinitude of Gossamer worlds lets your character do as others have and seek out realms to make their own. These worlds or lesser places are uniquely tied to the owner, and are called Domains. A Domain is a place of power, attuned to its master's every whim, ranging in tone from a sanctuary where peace and solace might be had; a mythical kingdom owing total fealty to its lord or lady; to a bolt-hole filled with death-traps and lethal defenses. Many Domains are a mix of all of these aspects.

Characters can share Domains, pooling points and jointly determining their characteristics and ruling them together, but control and "ownership" over the Domain is proportionate to the points spent: a character spending more points has more authority over the Domain, and can even use aspects of it against the other owners.

Unless your character has the Warden of the Grand Stair, or some other means of breaching the veils between the Gossamer worlds, they will have no easy egress to or from their Domain, and will be stranded there.

Domains are described fully in **CHAPTER SIX: DOMAINS**.

Allies

No character needs to be entirely alone: even the newest Gossamer sovereign has personal history, complete with friends and possibly even family to support them.

You can spend a few points on one or more allies for your character, choosing from the types described in **CHAPTER SEVEN: ALLIES**.

Stuff

The universe does not treat everyone equally: some Gossamer Lords are luckier, more fortunate, or just better-perceived than their peers, while other of their number seem cursed, with ill-luck following them. These less-fortunate souls are beset by petty maladies and are generally regarded less favorably by those who do not know them.

In *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, this is due to the characteristic called **Stuff**, a value measured in points... the same points used for purchasing Attributes, powers, artifacts and creatures, allies, and Domains. Characters are defined as either having **Good Stuff** (positive points, paid for with character points), **Bad Stuff** (negative points, assigned when the player spends too many character points), or **Zero Stuff** (the character is balanced, with no positive or negative points).

Stuff is not, however, an indication of good, neutrality, or evil. An evildoer can have plenty of Good Stuff, while a saint can have an abundance of Bad Stuff. Stuff measures how the outside universe interacts with the character, not what they have inside them.

Stuff has three major purposes. Firstly, it serves as an equalizer, balancing character point budgets. Secondly, it determines how luck will favor the character. Thirdly, it serves as an indicator of the way the universe (in the form of other people and the great powers) views the character.

Good Stuff. Characters who have Good Stuff are almost blessed, as if a metaphorical beam of golden sunlight were always shining on them. People who encounter a Good Stuff character will think of them as being nicer, more appealing, and will take comfort or inspiration from their presence. In a group of average people, people will tend to gravitate towards the highest Good Stuff character, making them the center of attention, regardless of any leadership qualities or personality traits. If an event has a potentially random outcome, the Good Stuff character will benefit from it. In person, the Good Stuff character isn't more attractive than anyone else, but they'll just look more appealing due to an indefinable quality. Simply put, the universe likes the Good Stuff character better. Enemies will initially want to behave honorably with the character, and the enemy may have a hard time finding allies to oppose them. The character may get compliments from strangers, they will always have exact change, and others will usually give them the benefit of the doubt.

For example, if a Good Stuff character is begging (however unlikely), in a relatively short time the character will earn some money, be given some food and shelter, be provided with clean clothing or other offers of charity, and may even make a few friends.

Zero Stuff. A character with Zero Stuff is essentially neutral to the rest of the world, judged by their words and actions rather than hunches or initial impressions. They win some, they lose some, and for the most part they'll have nothing exceptional happen, or a balance of negative and positive events. The rest of the world views a Zero Stuff character without preconceptions, so their behavior may be judged more carefully than their Good or Bad Stuff compatriots. Players might prefer Zero Stuff characters because they aren't guided towards a particular tone for an encounter, and like to keep their options open. Nonplayer characters meeting the Zero Stuff character may be more guarded, or cautious around them, letting the character show their cards first.

For example, if a Zero Stuff character is begging, they may end up with a little money, or none at all. The character may not even get noticed.

Bad Stuff. A Bad Stuff character is one that has a slightly sinister or unlucky cast. Think of it as a metaphysical storm cloud following the character. In an average group of people, the Bad Stuff character would be standing on the outside of the group, sulking in a corner, or just avoided by the others. Whenever a situation could take a turn for the worst, it will do so for the Bad Stuff character. Bad Stuff characters get blamed for the misdeeds of others, and their actions are almost always viewed in the least charitable light. They will have random bad luck, and it seems as if their normal gear is always breaking or getting lost. Their enemies will be legion, and will find powerful allies and means to strike at the character. They will be lousy at gambling, and will usually be constantly on the "day late, dollar short" track of life. Frequently, when a Bad Stuff character meets someone for the first time, the other person is suspicious and quick to become antagonistic.

For example, a Bad Stuff character trying to beg will have miserable luck at it, earning no money. People will cross the street to avoid passing the character. The weather overhead may turn lousy and rain (or be excessively hot and sunny). Other beggars may become irate at the Bad Stuff character, and the begging may even attract the attention of the police.

Assigning Stuff

When a character has leftover character points, those points become Good Stuff. Some players choose to reserve some points just to make sure their character has Good Stuff. When a player spends exactly the allotted character point budget, without any unspent points, the character has Zero Stuff. Any future character

points earned will go into Good Stuff until spent, and any leftover points will end up as Good Stuff. When a player spends too many points, the difference between the budget and the points spent becomes points of Bad Stuff.

Characters learning new powers in the course of play, deciding to buy new Allies, Domains, Artifacts or Creatures, will pay for those things in the form of points applied towards their current total of points in Stuff. If one of those things is somehow permanently lost, the gamemaster may choose to refund the points spent, and these points will be applied to the Stuff point total.

For obvious reasons, a character either has Good Stuff, Zero Stuff, or Bad Stuff, and can never have more than one type.

Amounts of Stuff

“How many points of Stuff can your character have?” That’s a question up to each individual gamemaster to answer, and to communicate to the players before the Attribute Auction and the purchase of any powers, etc. The gamemaster may choose to put a hard-and-fast limit on the amount of Stuff (Good or Bad) the players can end up with, or the gamemaster can simply let the players spend what they will and let the players set the range.

A reasonable limit is 10 points of Stuff (Good or Bad), as characters with more extreme Stuff totals will become dramatically unbalanced: high Good Stuff characters may have fewer powers and lower Attributes, while high Bad Stuff characters may end up with higher Attributes, more powers, etc. In these cases, it is up to the gamemaster to manage the way Stuff is handled, with dramatically appropriate turns of fortune and luck evening the scales, which is significantly more work than dealing with more modest Stuff values.

Pages 99-102 of **CHAPTER ELEVEN: GEMMASTERING** has additional information on handling Stuff in the course of play.

Player Contributions

The gamemaster does a lot of the work when running the game, including coming up with the story, the nonplayer characters, describing everything, and judging how conflicts are resolved, but players can offer to help out in other ways. Contributions are creative or helpful activities players can achieve between or during game sessions. As mentioned on page 8, players can pledge to make regular contributions to the campaign for additional points to spend on character creation.

Here are ways players can contribute to the game and the suggested point rewards each should merit:

- **Diary [10 Points].** The player contributes a diary written from their character’s point of view chronicling the events from each session or even events occurring outside the game. Diaries must be kept up-to-date and substantial enough to merit the point reward. Diaries provide an excellent source of documentation, as well

as giving insight into the character’s own personality. Usually a page or so of notes will suffice, though diaries could also be blogs, emails, letters, or an actual journal where the player fills in a blank journal such as those found in stationery shops and bookstores. The player and gamemaster should decide whether diaries will be shared amongst all of the players.

- **Campaign Log [10 Points].** Less formal and personal than a journal, a campaign log covers all of the events that occur each session from a general sense, providing an invaluable record of what happened. Once created, this is shared amongst players, either emailed, a handout, or as a blog.
- **Art [10 Points].** Art can add tremendously to a campaign, helping visualize characters, places, and events to a degree that words cannot. Players with artistic talent can provide character (and nonplayer character) illustrations (Icons or otherwise), scenes, or places visited in the campaign. These can be scanned and emailed, shown at each session, or put on an online gallery for all players to enjoy. One image should be created per session.
- **Fiction or Poetry [10 Points].** Players can write fiction or poetry set in the world of *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, concerning their characters or other characters. One such work should be provided per game session.
- **Quote Lists [5 Points].** Game sessions can frequently generate unusual, humorous, or incongruous quotes, and players often enjoy reading them as a “greatest hits” overview of a session. An ongoing quote list can be kept online, on paper, or as an addition to another contribution.
- **Other Contributions [Variable].** The gamemaster should also allow contributions in the form of bringing snacks and drinks to game sessions, preparing dinner for everyone, technical assistance if the game has a website or blog, making copies of handouts, providing a game space, or even driving vehicle-less players to-and-from game sessions. Any of these can be worth a few points in contributions, assuming it the effort is regular and reliable.

Players should be able to switch the form of contributions they’re offering, assuming it’s all right with the gamemaster, and the values of the contributions are equivalent.

Limits to Contributions

Players are not required to do any contributions, but they can pledge up to a maximum of 20 points, no matter how much additional work they choose to do! Additionally, contributions are primarily for campaigns or multi-session games where players will meet more than once. It is not recommended that they be used for one-shots.

Managing Contributions

A potential problem with contributions is that players may miss sessions, not have the time to do them, or may even turn in contributions that don't represent significant effort. Contributions, in many ways, are like homework. The gamemaster should give the player a friendly warning for a missed (or poor) contribution, and give a chance for a make-up. If the situation doesn't resolve itself, the gamemaster can apply a point or two of Bad Stuff to the character (subtracting from Good Stuff, if any), for each time the contribution is missed, removing the Bad Stuff when the contribution is "made up." If the problem persists, the gamemaster should just ask the player to take Bad Stuff up to the amount of the contribution and remove the pledge for the contribution.

Ultimately, contributions are meant to be fun, a way players can add to their own experience in the game and to increase the enjoyment of everyone. However, life happens, and sometimes players aren't able to spend as much effort on their entertainment as they'd like. If the gamemaster is forced into the position of policing players and demanding past contributions, it's time to re-evaluate the pledges for contributions and let people off the hook for contributions in return for an amount of Bad Stuff, perhaps reduced based on past contributions.

Incremental Contributions

An alternate means of handling contributions is as a reward, where the gamemaster simply awards the player a single point (or a half-point) for each contribution as it is turned in, given in a steady stream throughout the campaign, or in little clumps once 5 or 10 points are earned. In this case, players don't need to pledge contributions during character creation, and instead just earn them as the game goes. It's far easier to simply say "Nice drawing, Margaret. You get 1 point!" than it is to demand past contributions for players who have missed sessions or been unable to provide them.

The gamemaster should be clear about which actions merit contributions and which don't, and should try to be fair so they're awarded appropriate to the level of effort. A player who spends hours on an in-character journal should get more of a reward than the player who gave the gamemaster the last beer, for example. It is recommended in this case that the gamemaster only award one point in contributions to each player per session, with two points reserved for a truly exemplary effort.

Incremental contributions may lead to a greater power climb in the campaign, with players who make the effort outstripping their less-industrious companions, and even causing the gamemaster to adjust the Attributes and abilities of nonplayer characters in the campaign to keep them in line with player growth. For this reason, incremental contributions are only recommended for gamemasters who want to keep a steady eye on the numbers, and the gamemaster should warn players who don't want to bother with contributions that their characters may be quickly

outclassed, point-wise, by the characters whose players are willing to do them.

These points can be given out during regular advancement times, or at the end of major campaigns or adventures, and are in addition to normal points rewarded for character advancement.

Gamemaster-Controlled Aspects of Your Character

Alas, you are not in charge of every aspect of your character. The gamemaster has some control over certain details of background and history, and will create those in secrecy or with your consultation. This level of creative surrender is done for reasons important to the campaign or adventure, and to allow the gamemaster to provide dramatic "hooks," potential elements that plot elements and conflict can be connected to.

What the player and the character knows do not always have to be in synch, either. You as a player can know things that character doesn't, or you may know that your character is wrong about something. This is fantastic fuel for role-playing, as long as it is not abused.

- **Parents:** You can pick your character's view of their parents, whether they were loved or despised, but you can't pick who they were. You don't get to decide whether they are alive or dead, or how they feel about your character. Your character's parents may be among the movers-and-shakers of the Gossamer world, or humble nobodies. Hopefully, something more interesting than the latter...
- **Allies:** You can choose the nature of your character's allies, such as "Partisan Support" or "Mentor" but the gamemaster is the one who names and defines the identity of that nonplayer character. And guess what? The gamemaster doesn't necessarily have to tell you who that is, and may have a nonplayer character out there who behaves in exactly the same manner, but is not in fact the actual one you have points designating. Gamemasters are sneaky like that.
- **History and Background:** This is one of those things that most gamemasters will let players run with, and for the most part it is a good idea to give players control over this. But in some cases, the gamemaster may need to veto aspects of a character's background, or introduce other elements. In each case, these should be for the good of the overall campaign.
- **Effects of Stuff:** You can certainly decide, though character creation, how much Good or Bad Stuff your character has, or whether your character walks the line of Zero Stuff. However, that's all you can do when it comes to Stuff. Your gamemaster decides how it manifests in the course of game play, and how nonplayer characters and the environment reacts to your character. Your character may come to rely on Stuff behaving in a certain fashion, but as a player, it's all out of your hands.

- **Secrets:** You may decide there are secrets about your character, and gamemasters are encouraged to work with you to develop these and integrate them into the campaign, but gamemasters are also the arbiters of what knowledge your character doesn't have. Your character might have an artifact that has unguessed at power; a creature or Domain with an ancient and hidden origin; or you might not know that your character is the inheritor of an ancient curse, the sole hope of a dying mystic order, or the prophesied one to oppose the rule of the Dwimmerlaik.

The most important thing to consider with all of these aspects is that the player should know whatever the character would reasonably be expected to know, and if the player has information that is contradictory to the truth, it should be for an extremely good reason. This isn't a means for the gamemaster to add humiliating backstory or some means of invalidating the character concept: instead it should be viewed as a method of providing surprise, depth of character, and new revelations during the course of play.

An Example of Character Creation

At the end of character creation, the gamesmaster sits down with Sarah and reviews her character.

Gamemaster: So, Sarah, tell me about your character.

Sarah: Her name is Cordelia, and I'm picturing her as sort of a Valkyrie or an Amazon, a powerful warrior from a martial culture on one of these Gossamer worlds. She's proud, impetuous, and enjoys life to its fullest. She was a mighty hero and wanderer in her own world, like Red Sonja or even Conan. In one of her adventures, she destroyed a wicked sorcerer who was tormenting the people of his land, and in his tower she found a strange magic door... she opened it, and found herself on the Grand Stair. She began exploring, and since then she's learned a few things more and hasn't turned back.

Gamemaster: Great concept! Now let's talk.

Sarah: Well, from the Attribute Auction she has Paragon-rank Psyche, 20 points in Strength, 16 points in Endurance, and 32 points in Warfare. Definitely more a doer than a thinker.

Gamemaster: That's 68 out of the 100 points you have to start with. What did you do with those points?

Sarah: I didn't see her as much of a powers person, but I picked up Warden of the Grand Stair for 10 points, and Cantrips for another 5.

Gamemaster: Great! Good idea about the powers. With Paragon-rank Psyche, she'd be best to focus on the combat side of things. That's 83 points, then. You can pick the specific Cantrips later. What else has she got?

Sarah: I gave her a sword with Deadly Damage and Mold Gossamer Matter, for a total of 5 points. I figured the sword is a famous one from her home world, and it lets her do minor things like open locks to normal doors, start fires, change coins from one type to another... those sorts of things. It's covered with runes

that light up when she does that sort of magic. It made sense to buy a suit of armor with Resistant to Firearms for 2 points. Also, I wanted her to have some sort of psychic defense, so I picked a metal crown that has Psychic Barrier and Confers Quality on Wearer, for a total of 9 points.

Gamemaster: Any Domains or Allies?

Sarah: I picked Mentor, for 2 points. Someone who showed her the ropes of using the Grand Stair. No Domain. She's a wanderer. Maybe someday, but not now.

Gamemaster: Great! Let me add that up... That's a total of 101 points. You're over-budget by 1 points. Want to take that point as Bad Stuff?

Sarah: No way! I want people to think she's one of the good guys, so I'm going to do a player contribution to earn 10 points. The "Fiction or Poetry" kind. I want to write a short story every session about what happened, told as if she's the main character... sort of pulp adventure versions of whatever happens.

Gamemaster: That's awesome! You have 9 points left.

Sarah: Slide that right into Good Stuff.

Gamemaster: Great! You can figure out the rest, such as what she looks like, how she speaks, you know... the character bits. I can't wait to see her in action!



Chapter Three: Attributes

As mentioned previously, Attributes are the building blocks of determining how effective your character is in the game world relative to one another, any nonplayer characters, and other potential threats or challenges. There are four Attributes: Psyche, Strength, Endurance, and Warfare. Each of them governs an aspect of ability: all of the elements that make up that Attribute are at that Attribute's rank. For example, the category of Strength governs both raw muscle mass as well as unarmed combat such as wrestling, unarmed martial arts, boxing, etc. A character ranked 3rd in Strength will be the third-best in raw strength and will also be third-best in contests involving unarmed physical combat.

Each of the Attributes is described below, along with examples of what someone at the absolute pinnacle of that Attribute can do.

Psyche

Psyche is the combination of willpower, spirit, raw mental strength, and ability to manipulate magical forces through mental exertion. It is also a measure of how attuned to the universe and to fate your character is. Whenever any contest comes down to force

of mind, or magical finesse, Psyche will determine the winner. A character with a high-ranked Psyche Attribute can do amazing things: crush or sway the minds of lesser beings, detect danger, recognize others through psychic impressions, manipulate delicate magical energies, and even use brute mental force to withstand magical assaults.

If your character wants to use magic or have any facility with the great powers of Eidolon, Umbra, etc. then Psyche is the most important Attribute to have.

Potential of Psyche: A character with Average-ranked Psyche is essentially a normal human, unable to use magic, their mind an open book to those with higher Psyche rankings. A Superior-ranked character may be able to mount a token psychic defense, use minor magic, detect obvious psychic events, and even sway others through psychic manipulation. A character with Paragon-ranked Psyche is able to dominate lesser minds, to sense the presence of magic, to use magic powers great and small with some aptitude, and to get a strong sense of concealed emotions or motives.

At the highest ranks of development, Psyche can be used for

What Do These Attribute Abilities Mean?

The suggested potential abilities listed for each Attribute are outstanding instances, so much so that some gamemasters may not want to allow them as a definition for what a character ranked first in that Attribute can actually do. It may be that after the Attribute Auction is complete and characters are ranked alongside nonplayer characters on the Attribute Ladder, the highest score in a particular Attribute is not that remarkable. It could even be as low as 1 point for an Attribute no one else spent any points on, which makes the suggested Attribute abilities ridiculously cheap. Also, to some degree these abilities are practically superhuman (almost super-powers) and that might not fit the intended or desired tone of the campaign.

To this end, gamemasters should treat Attributes in a way that is most comfortable for them, and there are a few ways to handle this:

The Attribute abilities represent an initially-unattainable rank that is something to be strived-for, requiring considerable and repeated expenditure of points during character advancement.

Initially, a nonplayer character is assumed to be the exemplar of that Attribute, with an Attribute value assigned above the highest player character Attribute expenditure.

There may also be additional "phantom" steps on the Attribute Ladder reserved for nonplayer characters that the gamemaster has already assigned Attribute values to, or nonplayer characters that will be introduced later in the course of the campaign.

The Attribute abilities are tricks of the trade, representing potential avenues a dedicated character can learn, once per Attribute advancement.

The Attribute abilities are a relative scale, with players encouraged to experiment, with each ability as a potential ability at which a starting character has no ability and must be earned through in-game experimentation and experience.

Characters may be able to attempt these abilities in play, incrementally learning them rather than an all-at-once fully-manifest ability.

The lists of Attribute abilities can be edited, shortened, expanded, or done away with altogether, with players encouraged to explore the uses of their Attributes.

Whether any of these suggestions are utilized, the gamemaster is encouraged to communicate clearly to the players during the Attribute Auction and the character creation process the way Attribute abilities will be handled in the course of the campaign.

some or all of the following:

- Sense the presence of magical energies in a place, whether active or recent.
- Sense the presence of other living beings in an area, unless those minds are highly shielded (the character may still be able to detect a nearby presence, however indistinct).
- Identify anyone they know by psychic impressions if they are relatively near, even if that being is concealed, utterly silent, and makes no interaction with the character.
- Read the minds of beings of much lower Psyche, usually with the aid of a Power or Icon.
- When in psychic contact with others through some means such as True Names or Icons, the character can determine a great deal about the other party unless they are taking steps to shield their mind and magical abilities.
- Implant psychic suggestions into beings of lower Psyche, usually with the aid of a Power or Icon.
- Sense the presence of magical items, such as Artifacts, those storing Sorcery spells, or Icons.
- Sense when someone is magically spying on or observing them, through Sorcery or through use of a True Name or Icon.
- Identify a True Name from a normal name when hearing it spoken or seeing it written.
- Determine the influence of the Eidolon or Umbra in an area, as well as detecting whether a door within that area leads (or has led) to the Grand Stair.
- Getting a karmic “sense” of an area, determining if the inhabitants, environments, etc. are currently threatening, neutral, or benevolent.

Strength

The Strength Attribute covers a few related things, all concerning physical supremacy. It is the governing Attribute for raw hand-to-hand unarmed combat ability, raw muscular strength, the ability to damage a foe with bare hands, and the sheer ability to withstand physical shocks and impacts. Strength is the Attribute for boxing, wrestling, grappling, and simply holding onto a foe and putting the hurt on them. Like a professional boxer, a high-ranked Strength character can absorb damage such as that suffered through falls, punches, kicks, crashes, etc. Strength is also the go-to Attribute for lifting things, smashing down walls, and breaking things. Contests with the other Attributes can often be swayed with environmental or situational factors, but a Strength contest is the least likely to change. If your character has the higher Strength and can utilize it against a foe, your character will almost certain win.

Strength is the most important Attribute if you want your character to excel in unarmed combat, to perform extraordinary feats of might, and to be able to withstand a tremendous amount of punishment from unarmed combat or rough-and-tumble situations.

Potential of Strength: A character developing Strength to a significant degree can use it for the following:

- Sheer muscle mass and exertion, enabling the character to lift unbelievable weights, use tremendous force in a focused manner, and regularly perform Herculean feats of brute (or finessed) strength. The character can break thick chains, lift cars, bend bars, and even push or batter through moderately thick walls without much difficulty.
- An innate mastery of unarmed combat born of physical superiority and extraordinary muscular control. This might not be represented through a formalized martial style, though the character's reflexes, strength, and intuitive grasp of unarmed combat overcome most studied martial techniques. It's possible for the character to be caught off guard once in a while by an unconventional move, but the character will quickly adapt said move and its counter into his repertoire.
- In barehanded combat, the character is able to inflict damage upon opponents, twisting limbs from their sockets, breaking bones, crushing soft tissue, and even throwing foes around like rag dolls. The character can deliver powerful blows that can shatter bones and pulverize tissue, smash through light armor or doors, without injury to his own body.
- Anything the character can pick up, he can throw, with distance and accuracy determined by the size, weight, and relative shape of the item. The lighter and more streamlined the item, the greater the range. The character can throw something like a fist-sized rock with the force of a cannonball.
- Extraordinary resilience against most blunt-force physical injury, from unarmed attacks, blunt weapons, falls, car crashes, concussion from explosives, or other environmental threats. The character's sheath of muscle is enough to absorb or resist blows that would pulp tissue or cause severe blunt force trauma.
- Against mobile foes, the character is almost an immovable force, able to brace himself and withstand extraordinary force, such as a horse, a chariot, or even a small vehicle. Similarly, if the character can get a solid grasp on a moving target, he can slow it significantly or even bring it to a dead stop.

Endurance

Though it is primarily a measure of how much injury, torture, disease, fatigue, and physical discomfort your character can endure, Endurance also governs how long and at what level your character can exert themselves. It is also, significantly, the well of vitality and energy from which the use of many powers draw. While Psyche governs how well your character can use magical powers, Endurance is often the measure of how long such exertion can go on, and what reserve of energy your character can draw





Warfare will help you not only survive, but win, even the most dangerous of conflicts.

from. Another significant aspect of the Attribute is recovery... whether the speed at which your character can catch their breath, or the ability to heal (or even regenerate) wounds taken during the course of play.

Endurance is the most important Attribute to have if you want your character to be able to endure extraordinary hardship, perform magic or other activities over an extended period of time, to outlast anyone in prolonged conflicts, and to recover rapidly from injury.

Potential of Endurance: Endurance is the most focused and simple of the Attributes. A High rank in Endurance can grant a character the following:

- Healing is four times as rapid as a normal human from Earth. (A Superior-ranked character heals half again as fast, and a Paragon-ranked character heals twice as fast.) The character can heal from minor to medium scrapes, cuts, and bruises with a good night's sleep, and only suffers inconvenience and pain from such minor or medium injuries when they're sustained in great number across a majority of the character's body. Recovering from a major wound is just as dramatic, allowing the character to heal from a near-incapacitating wound within a few days.
- The stress of physical exertion is lessened significantly for the character, and he can exert himself normally without sleep for days on end, without suffering the symptoms of fatigue or exhaustion. To normal people, the character

seems to have an inexhaustible well of energy. Strenuous physical activity such as physical combat can be performed for extraordinary lengths of time, nearly ten times as long as any normal human.

- The character resists infection from wounds, the effects of even fatal diseases, radiation sickness, and other debilitating physical ailments to a near-inhuman degree. The character doesn't get drunk as easily as others, and recovers from most hangovers within an hour or so of wakefulness.
- The character is able to hold his breath for minutes on end without difficulty, withstand extremes of torture or physical hardship, and even temporary exposure to deadly conditions such as noxious gasses, vacuum, extremes of temperature.
- Food and drink, while necessary for survival, are not as essential to the character. He can survive for days on end without water (less so in extremely arid environments), and weeks without food, though will suffer the pangs of hunger and thirst as readily as a normal person. This is balanced by an extraordinary appetite: when given the chance, the character can put away an astonishing amount of food and drink.
- The character can eventually heal nerve or tissue damage that most living beings cannot. This can include fingertips, toes, ears, or other extremities. Wounds that would leave horrific scars often heal without a trace within a few years.

Warfare

Warfare is perhaps the most frequently called-upon Attribute, as it governs all manner of armed conflict and strategic or tactical activities, as well as being the determiner of how quickly a character is able to react in a situation. Warfare represents an affinity for all manner of armed combat--ranged and melee--as well as the ability to guide others into combat situations. It is as useful determining who would win in a sword duel, gunfight, armed skirmish, jet fighter dogfight, footrace, or even a game of chess. To the character focused in Warfare, everything is a conflict, and a high Warfare allows the character to determine the most effective path to supremacy in that conflict.

Warfare is the most important Attribute if you want your character to survive and win any life-threatening challenges involving armed conflict, strategy, or quickness of reflexes.

Potential of Warfare: At the highest levels of development, Warfare can be used in the following ways:

- Tactically, the character has an innate sense for the advantageous and disadvantageous points of any environment, able to analyze "the field of battle" instantaneously and determine the ideal point to counter any mode of attack or conflict.
- Assessing any foe, group, army, structure, or piece of hardware to determine strengths, weaknesses, tactics to deal with it, and ideal means of deployment in a combat situation. This can include recognition of what weapons are concealed, how they will be deployed, and what armor or defensive measures are being utilized.
- Analyzing any environment and its inhabitants, recognizing any obvious or hidden signs of an ambush, and instantly assessing where an ambush might be coming from. It is nearly impossible to surprise or ambush the character.
- Recognizing fighting styles and training instantly upon a moment of studying a foe, whether familiar or not. If the being or its fighting style are known to the character, he will recognize them instantly through even the tiniest clues of body language and movement, regardless of how well the being is disguised or what form it wears.
- The character has an innate and highly-effective sense for logistics, and is able to organize immense military efforts for maximum efficiency, handling all aspects of movement, communication, defensive measures, supply availability, training, maintenance, morale, and combat readiness at the highest level of competency.
- The character is a natural leader in any group organized for military endeavors, understanding how to motivate and delegate, recognizing problems and addressing them immediately. In a matter of days, the character can turn a group of demoralized troops into an efficient and motivated fighting force, and can turn a skilled and

seasoned group of soldiers into an elite fighting force like none the world has known.

- A keen understanding of morale also translates to the enemy, giving the character an insight into the best means of causing enemy morale to plummet, using psychological tactics to cause the foe to fight less effectively, lose clarity of communication, and feel hopeless against the character's own forces.
- Through firsthand experience or intuitive understanding, the character is familiar with almost any weapon or piece of defensive equipment, no matter where in history or whatever Gossamer world it came from, and will be able to utilize it to the best of his ability. Even military equipment that is utterly alien will take almost no time to decipher and employ in combat.
- In personal, armed combat, the character is dominant against any foe, no matter what weapons and armor are utilized, no matter what the rules of engagement are. In short, in any straight-up fight, the character will win, hands down. This dominance can only be countered through the unexpected, through intervention of other forces, serious environmental forces, or by switching a conflict to another Attribute such as Strength or Psyche. The only way to counter the character through Endurance is to hopefully absorb so much damage as to tire him out, a less-than-ideal means of winning a conflict.
- The character's reactions are incredibly, blindingly fast, enabling him to dodge any incoming missile fire he is aware of, avoid or parry almost any physical blows, and act before the words or gestures of any spell are performed. Even if surprised the character can likely act before any ambusher.
- Any game involving a strategic element can be easily won by the character, the ideal principles of play and best tactics divined quickly and utilized to best advantage. The character only tends to lose at games with an overwhelmingly random element, though he can minimize the effects of randomness as much as strategically possible.



Chapter Four: Powers

To most inhabitants of our world, magic is a fiction, a myth born of superstition, or a lack of understanding of science. However, there are those who know better. These are the Gossamer Lords. They have visited the infinite as they ascend or descend the Grand Stair; they have attuned themselves to the cosmic blueprint of the Eidolon or invited the essence of the Umbra into their souls. They have learned to master other strange powers, and to them, the Gossamer worlds are filled with magic and the unexplainable.

After Attributes, Powers are the next most important means of defining what your character can do. The powers described here are the primary ones that affect the Gossamer worlds and the Grand Stair, and let characters do incredible things in the name of survival and supremacy. Many of these powers come in basic and advanced forms. The higher forms are more expensive, but offer considerably more freedom and flexibility.

The power of Warden Of The Grand Stair is, in many ways, a key to the gateway of the universe. It allows player characters to move through the Gossamer worlds and to create Domains of their own. It is an indispensable power to have, and any player character without it is at a serious disadvantage when it comes to world-hopping. Eidolon Mastery is one of the two major world-affecting powers and is opposed by Umbra Mastery. Other, less powerful but still useful powers are Wrioting, Invocation, Sorcery, and Cantrips, each distinctive in its own way.

There are undoubtedly other powers in the infinity of the Gossamer worlds, which may even equal the Eidolon or Umbra in their influence. Look for them in future *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* source material.

Warden of the Grand Stair [10 Points]

The Grand Stair winds through the universe, a behind-the-scenes tunnel connecting all of the Gossamer worlds through doors that link to almost every place a door can link. It is a vast, possibly infinite stairwell that takes many, many shapes and forms throughout its length. At places it is a winding sloped tunnel with rough-hewn stone steps and light provided by irregular torches; gas-lit wooden stairs with elegantly-carved paneling, carpeted steps, high walls papered and bedecked with oil paintings; an industrialized staircase with concrete walls and flickering fluorescents; and many, many more forms.

All along the Grand Stair are the Doors, fashioned in an equally bewildering range of shapes and sizes, united solely in their sense of being “door-like.” To the initiated, these Doors are the gateways to the universe, portals to the infinity of the Gossamer worlds. The initiated call themselves Wardens of the Grand Stair. A Warden of the Grand Stair can open these doors and move up and down its span, opening other doors into almost anywhere. These Doors are always connected to their “real world” location, though that locale can be almost anywhere in our world or at some place within one of the Gossamer worlds.

Access to the Grand Stair is not something a character can strive for: it is instead a gift, a sudden ability to open a Door where previously there was only a door. The first experience with a Door sometimes runs in family lines, but sometimes potential Wardens are selected by the Grand Stair, without rhyme or reason. At times, someone picked by the Grand Stair will venture through a Door and never be seen again, with no one knowing whether they met death on their journey or merely found some better place to live the rest of their days.

As a Warden of the Grand Stair, your character can open these Doors and find their way through the Gossamer worlds, as well as short-cutting across our own world, opening doors into places where entry seems impossible.

Favored Attributes for Wardens of the Grand Stair. Psyche and Endurance are both important Attributes for using the Grand Stair. Psyche can allow an attuned character to do some of the neat “tricks” such as locking or unlocking Doors, spying through them, and even navigating the Grand Stair, but traversing the Grand Stair can be exhausting for longer trips. Even the effort of opening and closing Doors robs a bit of vigor, and for this reason Endurance is useful to have.

Warden of the Grand Stair Abilities

Opening and Closing Doors. Wardens can open Doors at will from inside the Grand Stair, and from the Gossamer worlds, can go through any Door that has been linked to the Grand Stair. Seemingly a mundane ability, it is fundamental to traversing between the Gossamer worlds or moving onto the Grand Stair. Anyone who is not a Warden will simply open a normal door and see what’s on the other side. To Wardens, the Door opens onto the Grand Stair.

Unlocking Doors. Wardens regard mundane locks as simple nuisances, mere inconveniences to be bypassed quickly. The Grand Stair seemingly aids Wardens in opening locks or bars to any conventional door as well as to its own Doors. So long as the lock is not powered by magic or sealed by a usage of Power, any conventional material lock is quickly undone. A Warden just has to concentrate for a moment, focusing on the mechanism and visualizing it opening, and it will open. Old-fashioned keyhole locks, sophisticated electronic alarms, retinal-reading security systems, handprint lock mechanisms, sliding bolts, or even heavy door-bars can be bypassed in a moment with this ability. It is usually the case that simple mechanical locks are more difficult to undo than more complex electronic locks, because it’s far easier to manipulate energy than to move matter. Despite this, if the door can be opened by conventional means, a Warden can unlock it.

Locking Doors. As with the ability to unlock doors and Doors, a Warden can close locks that were previously unlocked by conventional means, even if they are not in a position to normally lock the door. This is performed in a similar fashion,

with the Warden placing a hand on the door and visualizing it becoming locked. A few seconds later, the bolts slide into place, the electronic circuit is closed, the bar slides across the door, etc. This ability can come in handy for covering tracks, sealing rooms from the outside, or other devious uses.

Holding Doors. In addition to the option to open and close Doors, a Warden can hold Doors open against conventional forces that would try to keep them closed, or who try to open them against the Warden's will. A Warden can place the Door in any position of openness, from wide to closed, and maintain it at that position through an application of Psyche. Mundane (non-powered) mortal beings will simply be unable to budge the door from its position. This can be released at any time. Beings of Power can attempt to close the Door through a variety of means,

such as Psyche, Strength, or even Endurance, and these efforts must be resolved through opposed Attribute struggles.

Wayfinding. Wardens have an instinctual understanding of where a mundane door leads, or where one of the Doors of the Grand Stair opens to. This ability is like an internal compass, leading the character in a needed or desired direction. It can be countered through some of the disciplines used by Masters of the Grand Stair. Wayfinding can be used in the Gossamer worlds, Domains, and within the Grand Stair's entire span (though there are parts of the Grand Stair where it is possible to get lost, even with this ability).

With the Wayfinding ability, a Warden can find a specific place within the Gossamer worlds if the Warden has some idea about the nature of the place or even one specific part of it. Additionally, the

Learning the Powers

For characters possessing powers, it is assumed that they have already taken whatever steps are required to learn those powers. This course of study, initiation, or training does not have to be undertaken during the course of play. Furthermore, when characters learn new powers by spending advancement points (see page 68), they are also assumed to be able to undertake whatever activities are required to learn that particular power.

However, gamemasters may want to limit the powers new players can begin with for background reasons, such as having players begin in a world without magic (which would make Sorcery, Cantrips, and Invocation impossible), or having them begin in a place where either the Eidolon or Umbra hold greater power and the other power is forbidden. Such prohibitions can add interesting challenges initially, but should be both evenly applied to all players and readily done away with once gameplay begins, allowing players to advance their characters with whatever powers they desire.

The power descriptions have been left slightly vague as to the origins of the powers, allowing the gamemaster to supply the information as desired from this section, augment it with additional sources, or replace it altogether with sources specific to the gamemaster's own campaign or view of the setting.

Warden and Master of the Grand Stair: To become attuned to the Grand Stair, the would-be Warden must first walk for a time upon the Grand Stair, guided solely by instinct and in some cases, the Grand Stair itself. Each would-be Warden's path is different, a circuit through Doors, up and down steps, eventually reaching an understanding of the Grand Stair, its nature, and its use. No one can accidentally stumble across such a path and inadvertently become a Warden... the way through it must be experienced deliberately. Once a character is a Warden of the Grand Stair, becoming a Master is a simple matter of continuing and expanding the existing repertoire of abilities.

Eidolon Mastery and Umbra Mastery: Each of these powers represents a deep and profound connection to one of two primary metaphysical forces that govern most of existence. They can be learned through intense study and discipline at the feet of a mentor, or they can be attained through a mystic initiation ritual. There may be other ways, depending on the setting. A character could have discovered the principles of either power through advanced theoretical study, and achieved one or the other through psychic-based quantum manipulation of matter. Someone could have achieved a moment of ultimate enlightenment and become able to view the underlying structure to the universe, and emerged able to affect it via Eidolon Mastery. Alternately, a character could have been destroyed through some magical or scientific means and yet retained consciousness, slowly reincorporating themselves into a physical form and through the process gaining a primal understanding and ability to affect the universe via Umbra Mastery. Players should be encouraged to think of novel or entertaining means by which these powers can be earned and potentially improved.

Wrighting, Invocation, Cantrips, and Sorcery: These powers can be learned anywhere in the Gossamer worlds where some form of magic is studied, or even where it can potentially be learned. Sorcery has an additional requirement in that anyone learning it must have some awareness of the existence of alternate worlds. It is irrelevant whether these are considered mythological, metaphysical, or even parallel dimensions: the critical part is acknowledgement that these other worlds exist and that magic energy can be drawn from them.

Warden can find an ideal Gossamer world that suits a particular criteria, no matter how idiosyncratic that criteria may be. If the Gossamer world has Doors, the Grand Stair can open into it, and a Warden can find the way there.

Additionally, this power conveys an innate sense, almost a bump of direction or homing sense, that can lead a Warden to any Door opening onto the Gossamer world the Warden was born in. A Warden can intuitively feel his way through the Grand Stair seeking a Door home. The sense does not specify what's on the other side of the Door, where precisely it leads to, but it does let the Warden know that the Gossamer world on the other side is where they were born.

The Warden's Authority. Though there are few natural denizens of the Grand Stair, the ones who do exist are powerful and sometimes terrifying. They inhabit sections of the Grand Stair and regard it as their territory, and are fiercely protective of that territory against incursion. Most (but not all) of these creatures, however, will recognize the authority of a Warden and will grant them safe passage, though this is rarely reliable and is often subject to conditions and circumstance.

Piercing the Veil. The Grand Stair has a unique perceptual filter that temporarily masks any unusual aspects of a Door being used, warping the minds of any nearby Gossamer world inhabitants in order to camouflage its existence. It draws a veil over the inside contents: the Grand Stair itself. Passersby simply don't notice what was on the other side of the Door, filling in for themselves based on personal experience what should be there, or simply drawing a blank as to what was there.

For example, if a character suddenly emerges from a supply closet door, no one notices that the supply closet momentarily opened onto a richly-appointed stairwell lit with candles: they simply think "supply closet" and wonder how someone got in there without being noticed.

This is a one-way experience focused on the side of the Gossamer world, and anyone on the Grand Stair is perfectly aware of what is on the other side. Wardens of the Grand Stair are immune to this veil, and can see the Grand Stair revealed whenever a Door opens. The veil is not always drawn, however, and the Grand Stair often reveals itself when initiating potential Wardens or Masters. However, this effect does not last forever. Holding a Door open for an extended period, or willingly bringing someone through, will reveal the Grand Stair's existence, and characters with high-ranked Psyche may notice something amiss, or get telltale flickers of the Grand Stair if a Door is opened, even if they are not Wardens.

Exegesis. Just as the term translates as "to interpret," this ability allows the Warden to freely speak and comprehend the common or active languages of any world the Warden enters through a Door. The ability takes only a few moments to activate. This ability does not grant an actual understanding of the linguistic construction, grammar, or origins of the language, but instead serves as an instantaneous translator. The Warden

simply sees words that appear legible, hears language in a form that makes sense, and speaks that language in return. Trying to discuss any particulars of the language would be extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible. The language usually fades when the world is left, but returns if the world is re-entered or if the Warden speaks to someone from that world. Occasionally, obscure or dead languages escape this ability, and the Warden must make do as if encountering an unknown language. If the Warden travels to a world formerly visited, the Exegesis ability kicks in again, letting conversation and comprehension flow. A Warden going to a previously-unvisited world through a means other than a Door will not gain this ability. This ability can extend to those accompanying the Warden through the Door, at the gamemaster's discretion.

Communication Barriers and Roleplaying

Languages and communication can be a huge issue in games where players traipse across the globe, through time, much less parallel or wildly-different worlds. Some players and gamemasters enjoy the role-playing challenges presented in situations where languages are a barrier, while others prefer to handwave the issue away and let everyone converse freely, no matter where (or when) they are and with whom they are speaking. The Exegesis ability allows gamemasters to pursue either path: to allow for some communication barriers and reward players who have the Warden power, or to dispense with the language issue altogether, assuming at least one of the player characters has taken the Warden of the Grand Stair power.

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points]

If your character already is a Warden of the Grand Stair, then the cost to become a Master is only 25 points. While Wardens of the Grand Stair have the equivalent of a backstage ticket to the universe, Masters of the Grand Stair have even more access and greater control to the Gossamer worlds. Wardens can open Doors and affect them to some degree, while Masters can make new Doors, seal Doors permanently, bridge the places between Doors, and use Doors to access new Domains of their own desire. Additionally, Masters of the Grand Stair are able to manipulate its environment to some degree, and become attuned to its length, even invoking its presence in the Gossamer worlds themselves.

To become a Master of the Grand Stair is no small task. It represents a considerable effort and devotion to mastering the mysteries of the Stair, traveling its length, and studying the metaphysical means by which it spans and links the Gossamer worlds. Furthermore, they must navigate the Labyrinth that is at the heart of the Grand Stair, a place described on page 119 of **CHAPTER THIRTEEN: WORLDS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW.**

Masters of the Grand Stair claim that this title is bestowed upon them by the Grand Stair itself, and that the Stair has “chosen” them for this level of power. If a Warden is not selected by the Grand Stair to become a Master, no amount of study will result in the access to the Stair’s mysteries, or the abilities that Masters possess.

Favored Attributes for Masters of the Grand Stair. As with the lesser level of the power, Psyche and Endurance are of primary use. Psyche is the dominant attribute when dealing with some of the more esoteric uses of the Grand Stair and its Doors. Endurance becomes important for longer-term exertion and resistance, as well as simply surviving the rigors presented by some of the more dangerous Gossamer worlds.

Master of the Grand Stair Abilities

Warding Doors. A Master is capable of “warding” a Door that he has become attuned to, sensing when it is opened, no matter where he may be on the Grand Stair or a Gossamer world. This is the metaphysical equivalent of an electric alarm or even a simple bell on a Door, jingling when it is triggered. If the Master desires, the ward can be more sophisticated, alerting him to the nature of the being(s) who passed through the Door, though the more information is sent, the more obvious it will be to anyone who is passing through. Any Master will know when they’ve passed through a warded Door, and if he takes a moment to concentrate beforehand, will sense the presence of the ward itself.

Creating New Doors. A Master of the Grand Stair can link a door in a desired Gossamer world to the Grand Stair, or can find an unused Door along the span of the Grand Stair and link it to a door within a Gossamer world of choice. This requires some knowledge of the door in the Gossamer world, or a strong mental picture of the door to be turned into Door. The process takes a few minutes of intense concentration while the Master “syncs” the Door with the door. This is made quicker by a strong impression of the Door or its environs, and the Master must be in contact with at least one of the doors to be linked. The Door must be closed at the time the connection is made. This can be sped up tremendously if two Masters are cooperating from either side of the intended Door, with a psychic link established.

Keys. Many, if not all, Doors have Keys, unique magic artifacts that will open them if they are locked, sealed, barred, or otherwise kept shut. These Keys are a part of the Stair, and come into being as inscrutably as do the Doors themselves. Other keys may be made that are in all function and likeness the same as a Key, but only the Key that is intrinsic to the Door will open it. Other lesser copies will simply fail: they won’t fit, or if they fit, they won’t turn, and if they turn, they won’t engage any tumblers. Not all Doors have key-holes, though, for Keys can be of any shape: cards, remotes, or even combinations, but most are the metallic type with shafts, blades, or tines, and bows (the part you hold onto and turn). Keys are rarely found in proximity to the Doors they open, and are zealously sought by those who walk the Grand Stair. While anyone can use a Key to open its Door, a Master can

automatically determine which Door it belongs to, who made the Key if it is not the original, and can make a new Key for a Door if the original has been destroyed. However, even a Master cannot make more than one Key for a single Door, or make a Key for a Door that does not have a key-hole (or equivalent aperture). Doors without key-holes, though, can still be locked using the Warden ability. It takes roughly a day to make a new Key for a Door, depending on the method and the equipment at hand. The process is fairly mundane, though requires concentration and the continual evocation of the power of the Grand Stair. Once created, a Key is virtually indestructible. They are described in more detail on page 119.

Bridging Doors. While Wardens are limited to Doors that lead to-and-from the Grand Stair, Masters know how to connect two doors in a single Gossamer world together so that they are directly linked, opening from one to another. To do this, the Master must be physically present at one of the doors to be linked (which must be closed) and concentrates on the other door to be linked. This can take a few minutes, less so with a strong mental impression of the other door, and even less with a direct psychic or magic link to the other place. These doors only open from one door within a Gossamer world to another place on the same Gossamer world. They can never bridge worlds.

Bridged doors lack the invulnerability of Doors on the Grand Stair, and they can be accessed and affected by any Warden or Master. These bridged doors are rarely permanent, and the duration will last only so long as the Master desires, usually a matter of days. Making a permanent bridge between two mundane doors takes considerably longer, a process measured in days rather than minutes.

Severing Doors. A Master of the Grand Stair can close a Door permanently, destroying the link between the Door and the door to which it leads, whether in the Gossamer worlds or our own world. This can be done from either side of the Door, and is a spectacularly flashy display of power, requiring a considerable exertion of Psyche. If the Door whose link is severed is to a Gossamer world, any Warden or Master in that Gossamer world will know that the connection has been lost.

Sensing Lost Links. Any Warden or Master who touches the Door will know where it once led, even though the connection is no longer there. The character will get a sense of the old location, almost as a ghost of an echo, but will be aware that the door no longer works. The actual nature of the lost connection can be any of a variety of sensations, from the stillness of the Grand Stair, its smell, or even the temperature. Doors that were once bridged, linking between two places rather than to the Grand Stair, will give a sense of what world was once connected.

Opening “Empty” Doors. If someone opens a once-active Door in a Gossamer world, aside from the sense that a connection has been severed, the door will open to its natural destination. Doors on the Grand Stair can usually be opened, though their destination is up to the gamemaster to determine: potentially opening into the howling void of Shadow, opening to a random door (and a one-way trip) within one of the Gossamer worlds, or

even another Door along the Grand Stair!

Manipulating Doors. A Master of the Grand Stair can manipulate the functionality of a Door in ways other than simply severing the connection. These are the tricks of the trade, techniques used offensively and defensively against other travelers on the Grand Stair. The existence of these techniques make most Wardens and Masters paranoid about their travels, and many have developed routines of safety or detection to outfox any booby-traps or other unwelcome surprises.

Shrouding Doors. A Door's destination can be shrouded, to prevent any travelers from knowing what lies on the other side. This technique can confound the Wayfinding ability used by Wardens, making a mystery of where a Door leads. Few seasoned travelers on the Grand Stair will knowingly open a Door when they do not know where it goes, so this trick is usually only effective against amateurs or those without the time to be cautious.

If a Master of the Grand Stair is trying to determine if a Door is shrouded, or where it leads, consult the Psyche of the Master who shrouded it to determine whether the shroud is maintained. Once a shroud is detected, a Master of the Grand Stair can dispel the shroud with a simple exertion of Endurance.

Diverting Doors. A less obvious means of circumventing the use of a Door is to divert it, sending those who pass through it to a place other than where the Door apparently leads. This is extremely tricky to accomplish, essentially creating an illusory tableau of the "normal" destination, while the Door really sends the traveler somewhere else. A Master of the Grand Stair will get a sense before walking through one of these Doors that something is not quite right, but determining where it goes will take some effort towards detection. As with shrouded Doors, once the diversion is recognized, it is a simple effort to remove it and set the Door right.

Trapping Doors. A Master capable of some form of spell casting—whether Eidolon Mastery, Umbra Mastery, Wrioting, Invocation, or something else—can "hang" a booby-trap on a Door, setting in effect a magical circuit that will be "closed" when the Door is opened. This again is detectable by a careful Master, but only characters with extremely high Psyche attributes will recognize that the Door is trapped. The nature of the trap, its scope, and its power depend on the power used, and are based on the character's facility with those powers. The power conferred

by the Mastery of the Grand Stair simply governs the subtlety by which that trap is set. Leaving a trap on a Door usually requires an expenditure of Endurance, and keeping it maintained for a prolonged period of time is additionally draining.

Awareness of the Grand Stair. In addition to all of the senses extending to Doors, a Master of the Grand Stair has a natural attunement to the Grand Stair itself, almost akin to the fabled link a captain has with his ship. Though the Grand Stair is infinite (or apparently so), a Master can sense the presence of activity along its span within a relative proximity to him, an awareness that can be extended and sharpened with concentration.

A Master will know if a Door is being opened nearby, and whether someone is coming or going from the Grand Stair. This extends to any actions taken against the Grand Stair itself, if anyone dares bring magical force against it. A Master can place a hand upon a Door and know if someone else is on the other side of it, attempting to use it.

Additionally, a Master will know if a Door is one of those that the Grand Stair created itself, or if the Door was created by another Master. After considerable experience, a capable Master will learn to recognize the "signature" or style of another Master, and be aware of what Doors that Master has created.

Postcognition. A Master of the Grand Stair is able to touch a Door and sense if it has been used recently, whether it was opened from the Grand Stair or from elsewhere, and how recently. The more powerful a Psyche the Master has (or the more time spent trying to detect), the more information will be provided. This can be specific such as the identity of someone who passed through, how recently they passed, and even who else was with them.

Evoking the Safety of Grand Stair. Doors rarely lead to worlds where life is impossible, or to hostile environments. The Grand Stair itself never creates such a door naturally, but Masters have been known to do so, using environmental equipment or magical ability to withstand harm. A Master of the Grand Stair is able to extend the protective environment of the Grand Stair into a Gossamer world in the proximity of the Door, creating a "safe zone" where he can exist without harm.

This area is limited to a few yards from the Door itself, and requires an effort to maintain. While in this region, the temperature and atmosphere are the same as if the Master were standing in the Grand Stair. This environmental "envelope" is not

Opposed Powers

The Eidolon and the Umbra are diametrically opposed universal principles, set against one another by their very nature. Generally, beings tend to favor one principle and stick to it. As such, it seems impossible that a character could possess both of the powers of Eidolon Mastery and Umbra Mastery (described below). Gaining affinity with one universal principle of order and another of entropy may be too much for a single being to attain, and the metaphysical and psychological effect could be disastrous. To this end, though having both powers is not prohibited by these rules, the gamemaster may simply disallow it entirely. If it is allowed, such cases should be extraordinarily rare and noteworthy, causing considerable interest and concern to users of either power. An entire campaign may be structured around a player character or nonplayer character capable of using both powers, dealing with the metaphysical conflict that this unity creates.

specific to the Master, but will extend to anyone in their proximity, and can even work if the Door is closed. It is temporary, and once the Master has ceased maintaining it, it dissipates instantly. It does not confer any sort of magical warding or invulnerability to anyone under its protection.

Affecting the Grand Stair. To most who traverse its length and use it, the Grand Stair is eternal... invulnerable and inalterable. Masters know that the Grand Stair is in fact almost a living entity, capable of reshaping itself and rearranging its configuration if it so desires, or subject itself to the whim of others. There is no means of predicting when it may change its own arrangement of Doors, flights, landings, and passages, but the re-configuration can be provoked and guided. With great effort, Masters can will the Grand Stair to change the location of its Doors, and can even “convince” it to refashion sections of its great span into maddening mazes, to disorient or even trap the unwary. This requires a spectacular exertion of energy, and is incredibly obvious to anyone with any degree of magical sensitivity.

Domain. A Domain is a particular Gossamer world that is unique to the Master, a place that represents their inner self and is subject to their personal control. A Master finds a potential Domain among the Gossamer worlds using the Wayfinder ability of the Warden level of this power, but must then create a Door leading to that world. Once such a world is established, the Master must then spend character points to make the Gossamer world a proper Domain, and can then manipulate its contents as desired. The section on Domains on page 57 governs these in more detail. Note that this ability does not limit the ownership of Domains to Masters of the Grand Stair: it instead provides the origin for new Domains initiated by the Master, rather than inherited or as a source of origin.

Eidolon Mastery

Matter, ultimately, wants to be organized. It generally falls into predictable patterns and arranges itself along predictable avenues and orientations. This is due to the direct influence of the Eidolon itself, guiding the universe into a harmonic arrangement at the very molecular level. The very existence of a relatively ordered universe is testament to the power of the Eidolon. Underlying everything, like a cosmic blueprint that extends to the most minute levels, it shimmers as a manifestation of an idealized reality that guides and directs the shape and alignment of matter and energy. The Eidolon is a Platonic ideal, the perfect alignment of reality, and in the Eidolon is the uttermost pinnacle of existence. Unfortunately, the rudeness of mere matter and the fluctuating nature of energy means that the perfection of the Eidolon is rarely realized, and manifests only rarely.

To become attuned to the higher reality of the Eidolon, a conscious being must be trained specifically to perceive it and to align oneself spiritually with that ephemeral blueprint. This process can be torturous, and comes only at the cost of significant mental discipline and exertion of will. Forcing one's mind to perceive and reorganize itself along such lines of unattainable



An Eidolon Master may use the substance of the Eidolon as an active defense.

harmony can cause immense psychological trauma for the unready, and many who attempt to become attuned to the Eidolon instead end up in madhouses at worst, and at best as monks who contemplate the innermost harmony of the universe, attaining a higher realm of spiritual existence. Those who become attuned to the Eidolon become Eidolon Masters, able to perceive the greater aesthetic nature of reality and able to manifest or evoke it.

Becoming attuned to the Eidolon is to become one with that existential blueprint, marking one's soul and very essence with the perfection it conveys. It does not mean, however, that someone attuned to the Eidolon becomes perfect: it instead imbues that person with the potentiality of the tracery of that sublime, ethereal schematic. Eidolon Masters are able to evoke that power and guide matter and energy that are in a less-aligned state, adjusting them to a more perfect harmony with the Eidolon and strengthening them along its principles. The “stuff” of the Gossamer worlds, is malleable and able to be shaped, brought into conformity with the Eidolon's guiding shape. The Eidolon does not affect probability or the course of events: it is concerned primarily with the actual, physical, state of existence.

Eidolon Mastery [50 Points]

Favored Attributes for Eidolon Mastery. Psyche is the most important Attribute when it comes to bringing the perfection of the Eidolon to mind and imposing that schematic upon the

material world. Endurance is of secondary importance, as the process of adjusting unruly matter or energy through sheer exertion of will can be physically taxing over the long term.

Eidolon Master Abilities

The primary theme throughout all of the abilities conferred by the Eidolon are along the theme of bringing a higher order to something that is in disarray, or bringing purity to something suffering the taint of corruption. Eidolon Masters are able to use their connection and intrinsic alignment with the Eidolon to enforce its pattern upon reality in a number of ways.

Immortality. The primary side effect of the Eidolon is that it confers to its Masters a form of immortality, an idealized state where the Master remains in more-or-less their condition at the time they became attuned to its perfection. This does not make the Master a living paragon, or place them at the superior end of human development, but instead means that their default physical condition is at the state they were attuned. The Master will not age, will not physically deteriorate below their average condition without extenuating circumstances, and should heal most injuries as if they were never suffered. The extent of this immortality has yet to be explored, and few Masters are willing to lop off limbs or confer “permanent” damage upon themselves to test its parameters.

Perceiving the Eidolon. The primary and indispensable ability for Eidolon Masters is their ability to perceive the Eidolon in the world, no matter how faint or removed it may be from the current state of reality, and to sense how matter or energy can be guided along its principles. Like a master carpenter might be able to detect the infrastructure to a building based on studying its exterior, an Eidolon Master can look at reality and perceive the glimmers of perfection and harmony beneath the corruption. A Master would describe it almost like seeing a schematic superimposed glowing from within something that has been manufactured. Furthermore, summoning to mind the blueprint of the universe has the additional effect of revealing that which is immaterial, hidden, illusory, or otherwise undetectable by conventional senses. This is limited, unfortunately, to practical reality. A Master could study a person and see that at their core, they are potentially not human, that they suffer from some disease or malignancy, have been changed or altered in some fashion, or are otherwise out of conformity to the cosmic scheme of things, but the Master could not determine their innermost nature or what actions they had taken, or gain an insight into their thoughts and motives.

Manipulating Reality. The primary means of effecting desired conditions or states in a Gossamer world is through evoking the grand and unimpeachable design of the Eidolon stamped upon the soul of the user and then using that attunement as a guideline to coax reality into a closer alignment with the design of the Eidolon. This involves bringing to mind the elegant underlying structure of the Eidolon and applying it to the existing state of manner, essentially using Psyche as the crowbar to bring

it into the desired, correct state of existence. This can be a minor attunement, akin to fine-tuning a radio to the correct station, or it can be as dramatic as bending a crowbar with one’s mind.

Some of the means by which an Eidolon Master might manipulate matter would be to repair things that are broken, to join things that have been sundered, to straighten something that has been bent, and even to bend something that was unnaturally straight. The abilities below discuss this in more detail.

Bolstering Gossamer Reality. The “stuff” of the Gossamer worlds is malleable, and certainly less real than the Grand Stair itself. Matter from one Gossamer world might be insubstantial and less “real” in another world, or even denser and more real. The Eidolon, however, exists everywhere, no matter how far into the hinterlands of the Gossamer worlds one goes, though its presence is not as strongly felt. A Master of the Eidolon can take Gossamer world-stuff and strengthen it by evoking within it the Eidolon’s power, to bolster it and make it more “solid”. This can be done to items, to living beings, and even to places. It is almost always a temporary condition, the duration backed by the Endurance of the Eidolon Master.

Guiding Reality. Reality doesn’t always conform to the desired alignment or state of affairs, and the Eidolon can be used to finesse or otherwise “tweak” reality to coax it where the user desires, so long as the direction is “towards” the Eidolon’s example. To evoke this ability, the Eidolon Master brings the subtlety of the Eidolon to mind, a shimmering blueprint of reality overlaying and underpinning all reality, and begins to gently coax elements of the world that are out of alignment. The “proper” state of reality according to the Eidolon is inevitably a higher, nobler, and more pristine state of affairs, so any guidance to put reality into accord with the Eidolon should be along those lines. This might be as subtle and minor as repairing a broken piece of equipment, or as profound as rerouting a road or changing the personality of a living being.

Editing Reality. An unusual and rarely-used application of the Eidolon is to disincorporate Gossamer reality that does not conform to the Eidolon’s plan, a process that involves evoking the guiding principles of what “should be” and discarding everything that “is not.” Similar to the way reality is bolstered, the Eidolon Master summons the Eidolon to mind, superimposes it over the desired “thing,” and begins editing, making minor cuts as if with a psychic chisel, streamlining and removing the cruft and chaos that reality has allowed to accumulate over the pure scheme of the Eidolon’s guidance. Edited reality is inevitably more streamlined and hews to cleaner design principles, functions better and more economically. A pistol edited would be streamlined, lighter, more accurate, and less prone to misfires or jams, while a car would become sleeker, faster, more aerodynamic, the interior more comfortable and ergonomically designed, and generally more fuel-efficient.

Eidolon Defense. An important benefit to being attuned to the underlying blueprint of the universe is that it allows the Master to draw upon its perfection and use the Eidolon itself as a defense. The Eidolon cannot be broken, damaged, bent, or even

tainted: it can only be ignored. Because of this impermeability, Eidolon Masters are able to bring it to bear against a variety of threats, magical or mundane. Using the Eidolon in this manner is always internal, summoned within the body and soul of the Master as a personal defense. This is an obvious power, where the guiding lines of the Eidolon actually manifest within and without the Master, a framework of lines of powerful glowing energy.

Opposing the Umbra. The Eidolon by its very nature stands in stark opposition to the Umbra, the wild unpredictable chaos of disorder. An Eidolon Master may evoke the schema of the Eidolon within himself to bolster his magical defenses, making him less susceptible to the influence of the Umbra. This does not confer supernatural invincibility (it is limited to how well the Master can evoke the Eidolon, after all), but can prove decisive over struggles between characters that are closely matched, or can repel a half-hearted attack with ease. In any such challenge, bringing the Eidolon up against the Umbra (or vice versa) is a serious escalation in power, often with spectacular effects as they come into conflict.

Opposing Other Powers. The Eidolon is vastly more powerful against the lesser powers, such as Invocation or lesser magics that are found throughout the Gossamer worlds. Few of these powers are sufficiently potent to successfully breach the lines of perfection, and the Eidolon Master can evoke the Eidolon confidently against them. A Master can evoke the Eidolon within his mind and use it as a ward against possession or mental influence, or can bring it to bear in his body, “hardening it” against magical influence. A fireball thrown by a Gossamer world sorcerer might hit the Eidolon Master and have little effect, as if he were fireproof.

Physical Fortification. As a resort against injury, an Eidolon Master can evoke the Eidolon within himself specifically to enforce his personal reality, to strengthen his physical form against injury or harm. This can be a potent, powerful defense, allowing a character to essentially become partly indestructible, or at least as much as his Psyche allows. Bones become more rigid and unbreakable, muscle mass becomes tougher and more resistant to damage, and even the Master’s skin becomes more impervious. It is an extremely taxing means of evoking the Eidolon, to bolster one’s corporeal form, and while the Master is doing so his Psyche can be used in place of his Strength when it comes to resisting injury from falls or physical combat. Bringing the Eidolon to mind and evoking it throughout one’s body is a considerable effort, and it is extremely difficult to do so and exert oneself or perform other manipulation of powers. More refined use of the Eidolon allows for partially sheathing oneself in its protection, such as a single arm for use in armed combat, or protecting one’s vital organs against a catastrophic physical trauma.

Sanctification of the Eidolon. A more subtle evocation of the Eidolon allows the Master to bring it to bear within his body and actually purge unwelcome conditions such as illness, infection, poison, radiation, or other factors that have corrupted it from its idealized state. As described in Eidolon Immortality (above), the Eidolon confers a relative immortality and freedom from aging and debilitation from longterm injury. It is a simple matter

of course for Eidolon Masters to use it to purge any unpleasant or unwanted taints, sanctifying the body against corruptive influences such as those listed above. More advanced use of the power allows the Master to evoke this in others.

Awareness of the Stair. Though the existence of the Stair is not directly connected to the Eidolon, an Eidolon Master is able to discern the presence of a Door when encountering one in a Gossamer world. The nature of the Stair is such that no matter how it is disguised it does not “match” the Gossamer world stuff, and will stand out like a sore thumb. The distance a Door can be detected is mostly a matter of the Eidolon Master’s Psyche: the higher the Psyche, the greater the range. Once a Door has been located and/or identified, the Eidolon Master can call upon the Eidolon’s power to open the Door to the Grand Stair if it is not otherwise locked or sealed. If the Door resists (for one reason or another, such as being locked or sealed), the Eidolon Master can attempt to use the Eidolon in a brute-force fashion to open it. Doing so requires an immense amount of power, drawing upon the Eidolon Master’s Psyche and Endurance. Depending on the nature and strength of the Door’s resistance, this may leave the Eidolon Master weakened for a time. Opening a Door this way will also inevitably draw attention to any Wardens or Masters of the Grand Stair, or, for that matter, anyone with the ability to sense magical forces being employed. Unwanted intruders may find the way rough going, as well. Once on the Stair, the Eidolon Master is able to open Doors that would normally allow passage, or may again attempt to force locked and barred Doors by bringing the Eidolon to bear.

Umbra Mastery

While the Eidolon represents the force of order, offering a glimpse of an inherent organization of reality, the Umbra is its polar opposite, unpredictable and tumultuous, a chaotic, entropic force that destabilizes, mutates, corrupts, and disorganizes reality. All matter is caught between these two forces, affected by both to some degree, and their interplay is at the fundamental source of all great emanations of power.

Though the Umbra is frequently represented as a negative force, its influence is essential to reality, an antidote to stagnancy and sterility. Life in all its variety could not exist without the influence of the Umbra. It drives creativity and destruction, but it is also a vital part of any cycle of life and renewal, an agent of evolution and of change, destroying old matter and patterns so that new and sometimes better ones might emerge.

Those who have become initiated into the mysteries of the Umbra are called Umbra Masters. These powerful beings have embarked on a secret and dangerous path to power. They bear within them the chaotic, ever-shifting mutation of the Umbra, a dynamic and ever-changing influence that permeates their bodies at the very basest levels of existence.

Umbra Mastery [50 Points]

Umbra Mastery, like Eidolon Mastery, is concerned with the manipulation of reality (defined as energy and matter) to a state of one of the two primal forces. The Umbra epitomizes change and disharmony, and Umbra Masters are powerful forces for chaos, able to destabilize, mutate, or otherwise affect the world around them to their desired end. The influence of Umbra permeates their bodies like an ever-mutating virus or even a cancer, and confers upon them an astonishing array of abilities relating to the nature of the Umbra.

Umbra Mastery Abilities

To become a master of the Umbra, one must embark on a mystic journey, a spiritual quest in search of chaos. It is an unconscious pilgrimage containing periods of madness and sections later blocked with amnesia, a journey into chaos that may cause the initiate to wander the world in a haphazard route, almost in a fog, a maddened spirit seeking something far from its point of origin. Every initiation into Umbra Mastery is different, though all are equally as terrifying as they are destructive. The initiation begins with an invocation, a maddening chant that unlocks the channels within the mind that preserve rational thought. At that point the Umbra takes over and the pilgrim simply goes on an unpredictable walkabout, ranging the Earth (or whatever Gossamer world they call home), leaving a ragged hole in reality. When the initiation is complete, the pilgrim has died, discorporated, or has become one with the Umbra. They may be thousands of miles away from where they started, but they are an Umbra Master, able to evoke that great power at will and use it to and use it as an extension of their new mantle of power.

Favored Attributes for Umbra Mastery. Psyche and Endurance are foremost for utilizing the Umbra. Psyche is required to manifest it and withstand the howling despair that its entropic nature radiates, and Endurance is useful for resisting its effects to whatever degree is possible.

Perceiving the Umbra. At the heart of the power is the ability to sense the Umbra's presence. It is manifest to some degree in everything, all matter, all living beings, even constructs of pure thought or energy. Pure and unimpeachable perfection is only available in the most highest and rarified realm of the Eidolon. No matter how seemingly perfect something is, the Umbra is there in some measure, a flaw or gap in its design, a cancer that can be used to exploit and corrupt. An Umbra Master can sense the Umbra and can cause it to manifest in a fashion that is only visible to the Umbra Master, revealing its influence upon energy or physical matter, physical bodies, brick walls, etc.

Detecting Imperfections or Weaknesses. An Umbra Master can detect any flaw or imperfection within a thing (defined as a living being, a material object, a structure, a process, or even a mode of thought), and views that flaw, however minute, as an opportunity for influence. In practical terms, the Umbra Master "sees" the presence of the Umbra manifesting in a manner appropriate to



An Umbra Master can unmake reality.

the type of thing being examined.

A wall would show a minuscule crack or structural flaw, and a sword may show a weakness in the metal it is made of: a point at which, if struck, would shatter the blade. A computer program would show a potential security flaw or weakness that could be exploited with a virus, and a combatant might be revealed to have a not-entirely-healed wound, a bad knee, etc. An engine might have a slightly imperfect or poorly-manufactured part that can be easily forced to malfunction. Similarly, a magical shield might have a simple place where it could be destabilized. At the more abstract method, an Umbra Master might be able to demolish a philosophical position by sensing and exploiting any inherent weaknesses in the position being espoused.

The inescapable, ever-present influence of the Umbra is a bridge, an entry by which additional Umbra influence may be manifested and grow to outright corruption, transformation, or destabilization. The Umbra Master does not really learn to see the defects in all manner of items... they simply seek out the Umbra and see how it manifests.

Affecting Reality. An Umbra Master may use the Umbra to influence reality, essentially turning up the volume on the Umbra's influence and attempting to guide it in one of the desired directions. There are additional, more subtle methods of using the Umbra's influence, but those disciplines are not known to

most Umbra Masters and are instead secrets prized by the more powerful and skilled among their ranks. The most commonly-used methods are weakening reality, warping reality, or destabilizing reality, and are described below.

Weakening Reality. The Umbra can be evoked in something to weaken it, to create a point by which it can be exploited or otherwise affected through other means. This is a simple matter of perceiving the Umbra as it manifests in the item to be influenced, and then focusing on the Umbra itself, feeding Umbra energy into that flaw and intensifying it until the entire object becomes weaker and less stable. It takes time... the more “solid” or the weaker the Umbra influence, the more effort and time must be expended. Things that have been influenced by the Eidolon become much more difficult to manipulate, while the stuff of Gossamer reality is infinitely easier and more malleable. For this reason, many Umbra Masters prefer to remain in the Gossamer worlds, where their powers are much more potent.

Warping Reality. The Umbra can transform something, with enough of its influence brought to bear to serve as a mutating force. It can change part or the whole, with the difficulty and time being dependent upon how much control the Umbra Master wants. In this case, the item is shape-shifted out of its original configuration, a refutation of the intrinsic guidance of the Eidolon and its basic nature. This does not cause it to change the substance it is made of, or shift it from one thing into another type of useful thing... instead, it allows the Umbra Master to twist and distort reality, breaking it from its true shape and turning it into something inevitably less useful.

A gun might suddenly find all of its components and parts jammed, the metal twisting and warping to the point where it cannot fire and can barely be held comfortably, with pieces breaking or falling off where they’re forced out of their original shape and assembly. A living creature could suddenly find its limbs contorted and stretched, hideously and painfully realigned into some un-survivable shape. A wall made of bricks might see every brick bow and break, almost as if like rubber, separating and causing it to collapse in part or whole. A mind might be broken in a similar fashion, rationality skewed and the channels of thought waylaid and misled, sent down maddening paths.

This sort of power requires a struggle of Psyche versus the Psyche of a conscious, living being if the thing to be changed is along mental or psychological lines, or the Umbra Master’s Psyche against the opposing force’s Endurance if it is a physical transformation. Items and creatures of power may be less susceptible to the corruption of the Umbra: see “Artifacts & Creatures” on page 54 for details. This transformation is rarely entirely predictable, though something is almost never improved with the influence of the Umbra.

Uncontrolled Transformation. In a more advanced form of warping reality, described above, the Umbra Master can plant a seed of the Umbra that will grow, feeding it with corruption and chaos and allowing the Umbra to run havoc within the thing being corrupted. Without any guidance or control, the item affected will transform at some fundamental, primal level in an unpredictable

fashion, into something new or something unexpected. In most cases, this is to a lesser, and more corrupted form. A living being might conceivably be reduced to carbon, a wall reduced to rubble, or an engine instantly overrun with rust and corrosion; the severity of this reaction can sometimes be a surprise even to the Umbra Master. It is much more taxing to evoke this level of Umbra influence, a prolonged expenditure of energy and will that drains Psyche and Endurance in equal measure.

Destabilizing Reality. The Umbra Master can cause reality to be destabilized, pushing with the Umbra until it passes a tipping point and rapidly comes apart. This is a highly dangerous course of action that causes the subject to lose the influence of the Eidolon altogether, usually discorporating or otherwise losing all coherent form. It can cause Gossamer reality to come apart completely, and can weaken real matter to the point where it simply collapses or otherwise crumbles. Explosions or violent discorporation are not altogether rare, and many cases of spontaneous combustion or unexplained explosions are the result of the Umbra allowed to run amok.

Umbra Defense. The Umbra Master can tap into the Umbra’s influence within their very own bodies and/or minds, a terrible and fearsome evocation of this chaotic, turbulent force. In essence, the Umbra Master uses the Umbra as a reverse shield, pulling any intended attacks against the Umbra Master into its annihilative essence. Spells, physical attacks, etc. simply vanish into it, as if it were a black hole, a singularity of nihilistic force that must be resisted by the Psyche or Endurance of an attacker if the attack is along direct lines. This is an extremely visible and obvious form of defense, causing immense distress to all living beings and lesser matter when it is evoked.

Opposing the Eidolon. The Umbra can also be brought to bear against the Eidolon, focusing its entropic force against the Platonic ideal the Eidolon represents. This ability aids the Umbra Master in withstanding any effects an Eidolon Master may be trying to impose, such as any attempts at editing, guiding, or realigning the reality that makes up the Umbra Master! This is akin to an irresistible force being brought against an immobile object, and may prove devastating to both parties if the Umbra and Eidolon are put into opposition in a serious fashion.

Personal Transformation. Once attuned to the Umbra, an Umbra Master’s body is tinged with a corruptive force that causes it to shift from its original state indefinitely, a state of eternal flux and discorporation. This is extremely visible to those who are able to sense magical forces or power, and it screams the Umbra Master’s nature loudly and clearly to anyone attuned to the Eidolon. The Umbra’s presence in the Umbra Master’s being means that their material body will constantly be in a slight state of degradation and change, rarely stable. This manifests in a variety of ways, listed below.

Shape-Changing. An Umbra Master is able to transform their physical shape into that of another living being, using the Umbra to warp the Eidolon’s pattern within them into an altogether different form. Umbra Masters try to assemble a “wardrobe” of alternate forms they’re comfortable assuming, in addition

to “on the fly” changes like shifting their height, coloration, growing hair and claws, etc. Simple cosmetic changes are easy, and the Umbra Master is generally able to accomplish these shape changes without much difficulty, but to grow new organs and functionality is more complex and requires a bit of time. Changing into something radically different (something that can fly, or one that breathes underwater) takes practice and effort, and can occasionally lead to mishaps or bizarre chimerical forms if the Umbra Master is distracted. Assuming the form of a specific being is extremely difficult and contrary to the Umbra’s influence: the last thing it wants is to duplicate an existing form. It is not impossible, but more exhausting and difficult to maintain than a simple shape-shift into something other than the Umbra Master’s original appearance.

Physical Adaptability. As an interesting side effect, the instability caused in the Umbra Master’s body by the presence of the Umbra makes it more susceptible to the forces of rapid evolution. When an Umbra Master’s body is placed into a threatening situation (such as without air to breathe, low or vacuum pressure, poisoned, irradiated, etc.), the Umbra breaks down the ideal state of the Umbra Master’s body, accelerates its response time, and allows it to rapidly evolve and adapt to the changing surroundings. In the case of breathing, lungs can become more efficient, can utilize previously-stored oxygen in the body, or can process other gasses for sustenance. This is usually an unconscious, involuntary response, but Umbra Masters can activate it willingly when expecting hazards. Endurance is the guiding Attribute for this ability.

Psychological Adaptability. A side-effect to having the ever-corrupting element of the Umbra present at all times within an Umbra Master’s mind and body is that they are psychologically-adaptable to almost any mental adversity, having something altogether worse residing inside them. This allows the Umbra Master to readily deal with psychological trauma, such as torture, immense personal loss, horrific sights, psychic assault, and other brain-melting forces with relative aplomb. For one who has the ultimate expression of entropy burning a hole within their brain, nothing the material world has to offer can be that much worse.

Insanity and Amnesia. The flip side to the extremely adaptable nature of an Umbra Master’s psychological makeup is that they are highly prone to eccentricity or even outright insanity, occasionally losing specific memories of a time, place, or phase of their life. Just as the Umbra is a hole in the pattern of reality, its influence can be a black spot in the character’s memory, a gap in perception. This can be a minor and voluntary aspect of an Umbra Master’s personality, role-played willingly by the player, or it can occasionally be evoked by the gamemaster, the equivalent of a “blind spot” where the player character is either entirely or partially unaware of uncontrolled trains of thought, colored perceptions, or uncharacteristic behavior. This is not an overriding element of the player character, but should be a potential threat or recurring minor element, manifested either as a minor and ongoing trait, or by occasional blackouts and completely unconscious, crazed behavior.

Involuntary Shape-Changing. The Umbra Master’s body is constantly shifting, continually mutating between shapes. It is a rare Umbra Master who looks the same year after year, and the more powerful an Umbra Master is, the more rapid their shape changing is. An Umbra Master’s physical appearance continually evolves in minor and sometimes dramatic fashion over the course of years, months, or even weeks: color shifts with hair, skin, and eyes; facial features slowly lengthen, broaden, shorten, or change proportions; apparent age may shift up or down; height, musculature, and body type may shift; etc. It is possible to return to one’s original shape, but this frequently requires some expenditure of effort, and for this reason Umbra Masters rarely bother trying unless dealing with others: change and transformation are the status quo.

Adaptation, Evolution, and Immortality. As a result of this continual transformative cycle, the Umbra Master becomes highly adaptive to forces that would normally harm or otherwise weaken a living being. The Umbra’s presence in their being fundamentally overrides lesser concerns and ailments, making the Umbra Master functionally immune to disease, illness, the effects of aging, as well as highly adaptive against poisons, radiation, or other such debilitating forces.

Aging. As the Umbra Master slowly changes, their physical body may seemingly go from young to old, but then may reverse and get younger, with no connection to the actual passage of time. An Umbra Master may look entirely different after a few centuries (and may not even be the same gender!) but their apparent age is of no relation to their actual lifespan.

Regeneration. An amazing and unpredictable aspect of the element of Umbra Mastery is that occasionally, when the Umbra Master is injured seriously enough to cause near-certain death, the Umbra Master can surrender utterly to the Umbra and allow it to run wild as a survival tactic. When this is done, the Umbra Master’s body “regenerates” entirely. Not in the “it repairs itself as it once was” fashion, but in the literal definition of “it is generated anew.” This can cause the Umbra Master to dramatically change appearance and even personality.

It is not a “get out of death free” card, as death is still a threat to the Umbra Master: instead, this spontaneous transformation occurs when the Umbra Master is brought almost to the brink of death and survives, and requires the conscious release of the Umbra’s influence within the Umbra Master’s body. The process takes several hours and when it is complete, the Umbra Master will be weak as a baby, disoriented, and vulnerable, though in an unharmed new body. In some ways it can be a state worse than simply suffering the effects of injury and hoping for recovery.

Passage Through Doors. The Doors of the Grand Stair are made of a higher form of reality than the Gossamer worlds, and are incredibly resistant to the forces of the Umbra (and, for that matter, the Eidolon) within that world. Thus, Doors are glaringly obvious to any Umbra Master as examples of reality not subject to the entropy of the Umbra. Due to this, Umbra Masters are able to detect the true nature of Doors from nearby proximity, usually dependent upon the Psyche of the Umbra Master. Once

the Umbra Master has located a Door, it can be opened to the Grand Stair by evoking the Umbra against it, causing the Door's impregnability to be weakened momentarily. If the Door resists opening (such as being locked or sealed), the Umbra Master can destroy that resistance. Doing so requires an immense amount of power, drawing upon the Master's Psyche and Endurance. Depending on the nature and strength of the Door's resistance, this may leave the Master weakened for a time. Using the Umbra is a crude and messy means of opening a Door: it gets the job done, but will alert anyone with the sense to detect it that something of a magical nature has transpired, and may even bring the attention of unwanted denizens of nearby Doors. Once inside the Grand Stair, an Umbra Master can open any Doors that are not otherwise barred, or can bring the Umbra to bear against sealed Doors, to mixed results.

Wrighting [30 Points]

Travelers embarking upon the Grand Stair and crossing into infinite Gossamer worlds have encountered many strange and incredible things, magic powers great and petty, and met beings of unimaginable variety. Most importantly, though, is that they met one another. Some became enemies, and others close allies. There came a great need to communicate with one another across the veils of Shadow separating the worlds, speaking mind-to-mind and distinguishing one version of an individual from the countless Gossamer doubles.

To meet this need, the earliest sorcerers to traverse the Grand Stair—independently and collaboratively—devoted themselves to the arcane discipline that eventually became the magic of Wrighting. A unique fusion of art, enchantment, and idolatry, Wrighting allows the creation of a likeness of a particular being, instilling in it a magic link by which that being can be contacted.

The principles behind Wrighting were drawn from other sources: Sorcery, Invocation, and even worship. History and myth throughout the Gossamer worlds describe instances where created images link with living beings, from the portrait of Dorian Gray, tarot cards depicting immortal beings, or even statues that serve as avatars for gods. Prior methods of creating such links were fruitless, unreliable, or disastrous, rarely working or so limited that they could not be replicated. Many of these earlier means required magic rituals or even living sacrifices to be effective. By contrast, the discipline of Wrighting offers a consistent, ritual process of creating reliable links between an item and a living being.

The resulting item created by Wrighting is an Icon. Icons take many forms, but all are fashioned to resemble a particular being, unique throughout all of the Gossamer worlds. An Icon is a mystic link, almost a cross-dimensional telephone number. Once created, an Icon can be used by anyone who has any sort of magical ability (possession of any power, or at least a Superior-ranked Psyche), but those who use this power to create Icons are called Wrights.

Icons can be made in almost any format that allows a relatively accurate depiction of the subject. The semblance does not have to



A tablet in use as an Icon, focused on Drake, Lord of the Falling Wall—a Gossamer Lord.

be photographic, but cannot be so abstract that it could represent anyone. Wrights fashion Icons as stained glass windows, paintings, illustrations (loose or bound in a book), statues, graven images such as on keys or coins, totems or talismans, or even sculpt them as figurines. A novel set might be made into the shape of chess pieces, arranged on a board.

Generally, the more portable an Icon, the more useful, but there is nothing preventing a Wright from making more than one version of an Icon: something more solid for stationary use and another lighter one for travel. Electronic or similar Icons can be created, but there is something unique about the process that renders them unable to be easily duplicated.

Using an Icon is simple: observe the Icon, lay hands upon it, and concentrate on the being it depicts. The subject of the Icon will feel a presence, almost as if being addressed, and can “answer” by opening their mind to the contact. Once established, the contact can be used for verbal communication, psychic communication (if both parties are able to do so), and even provide a psychic link through which psychic combat, Sorcery, Cantrips, Invocation or other powers can be directed.

The greatest advantage, however, is that either party in the communication can “reach through” and make physical contact with the other, and step through, bridging the veil of Shadow between Gossamer worlds instantaneously. This form of travel allows for a limited number of others in direct contact with the subject to be brought along, and must be consensual between at least the two parties involved in the communication.

Icons are not always reliable—they can be blocked by psychic barriers and may not even work in certain Gossamer worlds—but despite these limits they are the most effective means of communicating between worlds.

A unique feature of an Icon is that it becomes fairly resistant to damage once it is completed. An Icon is proof against the effects of conventional damage (fire, water, etc.), far more than the medium it was created using would otherwise indicate. Icons are not indestructible: they can be damaged by serious evocation of magical force (the Eidolon or Umbra brought against one, for example), or harmed by powerful Artifacts or Creatures capable of damaging toughened substances. However, they are supernaturally resistant to normal damage. Even an electronic Icon will survive an electromagnetic pulse or will resist being erased. Higher, more advanced and arcane manipulations of Wrighting allow the Wright to use an Icon in a fashion not unlike a “voodoo doll,” causing harm to the subject by harming the Icon, though this ability should be developed with the gamemaster’s approval.

Visually, when an Icon is in use, it appears as if “alive” to the user... statues will appear to speak and pictures will move as if animated. To the receiver, the presence of the caller will appear hazy, almost ghostlike, the semblance of an apparition rendered in the same fashion as the Icon itself. For example, for the caller, an Icon resembling a stained glass window would appear to move and speak, while the receiver on the other end of the communication would get a faint impression of light shining through colored glass.

To magically-sensitive characters, an Icon will be obvious as a magical artifact of some sort, charged with magic energy. Non-sensitive beings may get a strange tingle (or not) handling an Icon, but for those with power, an Icon will give off an almost-electric sensation. This does not mean that the Icon’s nature will be revealed: just that it has a magic quality about it.

Favored Attributes for Wrighting. Psyche is the most useful Attribute for Wrighting. It requires extensive perception and attention to the fine details of the being depicted in the Icon.

Wrighting Abilities

Creating Icons. Wrights can create Icons, magical talismans that can create a psychic link between the subject and the item itself. As described above, an Icon can be created through a number of mediums: illustration, painting, stained glass, electronic imagery, etching, sculpture, wood-carving, etc. The materials are the same, and an Icon takes roughly twice as long to create as a nonmagical version of the same item. The process must be uninterrupted, requiring considerable concentration and artistry while the Icon is created. Icons can only be created depicting subjects known to the Wright: creating one based on an unfamiliar subject may not work at all, or may contact a Gossamer world doppelganger of the desired subject. It is not necessary for the subject of an Icon to allow for its creation, or even be aware an Icon is being made.

Impromptu Icons. One-use Icons can be constructed quickly in a less-permanent fashion; quick abstract sketches or impressions that allow the Wright to contact the subject in a hurry. These impromptu Icons do not need to be as exact, and take only half the time to create as a regular Icon (essentially the same time to create as the “regular” item), but the disadvantage is twofold: they do not last beyond a single use, and they can only be used by the specific Wright. Another Wright could, when given a “used” impromptu Icon, determine who it depicted, but could not duplicate that Icon in any form. An impromptu Icon has none of the resistance to damage of a traditional Icon, and requires considerably more concentration and exertion of Psyche to use. When on the receiving end of a contact using an impromptu Icon, communication will seem distant and lacking the usual clarity.

Icon Defense. When attacked psychically or by some other means (Sorcery, Invocation, etc.) a Wright can use his own Icon to create a powerful psychic bulwark through an evocation of self, backed with the magic power of the Icons themselves. This requires intense concentration and access to an Icon depicting the Wright (whether a self-portrait or an Icon made by another), and can be maintained for as long as Endurance holds out. The more powerful the forces defended against, the more difficult and draining this power is.

Identifying Icons. Wrights are able to instinctually recognize any item that is an Icon, and sense the identity of the being it is linked to. They are also so sensitive to any contacts being made through an Icon that a Wright can tell who is contacting them before accepting and opening the communication.

Creating Icon-Powered Artifacts. The rules for **ARTIFACT & CREATURES** (page 54) describe the possibility of creating such items that are charged with, or evoke, powers such as Eidolon, Umbra, Sorcery, or even Wrighting. Though the rules leave the governance of such creations in the hands of the gamemaster, the Wrighting power is essential for any Icon-powered Artifacts or Creatures.

Invocation [20 Points]

Every living being and some powerful magic items have a True Name, the utmost expression of its essence and innermost nature. A True Name is a unique moniker in the mystical proto-language that has existed since the making of the Grand Stair, and perhaps prior. This language—variously called Orphic, Enochian, Logos, Shabda, and Mabrahoring, among other names—underlies all of matter and life, and most languages spoken anywhere in the Gossamer worlds are derivations of it. A True Name in this tongue is a special bit of knowledge, almost the equivalent of a cosmic serial number, a multi-layered fragment of information that must be perceived at several metaphysical and intellectual levels to be fully comprehended.

Mastery of True Names is called Invocation, and those who use this power are Invokers. Invokers can divine a being’s True Name, study the name to learn about its owner, and use the True Name to communicate, compel or even conjure the owner. Like

Wrighting and Sorcery, Invocation takes on many forms in the Gossamer worlds, with variant magical traditions specializing in particular forms. Some of these traditions are entirely based on magic circles, reference books, and sacred markings, while others are entirely oral and take on the form of songs or chants in which True Names are learned as if verses of a song.

These names are for the most part secret: few beings know their own True Names, yet any living being will recognize and respond to its own True Name if that Name is uttered. It is a mark of extreme trust to share one's True Name with another, and an innate sense of self-preservation prevents most beings from sharing their True Names openly. If a being knows its own True Name, this knowledge is almost always a closely-guarded secret. No being with a Psyche ranked greater than Paragon can be forced to reveal its own True Name.

Physical items with True Names are rare and often magical in nature. During character creation, it is possible to purchase an artifact or creature with a True Name (see page 52 of **CHAPTER FIVE: CREATURES AND ARTIFACTS**), which confers certain benefits and defensive qualities. There are two types of items with True Names: those paid for with character points, and artifacts of legend from the Gossamer worlds. Knowing the True Name of an item gives the Invoker an understanding of its history, its nature, and any inherent magic qualities it possesses. In some cases, the True Name of an item must be known in order to use it, such as a magic sword who will tolerate no wielder other than one who has such knowledge. The abilities gained by knowing the True Name of an item are entirely dependent upon the abilities of the item itself, and should be determined by the gamemaster and influenced by its capabilities (sentience, movement, magic abilities, nature, etc.).

An Invoker begins play knowing about a dozen True Names of various beings, either encountered prior or learned through research. These names can be established at the time of character creation or can be defined during the course of play. The gamemaster should be the ultimate arbiter of whether a particular True Name is known, and can veto any preposterous coincidences (such as knowing the True Name of a powerful Dwimmerlaik lord just met, for example).

Who and What Has True Names? As stated above, every living being has one, including the player characters, and even some magical items of significant prowess possess them.

Favored Attributes for Invocation. Psyche is the dominant Attribute for using Invocation.

Invocation Abilities

Divining a True Name. The primary and most basic Invocation ability is determining a being's True Name. Without this ability, magicians are forced to seek out True Names from grimoires or must bargain directly for them from knowledgeable entities, a process filled with hazards and prone to failure, and lacking the intrinsic understanding of that True Name, just as learning a phrase in another language can be learned and used

without understanding it.

To divine a True Name, the Invoker must spend several days in contemplation and research, concentrating on the being in question, attempting to understand the secrets and truths of its innermost nature. The more powerful the entity whose True Name is being sought, the longer the process will take. For a minor being whose True Name is not protected by magical wards, it might take only a day of such research, while a powerful sorcerer or divine being whose True Name is a closely guarded secret may take weeks—months, even—to learn.

For a quick rule of thumb, a simple True Name (a child, creature, or person whose life has been relatively uneventful) will take a single day to divine. Learning the name of an older person, minor magic being, or someone with some degree of magic talent could take a few days to a week, and complex and powerful beings such as Gossamer lords and ladies, powerful sorcerers, divine beings, and hugely powerful magical creatures could take weeks, or even months, if the names can be divined at all. Objects with True Names should be judged in an equivalent fashion, with minor charmed items having quick and easy-to-learn names, while major arcane artifacts taking the upper end of the scale, time-wise. This time can be interspersed with other activities, but the research must be dedicated and cannot be performed consecutively with other activities, such as maintaining spells, any other course of study, or the demands of employment.

Also, True Names may be a form of currency among beings of power, and could be traded or given as favors. It takes no time to learn a True Name from another, but if the owner of the Name knows its True Name, it will become aware that their Name is being used.

Understanding a True Name. Once a True Name is known, it must then be understood, and once it is understood in its fullness, it provides a key to knowing aspects of the being's character. The initial information is relatively superficial in nature: the being's identity and gender are all that can be gleaned from the name, though once the True Name is known, the Invoker will be able to identify the being by sight, no matter what material disguise is in place. When the True Name is fully understood, the Invoker gains a sense of what the being is like, such as its origins, personality, and any strong forces influencing the subject's life. Generally, a True Name can be understood in about half the time it took to research. If the name was not researched, then assume a number of days relative to the being's complexity and lifespan: long-lived, ancient and complex beings of power would take weeks, while a wild animal or relatively simple being's True Name would take only a day or so to fully comprehend.

Concealing a True Name. Invokers inevitably wish to keep their own True Names a secret, and a necessary technique for self-preservation is the concealment of one's own True Name. There are several methods, roughly equivalent in effectiveness. They range from shrouding the Name in random characters, attempting to "scrub it" from existence through mystical means, or by layering another similar True Name over it as a diversion. When these techniques are put into place, anyone who is unaware

that the True Name is concealed is simply misled. A character with a high Psyche, or another Invoker, may be aware that a True Name has been concealed, and uttering or attempting to use the True Name requires a success in psychic combat. It takes four times as long to divine a True Name that has been concealed. Using an incorrect or obfuscated True Name has no effect whatsoever.

Warding a True Name. Another trick of the trade is to ward one's True Name, using its syllables to place a magical effect (a spell) upon the Name itself, using the power of that magic spell to activate against a would-be Invoker when the name is uttered. This ability requires that the Invoker be able to use Sorcery (see page 40), and is essentially the process of hanging a spell upon one's own True Name. When the True Name is spoken, the spell goes off; no matter who has spoken it or where they may be (assuming the spell was designed to do this). This is a magic booby trap, obvious and unobvious. A skilled Invoker should instantly recognize a spell-warded True Name, though to any neophyte or meddler a warding True Name can be catastrophic.

Awareness of One's Own True Name. Invokers always know their own True Names, as these are the first they learn. This follows a period of self-reflection and meditation, learning the basic principles of Invocation and how to fully understand True Names. The time is roughly equivalent to that of divining a True Name (above), though the Invoker automatically and instantly understands one's own True Name. An Invoker will also become aware if or when another being learns their True Name, though this is a simple awareness, almost like an alert. However, the Invoker will not know the identity of the one who learned the Name. This awareness will occur to the Invoker at the exact moment the True Name is learned, and is frequently a signal for the Invoker to begin preparing against any future magical assault using their True Name. Knowing one's own True Name is incredibly useful: it can even be evoked defensively (see below), and used in sorcery spells to aid the Invoker. Such effects can increase the efficacy of a magical effect or Psyche Attribute by as much as a rank in a psychic conflict, but using one's own True Name in such a fashion comes with the risk of revealing it.

Using a True Name. A True Name's worth as a bargaining chip notwithstanding, the real value of knowing one is putting it to use. Magical traditions throughout the Gossamer worlds use True Names in rituals and evocations. Some of these are paltry and ineffectual versions of Invocation, allowing the users a glimmering of the true power the True Names possess.

Following are the primary uses a True Name can be put to:

Calling. If a True Name is uttered aloud anywhere within the Grand Stair, the owner of that True Name will hear it, however faintly. If the being is asleep, they may hear the Name called in a dream, and if awake, it could sound like a whisper or a distant shout, depending on how it is vocalized. If the speaker is within the same Gossamer world, the True Name will be heard distinctly and with a sense of "presence," no matter how far the speaker is, and if the voice is calling from a nearby Gossamer world, it will be muffled and indistinct, though clearly an identification. No further message can be relayed, but the speaker's identity will be

obvious if it is known, and Invokers of sufficiently high Psyche will recognize the speaker's basic name and identity, even if it is someone they do not know. Using a True Name in this fashion is instantaneous.

Summoning. If a being's True Name is known, that being can be summoned to the Invoker's presence, no matter where that being may be. Summoning takes a number of hours equal to the days spent divining the True Name, and can be handled through the construction of magical circles, deep meditation, chanting and song, or some other means desired by the Invoker. The summons creates in the subject a strong compulsion to journey to the Invoker, no matter how far away. If this compulsion is unwanted, it must be resisted with a psychic conflict between the Invoker and the summoned being. If the summoned party resists successfully, the compulsion is dismissed and no further summons will work until circumstances have changed, such as some additional influence being brought to bear. Unless the summoned being has some means of teleportation, dimensional travel, or other paranormal means of movement, it will use conventional methods of travel. If the Invoker moves from the place the summoning was initiated, the sense of compelled direction will change to suit the current location of the Invoker. The compulsion instilled by the summoning lasts until it is dismissed, or a number of days equal to the hours spent in the summons, and it vanishes immediately once the summoned party arrives in the presence of the Invoker. There is no compulsion for the summoned to behave favorably towards the summoner, and Invokers are advised to prepare for the worst.

Using in Magic. As depicted in traditional magic throughout the Gossamer worlds, knowing a True Name makes it easier to cast magic upon the named one: the magical equivalent of a secret passage through any magical defenses the Named being possesses. Using a True Name in conjunction with another power (such as the Eidolon or Umbra) can give a distinctly effective edge, bumping the Invoker up a rank or more against the Named opponent. Using a True Name in Sorcery serves as a psychic contact with the intended target. Using a True Name against mundane foes without ranking in Psyche can be catastrophic, allowing any intended magical influence its full effect. A True Name can be used defensively as well, to strengthen a targeted magical defense against a particular foe and making any wards or counter-spells against them that much more effective.

Banishment. Knowing a being's True Name is not just a means of calling: it can be a useful tool in dismissing the being if it is unwanted. With the use of another power or even sorcery, the True Name can be invoked to specifically create a sense of unwelcome towards the named being. Just as a summoning calls the Named one towards the Invoker, a banishment causes them to unwillingly withdraw from it. Resisting this pits the Invoker and the Named subject into psychic combat. This measure of banishment is entirely dependent upon the Psyche of the Invoker: a low-Ranked Psyche will only compel a being to leave the immediate proximity, while a high-Ranked Psyche may cause the target to desire to flee the vicinity or even the Gossamer world.



Even if sorceries are not in your offensive repertoire, you can bet your rivals use them.

Evoking. A True Name can be evoked to produce a potential result in another being or environment. For this to work properly, the intended target must have some sort of strong affinity (love, hate, a blood relation, etc.) towards the subject of the evoked True Name. For example, an Invoker might call upon the True Names of angels to repel or harm demons, or call upon the names of mighty elves of old while creeping through a baleful, demon-spider haunted cavern whose very stones radiate evil. Similarly, evoking a True Name might give heart to those favorable to the subject of that Name, bolstering their morale and, depending on the power of the Named being, offering some minor blessing or even the removal of a curse. In Attribute-based conflicts, evoking a suitable name may boost the Invoker's Psyche (or relevant Attribute) up a rank, a significant advantage when both sides are well-matched.

Compelling Obedience. A traditional use for a True Name is compelling obedience, a demand made by using the True Name of the target within a command or spell. This can be done overtly, such as an actual vocal threat to the intended target if a service is not rendered, or it can be done more subtly, with the Invoker concealing the use of the True Name into a geas, a magical compulsion causing the subject to behave in a desired fashion. A geas will automatically work against beings of Average or Superior Psyche, and requires the Invoker be successful in a psychic conflict against Paragon or ranked Psyches. Creating a geas requires a True Name, demands explicit instructions, and takes a number of hours to create equal to the number of days

spent divining the True Name. The more severe the conditions of a geas, the more resistant the subject will be to it. It is difficult to compel a strong mind to murder, for example, if the subject was not already inclined towards such an act. A vocal threat, on the other hand, is simply that and does not involve a psychic conflict. As such, it can be ignored, and it is up to the Invoker to follow through on any implied repercussions.

Binding. One of the most powerful and drastic means of utilizing a True Name is binding or enslaving a being to the Invoker's will. This is almost always a hostile action done with the full resistance of the named being, and will be resisted with a Psyche versus Psyche conflict. It requires a number of hours in preparation equal to the number of days required to understand the name. If the being named loses the Psychic combat, it is bound to the will of the Invoker for a period of time determined by the gamemaster, based on the relative differences in Psyche: if the Psyches are closely matched, the period of binding will be contentious and short, and if there is a considerable difference between the Attributes the period of binding will be longer and the binding more resolute. As with compelling obedience (above), any commands given during binding that are in conflict with the subject's normal tendencies may spur a new psychic conflict, if the bound party wishes to break the binding. The binding can be dismissed at any time by the Invoker, and will remain in effect only for as long as the Invoker maintains awareness of it and desires to keep it going. The Invoker can sleep and act normally while keeping a subject so bound, but, for example, would lose

control if the Invoker suffered amnesia or a significant psychic trauma.

Purification. True Names are not just useful against other living beings: an Invoker aware of their own True Name can use it to cleanse their own existence, using the True Name as a purifying force that removes any negative magical or corruptive spiritual effects. It can be powerful resistance against spells of compulsion, befuddlement, or even amnesia. Using a True Name in this fashion is the magical equivalent of focusing on oneself and one's core identity, and using that as a renewed focus on self, or even as a guiding light in a time of confusion. Such an action is relatively quick and takes only a number of minutes equal to the days it would take to divine the True Name.

Changing a True Name. This rare and unusual process can only be attempted against beings whose Attributes are all at Paragon, Superior, or Average rank. No being with an Attribute on the Attribute Ladder may be affected by this ability. To change a True Name, the Invoker uses the power to rewrite or reconfigure a being's True Name at a metaphysical level. This change will eventually be reflected throughout its physical being and emotional makeup, in as subtle or profound a fashion as the changed Name is. Though the change of the Name itself may have little effect than to confuse others who know only the original version of the True Name, changes to the being's nature can be more fundamental, causing it to shift personality, behavior, and even physical form, through self-intervention or through a gradual biological shift.

This is a complex ritual that can only be attempted with the complicity of the named being, or by an Invoker with an overwhelming superiority in Psyche and Endurance (and even then, a psychic conflict must be won). Changing a True Name takes a number of days equal to the time that would normally be required to understand the True Name, and requires uninterrupted concentration and full access to the intended subject of the change. Once this is done, the being or item is in effect a different being, and its original True Name has no effect on it. Learning the original True Name when it has been changed requires a number of weeks equal to the days spent to divine the original True Name.

Cantrips [5 Points]

Though the Eidolon and Umbra represent the major powers in the universe, lesser magic involving the shaping and manipulation of reality are used throughout the Gossamer worlds. These powers do not involve tremendous changes in the nature of reality, but instead are minor adjustments, little "tweaks" to the temporary state of things. These subtle manipulations of pure will are less complex than actual spells, and are called cantrips. In many magical traditions, cantrips are the first stage of magical initiation, the type of magic taught to apprentices. Some magicians lack the aptitude to ever learn anything more than cantrips.

To use a cantrip, your character must simply ready the cantrip mentally, focus on the intended target, and concentrate with

a burst of Psyche. Cantrips cannot be combined, other than canceling each other out. Cantrips are always instantaneous, lasting anywhere from a split-second to several seconds, but rarely longer. Their effects are for the most part subtle, and bystanders who are unaware of magic or power will usually think of them as freak occurrences, or simple unexplained oddities. Anyone with any magical ability will instantly recognize a cantrip for what it is.

Each time a cantrip is used it drains the vitality of the caster. Characters with Paragon Endurance will barely notice the effort, but anything less, such as Superior or Average Endurance, will definitely feel the loss of vitality. A character with Superior-ranked Endurance could use a few cantrips without getting too tired, but a Average-ranked character would be exhausted after using one or two. Even the toughest characters should not use cantrips lightly, as the effort to cast one might prove fatal in the middle of a complex or dangerous activity.

Favored Attributes for Cantrips. As cantrips are powered entirely by the caster's will and do not draw from external sources of power, Psyche is the most important Attribute for using them. Psyche provides the relative strength of a cantrip, but Endurance is important to ensure cantrips do not drain the energy of the caster.

Learning Cantrips. The most common usage of a cantrip is as a word of power, a short vocal instruction that channels Psyche to perform a single task. Cantrips do not always have to be single words: they can be arcane gestures, martial actions, even verses in a song. Whatever form they take, they must require some expenditure of effort beyond a mental command. Cantrips are limited in range to the caster's self and immediate vicinity, no more than a few yards at best.

When this power is chosen, your character can select a total of five cantrips to begin play with. These cantrips cannot be changed out or substituted with another, and will remain with your character until death. Additional cantrips can be purchased during character creation or advancement at a cost of 1 character point apiece (see page 5 for more information).

Players can invent their own cantrips if they desire, using the ones provided below for guidelines, but any new cantrip must be approved by the gamemaster before it can be learned. Any new cantrips should be similar to the ones below: simple, instantaneous, and focused in scope. If it takes more than a few words to define, has more than one stage, or involves multiple targets, it's probably outside the scope of what a cantrip can do.

Opposing Cantrips. Cantrips are pretty simple, which is a strength and a drawback. The great thing about them is that they're quick, easy to use, and work pretty much everywhere. One drawback to cantrips is that they're rarely much use against the big powers, such as Eidolon and Umbra. They're also sort of "one size fits all," without any finesse or adjustability. Additionally, once a foe knows what cantrips your character has, it is simple work to devise a counter-spell or other contingency against it.

Twenty Seven Cantrips

The provided names are simply examples of what the cantrips might sound like as they are uttered, as most cantrip-users choose their own names or methods of casting them.

Charm ("Canto!"). This creates a minor and temporary enchantment upon an item or being. The enchantment has little effect other than to make the thing appear magical to senses capable of detecting magic energy, though it can be used to enchant an item or being for a spell or ritual requiring a magical object or being. The larger the being, the shorter the effects of this cantrip last, and conversely, the smaller, the more the cantrip remains in effect.

Clarity ("Colo!"). This cantrip provides a moment of intellectual clarity, when otherwise confused, dazed, or befuddled. It is useful against drunkenness, magical confusion, or any condition that hinders rational thought. It lasts only a few moments, before the original state returns.

Dampen ("Opprimo!"). This cantrip allows your character to cause an existing process to momentarily dampen or falter in intensity, despite normal behavior. It might cause a flame to gutter, or electrical current to suddenly ebb.

Dim ("Caligo!"). This cantrip dims the light in an area momentarily, causing shadows to deepen and any available light source to become faint to feeble.

Eidolon Negation ("Repudio Eidolon!"). As one of the two great powers in the universe, the Eidolon is not typically affected by a mere magic trick, but this cantrip allows the user to momentarily cancel or block the effects of the Eidolon within their body. This does not extend to clothing, gear, or anything external: it simply stalls an Eidolon-based effect on the user.

Flare ("Clareo!"). Useful for quick illumination of an area, the Flare cantrip offers a momentary burst of dazzling light, enough to fully illuminate a small or medium space. Flare lasts for a few seconds, then fades rapidly. The light can come in a variety of colors or intensities, but it is not bright enough to do much more than temporarily surprise an attacker. Many magicians customize this power to create signature uses, with a particular pattern or color to the illumination.

Focus ("Conligo!"). This cantrip quickens the spirit of the caster, giving them a sudden surge of Psyche. This can possibly tilt the balance for evenly- or closely-matched contests of Psyche, or if well-timed, can help provide extra protection against an incoming psychic assault.

Foul ("Inquino!"). This cantrip will cause the subject to become inedible or otherwise impure and unusable, whether it be food or drink, a chemical substance, or even a medicine. It will curdle milk, taint water, and cause fresh food to spoil. It can also desecrate sacred substances like holy water, and even cause poison to lose its efficacy.

Fracture ("Fatisco!"). Though it is not anywhere so powerful as the Umbra ability to cause things to lose structural integrity, Fracture allows your character to cause a sudden weakness or flaw in a physical item or object, whether it be a window to be cracked, a glass to be shattered, a door-frame to splinter, or a rope to fray.

Glitch ("Dirimo!"). When directed at a technological device with moving parts, such as an electrical engine, a computer, telephone, etc. this cantrip will create a momentary malfunction, causing it to fail to work momentarily. An electronic signal will become garbled, a circuit will fail to be completed, etc. For a larger device, the cantrip will merely cause a sputter or quick failure of function, but a smaller item might completely seize up and need to be rebooted, etc. This condition is not permanent and goes away after a few moments.

Grasp ("Capio"). Usually accompanied by a physical motion with a hand, this cantrip gives a slight physical shove or tug to the targeted item, structure, or living being. It is not enough to push a target over, but could potentially cause the subject to lose balance in a chaotic situation, or it could potentially knock something out of a target's hands if it is being held loosely.

Invigorate ("Roboro"). This cantrip gives a quick charge of energy to another living being, almost like a metaphysical shot of adrenaline. In game terms, it represents a sudden burst of Endurance, enough to jump up one rank for a few seconds. The amount of energy given is enough to potentially re-start the heart of a dying character or give someone a bit of vitality when fatigue has set in. It can't offset wounds, or bring the dead back to life, but the sudden surge of life-force might confuse a zombie or momentarily quench the appetite of a hungry entity like an Erebus (page 145) or other energy vampire.

Jam ("Haesito!"). When directed at a door lock, a hinge, gears, or anything with interlocking components or pieces that move against one another, this cantrip causes them to inexplicably slip and become jammed. This might temporarily cause a crossbow or pistol to jam, a door-lock to freeze, a winch to suddenly stick, etc. The effect lasts only a second or two, and does not do any permanent damage to the targeted item.

Loosen ("Explico!"). The Loosen cantrip causes any knot, buckle, or fastener to become loose for a moment, allowing someone to take advantage of the interval and untie or otherwise unfasten it. The cantrip can apply to something as abstract as a pulley or fan belt, or a rope tied around your character's hands. It won't completely unravel anything or completely cause it to become undone, but will give a slight window of opportunity to pull the fastening loose.

Mana ("Animus!"). This cantrip creates a sudden pool of mana, or magical energy, that can be used to boost another spell or magical power other than those based on the Eidolon or Umbra.

Nullify ("Con-vello!"). This cantrip lets the caster momentarily cause any magical energies to fail. This can be cast while an enemy spellcaster is building or casting a spell, causing that spell to fall apart, or it could temporarily suck the magical energy out of an existing magical process, like a ward, curse, or magical shields. This cantrip's power is relative to that of the caster, meaning that a more powerful Psyche will have a more profound effect on the targeted magic energy. It can also instantly counter almost any other cantrip.

Numb ("Rigeo!"). In the rare occasion that your character is expecting to experience pain, the Numb cantrip causes a

momentarily dulling of sensation to a particular body part. Uses might include dulling the area before cutting into an area for battlefield surgery, or lessening the pain impact before it hits. While this cantrip doesn't prevent damage or boost the target's Endurance, it will help resist side effects of a sudden painful injury, letting the target go without yelling or flinching.

Open ("Aperire!"). This cantrip can temporarily open a closed Door leading from a Gossamer World onto the Grand Stair, or vice versa, so long as that Door is not being held through some other force (such as that of a Warden or Master's command). When used, the Door opens for a few seconds, enough to allow the cantrip-user and a few others to pass through. It does not work on locked or sealed Doors, or those opposed directly by a Warden's power, and can only be used once per Door at any given time.

Pain ("Noceo!"). When using this cantrip, your character must point at a particular body part of an intended victim as the cantrip is uttered. A good tactical tool, the Pain cantrip sends a quick burst of physical discomfort or actual pain through the affected body part. It is not enough to cause damage or any long term effect, but it is uncomfortable and can catch an unwary foe by surprise.

Paralyze ("Con-gelo!"). This cantrip freezes the subject for a moment in their tracks, causing a non-painful paralysis that lasts but a second. This paralysis is not mental, and the target will be conscious throughout the momentary paralysis, but physically unable to act. This is a powerful cantrip when used in the midst of combat, and can cause an attacker to miss a blow, or a defender's parry to go awry.

Reveal ("Acclaro!"). This cantrip reveals the reality behind an illusionary appearance for a moment, pulling aside illusions, holograms, or other immaterial means of changing the way something looks. The caster's Psyche is important: the higher the Psyche the more profoundly the illusion is stripped away.

Quicken ("Propero!"). This cantrip causes any physical motion the caster is performing to speed up momentarily, whether running, dodging, or attempting any feat of eye-hand coordination where speed is crucial. The caster's perception also speeds up momentarily, allowing full control over this physical motion while the cantrip is in effect. This could be used to win a close race at the final moments, speed a reaction, etc.

Shut ("Claudo!"). This cantrip causes a Door of the Grand Stair to slam shut and close, as if locked or otherwise sealed. The Door will not remain closed to anyone with the ability to open it, but will give the cantrip-user a few moments to escape or otherwise prepare a nice surprise for any passing through the Door after them. If this cantrip is used on a Warden or Master of the Grand Stair trying to hold the Door open, the cantrip-user must defeat the other character in a Psychic conflict.

Stun ("Sopio!"). This cantrip causes a momentary sense of confusion, befuddlement, or even vertigo in the targeted foe, causing the target to lose a train of thought or botch any complex action being attempted. It is not harmful, little more than the psychic equivalent of an involuntary sneeze, but can often disrupt a critical process or action.

Sureness ("Caveo!"). This cantrip allows for a slight improvement of eye/hand coordination, allowing your character to perform a physical action with more accuracy. It might make a single weapon strike slightly more precise, guiding it through armor joints or a slit in a helmet, or the caster could use it to win at darts.

Surge ("Acuo!"). This cantrip allows your character to cause an existing process to suddenly surge, or increase in intensity, despite normal controls or limitations. It lasts for only a second or two, and has no effect on the overall duration or magnitude of the process. Surge can cause a campfire to suddenly flare larger, a lightbulb to suddenly brighten, a horn to grow louder for a moment, or electric current to suddenly increase by a noticeable amount.

Umbra Negation ("Repudio Umbra!"). Though the Umbra is powerful beyond measure, with only the Eidolon equaling it, it is possible for a focused effort to disrupt or cancel lesser manifestations of its power. This cantrip momentarily disrupts or stalls any Umbra-based effects on the user.

Sorcery [15 Points]

Magic is energy. Particularly, the energy created through the tension between the Eidolon and the Umbra, generated when stability and entropy are in conflict. All of the myriad worlds the Grand Stair runs through have some magic to them, and the Gossamer Lords are able to evoke this energy to achieve magic effects of their desire.

Favored Attributes for Sorcery. Though Sorcery is essentially powered by the natural forces it harnesses, it is still inextricably linked to the Psyche Attribute. For the most part, Psyche is the dominant Attribute in Sorcery. Many spells require victory in a Psyche vs. Psyche battle in order to affect the desired target. Endurance is of secondary importance, as creating spells is a time- and will-intensive process and requires extreme focus over prolonged periods of time. Additionally, a sorcerer with a high Endurance may be able to complete a spell if attacked while casting it, while a low-ranked Endurance sorcerer would certainly be overcome with pain. Warfare is of tertiary importance, guiding some attack spells against the target as if they were missile weapons.

The Care and Feeding of Spells

The process of creating, hanging, and maintaining spells is the most important part of any sorcerer's daily rituals, and is not to be taken lightly. Think of spells as an astonishing variety of delicate and complex weapons, arrayed upon the walls of an armory. Some of these weapons have volatile ammunition, or components that may decay, rust, or otherwise corrode, so they require special attention. From apprenticeship, sorcerers learn how to memorize existing spells, to create new spells from individual components, to "hang" them somewhere they will be ready to use, and to tend to them and keep them intact. Because spells are essentially

fragile lattices of magic energy, they degrade over time, and may even become unstable if the sorcerer experiences magic or psychic trauma. For experienced sorcerers, maintaining spells is a quick process, while for less experienced sorcerers it is a rigorous mental exercise requiring considerable devotion of time and discipline.

This busywork might seem onerous, but is the bread and butter of what it means to be a sorcerer, and the focus and attention to these basic activities is what separates a mere flinger of spells with a first-rate sorcerer supreme. Each sorcerer has his own methodology and approach to handling their spell-casting, though the principles are fundamentally the same.

How Sorcery Works

Sorcery is essentially a systematized method of evoking raw energy and matter into desired behavior through enforced will, with the rules being encoded into the words and/or gestures of the spell. Think of spells as complex sets of instructions. Cantrips, which are essentially mini-spells, have only a single function, and require only a basic structure. Sorcery spells, on the other hand, are more complex and powerful, marshaling greater forces, and are hence more difficult to use. Sorcery is democratic in its application: even those who are not attuned to the Eidolon or the Umbra can use it, provided they have the knowledge and discipline to do so.

To use a quick analogy, a cantrip is a simple program with two states: on or off, while a Sorcery spell can be as complex as a graphics editing software package, with a myriad of variables and tunable elements. These variables can be the nature and origin of the magic energy to be evoked, any transformation of that energy, any scaling of the level of energy, any modulation or changing of the energy while it is in use, the location of the caster, the location of the target, the nature of the target, the duration the energy will be evoked, the manner by which the spell ends, any safeguards put in place by the caster, and more.

There are three reasons Sorcery is not the end-all of powers. First is that the psychic convolutions and conditions required to cast a Sorcery spell are so immense, so complex, that a sorcerer can generally hold only one active spell in his head at any given time. Second is that because spells are very specific in their application, they are often of less use in all circumstances. The third reason is that Sorcery spells take time, requiring several minutes or even hours to assemble and cast.

The solutions to these problems are addressed in Hanging Spells and s, below.

Hanging Spells

As noted above, spells are so complex that generally, a sorcerer can only hold one spell in his mind at any given time. The most fundamental means of approaching this problem is to “hang” spells, readying them and placing them in cold storage. Think of it like clothing... you can only wear one coat at a time, but your other coats are in a closet, hanging on hooks or hangers, ready for

use when you need them. The ability to hang spells means that sorcerers can have a variety of spells, a veritable arsenal, available for use at any given time.

However, as mentioned above, spells must be maintained through constant vigilance and it is extremely difficult for sorcerers to maintain any number of them in his mind alone. Depending on Stuff or circumstances, spells may be damaged if the sorcerer is trying to keep them only in memory, and for that reason sorcerers hang spells in items or even on universal powers themselves, such as the Eidolon or the Umbra. CHAPTER FIVE: ARTIFACTS AND CREATURES describes items capable of hanging spells. For the most part, hanging a spell in an item or on a great power does not have game implications, though the gamemaster may choose to have spells affected if the power or item is affected significantly.

The Invocation ability (page 34) allows an Invoker who knows Sorcery to ward their own True Name by hanging a spell on it, to be activated when the True Name is spoken or invoked.

Lynchpins

A sorcery spell needs to be very specific to work correctly, and it is a rare occasion when a sorcerer constructs a spell knowing exactly where and when it will be used, how long it will last, and at whom it will be cast. For this reason, sorcerers leave small, critical pieces of information out of a spell that can be filled in quickly when the spell is to be cast. These are called *lynchpins*, and include the above-mentioned conditions as well as many more. Lynchpins are almost always spoken aloud, but can also be complex arcane gestures, spell components, or even written words.

Lynchpins make spells more versatile, but come with some serious tradeoffs. It takes a little extra time to create a spell using lynchpins rather than the precise information, and for every lynchpin a spell has, that's another piece of information the sorcerer has to supply when casting the spell, even if the lynchpins are supplied with just a few words or gestures. Not a lot of time, but sometimes enough for the spell to be disrupted by a Cantrip... or a knife in the throat.

The presence and quality of magic differs dramatically from one Gossamer world to another, and for this reason “Gossamer Magic” is often the first and most important lynchpin, defining the spell's utility in the Gossamer worlds. A sorcerer must have visited a Gossamer world the spell draws magic from or be otherwise familiar with its contents, or else the spell must draw magic from the Gossamer world the spell is cast in.

Other common lynchpins are target, target location, duration, link, dispel, area of effect, trigger, etc. Each spell described below lists appropriate lynchpins and the amount of time each adds to the spell-casting time, if they are used.

Links and Sorcery

An important factor for a spell is how it passes from the sorcerer to the intended target. For physical types of spells (such as Lightning Bolt) this is obviously simply a connection defined by the sorcerer's line of sight. Other spells require a mind-to-mind connection, and for this reason, the sorcerer must have some form of psychic link to the target. A psychic link can be brought about through powerful use of Psyche in psychic combat, or through the use of a power such as Invocation, Eidolon, or the Umbra. A direct psychic link is inevitably the most effective means of casting a spell on another living being, and is the preferred method for most invasive spells.

Sorcery and the Powers

There are a great many ways sorcerers can combine spell-casting with other powers, too many to detail in a case-by-case fashion. Gamemasters should use the following guidelines when players attempt to combine sorcery with other powers:

Cantrips. Since Cantrips are essentially mini-spells, they can be used to augment or support traditional sorcery spells.

The Grand Stair. Few of the sorcery spells will have much effect against the Grand Stair, and those that do will be fleeting at best. Barring doors on the Grand Stair against a Warden can be an exercise in futility, though spells calling Gossamer world magic may be made easier or more difficult by the caster's proximity to the Gossamer world being utilized.

Wrighting. Spells can be cast through an active Icon connection. Additionally, the gamemaster may allow the use of Icons for hanging spells, or spells may be placed upon icons that activate when the Icon is used.

Invocation. Knowing the True Name of any target allows for a significant advantage in any Psyche-based struggle, and any being that has been so named, summoned, or bound will be highly vulnerable to sorceries directed at them by their Invoker.

Eidolon Mastery. The Eidolon, in its perfect symmetry, is antithetical to the nature of Sorcery, and does not mesh well with it. It serves as an excellent ward against Sorcery for these reasons. Despite this, it is possible to use the Eidolon to hang spells, though it requires constant upkeep to maintain them in their desired form. The Eidolon tends to "correct" spells and will sometimes modify untended spells by eliminating lynchpins, or slowly removing them until they have vanished from its reality.

Umbra Mastery. The Umbra, with its broken and decaying nature, is a useful but potentially dangerous platform for racking spells. It takes an additional ten minutes of casting to hang a spell within the broken matrix of the Umbra, but that spell will be readily available wherever the Umbra can be accessed. Spells hung upon the Umbra will decay rapidly due to its influence, and for this reason sorcerers are advised to devote additional time to maintaining them, lest they degrade and misfire when triggered.

Artifacts & Creatures. Sorcerers are well-advised to create at least one artifact or creature capable of racking spells, or even

capable of using such spells on the sorcerer's behalf.

Idiosyncratic Sorcery

Listed below are the 15 basic spells that are generally learned by every sorcerer as part of basic magical tutelage. With the gamemaster's permission, the player can substitute some or all of these spells with ones more suitable to the character's origin, though there cannot be more than 15 spells and they should be roughly equivalent in power to the ones presented below. These basic spells represent fundamental knowledge of the craft, and are the bread-and-butter of sorcery. However, a sorcerer is in no way limited to just these 15 spells. Devising, developing, and codifying new spells is an important part of sorcery, and defines the sorcerer's power in an obvious way.

Though these spells described below are presented in a generic fashion, sorcerers are almost expected to customize and personalize these spells, giving them alternate names if need be, creating unique visuals and sounds unique to the sorcerer. These unique signature characteristics can be incorporated into the spell itself, or an optional "Style" lynchpin can be added to any spell to personalize it as the sorcerer desires.

A competent sorcerer can also deconstruct a spell overheard, or attempt to re-engineer one from study of its effects. However, the less that is known about the spell, the riskier the process is. The creation of new spells is covered in **Building New Spells** on page 44.

Basic Sorcery Spells

The following spells are commonly learned in almost any competent apprenticeship. The gamemaster and players should assume that these spells are already known to the player with the 15 points spent on the Power. If the player for some reason decides that the character does not know any or all of these spells, the cost is not reduced. As mentioned in Idiosyncratic Sorcery, above, the player is encouraged to derive additional, unique spells for the character. Each spell is described with a generic title, a description of its effects, a suggested casting time, common lynchpins, and in some cases, variations. Optional lynchpins are in *italics*.

Invasive Spells

These are spells that invoke a specific condition or reaction directly inside the body of the target, usually requiring a successful Psyche versus Psyche combat. Though these are generally offensive spells, designed to harm the target, the subject of the spell can willingly open themselves up to the spell, eliminating the need for the Psyche struggle.

Mind Touch. This opens a psychic link between the sorcerer and the target. It can serve for telepathic communication or low-level empathy. This spell usually requires the sorcerer to overcome the target's Psyche, or can be willingly accepted by the

target (eliminating the need for the Psyche vs. Psyche struggle). For the spell to succeed, the sorcerer must know exactly what Gossamer world the intended target is in, and where in that world they are. Once established, the spell lasts as long as the sorcerer and target allow.

CASTING TIME: Thirty minutes, plus five additional minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject (name or description), Sorcerer's Location, Target's Location, *Duration, Dispel*.

Quell. The target of this spell is put to sleep. It requires a successful Psyche vs. Psyche struggle, and lasts as long as the target is allowed to sleep.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject, Gossamer Magic, *Duration, Dispel*.

Death. This causes the target's heart (or equivalent) to simply stop functioning for a short period of time. For Average-ranked Endurances, this is fatal. This is the equivalent of a heart attack to Superior-ranked Endurance characters, requiring a week or so of bed-rest and recovery. For Paragon or higher-ranked Endurances, this is painful and disorienting, but does not cause any short-term disability or long-term damage.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject, Gossamer Magic, *Duration, Dispel*.

Immobility. This spell ceases a target's movement by slowing the rate of time flow within the target. The target will be frozen, like a statue, unaware of the passage of time, until the spell is dispelled or the target is removed from the Gossamer world. This spell does not reverse time, confer invulnerability, or cause time outside the target to still. It requires a successful Psyche struggle to overcome the target's defenses. Contact with the Eidolon or the Umbra will instantly dispel the spell.

CASTING TIME: Ninety minutes, plus fifteen minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject, Gossamer Magic, *Duration, Dispel*.

Invisibility. Turns the target (and worn garments and carried equipment) invisible, immune to detection through conventional vision. The target is still potentially detectable through sound, scent, magical senses, and advanced detection methods not depending on light or visual information.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject, Gossamer Magic, *Duration, Dispel*.

VARIATIONS: The target can alternately be made immaterial.

Weaken. This spell reduces the target's Strength Attribute to Average rank. It requires a successful Psychic struggle, and lasts until it is dispelled, until the target moves to a different world, or until the target comes into contact with the Eidolon or Umbra.

CASTING TIME: Two hours, plus 20 minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject, Gossamer Magic, *Duration, Dispel*.

Defensive Spells

These spells help defend the sorcerer from injury, whether magic, physical, or through some other source. Defensive spells either protect from damage, absorb damage, or magically toughen

the target against damage.

Physical Ward. This spell makes the target more resistant to physical injury from magical sources up to and including the Eidolon and/or Umbra. Though it is usually a general-purpose spell, it will be more effective if designated to work against a particular source of magic energy.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject, Gossamer Magic, *Duration, Dispel, Power Type (Cantrips, Eidolon, Invocation, Sorcery, Umbra, other)*.

Barrier. This spell creates a fixed, stationary magical barrier roughly three yards across, generally square in shape. It is resistant to physical attacks, lightning, firearms, flame, energy weapons, etc. and usually only collapses under massive assault from primal forces (Eidolon or Umbra) or by overwhelming physical assault (high explosives, dragons, etc.). Barriers tailored to a specific source will be more resistant than general ones.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Location, Gossamer Magic, Size, *Duration, Dispel, Shape* (if other than square), *Specific Force* (otherwise general).

Magic Drain. This spell causes any magic energy created within it to be drained to another Gossamer world. Cantrips, sorcery spells, invocations... all of these will be negated, though the Eidolon and Umbra are only affected moderately. The drain generally covers a large radius (two miles) and lasts up to 30 minutes in our world or longer in other worlds. Magic Drain can be cast to be self-perpetuating, powered by all spells it drains the magic from. Due to its nature, dispelling a Magic Drain with magic is almost impossible.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Location of Drain, Destination of Drain (elsewhere in the same Gossamer world, another Gossamer world, into spell), Gossamer Magic, *Duration, Dispel, Area of Effect* (if smaller than two miles).

Psychic Ward. Placed on a door, walls, or as a magic circle around the intended beneficiary, this spell creates a formidable psychic barrier, defending against mind-affecting magic or influence. Psyches of lower than Paragon rank are unable to pass the barrier. Once established, the ward can remain independent or can link to a subject of the sorcerer's choosing, allowing the subject to add his Psyche to the ward's strength, and linking any mind brought against the ward to the subject. This spell will last up to a full day, and perhaps even longer in some Gossamer worlds.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Area of Effect, Gossamer Magic, *Independent, Linked, Linked Subject, Duration, Dispel*.

Material Ward. Any item this spell is cast upon will become Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons as described with the artifact/creature quality on page 49. It is cast on a single item (a garment, shield, door, etc.), and the item becomes proof against most conventional sources of damage. This lasts indefinitely until dispelled, destroyed, or moved to another world. This spell offers

no protection against Psyche or other magic powers.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Subject, Gossamer Magic, *Duration*, *Dispel*.

Summoning Spells

These spells bring objects or forces out of other worlds, usually for offensive purpose.

Bolt. This spell opens a path from the sorcerer to the target, filling it with an elemental force directed at and guided towards the target, usually with extreme velocity, causing immense damage to the target. Popular forms are lightning bolts or streams of fire. The bolt is near-instantaneous, though targets with high Psyche or Warfare Attributes may be able to detect and dodge the bolt before it strikes. The accuracy of the bolt is determined by the sorcerer's Warfare Attribute.

CASTING TIME: One hour, plus ten minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Trigger, Target Path, Gossamer Magic, Type of Bolt (elemental, magical, etc.), *Range*.

Environmental Attack. In a fashion similar to that of the Bolt spell (above) this spell draws a solid mass of matter from another Gossamer world's environment and hurls it at the target with the intent of causing significant damage. Popular modes of this spell utilize chunks of lava, pieces of rock, crystal spears, acid, or even more exotic substances. Accuracy is determined by the sorcerer's Warfare Attribute, and range is dependent on the mass of the matter summoned, with larger items having shorter range.

CASTING TIME: Thirty minutes, plus five minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Trigger, Target Path, Gossamer Magic, Type of Attack, Size.

Replicate Object. This spell draws raw, unformed matter from one Gossamer world and shapes it into a duplicate of an existing object, living or dead. Replicated objects do not inherit any magic or exceptional powers of the original, and living beings will not have the memories of the original being, though instinctual behavior is retained. A duplicate will last until it is dispelled, destroyed, or moved to another world.

CASTING TIME: Thirty minutes, plus five minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Object, Gossamer Magic, *Living or Dead*, *Duration*, *Dispel*.

Teleport. This spell instantly teleports the sorcerer to a specific desired location known to the sorcerer, anywhere in the Gossamer worlds. This location can be predetermined with the spell or selected via lynchpin, and must be familiar to the sorcerer through personal experience or extensive research or equivalent experience. Normally the spell teleports all personal gear, including anything the sorcerer may be bound by or in contact with, including anyone grappling or holding onto the sorcerer! The lynchpin "Without Possessions" allows the sorcerer to leave all clothing and possessions behind, appearing stark naked at the desired location, free of any constraints or bonds.

CASTING TIME: Thirty minutes, plus five minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Destination, Gossamer Magic, *Without Possessions*.

Building New Spells

As noted previously, though most sorcerers begin with the same 15 spells, they are expected to expand their roster of spells and develop their own as part of any magical course of study. Adventuresome sorcerers will frequently need to create new spells to suit a particular need, and will fill grimoires or even libraries with the fruits of their magical experimentation.

New spells are inevitably constructed out of some or all of the four micro-spells described below. These micro-spells are fundamental building blocks of spells, and any new spell to be developed should be considered in view of how it would work utilizing these components. The total casting time for a new spell is thirty minutes per micro-spell plus another five minutes per lynchpin. Depending on its goal, a more complex spell requires multiple micro-spells, and the casting time for each must be added to the overall casting time.

To determine what micro-spells are utilized (and if multiple uses of a particular micro-spell are required), the sorcerer should describe to the gamemaster exactly what the desired spell will do, step-by-step, and the gamemaster and player should determine what micro-spells will be utilized and what lynchpins must be added.

The development of new spells can be a taxing and time-consuming exercise. The gamemaster should adjudicate the length of time it takes to develop new spells from scratch: a novice may take months to develop a spell from first principles, while an experienced sorcerer could half-ass a spell together in a matter of hours, taking shortcuts and relying on extra lynchpins. Once a new spell is assembled and has been cast successfully a few times, the sorcerer can reduce the base casting time by half, though lynchpins still take five minutes apiece.

Rules of Magic

Though there are a great many means of devising sorcery spells, and the Gossamer worlds contain infinite magic traditions and methods, one rule applies to any custom spells:

No Spell Can Invoke a Power Unless the Sorcerer Possesses that Power. This means that a sorcerer can't create a spell to manipulate the Eidolon, Umbra, or other power type without actually having spent points to possess the power. Additionally, the gamemaster may rule that a spell requires advanced facility with a power, either through the player developing an advanced version of the power or bold experimentation.

Micro-Spells

Micro-spells are the building blocks of all spells. Every spell uses one or more micro-spells to accomplish its desired goals, and micro-spells form the foundations of each spell. Each micro-spell has a specific casting time, though as mentioned above, this is reduced as the spell becomes better known to the sorcerer, who

will discover a more effective means of casting it. A micro-spell can be used individually, though it will rarely be as effective as a complete spell.

Micro-Spell: Gossamer Portal. This opens a defined portal to a desired Gossamer world, with the size, shape, and duration defined by the sorcerer. A sorcerer must have visited a Gossamer world to create a micro-spell accessing it. Usually a Gossamer portal micro-spell is instantaneous, allowing for passage of something from one world to another, though it can be maintained for longer (even indefinitely) if desired and the requisite energy is spent. Using this micro-spell without Gossamer Shaping is dangerous, as anything coming through the portal will be inevitably centered on the sorcerer.

CASTING TIME: Ten minutes, plus five minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: World of Destination, World of Origin, Desired Location, Duration, Dispel.

Micro-Spell: Gossamer Shaping. This micro-spell allows the sorcerer to shape or otherwise manipulate the raw matter of Gossamer reality, and to guide matter within it to desired places or configurations. Among the more powerful micro-spells, Gossamer Shaping combines the ability of transmutation with manipulation. It can change the size, shape, mass, or basic qualities of matter; prepare Gossamer reality for additional magical manipulation; and define the course or direction of magical energies when they manifest.

CASTING TIME: Ten minutes, plus five minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Current World, Duration, Dispel.

Micro-Spell: Magic Energy. This micro-spell draws raw magical energy from the surrounding Gossamer world and makes it available to the sorcerer to power spells. This micro-spell will usually provide a physical object about an hour's worth of power, and will power a field or magical construct for about half a day.

CASTING TIME: Ten minutes, plus five minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Current World, Duration, Dispel.

Micro-Spell: Mind Touch. This micro-spell connects the minds of the sorcerer and a desired target, allowing for Psyche struggles, telepathic communication, location, or a variety of other associated benefits. This spell opens the link, while the sorcerer must defeat the target in a Psyche vs. Psyche struggle.

CASTING TIME: Ten minutes, plus five minutes per lynchpin.

LYNCHPINS: Target, Target's World, Target's Location, Duration, Dispel.

Sorcery and Raw Power

The Gossamer worlds are full of power, places where raw magic energy is present, whether a part of the background energy, a river of magic force, guidelines of energy that permeate everything, or even floating wisps of mana. Any sorcerer can manipulate this nascent magical energy directly by simply gathering it, shaping it, and hurling at a foe as raw force. This is as sloppy and undisciplined as sorcery gets, and the only virtue of these attacks is their raw, elemental force. It is easy to defend against this sort of an attack, but extremely tiring, and it is a serious act of last resort.

Impromptu Sorcery

There is another means of casting spells for sorcerers who are not particularly dedicated to spell creation and maintenance, or have exhausted all racked or otherwise available spells. Sorcerers can attempt rapid creation of previously created and known spells, or can even attempt to create spells instantaneously, by drawing directly on magic force drained from the Gossamer world and personal reserves of Endurance to fuel the spells. This is a highly taxing use of magic, an effort of last resort for any but the most desperate or unskilled sorcerer.

To do this, the sorcerer creates a desired spell in the same fashion as described in these rules, but abbreviates or eliminates the micro-spells "Gossamer Portal" and "Magic Energy" (described above), allowing the spell to fill in the blanks: the portal opening at the sorcerer's feet and the magic energy coming from the sorcerer himself.

The effects of drawing magical energy from the Gossamer reality in the sorcerer's immediate vicinity will be marked and immediate: lights and flames will dim or be extinguished, electronic devices will fail, chemical properties will dampen, mana will be leeched from the area, plants may die, food will spoil, animals will be frightened, blight may affect crops, etc. Note that this is not the effect when Gossamer world energy is drawn through normal spell use, but is instead intensified by this drastic and immediate drainage. The effects on the sorcerer are similar, with Endurance being taxed mightily. A sorcerer with a high Endurance Attribute will feel fatigue, while one ranked low in Endurance will become dizzy, exhausted, and may even swoon. A sorcerer with Average or Superior-ranked Endurance may even pass out immediately upon successful casting of the spell.

As noted in Sorcery and Raw Power(above), Gossamer worlds that are rich in magic energy may be easier to draw Gossamer energy from, and those weak or bereft of magic energy may be far more difficult. One exception to this is that a sorcerer drawing Gossamer world energy from within the sorcerer's own Domain will be able to draw more energy with less effort, with the amount of energy available increased proportionately to the sorcerer's control over the Domain. The converse is also true: a sorcerer attempting to drain Gossamer energy from a Domain owned by another character will have a much more difficult time of it depending on the owner's control over that Domain.

Another virtue of this raw power is that it can be used to bolster the force of an existing spell. A sorcerer with access to raw magic power can simply pump it into an existing spell, if appropriate, to strengthen its effects. A creative sorcerer might even use raw magic to overload a poorly-designed spell. Endurance can be a limiting factor for either use, as handling raw elemental magic is akin to holding onto an electric line while grounded.

Final Note on Sorcery

This level of detail is not always appreciated or useful to some styles of play. There is no reason play needs to grind to a screeching halt whenever a sorcerer declares a new spell is being developed. **Gamemasters and players who are reluctant to address micro-spell bookkeeping are advised to handle new spell development casually, fairly, and with the level of detail appropriate to the campaign, overruling any spell descriptions that seem too powerful.**



Chapter Five: Creatures and Artifacts

With danger through every Door, most Gossamer Lords use their ability to traverse the Grand Stair and equip themselves with items of great power and utility, or ally themselves with a staggering array of fantastic (or mundane) beings. While the physical properties of Gossamer stuff vary from world to world, items (artifacts or creatures) bought as part of character creation are potent throughout the Gossamer worlds.

Players may spend character points on items to make them part of their characters' reality, an item that is intrinsic to the character. This can be something as overwhelmingly powerful as Thor's mystical hammer Mjolnir, or as mundane (though loyal) as Bruce Wayne's manservant Alfred Pennyworth.

Players do not have to spend points on every item carried or used by characters: they only spend points on those things that are personal, intrinsic to the character, and are used throughout the Gossamer worlds. Characters can find items of incredible power in the Gossamer worlds, but those items may lose their potency if taken outside the world of origin and be worthless junk in another world.

Creating Artifacts and Creatures Without Points (page 53) and Artifacts of Power (page 54) address alternate means of gaining exceptional items. Greater Qualities and Powers (page 56) covers qualities above and beyond the scope of character creation.

How to Build an Artifact or Creature

When a character is created, the player has the option of spending points on artifacts or creatures, as described earlier. Once purchased, these items are a part of the character as much as an Attribute or a power. If an item is lost or temporarily destroyed, it can be found again, somewhere in the Gossamer worlds. If it is truly destroyed in a fashion where the gamemaster declares that it can never be replaced as it was, the character points spent on the item should be returned to the player, either directly or in reserve by the gamemaster.

Step One - Describe Item

First, select an item and decide what role it serves. It can be almost anything. Is it a shape-changing weapon? A suit of armor allowing survival in outer space? An intelligent cybernetic vulture? A quartet of elemental-themed ninjas? A magic ATM card that allows access to cash anywhere throughout the Gossamer worlds? It does not have to be so fancy or unusual as these. It could simply be a squad of pure-hearted knights, a pack of hunting hounds, or an incredibly sharp magic dagger. No matter how strange or exotic the item, the character can find it somewhere in the Gossamer worlds, or through some other means. The item (or items) are free, and cost no points.

Step Two - Add Qualities

Qualities are an item's equivalent to Attributes, though they are not ranked in the same way. Qualities increase the item's durability, efficiency, and can add new capabilities. While the item will automatically have the abilities of a representative type—a person will be able to talk and walk, a pistol can fire bullets—adding a Quality can make the person bulletproof or give the pistol a voice and the ability to speak. This is a two-way street: giving an inanimate object an identity, or psychic sensitivity, means it can be influenced through magical means.

Step Three - Add Powers

Powers give items power over the rough matter of the Gossamer worlds, just as character-based Powers do. This allows them to do incredible things, and serve in a far more useful capacity than mundane items. Items with power become great artifacts legends are made of, and creatures with power are famed throughout myth or history.

Step Four - Add Transferral

Some items are most useful for what they can directly do for the character. In these cases, "transferral" allows the item to transfer a quality or power to the owner (or wielder). The nature of this transferral is determined by the player when the item is created.

Step Five - Pick Quantity

Characters are not limited to a single item. Quantity is a multiplier that takes the total cost of the item (Qualities, Powers, and Transferral) and modifies it for multiple, identical (or nearly-so) copies. For a single item, the multiplier is x1 (no extra points).

Qualities

Vitality. This measures the physical strength and endurance of the item. If this quality is transferred, only the strength associated with it is granted, not the durability.

Quality	Cost	Description
Animal Vitality	1 Point	Inanimate objects have life at the level of a normal animal. A weak animal becomes stronger and more durable.
Double Vitality	2 Points	Doubles the creature's normal capability for exertion (leaping, running, strength, etc.). Humans become Superior ranked.
Immense Vitality	4 Points	Creatures become capable of astounding feats of exertion. Humans become Paragon ranked.



Creating an Artifact takes time, materials, patience, and Power.

Movement. This quality bestows movement onto items or creatures that do not normally have the ability, or can speed up the normal movement speeds of creatures that can move. This does not offer a significant tactical advantage, as it focuses on running speed rather than reflexes.

Stamina. This quality confers additional stamina for short- and long-term exertion, but does not grant the equivalent healing rates from the actual Endurance Attribute. Inanimate objects without this quality are feeble and cannot act for very long before tiring.

Quality	Cost	Description
Mobility	1 Point	Items without movement can move at walking speed using whatever equivalent means of locomotion it possesses (wheels, legs, treads, etc.). Items without locomotion will slide or inch along, slowly. If it does not have animal vitality (above) it will be too feeble to climb. Items already able to move can do so at half again their normal movement speed.
Double Speed	2 Points	Doubles a creature's or item's normal movement speed. Creatures without normal movement will move at an equivalent to a human run.
Engine Speed	4 Points	Creatures can move at a speed to match normal motor vehicles. Items without normal movement can move at roughly twice normal human running speed.

Quality	Cost	Description
Superior Stamina	1 Point	Creatures can perform at twice normal capabilities. Humans or items can act with the equivalent of Superior ranked Endurance.
Paragon Stamina	2 Points	Creatures can exert for hours without tiring. Humans and items perform at paragon ranked endurance.
Tireless Stamina	4 Points	Confers near-infinite stamina, never tiring.

Aggression. This quality confers and enhances raw fighting ability and combat reflexes, as well as granting some basic level of strategy and intuition relating to skirmish or close combat. This should be limited to weapons or combat modes natural to the creature. It does not confer the high-level competency with all weapons or the strategic superiority of the Warfare Attribute.

Quality	Cost	Description
Combat Training	1 Point	Gives a creature superior combat ability (reflexes, skills) and enables a group of creatures to work together as if trained together. Confers Superior ranked warfare with a specific mode of combat (swords, unarmed, firearms, etc.).
Combat Reflexes	2 Points	Grants dazzling speed and expertise equivalent to Paragon rank in a specific mode of combat, and strategic knowledge relating to that discipline. Groups will have instinctual coordination and superior group tactics.
Combat Mastery	4 Points	Creatures will have an instinctual mastery of conflict situations and a strategic superiority in their field of expertise, and (unlike lesser levels of this quality) can adapt to new weapons and circumstances easily. This confers a ranking above Paragon to a limited number of combat styles or modes.

Damage. This quality enhances the destructive capability of an item or creature's natural or crafted/manufactured weaponry, whether in the form of blade, claws, horns, arrow, bullet, beam, or some other means of inflicting harm. Weapons with ammunition should be considered one and the same, so arrows launched from a bow with the "Double Damage" quality will do double damage. It is not necessary to spend points on each piece of ammunition (arrow, bullet, bolt, stone, etc.), unless a specific exceptional piece of ammunition is desired.

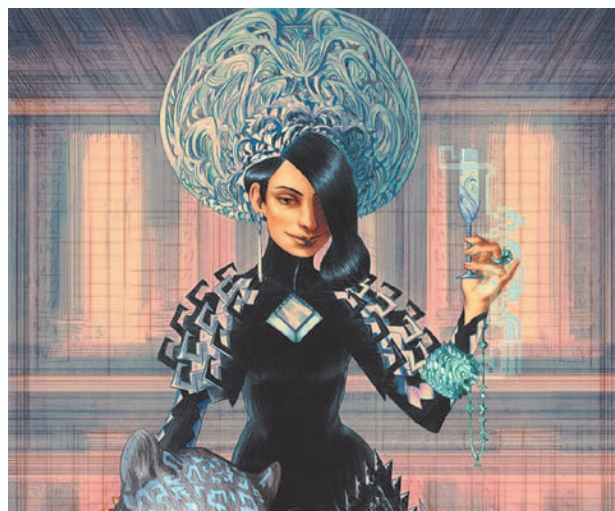
However, these qualities are not incidental: a wielder of a Deadly Damage weapon does not automatically chop through any swords parrying it, or slice through armor like tissue paper. In incidental combat normal weapons and shields can parry weapons possessing damage qualities, though they will be notched, scratched, and even lightly damaged, though when they are used to defend against powerful blows the damage qualities will become decisive, the effects noticeable.



Quality	Cost	Description
Hardened	1 Point	This hardens the natural weaponry of a creature so it will not be damaged in combat, and increases the sharpness and penetrating power of normal weaponry.
Double Damage	2 Points	Increases the durability of natural or crafted weapons and doubles the normal damage inflicted. Can easily penetrate the "Resistant to Normal Weapons" quality and, with effort and skill, can penetrate the "Resistant to Firearms" quality (below).
Deadly Damage	4 Points	Does incredible damage to a normal target, often fatal to normal beings. Penetrates almost any armor, and will have a lessened effect against foes armored in armor with the "Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons" quality (below).

Damage Resistance. This quality confers resistance against damage, either in the form of toughened natural defenses or increased durability and protection for actual armor. This does not have to look like armor: it could be toughened skin or just a supernatural resilience.

Quality	Cost	Description
Resistant to Normal Weapons	1 Point	Resists/protects from normal swords, claws, arrows, and some lesser natural forces. Reduces the effect of even weapons that can penetrate this protection.
Resistant to Firearms	2 Points	As above, plus resistance to gunfire, explosions, fire, and equivalent sources of damage.
Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons	4 Points	As above, plus energy weapons and other forces. Cannot be damaged by conventional means. This does not mean that the wearer is immune to harm, but that the armor certainly is.



Intelligence and Communication. This quality confers sentience to non-sentient items or creatures, and boosts these qualities for beings that normally possess those abilities.

Quality	Cost	Description
Able to Speak	1 Point	Possesses a limited vocabulary and can speak the owner's native language. If the item is inanimate or unable to speak, it can comprehend and obey commands. It will display loyalty and is capable of a low level of independent action.
Able to Speak and Reason	2 Points	Can express itself through voice, song, or other means. It understands complex orders, problem solving, can plan ahead and adjust to new circumstances, and (if trained) is literate and capable of counting and using basic math.
Able to Speak in Tongues and Voices	4 Points	If a normally non-sentient being, the item has the equivalent of Human level intelligence, capable of feats of intellect, fluent in multiple languages, and can imitate other voices.

Psychic Sensitivity. Similar to the Psyche Attribute, this quality gives the being a psychic presence, making it stand out from the normal non-exceptional creatures and beings. This quality is wholly concerned with sensitivity to magic and supernatural powers, and does not offer any psychic defense (for that, see Psychic Defense, below).

Quality	Cost	Description
Psychic Sensitivity	1 Point	Equivalent to Superior ranked Psyche, this allows mind-to-mind communication with any mind the item comes into contact with, though limited to the basic intelligence of the item. An inanimate object with this quality can be psychically commanded by the owner.
Danger Sensitivity	2 Points	As above, plus the ability to detect hostile thoughts or potentially harmful magic forces nearby in a nonspecific fashion. Does not confer the ability to detect threats from inanimate objects or natural forces.
Extraordinary Psychic Sense	4 Points	As above, plus an innate quality to sense incoming danger from future events. Includes an awareness of the owner's current location and state, especially when the owner is in danger. It can link minds across the void between Gossamer worlds, but has no innate magic ability (or defenses).

Psychic Defense. Distinct from Psychic Sensitivity (above), this quality confers some measure of psychic ability to compete in psychic combat and offers some proof against magical influence.

Quality	Cost	Description
Psychic Resistance	1 Point	Able to resist psychic tampering or psychic attack as if it had Superior ranked Psyche.
Psychic Neutral	2 Points	Can cloak itself to be psychically undetectable, and confers the equivalent of Paragon ranked Psyche in psychic resistance even if it is detected. This quality also conceals any psychic traces created by powers or qualities the item utilizes.
Psychic Barrier	4 Points	Resistance to all forms of psychic attack, but conversely cannot be contacted or manipulated by any psychic contact, including that of the owner. It simply has a psychic wall that cannot be overcome. If the item or creature is intelligent, it can choose to turn this quality on or off. If this quality is transferred, the subject will be unable to use any psychic powers. This level of psychic defense is incredibly noticeable to any being with psychic sensitivity or a high Psyche.



Powers

Attunement to the Grand Stair. This power allows the item to use the Grand Stair to visit Gossamer worlds other than the world of its origin. While theoretically any item can be carried into the Grand Stair between worlds, this power allows the item the ability to access the Grand Stair even if it does not have the means to actually move on it.

Power	Cost	Description
Pass through Door	1 Point	Can open a Door that has not been barred, and pass through it. While this ability requires some means of actually physically opening a Door, the item could be a key or the equivalent.
Follow Path	2 Points	As above, plus an innate sense for the path left by a being through the Grand Stair, and can follow that path, even if it leads through multiple Doors. To do this, the item or creature must be familiar with the subject and be following a psychic trail from some point along its length. The path must follow the desired subject and deviations cannot be made: no new Doors can be opened, no new Gossamer worlds visited. Once the path has been followed, it can be followed again, even if the structure of the Grand Stair changes.
Search Through Worlds	4 Points	As above, plus an innate sense for what Gossamer world a particular subject is located in, and can follow that sense through the Grand Stair towards that subject. This may not be the most expeditious route, however, and while the item might not get lost, it could hit some rough Gossamer worlds and find some less desirable expanses of the Grand Stair.



Control of Gossamer Reality. Just as the Umbra and Eidolon confer the ability to shape the stuff of Gossamer reality, this power allows the item similar abilities, though they are more of an intrinsic magic power rather than one of those two forces. For all of these, subtle changes are easy, while more profound or marked differences from the norm are more costly in terms of time and effort.

Power	Cost	Description
Mold Gossamer Matter	1 Point	Can quickly reshape the inanimate matter of Gossamer worlds in subtle, minor ways.
Mold Gossamer Creatures	2 Points	As above, and extending to living beings. Moods, attitudes, and other personality traits can be changed easily, while appearance, knowledge, abilities, etc. are more difficult.
Mold Gossamer Reality	4 Points	As above, extending to the material/physical environment of the Gossamer world. This can be subtle, such as altering environmental aspects like weather, or can be profound like physical laws and the Gossamer world's interaction with magical forces.

Healing. For living beings, this power accelerates the natural healing process and gives it the ability to recover from injuries or wounds that it may not normally be able to heal from (missing limbs, for example). Inanimate objects with this power are able to repair themselves, pulling component pieces back together or re-growing lost parts where necessary.

Power	Cost	Description
Self Healing	1 Point	Creatures normally able to heal recover at twice the average rate, and items with this ability are able to repair damage as if living beings healing wounds.
Rapid Healing	2 Points	All items and creatures heal as if possessing Paragon-ranked Endurance: minor wounds within a matter of hours or days and serious wounds in weeks. Major loss of limbs or other parts is slower, but can be done.
Regeneration	4 Points	Recovers from all but catastrophic injury within a matter of minutes, and can recover lost parts in an hour or so.

Shape-shifting. An item or creature with this power is able to assume another form (or multiple forms), with all of the natural abilities, instincts, and skills of that shape. All qualities and powers possessed will be present no matter what shape the item takes. Incredible abilities related to form, such as invisibility, may be granted with this power. This power cannot be used to assume

alternate personas, mimic qualities or powers, or restore damage from injury.

Power	Cost	Description
Alternate Form	1 Point	Can change into one additional shape or form, defined when it is first created.
Named and Numbered Alternate Forms	2 Points	Can change into up to twelve additional shapes or forms, defined when first created.
Limited Shape-Shift	4 Points	Can take the shape of any item or creature of similar shape or mass. When created, this is limited to things the item is familiar with, but it can learn new shapes as it experiences them.

Contains an Icon. The item is inscribed with qualities enabling it to serve as an Icon. If the creator possesses the Wrighting power, then the item is genuinely an Icon. If the creator does not have the power, the item serves as a bastardized equivalent — mimicking an Icon. Alternately, it was created by someone else with the Wrighting power, and given to the owner. This power cannot be given to a living creature.

Power	Cost	Description
Contains an Icon	1 Point	Contains an Icon image (or equivalent) with all of the magical properties associated with one, and can serve as one. It is as permanent as an Icon can be, whether inscribed, painted, or otherwise rendered.
Set of Icons	2 Points	This is not a power, but instead represents possession of a set of Icons representing player or nonplayer characters or creatures known by and associated with the character. The exact nature of the Icon set is determined by the player and must be approved by the gamemaster. If the character does not possess the Wrighting power, the set was discovered, or is a gift. A character with the Wrighting power can add to this set as desired. If it has a Quantity (see page 53), it can be shared by others.

True Name. The Invocation power deals with the use of True Names and their application, granting power over a being when the name is known. This power confers upon the item (or its owner) a measure of that connection. While this power is the most useful for sentient beings, it can be applied to lesser effect to inanimate items. See Invocation on page 34 for more information on what True Names can be used for.

Power	Cost	Description
True Name Is Known	1 Point	The owner knows the creature's or item's True Name, and has an understanding of it, with the advantages that it confers.
True Name Is Warded	2 Points	As above, though the creature's or item's True Name is warded in secrecy as per the "Warding a True Name" Invocation ability (page 36) and is not known. Getting this information is extraordinarily difficult, as it is only possessed by the item and the owner.
True Name Is Secret	4 Points	The True Name is completely unknown, hidden by forces more powerful than the Invocation power itself. Not even the creature or owner know the True Name, rendering it functionally immune to the effects of the Invocation power.

Cantrip Use. Items with this power are capable of using cantrips using their own Psychic Sensitivity (page 50). If the item does not have at least some level of Psychic Sensitivity, cantrips are cast as if at Average-ranked Psyche. Intelligence and Psychic Defense have no effect on an item's ability to use cantrips. The item itself casts the cantrip, not the user: unless the power is Transferred (page 53), the effects of the cantrip will benefit the item, if applicable.

Power	Cost	Description
Contains a Cantrip	1 Point	Has a single cantrip, determined when the item is created.
Contains Named and Numbered Cantrips	2 Points	Has up to a dozen cantrips, determined when the item is created.

Spell Storage. This power allows the owner to hang Sorcery spells in or "on" it, as described in Hanging Spells (page 41). Casting a spell hung from an item still requires the proper lynchpins (if any). Spells must be prepared through normal means as described in Sorcery (page 40), and when cast, are gone and must be replaced.

Note: Items with this power are highly intrinsic and idiosyncratic to the sorcerer and must be made for, or made by, the sorcerer (or given to the sorcerer), and must have points spent upon them if they are to have any ability to hang spells outside their Gossamer world of origin.



Power	Cost	Description
Capable of Hanging a Spell	1 Point	Item has the capacity to hang one spell (of any type). The exact spell can vary from use to use, but must be cast normally with lynchpins (if any).
Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells	2 Points	As above, though the item has the capacity for up to a dozen spells of the sorcerer's devising.
Capable of Hanging and Using Spells	4 Points	As above, but the item itself is capable of actually casting the spells independently, without requiring the sorcerer's intervention. If it is a sentient being, the spells can be cast normally, and if an inanimate object, the spells are instantaneous, without the time needed for lynchpins and traditional casting. In either case, spells must be replaced by the item's owner.

Transferals

Items can be created to lend qualities or powers to their owners (or wielders). Having an item that transfers a quality may make up for a low Attribute rank, and an item transferring a power can help fill a perceived gap in magic abilities. This is tremendously useful, but comes with some significant limitations and drawbacks. Transferred qualities or powers are not additive, however, and do not stack: an item with a lower-ranked equivalent to an Attribute will have no effect, or may possibly even weaken the character, while a transferred power does not add anything if the owner already has the power. Furthermore, while the cost of an item's quality or power plus the Transferal ability can be cheaper than buying an equivalent Attribute or Power outright, in most cases it is not as versatile or reliable as the thing it mimics. Multiple qualities or powers must be selected and paid for separately.

Quality	Cost	Description
Confers Quality on Wearer/Owner/User	5 Points Per Quality	Confers a single quality onto the owner/wielder, as designated when the item is created.
Confers Power on Wearer/Owner/User	10 Points Per Power	Confers a single power onto the owner/wielder, as designated when created.

Quantity

Items can be purchased in multiples upon creation (or during character improvement). It is assumed that any item has a quantity of 1 (with a multiple of x1, or nothing extra). Additional items are paid for by adding the total cost of all qualities, powers, and transferals, picking the desired number of items, and multiplying

by the quantity multiplier from the table below. Any aspects of quantity (individual item names, differences in qualities/powers/transferals, source and origin, etc.) must be defined when the item is created.

Quantity	Multiplier	Description
Unique	x1	The item is unique. No extra cost.
Named & Numbered	x2	Up to a dozen of the item, exact or near duplicates. Any differences in qualities, powers, or transferal must be defined and paid for separately, apart from the multiple.
Horde	x3	In one specific location, a large number can be gathered readily, up to 50 total. Within an hour this can be doubled, again in eight hours, and again after a day's effort. Quantities greater than that become logistically difficult, but are not impossible.
Worldwide	x4	As above, though the item is readily available anywhere within a single Gossamer world.
Cross-World Persistent	x5	A single item of the desired type can be found in any of the Gossamer worlds: one in a single location and up to a Named & Numbered quantity throughout the rest of the world. It must be a naturally-occurring item, or appear so, like a native creature or some piece of equipment that would not be out of place where it is encountered.
Ubiquitous	x6	The item can be found anywhere, easily, appearing as a natural and sensible element in any environment. Outside of the confines of the Grand Stair, the item can be found in near-unlimited quantities in almost any Gossamer world, unless efforts have been taken to expunge it, and even then there will probably be one or two left unnoticed. Such items can even be found within the Grand Stair, though in less plentiful numbers.

Creating Artifacts and Creatures without Points

As noted in the introduction to this section, normal items or creatures without special powers (or with powers potent in only their world of origin) are free. A character willing to stay in a particular Gossamer world and with the time and will to find amazing items, or the power to shape and improve Gossamer reality, can have armories of magic cloaks, a utility belt full of amazing magic gadgets, an armory of weapons, and an impregnable castle armed with magical assassins. All of this is wonderful, save that it is only potent within that particular Gossamer world, and will come up short when compared to real

items or creatures of power (i.e., those that have had points spent on them).

Hope is not lost, however! The character point budget-minded player can use other options to gain items or creatures with some measure of power, without spending the points as described in this section. Here are some of the ways how:

- **Finding the Item in the Gossamer Worlds.** If a character is capable of venturing upon the Grand Stair and seeking the item in the Gossamer worlds, it is not impossible to find an item with exceptional potency and heightened reality such that it will not lose all traces of power when it's removed from its native Gossamer world. Every point the item would cost is another day of searching. The resulting item is powerful, but not quite as much so as the "real" (points spent upon) thing. It will behave almost as powerfully, but in any case where it is opposed by an intrinsic Attribute or Power, or a paid-for item quality or power, it will be second rate, and will degrade rapidly in condition or even be destroyed. Once gone, it must be sought again, from scratch, with the same amount of time spent.
- **Using the Eidolon or Umbra.** These two massive

polarities of power have the ability to augment or supplement the reality of items to varying degrees, and can be used by an enterprising character to craft the gross matter of a Gossamer world into something approximating an artifact or creature. Figure one hour per point the item would cost, during which time the character must be stationary and evoking the power. The item will be resilient against lesser powers, but will be considerably weak against the power that made it, or the power that opposed it.

- **Using Wrighting.** The Wrighting power allows the player to create magically potent items called Icons. See Wrighting on page 33 for details.

Artifacts of Power

It is also possible to create items that are tied to greater powers such as the Eidolon, Umbra, or the Grand Stair itself, or lesser powers such as Invocation, Wrighting, Sorcery: imbued or even embodying some measure of the power. Just as characters with Wrighting can create Icons and items with Icon-related powers, characters who are willing to experiment and expend the necessary effort can craft items possessing elements of one of their powers.

An Example of Artifact & Creature Creation

The gamemaster sits down with Stratton to review his character, Reevard. This portion of their discussion concerns Artifacts & Creatures.

- Gamemaster: Okay, Stratton. I see you've filled out a couple of Artifact & Creature worksheets. Let's hear what you picked.
- Stratton: Well, first off, I thought I'd pick a weapon. Reevard is a jack-of-all-trades and a bit of a rogue, so I wanted something versatile and easy to conceal. I decided on a weapon that changes shape. Sometimes it's a big knife, or a light rapier, or a pistol, a small crossbow, a chain, or even a spiked gauntlet. When Reevard isn't using it, it appears like a metal bracer covering his whole right forearm.
- Gamemaster: That sounds cool. It keeps roughly the same mass all the time?
- Stratton: Yes. It also looks similar, so it's always a black "thing" with gold tracing and Reevard's personal symbol somewhere on it. Don't know what the symbol is yet, though.
- Gamemaster: Nice. How did you spend the points?
- Stratton: I picked Double Damage [2 Points], Resistant to Firearms [2 Points] if he wants to use it to parry while it's on his arm, Mold Gossamer Matter [1 Point] so it can shape Gossamer matter for ammo if it needs it, and Alternate Named & Numbered Forms [2 Points] to cover all different shapes.
- Gamemaster: You have a small arsenal there for the grand total of 7 points. What a bargain! What's the other sheet for?
- Stratton: I want my character to call on a demon servitor, from some Gossamer world that resembles Hell.
- Gamemaster: Wow! Tell me about it.
- Stratton: Well, I'm assuming that on his Gossamer hell-world, he can think, move, fly, etc., right?
- Gamemaster: Right. Let's assume that if you take him out of his hell-world, he's equivalent to a normal human, though, unless you improve him through points.
- Stratton: That's what I thought. So I bought Immense Vitality [4 Points], Double Speed [2 Points], Paragon Stamina [2 Points], Combat Mastery [2 Points], Double Damage claws and horns [2 Points], Resistant to Firearms [2 Points], and Extraordinary Psychic Sense [4 Points] which is how he knows when I'm in danger. I figured that Double Speed could count for when he's flying? Is that all right?
- Gamemaster: I'm impressed. That's a lot of points, but he's going to be very, very tough.
- Stratton: I'm not done yet. I want him to get to me, so he has Follow Path [2 Points], Rapid Healing [2 Points], and I don't want others messing with him, so I want True Name is Warded [2 Points]. He also Contains Named & Numbered Cantrips [2 Points].
- Gamemaster: If my math is correct, this bad boy is going to set you back 26 points. That's not cheap. Anything you want to cut?
- Stratton: I'm happy with him. His name is Wityk, and he's pretty much your classic combat demon. He's got a cruel sense of humor and loves bloodshed.
- Gamemaster: I'm sure he'll be the hit of the party.

However, this task is outside the scope of what's possible for beginning player characters: it should represent a major campaign goal or epic undertaking, fraught with danger and herculean effort, an endeavor not to be taken lightly, and with profound consequences and responsibilities. If this is attempted, the gamemaster should be the arbiter of what is possible, and should determine the point costs for any resulting artifacts or creatures.

This is represented by a new item Quality called "Tied to a Power," described below.

Tied to a Power. This measures how tied the item is to the owner's own powers. Adding this power to an item makes it more than just a part of the character's "portfolio" or personal

reality: it makes it a part of the character's very nature, but also represents tying the item to something beyond the character's control, the power itself. If the power is a great one, the results may be unexpected and even uncontrollable. For example, if the Eidolon, Umbra, or the Grand Stair are interacting directly with the character, these items are likely to be the conduit they use to interact with the character, and that great power may even seize control over the item, or use it to influence the character, towards its own ends.

Each level of this Quality is specific to one power only and must be purchased separately. When describing items using this quality, describe it like so: "Connected to Eidolon," "Linked to the Umbra," or "Integral to the Grand Stair," etc. Items can be linked to one or more powers with two notable exceptions:

Point Costs for Artifacts		
Power	Cost	Description
Connected to a Power	1 Point	The item possesses an instinct for the character's use of the power and aids it in its use, making the power a bit quicker and cost less effort. If appropriate, it confers a slight edge in conflicts based on that power if all other factors are equal.
Linked to a Power	2 Points	As above, but the item is more prominent in the character's use of the power, aiding it considerably, even instinctually. This offers a more-than-slight edge for conflicts regarding the power, overcoming two or three other factors that would tip the conflict one way or another. The item embodies some characteristics of the power itself, and its nature is recognizable to others with the power. The character may find that using the power without the item is slightly more difficult and cumbersome, or even less rewarding.
Integral to a Power	4 Points	As above, but at this level the item is intrinsic to the character's understanding and involvement with the power, and provides a key into the character's very nature. A character can still use the power without the item, but it will seem tedious and perhaps even difficult by comparison. The item embodies the major characteristics of the power itself, and can potentially call upon it independently of the character. If the player is separated from the item it may potentially be returned (or replaced) by the power itself. The item holds tremendous psychological significance to the character: losing it permanently will be a shattering and painful experience.

Greater Qualities and Powers Point Costs for Artifacts		
Qualities	Cost	Description
Stupendous Vitality	8 Points	Item has strength beyond any mortal being. For living beings, this is the equivalent of Strength ranked at the middle of the Attribute Ladder.
Exalted Vitality	16 Points	The item has legendary Strength, capable of beating the highest-ranks of the Attribute Ladder.
Combat Supremacy	8 Points	Creatures or items with this quality are peerless combatants, more than the equal of Paragon-ranked characters and competitive against the middle of the Attribute Ladder.
Impervious to Harm	8 Points	Few if any forces (magical or natural) can influence or damage the item's physical integrity. It is partially proof against "Destructive Damage" weapons (below), but "Primal Damage" weapons will shear through it.
Destructive Damage	8 Points	Causes massive, horrible wounds, fatal to lesser beings and near-mortal to beings of power. Can cut through almost any armor known, and is blunted somewhat against armor with the "Impervious to Harm" quality (above).
Invulnerable	16 Points	Nothing, including weapons doing Destructive Damage or Primal Damage, can harm the armor or item. It is eternal, and may even destroy weapons wielded against it. Destructive Damage weapons may be damaged, and only Primal Damage weapons can survive impact without harm.
Primal Damage	16 Points	The item is touched with either the Eidolon or Umbra (pick one), and has elements wrought within it. This causes immense damage to most things, and unbelievable damage to things allied with the opposite power. The effects of these injuries will be shatteringly explosive, and may not heal or be overcome through even powerful regeneration or shape-shifting.

- Characters can only link powers they possess.
- No item can simultaneously be linked to the Eidolon and the Umbra.

For example, a character wishing for a magical grail which is Integral to Sorcery [4 Points], Linked to the Umbra [2 Points], and Connected for Invocation [1 Point] must pay 7 points for those Qualities, in addition to the cost of any other qualities or powers, or multiples which might apply.

While items can be created to be used by the owner and/or wielder (if the two are separate), items tied to powers cannot easily be used by others to their full potency, unless ordered to do so by the owner (defined as the character who paid the points).

The level of this resistance to outside users increases with each step of the quality.

Greater Qualities and Powers

Through character improvement, characters are not limited to the existing levels of qualities and powers described previously. When spending points to improve characters, players may choose to spend points to improve existing qualities or powers for their artifacts or creatures, outstripping their starting capabilities. The table on page 55 lists a variety of greater qualities, and the gamemaster is encouraged to allow or devise additional improvements.



Chapter Six: Domains

One of the first things someone attuned to the Grand Stair does is to establish a Domain. As mentioned before, a Domain is a place of power, in or consisting of the entirety of a Gossamer world, accessible via a Door and made “home” to the owner. This is accomplished during character creation by paying points for a Domain, as described earlier on page 27. Characters with access to the Grand Stair can find any Gossamer world and maybe even make it their own, but unless points are paid for it, it is just another world, and not a Domain. The more points, the more tied to the character the Domain will be, and vice versa. Starting Domains are assumed to be inherited by the character or otherwise given to them, or are the character’s Gossamer home world.

A Domain where a being of power resides will soon become attuned to the owner’s personality and presence, reflecting the owner’s nature. The last thing a foe would want to do is face a Gossamer Lord within his or her Domain, where the Gossamer reality has conformed to serve the owner’s desires.

Domains will often be filled with loyal partisans, death-traps, palaces and domiciles of astounding wealth or luxury, depending on the personality of the owner. Domains are often hidden in secret or less-traveled recesses of the Grand Stair, and entry-points may be guarded by mortal soldiers, patrolled by magical wardens, warded by supernatural forces, or even trapped with mundane physical threats. Some regents will even evoke catastrophic forces of nature to defend themselves while in their Domains, unleashing landslides, floods, fires, and earthquakes to hinder unwanted visitors.

When designing a Domain, the two most important factors to consider are security and access. Security is determined by the level and nature of defenses the Domain contains, whether magic or mortal. Access is determined by the Doors the owner establishes within the Domain, short-cuts to places in the Gossamer worlds

serving a specific purpose: whether tactical, pragmatic, magical, aesthetic, or even sentimental.

The degree of accessibility of a Domain is a statement to others, a declaration of allegiance and level of involvement in the political landscape. Someone who hides a Domain is thought to be a schemer, or perhaps is too meek to be a serious player in the great game of power. A heavily-warded Domain could indicate an owner who lacks confidence, or it could be someone who wants to be left well alone, thank you. A too-accessible Domain is an invitation and potentially a trap, and a Domain established as neutral ground is good form, if naive.

Some of the Gossamer Lords have multiple Domains, the exact number of these is a zealously-guarded secret, known to few. Rivals will go to great lengths to determine the exact location and number of a potential ally’s or foe’s Domains, and it is wise to guard this information as carefully as sorcerers of old guarded their True Names.

Three qualities define a Domain, rated the same way as item qualities: Type, Security, and Control.



Type		
Quality	Cost	Description
Personal Domain	1 Point	This represents an entire Gossamer world (or a defensible portion of one) suited to the owner’s tastes, including denizens, environment, climate, laws of physics, weather, history, etc. The domain may be focused on the character, or the character could be an anonymous part of it... Whatever is desired. The domain will be accessible from some distant or obscure part of the Grand Stair (or one easily overlooked) and relatively unknown to others.
Common Ground	2 Points	The domain is known to most of those who are able to walk the Grand Stair, reached by a commonly-traveled part of the Grand Stair, even serving as a landmark of sorts. It may have had previous owners, and may still be coveted by others. Other lords and ladies of the Gossamer worlds may even have business or interests of their own in this domain. Common ground worlds are more substantial than personal domains, Gossamer worlds with reputations that will be reflected upon the owner.
Primal World	4 Points	This is an ancient and powerful place, old and with secrets beyond the ken of most who travel the Grand Stair. It may even be fabled, or feared. There is some exceptional quality to this place, to be defined by the player and gamemaster, that makes it stronger than other Gossamer worlds.

Security

Quality	Cost	Description
Communication Barrier	1 Point	Communication into and from within the domain is prevented by the veil of shadow surrounding the Gossamer worlds. This includes any or all powers such as the eidolon, umbra, sorcery, invocation, wrighting (including the use of icons), and even psyche. While aspects of these powers that reach across Gossamer worlds will still work, communication is made impossible. The barrier can be one-way, or two-way, but must be total (no exceptions such as “blocked to all psyches but mine,” for example).
Restricted Access	2 Points	As above, with the additional feature that entry to and from the domain is limited, with limited doors accessing it, and the creation of new doors extremely difficult or impossible. The severity of this limited access should be determined by the player and gamemaster. If there is a key to the door to this Gossamer world, the player character possesses it.
Guarded	4 Points	As above, with the feature that doors and other entry points into the domain are constantly guarded by powerful beings, natural or supernatural, steadfast in their watch. The player must determine their orders when the domain is created.

Control

Quality	Cost	Description
Control of Contents	1 Point	Through a profound understanding of the physical, magical, and other laws that govern this gossamer world, the owner can control the domain’s history, cultures, people, creatures, environment, etc. as desired. The time required to enact changes increases by the scale of the alteration being attempted. The owner must be within the domain to control its contents.
Control of Time Flow	2 Points	As above, plus the owner can control the flow of time in the domain, causing the gossamer world to speed up, slow down, or even practically stopping it, all relative to the passage of time within the Grand Stair. Normally, all worlds have a time flow more-or-less congruent to the Grand Stair, but this quality allows the domain’s owner to break these rules and affect the flow of time. The owner must be within the domain to influence the flow of time. This control over time is felt world-wide, and will affect all within that domain, hence the inadvisability of freezing time outright.
Control of Destiny	4 Points	This domain is so powerfully tied into the owner’s destiny that it will manifest as he or she moves through the Grand Stair, or even in other gossamer worlds. Doors may unexpectedly open into this domain, and the character may encounter doors to this domain in surprising locales. No matter where in the gossamer worlds the owner goes, this domain will emanate a powerful sense of location, to pull the owner to it.

An Example of Domain Creation

The gamemaster sits down with Morgan to go over his character, Moreltheus. This portion of their discussion concerns Domains.

Gamemaster: All right, Morgan. When we reviewed your character, you said you were setting aside 7 points for a Domain, and would detail it later. What have you got for me?

Morgan: I’m a fan of “hollow Earth” stories, so I wanted to have Moreltheus have one of those as his domain. I’m borrowing the name “Agartha” from our world myths. It’s got all of the classic stuff: dinosaurs and savage cultures, lost civilizations, weird Atlantean-style technology, a central sun called Prosperine, and in this world Moreltheus is a sort of a god-king. The chosen one. Maybe every so often steampunk-style British explorers show up and get into trouble.

Gamemaster: Wow! That’s going to be cool. So how do the points break down?

Morgan: I spent 1 point to make it a Personal Domain, 4 points to make it Guarded, and 2 points for Control of Time Flow.

Gamemaster: What is it Guarded with?

Morgan: There’s only a few entrances, and most of them are secret, but the big one is a kind of huge gate in the center of the palace. It’s guarded by legions of lizard-men who are fanatically loyal to Moreltheus.

Gamemaster: What else could a god-king want? I’m definitely going to see about working that place into some of the adventures.

Chapter Seven: Allies

Your character does not necessarily have to be alone in the universe. During character creation you can purchase allies for your character, whether they be friends, mentors, parents, or even rivals. Unfortunately, the identity of these characters is not up to you, the player. Nothing in the Gossamer worlds is certain, and someone who presents as a loyal friend may in fact be a deadly enemy, and someone who seems hostile may be a close but unknown relative. The gamemaster gets to decide the identity of each of your allies, but will not make it obvious about who it is, and may even lie outright to you or your character.

Pick any desired allies from the following:

GOSSAMER WORLD ALLY [1 POINT] – This is exactly what it sounds like, someone (or something) from one of the Gossamer worlds who owes your character a favor, or feels strongly enough about your character to offer aid and hospitality when needed. This might be an old childhood friend, a distant relative, a coworker, a sworn blood brother, an ex-lover, a loyal supporter, an old teacher, or even a ruler. This ally's influence is limited to their world, and they will almost never be encountered outside of that home base.

MENTOR [2 POINTS] – Someone who taught or otherwise instructed your character, whether a counselor, a teacher, a former master, a wise old uncle, or even a former commander. Like the Gossamer world ally, the mentor's influence is linked to their world of origin, but they are considerably more powerful, and have a stronger bond of affection or loyalty. A mentor may even risk life and limb to aid your character based on the circumstance.

GOSSAMER WORLD DEVOTEE [3 POINTS] – A Gossamer world devotee is, as the name suggests, someone prominent from one of the Gossamer worlds who is devoted to your character, willing to go to great measures to help your character. This connection can be a devout friend, a lover, or even a blood relation. If this ally is publicly known, others may assume that your character has a familial or other intrinsic connection to one or more of the Gossamer Lords.

PARTISAN SUPPORT [3 POINTS] – Your character is backed by an entire group possessing some measure of power, either political, social, magical, or tactical. This could be a political party, a secret society, a religion or magic tradition, or an army. Alternately, this group possesses or controls some thing to be reckoned with: a single artifact of incredible power; a supernatural being at the level of a god; or a place with considerable magical properties. Unlike an artifact or creature, this group supports your character overall, but this does not necessarily mean it is always reliable or consistent in support.

DWIMMERLAIK ALLY [4 POINTS] – Incredibly, your character has made an ally, or holds some relation to one of the strange and mysterious Dwimmerlaik, the powerful race of beings at war with the Gossamer Lords. Perhaps the character has encountered one of these beings before and found a common purpose, or has entered into an alliance to oppose a shared enemy. It may

even be that the character is descended from, or related to, the Dwimmerlaik, and this lineage is known to them and the character. The character is unlikely to be able to freely call upon or discuss this connection, as it could cause instant distrust among fellow characters and others. This is perhaps the most tenuous and unreliable of the Allies in this section, as an encounter with this Dwimmerlaik does not guarantee an acknowledgment of the alliance. The gamemaster is encouraged to develop the details of this ally in secrecy, or with minimal consultation with the player.

LORD OF THE GOSSAMER WORLDS [5 POINTS] – A Gossamer Lord (or Lady) ally is one of the movers and shakers of the universe, one of the mightiest beings in creation. Taking this ally means that your character is either the child of one of these powerful personages, or has been “adopted” as such, though this does not necessarily mean that the ally is the same as the parent. For one reason or another, the particular lord or lady has taken an interest in your character, and is willing to bring tremendous resources to bear to aid and abet your character if need be, defending when possible and offering extraordinary levels of aid. The gamemaster should work out which nonplayer character this is, if it is not a parent. Note that while being the offspring of a Gossamer Lord does not necessarily grant any special bloodline or ability, Gossamer Lords are more-than-likely to aid their children in achieving power greater than that of mere mortals.

Players cannot pick other player characters as allies in this fashion. Any alliances between player characters are handled through roleplaying and are far less reliable.





Chapter Eight: Playing Your Character

Some (if not all) players reading this book may be familiar with how to role-play, skills learned from other games, while for some players this may be a first encounter with diceless role-playing, or even role-playing in general. Role-playing without dice generally requires greater imagination than traditional role-playing, and can potentially be more engaging than other types of role-playing, but it does require a somewhat different skill set. The previous section covers character creation, and the following section governs the rules that guide diceless role-playing. The focus of this section, however, is to bridge the gap between having a character and being able to role-play that character in the world of *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*.

Be Invested in Your Character

The first and most important advice for players of *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* (or any role-playing game) is to be invested in your character. Many (if not most) television shows, comic series, and fiction series are concerned with the actions of one or more characters you (the audience) are expected to become invested in. Sometimes the plot of an individual episode is important, or even a major story arc is engaging, but ultimately it is investment in the characters that is crucial. If the audience is not invested in the characters, the interest in the day-to-day plots and story the characters are immersed in become uninteresting and not very compelling. The same is true of characters, player- or nonplayer-, in a role-playing game. Players must be excited to get to “put on” the identity of their characters as if they were roles being played on stage, or even a comfortable set of clothing.

Move beyond thinking of your character as a set of numbers and abilities and think of him or her as a fictional character, or even as if a living being. That means giving your character qualities of personality and behavior that aren't the sort of things that can be measured by rankings and point totals. If you do not care about what happens to your character, it becomes little more than a playing piece on a board, rather than a character that inhabits a setting you and your fellow players are creating.

Some people have an easier time creating and becoming invested in character than others, but there is no reason to give up trying. Find something about your character, even if it is a characteristic you share, that you can care about. Ultimately, you can even make your character an extension of yourself, and use role-playing as a means of exploring how you might react to the strange and amazing world your character is thrust into. Give your character goals you as a player can sympathize with, or at the very least, care to see your character succeed at. If your character does not have anything that you can relate to, you are likely going to have a difficult time role-playing that character, and the other players will have an even harder time figuring out who your character is.

Becoming invested in your character ultimately means caring, caring about whether he succeeds or fails, caring about the emotions she feels, and caring enough to see that character's story continue, session by session, for the length of the campaign and beyond. The more you're invested in your character, the more likely you're willing to care when that character suffers. And if your gamemaster is doing their job, things will not always be sunshine and roses. If you are not engaged with your character, any adversity will be superficial and abstract, as if it were happening to someone else, but if you are invested, it will be as if it happened to a good friend, or even to you. How is that good, you may ask? Facing challenges and persevering through them is the very heart of what diceless role-playing is all about. In a world where every challenge is framed as a conflict, your character becomes more real, more defined, by how he or she handles that conflict, whether succeeding or failing.

Always Be Role-Playing

A good way to think of your character is as a role you put on, almost like donning a uniform. When you put that uniform on, you are that identity. A person in plain clothes may look like anyone, but in a police uniform, that same person has suddenly come to embody something larger and more significant. Ideally, that person will act in a fashion appropriate to the uniform, and people will modify their behavior (for better or worse) in response to the presence of the uniform. If you have ever acted before on stage, the absolute worst thing you can do is to think of your part as a series of dialogue lines and directions you need to get right. Instead, you should think of the role as an identity, and place yourself in that identity. If you're totally committed, you cannot blow a line or do something wrong because that isn't what would happen to your character. Your character will say the line of dialogue correctly or perform the stage action as scripted because that's what he or she would do.

It's essentially just pretending. Pretend you are the character. You don't have to know everything your character knows, or be as good or as terrible as your character may be at certain things, but you should pretend you do, and pretend that you are all of the things your character claims to be. Good role-playing is like bluffing, with one important difference. In a card game (or any game involving bluffing), you can bluff, but the other players are predisposed to thinking you're lying, suspecting a bluff, and trying to guess what you're really up to. In a role-playing game, you are continually bluffing, and the great part is that your fellow players are also bluffing and at the same time are willing victims to your bluff, and the bluffing becomes the reality, a heightened and (in most cases) more enjoyable world than the one represented with character sheets and rulebooks.

Every game session should represent a chance to strengthen your role-playing chops, whether it is full of exciting action

and tense, emotional exchanges, to lighthearted banter and an exchange of witty repartee. The more you speak in your character's voice, the more real that character will become to you and your fellow players, creating an interesting dynamic where the characters are just as familiar with one another as the players are with each other.

The gamemaster should try to engage your character with nonplayer character dialogue whenever possible, speaking to you in a nonplayer character's voice when one is present, referring to you by your character's name during all appropriate exchanges. There are many tricks to make this easier: a particularly useful means is to have the players set name plates (a folded sheet of paper) in front of them so the gamemaster sees those constantly, to a quick cheat-sheet with the names of the player characters and the player names in parentheses after. If a portrait of the player character exists, by all means keep a copy of it handy, and think of that image rather than the player when addressing them.

Developing Your Character

If you have always wanted to be an actor, role-playing is your moment to shine. Even if you do not necessarily want to become an actor, you can use a few tricks to make your character live, stepping from the character sheet and into the minds of your fellow players and gamemaster as a real being rather than some numbers and words. Feel free to personalize your character with quirks, goals, and mannerisms that are easy to recognize and are consistent from session to session. Your character may use a particular figure of speech, have a particular mannerism or nervous tic, or even speak with a slight accent. A warning... thick or difficult accents can sometimes be problematic in the relaxed environment of a role-playing game, where you may have to step in and out of character depending on what is happening. This is not advice against accents, but a simple warning that it is not always as easy as it might seem to speak in a different accent for hours a night, session after session.

Living in your character's shoes can mean a few things, such as moving from saying *"My character does..."* to *"I do..."* when telling the other players and the gamemaster what you're planning on having your character do. This simple step can make a world of difference in role-playing, when the players stop thinking of each other as their real-world identities but instead see the character in that place. It's not as weird as it sounds, and can happen easily and comfortably, where suddenly conversations shift from you saying something like: *"Jessamyn asks Natasha to step out of the away"* versus *"Natasha... if you care to live beyond this next second, you will remove yourself from my path."* Both of them serve the same purpose, but one of these is a mundane bit of description, and one is a dramatic threat that can send chills down a spine.

Stepping completely into the role of your character can mean feeling as they do, actually laughing, crying, and exhibiting dramatic or extreme emotion when it's appropriate. Some players will have an easier time of this than others, and sometimes strong displays of emotion in a role-playing session can make other

players uncomfortable. Recognize when it's appropriate, have the gamemaster keep things at a comfortable tone, but don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone from time to time and risk... the rewards will almost always be worth it.

Secrets Are Worth Keeping

Once you and the other players have completed the Attribute auction, there is no reason the other players need to know anything more about your character's capabilities. Attributes can be increased further up the Attribute Ladder during character generation, and any powers, artifacts, creatures, allies, Domains, etc. can be developed and purchased without involvement from other players. This gives you a tremendous advantage in that your character is somewhat of an unknown quantity, capable of surprising the other players. In games where players are crossing swords or coming into opposition with one another in other ways, this can be a tremendous advantage, and even when characters are getting along this can be of tremendous use.

The gamemaster should be discreet about what your character is capable of, as it's the greatest advantage you have in a conflict with other players. Zealously guard concrete information about what your character can do, or what he or she is trying to achieve, because those friendly players sitting next to you might not have your character's best interests at heart, or may not even be who they appear to be. Furthermore, the infinite otherworlds are full of powerful beings, powers, and creatures who may use what they learn about your character against them, so always be aware of what gets said, and only show your cards when it's absolutely necessary.

Secrecy is a two-way street as well, and there is a tremendous difference between what you as a player knows and what your character knows. Obviously your character inhabits a fictional setting and may have a radically different background and skill set than you, the player, but you will also be privy to things your character may not know. You may remember how high one of the other players bid on Psyche during the Attribute Auction, but unless your character has some experience with that player's character, that character's Psyche should remain a mystery. Similarly, things that are said from one player to another are not always known to all characters. Just because you as a player hear one player tell the gamemaster they're setting your character up for an ambush does not mean that your character knows it.

These two types of knowledge are called "in-character" and "out of character," with the former being what your character knows and the second being what you as a player know. Try to keep them straight, and do not get offended if your gamemaster corrects you on what your character would actually know. Acting on out-of-character knowledge breaks the believability of the setting, and can lead to disagreements during play, especially if out-of-character knowledge is exploited or used to take advantage of another player character.

Focus on Something

All of the personality stuff aside, a valuable means of creating a vivid character, one that you can enjoy role-playing, is finding a focus. A focus is something your character is known for, or is striving to deal with, either positively or negatively. There are two avenues for your character to be focused: characteristics and goals. The first concerns who your character is, the second concerns what your character wants.

Characteristics: Your character has four Attributes and may have some Powers, Artifacts, Creatures, Allies, Domains, and some quantity of Stuff. Take a look at the character sheet. Where do you see your character's strengths and weaknesses? If one of the Attributes is particularly strong, you might use that as a means of identifying with your character. A character with a high Strength may be focused on physical challenges, and see the world in terms of things that can be addressed through brute force. That character is perhaps used to intimidating others through raw physical strength, and may have a high sense of self-esteem regarding all things physical. A Warfare-centered character sees the world as an immense tactical situation, with every decision having ramifications that will eventually involve strategic implications. All decisions become tactical, all relationships become strategic alliances. Everyone is assessed in terms of the level of threat they possess, and their weaknesses are categorized for future use. Alternately, your character may be focused on a Power and on means of improving it. A Sorcerer may devote herself to the construction and maintenance of spells and their use, while an Invoker may devote himself to learning the True Names of all of his allies and enemies, risking everything for this secret knowledge. An item may become a focus, such as the character being the inheritor of a sacred artifact sought by others, or entrusted as the guardian of a special place, preventing it from being despoiled or exploited. Even Stuff can help you find a mechanical focus, such as your character feeling blessed and counting on amazing good luck to win the day, or feeling cursed and thinking that at any opportunity, the universe will take a great reeking dump on you.

Goals: Ultimately, what is your character trying to accomplish? This can be as shallow as "survive the session," and plenty of fun role-playing can be had simply showing up and trying to make the best of what challenges and conflicts the gamemaster throws at your character, but it's hard to stay invested in a character that doesn't want anything, and the gamemaster may have a difficult time coming up with plot elements your character will feel drawn to. It's perfectly all right for a character recently introduced to the world of the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds to be adrift and not know what he or she wants, but after a while, you should give your character something to strive for, something he or she is trying to achieve.

Ask a Lot of Questions

The gamemaster has the job of portraying multiple worlds, an entire universe even, to the players, which can be a daunting task. When player characters meet a new nonplayer character, or encounter a creature, or enter a new environment, the gamemaster provides all of the information to the players, information that directly affects the way the characters behave. If a particular nonplayer character is depicted as being dangerous-looking, keeping her hand on her weapons, always appraising the player characters looking for weaknesses, the players may take this as a challenge, or be wary. An environment described as being full of sharp rocks, deep shadows, and unearthly sounds will evoke a much different response than one described as sunny and idyllic.

The gamemaster can't tell the player everything, however. It would take too long to describe every little detail of an environment or every single little element that describes a nonplayer character, so the gamemaster should generally provide just enough information to portray a character, creature, or place accurately, and leave it to the players to ask questions when they need more information. Once those questions are asked, the gamemaster can skew further information according to the way the character views the world, filtering it through a tactical lens for Warfare-focused characters, or tonally when considering Stuff.

Sometimes the gamemaster hasn't decided the details of something important to your character to know. Asking questions early will potentially skew the answers in a way that's favorable for your character versus others, so players may end up jockeying to ask the gamemaster the first, or most significant questions whenever something new comes up. As real people trying to play fictional creations with abilities that far outstrip human capabilities, the players will often need the gamemaster to provide answers for things their characters would know if they would not.

Asking unexpected questions can lead to interesting evolutions of the game, aiding in the joint experience of building a setting. The most important thing to remember is that the gamemaster should always be assumed to be right. If something is amiss, ask to clarify, and only unless it is truly and completely outside acceptable, the players should accept it and roll with it. Arguing with the gamemaster is not much fun for anyone concerned. Most gamemasters put in a lot of work creating their world and bringing it life for the players, and other players may not agree with the point in contention. The best way to deal with disagreements is through questioning. Maybe not all is as it seems, and the gamemaster has a very good reason for saying something that sounds false or inaccurate. Or maybe that's just the way the gamemaster is portraying this world. Arguments should be the last resort of any disagreements in a role-playing game, and the gamemaster should first decide whether the complaint is warranted, and if it is not, ask the player to drop the matter or promise to discuss it later.

Talk Amongst Yourselves

A great deal of the role-playing interaction in a session of game play is between the gamemaster and the players, with the gamemaster either relaying information as an impartial observer and provoking reactions from the player characters, or the gamemaster playing a nonplayer character and conversing directly with one or more players. Even the best gamemaster can't involve everyone all the time, as players and certain situations will monopolize the gamemaster's attention from time to time.

When that happens, players should make the best of it and speak to one another if they are able. If the characters are in

proximity, they can speak directly, and if they are not, there are magical means of conversing across the Gossamer worlds, or if the characters are in the same world the players may be able to role-play conversations through phones or other communication methods (emailing, chat programs, holographic projections, etc.).

Use the down time while the gamemaster is elsewhere to make plans, to strategize, analyze, and even assess one another. Sometimes these conversations can take on a life of their own, involving the gamemaster, and in some cases players may (with the gamemaster's permission) take on the roles of minor nonplayer characters, so long as combat or significant plot elements are not being decided without the gamemaster's involvement. If



Lucien, Lord of the Grand Stair, is a Sovereign of Gossamer worlds. Access to his library is no small favor.

appropriate, the players can inform the gamemaster what they were up to, but should be open to the notion that the gamemaster may veto certain actions or statements if they contradict the overall plan for the campaign. Ideally, players should get a sense for what is all right to introduce, and what should require a gamemaster's intervention.

Other Sovereigns of Gossamer and Shadow

Your character will likely be built on 100 points and be a relative newcomer in the overall scheme of things, or if they have been around, may be somewhat of a small fish in an infinite pond. The gamemaster will be introducing major nonplayer characters in the form of experienced walkers of the Grand Stair, other sovereigns of the Gossamer worlds, and even powerful nonplayer characters from one of the Gossamer worlds. Characters may even come face-to-face with some of the mysterious Dwimmerlaik, strange beings who claim authority over the Grand Stair and all of the worlds it touches.

Some of these nonplayer characters may be centuries, if not millennia, older than the player characters, with powers and experience outstripping the entire group of player characters. Their goals may be vast and unknowable, with plans set in motion centuries before the player characters happened onto the scene, and as a result, there might be conflict. Do not lose all hope! These powerful beings might be allies, deadly enemies, or even parents or siblings.

Each of these major nonplayer characters should be viewed as an opportunity for your character, a chance to forge a valuable alliance, or gain some previously-unknown insight, a peek behind the curtain of mystery shrouding the nature of the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds. Rather than acting with suspicion, or formality, you might have your character react in an emotional fashion, as if he or she might really behave when confronted with such a figure torn from myth or secret history.

Choose wisely before acting, however. These beings have seen a lot, done more, and patience might be thin when it comes to dealing with petty upstarts. If the other player characters surge around a powerful nonplayer character, bubbling with questions and asking for assistance with their problems, the best choice might be to offer what aid your character can marshal, or even volunteer to help serve their interests. No reason to follow through, but the offer can make a world of difference.

The World Is What You Make It

While the gamemaster is going to be responsible for describing the broad details of your environment, as a participant in the joint creation of the setting, you should feel free to add minor details as appropriate. You can do so in the form of asking the gamemaster yes/no style questions such as *"Does this guard station have a gun locker?"* or you can simply interject details and rely on the gamemaster to approve or reject them, such as *"I'll step into the guard station and see if I can get the gun locker open."* The

gamemaster should feel free to veto anything that is out of place, such as a fully-charged and operational laser rifle sitting in a Quaker barn, so don't get too attached to anything you introduce.

You should be able to assume certain things about a particular environment (like plenty of tools in an auto shop, for example), and the gamemaster should also be prepared to listen for interesting explanations about a less-than-regular detail a player adds. You can even do this with nonplayer characters, providing background information such as past involvement with your character, or details of personality and behavior that may not have been apparent when the gamemaster initially presented them. Make nonplayer characters great and small as real or as engaging as you can, and that'll make them far more useful to the gamemaster as means of involving your character.

The more the players and the gamemaster collaborate on the shared reality of their game setting, the more everyone prospers. Players feel a sense of worthwhile investment and some measure of control over their surroundings (if not their fates), while the gamemaster is spared most of the heavy lifting and is occasionally challenged and even delighted by the details that the players will introduce. A group of imaginative players and a skilled, open-minded gamemaster is a thing of beauty, calling into creation world after world, environment after environment, situation after situation, and making them real together. Strive for it.

Player Tools to Help Role-playing

Contributions (described on pages 14-15) provide an invaluable means of improving role-playing and turning character sheets into characters. Many Contributions actually demand that the player assume the role or mindset of their character, and this can only deepen the personification of that character.

- **DIARY:** An in-character diary is perhaps the absolute best method of providing depth to a character. The best diaries are those where the player writes a diary in the voice of his or her character, providing a crystal-clear insight into the character's thought processes, motives, goals, and even the way they view other characters (player and nonplayer). Remember though that a diary is subjective, and the way you write about other characters should be how your character views them, portrayals that may not always be accurate.
- **CAMPAIGN LOG:** Even a simple recitation of events in the campaign can provide a means of keeping track of a character's personality. Character is manifested in action as well as through dialogue, and a record of what a character does, session after session, provides a narrative of how that character behaves. Most characters will likely have some consistency in how they behave, and that can make it easier for the player and others to anticipate that character's actions and reactions.
- **PORTRAITS:** A picture may or may not be worth a thousand words, but it can certainly serve as a shortcut for

personalization. Abstract and idealized images are fine, but the more concrete and realistic a portrait is, the more easily it is for the gamemaster and other players to visualize that character, and identify that character with that appearance, rather than an abstract personality the player sometimes inhabits. Exhibit character portraits wherever possible, to create that strong identification.

- **STORIES OR POETRY:** Both of these allow players to flesh out their characters (or even take stabs at fleshing out each others' characters) by adding to their fictional identities. The more characters are written (or even thought) about, the more concrete and real they become. The only consideration a gamemaster should have with this is that, like a diary or journal, a story or poem should be considered biased, not always reflecting characters in the most accurate light.
- **QUOTES:** Even something as specific as a quote list can be useful for keeping character identities consistent and rich in the players' minds. If the quote list is not entirely composed of out-of-character comments or out-of-context jokes, it can provide a great source of epigrams or memorable lines that can stick in the players' minds between sessions, and can even be used to quote back at players in in-character conversation.
- **QUIZZES:** Character quizzes are a wonderful tool for players and the gamemaster to gain greater insight into characters. Players are given a series of questions to answer in the voice of their character, or providing the answers as if they were their character. Some of the questions are relatively easy to answer, while others require some thought. Do not be afraid to reconsider the answers and change them as your character evolves! Personalities change, and sometimes the quick answer you provided at the beginning of a campaign doesn't fit the way your character evolved. Sample quiz questions are provided later in this book, on page 66-67.

Gamemasters and Role-playing

All of the advice above can apply to the role of the gamemaster as well, though obviously the gamemaster has a simultaneously tougher and easier task of role-playing. Nonplayer characters do not generally have to be as well-developed as players, and minor or unimportant nonplayer characters usually can be characterized with a single note, like an accent, a particular voice, or a quick verbal characteristic, whereas the player is forced to come up with a whole character with all manner of backstory and goals and idiosyncrasies of personality to make their character feel "real." Some nonplayer characters deserve the full "player character treatment," with rich back-stories and complex goals, as well as personalities that feel fleshed-out rather than superficial.

However, the gamemaster should be careful to use this sparingly. When players sense there's something to seek out, or something they're meant to pay attention to, they'll dig in,

often tenaciously. This can be useful when you want players to get interested in something, and tedious when you want them to move on and focus on the important stuff. Unless there is an important reason why a simple innkeeper or city guard might be a complex and intriguing personality, it's best to keep things light, or else players will become bogged down in lengthy conversations about nothing in particular, or even interesting discussions with nonplayer characters who are not important to the plot or story. Once in a while this can be an interesting change of pace, but too much can bore players not involved and make a campaign or even a session feel like it's wandering aimlessly.

If the gamemaster is doing the job well, the players should care about friendly or allied nonplayer characters as well, and may even become invested in the fates of neutral or hostile nonplayer characters. Players who become invested in the setting, as portrayed through the nonplayer characters inhabiting it, are more likely to care about what happens every session, and will inevitably bring their best role-playing to the table.

Character Quizzes

One of the most useful tools a gamemaster (and by extension, a player) has to understand and define the player character is the character quiz. This is essentially a series of questions the gamemaster will ask the player about their character, forcing the player to think of problems and different situations from the point of view of the character.

The gamemaster should present these questions early in a campaign, immediately after character creation (but not bogging down play), and let the players answer them at leisure. They can be presented in the form of a handout or emailed, but should be directly player-to-gamemaster, not aired in front of other players.

A list of sample questions is presented below, and the gamemaster should feel free to expand, alter, or edit these questions as desired. There is no need to present all of the questions to players (certainly not all at once). Instead, the gamemaster may choose to hand out a few questions every game session, perhaps on note cards. Quiz questions could also be emailed to the players to be answered between sessions. Players don't have to answer all of the questions, and may even substitute additional questions and answers.

- Your character is given a quick "out" of his or her choice, a safe haven among the Gossamer worlds, free from danger... a possible spot that might be good to retire in. What is it like?
- Your character has a business card. What does it say (if anything) to indicate career?
- If your character could pick one work of art from anywhere in the Gossamer worlds to display in his or her study, living room, hall, library, etc... what would it be?
- Your character decides to learn something new, and is offered the exclusive service of a tutor/mentor/sensei/instructor in a subject your character knows nothing

about. What would that subject be, and why would your character want to know it?

- Describe your character's Icon, made by someone who knows him or her well.
- If someone met your character fleetingly, and had to give a quick description, what would they say to describe your character?
- What is the one mistaken impression others always have about your character? Why does that keep happening? Does your character care about it?
- When was the last time your character almost died?
- If your character could have one question answered "yes" or "no," about any subject, and was convinced that the answer was authoritative and correct, what would that question be?
- If your character has a phone/communicator and is able to screen calls, who always gets picked up?
- Your character is having a wonderful evening with a desirable partner, and is somehow slighted or insulted randomly by a total stranger (or group of strangers). The insult is significant enough to cause anger, but dealing with it may spoil the rest of the evening. What does your character do?
- If your character was on Death Row, and was forced to choose a last meal, what would that meal consist of?
- If your character could call for any one personal enemy from his or her life in a room, in chains, and be in charge of that enemy's fate... who would it be, and why? And what would your character do?
- Your character is forced to hide out on the Gossamer world known as Earth... this very world. What sort of a life would he or she build? Assuming a career is necessary, what would he or she do to make ends meet?
- Imagine your character's peers from childhood meet up with your character as he or she is now, after being absent years or decades. Is your character what they would expect? How is he or she different?
- Does (or did) your character have a pet? What was it? How did your character come to own it? What was its name? What happened to it?
- Has your character ever been on the wrong side of the law? Why? Was it deserved?
- What would it take to provoke your character to kill someone?
- If your character needed a lot of money in a hurry, who would he or she call? Why? Now imagine that your character needs to dispose of a body. Who would he or she call, and why?
- Describe your character's perfect mate. If that person doesn't exist, why not?
- If your character had a six-hour period of downtime and a pocket full of money in a place he or she knew well, how would he or she spend the time?
- What phase or period of your character's life would he or

she look back with embarrassment on?

- If your character were forced to hide out from enemies on a Gossamer world of choice, what type of world would he or she pick?
- What is the most vivid memory from your character's childhood, the one that made the most significant influence on the person he or she is today?
- Philosophically, does your character fall on the side of order (the Eidolon) or entropy (the Umbra)? If your character had to choose one of these forces to be dominant, which would it be?
- If your character could go back and restart his or her life from any one point, will full knowledge of what came after and the ability to make a different decision, what point would your character go to, and why?
- Your character is going to be hanging out on a particular Gossamer world for a while. What means of transportation does he or she pick? Why?
- Your character is challenged to a duel, to the death, against a longtime rival with roughly equivalent skills and martial prowess. The selection of weapon and dueling ground is up to your character. What does he or she pick?
- Your character wakes up in the middle of the night, suspecting a break-in or intruder in his or her domicile (apartment, house, mansion, castle, etc.). What next?
- Did your character have a role model while growing up? Who, and why?
- Describe your character's last nightmare.
- Your character wakes up in the hospital, wrapped in bandages, legs in casts, but seems to be otherwise healthy and unharmed. He or she has no memory of being hospitalized. What happens next?
- How did your character first become aware of the Grand Stair?
- Your character wakes up in his or her home, alone, and discovers it's on fire. Given the chance to grab one item and flee with it, what would your character grab?
- Your character is handed the reins to a faltering, on-the-verge-of-anarchy kingdom, shoved into the throne and given the chance to run things. What would your character do? What kind of a ruler would he or she become?

Though the act of answering quiz questions may seem like a test, this exercise is ultimately for the players to better create and understand their characters, and only secondly for the gamemaster. That said, the gamemaster should read the quiz answers, taking note of the way the player character is revealed.

After a long-term campaign or at some mid-way point after many sessions of play, it may even be interesting to ask the player some of the same questions again, and to see if or how the answers may have changed.

That's character development in action.

Chapter Nine: Character Advancement

One of the most significant aspects of campaign play is that players get to watch their characters improve, raise their Attributes, learn new powers, accumulate new items of power, earn new allies, and even claim new Domains. As play continues throughout the course of a campaign or multiple series of adventures, the gamemaster will award player characters with advancement points (which are essentially character points, described on page 5). Players can spend advancement points on their characters' Attributes, powers, artifacts & creatures, Domains, allies, and even Stuff.

Advancement points should only be awarded when player characters achieve meaningful goals, either personal or those created by the gamemaster as a part of the campaign's story. Though player characters could conceivably sit around week after week engaging in witty repartee, exploring, and pursuing hobbies or other means of entertainment, such activity is not generally the sort that challenges or inspires personal growth. When characters have defeated a mighty foe, saved the Gossamer worlds from destruction, or scored an incredible victory in the face of a daunting threat... that is when the gamemaster should award advancement points.

The amount of advancement points the gamemaster should award players is based on the scale of the threat and the goals accomplished, and potentially modified by the desired rate of player character advancement within the campaign.

For example, a massive, universe-threatening campaign lasting dozens of sessions should be worth around 50 advancement points awarded to each character, more or less, depending on the severity of the opposition, the depth of the role-playing, and the relative involvement of each character. This could be increased to 75 advancement points if all of those factors were superlative, and reduce it to 25 points if the challenge was less momentous and the characters relatively unmotivated.

A good rule of thumb is to add up all of the character points used to create all of the enemies faced and defeated, and award the players anywhere from 5% to 10% of that total in advancement points.

Unfortunately, there is no hard-and-fast rule for how many advancement points to award. Too-high or too-frequent advancement point awards will result in a campaign where player characters may rapidly outstrip nonplayer characters in powers and Attributes, just as readily as too-low and too-infrequent awards can make players feel the characters are powerless or unrewarded. It's generally better to err on the side of too few advancement points, and step them up or award them more generously if need be, than deal with the effects of a rapidly escalating campaign where player characters have advanced too quickly.

Once the amount of advancement points has been decided, the gamemaster should keep it a secret. Though the gamemaster should say that it is time for advancement, the gamemaster should not tell players exactly how many advancement points will be awarded. Instead, the players should prepare a wish list of advancements, rated in order of priority, first to last, and should indicate whether or not they are willing to accept Bad Stuff to get that advancement.

It is vitally important that the player carefully weigh the decision about whether or not to take Bad Stuff to gain a particular advancement, as that decision can potentially turn a Good Stuff character into a Zero or Bad Stuff character.

Areas for Advancement

Here are the ways advancement points can be spent for advancement:

Improving Attributes: Players should indicate on the list which Attributes they want to improve. Attributes can be advanced one, and only one, rank at a time, no matter how many points are being spent. It costs 15 advancement points to advance from Average rank to Superior, and 10 points to go from Superior to Paragon. Above that, the cost of each rank is the difference between the existing rank's point total (how much was spent to get there) and the next rank on the Attribute Ladder (page 3). The points are applied and the character is now at the desired rank, just behind the current holder of that rank, in a ".5" position. Only the original bidder for the Attribute can hold the full rank. The .5 rank holder will be just slightly behind the existing rank holder and will remain there unless that character also advances, or unless the .5 rank holder advances again and the existing rank holder does not. Further advances will take the character to the next-higher .5 rank. When a character is at 1st rank on the Attribute Ladder and wants to advance, advancement points are simply added to the value of 1st rank, making it even more costly to attain the 1.5 rank position. No Bad Stuff can be applied to advance 1st rank in this fashion.

For example, Kit's character Jessamyn is at 4th rank in Warfare, having spent 15 points previously, and wants to advance. Sarah's character Cordelia is 3rd rank, having spent 32 points to be there. This will cost 17 advancement points ($32 - 15 = 17$). After spending the points, now Jessamyn is at 3.5th rank and Cordelia is still at 3rd rank, meaning Cordelia is now only fractionally better than Jessamyn. If Jessamyn advances again later in the campaign and Cordelia remains where she is at 3rd rank, Jessamyn will be 2.5th rank, ahead of Cordelia.

Advancing or Adding New Powers: Adding new powers or advancing existing powers is relatively easy. The power costs its usual cost, and advanced versions of powers cost the difference



between the advanced and basic version. When an advanced version of a power is purchased, the player character immediately gains all of the relevant abilities. Cantrips are the sole exception to this rule: additional cantrips cost 1 advancement point apiece. (*Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* features only a few advanced powers: additional ones will be provided in subsequent releases for the game line.) If a desired power is on the player's prioritized list, the gamemaster should allow the player to learn it, assuming it is not completely contradictory to the events in the campaign. Any required training or studies are assumed to be completed between sessions.

Incremental Power Increase. The gamemaster may also allow player characters to advance powers incrementally, dividing the total cost of the power among the abilities it grants, skewed by their usefulness. This is not recommended during character generation. If this method is used, the gamemaster may consider pricing the individual abilities so that taking the whole power is at a lowered price, as well as insisting that to attain the advanced version of a power, all of the relevant abilities at the lower level

must be purchased/learned.

Advancing or Improving Items: New items (artifacts or creatures) are gained the same way they are during character generation: the player should figure out what qualities and powers are desired, and total the points. The only difference is that they are paid for with advancement points. The cost of adding additional qualities or powers to items, increasing existing qualities and powers, or increasing quantity is determined by figuring out the difference between the point cost for the existing level of quality, power, or quantity and the desired levels. Players can also choose to modify one of an existing subset of items, spending advancement points to improve a single item in a Named & Numbered set, for example.

Adding or Improving Domains: Players can choose to find new Domains on the Grand Stair, or can improve existing ones in the same fashion as with items (above). This can be assumed to be handled between sessions, or the gamemaster can allow the player character to assert ownership over a Gossamer world encountered in the course of gameplay, assuming it is not already

An Example of Character Advancement

It's time for character advancement, and the gamemaster sits down with Scott to talk about his character, Taltos's advancement goals. The gamemaster has awarded all of the players with 25 advancement points, but Scott is not privy to the amount. Scott has prepared a list of desired advancements and the

- Gamemaster: Okay, Scott... walk me go through your wish list.
 Scott: First, I want to improve Warfare.
 Gamemaster: You have 1 point now, so this will cost the amount of the next rank above, and you'll be .5 rank to whatever that rank is.
 Scott: Sounds good. I want to pick up some more cantrips. I'll spend 5 points on those, and will pick the five I want after we finish talking. Next, I want to improve my pistol's damage from Double Damage to Deadly Damage. That's another 2 points, right?
 Gamemaster: Correct. Anything else?
 Scott: Next thing on my list is an artifact. Remember that Oroboros-shaped ring I took off that weird sorcerer, Tur-Kaspa? You said it "might be" magic, but I put it away and sort of forgot about it. I'd like to say that Taltos has been wearing it lately, and it has Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]. It squeezes his finger when it senses trouble.
 Gamemaster: Cool! What's next on your list?
 Scott: Umm... Taltos has been doing a lot of stuff for Vala and the other Gossamer Lords. I know I can't pick who it would be, but I'd like him to have an ally, a Lord of the Gossamer Worlds for 5 Points.
 Gamemaster: That's quite a list. If you have spent more advancement points than you earned, or if there are any extra, do you want the rest to go into Stuff?
 Scott: Yeah. Taltos has a 2 points of Bad Stuff. I can take a bit more.
 Gamemaster: Great. I'll take a look at this list and do the math. Feel free to write down all of the stuff other than the Attribute improvement. That stuff is no secret. I'll adjust the Attribute Ladder and see where Taltos falls now.
 Scott: Thanks! Taltos is certainly moving up in the world.

After the discussion, the gamemaster looks at the Attribute Ladder and finds that the next Warfare rank above Taltos' is 6th rank, at 10 points. This means it will cost Scott 9 points to become 6.5th rank.

The gamemaster then totals all the items on the advancement wish list:

- Warfare increase [9 Points]
- Damage quality increase for weapon [2 Points]
- More cantrips [5 Points]
- Danger-sensing ring artifact [2 Points]
- New ally [5 Points]

The total is 23 points and there were 25 points awarded, meaning that the remaining 2 points are applied to Taltos' Stuff. He currently has 2 points of Bad Stuff, so the positive points cancel those out and Taltos is now a Zero Stuff character. Life will get just that much easier for him!

owned by someone else. However, once a Domain's basic type has been determined (see page 57), that type cannot be modified. *For example, a Personal Domain cannot ever become a Primal World.*

Adding Allies: Players can also spend advancement points on new Allies, either by simply specifying an ally to be determined by the gamemaster, or turning an existing nonplayer character into an Ally with the gamemaster's approval. The gamemaster is the ultimate arbiter of the latter, and a player cannot add an Ally implying a blood relation to an existing nonplayer character without the gamemaster's approval. Players cannot pick other player characters for Allies in this fashion.

Adding Stuff: Because Stuff is either negative (Bad), even (Zero), or positive (Good), players can add Stuff to their player character by either choosing a specific amount (+3 points) or rolling all leftover advancement points into Stuff. Obviously, players cannot choose to add Good Stuff by taking Bad Stuff.

Spending Advancement Points

The gamemaster should then go through each player's list, and with the player add the desired advancement, making adjustments as appropriate and informing the player about any information their character would be privy to, yet at the same time withholding certain information the player and player character would not know.

The gamemaster should continue to apply advancements from the prioritized list until taking Bad Stuff is required in order for the character to "afford" the advancement. Then, the gamemaster should determine the difference between the current advancement points and the cost of the desired advancement, and apply that difference to the player character's Stuff. If the player character has Good Stuff, the points required are subtracted and can become Zero or even Bad Stuff. If the player character already has Zero or Bad Stuff, the required advancement points become new Bad Stuff.

If the player's prioritized advancement is exhausted before the advancement points are all spent, any leftover advancement points are added into Stuff, potentially turning a Bad Stuff character into a Good or Zero Stuff character, and making life that much more wonderful for a character that already has Good Stuff. If the player feels that having a bounty of Good Stuff is contrary to the player character's concept, the gamemaster should encourage the player to spend the advancement points via a second round of advancement, or determine a sufficient avenue for the advancement points to be spent, unknowingly or with the player's involvement.

Players may wish to "bank" leftover advancement points for future advancements. Instead of putting those points into Stuff, the gamemaster can allow the player to apply those advancement points as Stuff to existing artifacts, creatures, Domains, or even allies, conferring favor onto the recipient until the player chooses to spend those points. These points will be safe and untouched until needed, and the beneficiary of the advancement points

should enjoy the benefits from the sudden influx of Good Stuff.

Some advancements may come with in-game requirements, such as a debt to repay, a willing teacher, a journey to some sacred place, finding an item or a Domain, etc. The gamemaster should be clear during advancement about these requirements and may require the player character to handle them (or at least set them in motion) during the course of game play.



Chapter Ten: Diceless Role-Playing

This section is for players and gamemasters alike, covering the basics of how to do things in a diceless universe.

Now that characters are created (or are at least the concepts are understood), it's time to turn to the actual mechanics of diceless role-playing. Ultimately, all action is about conflict of some type, whether it's characters opposed to one another, characters versus their environment, or characters versus a some intangible force. To decide who succeeds and who fails, a game must have some means of resolving conflicts. While "diceless mechanics" may seem a misnomer, there are specific rules and guidelines for handling conflict in a game where outcomes are not determined through dice or some other random mechanic.

Three Rules for Conflict Resolution

Ultimately, there are only three simple questions to ask in any conflict. These questions can be answered in simple terms that should help judge the outcome of any conflict.

- **Does the action involve a reasonable chance of failure, and is that success or failure dramatically important to the continuation of the game or campaign?** If it does not matter whether the character succeeds or fails, then the character automatically succeeds. If there's a question about the outcome for such a non-dramatic resolution, consult with the character's background and Stuff (Good, Bad, or Zero) and determine the outcome based on that.
- **Is the action opposed by any force represented through background, an Attribute, Stuff, or power?** If so, the gamemaster should determine why and what the nature of that opposition is. If the level of that opposition is not immediately clear or has not been previously determined, the gamemaster should endeavor to come up with some dramatically appropriate training for a nonplayer character, a nonplayer character's rank in an Attribute, the amount of Stuff, or the power that opposes the player's action. In many cases, more than one of these will be required, such as a power depending on certain Attributes for its use. Items (whether artifacts or creatures) may also be important in this reckoning, but their value should be apparent by the description of the appropriate quality or power.
- **Is one of the opposed Attributes, powers, or amounts of Stuff higher than the other?** The high score wins. The more advanced version of a power wins in a contest of a power's ability vs. ability. For powers that depend on Attributes, the gamemaster and players should refer to the rank of the associated Attribute. The higher

Attribute wins. If it is a question of an item's quality or power, the higher point value wins, or the higher ranked Attribute of the character if it is the guiding force. If there's a tie between power, Attribute, etc. then the gamemaster should refer to Stuff as the resolving factor.

During the course of game play, players should be regularly asking the gamemaster basic questions of "*Can my character do that?*" or "*Does my character succeed?*" (These are the same question.) The gamemaster should review the three rules above before answering. This should not take a lot of time, and most gamemasters will get quicker at answering as they get better at gamemastering. Once those questions are answered, the players and gamemaster should know whether something the character wants to accomplish is **unopposed** or **opposed**. These are handled differently.

Unopposed Actions

Unless the question of success or failure is important to the game session, the player should succeed at unopposed actions. The value of any success or failure can be determined by the character's personal history, Attributes, powers, artifacts or creatures, Domains, or Stuff. What does this mean? Simply put, in diceless role-playing, characters do not have "accidents" or meet their ends through mishaps or failures. Characters do not die in car crashes... unless another driver is trying to kill them. Characters do not fall off cliff-sides... unless they are pushed.

If a challenge to a character is not opposed by another player's character, a nonplayer character, or some other active force, then it should be dealt with as an unopposed action. And a handy way of resolving unopposed actions is to answer in one of three ways:

- **"YES, AND...":** If the character has one or more of the following: a background that indicates proficiency in the action attempted; has a high rank in an appropriate Attribute; has a Power that might be brought to bear; has an Artifact or Creature that could help out; or has Good Stuff; the gamemaster should answer a question of "*Did I succeed?*" with "*Yes, and...*," completing the sentence with some additional favorable outcome. For example, "*Did I succeed in picking the lock?*" would be answered with "*Yes, and you do so quietly. No guards were alerted.*"
- **"YES":** If the character has Zero Stuff; cannot make a particularly relevant case for possessing the skill required; has average-to-low-ranked Attributes; and has only vaguely-applicable Powers, or items; the gamemaster should answer with "*Yes*" allowing only a minimal success, with nothing out of the ordinary happening and no extra benefits. For example, the question of "*Did I succeed in*

Losing the Dice

For players and gamemasters accustomed to dice-based role-playing games, diceless role-playing can represent a huge shift in expectations and game style. This can be a tremendously liberating experience. Dice serve many functions beneficial to other types of games, providing an impartial sense of fairness, a generator of random results which over the long term should be statistically probable. Dice can also add a certain sense of charm and danger to even the most mundane of actions. On the other hand, the sense of fairness is only as real as the gamemaster allows. “Statistically probable” results are not always evident or fun to experience. Dice-based task resolution can sometimes become tedious, and random outcomes can divert or even derail a plot.

One of the many virtues of diceless role-playing is that it liberates game play from randomness, lengthy resolution of mundane issues, and allows a laser-intense focus on character and story. Player characters, free from the mundane dangers of falling off walls, inexplicable vehicle crashes, equipment fumbles, etc. will only meet their deaths through poor decision-making or when facing overwhelming odds. The chance of succeeding or failing at a task only become important when it is important to the story, and characters will spend less time “sweating the small stuff.” More time at the game table is spent dealing with conflict, adventure, and role-playing, with conflicts receiving the amount of focus they require based solely on the narrative importance of the action. Furthermore, the benefits of diceless gaming are across the board: gamemasters can spend more time preparing plots and interesting nonplayer characters than in rolling up monsters and laying out encounter or making maps.

Making the shift from dice-based to diceless gaming requires a few fundamental shifts in perception and expectation:

THE GAMEMASTER IS YOUR FRIEND: The gamemaster is going to provide you, the player, an enjoyable play experience, allowing characters to flourish, and presenting a world where the player characters are the most important people in the story (if not in the setting). To do this, the gamemaster will not cheat, lie, or otherwise mislead you (and your characters), because to do so would be unfair. Nonplayer characters and other threats are created fairly and without bias. If dice were involved, the gamemaster would quietly “fudge” the results of dice rolls all the time in favor of the player characters.

THE GAMEMASTER IS YOUR ENEMY: The gamemaster is going to regularly exploit information about your characters in order to give nonplayer characters an advantage, or emotionally manipulate your characters into situations that are not easily resolved. Your character will have to struggle for every accomplishment, and the gamemaster will use every trick in the playbook: deception, manipulation, misdirection, coercion, etc. to keep things challenging. Nonplayer characters are created based on the needs of the story and as a response to the player characters, and as they may be given unfair advantages, created with point values far in excess of the player characters, and will act on information not available to the player characters. Because there are no impartial dice, when conflict arises, the gamemaster will scrupulously require the player characters to justify every advantage they attempt to create or exploit over the nonplayer characters, and will similarly use the same tactics against the player characters.

EVERYTHING IS AN ARGUMENT: Ultimately, every situation that is important can be boiled down to an argument, two or more opposed positions that must be resolved through a formalized structure represented as a conflict in these rules. Whether an astral battle, duel of wits, bar brawl, chess game, sword duel, or nations at war, any meaningful accomplishment must be phrased within the form of a conflict and resolved through comparing Attributes and role-playing the use of other factors to sway that resolution.

THERE'S NO NEED TO ARGUE: The gamemaster may set the stage and present the grander narrative (who is doing what to who, what will happen if something is done or not done, etc.) but it is the player characters and their actions that guide the course of play. A player character is a unique creation with one tremendous advantage: a player. That means that the player can choose to have the character fight or flee, to resolve issues through conflict or through role-playing, to avoid or disarm challenges, or to find a way out of a problem that doesn't involve beating an opposed force. Alternately, a player can simply find a way to shift a conflict from one that is challenging (where they are equal or at a disadvantage) to one where the character is not threatened or is in a vastly superior position and the opposition chooses to avoid conflict.

STORY DECIDES WHAT IS IMPORTANT: The gamemaster should be in charge of the grand story, and use every trick in the book to convince the player characters it is the most important thing they can be doing. Nothing happens by chance. Hostile nonplayer characters or monsters don't appear because they were rolled randomly from a table, and a challenge isn't “2d6 Orcs.” Threats appear because the gamemaster placed them there as tools of an enemy, to challenge the player characters in an area, or as flavor. Characters should not be focused on random spoils from combat, looting every enemy they defeat, because the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds present untold wealth for the taking. Want some gold? Open a Door into a Gossamer version of Fort Knox. Need a magic weapon? There's a shack with a door near a Gossamer version of Lake Tintagel... beat King Arthur to it and score Excalibur! Once all of the mundane motivations for adventure are taken away, the narrative the gamemaster is presenting becomes the most important thing, and may concern matters of world-spanning importance.

YOU DECIDE WHAT IS IMPORTANT: The flipside to that is that since player characters have potential access to infinite worlds and resources, their goals become paramount, and the gamemaster should do everything within reason to accommodate those goals and make them a part of the grand story. Players should emerge from character creation with a strong sense of what their characters are striving for, and the gamemaster should always be open to taking those goals and weaving them into the grand story. The resulting game experience should feel like a collaborative effort rather than a one-way street, with the gamemaster sometimes being forced to scramble to stay one step ahead of the players, or even struggling to catch up!

picking the lock?” would be answered with “Yes. You managed to get the door open.”

- **“YES, BUT...”**: If the character has Bad Stuff, no skills or history applicable to the task being attempted; a low-ranked Attribute; no applicable Power or item; the answer to the “*Did I succeed?*” question should be “Yes, but...” followed by some negative side effect or complication that both intensifies the likelihood of further conflict as well as emphasizing how ill-suited the character was for the task. For example, the “*Did I pick the lock?*” question would be answered with “Yes, but you managed to set off an alarm, and the lock is now jammed. You hear guards shouting to one another. What do you do?”

The gamemaster does not have to phrase the answers in exactly this format, and there can be some fluidity in the way the questions are asked. However, a conflict that does not pit a character against another or against an opposing force, is nonessential to the overall narrative and should be dealt with by simply judging the quality of success using some equivalent to the “Yes, and...,” “Yes,” and “Yes, but...” system or whatever phrasing feels natural for the gamemaster.

Obviously, common sense should guide the gamemaster when presented with patently impossible requests from players, such as a character who is Average-ranked in Strength wanting to pick up a car, or one who is Superior-ranked in Endurance trying to drink a bottle of sulfuric acid and survive. The gamemaster should feel free to declare an action impossible or to let the character attempt it and deal with the crushing results of failure. If these sorts of requests are frequent or problematic, the gamemaster should clarify what the Attributes mean and their limits, or determine why the players are making such requests.

Conflict between characters (player character or nonplayer character) is the important force in *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*. The player characters are immensely-powerful beings caught up in a struggle for the control of countless worlds, with dangers both unimaginable and all-too-familiar. Threatening them with mere set dressings and props is not enough to keep them interested. The real challenge in diceless role-playing is facing—and prevailing—against opposition.

Opposed Actions: Three Fronts of Conflict

All conflict in *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* boils down to three “fronts,” three different avenues through which a character can be opposed. The three fronts of conflict are:

- **ARMED COMBAT**, whether in a sword duel, firefight, melee skirmish, or on the field of battle. It can even be on the chessboard, with playing pieces abstracted as soldiers. Warfare is the primary Attribute in determining the outcome of armed combat.
- **UNARMED COMBAT**, described as wrestling, boxing, martial arts, or even just struggling against one another in a

physical contest. Strength determines the outcome of unarmed combat.

- **PSYCHIC COMBAT**, pitting mind against mind, whether bridged through magic, focused through the avenue of a power, or simply raw egos and strength of personality. Psyche is the obvious determiner of who wins in Psychic Combat.

All forms of conflict should be considered in terms of one of these fronts. Whenever a character is trying to accomplish something: the gamemaster should know who or what is opposing that action. The nature or identity of this opposing entity does not always have to be known to the player (or players), but the gamemaster should always know what the force is and how it measures, rank-wise, against the player character attempting the activity. Once the opposed ranked Attribute is known, the only question left is “Who wins?” based on comparing ranked Attributes.

This is, at its heart, the simplest and most direct means of diceless task resolution. It is possible to play *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* without ever needing to go any further than these for determining who succeeds and fails, but it is only half of what diceless role-playing means.

Role-playing is the second part of the equation, and this aspect is what players tend to enjoy most about diceless role-playing. Role-playing is ultimately about making decisions, reacting, and negotiating, and those elements introduce the widest range of possibilities into any conflict. Once you, as players and a gamemaster, go past simple numerical determination of “high score wins” and consider the possibilities represented by these aspects of role-playing, the imagination of the players and gamemaster introduces a near-infinite, range of potential outcomes.

Using role-playing, a player can challenge the “high score wins” mechanic by introducing new elements such as environmental features, perform actions not strictly delineated by ranks or Powers, or even shift from a less-favorable Attribute to another that is dominant. Any of these, individually or in combination, can shift the nature of a conflict from being a straightforward number-versus-number comparison to a strategic exchange that involves elements of personality, imagination, and even risk.

The following sections describe two important decision points for the way a character approaches a conflict: *Tactics and Options*. Tactics are the overall guiding attitude or strategy governing all actions, while options are the specific actions, moves, or stances the character can take.

Tactics in Conflict

The primary means of escaping or breaking free from the deterministic “Higher rank wins” rule is to introduce a level of tactical decision-making into the conflict. Once the players and gamemaster go beyond the simplest level of determination, any conflict situation can likely be resolved in countless ways—far too

many to be listed here. However, there are some simple tactical approaches to guide role-playing through conflicts.

AGGRESSIVE: A furious, savage attack, without thought to personal safety, can possibly succeed against a marginally higher-ranked character if it is accomplished quickly or even unexpectedly. While skill will win out in an average contest, sometimes the quick, all-out assault can turn the tide. In armed combat, this would be represented by a wild flurry of blows, a reckless charge, or even emptying a clip at the opponent. In unarmed combat, this would be a berserk assault, swinging wild haymakers, or a savage grapple. The psychic version of this would be just a full-out mind blast, a wave of ego and willpower designed to batter an opponent's defenses aside before they can be marshaled. On the downside, aggressive attacks can be sloppy, and a much-higher ranked opponent can usually make short work of someone dropping their defenses.

OPPORTUNISTIC: A calculated stance is often the wisest against a foe whose rank is better, or unknown. This represents fighting defensively but seeking to take advantage of openings or perceived weaknesses through a prolonged engagement. For an armed conflict, this would mean a careful, measured stance heavy on defensive options and taking few chances, seeking to only strike when the foe makes a mistake. In a barehanded fight, a combatant would rely on dodging, clinches, and evasive moves. In a battle of the mind, the opportunistic stance would rely on holding out, reserving willpower, waiting to detect cracks in the foe's psychic defenses. The disadvantage to the opportunistic stance is that it can take a while to succeed, and may go nowhere against a foe who is similarly-ranked.

CAUTIOUS: The safest approach is the cautious stance, representing a completely defensive posture designed to prolong survival as long as possible. When in a cautious armed combat, a character parries, blocks, dodges, and backpedals continually,

trying to seek safe ground or strategically safer positioning, perhaps even forgoing even obvious opportunities to strike at the foe. Unarmed combatants fighting cautiously will continually try to avoid clinches, grapples, and any contact with the foe, retreating and using defensive footwork to stay out of any close engagements, and if any contact is made, it is almost always with the intent of preventing injury rather than causing harm. Psychic combats fought defensively are always evasive or focusing on a strong defensive bulwark rather than any engagement with the foe. Unfortunately, cautious stances leave the enemy with plenty of options, and for the most part put the defender at the mercy of the attacker.

These three tactics can make a tremendous amount of difference for characters who are evenly matched, rank-wise, or nearly so, and can even tilt the scale dramatically among characters who are a bit apart in the Attribute Ladder. Far from turning into a simple "rock/paper/scissors" system, the interaction of these tactics can play out in a variety of ways, limited only by the imagination and allowances of the gamemaster and players. A low-ranked character waiting for reinforcements may be able to hold out against a high-ranked character fighting opportunistically, while a mid-ranked character fighting aggressively may overwhelm a higher-ranked, but unready opponent.

Armed Conflict Options

As mentioned above, most of the conflict in normal *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* games will involve armed conflict, and in many cases, melee weapons such as swords, daggers, and the like. Guns and all manner of more sophisticated weapons are still prevalent, but every Gossamer world has slightly different physical laws, and that cool energy blade in one world could be little more than an ornamental tube in another. Gunpowder (or primer)

What About Endurance?

Endurance is the odd Attribute here, seemingly unused for any of the three fronts of conflict, but serving instead as support for each of the other Attributes. Endurance is generally the measure of how much punishment a character can endure and how long they can exert themselves along one of the three fronts using one of the other Attributes.

That said, Endurance should always be viewed as the Attribute that is not directly tested, but supports all three other Attributes. Even things that would seem to be Endurance-based conflicts might actually be tests of other Attributes:

Long-term armed conflicts? Warfare is the more direct Attribute here, as long-term armed combat involves training, pacing oneself, learning to take tactical breaks, and staying alive. Endurance is the fuel in that gas tank, but Warfare is the engine.

Running speed? It's more likely a question of Strength, as it involves general musculature and physical training. Endurance comes into play as the backup, but is not the primary Attribute for determining marathon performance.

Withstanding torture? While one would think that Endurance, the ability to soak up damage and withstand injury, would be the ideal first Attribute, it's not. Psyche, manifested in sheer personal will, is the thing that keeps a person's sanity intact through torture. No matter how broken and damaged a body can become, the mind is the fortress that torture tries to assail.

Out-drinking someone? While this might seem the most basic function of Endurance, again this falls to other guiding Attributes. Who is competing in this drinking contest? Why? How badly does each want to win? If it is a case of sheer determinism, it's a Psyche contest. If it's a tactical engagement, then Warfare might be the key. And if it's a sheer case of putting the most alcohol into your body, it's a test of Strength. Endurance is still the backup Attribute.

If a conflict absolutely seems to be about Endurance, in all likelihood the conflict is an unopposed one in which the character will succeed or fail just as other unopposed conflicts are determined.

might not ignite due to a difference in chemical interactions, rendering them equally useless. For this reason, those who walk the Grand Stair tend to choose reliability when picking weapons, favoring muscle-powered basic gear like swords, bows, daggers, etc. A clever user of the Grand Stair will seek out Domains that minimize the chance of energy, chemical, or gunpowder-based weapons, but it's hard to find a place (and inhabit it successfully) where a sharp piece of metal will not behave the same as it does everywhere else.

In addition to their value for hurting people, most weapons can also be used to parry and deflect incoming attacks, be interposed between an attacker and the defender, and can sometimes even serve well for utilitarian functions, such as chopping through doors, cutting chains, etc. And psychologically, someone holding a weapon is generally more intimidating than someone who appears to be defenseless.

This section covers all of the options available using weapons, and can be applied to swords, daggers, spears, guns, nets, and even explosives to some degree. These are broad tactics rather than specific moves, and must be interpreted in context by the weapon type. Ultimately, the gamemaster is the final word about whether a particular move or option would work. The gamemaster and players alike should be familiar with the description of the Warfare Attribute on page 21 for guidelines on what Warfare represents.

In any of these actions, the ability to take injuries and continue fighting may become pressing. In these cases the Endurance Attribute comes into play. A few light injuries might seriously hinder a Average-ranked character while a high-ranked character can fight on despite several wounds that are life-threatening or worse.

Offensive Actions

This represents the wide range of attack options used in armed conflict, when the primary goal is to do harm to the opponent. Attacking usually carries with it an element of risk, exposing the attacker to the defender, though generally ranged attacks are less risky.

ATTACK: A basic attack, ranging from a sword-thrust, a pistol shot, swing with an axe, flurry of knife cuts, etc., defending where necessary, gauging the skill of the opponent and trying to overcome any defensive actions in order to wound the foe. If the Strength Attribute is not brought into play, attack versus attack conflicts become pure tests of Warfare.

FEINT: This action is represented by faking one type of attack to provoke a particular type of defensive action that presents an opening, then immediately taking advantage of that opening with an attack aimed at exploiting that weakness. If the target of the feint is higher in Warfare than the feinting character, this will be obvious and could prove disastrous. If the target is much lower in Warfare, they will likely fall for it and weaken their defenses. If opponents are close or even in Warfare, the gamemaster should ask the defender for a decision, or make an appropriate decision



Going on the offensive is necessary when there's no way to talk one's self out of trouble.

for a nonplayer character targeted with a feint.

REVEAL AN OPENING: Similar to a feint in nature, a revealed opening is the act of creating an apparent weakness in one's defenses with the intent of luring an attack at that opening. Since the attack is expected, it should be easy to deflect or avoid and will in turn lower the attacker's defenses against a counter-attack. If the defender has a higher Warfare than the attacker, this will probably be successful. If the attacker is higher, the revealed opening will be obvious as a trap, or will turn into a real opening with potentially devastating results. If the combatants are roughly equal in Warfare, it should be a judgment call on the behalf of the attacker.

ADVANCE: This action represents pushing forward against a defender, attempting to gain ground or drive them in a particular direction. This is a relentless, aggressive stance to take, one that can be intimidating and successful if the defender is willing or able to fall back. Unfortunately, pressing forward does not provide the most stable footing, and an equal or superior defender may be able to take advantage of the attacker's instability while moving.

ALL-OUT ATTACK: This represents throwing caution to the wind and just whaling away at a foe with the attempt of overcoming any defenses with a barrage of attacks, with no mind to personal safety. It is foolhardy and reckless, and could get an attacker with an equivalent-ranked Warfare injured, or even killed if the

Warfare rank is inferior. On the other hand, a superior Warfare could rapidly end any conflict.

FAKING IT: Deception can be a tremendously useful tactic. The impression others have of a character's ability can frequently be more important than the ability itself. Bluffing at having a higher Warfare can be just as useful as pretending to be much worse. Practicing deception can also serve to hide one's identity, masking a unique fighting style.

- Feigning inferiority is a wonderful way to lure a foe into a false sense of confidence, representing a complete stance that is a revealed opening (see above). This may lead to taking some minor injuries, but these will serve to add verisimilitude to the role. Characters should think of it as method acting. If someone does not know the full measure of their opponent, it is possible to make mistakes and to become overconfident... then pay for it. Faking inferiority can be incredibly useful for characters with higher Warfare ranks who can keep any injuries to a minimum while retaining the illusion of lower competence. Against equally-matched combatants it can be risky. Against higher-ranked foes, feigned inferiority is unnecessary and suicidal. The only benefit to this is that an attacker may take mercy on a vastly weaker foe.
- Feigned superiority is a risky stance that may occasionally pay off. If foes think a character is significantly better than they are, combat may be averted entirely, or they may shift to defensive stances against attacks that had no chance of succeeding, thinking that they are being toyed with. It takes a bit of style and confidence to successfully pass oneself off as being a superior combatant, and an actually superior Warfare character will likely see through the ruse. This can work excellently against an inferior foe, but against an equally matched opponent, it is a gamble. Against a superior foe this is a gamble tantamount to laying down one's weapons and saying "just kill me." If it doesn't work instantly, it won't work at all.
- Concealing a fighting style could be done to conceal one's identity, as a means of concealing aptitude (fighting in the style of a particular trainer is a dead giveaway), or to keep an opponent guessing at what they can expect.

USING STRENGTH WITH WARFARE: For most hand-to-hand armed conflict, being strong can be an advantage. While speed and technique are often the deciding factors, sometimes simply being able to overpower a foe or throw some additional power behind a blow can make a world of difference. The section on **Mixing It Up: Switching Attributes in Conflicts** (page 82) discusses how to substitute one Attribute for another in a conflict, but throwing an occasional roughhouse blow into a swordfight is completely within the province of Warfare. Two fencing moves that benefit from a superior Strength Attribute are the *beat* and the *bind*.

- A beat is simply tapping or even hammering on a foe's weapon to draw it out of line and to create an opening, or to even cause the defender to feel some pain in their hand. A well-timed or particularly powerful beat can potentially disarm a foe by knocking it out of hand or even breaking it.
- A bind is a maneuver where the attacker seeks to entangle, maneuver, or otherwise trap the opponent's weapon by forcing it into a circle, pushing it into a direction other than where the defender would want it to be situated.

Beats and binds can be used in tandem, with a bind used to maneuver a weapon into a weakened position where a beat can knock it loose, or a beat used to soften up a defender's grasp on their weapon or shake a defensive position, enabling a subsequent bind to move it out of line. In either case, parity or superiority in Warfare and/or Strength is a decisive factor: a weaker rank in either Attribute will be ineffectual and potentially risky, opening the attacker up to potentially devastating retribution.

Defensive Actions

The following actions would be taken if a character's primary goal is defensive, keeping harm away, rather than trying to hurt the opponent. In most cases, an attacker must be superior in Warfare to injure someone taking defensive actions.

TOTAL DEFENSE: This represents a complete avoidance of harm, utterly trying to save the character's own skin versus trying to hurt the other opponent. Methods of doing so involve: parrying, dodging, taking cover, blocking, careful footwork, or interposing obstacles (including other combatants) between the defender and attacker. For ranged weapons, this might represent cover or distracting fire. If an attacker still manages to injure a defender fighting totally defensively, the defender is likely woefully outmatched. If a defender manages to injure an attacker, despite fighting defensively, then the attacker is probably out of his league. Endurance can become a factor in longer engagements, as continual parrying and dodging can weary a defender.

CAREFUL RETREAT: This is a measured, considered withdrawal, backing away from the field of conflict, seeking two goals: keeping an escape route clear, and biding time to take advantage of an opening from some weakness or sloppiness on the attacker's side. Endurance is rarely a factor here unless the retreat is over vast distances.

BLOCKING: Like using an obstacle in the Total Defensive action described above, this represents completely hiding behind something large, like a piece of furniture, a feature of the environment, some hapless third party, or a door; anything to stall or delay the attacker, or absorb the first few attacks. Endurance is not a factor in the short term, but may become important if repeated blows upon the blocking object are absorbed by the defender.

Unarmed Conflict Options

The unarmed front of combat is where Strength dominates. Unlike armed combat, most Strength-based combats are relatively straightforward and uncomplicated, and in most cases easier to predict. A stronger, tougher, and more skilled unarmed combatant is likely to win most battles in that arena.

Strength, defined on page 18, represents (or approximates) considerable physical training and toughness, hand-to-hand coordination and the ability to absorb physical blows without feeling ill effects. Endurance measures how well a character can act despite injury, but Strength is the measure of how readily a character can shrug off physical punishment from blows, grapples, falls, etc.

Offensive Actions

Following are a number of Strength-based offensive actions a character can make when fighting unarmed. They are not specific “moves” but are general tactics, approaches, or actions and can be detailed through role-playing and description during gameplay as appropriate.

ATTACKS: This represents punches, kicks, chops, head-butts, knees, etc., whether done with finesse and martial arts techniques or straight-out brutal force without any technique. The point of the unarmed attack is to do damage, incrementally, without opening oneself to counter-attacks. The attacker uses defensive postures and unarmed parries or dodges and footwork to maintain a distance, keeping the opponent within arm’s reach. For unarmed

An Example of Armed Conflict

Margaret’s character Natasha has 16 points in Warfare, ranking her 6th among player characters. While moving through a deserted section of archives within the Labyrinth, she encounters Halkrist Tuur, a rival nonplayer character Gossamer Lord who swore to kill her the next time they met. The gamemaster checks the Attribute Ladder and determines that Halkrist has 14 points of Warfare, which would make him ranked 7th compared to Natasha (almost as good, but not quite there). Natasha has 12 points of Endurance, making her 4th rank, while Halkrist has 18 points of Endurance, which would put him at 3rd or higher (depending on if any other nonplayer characters had ranks between those two points totals).

- Gamemaster: As you round the corner into a section of the Labyrinth filled mostly with old racks and dusty scrolls, you see Halkrist Tuur standing there, reading a scroll held in both hands. He squints at you, recognizes who it is, and lowers the scroll while simultaneously going for that long-bladed sword he keeps over his shoulder. What are you doing?
- Margaret: Do you need to ask? I’ve been waiting for a rematch with this jerk. Natasha draws her own sword, and as she does so, the blade gives off a slight shimmer, warming for battle. “I’ve been waiting for this moment, Halkrist... if I’d known it was going to be today, I’d have sold tickets.”
- Gamemaster: He sneers at your bravado, but you can tell he was not expecting to run into anyone here. “Let’s get this done, traitor.”
- Margaret: “Wha-what? Traitor? What?”
- Gamemaster: He’s not going to answer you. Halkrist throws the scroll at your eyes, and advances rapidly with his blade moving so fast it blurs, hoping to throw you off enough that he can bury his blade in your neck. What are you doing?
- Margaret: Natasha slices the scroll in half and parries Halkrist’s attack in the same move.
- Gamemaster: Your blades ring and you feel the press of his attack, but you don’t give any leeway. What are you doing now?
- Margaret: I’m going to go all-out on him, a wild series of attacks and feints. I remember he’s not as good a fighter as I am, but he’s probably stronger or tougher, so I want to end this quickly.
- Gamemaster: He’s always thought he was a better fighter, so his eyes widen in surprise as you come at him, your blade moving faster than he’s able to parry. You manage to lay a long slash against his forearm when one of his parries wasn’t quick enough, and stick a couple of inches of metal into the flesh of his thigh when his blade was trying to block one of your high feints.
- Margaret: That’ll slow him down!
- Gamemaster: Not that much, but it does hurt. On the other hand, going so wildly against someone who’s not that much worse than you has its cost. His blade cuts through the armor of your abdomen, on the side, just under your rib-cage. It’s not a deep wound, but it sure hurts and you can feel blood running down your side.
- Margaret: Crap. I’ll be a bit more cautious, but I’m still going to advance on him, trying to keep things on a sword-to-sword basis. I don’t want to let him get his Strength into this, or turn this into an Endurance match.
- Gamemaster: Okay. A few attacks and parries later, Halkrist knows that you’re better than he is, Warfare-wise, and he begins fighting more defensively, more cautiously, limping a little. At one point when both of you get close to one of the walls, he reaches out and grabs a tall scroll stand, trying to dump it on top of you. What are you doing?
- Margaret: While he’s trying to do that, my blade licks out and I take a swipe at the extended hand.
- Gamemaster: Okay. You catch some of the brunt of the scroll stand, but you are quick enough that you leave a long red line on the back of the hand he pulled the shelf with. Halkrist hisses and draws his hand in to his chest, protectively, and begins to move backwards slowly, retreating. What are you doing now?
- Margaret: Natasha’s still ready to kill him, but that thing he said confuses her. She tells him “Throwing the toys around when you don’t get your way? I thought better of you. What’s this nonsense about me being a traitor?”

If the combat were to continue, Halkrist’s superior Strength and Endurance might come into play, or even the combatants’ Stuff. However, unless something unforeseen occurs or tactics change dramatically, Natasha will be the likely victor.

creatures, this could also represent a clawing, stinging, or biting attack.

GRAB OR GRAPPLE: This is laying hands on an opponent with the intent of immobilizing them and potentially even causing them some pain. This only really works if the grappler has superiority in Strength, as a stronger opponent will quickly be able to reverse the grapple and overpower the grappler. Evenly-matched Strength does not yield much more than a stalemate, with the grappled opponent able to attack the grappler in turn. Once a grapple has been accomplished, the grappler can do one of the following to their foe:

- Move them around, swinging them into hard or harmful surfaces, throwing them to the ground, lifting them into the air, or even using the grappled foe as a shield against other attacks.
- Knock them out by depriving them of air, with a chokehold, crushing grip, or just hitting them hard in the head (or appropriate weak spot). A grappled foe is pretty much at the mercy of someone with superior Strength, and can be pummeled, twisted, or strangled, as desired.
- Hurt them by putting torsion on limbs or torso, throwing short punches, iron-hard grips, gouges, etc. This can yield anything from torn-off ears to Beowulf-style arm removal.
- Break bones by putting pressure on joints, ribs, or using a combination of hard surfaces and leverage. This can get ugly when dealing with a clear superiority in Strength.
- Tearing flesh can even be an option if the attacker has claws (natural or artificial) or teeth.

DEATH GRASP: This action is a foolhardy, focused chokehold, attempting to lay hands on the neck of the foe to either strangle them or break their neck. It can be dangerous because it immobilizes the attacker's arms, leaving them wide open to retaliatory attacks by the opponent. This attack is useless against someone with a greater Strength. If the attacker and opponent are evenly matched in Strength, this can boil down to a test of Endurance, seeing who can hold out longer. If the attacker is markedly higher in Strength, the only question is whether the opponent will be strangled, killed outright, or given a chance to surrender.

USING WARFARE WITH STRENGTH: In most cases, unarmed combats are going to be fairly straightforward if both opponents are fighting cleanly. Why would that ever happen, though? If the stakes are life and death and a weapon is available, the smart move is to shift to Warfare or try to use Warfare-based attacks versus losing on Strength-based terms. As long as an arm remains free and a weapon is within reach, there are options. If an attacker has gone for the throat in a chokehold, that leaves their entire front and sides open for attacks with dagger or even a firearm. In the middle of a grapple, a sharp knife used right can open an attacker up like a zip-sealed bag.

Defensive Actions

The following actions aim at using brawn and physical coordination to prevent taking damage.

GRAB, PARRY, OR DODGE: These tactics represent straightforward defensive moves, such as using one's limbs to deflect, block, or otherwise absorb an attack aimed at a more vital area, or simply getting out of the way, twisting to avoid an incoming attack. It can also represent grasping the opponent's attacking limbs, or clinching to inhibit incoming blows.

TAKING IT: This represents simply taking the blows and hoping to tough it out. While the Strength Attribute imparts some ability to resist damage from physical blows with toned muscle mass, it's unwise to rely on outright toughness to stay alive. If enough time goes by, contests that would be decided with Strength will end up as tests of Endurance.

SHOWING WEAKNESS: Sometimes the best defense may be to pretend at weakness, not engaging fully in a Strength-based conflict, and hoping the attacker will either change their mind or adjust their own approach to avoid causing serious harm. If the one pretending at weakness is actually stronger than the opponent, Strength can be scaled down to match the opponent, or even to appear much weaker. This is generally a risky gamble, but could lull an opponent into a false sense of security and leave them open for a sudden Strength-based assault.

Psychic Conflict Options

Psychic conflicts are the rarest and perhaps most dangerous of battles, in that the stakes are greater than simple life, death, or bodily harm. Characters indulging in psychic combat risk their sanity, their secrets, and even their souls. At the same time, psychic conflicts can take place between foes without even appearing to be a combat, and can be waged across vast distances... even across the veils between Gossamer worlds.

Unlike armed or unarmed conflicts, psychic conflict requires a connection between the combatants beyond simple physical proximity. While anyone who can pick up a weapon can indulge in Warfare-based struggles, and anyone mobile and with limbs can use Strength, Psyche-based combat is only available to those who can create some sort of mind-to-mind link with the intended opponent. There is a wide range of ways to create that link.

Initiating psychic combat is not something just anyone can do, however, and it cannot be done casually. It requires some degree of training which is normally available to those who have learned a power that utilizes or enables Psyche-based conflict (Eidolon, Umbra, Wrighting, Invocation, or Sorcery). It also requires that the attacking character be able to initiate psychic contact, usually through one of those powers or considerable psychic effort. However, anyone drawn into psychic conflict can defend themselves using their Psyche, regardless of training.

Characters can make mind-to-mind contact with an opponent in the following ways:

POWERS: Several powers allow mental links. Some of the more

obvious and direct means are Invocation's use of True Names, the Sorcery Spell "Mind Touch," and even evoking the Eidolon or Umbra in another character while one of those powers are manifest within oneself. There are also several means of breaking power-based psychic contact, such as the "Focus" cantrip to help overcome the Psyche of an unwanted psychic contact, or other cantrips could distract or inconvenience an attacker. In the case of the Eidolon or Umbra, there are cantrips to negate either, and evoking the opposite power will likely sever any and all psychic connections at the very least.

ICONS: Icons were created with the express purpose of linking minds across the veil of Shadow separating the Gossamer worlds, and thus they are ideally suited as avenues for psychic attack. For this reason, many characters are not particularly willing to accept Icon contacts from strangers, or even those they know well. It is possible to use Icons to force a psychic contact, but such finesse

would require a considerable advantage in Psyche.

CLOSE CONTACT: The gamemaster may allow characters who are highly-ranked in Psyche to be able to initiate psychic contact, through close contact. If so, the means of establishing psychic contact between two (or more) beings requires considerable effort, and must be skin-to-skin (or the equivalent), with any layers or covering blocking the contact. Eye-to-eye contact must be done extremely closely, at no more than arm length, taking some time to establish the link, and will break if either character moves away or the line of sight is interrupted.

ALTERNATE MEANS: In the infinitude of the Gossamer worlds, there are countless other means of establishing psychic contact. There may be items or creatures with the Psychic quality (as described on page 50), rare psychic disciplines that work only on one Gossamer world, mechanical means of connecting one mind to another, or even worlds where psychic contact is the norm.

An Example of Unarmed Conflict

Marv's character Harrison is enjoying some downtime in an idyllic Gossamer world, a jungle island paradise. He climbs out of a pool fed by a waterfall, dries himself off, and shrugs into some khakis and a shirt, and is getting ready to head back to his estate for a late lunch. The gamemaster knows that Harrison's Strength is 28 points (2nd rank among the player characters), and his Endurance is 19 points (2.5th rank). Harrison doesn't know that he will soon be ambushed by two goons with Paragon-level Strength, Warfare, and Endurance.

Gamemaster: As Harrison gets dressed, he realizes very quickly that his sword-belt and sword are mysteriously absent from the rock he laid them against. He also sees a bunch of footprints that aren't his. Boots, while Harrison was wearing sandals. What are you doing?

Marv: That can't be good. I'm alert.

Gamemaster: "Looking for this?" you hear from thin air. In the direction the voice comes from, you see the air ripple and shimmer, and two men appear at the edge of the pool, as if they were cloaked in some sort of invisibility shroud.

Marv: Those guys?

Gamemaster: None other. They're wearing tough-looking armor out of some sort of blue scalloped leather, and each of them is pointing a weapon at you... weapons that look like a cross between an energy pistol and a magic wand. One of them has your sword-belt slung over his shoulder. That one says "Let's make this easy. Our master wants to speak to you."

Marv: Like hell I will. Harrison looks like he's thinking it over, raising his hands and nods. "Sure. I'll hear what he has to say." Then he takes a step forward like he's going to come with them.

Gamemaster: All right, the one with your sword sheathes the wand thing at a side holster, and raises his wrist. He's got some sort of communicator on it, and he says, "Got him. Bring us in."

Marv: Except that the moment he does that, Harrison leaps at the other one, closer to him, and grabs the wand-thing. I'm going to try to pull it out of his grasp.

Gamemaster: No problem. Harrison is faster and stronger than them. He's got it in his hand.

Marv: Harrison throws the thing into the pool, hopefully distracting the goon as he watches it go.

Gamemaster: That is exactly what happens. What are you doing now?

Marv: I'm going to follow up with a quick punch, something with as much of my weight as I can throw into it, right at the guy's jaw.

Gamemaster: Smack! He was completely caught off guard. Your fist crashes into his face and you think you knock out some teeth. And probably his jaw. He's stunned for a moment.

Marv: I'm going to grapple him then and try to interpose his body between me and his buddy.

Gamemaster: All right. As you do so, you see that the other guy is drawing his wand again.

Marv: I'll duck my head behind the one I'm holding and pray that those aren't disintegrators.

Gamemaster: You hear a loud pulse of energy and the body you're holding suddenly jerks and goes limp. You feel a bit of a shock, as if some of the energy went through to you.

Marv: Enough to harm me?

Gamemaster: No, you're tough enough and it was only secondary. Now you're holding an unconscious or dead goon and another has an energy-wand pointed at you. What are you doing?

In this conflict, as long as Harrison can keep things relating to Strength and his Endurance to survive any injury, he'll be the winner. The goon will probably try to keep the conflict relating to Warfare, but he is at a likely disadvantage. If Harrison is able to take a shot and survive it, he'll likely be able to put hands on the goon... and then it's all over.



Psychic combat may resemble a staring contest, but it requires concentration and a strong mind.

Players and the gamemaster should become familiar with the capabilities of Psyche, described on pages 17-18. Players and the gamemaster can choose to characterize psychic conflicts in vague terms lacking specifics (to emphasize their ethereal nature) or can create and describe specific metaphors for the psychic attacks and defenses that mirror real-world actions.

Offensive Actions

When psychic contact is established, an attacker has a variety of options for trying to harm or otherwise inhibit the target. There are always risks involved with this type of contact, because psychic connections are two-way streets. Just as with armed and unarmed combat emphasize superior Warfare and Strength (respectively), the higher a Psyche advantage the attacker has over the defender, the better.

PSYCHIC ATTACK: This is the most direct offensive action, a simple assault of will versus will, throwing Psyche against the opponent to stun or otherwise do psychic damage. If the attack goes on long enough, it can even kill. In most cases, the character with the higher Psyche will win. However, one mind pitted against another in this fashion can be time consuming, and is highly draining for both attacker and defender, so Endurance may become a factor in determining the winner of prolonged psychic assaults.

PSYCHIC PARALYSIS: Unlike a psychic attack where the intent is to damage the mind of, and possibly even kill, the opponent, psychic paralysis is an attempt to lock the foe up mentally, to keep all their mental resources concentrated on the psychic assault taking

place while they remain unable to act within the real world. When psychically paralyzed, a foe can barely move in the real world, and can only use powers involving mental processes alone. It is almost impossible to psychically paralyze someone with a higher Psyche, and a significantly more powerful Psyche using this tactic may even be able to keep the target from perceiving the world around them.

PSYCHIC SUGGESTION: If a psychic dominance is established, the attacker can attempt to implant a psychic suggestion into the target's mind, framing it in the format of something the target feels that they must do, through personal choice or through other forms of responsibility (fear, altruism, self-defense, etc.). If the suggestion is theoretically reasonable to the target, the suggested action will be performed. If the act is unnatural or abhorrent to the target, the act is disregarded or the psychic conflict continues anew.

PSYCHIC INTERROGATION: The attacker can simply demand information from the defender, ferreting within his or her mind to obtain it. The information can be something general like any secret thoughts, motives or true emotions the defender is masking, or it can be something specific, like the location of a hidden item, a key piece of hidden data, or a long-buried secret. This requires superiority in Psyche, though occasionally an inferior-ranked attacker can get a quick basic answer from the defender if it is unexpected. *For example, someone concealing information about a terrible crime they've committed may blurt out the answer to "What is your name?" without hesitation.*

PSYCHIC DOMINATION: This is the most powerful form of psychic offensive action, where the attacker seeks to utterly dominate the defender's mind, enslaving it and causing the defender to lose all free will. If this is successful, the attacker can actively take over the defender's body and move it as if a puppet-master, imprisoning the mind of the defender as if in a jail cell. When the psychic contact ends, the defender is freed and the dominating character returns to his own body. A superior-ranked Psyche is required to succeed in psychic domination.

Defensive Actions

Not all is lost for those enduring a psychic assault! Just as in the physical world, a purely mental conflict can utilize defensive tactics as well as offensive ones. In most cases, a superior-ranked Psyche will be the greatest advantage when attempting defensive actions.

YIELDING: The easiest means of avoiding or ending psychic conflict is to simply let the psychic attacker achieve the desired goal, with the defender masking their true rank in Psyche. If the attacker is out to harm the defender, then the defender is harmed (and perhaps plays at being hurt worse than they actually are). If the goal is information, the defender seemingly yields it under force, perhaps supplying misleading information if desired. If the goal is psychic domination, the defender surrenders control of the body and pretends to be subjugated. This ruse can be seen through if the attacker has a considerably higher Psyche, but in most cases, a higher-ranked attacker will likely win any psychic conflicts anyway.

PSYCHIC EVICTION: Similar to the means by which a psychic contact (as described above) can be broken, this is a last-ditch effort by the defender to break the psychic attention, almost the equivalent of flipping the table while locked in a game of chess. This will only work against an attacker reasonably close to the defender in Psyche, and has no chance of success against a much more powerful Psyche. It represents a sudden spike of willpower designed to thrust the attacker out of the defender's mind, with the risk that it is psychically and physically exhausting, leaving the defender vulnerable to danger in either world. If it doesn't work in the realm of thought, the defender has just thrown down all defenses, and in the real world, the defender has expelled all energy and is shaken, trembling and weak, perhaps even fainting. A high Endurance may offset the physical fatigue somewhat, or make recovery faster.

PSYCHIC WALL: The defender puts up a psychic wall, an internal bulwark intended to thwart any attacker from encroaching mentally. This is the psychic equivalent of blocking or going full-defensive, hunkering down mentally and attempting to withstand the assault. It is possible to survive for a while against a higher-ranked attacker, but the toll is physical as well as mental, and may end up being decided by Endurance or circumstances in the real world.

PSYCHIC BATTLEGROUND: If the defender realizes that the attacker is superior in Psyche or will not relent, turning the mind into a

psychic battleground may be the only recourse. With this the defender uses powerful visualization and will to create the psychic equivalent of traps, landmines, poisons, or other deadfalls and deterrents against the attacker in an attempt to slow them down or dissuade them. It is the equivalent of a measured retreat in the physical world, seeking refuge behind objects or parts of the environment, or even snatching up items and hurling them to harass the attacker and hinder progress.

PSYCHIC REFUGE: As a drastic measure, the defender may choose to hide their psyche somewhere deep, leaving an apparently empty shell of a mind for the attacker to root through. This is equivalent to surrendering the body to the attacker while hiding the mind. If psychic domination or attack is the attacker's goal, the victim's body is left at the attacker's mercy, but the mind remains hidden, shrouded in a construct of memory and abandoned psychic defenses.

INSANITY: The psychic equivalent of salting the earth before an invading army, or calling an air strike on one's own position. The defender simply goes mad, unfettering all wild emotion and any bottled-up, pent thoughts and desires, presenting a blasted, strange wasteland of a mind that appears to have little to offer. This is as difficult to do as it is to recover from, and the defender may emerge from this defense maddened and out of control, unable to act normally for some time. It may even provoke a coma or psychic shutdown. Defense is likely achieved, but at what cost?

Mixing It Up: Switching Attributes in Conflicts

One of the most useful tactics for success in diceless, Attribute-resolved conflicts is to play to one's strengths, using favored Attributes rather than lower-ranked ones. There is a saying in politics along these lines: *"If you are losing an argument, change the argument."* Similarly, if a conflict using a particular Attribute is destined for failure, the only sensible thing to do is switch to an Attribute with a better chance of success.

Switching from Warfare to Strength

Taking a conflict based on Warfare to one based on Strength is perhaps the easiest of all of the Attribute switches: just lose the weapons! Most personal-level armed conflicts will present a chance for one combatant to move in close to the opponent, allowing for a Strength-based move or tactic to come into play. Even in the midst of an armed duel, it's perfectly possible to throw a punch, kick, or try for a grapple or press, wrenching a weapon out of hand or overbearing an opponent, and eventually changing the conflict from Warfare to Strength. The greatest risk to this is that the instigating character attempting to switch a conflict from Warfare to Strength may end up suffering an injury while disarming the opponent, and an opponent who is not disarmed may still have the option to switch the conflict back to Warfare.

Switching from Strength to Warfare

In the real world, going from unarmed conflict to armed conflict is a matter of escalation, though in the world of *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, where every Attribute is deadly, the difference is more of methodology than end result. Unarmed conflicts can be easily switched to Warfare by judicious use of a concealed or open weapon, though this will be sometimes difficult in close quarter hand-to-hand fighting. In a clinch, draw a dagger and stab for the vitals. Break from a grapple and use the distance

to draw or seize a weapon, keeping it between combatants. The greatest risk of changing from Strength to Warfare in a conflict is that some sort of weapon is a requirement: lose that and the fight is back to Strength.

Bringing Psyche into a Physical Conflict

Even if the gamemaster allows characters to establish psychic links through close contact, it's extraordinarily difficult to create a psychic connection in the middle of a physical conflict, and

An Example of Psychic Conflict

Kit's character Jessamyn is having a conversation with Christopher's character Shadow, via the psychic contact of an Icon. Jessamyn is 1st ranked among the player characters in Psyche, at 60 points. On the overall Attribute Ladder, she is 7th. Shadow has Paragon rank in Psyche.

Unbeknownst to either of them, their communication is about to be hijacked by a powerful new enemy, a Dwimmerlaik using a combination of Wrighting, Sorcery, and the Channeling powers. (Channeling is a Dwimmerlaik-only power described on page 142.) The Dwimmerlaik has a higher Psyche than Jessamyn's, at 72 points, which puts him at 6th rank, one step above Jessamyn on the overall Attribute Ladder.

- Christopher: "I just don't trust that guy. I think he's up to something. There's this thing he said that I'm still mulling over..."
- Gamemaster: Jessamyn, you're still sensing Shadow in the Icon contact, but suddenly it's as if someone has stepped between you, interposing their mind into the contact. Someone very powerful.
- Christopher: What happens to Shadow?
- Gamemaster: He's just suddenly cut off, as if someone pulled the phone out of his hands.
- Kit: What about Jessamyn? The moment this happens she's throwing up all psychic blocks and trying to break the communication.
- Gamemaster: You suspect that there is some serious power at play here, as if this newcomer used Wrighting to tap into your communication, and then hijacked your mind link with Sorcery and Psyche.
- Kit: How's that possible?
- Gamemaster: That's a good question. Does Jessamyn want to ponder that while this is happening?
- Kit: Not a good idea. Okay... Jessamyn is going to throw up a psychic wall, to prevent any initial attack, and begins preparing a counterstrike, something to break the connection if there's any opportunity.
- Gamemaster: A wave of psychic force is thrown at her, a battering ram of evil, alien intellect and will. It smashes against the psychic wall, and Jessamyn is staggered, mentally, by the power. It's not overwhelmingly more powerful than her, but it is stronger.
- Kit: Great! Do I get a sense of who this could be?
- Gamemaster: From the nature of the attack, it's like nothing Jessamyn has encountered before. The attacker was not expecting such a strong resistance, or it is not using all its power, because your psychic wall held, for now. But if it were a real wall, it would have cracks.
- Kit: Good to know. Jessamyn is going to try to bolster the psychic wall, looking for a sense of when the enemy readies another attack.
- Gamemaster: Good plan. Another psychic attack comes, this one trying something different, rather than smashing through your psychic wall, it attempts the slow approach, boring through it with steady pressure. A big drill rather than a battering ram.
- Kit: This time I'm going to be tricky. I'm going to give the sense that the wall is coming down, and then when it readies itself to press the attack, I'm going to throw everything I have into psychic eviction, just getting this thing out of my brain. To help out, I'm going to utter the Focus cantrip the moment I do that.
- Gamemaster: Good play. You do this, yielding against the immense pressure, and then when your psychic wall seems to falter, it withdraws and readies for something else... some sort of possession, you suspect. At that moment, what do you do?
- Kit: At that moment, Jessamyn shouts in her mind, "Conligo!" and throws every bit of psychic energy she has into a big purge, exorcising this demon, evicting this guy, whoever he is.
- Gamemaster: No matter where it leaves you after?
- Kit: All in on this one.
- Gamemaster: All right then. Just as the psychic attack shifts to something invasive, as if it is attempting to bind your "broken" will, Jessamyn throws everything she has into jettisoning the attacker. The cantrip bolsters her Psyche enough to tip the difference. It suddenly is gone, and the psychic contact is broken.
- Kit: And...?
- Gamemaster: It's a good thing Jessamyn was seated, because she slumps in her chair, her head pounding with a terrible headache. Her nose may be bleeding... hard to say. So tired, so dizzy.
- Kit: "Medic!"

far easier to distract or break any attempted psychic connection using physical means. As such, efforts to utilize Psyche in physical conflicts can generally only be attempted by high-ranked Psyches, or in “lulls” where conflict is stalled and conditions are right. This might require grappling with an opponent, holding them fast, and then locking eyes, or even using some form of stalling or hypnotic technique in the middle of a swordfight to allow words, and then Psyche, to come into play.

Keeping Conflicts Where They Are

From an attacker’s point of view, the best situation is to initiate conflict using the favored, highest-ranked Attribute, guaranteeing the best chance of success. From a defender’s point of view, the opposite is true: it’s best if the attacker should be forced to use a non-favored Attribute to limit their strengths. As described in the section above, if these are different Attributes, either party in the conflict may try to mix things up, switching to whatever form of conflict and Attribute that offers the best chance of success, or provokes the most likely failure. In these cases, adaptability and strategic flexibility are paramount. The best advice for switching or sticking to types of conflicts is one of ground: *“Find out what ground your opponent wants to fight on, and change the venue to one of your choosing.”*

Cheating in Conflicts

Another important strategy is to cheat. That’s right: cheat. When a character has any chance to prepare for a conflict, there is no reason that any and all resources can’t be brought to bear. The Gossamer worlds are anything but fair, and survival is not just for the fittest but for the most canny.

One of the most useful cheats is to use the great powers for an advantage the opponent does not possess. That could mean using powers secretly, manifesting the Eidolon or invoking the Umbra and keeping them at bay, ready for use. Many magic powers such as Invocation or Sorcery can be brought to bear: having a foe’s True Name available can be just as useful as a ready-to-fire spell. However, these powers all have a major drawback in that if they’re not readied ahead of time, someone with a higher Warfare can potentially make a move before any of them can be employed. Even cantrips, which can even be called to mind, ready to be fired off in an instant to potentially tip the scale, must normally be vocalized (or activated through some other means allowed by the gamemaster), and a high-ranked Warfare character might find a way to silence the would-be caster before a single word can be uttered.

Other methods of cheating are plenty: ambushes, use of allies, using the environment tactically, using emotional tricks and duress on a foe.

- **Ambushes** are straightforward and can occur when one party is unaware of the ambusher, or in the midst of a social situation where an attack is suddenly launched.

For this reason, many Gossamer Lords keep their friends distant, and their enemies even more so.

- **Allies** are a mixed bag: unless these are creatures that have been purchased with character points, the chance of betrayal is always present. Many a would-be attacker has learned the hard way about the unreliability of hired help.
- In the infinity of Gossamer worlds, only a fool discards the notion of using the **environment** tactically. Domains are specifically chosen to suit their owner’s desires, and there is no reason a Gossamer Lord should not have intimate knowledge of all exploitable aspects of the environment, terrain, and other conditions offering an advantage over an opponent. Similarly, if given a choice for the ground to stand, the tactical thinker will find someplace with unexpected terrain features that could offer an advantage against the unknowing.
- Finally, nothing can rattle an opponent more than **making it personal**. Though it may be dastardly, invoking someone’s allies or loved ones in the middle of a fight may throw them off their game. Hinting at secret knowledge, outright lying, emotional manipulation, pleas to mercy, threats, half-truths, etc... all are fair game when life and death are on the line.

In a universe where anything can happen and opponents will seize any advantage, there is no choice but to always be thinking. Always pay attention, and plan accordingly. A tactically wise character may develop a range of means for neutralizing the chances of powers being used against them in a conflict.

Conflict with Multiple Participants

The simplest conflicts are usually focused on a single opponent. However, many conflicts won’t be simple one-on-one affairs. They will be messy and chaotic, with multiple player characters, multiple nonplayer character opponents, or plenty of both. The clear rule of comparing Attribute ranks to determine success becomes much muddier the more participants are involved. There are no hard-and-fast rules for handling combats with more than two participants, but some simple guidelines are provided below:

- **PHYSICAL CONFLICTS** (armed and unarmed) are limited by practical concerns, such as the number of combatants that can physically fit in an area. For combats where it is one versus many, only six to a dozen or so can theoretically surround a sole defender before the attackers begin to get in each others’ ways. The longer range the weapons possess, the more combatants can operate effectively, with ranged combat offering a limitless opportunity to attack, while close combat (grapples) are limited to a handful of attackers. A clever defender will utilize attackers’ numbers against them.
- **PSYCHIC CONFLICTS** are less limited in the number of participants, though the process of visualizing and

maintaining a psychic connection with more than one living being is extraordinarily difficult and can only be successfully attempted by high-ranked Psyches or those using Icons or some other method of psychic gestalt. For the most part, the number of participants in a psychic combat is limited only by the number of beings able to create and maintain a psychic contact with the intended target: these contacts do not always have to be willing connections.

Ultimately, in physical or psychic conflicts, there is no hard-and-fast rule to compare a one-versus-many situation. The gamemaster must judge the outcome based on the difference between the relevant Attribute ranks, adjusted by tactics, and taking into consideration the number of attackers or defenders and their relative ranks.

Under ideal conditions, a higher-ranked character can theoretically hold off a vast number of significantly inferior assailants, though if the difference in ranks is narrow, this becomes less of a sure thing. It is consequently much more difficult to be the attacker against more than one defender.

For example, Cordelia (with 32 points in Warfare), Natasha (16 points in Warfare), and Jessamyn (7 points in Warfare) attack Reevar (53 points in Warfare) in an armed conflict. If their Attributes were totaled up and compared, the conflict would be their 32+16+7=55 in Warfare vs. Reevar's 53 Warfare. A close fight. However, that is not how the Attribute Ladder works. Instead, the gamemaster looks at where each of them are located on the Attribute Ladder. In order, their ranks are Reevar (1st), Cordelia (4th), Natasha (6th), and Jessamyn (7th). Now the conflict becomes much clearer, with Reevar probably able to win by virtue of simply being ranked 1st in Warfare. Success is not always predetermined, though, and his three opponents may be able to work together to even the odds, using time, tactics, and other conditions in their favor.

The more participants in a conflict, the longer it is likely to last, and it cannot be stated clearly enough that as with other extended conflicts, Endurance will almost always become a major (or even the decisive) factor in long-lasting conflicts.

Judging the Outcome of Conflict

In addition to being a combination of narrator and referee, the gamemaster must ultimately be a judge. If a conflict is not interrupted or set aside, the gamemaster must decide its outcome, specifically who won, who lost, and to what degree. Once all issues such as environment, special maneuvers, trickery, tactical advantages or disadvantages, etc. are considered, the gamemaster must look at the relevant opposed Attribute ranks and make a ruling. Here are the possibilities:

One Side is Vastly Superior to the Other

In cases where one participant has an Attribute rank far above another, or there is a significant spread between the opposing ranks, the higher rank wins, and can usually dictate the terms of the victory, subject to the gamemaster's approval. The gamemaster is able to describe the scene in a fashion that gives the victor a further choice of action, but this must be in support of the winning condition. It can be drawn out further, giving more opportunity for action or decision points, but the victor should be placed in a tactically advantageous position from which to make these decisions. Unless some major force intervenes, the victor's success is assured. These conflicts usually end with the loser taking all of the physical or psychic injuries and the winner either unscathed or barely injured. Tactically, if a participant realizes this level of superiority, the smart thing to do is to fight defensively, seeking any escape or attempting to change the nature of the conflict as quickly as possible.

One Side is Moderately Superior to the Other

As above, if one participant in the conflict has a moderately higher-ranked Attribute, victory is all but inevitable. The only differences are time and the chance of an upset. The clearly higher-ranked character will almost always win, but it will take more time than the superior-ranked character. Additionally, tactical advantages can play a larger role in the outcome, with significant factors potentially balancing the equation if utilized cleverly by the lower-ranked character. Outcomes are usually bad for the loser, but the winner can also sustain a light injury or minor setbacks.

The Two Sides Are Close to One Another

The two possibilities here are "the participants are extremely close" and "the participants are equal." In cases where one party is slightly better than the other, all of the outside factors become much more significant. A minor tactical advantage or an unexpected edge can push the higher-ranked character into the "clear advantage" range, or it can push the lower-ranked character to equal the opponent, or even gain marginal superiority over them. Conflicts where opponents are closely matched are often the most engaging, with the outcome potentially in doubt based on the actions taken by either participant. These become chess games, with desperate moves having almost equal importance as long-term gambits. In many cases, both sides will take injuries or suffer setbacks, and Endurance can become the determining factor in such conflicts. These conflicts can take longer to resolve than any others, as they become a back-and-forth, with both sides exploring options and seeking the upper hand.

Consequences of Conflicts

Once the outcome of a conflict has been determined the gamemaster needs to describe the injury suffered by the losing party. Diceless conflict doesn't use any concrete system for tracking the degree of lethality of one weapon to another, or the specific effects of multiple injuries: these must all be handled through storytelling and the gamemaster's judgment. This section covers some quick descriptions of injuries, rated from near miss, light, medium, serious, mortal, to death blow. These are provided to give the gamemaster some benchmarks or inspiration when describing injuries to players.

Armed and Unarmed Conflict Injuries

When fists or weapons are used to inflict harm upon an opponent, injuries are going to ensue, ranging from "missed it by that much" to instant death. Obviously, sword injuries are going to be different than boxing injuries, which are different from gunshot wounds, etc., and the types of injuries can range into the infinite. Rather than define all physical injuries by specific type, injuries are described by severity, leaving the gamemaster to provide any further supporting details if desired. In most cases, the effects of physical injury are obvious, and common sense should prevail.

NEAR MISS: The absolute lightest might not even hurt: it could be damage to a garment or held weapon, or something like a sword-swipe cutting through a lock of hair. It could be a punch that just falls short. Good or Bad Stuff may affect the severity of near misses.

LIGHT: These include grazes, light cuts, bruises, abrasions, welts, bloodied noses, light burns, a black eye, and other minor injuries that do not penetrate the flesh deeply and are relatively small. They won't get in the way of activity, but they may look unpleasant. Characters can suffer as many of these as they have surface area.

MEDIUM: These are cuts, sprains, shallow stab wounds, contusions, broken teeth, open wounds, first-degree burns, jammed toes or fingers, eye gouges, or even small pieces of shrapnel buried in flesh. These wounds are painful and often bleed for a short while before the blood coagulates and seals the wound. In hand-to-hand fighting, injuries are usually inflicted on the arms and chest. These will hurt, but not be hugely inconvenient. However, if the wound is something like a sprain to the wrist or ankle it may affect Strength or Warfare, and a contusion to the head may temporarily affect Psyche.

SERIOUS: These are injuries that would require hospitalization and usually surgery, such as deep stab wounds, lengthy deep cuts, broken bones, through-and-through gunshot wounds in a non-vital area, second degree burns, and concussions. In cases of specific attacks or Bad Stuff, this may mean loss of an eye, ear, or fingers. A character suffering one or more of these is in bad shape, and these injuries cannot be ignored. If the wound is open, covering it with a hand, cloak, or bandage is an immediate

concern. Characters suffering serious wounds will first become weak, then vision-impaired, unbalanced, and finally will black out. If the wound is not covered or tended, they may bleed out, slip into shock, and may even die. For those of below Paragon Endurance, infection is likely to ensue if the wound is not cared for in a clean environment. Recovery depends on Endurance, with more time required the lower the Attribute.

MORTAL: More severe than the serious injuries listed above, mortal wounds consist of deep injuries into vital areas, choking, loss or incapacitation of a limb, stabs that penetrate major organs, spinal injuries, major head wounds, huge impact trauma, or substantial third-degree burns. Normal humans can generally survive about seven minutes after suffering a mortal injury, more if immediate medical attention is provided. Blood loss is the most immediate threat, with the body following the same course of reactions as severe wounds (above). Characters with Average-ranked Endurance will pass out immediately, and Superior rank will remain conscious for only a few minutes. Paragon rank in Endurance will keep the character conscious longer, but in tremendous agony. Chances for survival are slight, and dependent entirely upon the quality, nature, and speed of medical attention. A survivor will be waylaid for weeks, months, or even years, depending on Endurance, and may suffer ongoing chronic pain or debilitation, or even psychological trauma from the injury.

DEATH BLOW: This is an instant kill, such as decapitation, a massive brain injury, severing a windpipe, a stab or shot through the heart, evisceration, a cut throat, spinal severing, incineration, or being blown apart. A death blow is inflicted when there is no question about the victim's chance of survival.

Psychic Conflict Injuries

Outcomes for armed and unarmed conflicts are easy to describe, to quantify, and to identify. Psychic conflict, however, inflicts injuries that are (mostly) internal. This section gives the gamemaster and players some guidelines for what sort of outcomes characters can suffer in psychic conflicts, along with role-playing aspects and recovery issues.

NEAR MISS: A near-miss with a psychic injury occurs when the attack is fleeting or instantly rebuffed, and can manifest in a feeling of dread, a light headache, a sudden wild sense of disorientation, nausea, synaesthesia (where sensory perception is scrambled and one sense is perceived as another), momentary blackouts, or even a sense of the "willies." This has no long-lasting effect and can be shrugged off, and low-rank Psyche characters may not even recognize these symptoms as consequences of psychic conflict.

LIGHT: When a character lands a blow on another in psychic conflict, this can manifest in an intense headache, serious dizziness, drowsiness, severe disorientation, temporary panic, loss of will, a pang of unreasonable and specific fear, unusual nausea, sensory overload, or a longer and more intense blackout. This does not have long-lasting effects (though could prove fatal if distracting) but exist at the level of annoyance. A low-Psyche character may suffer the effects for hours, while a high-ranked

Psyche can clear the effects quickly. Meditation or rest will readily banish these conditions.

MEDIUM: The equivalent of a solid blow to one's mind, effects can range from a migraine-intensity headache, temporary blindness, loss of one or more other senses, lack of coordination, momentary paralysis or tremors, brief amnesia, intense panic or distress, severe apathy, severe dizziness or disorientation, or worse. These effects are not incapacitating, but can add up quickly, and can affect other Attributes such as Strength or Warfare. The higher the rank in Psyche, the less debilitating these effects are, and the quicker the recovery.

SERIOUS: A serious psychic injury is no laughing matter and nothing to be shrugged off. A character could temporarily lose one or more senses, have intense pain from the brain and throughout the body, suffer partial or total paralysis, be knocked unconscious, vomit, suffer nosebleeds, become crazed with fear, lash out wildly or be overcome with an extreme emotional state, slip into shock, shut down emotionally, or even lose some portion of memory. These effects are profound and will take time to recover, and though it is possible to function while suffering one or more, Strength or Warfare will almost definitely be affected.

MORTAL: Only the highest-ranked Psyches can suffer these and continue to function, and lesser Psyches will either be incapacitated or swiftly slip into comas or suffer psychological trauma. This is brain-blasting territory, and characters suffering these sorts of psychic injuries may even exhibit serious physical effects, from loss of mobility to damage to speech centers of the brain. Blood may come out the nose, eyes, or even ears. Loss of one or more senses is common. Paralysis or a coma is not completely out of the question. Recovery is not guaranteed, and even then the victim may suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, or serious sanity impairment.

DEATH BLOW: Death is either instantaneous or nearly so. The brain is shredded, all sense of identity completely erased, and sanity completely obliterated. A character may appear to suffer a catastrophic stroke, a major embolism or brain hemorrhage, or a dramatic cerebral shutdown. If the body survives the psychic death blow, it will be a comatose shell, without hope of any recovery of self.

Death

The ultimate, or final result of any conflict is likely death, whether inflicted or suffered, but in diceless resolution, no death is ever unintentional or accidental. Death can only come as the result of a decision made, whether by the aggressor, or as a consequence of a poor decision made by a character.

Nonplayer characters will likely die during the course of play, and die by the scores in especially violent or combat-oriented games. This is an obvious outcome for games where some form of lethal conflict is necessary for survival. The gamemaster should treat nonplayer character deaths with appropriate gravity, more so for those nonplayer characters who have become characters in their own right, reminding players always what dangers the

Gossamer worlds hold.

For player characters, however, it is a more complex issue, as player feelings are inevitably in play, and campaign goals often hinge on the continued survival of player characters. Player characters in *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* are remarkably tough, with (expectedly) high Endurance Attributes and the ability to regenerate or recover from injuries that would waylay or incapacitate mortals. For this reason, the gamemaster and players should strive to ensure that whenever one character faces the chance of death, it is due to decisions made in the course of play. If it is the possible outcome of a character versus character conflict, the gamemaster should ensure that the players (not characters) feel that fairness is the order of the day. Every opportunity should be given to soften the blow with an escape, imprisonment, or some potential alternative, and should be preferred as a narrative opportunity rather than the close of a chapter and a dramatic dead-end. See pages 89-91 for more details on dealing with death for player characters and nonplayer characters.

Time and Conflicts

The easiest resolutions to conflicts are those when there is an overwhelming difference in ranks, such as when one side is vastly superior (see page 85). Unbalanced conflicts like these can be resolved almost instantly, usually in the form of a single sword stroke, punch thrown, shot fired, or psychic attack. There are almost no decisions to be made, no junctures where things can go a different way, and little chance of some outside intervention.

On the other side of the spectrum, the more evenly-matched the participants in a conflict are, the slower things will go, and the greater the chance things will not be easily determined. The nature of the conflict could change, strategic decisions could shift things one way or another, outside parties or the environment might become tactical concerns, and Endurance might be brought into play as the determining factor.

Breaking Conflicts into Rounds

One easy way to handle timing for conflicts is to think of them as rounds (or turns, or exchanges... whatever is preferable). These have no fixed amount of time, instead being defined by the type of conflict: a round for a fistfight or gunfight might be several seconds, a sword duel a half-minute, a battle of armies a few hours, and for a psychic battle a round might be over in the blink of an eye. An epic battle might even have turns lasting days. For extended conflicts, where one side is not defeated or incapacitated easily, the gamemaster should announce another round once the first is completed, and repeat as needed until the conflict is resolved.

The length or detail of a round should reflect the gamemaster and player expectations: if the conflict is significant, the gamemaster may stretch it out, allowing several decision points during or between rounds, but unimportant conflicts can be resolved in a single round. The gamemaster should always pay

attention to player interest in the level of conflict pacing: lengthy combats with too many tactical decisions to make can be boring for those involved and not involved, and too-short conflicts without any decision-making or sense of investment can be unsatisfying or even rote.

Selecting the Level of Detail

When selecting the level of detail and how many rounds it will take to resolve a conflict, a measure of thumb is if it represents a significant moment for one or more of the player characters, or a potential turning point in the campaign. Conflicts can range from quick, no-detail scuffles over in a single round to lengthy exchanges with multiple turning points, monologues, and tactical decisions and opportunities opening and closing as the conflict evolves.

A “no detail” conflict can be handled in a single round with a simple comparison of Attributes. This is best for relatively unimportant conflicts or against vastly inferior foes.

There are many questions that the gamemaster could ask to determine the appropriate level of detail:

- Is this when the player character comes face-to-face with an old nemesis?
- Is this where the player characters meet up with the villain of the campaign?
- Is this a reluctant battle, fraught with emotional importance, when dialogue is an essential part of an otherwise physical conflict, such as when two rivals go sword-to-sword and declare their enmity for one another?
- Is there going to be a big dramatic revelation, or something that is best unveiled in the middle of a conflict?
- Are there too many characters (player character and nonplayer character) involved to resolve it quickly and cleanly in a single round or two?
- Are player characters “on the way” or arriving late to the conflict, and would be disappointed if they missed their chance at being involved?
- Is it a conflict where the outcome could go either way, such as when both sides are evenly matched?
- Has the gamemaster planned this conflict as the big climactic scene, such as at the end of a session, or a major action sequence?
- Is there a huge moral choice involved, where the player characters must have the time and attention to make a serious decision that might otherwise be lost in a quick conflict?
- Is a player character’s life in danger?

If the answer to any of these is “yes” then the gamemaster should pace the conflict accordingly, giving it the time to breathe and allowing multiple rounds for it to play out. Sometimes, also, it might just be time for an action sequence when there hasn’t been enough danger in the session or the campaign overall, and players

can simply enjoy being challenged.

There is no hard-and-fast answer as to how much emphasis to give any particular conflict, but it’s best to err on the side of allowing conflicts to breathe than to rush past them.

Who Goes First?

The higher-ranked Attribute in a conflict almost always goes first. If the conflict’s nature hasn’t been determined or if the participants are attempting different types of conflicts, the gamemaster should examine the situation and announce who goes first. The speed of thought is paramount, so psyche-based attacks will go first, *but only if a mind-to-mind link has already been established*. Determining who goes first in physical conflicts can be determined by the simple guideline: unarmed attacks are quicker than armed attacks, but if distance is involved, ranged attacks will usually connect before an opponent can close to fighting distance.

In order of action:

- Psychic (Psyche-based) actions are first if mind-to-mind contact already exists.
- Unarmed (Strength-based) actions are second if the attacker is in close range.
- Armed (Warfare-based) actions are third, unless at range against an opponent trying to use psychic or unarmed attacks.
- Psychic (Psyche-based) actions requiring establishment of mind-to-mind contact are slowest, as psychic contact may take longer to establish than an entire physical combat, and are easily disrupted by physical actions.

Taking Turns

The gamemaster should ask everyone involved in a conflict to announce their actions in whatever order preferred or call for actions in the order of the Attribute Ladder. It’s usually a good idea for the gamemaster to ask the lowest-ranked participant to announce their actions first, to allow higher-ranked characters to determine their own actions based on the increased amount of tactical information available, allowing higher-ranked characters to react or to interfere with the plans of lower-ranked characters.

In the case of nonplayer characters, the gamemaster should announce the nonplayer characters’ apparent actions, keeping in mind that nonplayer characters may be feinting or bluffing, pretending to act at a lower ranking. Keeping track of who is doing what in conflict when more than a few player characters and nonplayer characters are involved can be challenging. With larger groups, the gamemaster may even wish to jot actions down on a sheet of paper, placing actions in order using the above guidelines.

Once all involved parties’ intended actions have been determined, the gamemaster should narrate the actions in the order they occur, providing information about the nonplayer

characters and allowing for player characters to narrate their own actions and supplying any confirming details such as levels of injuries and outcomes. Repeat the rounds of conflict as appropriate until everything is resolved enough to move on.

Other Factors in Conflicts

Conflict can be unpredictable and messy, full of variables and external factors that keep resolution from being a clear-cut case of Attribute vs. Attribute. Following are some special cases or conditions that can significantly shift the expected outcome of a conflict.

- **ENVIRONMENT:** Not every conflict will occur in a stable well-lit place. Instead, player characters might be forced to fight for their survival on the steps of the Grand Stair, in places where movement options are limited, in crazy Gossamer world backdrops, and where elements of the environment may even be hazardous in and of themselves. A location for conflict should ideally be picked for the tactical advantages it provides, which is great for the one instigating or planning the conflict, worse for the defender
- **STUFF:** Good, Bad, or Zero stuff will affect the way chance favors any character (player character or nonplayer character) in a conflict. Many small things can happen in the course of a combat, and some things are outside either participant's ability to influence. For example, if a weapon is dropped, it may be just out of reach for a Zero Stuff character, far out of reach (and damaged!) for a Bad Stuff character, and nearby and easily accessible to a Good Stuff character. These are inexhaustible resources, and will affect any appropriate outcome where chance is involved.
- **INTERFERENCE:** Whether they're welcome or not, other characters may intervene, intercede, or interfere with the conflict. They might jump in to help one combatant, inadvertently get in the way of the conflict as innocent bystanders, or even try to stop the conflict altogether. Player characters and nonplayer characters have allies (see page 59), important and powerful supporters who may become involved with any conflict, great or small. These may be summoned, called upon, or show up on their own, even when unwanted.
- **WEAPONS:** Ultimately, a weapon is simply an expression of a character's Warfare Attribute. A high-ranked character may be just as deadly with a rubber spatula as a low-ranked character is with a machinegun; deadlier, even. Normal weapons should inflict injuries appropriate to their type and the rank of the wielder, and weapons with qualities such as Hardened, Double Damage, Deadly Damage, etc. (see page 47) do additional damage above and beyond their nature.
- **ARMOR:** As with weapons, above, armor is generally valuable against mundane threats, but is not a tremendous factor when dealing with ranked Strength or Warfare.

This is the same for thickened leather jackets to powered assault armor to personal energy fields. Using common sense, armor will protect in a fashion appropriate to its type, but for real protection, armor should have qualities added to it such as Resistant to Normal Weapons, Resistant to Firearms, Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons, etc. as described on page 49.

- **INJURIES:** Pain and injuries can make it harder to fight. As characters become injured as a result of unarmed, armed, or psychic conflicts, injuries may become a deciding factor in a character's ability to continue fighting. The gamemaster may choose to characterize injuries as causing minor inconveniences (blood-slick hands, etc.) or even impose major conditions such as broken limbs, internal damage, concussions, etc. that may seriously impede a character. Based on the descriptions of injuries on pages 86-87, players and the gamemaster should incorporate these conditions into any role-playing or tactical decision making.

Player Characters and Death

Many conflicts will end up being resolved in death. Fortunately, in *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, death is not a random occurrence or the result of bad luck. It is almost always the consequence of a decision made at the end of a conflict, such as an ending to a sword-duel where the victor decides to finish off the loser. In the rare cases where death comes outside a conflict, it should be as a result of a player decision, such as self-sacrifice or in defiance of self-preservation.

Due to their enhanced Attributes and powers, player characters should be exceptionally difficult to kill by normal means, giving the gamemaster plenty of opportunity to keep them alive for only the most dramatically significant moments in a campaign. But ultimately, death should be rare, and the gamemaster should use whatever tools necessary to avoid it when possible.

When players spend a lot of time getting into the heads of their characters, it is tragic to see those characters' lives cut short quickly. Furthermore, premature or frequent player character death can wreck havoc on the long-term goals of a campaign, with the gamemaster having to shoe-horn new player characters into the mix to replace deceased ones. Players who lose multiple characters can lose interest in continuing with the campaign, and can even become jaded to the effect that their actions and attitude affect other players and are detrimental to the game as a whole.

To avoid these potential problems, the gamemaster should always keep in mind the long-term effects of a particular player character's death, and consider the alternatives. In the cases where a nonplayer character is the one who decides whether the character lives or dies, the gamemaster may decide to have the nonplayer character spare the player character, but leave a token scar, let them survive with a warning, inflict some other loss, take the player character prisoner, or some other resolution that allows for future dramatic narrative action.



Death comes for all, even a Lady of the Gossamer worlds. Cordelia passes into her next journey.

Another option is to have an all-but-doomed player character rescued by some agency outside their control: a manifestation of a power may intervene in spectacular fashion; a concerned Ally (page 59) may sweep in with a *deus ex machina*-style reprieve; or the player character may appear to die but return in some alternate form. The nature of the player character's Stuff can affect what happens... a Good Stuff character may find a last-minute rescue into relative safety, while a Bad Stuff character may feel that death would have been easier... the frying pan being preferable to the fire. Any of these reprieves should come with repercussions, and all manner of strings attached.

In the event that all other options are inappropriate, inadvisable, or simply impossible, and it comes time for a player character to arrive at the most final of destinations, the gamemaster may wish to take the player aside and ensure that the player is all right with the intended outcome. Once death is certain, the gamemaster should narrate the event with sensitivity and as much detail as appropriate, allowing the situation to resonate with drama. If the player character suffers a mortal wound, allow the player character to gasp out some last words, goodbyes, or even a final action. If the player character is resigned to certain death, then the gamemaster should allow for a final speech or some other form of dramatic good-bye, if the player wishes.

A player character death is an important event, perhaps even a campaign-altering one, and as such it should have a suitable amount of dramatic emphasis.

Nonplayer Characters and Death

In a campaign full of action and violence, minor nonplayer characters will likely die in droves. Monsters, armies, guards, soldiers, even innocent bystanders will not be spared the grim finality of death. Player characters may cause deaths without even being aware of them. Think of these types of nonplayer characters as nameless, faceless "extras." Their deaths can add poignancy or drama to a situation, and emphasize the threat, but they are not necessarily important to the overall story. They may not even happen "on camera," and the player characters could simply learn about them secondhand.

By contrast, the gamemaster should ensure that more important nonplayer characters who have had personalities and names attached, and have interacted with the player characters, have deaths that are more significant and are given some narrative "space" to occur, with a chance for the player characters to react to those deaths. An important part of role-playing is reaction to adversity and to hardship, and there are fewer hardships greater than death. If the nonplayer character was liked, or even beloved, the gamemaster may wish to use whatever tools at their disposal to emphasize the loss of life and the aftereffects.

The gamemaster may also choose to show nonplayer characters the same level of mercy as player characters, saving them using necessary means when their survival is essential to the overall story. This should not be overused, as being unable to finally defeat enemies and significant nonplayer characters robs players

of the feeling that they have control over aspects of the game. Excessively sparing nonplayer characters the consequences of losing creates a sense of unfairness or even futility regarding life-and-death conflicts, so the gamemaster should only do so after careful consideration.

Player Character Death and One-Shots

For one-shot or convention games, the gamemaster is encouraged to be less merciful when it comes to the matter of player character death. All of the above suggestions should be carefully weighed, but can be readily ignored when it comes to the experience of a short, limited game where it is more important to have a great time with heightened stakes and drama, than it is to sustain player investment over the length of a campaign.

If players are given pre-generated player characters or quickly generate them at the beginning of the session, they should have much less emotional investment, and may enjoy the luxury of “going down swinging,” allowing their player characters to die in a way that they would not normally do during a regular campaign. Players may choose to be more adversarial than they would during a campaign, especially if the adventure as presented puts them at cross purposes, or even allows for them to be pitted against one another. Having one, some, or even all the player characters die gloriously during a one-shot or convention game can be a rich source of entertainment, so long as the players all feel they contributed to the end result and that their demises were not undeserved or unavoidable. Many of the best stories from one-shots or convention games come from such dramatic bloodbaths.

A good bit of advice for gamemasters dealing with the option of player character death in a one-shot or convention game is to try to avoid it for as long as possible, perhaps two-thirds or more of the game’s intended running time, to prevent the unfortunate result of having a player with nothing to do once their player character is dead. Some players are perfectly happy to be spectators for the remainder of a one-shot or convention game, but it is generally better to minimize the amount of time they will be in that role.

If a player’s character has been killed, one option is to offer them to play a helpful nonplayer character as their character for the remainder of the session, jumping back into the adventure in a somewhat diminished role. In cases like these, it is usually a good idea to make the nonplayer character someone less powerful than the player character, otherwise players might see virtue in

getting killed early to “step behind the wheel” of more powerful player characters. Some players may even be up for the challenge of playing a hostile nonplayer character, though this should be done in close consultation with the gamemaster.



Gamemasters Only!

Everything in this rulebook from this point on is written primarily for the gamemaster, not the players.

This is not to say that players are not welcome to read beyond this point, but should do so knowing that possible surprises will be spoiled, techniques will be revealed, and misinformation might be gleaned. Every gamemaster’s game will be different, and the setting information provided are only suggestions, not unimpeachable canon, and as such, building expectations based on what follows this warning could be detrimental to a good game experience. You, as a player, might have expectations that will not coincide with what the gamemaster intends.

Straying past this section is akin to ordering a meal and then wandering into the kitchen to watch it being prepared. The customer may learn something interesting about what happens in a kitchen, who is making the meal, and what exactly goes onto the plate, but the experience might not be altogether conducive to a fine and enjoyable meal.

Chapter Eleven: Gamemastering

As hinted at before, gamemastering encompasses a unique combination of skills and tactics used to create and guide players through stories. The gamemaster is the hardest-working person in the game, with the enormous task of creating the plots, evoking the world, and seeing to it that everyone has a good time.

This section covers all of the aspects of gamemastering, from advice on the general role of the gamemaster, such as tips and techniques, to the rules that all gamemasters must play by. From there, the section covers the construction of an adventure (from a one-shot to campaign length) and provides suggestions about how to inspire quality role-playing from the players.

Suggestions in this section may be repeated. This is intentional, reinforcing the advice where need be and re-emphasizing it in light of the new context presented.

The Gamemaster's Rules of Engagement

Though it might seem that there are no rules when it comes to storytelling and the role of the gamemaster, nothing could be further from correct. It is imperative that the gamemaster behave according to a rather strict set of guidelines to ensure that play is fair and that the players do not feel that they are simply subject to the arbitrary whim of gamemaster caprice.

Players must trust the gamemaster, but at the same time, the gamemaster does not always have to be honest, and can be selective with the truth. This delicate balance of transparency and opacity can be difficult to maintain, and for that reason, some principles and guidelines are essential.

Erick Wujcik, designer of the diceless rules that power *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, devised "The Gamemaster's Rules of Engagement," a set of five principles for gamemasters to adhere to. True to form, there are exceptions for almost all of these rules. Gamemasters should learn these rules so they are instinctual when gamemastering. If they are too much to remember, write them on a piece of paper and stick it nearby where the rules will always be visible.

Players Must Be Able to Trust Their Senses and Memories. The gamemaster is the player's guide to the setting, serving as eyes, ears, nose, throat, sense of touch, and even psychic sensitivity. If player characters have loyal subjects, the gamemaster controls what those subjects may say and do. The gamemaster can manipulate the flow of time, provide background information in the form of character knowledge and memory, and is the vessel through which players receive all data about the setting and its inhabitants. This information must be trustworthy.

The exception to this is that senses can be mistaken, they can be weak and imprecise, they can be fooled, and they can be swayed by emotion or other conditions. Memories can be tampered with, illusions are easy to create, and it is even easier to manipulate a player character's mind and senses to see something that isn't there, to miss something that is, or to see something other than

what is actually there.

Players Must Control Their Own Actions. The player is ultimately in charge of what the player character does and says. The gamemaster should no more be putting words into the character's mouth than telling the player how the character reacts or what the character does. Taking control of a character away from a player is absolutely forbidden.

The exception to this is that the gamemaster should be able to supply basic reaction to sensory input, such as telling the player that their character is cold, hungry, sleepy, ill, etc. Involuntary actions and minor automatic responses to stimuli can be taken out of the player's hands for dramatic effect from time to time. Similarly, in the midst of combat, the player should not have to describe every action and reflex made by the character. It is assumed that the character is moving according to training and ability, and there is no need to micromanage every single bodily movement.

So aside from involuntary action and automatic response, the player is completely in charge of what the character says and does. Unless, of course, the character has been taken over by magic or some other force, usually as the result of an unsuccessful psychic battle. In these cases, the gamemaster might narrate the player's actions for them, being sure to evoke any inner struggle between the player's will and that of the controlling force, or take the player aside and explain that the character is controlled and ask the player to behave accordingly, to keep the control hidden from the other players. This is difficult to do without tipping players off, and the gamemaster should remind folks about the difference between what they know versus what the characters know.

Death and Other Resolution Must Be Fair. Unlike games where a random dice throw can result in calamity, or where a character can be killed instantly and without awareness when encountering some threat, *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* puts the question of life and death into the hands of the player and gamemaster. Characters should never die unexpectedly or be penalized in the course of play because of an unpredictable or unexpected outcome. If a character's fate is at risk, the gamemaster should let the player know what the stakes are, and allow the character free will in trying to avoid death.

There is no exception to this rule. Player characters can be dragooned, shanghaied, or buffaloed. They can be tricked, captured, knocked unconscious, or neutralized as part of the opposition's plan, but this should be used to move the story forward rather than as a dead-end. Whenever a player character is taken out of action, instead it should be that they have been put into a dramatic new position from which to act. Nothing is less fun for a player to be sitting around with nothing to do because their character is dead or incapacitated.

All Problems Must Have Solutions. No matter what the opposition—an enemy, death trap, or even a disaster—there must be a way to escape it, stall it, or stop it altogether. Every

master plan must have at least one flaw (or ideally, more than one, to make sure players can figure it out), every foe must have an Achilles Heel, and an emergency exit installed (even if hidden) in every death trap. A good gamemaster will plan for a few of these solutions as part of every challenge; two that the gamemaster devises and one “open” one for the players to suggest. An even better gamemaster will look at the player characters and think “What solutions will challenge and bring out the best in the player characters?”

The exception to this is for the gamemaster to challenge the player characters with a problem that is apparently unsolvable. In these cases, the problem must have a solution that is unexpected or requires the players (and player characters) to draw on resources they rarely use, or which requires them to improvise a creative solution that works. Being forced to think or act unconventionally can bring about great role-playing. A solution that the player characters already know or possess (but need to remember or be reminded of) is even better, creating a sense of continuity to the game.

Bias is Prohibited. This is pretty simple. On a personal level the gamemaster should get along with all of the players in the game, but in the role as gamemaster there are no friends, no enemies, no prejudice, and no preference. There are only characters, and they should be considered equally, with their actions and attributes determining how the universe treats them.

There are absolutely no exceptions to this rule.

The Roles of the Gamemaster

One major difference between the gamemaster and players is that players usually only play one character in each gaming session, their own, and continue playing that character session after session. The player’s job is to inhabit that character to the best of his or her ability. The gamemaster, on the other hand, must take on many roles during any average session. These roles are all a part of the job of being a gamemaster:

Writer: The gamemaster must ultimately come up with the plots that a game session will include. This includes inventing any threats, creating any nonplayer characters, and deciding how they will interact with the plot. It includes the role of world-builder, coming up with the environments that are specific to the story and help relay its themes. It also includes the ability to improvise quickly enough to allow players to create their own narratives, and to be able to incorporate those personal narratives back into the larger overall story.

Designer: As mentioned above, the gamemaster must be a designer. This includes building nonplayer characters and spending points on their Attributes, Powers, artifacts and creatures. It means devising threats that are both balanced and still challenging, and it means coming up with interesting and fresh problems the player characters must solve utilizing their own Attributes and Powers. The designer’s work is to look at the player characters’ abilities and think “*How can I challenge these?*”

Actor: Once play begins, the gamemaster is now an actor,

embodying all of the nonplayer characters that show up in the course of play. From janitors, to soldiers, wizards, fanatic cultists, to kings or even aliens, the gamemaster must evoke each of these in play, bringing them to life with personality, either as deeply as player characters, or more superficially, as appropriate to the level of importance the nonplayer character has. While players get to play one character (their own), the gamemaster is a repertory player, often playing multiple characters in a single scene. In some ways, this is more liberating than the player characters’ own role-playing, as the gamemaster can do all of the things that would be too distracting if done by a player character: unusual accents, strange vocal stylings, exaggerated body language, outrageous personalities, etc. Many nonplayer characters are only around a little bit each session, so it can be fun for everyone if they are memorable.

Conductor: A role-playing session involves multiple players, each contributing their own flavor to the overall experience. Like a conductor, the gamemaster must keep the game moving along at a proper and pleasing pace, ensuring that scenes don’t linger overmuch and that one flows easily into another. The gamemaster is the one everyone in the game looks to for cues, even if they know what to do on their own.

Cinematographer: As well as the above roles, the gamemaster is the cinematographer (or the director of photography) describing the scenes and environments the characters inhabit or encounter. Just as the cinematographer places the camera in a scene and decides what it’s pointed at, the gamemaster decides where the focus of each scene will be. The gamemaster must be willing to provide as much detail as is required by the players, and picks many of the environments to emphasize (or sometimes contrast) the plot elements happening in them.

Director: Perhaps the most important role of the gamemaster is to be the director of the game. That means having the script (the plot) on hand and knowing when to stick to it and when to deviate from it, allowing the actors (players) the chance to explore the material and their characters organically. It means keeping everyone on task if the game is lagging, and letting everyone have some breathing room if things are too fast-paced. The director determines where scenes begin and where they end, who is initially present... and when to cue the special effects!

Bookkeeper: One of the necessary but boring parts of being a gamemaster is keeping track of the numbers. This means making sure everyone who has elected for player contributions (page 8) is being honest about bringing them. It means keeping track of the Attributes and Stuff of all of the player characters and nonplayer characters, determining how much their artifacts and creatures cost, and determining how any advancement points are awarded when adventures come to a close. As advancement after character creation involves information that the players may or may not have access to, in the role of bookkeeper the gamemaster is responsible for balancing everyone else’s checkbooks.

Referee: As mentioned above in “The Gamemaster’s Rules of Engagement,” the role of referee requires the gamemaster to act from a position of fairness and impartiality, and to be able to judge

conflict fairly, without any bias whatsoever. That sounds difficult, and sometimes it can be. But imagine how it would feel for a sports team if the umpire or referee were clearly biased towards the other team, and was judging unfairly or applying rules selectively. It would sap players of the willingness to play, right? The same applies in role-playing games. The gamemaster must put aside friendship, family (if applicable), and any outside attitudes and just judge events in the game based on what's happening between characters, using the characters' actions, their Attributes, Stuff, and any relevant powers or belongings.

Host: Most of all, it requires the gamemaster to be a master of ceremonies, a host whose sole goal is to keep the players entertained. It's the host's job to invite an interesting mix of guests, see to it that the entertainment is suited for them, and to make sure everyone is having a good time. This means paying attention to the mood at the table and adjusting things, the gamemaster equivalent of coaxing shy guests to mingle, and making sure everyone's drinks are topped off. If a player isn't having a good time, the gamemaster-as-host should find out why, and see what can be done, and the gamemaster should also be sensitive to when there are potential problems brewing between players (as opposed to their characters) and intervene in an appropriate fashion and opportunity.

It can be challenging to try to play all of these roles to fill—sometimes two or three of them can happen simultaneously—but “gamemaster” can often be the most rewarding role in the game. It might take a bit of practice to get to where it's comfortable, but when it happens and everyone is in synch... that's where the magic happens.

Tools of the Gamemastering Trade

There are many techniques to the gamemastering business, some of which apply directly to diceless role-playing more than any other type of role-playing. Some of these techniques are obvious, some instinctual, others will be learned over time and through experience, and some are a matter of personal style or taste. However, there are some general bits of advice that are applicable to any gamemaster running *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* for the first time. Not all of these may work for everyone, but they're good to keep in mind, even if they provoke the gamemaster to do something else.

Make It Personal. Whenever devising the plot for any game—no matter how long—always figure out what will involve the player characters and matter to them. Use elements of their personalities, their backgrounds, their goals, or the things they care about as tools to get them involved, and keep them involved. Think of whatever will hook them into the story and keep them there.

Bring the Action Home. Whenever possible, put the player characters into the action. If there's a conflict they need to know about... why not figure out how to put one or more of them into the middle of it? If the story calls for something big to happen “off-screen” or before the events of the game session, take a

look at that and try to figure out if there's a way to put a player character (or all of them) there for it. Let them experience things, not be told about them.

Pay Attention. Listen to what the player characters are saying during the game. Make notes about things that they bring up when they're talking about their characters, or what they say in character, almost as if they're under surveillance. If the player mentions a friend or companion of their character, then that's a new nonplayer character for the gamemaster to use... to make it personal.

Edit Ruthlessly. Film editors and writers have a saying: “*Arrive late and leave early.*” For film and television, every second of screen time costs money and represents a chance for the viewer to lose interest, so they tend not to waste time by showing characters driving to the next scenes, or figuring out where to go next. Instead, they begin scenes with the characters already present or just about to arrive, and they end scenes a moment or so after the point is made and it becomes clear what the characters' next goal or choice will be. Budget isn't a problem in a role-playing game, but attention span is, and if there's a chance to just begin a scene with an assumption that the player characters have already gone through the effort to put themselves in place, then do it. And if an encounter or scene can end once the primary conflict is resolved, then all the better. Everyone can take a break and handle any follow-up information, in brief, before the next scene.

Create Memorable Characters. The sample nonplayer characters presented in this book are only a fraction of the number of nonplayer characters players will encounter in the course of an average game. Unless players decide to do nothing but send their characters into uninhabited, desolate places, or only stick together in a room, they should be interacting with nonplayer characters all the time, whether in minor and forgettable roles, or as recurring allies or antagonists. Though there is no reason to make every single nonplayer character so compelling to the player characters, it is vitally important to make the important nonplayer characters feel memorable. The gamemaster can do this by describing them with a few strong characteristics (an unruly shock of hair, an interesting scar, a particularly striking form of dress, a distinctive voice, etc.) or through personality traits that are memorable (always morbid, slightly off-balance, contemptuous, etc.). It is even more interesting to have nonplayer characters apparently play against type from time to time, exhibiting characteristics that are unexpected, adding to their depth, than it is to overburden them with quirks or too many distinctive qualities. Some gamemasters like to “cast” nonplayer characters as if they were being played by actors or even people they know in real life. Gamemasters can also use drawings or photographs to depict nonplayer characters, though this can be risky if using someone too recognizable. In these cases, the real person can overshadow the character. At any rate, when nonplayer characters become memorable, the players begin responding to them in turn as characters, not just as temporary voices or channels for gamemaster interaction.

Be Flexible. Players are inventive. At times, fiendishly so. And they outnumber the gamemaster. No matter how carefully laid out a plot is, no matter how much preparation a gamemaster does, it's more than likely that the players will figure out some way to monkey-wrench it, to go off the beaten path, to turn when they should go straight, etc. It is certainly a good idea to think about what might happen from scene to scene, and to try to anticipate plot twists, but with the powers and resources at their disposal, the player characters have the ability to continually throw the gamemaster curve-balls and introduce unforeseen developments into the plot. Because of this, it's best for the gamemaster to come into every session with the idea that anything could potentially happen, and to think "what if?" instead of automatically saying "no" when the outrageous or unexpected is presented.

Keep Things Moving. Never, ever let things settle down and become stale or boring. Always be on the lookout for when things start to drag, and be ready to introduce new elements to shake things up. If the players get bogged down in a lengthy discussion, hit them with an unexpected deadline. When a player character is wanting to hide out or dodge responsibility, send a gunman through their door. If the players end up resting on a river barge, it is a dramatic imperative that the gamemaster sink that barge. Always consider the plot as an active, evolving thing in its own right, and every antagonist as its servant. This is not to say that the gamemaster should be an enemy to the player... the gamemaster's only real enemy is dullness. It's even all right to throw plot elements at the player that won't come to pass for a while... mystery assailants are excellent means of motivating player characters.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff. The role of the gamemaster can seem like an exercise in spinning multiple plates at once, with all of the information to keep in mind, player characters to appease, secrets to keep, roles to play, and rules to evoke. Diceless role-playing allows gamemasters quite a bit of freedom when it comes to improvising on the fly, making up aspects or characteristics as needed, and fudging the numbers when they're not really necessary. If a player character confronts a random nonplayer character, it may not be necessary to have the nonplayer character's exact Attribute ranks if it's not important. The final rule for the game is to have fun, and that might mean playing fast-and-loose with information, or even moving past it to fill in later (if at all).

Gamemasters wishing for more advice can find it in a variety of other sources. Particularly recommended is Robin Laws' *Robin's Laws of Good Gamemastering* (Steve Jackson Games, 2002, now available electronically). Additionally, one can find no better gamemastering advice than in the book that inspired *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, Erick Wujcik's *Amber Diceless Role-Playing* (Phage Press, 1992, available electronically).

Gamemastering the Player Characters

Each player character is made up of many elements—Attributes, powers, artifacts and creatures, allies, Domains, and Stuff—and

these can be a lot to consider while gamemastering. This section provides guidelines and suggestions for how to gamemaster those aspects of player characters effectively and fairly, using the rules of engagement above and the standard methods of conflict resolution.

Running an Attribute Auction

The Attribute Auction, if used (it should be!), is a critical element in setting the stage for the rivalries and tone for the campaign. Throughout any adventure, whether a short single-session game or a campaign, player characters are inevitably going to have conflicting goals, or even come into conflict with one another. The Attribute Auction is where those kinds of rivalries begin. It pits players against one another, giving birth to rivalries that will echo down to their characters.

The alternative is a quiet room full of players adding up points quietly, carefully discussing how to optimize the group in terms of Attributes and other abilities, or even worse, secretly determining what each character is able to do. A gamemaster's nightmare!

The Attribute Auction throws that sort of care out the window, forcing players into opposition and making them answer an incredibly important question: "*What do you want... and how badly do you want it?*" Though players can still bid cautiously and end up with exactly the characters they want, it is the gamemaster's duty to emphasize the importance of each Attribute as if it were the most important Attribute.

Re-read the example auction presented on page 8 in **CHAPTER TWO: CREATING YOUR CHARACTER**. When starting each Attribute Auction, the gamemaster should describe what the Attribute does and what someone with the highest ranks in the Attribute can do. For players who have been through a few Attribute Auctions, the gamemaster may even switch the order around, just to throw things off balance. The gamemaster should establish and announce before the Attribute Auction whether there is a limit on Bad Stuff. This is significant, because a player character with too much Bad Stuff becomes a black hole of negative karma, and can potentially unbalance a campaign, like a broken wheel on a wagon.

It is vitally important that the gamemaster begin by emphasizing how vital that Attribute will be in the course of the game. Psyche, Strength, and Warfare are each tied directly to a particular type of conflict resolution, and Endurance is important across the board as support and as a balance-tipper.

Throughout the auction, the gamemaster should be encouraging the players to spend points dramatically, dispensing with caution and making a bold statement about their hoped-for place in the Attribute hierarchy.

"*This is the most important Attribute,*" is how every Attribute auction should begin. Each Attribute's virtues should be extolled at great length, such as:

- "*Psyche is essential for almost all power use. If you want to be any good at magic, or using cantrips, or fine points*



Lucien, Lord of the Grand Stair, is a mysterious mentor.

of manipulating power, this is your Attribute. It is also the engine behind psychic conflict, so if you want to survive that, Psyche is the go-to Attribute!"

- "If you want to dominate in physical conflicts, Strength is the way to go. Not only does it give you raw physical power, but it determines how much damage you can shrug off. You don't need a weapon to use it, and it's probably the most reliable of the Attributes."
- "Warfare covers everything, from swords to knives, black powder rifles to laser pistols, ion turrets to planetary defense systems. If it involves tactical thinking, it falls under the purview of Warfare. Warfare is the determining Attribute for all armed conflict."
- "Endurance is a bargain, because it is useful for every other type of conflict, usually the determiner of how long a conflict lasts and settling ties. Not only is it the backup for Psyche when using magic or powers, it determines how long you can fight, whether with weapons or barehanded. If your character were a car, Psyche is the steering wheel, Warfare the wheels, and Strength the engine. Endurance is the gas tank. Without it, the others can't get very far."

Auctions can take as long as the gamemaster and players want. Unlike traditional auctions, there is no need for speed. The gamemaster should only close each auction when all of the bids have been confirmed, and all of the bidding is closed. Even then, though, the gamemaster should emphasize the importance of the particular Attribute, and encourage last-minute bids.

Other alternatives to the Attribute Auction can be allowed, such as:

- **Late bidding**, where a player joins later and bids against the other player bids as if the newcomer were present during the Attribute Auction. The new player must match the other players' bids, almost identically to the post-auction advancement for Attributes.
- **Blind bidding**, conducted over email or in person, usually done over a period of days rather than a single game session. To speed things along, it's advisable to auction all four Attributes at once.
- **Online bidding**, using instant messenger programs, online chat rooms, or even electronic gaming table software or websites.
- **Alternate starting points**, with more or less character

points, leading to more powerful or less powerful characters. If the gamemaster wants player characters to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the sample Gossamer Lords from **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: SOVEREIGNS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW**, character creation points might be increased to 200 or even 300.

- **Delaying the auction** until the end of character generation. A gamemaster, for example, might want to give the players only half of the Attribute points up front, and introduce the Grand Stair in the course of play, allowing players to select powers, artifacts and creatures, allies, and Domains, then giving the rest of the points for an Attribute Auction at the end.
- **Lower starting Attributes.** While the rules assume that all player characters begin with Paragon rank in Attributes, the gamemaster may reduce this to Superior or even Average, for a more modest scaled adventure or campaign.
- **Ditching it,** as in dispensing with the Attribute Auction altogether. As described in “An Alternate to the Attribute Auction” on page 9, the gamemaster can dispense with the auction altogether, allowing the players to spend the character points as desired, without any of the competitive nature of the Attribute Auction.

These only scratch the surface of ways the gamemaster can change things around, and gamemasters are absolutely encouraged to use whatever variant of character creation is the most preferable to everyone.

Gamemastering Attributes and Non-Conflict Obstacles

Players and gamemasters may sometimes have wildly different interpretations of what player characters can accomplish with their Attributes. For this reason, it is essential that the gamemaster inform the player that the Attribute abilities described on pages 17-21 represent the greatest achievements of that Attribute, developed through experience by the 1st-ranked character with that Attribute. It is not a laundry list of powers to achieve “as is” as an Attribute improves.

That said, the list of abilities suggests what the Attributes should be able to do at each level—Average, Superior, and Paragon—and the character’s place on the Attribute Ladder should provide guidance to how much of what can be accomplished towards those abilities. When player character Attributes are measured against challenges in the setting, as opposed to other Attributes, the gamemaster will need to deliberate what happens.

Always remember that the emphasis is pitting Attributes against Attributes in conflict. When a player character attempts to do something with an Attribute where the outcome is not opposed by another character, the gamemaster should first examine the challenge in light of the role the obstacle plays in the

story, answering some or all of these questions: Why is it there? Is anything backing it up? Are there compelling reasons it should remain an obstacle? What will happen if the player character succeeds in overcoming it? What could make the challenge more complex? What will happen if the player character fails to overcome it?

The gamemaster may wish to assign the obstacle a rank, to make things clear and specific.

Next, the gamemaster should examine the character’s rank in the relevant Attribute, any personal experience the character may possess, and any relevant contributing Attributes, items, or Stuff.

With this information, the gamemaster has three likely resolutions.

The character should succeed in overcoming the obstacle if:

- The obstacle is not significant to the challenges of the adventure.
- The character’s Attribute rank is able to overcome it.
- The character has relevant experience, skills, or training to handle it.
- Some power, artifact, or creature the character possesses makes the difference.
- The character has enough Good Stuff to matter.

The character must keep trying or change tactics if:

- The obstacle is important to the adventure, it is too complex to quickly/easily deal with, or it was introduced specifically to hinder someone’s progress.
- The character’s Attribute is almost equal to, or slightly less than, the challenging obstacle.
- The character has few or barely-relevant skills, experience, or training.
- Powers, artifacts, or creatures are not immediately helpful, but could be if used differently.
- The character has Zero Stuff.

The character should fail or be unable to overcome the obstacle if:

- The challenge is just too great to be accomplished by any stretch of imagination.
- The character’s relevant Attribute is woefully insufficient to meet the challenge.
- No skills, experience, or training is relevant or can be brought to bear.
- Powers, artifacts, or creatures are not in any way helpful.
- The character has Bad Stuff.

Situations may not always be as cut and dried as these solutions suggest, and gamemasters will always have to do some on-the-fly judgment. However, the most important thing to remember that if in doubt, the best outcome is the one that keeps the player character thinking, seeking alternate solutions, and trying to use abilities in new and unexpected ways.

Gamemastering Powers

These rules present a number of powers for accessing the infinite worlds (Warden of the Grand Stair), manifesting a universal principle (Eidolon or Umbra), creating magical communication devices (Wrighting), learning the true nature of things (Invocation), and mastery of magic (Sorcery or Cantrips). This is an incredible toy-box for player characters to delve into, and can present many challenges for the gamemaster to keep track of and referee.

Some helpful guidelines for any gamemaster to follow when gamemastering the powers:

- **Know Them, and Know Them Well.** Read the descriptions of each power and the abilities it confers. It may even help to refer to a cheat-sheet or summary of what each power can do, such as that presented on page 156 of **APPENDIX TWO: REFERENCE**. Additionally, each of these abilities should suggest to the gamemaster possibilities for the unexpected, or dramatic results. Gamemasters may wish to review the powers and make notes of what elements of the abilities can be brought into the adventure, or what might happen if a particular one is used.
- **Be Flexible.** This has been stated time and again, but bears repeating in this context. These rules are not exhaustive, and players will inevitably devise or introduce new and intriguing means of using their powers. Rather than using the power descriptions as limitations, they should be viewed as starting points for what the powers can do.
- **Let the Players Cross the Streams.** The powers are incredible enough on their own, but player characters may, and should, be inclined to see what happens when they combine the abilities. For example, what happens when a player character decides to use a little Umbra in a sorcery spell, or imbue an invocation with an aspect of the Eidolon? This kind of cross-pollination opens up a vast and exciting new horizon of ways to cause havoc, and the gamemaster should encourage such exploration.
- **Powers Have Personalities.** Each of the powers has a particular style or world-view it presents when used, whether the universal principles of the big two, the search for innermost truth, exposing inner natures, using Gossamer environment to one's needs, or even the casual nature of minor exertion of will. When player characters are using these powers, they are making statements, and those statements should be heard.
- **Powers Are Nothing Without the Will to Use Them.** As has been stated prior, powers ultimately are a means of affecting the stuff of the world (whether Gossamer or Grand Stair) or are means to pit an Attribute versus an Attribute. Characters with higher Attributes will generally be better at using their powers, and may have

developed new tricks.

- **Powers Should Grow With the Characters.** The gamemaster should pay attention to the unconventional ways the player characters are using their powers. When character advancement time rolls around, the gamemaster may simply tell the player that they now have an advanced version of a particular power, and list the new abilities it confers, including some of the techniques the player character devised.

Finally, the gamemaster should keep in mind that powers are also a means of viewing the universe as well as being tools for manipulating it. They can play a strong role in shaping the way adventures are conceived as well as how they play out. Player characters may find themselves pawns of either of the great two powers, or subject to the uses of the lesser ones, such as Invocation. Think of each power as potential gamemaster hooks, to draw the players into the events of the adventure and occasionally throw the unexpected into the mix.

Gamemastering Artifacts and Creatures

Artifacts and creatures are an essential part of any well-rounded character, as well as being helpful tools in the gamemaster's toolbox. They serve as distinguishing features for a character, and the amount of points spent on them indicate their importance to the character, but they can also provide valuable insight into the character by their nature.

The gamemaster should look at each item—artifact or creature—and determine ultimately what it says about the character. Is it a weapon? Is it defensive in nature? Or is it utilitarian? Does it serve to make an already-strong aspect of the character even more powerful, or does it fill in a gap where the character is weak? Is it targeted to defend or strike against a particular type of problem, or is it more general in nature?

The origin of the item can present countless interesting hooks. Where did the item come from? Did the player character make it? Was it given to them? Was it found? Does the item have a reputation unknown to the player character? Did it have a prior owner or owners? Does a prior owner want it back? Was the item always as it seemed to be now, or did it have some prior existence in a different form? Are there other items like it that are linked somehow?

For creatures or items able to communicate, the gamemaster has the advantage here of a voice to put in the player character's ear. Items such as these may have knowledge the player character is not privy to, and could be a useful source of information. They can also be a wonderful means of advising the player character to get back on track, if they stray too far from the events of the adventure, or could provide a conscience if one is needed.

Gamemasters may even be so bold as to assign qualities to an item that the player character (as well as the player) are currently unaware of. Maybe the item has capabilities that have yet to be tested, or are secret for some as-of-yet-undisclosed reason? Or

perhaps these abilities developed through the course of play in some unexpected fashion?

Having items demonstrate surprising capabilities can add intrigue and complexity to the player character's ownership of it, though the gamemaster should always keep the player's sensitivities in mind. The player spent the points on the item, after all, and should be the primary decision-maker about what it can and can't do.

Gamemastering Allies

As described on page 13 of **CHAPTER TWO: CREATING YOUR CHARACTER**, players can pick the nature of their allies but they cannot pick their actual identities. This is one of the most major aspects of a character the gamemaster has a hand in. The identity of the ally can play a dramatic role in how the player character relates to that nonplayer character, and should be chosen wisely, with the goals of the adventure and the campaign in mind, as well as the personality and aspects of the player character.

The gamemaster can designate an ally from the sample Gossamer Lords in **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: SOVEREIGNS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW**, the Dwimmerlaik from **CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE DWIMMERLAIK**, or even pick an ally from among one of the beings presented in **CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THREATS OF THE GOSSAMER WORLDS**. Alternately, the gamemaster can create a new nonplayer character to fill that role, perhaps in consultation with the player.

Regardless of their nature, these nonplayer character allies are important voices for the gamemaster, additional hooks by which the player characters can be called, informed, summoned, blackmailed, lured, manipulated, aided, rescued, supported, or even flat-out betrayed by.

When a player character contacts an ally, the gamemaster should always be thinking of the situation from the point of view of the ally. What does the player character want? Is it reasonable and within the power of the ally to grant? What has the player character done for the ally lately? Are there factors or political ramifications to any requests that may not be apparent? Is there an aspect to the character/ally relationship the player (and the character) is unaware of?

The relationship between the player character and the ally is not a one-way street, a resource that the player alone can draw on. Allies are complicated beings in their own rights, and may need help from time to time, and may be unable to help based on circumstances unknown to the player character. An ally may find their own circumstances have changed, and require the player character to intervene to restore the status quo.

Lastly, just as with powers and items, one's allies are a statement. Who does the player character call on for support, and what is their nature? How much does the player character rely on these allies? Player characters may find themselves drawn into conflicts much larger than themselves wholly due to their allies, who may call upon them for aid. This aspect of a player character can give gamemasters countless ways to draw player characters into adventures, or generate adventure ideas all their own.

Gamemastering Domains

Players who spend points on Domains own them, no argument, but the gamemaster has considerable leeway when determining what can happen in, and to, that Domain. Domains are essentially the player character's home base, but they also represent a tremendous source of dramatic potential for adventure hooks, and potential settings for adventures. Gamemasters should regard player character Domains not as "time out" spaces where the player characters get to retreat when they feel the need, but as new spaces on the game board, new settings to be exploited and evoked in play.

One of the first decisions the player makes about the Domain is the type: personal, common ground, or primal world. Most of the time, personal domains were found and chosen specific to the player character's desires, and are of little interest to other Gossamer Lords. That does not mean that all of the denizens are mere sheep. Events in that Domain could emerge that concern the player character, and may have causes, or repercussions, outside that Gossamer world. Was this Domain of interest to another Gossamer Lord in the past, or is there something dwelling within it that might be a challenge to the player character? Common ground Domains are even better for these purposes, suggesting that other Gossamer Lords have interests there, or are familiar with the world. Finally, primal worlds are likely to be prized by other Gossamer worlds or other beings of power that can travel the Grand Stair. The Dwimmerlaik themselves may have designs on these places, and more than likely there are residents of that Domain who may resent the player character's assertion of ownership.

The security chosen for the Domain can affect how often others can enter or affect it, but the other more significant element is the player character's control over the Domain, ranging from being able to affect its materials to the Domain being central to the player character's destiny. The more the player has spent on the Domain, the more important it should figure in the gamemaster's plans, just as would any Attribute, artifact, or creature. Domains connected to character destiny should loom large in any adventure, being primary places where things happen. A neat trick the gamemaster can use is to let the Domain not only exert its pull on the player character owner, but anyone connected to that character, anyone from allies, seekers, or even enemies.

Gamemastering Stuff

In some ways, Stuff colors everything and can be one of the most determining factors in a player character's experience. Simply put, the universe is attracted to Good Stuff characters, is ambivalent about Zero Stuff characters, and is repelled by Bad Stuff characters. The higher the Good or Bad Stuff, the more extreme the outcome. The gamemaster should always keep player character Stuff in mind, from planning the adventure, to the initial description of a particular scene, the process of role-playing through it, to the eventual outcome.

When player characters are created, the gamemaster should take a look at the elements that make up that character, and consider the possibility of how Good or Bad Stuff might affect those.

Allies: A player character with Good Stuff might find allies regularly available and readily able to advice or assistance, perhaps even offering in advance of being asked. A Zero Stuff character may have to bargain for assistance, being made aware that all help comes with strings attached. A Bad Stuff character may find allies surprisingly reluctant to intervene, cagey about giving straight answers, and demanding considerable recompense for any assistance.

Artifacts & Creatures: This is a little trickier, because player characters always own their Artifacts and Creatures, without question, and the gamemaster should be extremely reluctant to have things the player has paid for become unreliable. However, Stuff can affect how the rest of the universe views the item (whether artifact or creature) just as it does the character. A Good Stuff character is viewed as the rightful possessor of whatever item they have, while a Zero Stuff character's items may be obscure, of interest to some, but otherwise drawing little attention. On the other hand, a Bad Stuff character's items might be reviled, with hidden histories that cast an unfavorable light on the character, or at the opposite end of the spectrum, they may be highly coveted by others, who will go to lengths to claim them from the character.

Domains: While the player character sets the type, security, and control over a Domain, the amount and nature of the character's Stuff can affect the way it fits into the rest of the universe, and even when the character controls the contents of that Domain, it will eventually shift its nature to align with the way the rest of the universe treats the character. A Good Stuff character's Domain is regarded as a favorable place among the Gossamer worlds, even if it is inaccessible, and a Zero Stuff character's Domain may be obscure or considered neutral ground. The unfortunate Bad Stuff character's Domain may have a reputation as a place of dread among the other Gossamer worlds, existing as a mythical version of hell, or boasting an unfortunate history before the player character discovered and claimed it. Similarly, the residents of the Domain itself will tend to favor Good Stuff owners, be neutral towards Zero Stuff owners, and Bad Stuff characters will find that their Domains are a breeding ground for dissidents, malcontents, and those trying to oppose the player character.

Stuff can determine how one views the world, coloring the player character's perceptions whenever they enter a new situation. Whenever the gamemaster presents a scene to the player character, the overall ambience and tone should be shaped by the character's Stuff. Here are some examples:

GOOD STUFF: *Stratton's character Reevar has +8 points of Good Stuff, a fairly high amount. He has been summoned before a council consisting of a handful of Gossamer Lords for an unknown reason. The gamemaster tells Stratton the following: "You cautiously enter this side hall of Lucien's library. It is an amazing place, walls covered with shelves stacked high*

with books, scrolls, folios, folders, boxes, and a hundred other things. You could spend days in such a place. Lucien is standing with Vala and Drake, and on the table before them is a large map of a section of the Grand Stair you can only assume is the Labyrinth. Vala looks up, and though her expression does not betray it, she seems pleased to see you. Lucien gives you a casual smile and Drake's normally stern expression almost softens. The atmosphere is relaxed and even inquisitive. Your fears were, it seems, misplaced. What are you doing?"

ZERO STUFF: *Kit's character Jessamyn has Zero Stuff. When she is summoned to the same place in the same fashion, the gamemaster tells Kit the following: "You've never been to this region of Lucien's library before. It could be a sign of trust that he's invited you into this part of his sanctum, or it may be a trap. Hard to tell. You approach the table where Vala, Drake, and Lucien are standing around a map, and their expressions are difficult to read. Drake wears his usual stern expression, and the half-smile on Lucien's face doesn't fill you with confidence. Vala betrays nothing, and you are still not sure if you're privileged to be here or if you are in a lot of trouble. None of them have weapons in hand, but then, none of them are unarmed. What are you doing?"*

BAD STUFF: *Christopher's character Lowen has +4 points of Bad Stuff. With the same setup, the gamemaster tells Christopher the following: "You enter this section of Lucien's library, off from the main area, a room full of shadowy corners and alcoves where an assassin could lurk. Why has he asked you here? Is it because you are unfamiliar with the exits and entrances other than the one you are using now? You approach the table where Vala, Drake, and Lucien are looking at a map. There is tension in the air. Drake regards you with what seems like masked anger, and Lucien is smirking. Vala's expression is impassive, the candle-light glittering in her eyes, and you suddenly realize how powerful the three of them are and how no one knew you were coming here. They look at you for a moment, as if you were a laboratory experiment on a table. What are you doing?"*

Stuff is also a form of luck for times when there is a range of possible outcomes. When the player asks a question where the answer could be favorable, neutral, or unfavorable, the gamemaster should consult the player character's Stuff when determining the answer. Here are some examples:

GOOD STUFF: *David's character Grendel has +5 points of Good Stuff. He has escaped custody and is being pursued through the corridors of a starship while alarm klaxons blare and the power flickers in and out, with sparks blasting from access panels. David asks the gamemaster "I'm looking around to find a weapon of some sort. What are my options?" The gamemaster says "A wall-screen shows that you're only around the corner from the ship's armory. And it looks like the door is malfunctioning... the security lockdown protocols are offline. What are you doing?"*

ZERO STUFF: *Marv's character Harrison has Zero Stuff. He's dashing through the same ship in the same situation as above.*



Stuff, like luck, is something you either have... or you don't.

Marv asks the gamemaster the same question. The gamemaster says "You see an unconscious security officer lying down in the middle of the corridor, next to an exploded console of some sort. His sidearm is holstered. As you move towards it, you realize that another security officer is not that far away, calling for help on some sort of wall-screen. If you go for the first one's gun, you might be noticed. Or you could look elsewhere with less risk. What are you doing?"

BAD STUFF: Scott's character Taltos has +2 points of Bad Stuff. Same situation, same question. The gamemaster tells Scott "You see a security officer lying on the ground, with his sidearm in his hand, some sort of energy pistol. The corridor is empty, other than smoke, sparks, and flashing lights. What are you doing?" Scott answers that he's grabbing the gun. The gamemaster says "Just before you grab it, you realize that the pistol has some sort of palm print failsafe, likely discharging its power pack, sounding an alarm, or exploding when an unauthorized user handles it. Maybe all three! What are you doing?"

Stuff is also a way of announcing to the world the sort of person a player character is. As such, the gamemaster should always remember that immediate and first impressions will be influenced by player character's quantity and type of Stuff. Here are some examples:

GOOD STUFF: Margaret's character Natasha has +3 points of Good Stuff. She opens an unknown Door from the Grand Stair and finds herself in the antechamber of a majestic castle. The

gamemaster determines that her arrival attracts the attention of two guards on patrol. They see her, assume she belongs there, and politely ask if she needs any assistance, or directions to the banquet being held in the throne room.

ZERO STUFF: Morgan's character Moreltheus has Zero Stuff. He opens the same door mentioned in the example above. In this case, the same two guards see him and realize that they don't know him. One of them asks Moreltheus in a cautious tone what he is doing there, while the other guard shifts his halberd into position where he is ready to fight if need be.

BAD STUFF: Sarah's character Cordelia has +7 points of Bad Stuff. Same situation above. The two guards round the corner, see her, and immediately assume she is up to no good. One of them points the blade atop his halberd at her and advances, trying to pin her into a corner, while the other shouts "Hold, intruder!" and reaches for the small brass horn hung around his neck, clearly to summon others.

Finally, Stuff can be used as a quick determiner of outcome for something that might take too long to resolve, such as an incidental conflict where nothing serious is at stake, or when the characters' relevant Attribute rank is so high as to invite little challenge. For example, here's how a situation involving a bit of mass combat against a mob of lesser foes might play out, assuming the same Warfare and Endurance ranks, with only Stuff being different:

GOOD STUFF: Sarah's character Cordelia is 3rd rank in Warfare and in this example, has Good Stuff. She must fight her way through a saloon full of Average-ranked soldiers bent on killing her. Not wanting to go through the tedious description of each combat when it is certain she will prevail, the gamemaster simply summarizes the conflict as having a positive outcome: "After a breathtaking few minutes of furious sword-play and pursuit, you are surrounded by corpses strewn across the floor. You catch yourself in the huge mirror running along the wall, and notice only a single spatter of blood, almost a beauty mark, high on your cheek. There's a fairly clean-looking towel on the bar you could use to wipe it off."

ZERO STUFF: Assuming that Cordelia is instead a Zero Stuff character, the gamemaster announces the following: "You're not sure you got all of them, and a few of them are groaning with pain, chests still rising and falling. Otherwise, you got away with only a few scratches that should be easy to conceal. Your

gown, though, is going to need a serious cleaning to get all the blood out."

BAD STUFF: In the case of Cordelia as a Bad Stuff character, the gamemaster provides the outcome as follows: "You were fast and merciless, but a few of them got away. You can hear screams from the floor above, and from outside. The floor is slick with blood and you look like you took a shower in it. Your gown is torn and one sleeve has been ripped away. That saber you borrowed is broken half-way down the blade, and blood is running into your eye from a ricochet that caught you across the forehead. You look around, expecting more of them to come down the stairs when you hear the town's plaza bell ringing, clearly an alarm. What are you doing?"

Based on these examples, it should be obvious that Stuff is the most important Attribute.



Chapter Twelve: Creating Adventures

Though an enormous part of role-playing is in the focus on characters, ultimately the characters must encounter some sort of challenge, or experience events that will force them to act. A perfectly wonderful session could be had where all of the players sit around and role-play their characters at a dinner party or some social event, but for the most part the real thrill of games is the challenge of playing in adventures, which are at their heart interactive stories.

When the gamemaster begins planning a game session, it is important to think of the game in terms of a story, utilizing classic dramatic elements to set the framework for the players to explore. Not all of the classic dramatic elements apply directly to role-playing games, where tone and action can vary with player independence, but they are useful to keep in mind when planning. They are not all required, and do not work exactly like their literary counterparts, but they are excellent reference points for devising adventures, whether long or short.

The classic elements of a story most useful for a role-playing game are, in order: *Introduction, Conflict, Climax, Complication, and Resolution*. Each is described below in a step-by-step fashion for gamemasters to use while designing adventures and while running them.

An important point to make is that not every adventure must (or will) conform to this structure, and that every gamemaster should design according to personal tastes and the expectations of the group. It is not a rigid, inflexible framework, but is presented instead as a starting point and reference, something to refer to, build from, adapt, or to ignore entirely if desired.

Step One: Introduction

Here is where the world is introduced and the player characters' places within it established. For a long-term campaign, this only needs to be done at the beginning or after there has been a massive shift in the status quo. It is assumed that the setting will be the Grand Stair and a number of Gossamer worlds significant to the player characters. The player characters' own roles in the overall power structure can be introduced or determined at this time.

The establishment of the setting can be done through simple verbal introductory scenes, allowing the players to describe their characters' worlds or actions when the campaign starts. If there are important nonplayer characters or ongoing world elements to introduce, this is a good time to bring them up, though it is important to not get bogged down overmuch by too much exposition at this point.

In the beginning, the player characters may not even be together, or may be united in place but not sharing any similar goal, but the uttermost point of the Introduction is to set the

initial status quo... a status quo that soon will be threatened by Conflict.

Step Two: Conflict

Here the gamemaster gets to bring in the thing that will shake up the status quo, introducing the major threat or destabilizing agent. In short, the element of conflict (physical, psychological, and/or moral) must now emerge into the setting. The initial drama happens here, a signature event that pushes the rest of the adventure into motion. The player characters need to become aware of something that threatens their existence, their way of life, or at the very least will cause harm to something they care about. This section can also be termed the "call to action," where the player characters are summoned directly or indirectly to confront the source of the conflict.

To determine what represents a proper conflict, the gamemaster should try to answer the following questions:

- What, if anything, unites the player characters?
- What do they think is happening?
- What is actually happening?
- What/who is challenging the status quo?
- Why is it happening now?
- If this threat has an agenda (and it should!) what does it want to accomplish?
- How does the threat view the player characters?
- What will happen if the player characters do not act?

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow presents one major potential threat in the form of the Dwimmerlaik, the legendary foes of the Gossamer Lords, seeking dominance over the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds. **Threats and Villains** on pages 107-108 contains advice on how to select a proper antagonist (or multiple ones) to oppose the player characters. Additionally, **CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THREATS OF THE GOSSAMER WORLDS** describes many beings of minor and major power and generally hostile intent. Furthermore, some of the Gossamer Lords presented in **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: SOVEREIGNS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW** are not exactly on the friendly side. Any of these beings, alone or in concert with others, may be rich sources of conflict, acting at cross purposes to the player characters.

Once the gamemaster has determined the identity of the foe or the source of the threat(s), and decided what goal the player characters must oppose, it is time to move to the Climax.

Step Three: Climax

The Climax is a point where things either get better or worse for the characters. Usually worse. This can be represented in gameplay by the villain gaining an upper hand, or the outcome

of some conflict escalating to the point where it does not seem winnable. It may be the scale of the villain's plans becomes known, or the player characters suffer some major setback. Another way of thinking of the Climax is that it is the turning point, where everyone's fates seem to be in contradiction to where they were before the conflict was introduced.

For a fairly straightforward short adventure, the Climax might serve as the end of the session, with all of the conflict wrapped up conveniently at this point, any larger conflict left unresolved and assumed to be the gist of future adventures.

Though the notion of a dramatic climax might seem to contradict the notion of gameplay, where outcomes are decided by player agency, the dramatic climax can even be present in a player character victory. In cases like these, the villain may escape, or the heroes may realize that they have won a small engagement with the larger conflict looming over them still.

After the Climax, things should get more difficult, which is where the Complication is introduced.

Step Four: Complication

The Complication is the stretch of the story where the player characters and the forces representing the villain are brought into conflict with one another. This may be a single battle, a prolonged engagement of back-and-forth tactical actions, or a sense of one-upmanship where things escalate. In literary terms, this section is known as "falling action," the period where plans unfold, steps towards goals become more pronounced, and often ending in suspense.

This section can be as long or as short as the gamemaster wishes, playing out over several minutes of narration, or running its course over session after session of gameplay. Think of this as a cat-and-mouse sequence, where minor victories are won or lost, and tables can turn. This can also be a sequence where the villains become more powerful (gaining allies or making use of some advantage gained earlier in the Climax), or where the nature of the threat becomes more complicated or unstoppable than was previously thought.

This sequence can (and should) end in uncertainty, moving directly into the Resolution of the story.

Step Five: Resolution

The Resolution is where things finally come down to a head, with the outcome of the Conflict introduced earlier. Winners and losers are decided, and the best-laid-plans come to fruition... or fail miserably. Ultimately, the resolution is where the new status quo will be decided, whether it is one favorable to the player characters, or one they have sought to avoid. In drama, this section is called the *dénouement*, where the tensions that created the Conflict, the Climax, and the Complication are released.

The resolution for an adventure or campaign should always be dramatic, and whenever possible, personal. The player characters should act directly against their foes, and the conflict emphasized through their actions and against an appropriate and dramatic background. This is where the gamemaster must align the story, creating one or more situations that will put the player characters to the test, pitting their Attributes, powers, allies, and even their personalities against the forces that seek to have sway over them.

This is the portion of the adventure where all of the gamemaster's tricks come into play, and the sequence that can feel the most oppositional, as the gamemaster represents all of the forces the player characters must struggle to defeat. Player characters can often be cautious, seeking allies to do their fighting for them, trying to insulate themselves from direct conflict, but here the gamemaster must be merciless in breaking through these protective barriers and pitting the player characters face-to-face against their enemies.

As noted in **Threats and Villains** on page 107 it is best for the villain/threat to be personified in a fashion the player characters can relate to. Whether the player characters win or lose, they need a face to put to their opponent, whether as the focus for plans of vengeance... or to take personal satisfaction in their victory.

Once the resolution is decided, the gamemaster should allow the players some leeway in determining how their player characters were affected by the conflict, with the nature of Stuff playing a strong part in the tone of the outcomes. A player character with Good Stuff may end up winning accolades, assuming the brunt of thanks for a victory, while a player character with Bad Stuff may still come up short, with other nonplayer characters still suspicious of their actions. Even in defeat, a Good Stuff character may find themselves relatively unscathed, with allies emerging in support and plans of vengeance seeming very achievable, while a Bad Stuff character's defeat will sting that much more, ending in potential humiliation, loss of liberty, and pain.

The gamemaster may wish to adjust the severity and nature of any resolution by the type of adventure. Keep the long-term goal in mind: better to put player characters at a serious and yet dramatic disadvantage then to kill them outright. A one-shot short adventure could potentially end up with all of the player characters losing their lives spectacularly in one final battle, going out in a blaze of glory, but that sort of outcome would slam the door shut on chances for a continued campaign. As noted in the section on gamemaster advice, flexibility is important... always give the players something to think about, something to scheme around and try to overcome. Better to end with a cliffhanger than a bloodbath.

Conflict

The major element any adventure story requires (whether a short adventure or a long campaign) is a sense of conflict. What is the force preventing the player characters from simply achieving their goals? If there is no conflict, there is no story... just an anecdote or a set of wish-fulfillment fantasies.

At their heart, all of the rules in *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* are designed both to promote conflict and to address resolution of that conflict. From the Attribute Auction (where players are pitted against one another), to the Attribute ranking system (where a clear hierarchy is established of who is better than who), to the powers (which either automatically affect Gossamer stuff without conflict, or serve as a means of pitting one Attribute against another opposed Attribute).

Furthermore, the universal forces of the Eidolon and the Umbra, by their very nature, are in conflict. So it should come as no surprise that adventure design should always, without fail, introduce or encourage some sort of conflict and allow the players to confront and resolve it.

Just as three of the Attributes—Psyche, Strength, and Warfare—have their own specific types of conflict (with Endurance being the battery to fuel them or be the arbiter for ties), adventure stories should have three types of story conflict: **Physical**, **Psychological**, and **Moral**.

Physical Conflict. Even though the Attributes seem to address different aspects of a character, from force of will (Psyche), raw prowess (Strength), combat ability (Warfare), and fortitude (Endurance), each of them is primarily used to resolve this first type of conflict. Unarmed, armed, and psychic combat are all ultimately concerned with the survival of the player character's self, and therefore it is important to present conflicts in any adventure that challenge as many of these as possible. Players have invested in Attributes, powers, and artifacts and creatures, and they will want to have those challenged, putting them to the test. When constructing any adventure, the gamemaster should include some elements of challenge for as many of the Attributes as possible. These will be easy enough to introduce, and most of the time conflicts will either be Psyche- or Warfare-based, but a conflict resolved by Strength can be a refreshing, and unexpected, change of pace.

Psychological Conflict. Psychological conflict can come in two forms: from the players amongst one another (though it should ideally be minor, unless the game experience turns into an outright player-versus-player bloodbath), or it can come from the clash of nonplayer characters opposed to the player characters. Psychological conflict is primarily a result of adventure design, with the selection of the villain and the villain's agenda. A conflict should be personal, presenting a chance for a clash of personalities, as well as a physical response. For this reason it is best to personalize the villain, making them a sentient entity with an actual personality versus being some inexplicable phenomena or something alien that the player characters cannot understand or communicate with. Players have also spent points to buy Allies, ranging from Gossamer world folk, mentors, groups, Gossamer Lords, or even Dwimmerlaik. The gamemaster should consider each of these a potential conduit to introduce some psychological conflict, whether directly from the ally, or from some force affecting that ally.

Moral Conflict. Finally, there is the moral conflict. This is the highest and most ephemeral of the means of conflict, but is

often adds emotional resonance to any other conflict. A moral conflict can be as simple as good versus evil, unfettered ambition versus lawful restraint, selfishness versus service to others, or can be as complex as an act that seems horrific but will ultimately better the world. Villains should, by their nature, present a moral conflict, and the more interesting villains are those who are not simply cackling evildoers but instead have a goal that would be sympathetic to the player characters under different circumstances. Maybe the villain has the noblest of intentions, but to succeed it will cause untold suffering in the short term, killing millions to save billions. Do the player characters share that goal, or do they think the cost is too high and oppose the villain? Is a compromise possible? Moral conflicts that cause the player characters to experience inner turmoil, sympathizing with a villain's actions but still acting against them, are the best sorts of conflict.

Not all of these types of conflict are necessary in every adventure or every plot, but each provides such a rich opportunity for depth of role-playing that each should be included whenever possible. Adventures will be the richer for them, more memorable, and more involving, the sorts of stories players look forward to telling friends about for years to come, returning session after session for continued adventure.

Plots and Subplots

One useful option when coming up with plots is to think of the campaign as similar to a television drama series, shows that carry a recurring plot line or grand theme throughout the entire season, or even continues that plot line over multiple seasons. There are three different levels of plot a gamemaster can utilize in game sessions, each with their own scale and purpose:

Metaplot. The word “meta” has many meanings, but in this case, it refers to the meaning of “beyond” or “above.” The metaplot is the story aspect that sits above everything, linking all of the significant elements in the campaign. This overrides everything, and may not be apparent at first, and only comes into view after the player characters have been immersed in it for a while. Not every game needs a metaplot, but the longer a campaign goes, the more a metaplot helps provide structure between individual adventures. The metaplot is not usually something the player characters can address directly, but their actions in the main plot (below) can affect it dramatically.

For example, the gamemaster could decide to make a universe-changing campaign that ends in the Doors and the Grand Stair becoming known to all of the denizens in the Gossamer Worlds, linking these together freely and openly, allowing anyone at all to travel them. A quick summary of metaplot in this instance is “The Opening of the Doors.”

Main Plot. The main plot drives the main story. This is the plot described in the five-step structure presented earlier, where specific events occur, where the player characters have concrete

goals to achieve, and is a specific sense of what will happen if the player characters fail in their tasks. Sometimes in dramatic terms, this is referred to as the “A” plot, the primary plot that receives the most attention. In a television drama, the A plot will be the one that takes up the most of the episode, and can even persist over several or many episodes.

For example, expanding the adventure “The Opening of the Doors” described above, the gamemaster decides that the main plot is going to be two-fold: the return of the Dwimmerlaik in the form of an invasion aimed at wresting away the Gossamer Lords’ control over the Grand Stair, coinciding with a scheme hatched by one of the Gossamer Lords to “open source” the Grand Stair and allow everyone in the Gossamer worlds to use the Grand Stair, opening the Doors once and for all as a means of ending the constant struggle for supremacy and control. The specifics of the first plot involves the invading army and many sorties by the Dwimmerlaik, including betrayal from within the Gossamer Lords, and the second plot involves a quest into the heart of the Labyrinth to seek the nature of the Grand Stair and change it forever.

Subplot. The subplot is usually a more personal plot, involving a specific character’s goals, or resolving some minor mystery, usually with lesser stakes or an easier-to-resolve conclusion. Subplots run alongside main plots, and an adventure or campaign can have multiple subplots. In television terms, a subplot is described as the “B” plot, and if there are multiple subplots, the next is the “C” plot. Subplots can be incredibly useful to create a rich and interesting world, where not everything is tied into the monolithic metaplot or the major main plot, but at the same time, too many subplots can become overwhelming. Subplots are also best when they are derived from player character goals. Subplots can be mysteries, romances, tales of revenge, self-discovery, misunderstandings, or curious puzzles. They can also be hints at a main plot later to come. Sometimes if the main plot is resolved, a subplot can rise to prominence and become a new main plot, or a subplot can be the equivalent of a bread-crumbs trail leading the player characters into the main plot. Another use for subplots is as contrasts, to illuminate or enlighten some aspect of the metaplot or the main plot.

For example, the “Opening of the Doors” metaplot contains a main plot involving a Dwimmerlaik invasion and opening the Grand Stair across all the Gossamer worlds. The gamemaster looks at the player character backgrounds and decides that one of the subplots will be the mystery of a Key one of the player characters received as a child (Whose was it? What Door does it open?), while another subplot will be one of the Gossamer Lords grooming one of the player characters to take over her Domain, with the player character unaware that the Gossamer Lord is his or her mother. Another subplot might be trying to discover a missing Gossamer Lord, which turns out to be the very Gossamer Lord planning to open all the Doors forever.

Together, all three levels of plot—metaplot, main plot, and subplot—can work together to create adventures and campaigns that are gripping, complex, and involving to all of the player characters. The metaplot gives a coherent direction to the overall campaign and the individual adventures within it, the main plot drives the action within each session and from session to session, and the subplots create variety and allow player characters to act on their own initiative in a more direct fashion, allowing also for smaller resolutions that can give a sense of accomplishment though the overall plots are yet to be resolved. In some cases, more than one plot (any type) may be resolved simultaneously, or simply segue immediately into a new plot of equal or lesser significance.

Adventure Themes

After character creation, it should be readily apparent that the player characters are powerful... immensely so. Though their abilities might pale in comparison to the more experienced nonplayer characters described later in this book, individually player characters are formidable forces with incredible capabilities, and when assembled into a group, they are a force to be reckoned with. The Gossamer worlds are full of danger, but the player characters as a group represent a serious power bloc, with all of the ingenuity the players bring to the table.

Because of this, campaign goals should never be run-of-the-mill. There are a few major campaign goals that the gamemaster can always use, classic themes that almost always work to base an adventure on. Following are some reliable concepts to get the gamemaster started:

Personal Baggage. The gamemaster should look at the player characters’ backgrounds and goals and determine what aspects are ripe for exploitation. Anything can be brought into play here, from family members, old rivalries, connections to their Allies, and even residents of their personal Domains, or prior owners of their artifacts or creatures. Furthermore, the nonplayer characters the gamemaster introduces may be (or become) aware of one another, and they will almost inevitably have goals that are in conflict with each other. The more the merrier, in this case, when it comes to nonplayer characters the player characters can draw on for aid or pit against one another. Player characters may even find themselves as pawns in between nonplayer characters they are all friendly with, a rich source of potential drama when goals are conflicted and loyalties become crossed.

Getting Ahead. If it is not apparent from the Attribute Ladder, the universe of *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* has a pecking order, an established and system-based means of determining who is better than who. The Gossamer Lords have held power for centuries on the Grand Stair, claiming significant Domains and exerting their authority across the Gossamer worlds. Though the scattered and infinite nature of the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds means it is theoretically possible to travel the Grand Stair without ever becoming involved in the power struggles of the Gossamer Lords, it is highly unlikely that player characters will

want to simply stay out of the limelight and meekly accept roles of relative insignificance. Player characters should want to improve their lot in life, their Attributes, expanding their power and their influence, and that alone presents a source of conflict, pitting them against those who would rather see them relegated to the sidelines, or would use them without allowing them to grow and advance themselves.

The Great Unknown. The infinite nature of the Grand Stair allows for a wealth of game play through simply encountering the unknown, introducing new power factions, new worlds to explore, and potential new aspects of the Grand Stair, the Eidolon, the Umbra, and even Gossamer worlds that defy description, places of primal power and interest that can fuel gameplay for dozens of sessions. Player characters can find themselves immersed in mysteries, unexplained phenomena or strange events that merit investigation. Rather than a direct threat or a personal call to action, player characters of a more curious nature could be drawn into adventure by virtue of simply wanting to know what is going on. The Labyrinth, for example, at the heart of the Grand Stair, is a mysterious and unknowable place, with legends surrounding it. The nature and origin of the Grand Stair is an epic unexplained mystery. The Eidolon and the Umbra, though they seem to be mere universal principles, occasionally exert their influence in ways that hint at a more active nature, and player characters curious to explore that avenue may find themselves immersed (like it or not) into an adventure of primal importance.

Objects of Desire. Everyone wants something. Generally, the more powerful the person, the more powerful the desire for a certain thing. In an infinite universe, it can be easy to content oneself with material comforts, or valuables, but unless that item is “real” (has points spent to build it), it is merely a thing of Gossamer, and can be taken, copied, broken, or changed by others. Any Gossamer Lord of note will have one or more signature items, artifacts or creatures that are a part of their personal portfolio. If the gamemaster is going to introduce such an item, it is important to both make it valuable, not worrying about the price of the item, and to consider exactly what will happen should a player character actually get hold of the item. The value of an item does not always have to be related to its power, either. For some examples, the Maltese Falcon was an immensely valuable statue with no other properties, while Excalibur was a potent magical blade as well as signifying the bearer’s right to rule Britain. For variety, the object of desire could be a place, a unique type of power, or even a being of some sort. While such a thing represents a wonderful carrot to dangle in front of a player character, motivating them to act to acquire it, even afterwards it is a gift that keeps giving. An invaluable item is a hot potato stuffed with drama: everyone desiring the item will now shift their attention to the player character.

Blowing It All Up. When all else fails, the gamemaster should contrive to blow the universe up with a threat that cannot be ignored and will not resolve itself. This does not necessarily mean some huge explosion or gigantic black hole threatening to eat all of the Gossamer worlds, but it should be something of a

magnitude that renders everything into ruin, changing the status quo for the worse in a permanent fashion. If the gamemaster is having a hard time trying to imagine why the player characters would work together, threatening everything is a sure-fire way to get them on the same page, at least at the beginning of the adventure. It may even be enough to keep them working on the same side. In the case of a universal threat, the only choice is “do something” or “do nothing,” the latter of which makes for a pretty dull adventure. Between the Dwimmerlaik’s plan of universal subjugation, the eternal battle between the Eidolon and the Umbra, and the powerful entities described in **CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THREATS OF THE GOSSAMER WORLDS**, there should be plenty of source for grand plans to do damage on a universal scale.

There can be other themes, and this list is by no means exhaustive, but it should provide the gamemaster with a starting point. Obviously, many of these have at their center some sort of conflict, and inevitably the best sorts of conflict involve a threat, addressed immediately below in **Threats and Villains**.

Threats and Villains

Unless the goal is a game solely about role-playing and exploration, the adventure will almost inevitably need some sort of threat, or villain, to add an element of conflict and to drive the narrative in a way that opposes the player characters. As noted in **Creating Adventures** above, conflict is a necessary part of dramatic storytelling, and something or someone needs to create that conflict. The setting of *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* allows for a pretty-much-infinite array of threats or villains, though the gamemaster is advised to pick a villain (or combination of villains) capable of posing a significant threat to the player characters and to the status quo.

Furthermore, it is not enough that the player characters feel that they *must* defeat or thwart the villain or villains. They must *want* to do so, and that means it needs to be personal. For this reason, it is almost always best to have at least a substantial portion of the threat be sentient beings rather than cosmic forces or unfeeling multitudes of foes. While someone can feel anger at the devastation caused by an earthquake, for example, it is a stretch to hate seismic activity in particular. Drama comes from heightened emotions, and those emotions need a vessel players can fill with their emotion.

Here are some suggestions for picking suitable and challenging villains:

Motive. Picking a villain can be like finding a suspect in a criminal investigation. It is not enough that the subject be capable and have opportunity for the crime... did the suspect have the motive to commit the crime? For an adventure, the gamemaster should decide what the villain is trying to accomplish and why. This should be both achievable and understandable, and directly opposed to the motivations of the player characters. A villain with a quixotic or impossible goal is more a nuisance than an actual threat. If the villain conspires to take over the Grand Stair and rule the Gossamer worlds, then there should be a reason why.

One might ask “*If the universe is infinite, why can’t everyone get along, live and let live?*” The villain needs to reject that notion, possessing a motivation that is coherent and easy to grasp, once it is known. The Eidolon and the Umbra are in opposition to one another, existing at an unsteady balance. Maybe those allied with one side want to increase their power by weakening the other? This is a grand goal, one that might reshape the entire universe, and something an entire campaign could be structured around, with the player characters acting as active agents on one side or the other, or trying to avert the conflict entirely.

Plan. The villain needs a plan of attack, preferably something involving several stages. This ties into the five-act structure described previously. The villain’s entire plan cannot be a single do-or-die act, without warning, otherwise there is no real story there. Instead, whatever the villain is planning should take time, and require a variety of lesser goals that must be accomplished, in order to give the player characters something to accomplish over a period of time. For example, unseating a king can be as direct as a simple assassination, but taking over a kingdom requires strategy, seizing control of resources, forging new alliances, defeating those still holding power in the existing power structure, and defending oneself against reprisals and revenge. It can also mean holding onto that throne against any who would claim it once the existing monarch is gone, enemies who may have been held in check for reasons that will become apparent when the monarch is disposed of. An adventure should have multiple opportunities for the player characters to challenge the villain’s plan, and as the plan unfolds, its ultimate goal should become even more apparent.

Capability. This can be power, conventional and unconventional, familiar and strange. *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* has many powers players and nonplayer characters can utilize, and the gamemaster is encouraged to use ones such as Channeling (used exclusively by the Dwimmerlaik, as explained in **CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE DWIMMERLAIK**), to devise improved or expanded versions of existing powers, or to come up with new powers altogether that will challenge the player characters. If the villain does not have the ability to seriously threaten the player characters, then the game will not seem much of a challenge. This can also be represented with Attributes, items, and even Domains. When choosing a villain, the gamemaster should assign Attribute ranks high enough to be challenging (but not out-of-scale overwhelming) to the player characters’ own ranks. If a creature is built using the artifact and creatures rules, the gamemaster has an unlimited budget. Things from the Gossamer worlds can be just as deadly as something that has had points spent on it, but if the gamemaster desires a challenge that can move between the worlds and maintain its capabilities, spend the points with enthusiasm. However, while it is rarely a good idea that adventures end with the player characters facing humiliating defeat at an unbeatable foe, the forces they oppose should be tough enough to make things dramatic.

Resources. Villains need allies, and just as with power, these allies should be conventional and unconventional, familiar and strange. The Gossamer worlds are full of normal beings who can

make up the rank and file of any army, but player characters will likely get bored battling endless hordes of generic, normal people. The gamemaster should mix it up, giving villains interesting and powerful henchmen, unusual and distinctive servitors, and powerful allies they are even hesitant to use. A distinctive lineup of foes lets the gamemaster give the players incremental victories as they defeat key players along the way to the main villain, but also helps keep things from being one-track. A spectrum of villains adds variety. Maybe a villain’s henchman is highly sympathetic, and can be turned into an ally? Resources can also be physical things, like sites of power, or magic artifacts. Remember, though, that if the villains are defeated, it is entirely possible that the player characters may wish to possess these resources for themselves as spoils. Do not rule it out arbitrarily, but consider the implications if it happens... and it will.

Ambition. Scale of ambition is the final, and most important, element to assign to a villain. It is not enough to know what the villain wants to do, how they will go about it, and what resources they have to bear. The fundamental question that should be asked is how far they will go to accomplish what they desire. This is often the major issue that separates a hero from a villain. A heroic character may balk at injuring innocents, or breaking the law, but the villain is freed from such constraints, even though their goal may be sympathetic. Ultimately, though, the villain needs to have boundless ambition, an uttermost will to do anything to further their goal, and be willing to make whatever sacrifice to achieve victory. A villain with that kind of ambition is both memorable and deadly, and the player characters will inevitably rise to meet the challenge the villain represents.

The Dwimmerlaik (presented in **CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE DWIMMERLAIK**) are presented as a fundamental threat to the status quo that the Gossamer Lords enjoy. Furthermore, **CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THREATS OF THE GOSSAMER WORLDS** contains a variety of creatures that could individually be challenging foes, or could be utilized alongside other enemies. Lastly, the Gossamer Lords themselves are nowhere near a united front, and as their descriptions suggest, it would not be a stretch for some to work openly or secretly against the player characters in a bid to rule the Grand Stair and seize control over the Gossamer worlds. These are just a hint of the potential enemies out there in the Gossamer worlds, from long-slumbering gods to emergent foes the likes of which have yet to be encountered.

Gamemasters should revel in the chance to create unexpected and original enemies, drawn from imagination or even inspired by beings from other sources, such as literature, other games, or films. However, using a villain from another source outright is not advised, as they inevitably come with a set of preconceptions that the players may expect or even exploit, and it may end up difficult for the gamemaster to make a “borrowed” villain suitably challenging if it is loaded down with too much metaphorical baggage. While theft is flattery, it is good to personalize a villain’s inspirations, making him or her distinct and remarkable.

Player Character Hooks

An important question for the gamemaster is *"How will the player characters become involved in the adventure and why will they be compelled to see it through?"* The most direct answer to this is the Hook (like a fishing hook), an element of the story that connects (hooks) the player character to the events of the adventure. In this metaphor, the gamemaster is the fisherman, the plot is the boat, and the player characters are the fish that must be lured, caught, and reeled in.

Hooks can be personal, such as having the threat be from some aspect of one or more of the player characters' personal histories, or having the villain be related to or in some way directly connected to the player characters.

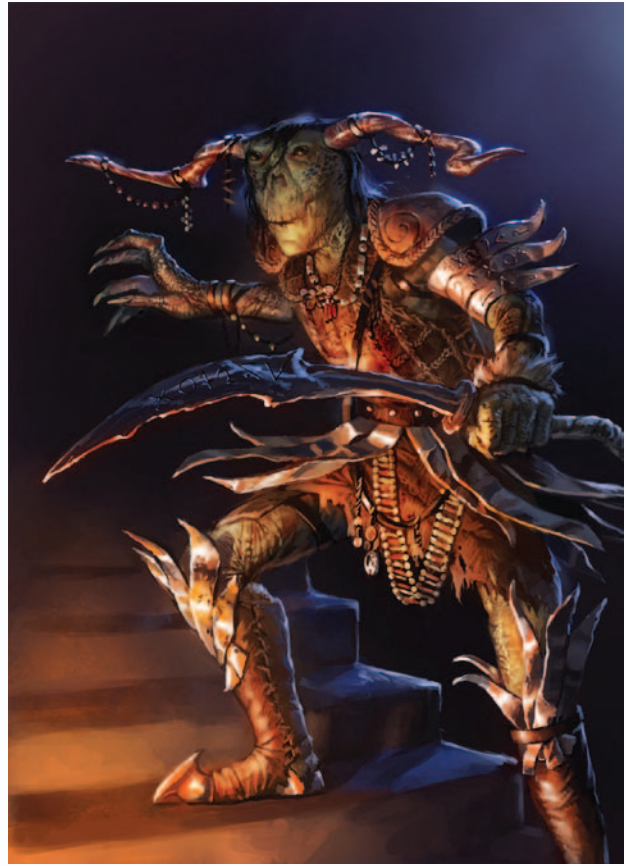
For example, the gamemaster might reveal that Countess Aldrette, the sorceress who has betrayed the Gossamer Lords to the Dwimmerlaik, is the older sister to Margaret's character Natasha, thought kidnapped when Natasha was a child. Instead, Aldrette had discovered the Grand Stair and has been exploring its reaches for more than a decade. She was captured by the Dwimmerlaik and turned into an ally, her actions paving the way towards their return. Natasha now feels a sense of familial responsibility towards Aldrette and a personal connection.

Hooks can also be situational, such as having one or more of the player characters on hand when the initial conflict is introduced, usually in a fashion that threatens their immediate well-being and causes them to seek action in retribution.

For example, the player characters are dining with Cal in a pleasant terrace cafe in a city resembling a high-tech Babylon, built on a sky island. As desserts and coffee arrive, Cal mentions that he has noticed something unusual as of late. Suddenly, the door to the kitchen flies open and a group of strange creatures begin to pour forth, resembling not so much real beings such as tears in reality in the shape of humanoids. The wall of the Grand Stair is clearly visible through the entry behind them. "Shade Wraiths!" mutters Cal, a compact pistol appearing in his hand. "So soon..." The gamemaster asks "What are you doing?"

The general hook is one where everything is threatened and where—by merely existing—the player characters are also threatened. This is often a strong hook for a campaign, a means of putting everything on the table for the greatest of stakes.

For example, Vala—leader of the Gossamer Lords—summons the player characters to the grand hall in Shatterlight, her estate. They arrive and notice that all of the other Gossamer Lords are also in attendance, tense and uncertain. Vala strides into the room, throwing onto the table a horrible mass of flesh. The player characters see long ridged horns, gray skin, and dark, fathomless eyes... realizing that this is the severed head of what can only be a Dwimmerlaik. Vala waits for the commotion to die



Dwimmerlaiks are common adversaries found amongst Gossamer worlds, when the adversary isn't another Lord of Gossamer and Shadow.

down, and announces with a clear, ringing voice: "The enemy has returned, and war is upon us. I call on your alliance... else all is lost."

While world-threatening plots are relatively easy to thrust upon player characters and fill the dramatic need for scale and urgency, they inevitably feel forced and rely on an intrinsic altruism, trusting that the player characters will both recognize that the threat is a valid one to their existence, and that allying for cooperative action is the best response. Players may rebel at those assumptions, and gamemasters may end up trying to force, or railroad, decisions onto player characters in these situations.

One method of generating hooks that are guaranteed to work and involve the player characters is to let the players themselves come up with them. In these cases, the gamemaster merely needs to set the stage and ask questions, letting the players supply their own introductions and hooks. In these cases, the gamemaster should be willing to improvise with the player characters, giving them some leeway and incorporating elements of the player-supplied hooks into the story.

For example, the gamemaster says to the player characters, "We begin in the Labyrinth, a section of the hidden deeps of the Grand Stair, in a curious section called the Great Transept. There

is a trick to getting to this place, and only experts in the Grand Stair or those who are allied with Lucien, are aware of this place. You arrive at roughly the same time, and notice a great big obvious smear of blood on the floor and the lower half of a wall, with handprints next to it as if a gravely-injured person were crawling and using the wall for support. There is no body, though. You notice one another. What has brought you here?"

Whichever method is utilized, hooks are a near-necessity for involving player characters in a meaningful, interesting fashion, and their use cannot be recommended highly enough.

Designing Games of Different Lengths

Role-playing games can take years to entirely play through, with campaigns that evolve, end-to-end or overlapping story arcs, incredible long-term character development, and a labyrinthine web of subplots and ongoing narrative threads that take dozens of sessions to play out. Or they can be one-shot affairs, only a few hours long. Many games fall somewhere between these two extremes.

That's quite a range, and there are some different techniques for designing games to suit both of those time frames. A subtle plot with foreshadowing and a gradual build is amazing to see play out over months, if not years, of game time, but for a one-shot that might be incredibly dull. Similarly, the kind of rapid ramp-up and dramatic action required of a short-term game can be wearying if played out over and over again, over the course of years.

This section presents advice on how to plot games, from the shortest to the longest.

Designing Short Adventures

Short adventures are those that can reasonably be expected to finish in one or two sessions, and usually are based around a single threat that must be countered or a single big dramatic event to be averted. These can be at a game convention (at conventions these are often called "tournament games"), a local gaming store, or a one-shot where the group of players wants to try out a new game and does not want to invest in a longer campaign.

Ultimately, the short adventure is really a taste of the setting (or the system), and is not that useful for deep background, subtle character evolution, or convoluted or complex plotting. These can be done, but it is fairly difficult and it's not the ideal time-frame to do those. Think of the one-shot or short adventure as the equivalent of a movie, with a single major plot thread and some minor plots to either emphasize or counter the main plot.

Player character cooperation is often assumed, though some short adventures can subvert that by making the player characters the threat themselves, and pitting them against one another. However, the gamemaster does not need to give away the plot, but should make it abundantly clear in the course of play whether player character cooperation is necessary towards resolution of the plot. While it can be fun to experience a group of player

characters turn on each other and destroy themselves with skullduggery and betrayal, it is less fun for players who wanted to have a rollicking good adventure and a clear happy ending. If the point of the game is backstabbing and competition between player characters, the gamemaster should make that clear through the plot and nonplayer character dialogue.

The gamemaster should look at the player characters involved and make certain that each of them has something to contribute to the adventure's resolution, whether it be some aspect of their background, an Attribute or power, an artifact or creature, or knowledge that only they possess. If this is not the case, the gamemaster should adjust the plot to make it so. If the player does not recognize what they are supposed to contribute, the gamemaster should either coax it out of them or subtly suggest it through nonplayer character dialogue or events in the session itself.

Other pieces of gamemaster advice for fun and fair single-session games are as follows:

- Always be equally fair to everyone, and pay attention equally to everyone. Scrupulously so. In the course of a campaign it's easy to adjust over the course of several sessions, so that a player who gets shorted attention in one session might get more in the next, but in a short adventure the gamemaster has one chance to treat everyone fairly, at the risk of alienating or antagonizing the players.
- Whenever possible, suggest or emphasize role-playing. Diceless role-playing is uniquely designed to focus on role-playing as the primary means of character expression, and it works best when strong personalities are brought together, whether cooperatively or in conflict. The gamemaster should look at every potential scene and try to determine how to inject the chance for dramatic role-playing into it.
- The resolution of a short adventure should not hinge on a single specific action to determine success or failure. If it does, the gamemaster should make sure that that specific action is a natural evolution of the story, in-character for the player characters, and more-or-less explicit through any nonplayer character dialogue. As noted earlier, approach player solutions with a thought to "what if?" rather than an answer of "no."
- One good method to design an enjoyable short adventure is for the gamemaster to think of at least two solutions for every problem presented, and be open to unexpected solutions or unconventional thinking from the player characters. There should always be at least one clear solution, and one last-ditch, incredibly risky "Hail Mary" solution that *just might work* and puts the players on the edge of their seats. A diabolical gamemaster might let the player characters think they've figured out the first method of solving the problem, and then pull the rug out from under them so they must try the second method.

- Always think of the problems presented in a game from the player characters' points of view. Though solutions may be apparent to the gamemaster and potentially to the player, these answers might not be apparent to the *player characters*. A part of role-playing is separating player knowledge from player character knowledge, so what might be blindingly, screamingly obvious to the people at the table could be an utter mystery to the characters they inhabit.
- While a short adventure can be both an exercise in problem solving and a chance for intense role-playing, it can be difficult to blend the two. The gamemaster should make it clear beforehand and through the session what the expectation is, to avoid players getting too immersed in in-character dialogue that they miss the plot, or the subtleties of the interacting getting lost while the players and player characters are in a tactical problem-solving mindset.
- Failure can always be an option for the resolution, but the gamemaster should not make any error fatal unless it is near the end of the adventure, and should make it clear when an ill-advised act or lapse in judgment is clearly going to end in a player character fatality. Better to punish failure with other methods that open dramatic opportunities than simply kill a player character and force the player out of the session early. It's also possible for the adventure to end with a bang, where the problem is not solved and everyone dies, but the players should have had the chance to solve things and felt like the problem was solvable. There are few things in a game less enjoyable than being forced to endure an obvious no-win situation when player agency is removed.

Ultimately, the point is to have fun. This gets repeated over and over again with good cause. The gamemaster bears the majority of the responsibility for making the game an enjoyable one, and there are far too many easily-avoided pitfalls or mistakes that can ruin everyone's play experience. A good short adventure can lead to a good campaign, and even a casual one-shot at a game convention can help recruit regular players.

Player Characters for Single-Session Adventures

Player characters for a short adventure or tournament game need not be developed through the normal character creation process, which can be time-consuming and is best used for longer play experiences. Additionally, players tend to spend points quite differently in Attribute Auctions for one-off adventures versus campaigns, often leading to wildly-unbalanced characters. If there's any communication with the gamemaster and players beforehand, the players can suggest basic personality types, preferred Attributes and powers, or even some artifacts or equipment, and let the gamemaster do the paperwork.

It is recommended to completely disallow player contributions, as collecting them after a single-session adventure has concluded may be difficult or impossible, and the inequity between a character who has elected for contributions versus one who has not is too great a difference for what will be a single effort at a contribution.

The gamemaster may even provide ready-to-use player characters particularly suitable for the intended adventure, with backgrounds tied into the intended plot and possessing information that may be critical to solving the problem the session presents. Alternately, the gamemaster can use some of the nonplayer character Gossamer Lords presented later in this book as player characters, rebalanced point-wise to be equal to one another.

Designing Multi-Session Adventures

Fortunately, many of the principles described for short adventures are equally useful for multi-session adventures, which are adventures specifically intended to take up several or many sessions of play. Though multi-session adventures obviously focus on longer-term goals and usually have more complex plots, with potentially multiple villains, the stakes can be equally as important as they are in short adventures.

The five-step adventure outline is equally of use, though in this case, the events are stretched across sessions of game play rather than hours, with additional complications and more player character-initiated activity encouraged and played out. Player character-initiated activity can include the exploration of the setting, personal subplots, or inter-player activities such as friendly rivalries or diversions. In a short adventure, player initiative is generally given short shrift, as it usually distracts from the singular goal to be resolved, and it may be difficult to treat every player fairly with equal attention and get around to resolving the point of the adventure. In a longer, multi-session adventure, players should be encouraged to initiate subplots or self-driven activities, and the gamemaster should try to involve the players in at least one subplot per player, or subplots that can be shared by more than one player characters.

Each of the steps of a plot should be expanded and allowed to breathe, letting the players and their actions be a more active guide to the pace of the multi-session adventure. This is not to say that it is simply a matter of padding things out, because that would inevitably become boring for the players, who will likely recognize bloated and unnecessary story elements for what they are.

Following are some guidelines about how take each step of the five-step adventure outline presented previously, and expand them for use as a multi-session adventure.

Introduction. For multi-session adventures, it is an excellent idea to give the players some freedom in establishing their player characters and the worlds they inhabit. While a short adventure might begin with the gamemaster asking the player "*What is your character doing?*" this is inevitably a mere scene-setting

before the main plot collides with the player character and the adventure kicks into gear. In a multi-session plot, the gamemaster is encouraged to let introductions play out for a while, to let the players get a feel for their characters, potentially involving other player characters before the call to action is sounded. Similarly, once the player characters become aware of what is happening (the plot), the gamemaster should not be so hasty to light a fire beneath them, but instead increase the pressure slowly. An adage says that to boil a lobster, it's better to put them in cool water and slowly raise the temperature, rather than throwing them outright into a pot of boiling water. For a longer multi-session adventure, the concept is the same. Start with a simmer, then turn up the heat when things get too comfortable.

Conflict. The central conflict of a multi-session adventure does not have to be more significant or have greater stakes than a short adventure, but it does have to be more complex, involving more challenges, potential elements of conspiracy, and should be less obvious. If the nature of the central conflict is something direct, and the player characters immediately understand it, get a sense of the scale, and know what must be done to oppose it, then the gamemaster will be forced to just keep throwing obstacles into the player characters' path, and at a certain point this may become tiresome and feel contrived. Instead, for longer games, the central conflict should have an element of mystery to it, the beginning of a mystery. The gamemaster should consider introducing the initial conflict as a feint (much lesser in scope than the real one) or using a minor precursor conflict as a preview of the real, greater conflict.

Climax. While a short adventure should almost always have a narrative climax, a single point of heightened stakes and forced conflict, a multi-session adventure can have multiple such events, staggered in intensity and interspersed with the adjoining conflict and complication phases. Since the plot should be more complex, with perhaps multiple villains or active forces happening at once, they should not all converge at one point in the middle of the adventure. Instead, the gamemaster should space things out, using these sequences as dramatic highlights over the course of several sessions.

Complication. Unfortunately for players, the more climactic events a multi-session adventure has, the more complications will also arise. Even more so than climaxes, the gamemaster should space complications out so they do not occur in tandem, or simultaneously. A multi-session adventure where things keep getting worse and worse may become dreary and feel hopeless for the player characters, dampening enthusiasm. And not every problem needs a complication or setback. Though a simpler, more direct plot should almost always introduce a complication or some additional challenge, a plot with multiple threads has the luxury of some plots being relatively direct and easy to resolve, while others can be challenging. A good gamemastering trick is to balance a player character setback with a victory, allowing the player characters to resolve one problem even when another problem becomes more complicated.

Resolution. Resolutions to longer adventures are relatively similar to short adventures, though there are usually multiple

problems and conflicts to resolve, issues that may not all be able to be straightened out simultaneously. An invasion from the Dwimmerlaik, for example, may consist of many tactical battles across the Gossamer worlds and inside the Grand Stair, though even if the physical part of the battle is resolved, the player characters may still have to deal with the psychological and the moral conflicts, dealing with the individual leaders of the invasion, and coming to terms with those who aided and abetted them, betraying the Gossamer Lords to the enemy. Another wonderful advantage a more complex, longer-term plot has over a short one is that resolutions do not always have to be so final: while one sort of conflict can be settled satisfactory, another may linger, while another could result in an unexpected conclusion. Despite this, it should be apparent at the end of the multi-session adventure that things have come to a close and that the adventure's goals have been met, whether in success or failure. The adventure should almost inevitably have included a physical conflict met and overcome, and ideally, some sort of psychological conflict fought and won, but it is even more satisfying if the events of the multi-session adventure reached a moral resolution.

Player Characters for Multi-Session Adventures

The character creation system presented on pages 5 through 16 is recommended for multi-session adventures. The only difference is that the gamemaster may wish to put a limit on contributions, such as a 10-point maximum on contributions, or to cut the point values of contributions to 1/5 their normal value. This reduced value better represents the amount of effort expected of the contribution. If the multi-session adventure continues for longer than expected, the gamemaster can adjust the values of the contributions upward, awarding the player characters the points openly or secretly, using the character advancement wish list (page 68).

Designing Campaigns

The longest and most ideal means of playing *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* is the campaign, an ongoing and epic adventure or linked series of short and multi-session adventures. The campaign resembles the five-step adventure outline the least, or it is extremely decompressed and extended, with multiple, ongoing conflicts and climactic events, and regular periods of adventure interspersed with character-driven adventure and exploration.

When designing a campaign, the gamemaster should set forth the same sorts of goals as for a single- or multi-session adventure, though for a campaign these conflicts should be far-off, distant milestones that will take considerable effort and game-time to achieve. While there will be regular smaller challenges to resolve and goals to achieve, the majority of goals in a campaign will be grander, and could run the course of years of time in the campaign (as well as in the real world).

A shape similar to the five-step adventure design may emerge in the end, but it should be much more stretched out, with a

more gradual introduction and a series of peaks and valleys, ups and downs, with multiple conflicts, climaxes, and complications arising and being resolved, before finally settling into a resolution that may eventually even give rise to a new introduction.

Resolutions in a campaign should never be so final as to give players the feeling that there is nothing left to accomplish. A campaign must continue, and thus the gamemaster should intersperse the campaign with short- and long-term conflicts, giving the players the sense that their characters have achieved victories in battles, but the war continues onward.

Player Characters for Campaigns

The system presented in **CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTER CREATION** is recommended for campaigns. In a campaign the players should work through the Attribute Auction, creating characters at the same time, with all of the range of campaign contributions available.

One essential element when creating campaigns is to understand the players' goals and their gameplay styles. For this, an Attribute Auction is almost essential. Though the gamemaster can allow for solo character creation where players merely spend points on Attributes, the competition between players is where the gamemaster will ideally learn what is important to the player. If Psyche emerges as the Attribute with the most vigorous bidding, the gamemaster should make a special note that this means the players desire (or anticipate) a lot of psychic conflict and powers use. If Warfare becomes the hot commodity, then they are ideally preparing for physical conflict.

The gamemaster should not only pay attention to the highest bids on a particular Attribute, but what portion of players bid on it. If an Attribute rockets up in value because of a bidding war between two players alone, then it might not be as important as one where everyone took part.

Similarly, Attributes that do not get bid on, or are even reduced below Paragon level during character creation are ones the gamemaster may wish to use sparingly. For example, placing an obstacle in the midst of an adventure that the players cannot overcome through any means because they lack an appropriate Attribute is a terrible idea, unless the goal is to force the players to improvise and change tactics dramatically. But use caution when introducing such obstacles. Players do not like to feel that their characters are unsuitable or poorly-designed for adventures, and ideally they will spend their advancement points along avenues they desire. It is always a good idea to include elements that challenge their weaknesses, but this should be sparing, and not a continual thing. Players will grow to resent a campaign where they are forced to spend advancement points to "catch up" rather than on advancement opportunities they like, in the same way that paying bills is less enjoyable than buying nice new things for oneself or others.

Stuff, also, can be a strong signifier as to the desired tone of a campaign. If a majority of player characters have Good Stuff, the gamemaster may want to emphasize the heroic or nobler aspects

of the campaign, where conflicts are clearer and less messily resolved, and where the player characters are not forced to make "shades of grey" moral compromises. Good Stuff characters are not the result of a lack of ambition, but can be evidence of players who do not want their characters to be troubled by lesser maladies, and would rather see good fortune and positive reactions. Zero Stuff characters are usually a result of careful players who desire balance, who would rather see events play out in a balanced fashion they are in control of. Finally, players who are willing to end up with Bad Stuff characters are generally willing to take risks, accepting the bad along with the good, and are probably more willing to get their hands dirty when resolving conflicts. By taking Bad Stuff, the player has essentially drawn a bull's-eye on their character and said *"Go ahead, universe, I can take it."*

For truly immersive role-playing, the campaign is the ideal type of game, allowing players to fully explore their characters, to discover new wrinkles and aspects of their personalities, and to be shaped and changed by events and interaction with other player characters and nonplayer characters. More than any other length of adventure, the gamemaster should make every effort to structure the campaign in step with the player character backgrounds and goals. The majority of nonplayer characters and villains ideally should have some connection to the player characters, and conflicts should almost always become personal even if they start at a more removed state.

The gamemaster should look at character backgrounds and see what loose ends and dramatic hooks present themselves. If players mention mysterious relatives, or potential areas of unresolved drama or conflict in their backgrounds, so much the better. These are ideal means of connecting the player characters to the events of the campaign, tying them on a personal level to the major conflicts and ensuring that they will feel ownership of the stakes, as well as reaping any rewards from the resolution of the major conflicts.

Finally, unlike shorter adventures, characters for campaigns should experience significant growth in their abilities, based on the amount and rate at which advancement points are awarded. Player characters will see their Attributes climbing up the Attribute Ladder, and will be able to learn new powers, come into possession of new artifacts or creatures, and even claim new Domains. They will grow in depth and through contributions may even evolve from one attitude to another, changing their outlooks. Heroes may become tragic anti-heroes, and morally grey characters may emerge as optimists and heroes.

A Final Word on Adventure Planning

As gamemaster, it is useful to remember the words of Helmuth von Moltke the Elder: *"No plan of operations extends with certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main strength."* This is often paraphrased as *"No plan survives contact with the enemy."* No matter how well-designed an adventure is, how much it adheres to the suggested five-act organizational structure, or even how many contingencies the gamemaster

may have planned for, the players are frequently going to do the unexpected. They'll break things, fail to notice "obvious" clues about where things should go, and will zig when every bit of the universe is indicating that a zag is in order. Players are, in short, the enemy of adventure design.

Does that mean it's useless to plan anything? Not at all!

No matter how often players force the gamemaster to make changes to the plan, it is almost always better for the gamemaster to have some idea of where things could, or should, be going. Even if the original adventure outline needs to be abandoned entirely, it is usually better to have some sort of overall ambition, goal, sense of structure, or notion of the shape the adventure could take, than to have nothing whatsoever and be grasping for ideas when the player initiative has run its course, or when the players are looking to the gamemaster for clues as to what should transpire next.

The term "railroading" is used frequently in games to describe situations in which the gamemaster allows the players little-to-no free will. In these games, events happen to the player characters as planned by the gamemaster, no matter what decisions the player characters make, or how much they try to steer control of their

own fates. In *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* it should be next-to-impossible for the gamemaster to railroad the player characters. Player characters have access to immense, incredible powers that allow them to potentially break any trap or side-step any preconceived story-line, so the gamemaster must be constantly re-evaluating and adapting any planned adventure in response to player activities.

It may seem difficult or even hopeless at first for a gamemaster to cope with this, a situation akin to herding cats, but a dynamic should evolve where the players and the gamemaster work together, and act to further the intended story as well as pursuing any individual goals or ideals.

It is not impossible, and it may take time to get right, but diceless games in general are precisely the best sorts of games for improvising on the fly, reshaping an adventure, allowing players to lead their characters into a new direction, and weaving together a coherent and engrossing adventure that may not have ended as planned, but nonetheless ends up in an incredible and enjoyable place.



Chapter Thirteen: Worlds of Gossamer & Shadow

All the Gossamer Lords and Ladies share something in common: at some point in each of their pasts, they became aware that the world they were born to was but one of countless many, no more real than the others. Reality was malleable, and the world which had seemed all-too-real could be changed all-too-easily by those who had power... like actual gossamer in the hands of a tailor.

With that knowledge came the awareness that all these worlds, these Gossamer worlds, were linked by the infinite span of the Grand Stair. Each of these people had a slightly different introduction to the Grand Stair: it is known to “choose” them as suitable Wardens by opening Doors into Gossamer worlds and letting them roam its lengths; an initiation into the greater world guided by another Gossamer Lord; or they may have discovered the infinite nature of the universe on their own, using magic or science to slip between worlds and venture onto the Grand Stair. Regardless, once they became acquainted with the Grand Stair, the true nature of reality became apparent, and the structure of the Universe was undeniable. At that point, there was little choice but to take up a role among the Gossamer Lords and Ladies, and claim that which was offered: worlds beyond counting.

Shadow and Gossamer

There are an infinite number of worlds, each as real as the next, differing in minor and major details. Think of them as alternate realities, each a world and a universe of its own, existing side by side. Any world you can imagine exists somewhere, and any place you’ve heard of in fiction, films, poetry, dreams, myths, or even legend... they’re all real, somewhere, and you can find them. In an infinite universe, every conjectured otherworld or hypothetical reality is not only possible, it is probable.

These worlds are called the Gossamer worlds, for they are made of malleable stuff, caught between the two primal forces in the universe: the Eidolon and the Umbra, cosmic representations of perfection and entropy. These two grand forces will be described later, but suffice to say that their presence is universal, if not constant. Rare is the area where one holds some power and the other does not. That, however, is not entirely true... the only place where the Eidolon and the Umbra do not hold any power is within the Shadow: the place between worlds.

The Gossamer worlds are separated by this Shadow, the void between them. It is the nullity of reality, and in this stark nothingness float the infinite worlds, drifting like wisps of gossamer (like the stuff of which they are named), floating in an infinite black void of nothingness, the place that is not a place. Shadow, as much as can be imagined, is cold and empty beyond all conception of coldness and emptiness. Thoughts and notions of these otherworlds breach the void of Shadow and impress upon one another, instilling in their natives dreams of places that are unreal, legends of mythical places, and inspiring visionaries in the

act of creating alternate worlds.

Places such as Olympus, Hy Brasil, Valhalla, Amber, Lemuria, R’lyeh, Middle-earth, Brigadoon, Metropolis, and even Elysium are thought to be legendary, lost to history, or fictional creations... but in the Gossamer worlds each is a real place, or as it happens, could be repeated a thousand-fold throughout the Gossamer worlds, each slightly different. Any of these places can be reached through the Grand Stair, if one has the patience and desire to find it. These places may be similar or vastly different from what we imagine them, and in any of these places our own Earth may be an equally fictional otherworld living in myth, legend, or fiction.

Here are a couple of notable Gossamer worlds, known to almost every Gossamer Lord:

Shatterlight, Vala’s Domain. Though she is not an appointed ruler, Vala is the acknowledged leader of the Gossamer Lords, and her Domain is considered open to all those who are able to traverse the Grand Stair. It is a rich and pleasant world, the name a witness to a peculiar atmospheric condition that sends prismatic lances of multi-hued sunlight across the land. It is a wealthy, prosperous world in a high medieval era, though with sky-sailing craft, evocative magic, and an egalitarian government overseen by Vala. She is the central figure of a rich mythology, and her castle at Shatterlight is atop a majestic mountain overlooking a sprawling, vibrant city. Many Doors open into Vala’s grand hall, Doors guarded by generations of zealous warriors who would lay down their lives for her.

Finisterrae, the Last Battlefield. The world’s original name is long-lost, and now it is known only as “the last Earth.” This is a broken world, a Gossamer place where sections of reality were shattered, torn away, the remnants devastated. It is a colossal graveyard, where the great war with the Dwimmerlaik ended, a reminder to all of the Gossamer Lords of what it cost, and what was lost. Tens of millions died in this Ragnarok-scale conflict, and in this place the Dwimmerlaik’s invasion was stopped, and they were sent back into the Shadow. No living soul native to this world remains. It is a mass grave, with all manner of strange and powerful engines of destruction scattered and broken. Fields of skeletons litter the ground, clad in broken armor, holding onto weapons or clutching at their death-wounds. Here, the soldiers of a thousand worlds lie alongside the remains of their Dwimmerlaik enemies. Fallen cities, scorched ocean beds, and shattered forests are the only things left. The sky and land alike are torn, bearing gaping wounds that open into the nothing void of Shadow. The Gossamer Lord Drake has placed a standing squad at every remaining Door to Finisterrae, and while it is not forbidden to go there, few do. It is likely that the place is warded against intrusion.

It is unknown how one particular Gossamer world is related to another, how each is located on the Stair, if they are adjacent or



Sovereign in their own Domains, the Lords and Ladies of Gossamer and Shadow.

separated by an infinite space, because the void of Shadow defies measurement and is nearly impossible to traverse. The concept of this dearth of reality, the void of Shadow, bleeds through to the Gossamer worlds, and on many of them it is represented through myth, metaphysics, science, or some combination of those paradigms. Passing from one Gossamer world to another is nearly impossible, and breaching the walls between worlds is a goal of mystics, sorcerers, and scientists throughout the Gossamer worlds. Aside from a few successes, there is only one reliable means of traveling between worlds: the Grand Stair.

The Gossamer Lords and Ladies

While the gamemaster can decide that the player characters are the first among all the Gossamer worlds to discover the Grand Stair and the powers of the Eidolon and Umbra (a very unusual and interesting campaign possibility), *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* includes a roster of prominent nonplayer characters, Gossamer Lords and Ladies who predate the player characters. These Gossamer Lords can serve as guides, friends, mentors, allies, rivals, romantic interests, and even enemies... maybe more than one of these at the same time!

They are for the most part a reclusive and suspicious group, pursuing their own goals and acknowledging only an informal power structure, with Vala recognized as the de facto leader, Drake a staunch if dour watchman against enemies, and Bastiano a potential rival for leadership. The others described—Cal, Lucien, and Dayle—are each up to their own agendas, and may

only intervene in the direst of circumstances. The Gossamer Lords may seek the player characters out, or the player characters may encounter them incidentally while exploring in the Gossamer worlds or the Grand Stair.

“How many Gossamer Lords are there?” players and gamemasters may wonder. The Gossamer Lords and Ladies described could represent a handful among many, or they could be almost all of them... an elite and powerful group, difficult to find and immersed in machinations beyond the understanding of the player characters. That is a question for the gamemaster to answer. The gamemaster should decide how the Gossamer Lords relate to the player characters, and especially the ratio of player characters to nonplayer character Gossamer Lords. The more nonplayer characters there are, the less prominent the player characters become, and the fewer there are, the less expansive the universe feels, if player characters are constantly meeting up with the same handful of nonplayer characters. A comfortable figure would be around two or three dozen Gossamer Lords alive at any given time, with almost half that number comfortably ensconced within their own Domains, or otherwise reclusive. The infinite nature of the Grand Stair means, however, that there could be countless others, with whole courts and social structures completely unlike that of the Gossamer Lords!

With that in mind, the gamemaster is encouraged to create new Gossamer Lords and Ladies as desired, using the same process as player character creation. However, rather than being limited to 100 points, the gamemaster should either allow for more points based on how formidable the nonplayer character is meant to be,

or simply assigning ranks in Attributes, powers, items, Domains, and Stuff as desired.

The Grand Stair

To imagine the Grand Stair, one must think of an endless span of twisting stairs and landings. The stairs appear to go up and down, occasionally folding back upon its length, Escher-like. At some spans the Grand Stair is a grand staircase leading through a magnificent tower, portraits of kings and queens of unknown provenance hung upon its walls, while in other spans it is a rough and darkened path of bare rock and earth. It has sections that are wallpapered and carpeted corridors lined with Doors, like an old hotel, and other sections seem to pass through high-tech factories with pulsing lights and signs writ in alien script. Still elsewhere it is a rickety wooden step in an unknown house, or a set of steps jutting from the inside of a tower, spiralling into darkness at each end. And along its length are Doors... countless Doors. These Doors are closed, and only the Wardens of the Grand Stair know the secrets to open and use them.

This infinite staircase twists and turns and climbs between and through the Gossamer worlds, with Doors set upon landings throughout its length, and each Door opening to a Gossamer world. Some Gossamer worlds are connected by countless Doors, while others may have only a single Door to link it to the Grand Stair. A Warden's attunement to the Grand Stair instills a sense of direction, allowing Wardens to know what Doors open where, and how to take shortcuts through the Grand Stair to reach a desired destination.

The more direct, quickest, and safest means of passage between the Gossamer worlds is on the steps of the Grand Stair. It is an infinite backstage passage behind the world's theatre stage, the ultimate secret passage, a Swiss-cheese trail through the world where two doors side-by-side might open to completely different parts of the same Gossamer world, and two doors side-by-side in one Gossamer world may open to sections of the Grand Stair miles... or even tens of thousands of miles apart. Traveling through the worlds can be direct if one knows where to go, or it can involve a circuitous route through many different sections of the Grand Stair and dozens of different worlds. Wardens must use every sleight and trick of their trade to find specific Gossamer worlds, and stretches of the Grand Stair remain yet unexplored, featuring an altogether unknown geography of linked Doors and worlds, shortcuts, and dead-ends.

The Grand Stair is unpredictable and dangerous, a stepping-way from world to world. The Wardens are able to open the Doors that lead to the Grand Stair, and have a sense for its byways. Strange beings can come along it, and it occasionally changes shape and configuration, growing stranger the more one moves through it, though extended treks are rare.

One doesn't actually walk up or down the entire length of the Grand Stair. Instead, it is used as a mainline and travelers on it jump to and from different areas, opening known or unknown Doors and leapfrogging along its length. This way, ascending

the Grand Stair is sometimes a bizarre and circuitous route, though Wardens are able to manipulate its actual configuration, determining what is behind particular Doors, and discovering new pathways between Doors.

The nature of the Grand Stair breeds different philosophies and approaches to handling it: some Wardens use only Doors they know, while others are explorers and welcome the chance to open an unknown Door and see what lies behind it. Though it is easy to play it safe, at some point every Warden of the Grand Stair needs to grasp the handle of a new Door and pull... seeing where it goes.

Appearance of the Grand Stair

Though it is called the Grand Stair, it would be inaccurate to describe it solely as a staircase. Instead, it is almost a crazy-quilt collection of staircases, halls, foyers, vestibules, landings, anterooms, passages, apparent lobbies, corridors, halls and amphitheaters, and even more convoluted sections of architecture, all connected in a branching, infinite fashion. There are sections that are clearly laid out as a maze, and sections that are simply long corridors with Doors arrayed on either side as long as the eye can see. No matter where one goes in the Grand Stair, there is another exit leading somewhere, and continuing in a straight line will eventually exhaust even the most dedicated explorer.

The material of the walls is mostly wood in a variety of colors and patterns, though there are sections that are brick, stone, or even metal. Colors range wildly section by section, though there is a sense of serenity and decorum manifested by the aesthetic sense at work in the Grand Stair. The floor of the Grand Stair is covered with carpet or bare, stone, brick, unbroken marble, mosaic tile, or countless other substances from countless Gossamer worlds.

The hall narrows occasionally to almost the width of a human being, though in sections it is at least three meters wide and at least four meters high, a size that is roughly consistent. The only constant is that there are walls, a floor, and ceiling, no windows, and there are always Doors.

Light is provided through a variety of sources, whether wall-mounted sconces that seem to burn on oil, gas lights that flicker dimly, hanging candled chandeliers from place to place, wall-mounted torches, and some stretches even have floating light globes or common fluorescent lights. Some lights are recessed and hidden, giving off a soft glow, while now and again travelers will find standing candles or even panel lights. The lighting usually matches the decor of the section of the Grand Stair, though occasionally there is the incongruous match, such as buzzing incandescent lights set into stony walls, or torches in a hallway that seems to belong to a modern office building.

Doors are almost inevitably two to three meters in height and a meter wide, and if they feature windows they are fogged and dark, or translucent enough that only light streams through. They are almost never barred, or if they are it is with locks that are simple and mechanical, such as sliding bars, chains, or cross-bars. However, for every rule about the infinite, there are countless exceptions, and more surprises.

Paintings and objects of art adorn the reaches and passages of the Grand Stair, though they are nowhere near as plentiful as Doors themselves. These works of art range the entire spectrum of the familiar and the unfamiliar, from portraits of humanoid and inhuman creatures, tableaux, still lifes, landscapes familiar and alien, modern and other types of non-representational art, framed mosaics, and almost anything else the gamemaster can think to describe. Additionally, there are alcoves with statues or strange pieces of abstract art, and occasionally there is even the oddity such as a wall-mounted fountain, ornately-decorated urns of various height, or suits of armor in baroque or less unusual shapes. The origin of this art is inevitably from a Gossamer world, somewhere, though it is almost never found in proximity to a Door opening to that world. These items are generally mundane, and can be marked, destroyed, moved, removed, or reorganized at will, and will remain in whatever state they are left. Some Wardens and travelers of the Grand Stair think it is common courtesy to leave the decor alone, and even add to it as suits their desire or sense of whimsy.

Though there is nothing preventing someone from bringing one in, no one has ever seen a living plant growing naturally in the Grand Stair, whether wall ivy, a potted plant, or even weeds or roots protruding from rough earth walls.

The Eternal Stair

A notable characteristic of the Grand Stair is that it is eternal, indestructible. Throughout its history, weapons of incalculable destructive power—bombs, lasers, chemical agents, fusion weapons, etc.—have been used within it, and none have been able to damage it sufficiently. Walls have been scorched, carpet destroyed, and light fixtures destroyed or damaged, but any large-scale destructive force has always been weakened, dampened considerably in the confines of the Stair. Structurally, the Grand Stair remains intact, with the Doors unharmed and their functionality unhindered.

In time, any damage done to the Stair is repaired, re-growing or regenerating, or simply reappearing intact when no one is present within it. Still-damaged sections of the Grand Stair are extraordinarily rare and exceptional, often the remnant of an unimaginable, catastrophic event. The dampening effect is significant, nullifying or muffling the destructive force of any large-scale weapon like an explosive with every corner and bend the Stairs take. In rare cases, when dramatically powerful explosives have been set off on the Grand Stair, Doors along the length of the blast radius have all suddenly opened at once, shunting the blast into unfortunate Gossamer worlds. Events like this point strongly at the Grand Stair's sentience, or at the very least some form of self-defense reflex.

Denizens of the Grand Stair, however, are not so immune, and are just as likely to be killed by a bomb going off within the Grand Stair as they are elsewhere in the Gossamer worlds. Radiation might linger, poison gas may take a while to disperse, but the Grand Stair remains intact, as it always has.

Technology and the Grand Stair

It is the nature of the Grand Stair that technology is of limited use there. Devices which require signals to points within the Gossamer worlds simply cannot penetrate the barrier of a Door, and even point-to-point electronic devices like walkie-talkies have their range severely lessened. Batteries, power packs, chemically-powered items lose their charge quickly, and generators are uncharacteristically weakened, the power they emit greatly diminished.

This is not a constant through the Stair, however. In some stretches of the Grand Stair any technological or chemical devices fail completely, while in others they work to a limited degree. The ability to change the rules of the Grand Stair, to allow such devices their normal range of power, or even to make them fail utterly, is an advanced aspect of familiarity with the Grand Stair. The only Gossamer Lord known to be able to do this is Lucien, with the power "Lord of the Grand Stair."

Smaller technological devices with self-contained usage, such as firearms, energy weapons, calculators, etc., behave normally within these constraints. A smart-phone might boot up, with no reception, but the user could take photos with it and read any electronic books stored on it. A compass would be utterly useless. For these reasons most Gossamer Lords rely very little on technology while on the Grand Stair, favoring weapons with few moving parts. A sword, no matter what its shape, is still a sharp piece of metal with a handle, while a fancy fusion pistol might be nothing but a curious club in the wrong section of the Grand Stair, or made useless by the meddling of a Warden of the Grand Stair.

The rare exceptions to this are artifacts that characters have paid points for. These are "more real" than other such items, and as such their usefulness is bolstered considerably, making them far more useful than mere Gossamer world items. The Agora, the marketplace of the Grand Stair (described below), has many items of curious nature, some of which work in the Grand Stair, and some of which are inert while there. Buyers should beware anything they purchase if it has complex workings, or depends on high technology or certain laws of physics. The item may work fine on the Grand Stair but only within a few Gossamer worlds, or work perfectly throughout many Gossamer worlds but be utterly useless on the Grand Stair itself.

Points of Interest in the Grand Stair

Though the Grand Stair is apparently infinite, there are several stretches that are more commonly traveled than others, areas that are considered "common ground," and some that are generally avoided. Due to the nature of the Doors and their ability to open anywhere, the notion of strategic choke-points or key bottlenecks in the Grand Stair is laughable, though this has not stopped would-be conquerors or marauders from making attempts to seize control over parts of the Grand Stair.

The Labyrinth. The heart of the Grand Stair is the Labyrinth, a concatenation of landings, Doors, passages, stairs, and halls, like the rest of the Grand Stair. In the Labyrinth, Wardens and Masters of the Grand Stair will gain a sense of “centeredness,” realizing that they are in the nexus of the Grand Stair. Not all initiates of the Grand Stair know about the Labyrinth, or where it is; but to those who are familiar with it, the Labyrinth is the equivalent of holy ground, a neutral space claimed by none and respected by all. Bloodshed in the Labyrinth is to be avoided at all costs, and most travelers in the Grand Stair choose to avoid the Labyrinth whenever possible. There are sections of the Labyrinth that are known to only a few or perhaps only to those who made the Grand Stair itself, and over the centuries, more than a few Wardens and even Masters have simply vanished into its complex passages.

The Agora. Though the nature of the Grand Stair is that it practically defies permanent or long-term residences, nonetheless a market has formed, informally known as the Agora. It is located within a section of the Grand Stair where a series of parallel halls, and high and wide sections allow for a sprawling “outdoor” style market. It is multi-leveled, with the Grand Stair folding back and over, with balconies overlooking sections of the Agora, and stretches of halls that intersect with wide foyers, vestibules, and wide landings allowing for structures to be erected. The marketplace consists of tents of all shape and size, lean-tos, blankets, stalls, stands, and even some smaller huts...

all of which were brought in by the resourceful merchants and traders throughout the Gossamer worlds. They deal in all manner of goods and riches from the infinite worlds, or curiosities unique to a single place and time. The Gossamer Lords tolerate the place and maintain it as a neutral ground, and if the Grand Stair has any feelings on the Agora’s existence, it remains as silent as ever. Here, it is said, *“Anything can be found, and if it cannot, it is but a Door away.”*

Additionally, the Gossamer Lords keep many Domains, some public and some private, that the player characters may be (or become) familiar with. Vala’s Shatterlight is an example of a public Domain, while Drake’s Ineswitrin is a private one. Lucien’s Labyrinth is part Domain, partly an extension of the Grand Stair. Descriptions of these Domains are provided earlier and in **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: SOVEREIGNS OF GOSSAMER AND SHADOW.**

Doors

Any door within the Gossamer worlds can potentially become a part of the Grand Stair, though not all doors are a part of it. To most folk in the Gossamer worlds, a door is simply a door, an inert means of passing from one room to another or from inside to outside. But to one of the chosen few, a door is a Door, a gateway into the Grand Stair, a seemingly infinite, twisting and convoluted stairwell with seemingly infinite Doors along its length. Doors are often fixed in location along the Stair, though they are not

Keys and Doors

Those attuned to the Grand Stair can open most Doors from either within the Grand Stair or outside in the Gossamer worlds. There is another major way one can open a Door... Keys. As with the difference between doors and Doors, there are keys and there are Keys. These appear as normal keys, appropriate to the locks on either side of the Door, and it may be that every Door has a single Key somewhere out there. They are made like normal keys, though the Warden or Master of the Grand Stair must consciously invoke the power of the Grand Stair while the Key is made, with the Door it is intended for in mind. The Key does not need to be made anywhere near the Door, though it is generally more convenient to do so.

Keys do not, however, automatically allow access to the Grand Stair. There must be knowledge that the Key is something special, and that the opening of the Door will yield something more than mundane. For this reason, most Keys are never discovered, and remain idly on key rings or even in junk drawers throughout the Gossamer worlds. To open a Door into the Grand Stair, the one holding the Key must be magically capable, know an appropriate spell or mystic rite (most will do), or have been chosen by the Grand Stair. This last is the most significant factor.

A common origin for Wardens and Masters of the Grand Stair is to have a Key passed down to them, or somehow fall into their hands. The Door the Key unlocks gives access to the universe, and many of these lucky individuals seek to divine the secrets of the Grand Stair, eventually becoming initiated into its mysteries. Keys remain as valuable keepsakes, sometimes imbued with additional qualities or powers by their owners.

For the most part, Keys have practical origins, manufactured or crafted through normal means, but once a door is turned into a Door its Key achieves the ability to open the magical aspect of the Door. If multiple keys for a mundane door exist, only one of them becomes the Key, and therefore magically able to open the Door. The other keys will still open the mundane door, but passage through the Door will be just as if a normal door in the Gossamer world. A physically identical key could be manufactured, but would not have the same ability to open the way between the Grand Stair and the Gossamer world. At the gamemaster’s discretion, Keys might exist in the form of electronic devices or even codes, though only a unique instance of each would work on a Door.

Magical senses will reveal that the Keys have some element of enchantment to them, though Keys have no special properties other than being able to open a single specific magic Door. If or when their magical natures are divined, these Keys become treasured artifacts, handed down across generations, even echoing in stories and legends. Naturally, Keys are often sought out and treasured by Wardens and Masters of the Grand Stair, as they represent a weakness or means by which any door can be breached. Like the Doors, their Keys cannot be destroyed through any but the most extraordinary means, such as a weapon doing Primal Damage (page 55), so they are often carefully guarded.

contiguous; so two Doors side-by-side to one another in one Gossamer world might lead to sections of the Stair miles apart, and two Doors near one another on the Grand Stair might lead to completely different worlds.

As mentioned above, to those who are not initiated into their use, Doors are just doors. But, sometimes a Door is still charged with the latent energy left by someone who passed through it, and that Door can be accessed by others who would normally be unable to use it. This is often by accident, and rarely does the trespasser return where they began. Some of the Gossamer worlds know about the Doors, through myths, legends, and folklore. They may even have devoted efforts to divining their secrets. There are rituals and magic spells that might force the issue, though sorcerers are rarely aware of the scope of what they are attempting to access.

Doors have their own rules and logic, and not just any door can be made into a Door. Though Wardens have many tricks at their disposal and can do some amazing things with Doors, there are a few ground rules about what constitutes a Door:

- A Door on the Grand Stair must link with an actual physical door in one of the Gossamer worlds. They don't have to be identical (and rarely are) but they both have to be physical doors of some sort.
- Two Doors cannot link to the same door, nor can two doors link to the same Door.
- A door must be functional to be turned into a Door. That means it cannot be decorative, or freestanding without a connecting wall of some sort. No doors standing in the middle of fields, alone on a beach, or hanging in mid-air. If the door does not block progress in some fashion, it cannot be a Door.
- Doors can actually be connected to non-traditional doors (hatches, hidden or otherwise concealed doors, automatic doors, revolving doors, etc.), but it is tricky and rare.
- Doors always open out from the Grand Stair, into the Gossamer worlds. Never the reverse.
- Locks to Doors cannot be picked, though in all likelihood a key exists that can open the Door.
- The orientation of a Door and a door must be identical. Doors on the Grand Stair are almost always upright and vertical. A vertically-oriented Door cannot be linked to a door in a ceiling or floor, for example, or be upright in the Grand Stair and upside-down in the destination world.
- A nonstandard Door's Gossamer world door will match the natural equivalent in the Gossamer world, such that Doors in the ceiling of the Grand Stair that open to floor trapdoors in the Gossamer world destination, and Doors in the floor that open into ceilings in the Gossamer worlds. However, a hidden Door in the Grand Stair does not automatically mean that the Gossamer world door it connects to is also hidden.
- If the Gossamer world door is torn down, moved, broken through, burnt, destroyed, or otherwise damaged beyond

purpose, it no longer links to the Door in the Grand Stair. Repairing it will not reconnect the two.

- A Door in the Grand Stair that has lost its connecting door in the Gossamer worlds will not open until a new destination door is connected to it.
- Anyone in the Grand Stair, whether attuned to it or not, can open any Door that has not been secured.
- Doors will close on their own eventually (usually quickly), even if blocked open.
- Doors can be connected to other Doors within the Grand Stair, though this is rare.
- No matter how securely a door is locked/barred/secured within the Gossamer world, if it is connected to a Door within the Grand Stair, anyone can open it up easily from within the Grand Stair. The reverse is not always true. Wardens, though, have the power to open locks on doors in Gossamer worlds.
- If a Gossamer world door is in a place that's underwater, filled with poison gas, fire, vacuum, etc. the Door emanates a field, almost a membrane, that keeps the Grand Stair safe.

Not every Door opens. Up and down the length of the Grand Stair, some Doors seem closed, locked, or do not seem to have any means of being opened. There are many reasons characters may not be able to open a particular Door, such as the Door being blocked by another Master of the Grand Stair, or the Gossamer world the Door connects to being destroyed or otherwise absent. It could be that the Door on the other side, within the Gossamer world, may have been damaged, destroyed, or otherwise altered and no longer functional.

Furthermore, some of those attuned to the Grand Stair have a theory that it is somewhat aware and active. There are countless instances of Doors opening or closing on their own, being sealed for no apparent reason, and even admitting strangers into the Grand Stair. Some seasoned travelers on the Grand Stair suspect that it possesses some kind of intelligence, or at the very least has some sort of instinctual behavior that is far from inanimate, though its motives are unknown and perhaps utterly unknowable.

There are always Doors that are apparently "new," not tethered to any door in the Gossamer worlds...which is why many Wardens and Masters believe that the internal geography of the Grand Stair is fluid and not entirely fixed. Doors sometimes appear where there were none, and rarely, Doors even disappear.

The Mystery of the Grand Stair

Most travelers of the Grand Stair either take it for granted, or are simply overwhelmed with its existence that they do not even contemplate its origin. Those who study its power and learn to become Wardens of the Grand Stair have invested a bit more thought into it, and have varying degrees of knowledge about who made it and what its purpose is.



Shatterlight, a Domain of grace and beauty, benefits from the leadership of Vala, Lady of the Shimmering Veil.

Many theories abound as to its nature and its purpose:

- The Dwimmerlaik were originally responsible for the Grand Stair, and their crusade is to reclaim it. It was wrought by them so far back in their history that most of the Dwimmerlaik have even forgotten that they made it.
- Some believe that it was another race—the Annunaki or the Typhonians (described in **CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THREATS OF THE GOSSAMER WORLDS**), or another long-vanished manner of beings—that made the Grand Stair, and met some fate that caused them to vanish from its flights. No one knows whether these unknown makers were destroyed, driven away, went sublime and transcended reality, or remain in hiding.
- The Grand Stair is a physical manifestation of the conflict between the Eidolon and the Umbra, an arrangement of matter given physical shape by their opposing natures.
- The Grand Stair is alive, a complex and godlike entity above and beyond the Eidolon or Umbra, and the Labyrinth is its cerebellum. The Grand Stair is like a circulatory system, connecting the ethereal flesh of the Gossamer worlds to it.
- The Grand Stair is the backbone of the universe, almost like a tree, with the Gossamer worlds its leaves, Doors in place of stalks. Though it is not truly infinite, the Grand Stair's growth creates new Gossamer worlds, intuitively linked through Doors.

Any or none of these could be true, leaving it a matter entirely up to the gamemaster to decide. The nature of the Grand Stair may be a mystery to structure a campaign around, an interesting plot thread, or simply a backdrop element that is never explored in the context of play.

Domains

For a Gossamer Lord newly attuned to the Grand Stair, one of the first courses of action is to establish a Domain. This is a place of power, accessible via one or more Doors: a Gossamer world (part or whole) idiosyncratically attuned to the Gossamer Lord's every whim. These places are almost inevitably the last place one would want to face a Gossamer Lord, sanctums where reality itself can become a manifestation of the owner's psyche and personality.

Domains will often be filled with loyal partisans, death-traps, palaces, and other domiciles of astounding wealth or luxury, depending on the personality of the Gossamer Lord dwelling there. Domains are often hidden within less-commonly traveled portions of the Stair, and all of the entry-point Doors may be guarded by mortal or magical wardens, warded by supernatural forces, or even trapped with mundane physical threats (though this is rare). Usually it is some combination of all of these.

War on the Grand Stair

Though it is a place of wonder, the Grand Stair has seen an eternity of bloodshed and violence committed upon its steps, within its confines, and along its passages. Furthermore, its very nature has invited would-be world conquerors to use it in military endeavors. Though there are many challenges to moving an army through the Grand Stair, it has been done countless times.

Would-be conquerors have marched Gossamer world soldiers through the corridors of the Grand Stair, often without knowing the nature of the place they passed through. Masters of the Grand Stair are able to link two Gossamer world doors together, allowing a dramatic shortcut that would be ideal for ambushes, rapid deployment of troops, tactical strikes behind enemy lines, and other strategic advantages.

The negative aspect to wars being fought through the Grand Stair is that it creates choke points, strategic bottlenecks where supply lines are narrow and potentially unreliable, and where large-scale weaponry, equipment, or troops become difficult to move through Doors. Additionally, the vulnerabilities against an opponent who is also versed in using the Grand Stair are considerable. Troops can be waylaid, supply lines cut off, and the Grand Stair itself is unpredictable enough to cause precise military plans to go awry.

As for battles on the Grand Stair itself, it is a military logician's nightmare. Difficult to maintain supply lines, a near-infinite number of tactical weak points, unpredictable paths of travel, no resources or easily-defensible positions, and battlegrounds consisting entirely of staircases or small spaces connecting them. Barricades can be bypassed, and the difficulty of maintaining a standing military force is considerable. Furthermore, there have been instances when Doors suddenly appeared in previously empty spaces, and admitted hostile creatures into the midst of an occupying force.

In short, it's not that using the Grand Stair as a tactical advantage is impossible, but it's a double-edged sword, one that is as liable to cut the wielder as it is the foe. That hasn't stopped ambitious would-conquerors from trying, though.

Time and the Gossamer Worlds

Time within the Gossamer worlds is a constant. That is, it flows forward everywhere at more-or-less the same rate, as consistent within the Grand Stair as it is on each of the Gossamer worlds. Worlds where time does not pass at the same rate are the exception, usually a curiosity, and often are avoided for the unusual conditions and potential paradoxes it can cause. Some theorists among the Gossamer Lords suspect that this is a controlling factor enforced by the Grand Stair itself, and have performed experiments to test that theory. The results thus far are inconclusive, and those who performed the tests are unwilling to discuss the findings. Knowledge, after all, is a valued currency in the Grand Stair.

However, Gossamer Lords possessing personal Domains can assert the "Control of Time Flow" aspect over their Domain (see page 58), giving them the ability to speed up, slow down, or even temporarily pause the flow of time within their Domain. It is impossible to make time run backward, or at least successful time travel in this fashion has not been observed yet. Whenever a Gossamer Lord's exertion of time flow on a Domain ends, the Gossamer world's time readily returns to normal, flowing congruently with the time on the Grand Stair.

The Shadow Between Worlds

If you imagine every universe being represented by a single star, the Shadow is the void of space between them. However, that huge emptiness serves as both distance and ward, with the walls of reality keeping the Gossamer worlds from bleeding into the emptiness of Shadow. The Grand Stair bridges many of these worlds, but there are even more worlds that do not have the equivalent of a Door and cannot be reached via the Stair. Still other worlds have been cut loose from the Grand Stair and are now unreachable. There are Gossamer worlds where the barrier between reality and the Shadow has been breached, from minor anomalies to worldwide destruction. These worlds are often barred and cut free from the Grand Stair because of the risk of the Shadow.

Shadow is not antimatter: it is a void, the apparent absence of anything. But as with real space, the Shadow is not entirely empty. Within it could be anything. There could be lost worlds that broke free from the Grand Stair, or great pieces of those worlds. There may even be giant chthonic beings of unimaginable power, sleeping or simply floating in space, barely aware of the Gossamer worlds. Most importantly, though, Shadow is home to the Dwimmerlaik, who fled there when they were defeated by the Gossamer Lords centuries ago. They have made it a realm unlike any other, a place forged of broken pieces of worlds stitched together through unimaginable arcane forces, chaotic and unsettling to any who are unaccustomed to it.

Of course, once such a place is described, some player characters will immediately decide that they want to go there. What will they find? How will they get there? If the Dwimmerlaik have emerged as a credible threat once more, there will doubtless be plenty of reasons to visit their realm, either for information gathering or to take the battle back to them.

The Eiddon and the Umbra

The two great universal forces that permeate all the Gossamer worlds are abstract metaphysical principles that, when properly understood, can offer great power. Or are they more than that? Do they have consciousness of some sort, some primal sentience that exists beyond the simple ideal they define? Other than the obvious ideological conflict they represent, is there an active struggle between each, with agents at work in the Gossamer worlds and the Grand Stair? And if these powers are indeed sentient, it is

likely at a level utterly beyond human understanding. How would they communicate with those they wish to influence?

Assuming that these powers are more than energized metaphysical principles, it is entirely possible that the player characters will become involved with their machinations. However, there is no clear good/evil distinction between them, and a character could feasibly possess both Eidolon Mastery and Umbra Mastery, potentially positing them between two rival sources of power. What would life be like for a character like that

if the powers became actively antagonistic towards one another?

There are roughly two philosophical camps among the Gossamer Lords and Ladies: those who feel that they should intervene in the affairs of the universe and rule it, and those that claim their place is in secrecy and that their affairs are to be kept from the folk of the Gossamer worlds. From all accounts, it is possible that both groups have achieved their goals, though each would claim that the other group threatens their way of life and must be stopped.



Chapter Fourteen: Sovereigns of Gossamer & Shadow

This section presents a roster of some of the more powerful and significant personalities players might encounter in their adventures among the Gossamer worlds. They are not necessarily the most powerful, but make up the most prominent members of the group. The exact number of Gossamer Lords is up to the gamemaster to determine. For a campaign rich in intrigue and depth, it is suggested that there be many Gossamer Lords, with a complex power structure to navigate. But for a more personal campaign where the player characters are foremost, the fewer Gossamer Lords, the better.

Descriptions of each of these characters come from the journal of Cal, a relatively new member of the elite who rule the Grand Stair. Though Cal could become an ally to the player characters, he is not without his own biases and his views should not be trusted entirely.

The Attribute values provided for these Gossamer Lords are provided as suggestions, to be adjusted when incorporated alongside the player characters into the Attribute Ladder. Or they can be changed outright based on the relative power level of the campaign. Gamemasters should assign these initial values with player character advancement and competition in mind: as Attribute improvement is measured against them, it is generally a good idea to space Attribute values so that player characters are able to make regular, if incremental, improvements over the course of the campaign.

A player character and nonplayer character summary is provided in **APPENDIX TWO: REFERENCES**.

Calais, Prince of Gossamer and Shadow

'She stared at me, and I had a fair idea what she saw: a slim male with short, curly black hair, brown eyes, and a slight olive cast to his skin. Depending on the cultures she was familiar with, she might have a hard time pinning down a particular ethnicity. I was too-long between showers and after a rough slog through one of the wilder sections of the Stair, so she might peg me as an ambitious Renaissance festival-goer auditioning for mercenary work in Bosnia, or the host of some sort of medieval Outback adventure tour. Add to the ensemble a straight-bladed swept-hilted sword, one visible pistol, a battered leather sling bag, a once-black baldric edged in bronze scalloped metal, and top it off with a thick brown over-cloak, dusty, stained, and with a few holes left by the passage of bullet and arrow.'

'I'd turn my nose up at me too.'

— Cal's Journal

Cal, short for Calais, is one of the younger Gossamer Lords, newly embracing his power and destiny as a traveler upon the Grand Stair. Though he hails from a world where magic is rare and generally unavailable, Cal's intuitive natural talent made him a sorcerer, capable of actual magic. This intensified when

Cal inherited a Key from a mysterious great-uncle, eventually opening a Door into the Grand Stair.

He found adventure and terror within the Gossamer worlds, returning to his own world intermittently, leading a life that grew increasingly difficult to maintain. Eventually, he gave up his own world and devoted himself entirely to exploring the Gossamer worlds. Cal's journeys on the Stair caught the attention of Lucien, who found him, befriended him, and trained him in the arts of true power, setting Cal on a path towards discovering the true nature of the Grand Stair. Cal does not entirely trust Lucien's motives in this, and maintains his independence. He has been active as a Gossamer Lord for only a century or two, and unlike most of the other Gossamer Lords, Cal does not keep a fixed Domain.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 85 Points

STRENGTH – Paragon Rank

ENDURANCE – 30 Points

WARFARE – 25 Points

Powers

Eidolon Mastery [50 Points]

Warden of the Grand Stair [10 Points]

Wrighting [30 Points]

Sorcery [15 Points]

Cantrips [5 Points] – Clarity, Focus, Jam, Nullify, Surge

Artifacts and Creatures

alFone [16 Points] – Cal's smartphone looks like any other from the Gossamer world he picked it up on, but he has modified it with some highly specialized Wrighting and Sorcery-based effects.

- Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point]
- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- Psychic Neutral [2 Points]
- Set of Icons [2 Points]
- Contains Named & Numbered Cantrips [2 Points] – The alFone contains one instance of each of Cal's own cantrips as backup for when his run out.
- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points] – Cal has a number of the standard sorcery spells loaded and ready to use on his alFone, as well as those from his personal grimoire (see above).
- Confers Psychic Neutral Quality on User [5 Points] – The alFone has an app that, when activated, confers psychic neutrality upon the holder of the phone.

Chrysaor, Cal's Sword [3 Points] – This fine blade was gifted to Cal during his sojourn in a Gossamer world, during a time he

speaks little of. Chrysaor has a narrow, double-edge blade, the metal chased with faint designs resembling Celtic knotwork, with swept hilt-guards of steel fashioned in a similar pattern.

- Double Damage [2 Points]
- Contains an Icon [1 Point] – A small plate near the pommel is wrought with a symbolic pattern depicting its maker, a powerful being named Astraea. Cal can concentrate on it and invoke her, though he tends to save it for only the most dire of circumstances.

Cal's Pistol [4 Points] – Cal keeps a heavy revolver holstered at his belt for difficult situations. It is a sturdy weapon resembling a break-top Webley.

- Double Damage [2 Points]
- “Limited” Mold Gossamer Reality [2 Points] – Cal's revolver is able to shift Gossamer reality in only one fashion: guaranteeing that no matter what the physical laws of the Gossamer world are, the chemical reactions that allow the weapon to fire work as desired.

Gossamer World Key [4 Points] – Cal inherited this key from a mysterious uncle, and with it found himself able to access the Grand Stair. Cal's early magical examination of the key revealed that it was capable of hanging spells, to which purpose he used it (though now he relies on his alFone, above). Cal wears the key on a cord around his neck concealed beneath his clothing.

- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]
- Pass Through a Door [1 Point] – This key opens a Door to the Gossamer world of Cal's origin.

Allies

Mentor [3 Points] – Cal has a longstanding friendship with Lucien and can expect a level of support from the Lord of the Grand Stair beyond any Lucien extends to any other.

Stuff

Good [+5 Points]

Cal as an Ally

Cal is friendly, a bit quiet, and as he has had only a century of experience as a Gossamer Lord, he is uncertain in the role as an Ally, more likely offering player characters friendly guidance rather than outright mentoring. He may even try to foist them off onto other Gossamer Lords of more experience and renown, such as Lucien or Vala. Despite this, Cal is less hide-bound than the other Gossamer Lords, without years of old grudges and suspicions, and as such he is all-too-eager to show newcomers the wonder of the Grand Stair. Cal is surprisingly trusting, occasionally to his downfall, which causes other Gossamer Lords a bit of hesitation to deal with strangers associated with Cal.



Calais, Prince of Gossamer and Shadow, wields artifact weapons capable of inflicting double damage.

Cal as an Enemy

There are few circumstances by which Cal would be an enemy, or at least, undeservedly so. At best, he is a rival, someone who might resent some past slight or bear a grudge against a player character. Cal is more the type to ignore someone who has caused him trouble, or may act directly to try to resolve any differences he has with a player character. If, however, someone has gone out of their way to provoke him as an enemy, he will act directly, perhaps even rashly, attempting to end the conflict as quickly as possible.

Objectives

Of the Gossamer Lords, Cal is perhaps the least burdened by responsibility or history. He is too young to have taken part in the battle with the Dwimmerlaik, and has maintained a sense of distance with any of the existing rivalries and conflicts between his peers. His interests lie in the exploration and experience of power, and he will most likely be found at the center of any emergence of an unknown force or phenomena.

Bastiano, Empire Maker

I had always had misgivings about Bastiano, and as I watched him interact with the others I wondered if I was not being unfair.'

His skin was naturally florid, almost ruddy. Handsome, with an unruly mass of black curled hair, hanging down past his shoulders, and a wide friendly smile that sometimes seemed at odds with the chips of obsidian that were his eyes. Like many of us, his clothes were an eclectic mix of medieval and modern, with elements of advanced technology. He was clad in a long tunic of scalloped mail over which was a glossy black surcoat, the theme broken somewhat by a metallic ring hung loosely around his neck, almost like a torc, though lit from within at several points. I'd seen him use it as a communicator, and as some sort of high-tech rebreather, and suspected it had additional defensive capabilities. Over his shoulders hung a shawl or serape of sorts, a pattern of crossed leather straps, metal-capped ends dangling loosely. On his hip he bore a hilted device with a long blade. I had seen it in action, and knew its true nature was beyond that of a mere sword.'

'He was supportive and every bit the host, pouring drinks and claspng shoulders... working the room. Bastiano was charming, ambitious, and passionate about the role of the Gossamer Lords and our responsibilities. I knew that alone among us he was aggressively expanding his rule among the Gossamer worlds, claiming Domains through right and by force. In some he was a god-king, others a conqueror, while he saw at the center countless conspiracies among these ephemeral worlds. I had walked those worlds and had not been heartened by what I had seen.'

'No... I think I'm right about him.'

— Cal's Journal

In any other group, Bastiano would be the natural leader. Charismatic and dynamic in the extreme, he exudes an almost magnetic sense of self, a boundless ego, but the charm to pull it off and to draw others to him. He is the quintessential "bad boy" leader, a powerful and ambitious figure able to sway others to any cause he champions. Across the Gossamer worlds, his like are kings, generals, cult leaders, and even rock stars. Born of common stock in a society of Machiavellian scheming and power-mongering, Bastiano rose to prominence, a self-made man who claimed power through means both honorable and less so. A well-timed coup placed him on a throne, and a quest for expansion claimed him the rest of his world.

Bastiano's ambition was not constrained at the borders of a single world, however, and it was a mere matter of time before he became aware of the existence of other worlds. He sought the answers to this bridge between realities, mysteries long lost to his world. Eventually, Bastiano was able to venture onto the Grand Stair, searching it and divining its mysteries, until he had discovered enough to become a Warden. Unlike many of his predecessors, he used the access to these other worlds



Bastiano, Empire Maker, is no stranger to conflict.

to consolidate his rule at home, and then used it to infiltrate and come to power within multiple worlds. With the longevity extended him by his initiation into the Grand Stair, Bastiano has amassed a virtual portfolio of Domains that he rules in various guises and through differing degrees of authority.

Attributes

PSYCHE — 25 Points

STRENGTH — 50 Points

ENDURANCE — 40 Points

WARFARE — 115 Points

Powers

Umbra Mastery [50 Points]

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points]

Cantrips [10 Points] — Clarity, Focus, Fracture, Glitch, Jam, Nullify, Numb, Pain, Paralyze, Sureness

Artifacts and Creatures

Finitus, Bastiano's Sword [22 Points] — Bastiano's sword Finitus is a powerful and complex weapon with a variety of functions, but in its sword form it is deadly enough on its own.

Additionally, he uses it in battle to summon storms, to cause earthquakes, and even to destroy Gossamer reality, carving holes in reality into the terrible black void of Shadow. This last power he uses rarely, and only as a last resort.

- Destructive Damage [8 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]
- Destroy Gossamer Reality [8 Points]
- True Name is Secret [4 Points]

Bastiano's Armor [3 Points] – At his command, the shawl over Bastiano's shoulders and arms assembles and connects into a battle-harness of surpassing hardness and resilience, adding extra protection to his neck and vital organs, allowing him to parry weapons with his limbs, if need be.

- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- Alternate Form [1 Point]

Bastiano's Torc [17 Points] – Worn about his neck and sealed hermetically to his armor, this defensive item serves Bastiano as an emergency warning system and defensive countermeasure. When it senses danger, it assembles into a helmet warding against psychic assault, as well as molding the Gossamer reality to provide a supply of breathable air. Additionally, it has a number of lesser functions such as night-vision and a communications link to forces within the Gossamer worlds. These are technological in nature, and sometimes are not reliable in Gossamer worlds with different physical laws.

- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]
- Mold Gossamer Matter [1 Points]
- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- Confer Psychic Barrier [5 Points]
- Alternate Form [1 Point]

Bastiano's Armies [5 Points] – Bastiano has trained hundreds of armies, nurturing a fighting force unlike anything the Gossamer worlds have seen since the days of the war with the Dwimmerlaik. In addition to those he has stationed across his own Domains, he maintains armies on other Gossamer worlds, some secret, and others openly, ready to assemble and march at his summons.

- Combat Training [1 Point]
- Cross World Persistent [x5 Points]

Domain

BASTIANO'S EMPIRE [8 Points] – Rather than one or two distinct and separate Domains, Bastiano has conquered or otherwise come to rule over almost a dozen worlds. They vary in levels of technological and cultural development, though all are alike in that Bastiano is the undisputed ruler of each, whether known or through proxies. Most have shifted to a more militant existence, with immense armies funded at the expense of economic stability, militaries unaware that they are being readied for conflict across the Gossamer worlds. He has riddled them with

conveniently-located Doors, enabling him to gather vast forces on relatively short notice, and to move between his Domains with relative ease.

- Personal Domain [1 Point]
- Restricted Access [2 Points]
- Control of Contents [1 Point]
- Named & Numbered [x2 Points] – Domains do not generally have a quantity multiplier, but Bastiano's portfolio of connected Domains merits it.

Stuff

Good [+1 Points]

Bastiano as an Ally

As an Ally, Bastiano would be a very powerful figure in a player character's life, readying them for conflict and trying his utmost to instill loyalty and devotion. This would come with a great deal of caution, as he has not risen to his position of strength by grooming potential rivals. A character Bastiano has mentored or served as an ally to may find themselves alone and dependent upon him, having any external allies or supporters slowly discredited, revealed as "disloyal," or otherwise eliminated, until Bastiano is the only trustworthy figure remaining in the character's life.

As a father, Bastiano would be a tremendous presence of strength and raw magnetism to his child, though they would be aware of how dependent his affection and regard is upon their measuring up to his standards. His child would grow up in a world of unimaginable wealth and privilege, standing at the periphery of power, and may exhibit a world-view shaped somewhat by that background. If Bastiano has multiple children, he almost inevitably will separate them at birth, keeping them on separate Gossamer worlds and unaware of one another.

Bastiano as an Enemy

Bastiano claims that he has no known enemies, an apparently straightforward statement with a dual meaning: he is always charming and affable, seemingly ready to extend a hand in friendship, yet the truth is that the outstretched palm of friendship is balanced by his other hand behind his back holding a dagger at the ready. He knows of no enemies because if he did, they'd be dead. As ambitious as he is, it is only natural that he views anyone as a potential threat, no matter what level of conviviality may exist.

Objectives

Bastiano has never been content with the informal leadership of the Gossamer Lords, who claim relatively few Domains and rarely concern themselves with empire-building. He views it as a matriarchy, with Vala as the obvious head. Bastiano would rather see himself in a leadership role, with the Gossamer worlds more

aggressively claimed as territory across the universe. He is aware that his ambitions are no secret, so he is cautious when trying to advance his agenda among the other Gossamer Lords, frequently using others as his proxies. Player characters are the perfect subjects to utilize in this regard.

Dayle, the Eternal Seeker

I hadn't seen her in almost a century, but here she was before me, with the same enigmatic half-smile she'd given me when we'd parted. Dayle had come into her power early in her life, and as such, she seemed the youngest of us, but she'd looked that way for millennia. Only her eyes gave away the weight of antiquity she'd seen... aeons she'd lived through.'

To others, she seemed a slender woman clad in a simple black gown overlaid with a subtle branching pattern of grey, an elaborate linked silver sash about her waist. Her skin was pale with a slight sheen to it, and up close, I knew, bore silvery patterns like scales. Silver jewelry gleamed in her ears, and her hands bore several rings of different shapes, but all silver. Dayle's thick mop of hair was a fuliginous black, and I remembered the smell of it when she'd last whispered in my ear, cool cheek pressed against mine. I have never forgotten what she said then, just before she left, but it is something I can never share, and rarely consider for the sorrow it brought me.'

— Cal's Journal

On the Gossamer world of her birth, Dayle was an artist and a seeker. She pursued higher truth through the study of mystic alchemy and philosophy, practicing a rigorous discipline of meditative awareness and psychic exploration, striving to ascertain the heights of truth and depths of meaning to and beyond the world she knew. Her studies bore fruit, allowing her to cast her mind across the void of Shadow and into alternate realities. In time, Dayle divined the cosmic principles of the Eidolon and the Umbra, and with those, discovered the Grand Stair and was able to physically venture to the worlds beyond her own. Once the Doors were open to her, she began a spiritual journey of self-enlightenment that has not ceased.

Attributes

PSYCHE — 135 Points

STRENGTH — Paragon Rank

ENDURANCE — 25 Points

WARFARE — Paragon Rank

Powers

Aetheric Projection [35 Points] — This form of astral travel allows Dayle, while meditating, to separate her consciousness from her physical body and journey to metaphysical higher realities and breach the physical barriers of the Gossamer worlds. In aetheric form, she can venture to other Gossamer worlds and

throughout the Grand Stair, though she has no ability to affect the physical world, an invisible presence. Should she encounter other aetheric beings in that astral space she can use whatever aspects of her powers are relevant, so long as they do not depend on interaction with the physical world. The gamemaster should determine if she can be sensed via Psyche or can make psychic contact while in aetheric form.

"Exalted" Wrighting [75 Points] — Dayle's mastery of Wrighting allows her to spy on others using Icons, to use non-Icon representations of others as if they were Icons, to block others from contacting her via Icon, to project her awareness through any Icons of her that exist, and to trap lesser minds within Icons. She does not choose to use this last power often.

Eidolon Affinity [10 Points] — Though Dayle understands the greater principles of the Eidolon, she has not become fully attuned to it. Her ability with it is more theoretical than practical, limited to perception and intuitive understanding of the nature of the Eidolon.

Umbra Affinity [10 Points] — As with her limited use of the Eidolon (above), Dayle has not mastered the Umbra, though she is able to perceive its nature and workings, and intuit its higher meanings.

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points]

Invocation [20 Points]

Cantrips [15 Points] — Charm, Clarity, Dampen, Dim, Eidolon Negation, Flare, Focus, Glitch, Invigorate, Mana, Nullify, Reveal, Quicken, Surge, Umbra Negation

Sorcery [15 Points]

Artifacts and Creatures

Dayle's Silver Belt [9 Points] — Dayle's belt provides her with a psychic barrier, allowing her to travel the Gossamer worlds without fear of psychic assault.

- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- Confers Psychic Barrier Quality [5 Points]

Dayle's Silver Jewelry [10 Points] — Dayle's earrings, necklace, and rings are able to store spells and can shape Gossamer matter to some degree, which she uses to create useful currency, necessary papers, and any other minor items she needs.

- Mold Gossamer Matter [1 Point]
- Set of Icons [2 Points]
- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]
- Named & Numbered [x2 Points]

Stuff

Good [+8 Points]

Dayle as an Ally

Though Dayle is a powerful mystic, likely the most powerful amongst the Gossamer Lords, she does not generally intervene

in conflict, seeing her role more as a herald and counselor. She has few friends, but will hew to them closely in times of crisis. However, her frequent stretches of unavailability and her distance from the Gossamer Lords makes her fairly limited in use as an ally.

Dayle as an Enemy

Dayle's nature and her lack of a fixed abode make her an unlikely enemy. She does not crave territory, claims no authority over others, and avoids involvement in political or social structures that would place her in conflict with others. If someone somehow manages to define themselves as an enemy to Dayle, they will likely be vexed by her utter lack of enmity. Despite this indifference, if she is threatened, she will retaliate with any appropriate measures at her command.

Objectives

Even more than Lucien, Dayle is a seeker after higher knowledge, though unlike him she seems to pursue it for its own sake, a spiritual and esoteric journey that has caused her to cast aside much of the trappings that the Gossamer Lords cling to. She keeps no fixed Domain, has built no armies of followers, and is content to roam throughout the Grand Stair and remain out of contact for decades, or even longer, only returning to the fold when there is some matter that threatens peace. During this time she usually wanders the Gossamer worlds, living anonymously as a mere mortal, studying and teaching when the opportunity arises. She generally disdains sentimental attachment, though is not always consistent with this, and her aloofness is sometimes broken with periods of rare emotion and attachment.

Drake, Lord of the Falling Wall

I settled on one of the pictures, a portrait of an apparently middle-aged man on an ornate marble balcony with a gorgeous seascape to his left side, patterned curtains of damask to his right. Drake. It was a good picture, I had to admit. Very martial. He was arrayed in clothes of a dark grey and over them, the warlike panoply of some quasi-medieval general, his armor fashioned of a substance harder and lighter than metal and enameled the color of rust. It could withstand bullets... even lasers. I knew, because I'd tried both. Despite the finery surrounding him in the portrait, he held his blade as if he meant to use it, a long, straight, single-edged weapon like an arming sword, but with the lightness of a rapier.'

— Cal's Journal

One of the most stalwart of the Gossamer Lords and staunchest supporter of Vala's rule, Drake is dour, spare with words, and generally unfriendly, though he distinguished himself with great valor and tactical genius during the war with the Dwimmerlaik. When faced with challenges, his personal view or recommended

counsel is always to be brutal, efficient, cunning, and quick to the point. Though Drake has his own code of honor, he remains suspicious of most, but can be an indomitable ally to those he trusts.

Drake is not his birth name, though it is no secret that he was a king on his home world, the deeds of his glory echoing throughout history. Wounded near unto death in an epic battle, he was spirited away and brought to the world of the Grand Stair, never to return to his home world. His title "Lord of the Falling Wall" comes from a battle in his distant past, though only a few know the specifics. Drake spends his time planning, training, and viewing himself as the self-appointed sentinel against the return of the Dwimmerlaik, or any related threats that could challenge the sanctity of the Grand Stair, the Gossamer worlds, or his allies among the Gossamer Lords.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 30 Points

STRENGTH – 65 Points

ENDURANCE – 45 Points

WARFARE – 160 Points

Powers

Warden of the Grand Stair [10 Points]

Eidolon Mastery [50 Points]

Cantrips [10 Points] – Clarity, Flare, Focus, Fracture, Grasp, Nullify, Pain, Paralyze, Quicken, Stun

Artifacts and Creatures

Clarent, Drake's Sword [14 Points] – This sword has known Drake's hand in many guises, changing shape gradually throughout the centuries to suit his whim and purpose. It is a blade of legend, with many names... among them Caliburn.

- Destructive Damage [8 Points]
- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]
- Gradual Shape-shift [2 Points] – This lesser version of the Shape-shift power allows the blade to change its shape, length, color, markings, and style, though it is always a one-handed sword of the same weight.

Drake's Armor [6 Points] – A suit of heavy plate armor enameled in scarlet and white, Drake's plate is proof against all manner of harmful forces. Additionally, his armor is adorned with a series of five circular metal plates, each an Icon linked to the leader of one of his legions he can draw from on a Gossamer world, along with accompaniment.

- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]
- Set of Icons [2 Points]

Drake's Legions [21 Points] – Though Drake has access to Gossamer worlds full of loyal soldiers, standing armies he keeps

trained and accessible, the Icons on his armor link to leaders of his legionnaires, combat-ready veterans trained and equipped for a variety of tactical situations, ready within moments for engagement in the field.

- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Double Damage Weapons [2 Points]
- Resistant to Normal Weapons Armor [1 Point]
- Horde [x3 Points]

Domain

INESWITRIN, THE FORTUNATE ISLE [7 Points] – The section of this Gossamer world Drake calls his Domain is the largest in a series of remote islands resembling early medieval Britain in geography, fauna, and culture. He maintains storehouses of arms and has camps and barracks scattered throughout the isles, each full of loyal soldiers, all products of a near Spartan-level martial culture.

- Personal Domain [1 Point]
- Restricted Access [2 Points]
- Control of Destiny [4 points]

Allies

Dwimmerlaik Ally [+4 Points] – Unbeknownst to the other Gossamer Lords, Drake has made a pact with Krovalis, the Suzerain of the Sixth Reach, a powerful warlord of the Dwimmerlaik. They are not friends: rather, they are fellow conspirators.

Stuff

Bad [+3 Points]

Drake as an Ally

Drake could be a difficult ally, as he is harsh, frequently disdainful of other Gossamer Lords, and reclusive to the point of surliness. That said, he is grudgingly respectful of those who have proved themselves, or demonstrated loyalty to what he values, and once someone has entered his circle of trust, he spares them the less pleasant elements of his demeanor. In private, he is more relaxed and clearly haunted by the shades of empires won and lost, and lifetimes of living through cycles of love, betrayal, and redemption.

Drake as an Enemy

One could not have a more implacable enemy than Drake. A master tactician and leader, he is forthright in his enmity, and does not generally tolerate undetermined threats or lingering menaces. He can be merciful (and this has proven his undoing in the past), but after he has given his foes the opportunity to turn

and surrender, there is no mercy for those who renege or continue hostilities.

Objectives

Drake is aggressive when it comes to seeking out and dispatching those who would threaten the Gossamer Lords, and as a veteran of the great war with the Dwimmerlaik, he has appointed himself the defender against that threat. Thus he frequently uses agents to search the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds for hints of their return, and uses all the resources he can muster at expunging any trace of their presence when it emerges. Drake is somewhat myopic on this front, sometimes allowing other threats to remain when the Dwimmerlaik are on his mind.

Lucien, Lord of the Grand Stair

'He was my friend, my mentor, and he'd pulled my ass out of the fire countless times, but I still did not know how far I'd trust him. He was tall and lean and spare, high forehead topped with a thick mass of dark hair, worn shoulder length with a braid in one part, and a slight fringe beard on his jaw. Wolfish and prone to introspective melancholy. He was dressed casually, an incongruous mix of black slacks, white dress shirt, and a black tie. Over this, though, his right arm and shoulder were clad in a big lobstered sleeve of silvered plate mail, with a bulky shoulder plate connected across his chest with a leather strap and a metallic buckle, with a besagew in the armpit and the elbow protected by a cowler. (Of course I know what those are called: I'd worn similar regalia myself.) The armor had a fringe of gold filigree, matching the belt buckle of his sword-belt.'

'I rarely saw him outside one of his libraries, so the situation must be dire.'

– Cal's Journal

An information broker and something of a daredevil, Lucien is the undisputed visionary of the Gossamer Lords, a mystic philosopher. He is prone to long absences, and keeps his own counsel, though whenever something unusual of a metaphysical nature occurs, it is to Lucien that Vala turns. He has made the study of the Grand Stair his primary concern, even going so far as to make a section of it his permanent residence. Lucien alone has achieved the status of a Lord of the Stair, and knows more about it than anyone alive... and on it he has been to places no one else has. Unbeknownst to the other Gossamer Lords, he is always quietly gathering information about them, their Domains, their potential strengths and weaknesses.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 100 Points

STRENGTH – 15 Points

ENDURANCE – 35 Points

WARFARE – 20 Points

Powers

Eidolon Mastery [50 Points]

Lord of the Grand Stair [50 Points] – Lucien knows more secrets of the Grand Stair than many of the other Gossamer Lords have yet to learn, including its origins, its true nature, and its ultimate destiny.

High Sorcery [40 Points] – Lucien is a master sorcerer, able to cast all basic spell and dozens more, with access to spells from across the Gossamer worlds. He has prepared instant counterspells to all of the known basic spells, and is able to weave spells together and tie them to his other powers.

Cantrips [28 Points] – Lucien knows all of the listed Cantrips, and may have access to several others, at the gamemaster's discretion.

Artifacts and Creatures

Glindwatain, Lucien's Sword [6 Points] – A long, narrow-bladed sword, Glindwatain is also etched with glyphs representing the cantrips Lucien has at his disposal.

- Deadly Damage [4 Points]
- Contains Named & Numbered Cantrips [2 Points]

Lucien's Vambrace [12 Points] – Lucien's elaborate shoulder-and-arm heavy plate armor is not only for defense; it allows him to mold Gossamer reality and serves as a hanger for his arsenal of spells.

- Double Damage [2 Points]
- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]
- Molds Gossamer Reality [4 Points]
- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]

Lucien's Compass [9 Points] – Lucien keeps a small pocket compass which also serves as a sundial and wayfinder in the Grand Stair. With this compass, Lucien is able to deduce considerable information about the worlds he encounters, and in its cryptic markings and instructions he uses it to divine the true nature of the Grand Stair itself.

- Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point]
- Search Through Worlds [4 Points]
- Integral to a Power (Grand Stair) [4 Points]

The Charm of Naming [23 Points] – Lucien wears a simple medallion of amber stone around his neck, little more than a flat stone with a hole through it. This powerful charm wards his mind and his True Name from any attempts at psychic assault.

- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- True Name is Secret [4 Points]
- Confer Psychic Barrier Quality [5 Points]
- Confer True Name is Secret Power [10 Points]

Domain

THE ATHENAEUM, HEART OF THE LABYRINTH [10 Points] –

Though it exists within the Grand Stair, Lucien's advanced ability with the Grand Stair has created a central location within it where the barrier between Gossamer worlds and the Grand Stair are meaningless or nonexistent. This is a high, vaulted place, filled with libraries, archives, storehouses, armories, and other repositories. It is seemingly unguarded, though Lucien is aware of everything that transpires within it, and is quick to respond to trespasses.

- Primal World [4 Points]
- Restricted Access [2 Points]
- Control of Destiny [4 Points]

Allies

Lord of the Gossamer Worlds [5 Points] – Lucien has mentored Cal, helping him discover his way among the Gossamer worlds. Though Lucien knows much about Cal's true nature and the ultimate role Cal will play in the strife to come, he withholds this information from his friend as best he can and depends on Cal's unswerving loyalty.

Stuff

Bad [+5 Points]

Lucien as an Ally

Lucien as an Ally would be a suspicious and distant one, aloof and frequently absent or unavailable. The trade-off would be that Lucien is almost inevitably better informed than anyone else, and is able to offer insight on other Gossamer Lords that no one else knows. He is slow to warm to, but when he does make friends, he takes pride in sharing secret knowledge with them, though there is inevitably a purpose for it, and something significant usually held back. Lucien's close friendship with Cal is a bit of an anomaly, and may even be an act, with the possibility that he is setting his apparent friend up for something grander than anyone suspects.

Lucien as an Enemy

It would be possible to be Lucien's worst enemy and be utterly in the dark about it. He does not engage his foes, and it's far more likely for him to simply ignore his enemies, to pretend to tolerate them, or to pit others against them. Because much of Lucien's agenda concerns the metaphysical aspects of the Grand Stair, he does not devote much time to petty vendettas or revenge. If someone, however, managed to anger or provoke Lucien enough that he will act, that person may find the Grand Stair itself working against them.

Objectives

A seeker first and foremost, with a mind keen on metaphysical mysteries and their unraveling. He is liable to be absent or unavailable even by contact through Icons or other magical means, and his True Name is hidden from any reasonable means of discovery. If anyone has the Grand Stair's goals at heart, it is Lucien, though he is likely privy to knowledge that could pit him against his fellow Gossamer Lords.

Vala, Lady of the Shimmering Veil

I remembered the first time I laid eyes upon Vala. It was across a tormented battleground, fiery winds racing overhead across torn skies, her cloak singed and in her hands was Vajra, a great weapon that, legend said, had shattered buildings. I had just arrived, courtesy of Lucien, and he pointed her out to me from our vantage point. She seemed ageless upon the rocky ground she stood upon, almost as if carved out of some jutting stone and painted. Her robes were of white and gold, with a scarlet sash and hood, and golden scaled armor was draped across her shoulders, seeming more a shawl than anything functional. Her skin was dusky, and though it would have been only natural for her dark eyes to broadcast panic or rage, there was instead a terrible calm that was all-the-more frightening.

Surrounding her was a howling pack of creatures called the Ur-Orobos. They were pitiful remnants of a once-great race enslaved and consequently destroyed by the Dwimmerlaik, yet still driven by hatred for the enemies they had been thrown and wasted against. The Ur-Orobos held back, readying themselves for a rush against this one they knew led the Gossamer Lords. Vala rotated slowly, her baroque polearm held fluidly, easily, in her grasp. She raised it above her head, and it seemed to brighten, calling light to it from her surroundings.

"Close your eyes," Lucien said to me then, as he brought his gauntleted forearm up over his own face.'

I followed suit, and even through closed lids the flare caused me some discomfort, and a split second later my ears were assailed by a sudden roar, as if lightning had struck nearby.'

— Cal's Journal

Likely the oldest member of the Gossamer Lords, Vala of the Shimmering Veil is their undisputed leader, though she claims no special title, and has never asserted her authority over the others. Her understanding of the Eidolon ranks above any others, and she frequently exhibits an intuitive understanding of the path events will take based on the interplay between the Umbra and the Eidolon. She is a calming force, a natural leader among the sometimes fractious Gossamer Lords, and her leadership in battle against the Dwimmerlaik afforded her Drake's unwavering support. She is a gracious host and her Domain serves as a common ground for many of the Gossamer Lords, who are free to come and go as they please, provided they do not infringe overmuch on her hospitality.



Vala, Lady of the Shimmering Veil, is the acknowledged leader of the Gossamer Lords.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 175 Points

STRENGTH – 25 Points

ENDURANCE – 40 Points

WARFARE – 75 Points

Powers

Greater Eidolon Mastery [75 Points] – Vala's understanding of the Eidolon is without peer among the Gossamer Lords. Through meditative study and practice, she has extended her Eidolon mastery into tremendous abilities, including enhanced protection, an almost constant perception of its presence, and an intuitive ability to manipulate reality through deceptively subtle means.

Esoteric Invocation [35 Points] – Vala's Invocation grants her an intuitive understanding of the True Names of most sentient beings she encounters. Additionally, she is able to utilize True

Names easily with her other powers. Most unusually, she has the ability to grant True Names to things that would otherwise not be able to possess them.

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points]

Sorcery [15 Points]

Cantrips [15 Points] – Charm, Clarity, Dampen, Flare, Focus, Invigorate, Mana, Nullify, Paralyze, Reveal, Quicken, Stun, Sureness, Surge, Umbra Negation

Artifacts and Creatures

Vajra, Vala's Polearm [30 Points] – A relatively short-hafted polearm, this weapon has seen battle across the Gossamer worlds, striking like a thunderbolt against the Dwimmerlaik. Etched with tracings of the Eidolon, this weapon stands as Vala's symbol of office as well as being one of the most powerful weapons in the Gossamer worlds.

- Primal Damage [16 Points] – Vajra inflicts fearsome, terrible wounds on most living creatures, and against those tainted by the Umbra it is devastating.
- Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points] – This has two aspects: to destroy that which it is wielded against by breaking apart the Gossamer reality creating spectacular explosive results; and to mend that which it defends, soothing broken reality and restoring it to a former undamaged state.
- Search Through Gossamer Worlds [4 Points]
- True Name is Secret [4 Points]
- Linked to the Eidolon [2 Points]

Set of Icons [2 Points] – Vala's set of Icons are coins of various shapes, sizes, and metals, each inscribed with the name and likeness of the subject. This collection numbers in the hundreds, though she keeps only a couple of dozen with her at any time.

Domain

SHATTERLIGHT [6 Points] – Vala's Domain is described in detail on page 115 of **CHAPTER THIRTEEN: WORLDS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW**. This is her unofficial court, and a common space for many of the Gossamer Lords to meet and mingle. The Eidolon's presence here is overwhelmingly strong, to a degree that might cause discomfort to those who have mastered the use of the Umbra. This has no longterm effect, but is simply a growing sense of unease Umbra Masters will feel the longer they are in Shatterlight.

- Common Ground [2 Points]
- Control of Destiny [4 Points]

Allies

Partisan Support [3 Points] – Vala is the acknowledged leader of the Gossamer Lords. Though some have challenged her opinions, few would turn openly against her.

Stuff

Good [+6 Points]

Vala as an Ally

Of all the Gossamer Lords, Vala would be ideal to have as a supporter. Not only is she privy to the long and storied history of the Gossamer Lords, but she knows of the whereabouts of many who are thought long-lost, or are so reclusive they are relatively unknown. More so than any other Gossamer Lord, she will seek out newcomers to the Grand Stair and host them at Shatterlight, seeing that they become aware of the incredible inheritance they possess. Though she rarely intervenes directly in minor matters, she will often enlist her fellow Gossamer Lords to act on her behalf.

Vala as an Enemy

Having Vala for an enemy would perhaps be the most spectacularly ill-advised decision one could choose from the options available in the Gossamer worlds. Though she cares little for petty vendettas or meager politicking, her authority among the Gossamer Lords and her alliance with the Eidolon would make her among the most formidable opponents imaginable. Her dual role of philosopher-queen is well-earned: as her Domain of Shatterlight has vast armies of loyal followers, soldiers she will not hesitate to lead into battle if need be.

Objectives

Vala seeks, first and foremost, to ensure peace and prosperity amongst the Gossamer Lords and to see stability and justice within the Gossamer worlds they claim dominion over. She does not meddle in the affairs of individual Gossamer Lords, but the principles she espouses will make it difficult for those who would inflict tyranny upon their own Domains. When presented with a challenge, she turns first to Drake for a strategic assessment, and then to Lucien for any additional metaphysical matters that may be relevant. Her councils are public to any who claim the title of Gossamer Lord, and her deliberations inevitably fair.



Chapter Fifteen: The Dwimmerlaik

In a time so far gone even the oldest records are dust, a civilization arose upon one of the Gossamer worlds. These people were powerful in philosophy and learning, and their psychic abilities were considerable, allowing them visions of the nature of reality. The wise among them learned how to project their minds beyond the walls of reality, bypassing the veil of Shadow. In dreams they walked among the Gossamer worlds, adventuring in places beyond their imagination. This gave them insight into the nature of the universe and the certainty that their world was not alone.

In time, their greatest sages discovered the Doors... and with them came the means to walk upon the Grand Stair. With actual physical access to infinite other worlds, the sages among these people became rulers, exploiting well the secrets of the Doors and the Grand Stair. Their sojourn among the Grand Stair improved them, making them more powerful in all means, and they consolidated their power on their own world and beyond, seeking to conquer other worlds by using the Doors as their means of invasion.

They proved a scourge across the Grand Stair, and their civilization flourished as it spread, a race of psychically powerful, zealous invaders who would bring all the infinite worlds under one rule. They called themselves the Dwimmerlaik.

Ancient beyond days, the Dwimmerlaik trod the Grand Stair before, and for longer than, any other race known. If any came before them, those long-vanished species did not survive contact with the Dwimmerlaik, and only obscure traces remain of their existence. As conquerors, the Dwimmerlaik readily expunged the worlds they encountered of any semblance of prior rulers, scrubbing Gossamer worlds of any history they possessed before the coming of the Dwimmerlaik. The Dwimmerlaik installed themselves as monarchs, dictators, emperors, kings and queens... and they ruled world after world.

Eventually, though, the Dwimmerlaik overstepped their reach, and drew resistance able to meet them head-on. As the Dwimmerlaik spread across the Grand Stair, others were drawn together to counter the threat they possessed. These individuals ranged from philosopher-kings, sorcerers, scholars, mystics, presidents, adepts, heroes and theocrats, to simple pilgrims. All realized the threat the Dwimmerlaik possessed, and were drawn to oppose it. Forging pacts across the veil of Shadow that separated them, these would-be-heroes, the Gossamer Lords, grew in number and strength, and taught one another secrets of magic and power, searching across the Grand Stair for a means of defeating the conquering race.

The Gossamer Lords battled the Dwimmerlaik in their own worlds and upon the Grand Stair, fighting alone and in concert. They brought the Umbra and the Eidolon to bear against them, as well as every other form of power they could muster. The damage was incalculable, with the Dwimmerlaik throwing hosts at this

defiance. Armies like locusts, consuming entire nations, marched through the Grand Stair directed against those who opposed the Dwimmerlaik. Populations of whole worlds were drafted and pressed into service as foot-soldiers in this war, sent into battle to die for these otherworldly masters. Blades, guns, energy weapons, and sorcery were used... weapons wrought of iron and steel and glass and wood, crystal and fire, thought and stone... all were brought to bear and were bloodied. Gossamer worlds were stripped bare of their resources, poisoned, destroyed, evacuated and left empty and ruined. Blood stained the steps of the Grand Stair, and whole worlds were lost entirely, destroyed or cut off from the Grand Stair, their Doors broken and sealed.

The carnage rippled throughout all reality, the sheer awful force of the conflict echoing across worlds, leaping the veil of Shadow, and manifesting in similar or altered form in all but the most distant or alien of the Gossamer worlds. However, no world suffered more than those directly involved in the battle, as no copy of the Dwimmerlaik could be so destructive.

The war raged for centuries, and the defenders fought against the oncoming wave of Dwimmerlaik until it seemed as if all hope was lost... and then the unimaginable happened. The Grand Stair itself seemed to intervene, cutting off entire expanses, erasing Doors, severing vast lengths of its span, and deactivating Doors that led to Dwimmerlaik-held worlds. The threat was over, and the Gossamer worlds involved in the war were able to recover.

Hundreds of years passed, and the Dwimmerlaik were forgotten by many. Worlds they had barely touched 'remembered them only faintly as bogeymen or devils, strange and terrible creatures out of myth and nightmare. The Gossamer Lords who opposed them eventually returned to their former isolated ways, though still bound by the knowledge of what had been done to oppose the Dwimmerlaik, and what had almost been lost. Some among the Gossamer Lords used the peace to seize power for themselves, tentatively at first, then more brazenly once time passed, while others sought study, solitude, and solace.

No one knew the ultimate fate of the Dwimmerlaik. Had they been quarantined from the Gossamer worlds or erased from reality entirely? Were they still out there, biding their time, until they might return? Was such a return even possible? All of these questions were unanswered... until now.

The lords and ladies of the Gossamer worlds are even more fractured and unaligned than ever they were. Newer generations grow up not knowing anything about the Dwimmerlaik, sometimes barely aware of other Gossamer Lords. They act in secrecy, and often against one another, and share information sparingly, as if it were hard-earned currency. But even now they whisper amongst one another, acknowledging what the older ones among them have long since feared:

The Dwimmerlaik have returned.

Using the Dwimmerlaik

Currently, the Dwimmerlaik are ruled by an Empress who holds her throne forcefully, having dwelt in power since their grand defeat at the hands of the Gossamer Lords. She is eager to test the might of the Dwimmerlaik, and assert their power across the Gossamer worlds once more. Her two greatest allies are fanatically loyal to her: Mowbray, the Pale Hierophant, leader of the religion that all Dwimmerlaik are born into and practice; and a war-leader like none other... Krovaliss, the Suzerain of the Sixth Reach. The Dwimmerlaik now dwell in a ruined place in Shadow, the void between the worlds, and have now found the will to break free and wage war once again. They believe that the Gossamer Lords pitted the Stair against them, and are seeking its legendary source...the heart of the Labyrinth. Since their defeat, they have been dormant, but that time is at an end.

Empress Ayasha, First of the Dwimmerlaik

I knew without asking that this was Ayasha, their queen, first of their number. She was clad in war-armor, an archetypal image of the warrior-queen to echo across the Gossamer worlds and inspire countless others. Her narrow mouth was set in a tight line, her eyes unfathomable pools of onyx. She was tall, like the rest of her kind, and her armor was baroque, every bit of it engraved with glyphs and set with bits of crystal or other metals. The same with the curling horns, every segment etched with some sort of symbol or rune, a strange and whorled crown set upon her brow. Her hair was a night-black cascade down her shoulders, and it also was braided and set with gems and wire. In her hand was a flanged mace, and it glimmered weirdly, light seeming to enter parts of the metal and go sideways, astray into some nether-space.'

— Cal's Journal

The current empress of the Dwimmerlaik is Ayasha, who climbed to power atop a bloody power struggle in the wake of the defeat and retreat of the Dwimmerlaik into Shadow. Broken as a people, their entire civilization demoralized and their leadership in disarray, the Dwimmerlaik were on the edge of pure anarchy. Into this stepped Ayasha, a charismatic and powerful noble, and she clawed her way to the top in a political struggle that cost the lives of tens of thousands of her kin. For centuries now she has

ruled, ancient but ageless, growing in power and ambition until her only goal now is to reclaim what was lost to her people and win the battle that her predecessors lost.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 150 Points

STRENGTH – 20 Points

ENDURANCE – 50 Points

WARFARE – 35 Points

Powers

Greater Umbra Mastery [70 Points] – Ayasha has divined greater secrets of the Umbra, allowing her the ability to simply dispel sections of reality, to tear holes in Gossamer worlds into the void of Shadow, as well as being able to shape-shift with precise control, and to inflict a limited degree of shape-shifting upon those she comes into contact with.

High Channeling [65 Points]

Sorcery [25 Points]

Invocation [20 Points]

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points]

Artifacts and Creatures

Ayasha's Flanged Mace [8 Points] – A relic of the Dwimmerlaik, this flanged mace gives Ayasha some ability to mold Gossamer reality, such as compelling obedience of lesser beings, weather control, and altering other physical laws.

- **Deadly Damage** [4 Points]
- **Mold Gossamer Reality** [4 Points]

Ayasha's Plate Armor [4 Points] – A finely-wrought suit of plate armor made by the greatest Dwimmerlaik craftsmen in ages gone.

- **Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons** [4 Points]

The Phylactery of the First [X Points] – This amulet is Ayasha's badge of office, held by each of the First, and is a living repository of the souls of those who have ruled before. The central stone is of purplish-red porphyry and the setting and chain are of orichalcum. It gives off an unnatural glimmer, as it is imbued with

Out of Shadow...

The setting material presented assumes that the Dwimmerlaik were once a mighty threat and were defeated, at terrible cost, by the Gossamer Lords, and have been biding their time since. Alternately, the gamemaster may choose to run a campaign where the Dwimmerlaik have yet to make their presence known to the Grand Stair. In such a campaign, there never was an ancient Dwimmerlaik war, and the Gossamer Lords have never heard of them, or they may only be mythical bogeymen.

This sort of campaign could deal with the Dwimmerlaik as an emerging threat, with terrible power and surprise as an advantage. The origin of the Grand Stair itself is still shrouded in mystery: perhaps the Dwimmerlaik are those who made it originally, and are only now returning to claim it after an eternity of absence. Such a campaign has the potential of introducing them freshly to the universe, and allowing the player characters the firsthand experience of encountering these strange and devastating foes.



the trapped pneuma (spirit essences) of each of the past Firsts, the rulers of the Dwimmerlaik, captured at the time of their death. The rightful possessor of the Phylactery may speak with any of them and gain their counsel, though that counsel may be strained depending on how the First came to power. Normally this is kept, well-guarded, warded, and hidden within Ayasha's quarters.

- Set of Icons [2 Points] – This represents the aspects of having stored pneuma within the Phylactery.
- Able to Speak in Tongues and Voices [4 Points]
- Psychic Sensitivity [1 Point]
- Contains Named & Numbered Known True Names [2 Points]
- Invulnerable [16 Points]
- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]

Ayasha's Crown [2 Points] – Another relic of the Dwimmerlaik, this crown serves as Ayasha's spell storage device.

Claws of the First [16 Points] – These are Ayasha's elite blood legions, ten soldiers hand-picked from her armies to be her personal guard. The Claws of the First are fanatically loyal to her and will readily die in her service.

- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Paragon Stamina [2 Points]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Hardened Weapons [1 Point]
- Resistant to Normal Weapons Armor [1 Point]
- Named & Numbered [x2 Points]

Domain

KHESTAROS, AYASHA'S THRONE REALM [10 Points] – Though it is not a proper Domain, this remnant of a Gossamer world floats in the void of Shadow, a twisted place of unsettling, Escher-esque turns and angles, a massive continent-sized city bent around itself, wrought to celebrate her rule and emphasize her primacy.

- Primal World [4 Points]
- Restricted Access [2 Points]
- Control of Destiny [4 Points]

Allies

Partisan Support [3 Points] – Ayasha is the First of the Dwimmerlaik, a position akin to a sanctified empress. As such, she is the ruler of her entire race, from the greatest warlord to the lowliest beggar.

Stuff

Zero Stuff [0 Points]

Empress Ayasha as an Ally

If one were utterly opposed to the Gossamer Lords and did not mind the near-certainty of betrayal, Ayasha would be the greatest imaginable ally. Otherwise, she is unlikely to find much use for allies among any but her own people, and any such alliances would be taxing for the character, as well as fraught with the danger of discovery by the Gossamer Lords.

Empress Ayasha as an Enemy

Most of the Gossamer Lords are by default her enemies, but should a player character earn the special distinction of being known as a personal enemy of Ayasha's, life will likely become hellish and blessedly short, as she throws the weight of her magic and her zealot warrior-mobs at any who would offend her.

Objectives

As the ruler of the Dwimmerlaik, Empress Ayasha's goal is the return of her people to their former territory as the foremost rulers of the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds. She is also seeking to destroy any who challenge this authority, and to throw down the pretenders to the Grand Stair. Furthermore, Ayasha is ready to return a thousand-fold the humiliations faced by the Dwimmerlaik's defeat at the hands of the Gossamer Lords.

Mowbray, the Pale Hierophant

'He was venerable beyond any sense of measure, and if there was a single being that had seen the dawn of the Dwimmerlaik civilization, it was Mowbray. Aeons had robbed him of his pigment, and he was a pale, sulfurous-white, skin broken with inlaid tattoos and ritual scarring. Mowbray's pale horns were etched with scrimshaw and inlaid with black runes. His ceremonial robe looked as if Gustav Klimt had fashioned it, linking together shards of ivory and thin panels of some other bleached stone, at once uncomfortable and impressive as all hell. He bore a long metal staff curiously curved and flared at its peak, almost serpentine in form, and I got a clear sense of the power it represented.'

– Cal's Journal

Mowbray is the Pale Hierophant of the Dwimmerlaik, primarch of a religion uniquely devoted essentially to the Dwimmerlaik themselves, an all-encompassing cult that venerates their progenitors and the heroic lineages that produced them. He has served each of the First of the Dwimmerlaik, some faithfully and others less so, and at times in their history he has been the true emperor in all but title. Currently, he serves Empress Ayasha faithfully and with his full support, seeing in her a return to the greatness his race once possessed. In his role as Pale Hierophant, Mowbray mentored Ayasha in arts magical and imperial, and regards her as his greatest accomplishment, a living embodiment

of the finest aspects of the Dwimmerlaik race.

In temperament, Mowbray is shrewd and contemplative, giving careful measure to all he observes. He has seen emperors and empresses rise and fall over his lifetime, and his view is that the Dwimmerlaik race itself is far more important than any single leader. Though Mowbray is intensely loyal to Ayasha, his calculations might shift in a moment if he perceives in her a sign of weakness or a greater chance to strengthen his people.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 160

STRENGTH – Paragon

ENDURANCE – 35

WARFARE – Superior

Powers

Greater Umbra Mastery [70 Points] – Mowbray has divined greater secrets of the Umbra, allowing him the ability to simply dispel sections of reality, to tear holes in Gossamer worlds into the void of Shadow, as well as being able to shape-shift with precise control, and to inflict a limited degree of shape-shifting upon those he comes into contact with.

‘Exalted’ Channeling [85 Points] – Mowbray’s exalted mastery of Channeling extends his abilities to affect multitudes of beings at once, to utterly destroy or re-write minds in Psychic combat, provides greater facility and finesse with telekinesis, and confers upon him a psychic mastery over any matter, not just mere flesh.

High Sorcery [40 Points] – Mowbray is a master sorcerer, able to cast all basic spells and dozens more, with access to spells from across the Gossamer worlds. He has prepared instant counterspells to all of the basic spells, and is able to weave spells together and tie them to his other powers.

Keeper of the Void [35 Points] – Mowbray is able to manipulate the emptiness of the Shadow itself, moving things through it, causing it to warp, contort, and contract, and even folding it so he can move instantly from one place to another. With an exertion of will, he can reach through the Gossamer veils of reality and pull things into the Shadow, or expel them from the Shadow into a Gossamer world of choice.

Invocation [20 Points]

Artifacts and Creatures

Omphalus, Mowbray’s Scepter [14 Points] – This ancient staff is wrought from the metallic osseous of an immensely powerful Typhonian, and is still charged with its mystic energy, as well as that focused through regular use in magic ritual.

- Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points]
- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]
- Impervious to Harm [8 Points]

Mowbray’s Robe [4 Points] – Even the most revered of the Dwimmerlaik fears betrayal, and for this reason Mowbray’s robe is enchanted against assault.

- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]

Stuff

Bad [+3 Points]

Mowbray as an Ally

Mowbray would be a curious ally for any player character. It would be an inevitably one-sided relationship, as his interest or ability to aid someone allied with the Gossamer Lords is minute, and he would be more likely to turn such a relationship into a weapon to strike against the enemy of his people. Still, it is possible that he might regard such a connection as a strategic alliance, and might potentially use his influence to sway a player character into joining with the Dwimmerlaik.

Mowbray as an Enemy

If it is possible to have a worse enemy among the Dwimmerlaik than their Empress Ayasha, it would be the Pale Hierophant. Mowbray commands respect throughout the entire Dwimmerlaik empire, and could readily call for a crusade whose sole purpose was to exterminate a personal enemy amongst the Gossamer Lords. By default, anyone who isn’t a Dwimmerlaik already has Mowbray for an enemy, including characters who have purchased “Dwimmerlaik Ally”.

Objectives

Despite his immense age, Mowbray maintains a great curiosity about the universe, particularly the manipulation of magical power and the uses it can be put to. For this reason, when he comes into contact with some magical power that could potentially be of use to his people, he may stay the rash action of his people and allow this new power to be studied, learned, and turned against the Gossamer Lords.

Krovaliss, Suzerain of the Sixth Reach

‘It was hard to find footing on the stairs, caught in the skirmish. I thought for a moment Drake would be borne backwards by the press of the Dwimmerlaik, falling against his soldiers advancing from the steps below. But he remained standing, resolute, and his blade Clarent tore a bloody swath through those that opposed him, and the way was clear for a moment.’

‘Then the Door opened, and through it stepped a massive figure, almost elemental in the savage power he represented. It could only be Krovaliss, their highest general. He was almost a head taller than the tallest of his forces, and his skin was a deep green, with grey mottles. The spread of his horns was wide,

and they branched like antlers. His armored battle-harness was almost painted red with blood, its brush his sword... a great curved cleaver as tall as I was.'

'Drake and Krovaliss sprung at one another, blades already moving with dazzling speed, but at that moment I was caught in the press and lost sight of that battle.'

— Cal's Journal

The Dwimmerlaik forces are divided into six armies, and their leader is the Suzerain Krovaliss. As the war-master of the Dwimmerlaik, he is the epitome of their deadly nature, a fierce and powerful natural predator. Ambitious, ruthless, and eminently deadly, he thrived in the bloody internecine struggles that defined Ayasha's rise to power. Recognizing in her an empress-to-be, he swore allegiance to her and has benefited mightily, eventually being granted utter control over all of the Dwimmerlaik armies. Under his command, they have grown in power and hunger for battle, a hungry sword ready to slake its thirst. In combat, he is uncharacteristic for his people, a deadly assailant who moves with cold, fierce precision, and his character vacillates between grim silence and fierce melancholy.

Attributes

PSYCHE — 10 Points

STRENGTH — 75 Points

ENDURANCE — 75 Points

WARFARE — 180 Points

Powers

Channeling [40 Points]

Warden of the Grand Stair [10 Points]

Cantrips [10 Points] — Eidolon Negation, Focus, Fracture, Grasp, Invigorate, Nullify, Numb, Pain, Paralyze, Stun

Artifacts and Creatures

Krovaliss' Ancestral Sword [8 Points] — This overlong, curved and brutal weapon is immense, nearly two meters in length, the blade notched from combat and etched with glyphs depicting the victories. The blade is of orichalcum and the hilt is wrought of Typhonian osseous and set with stones of various Gossamer worlds that have long since shattered and been lost to the Shadow.

- Destructive Damage [8 Points]

Krovaliss' Battle Armor [8 Points] — Like his sword, Krovaliss' armor is a relic of his ancestors, who wore it proudly to war, and likely died in it. It is made of a metal resembling blackened bronze, and unlike the tradition of his people, it is free from etchings or other ornamentation.

- Impervious to Harm [8 Points]

Krovaliss' Sable Guard [63 Points] — Hand-picked from among his most doughty, loyal warriors, Krovaliss' honor guard wear all black, and are feared throughout the Dwimmerlaik empire as an extension of his will. He frequently sends them on exploratory and scouting missions from out of Shadow onto the Grand Stair and into the Gossamer worlds, or to wreak havoc as a precursor to the coming invasion. Each squad is often equipped with a totem capable of leading them through the Grand Stair.

- Immense Vitality [4 Points]
- Double Speed [2 Points]
- Paragon Stamina [2 Points]
- Combat Mastery [4 Points]
- Hardened Weapons [1 Point]
- Resistant to Firearms Armor [2 Points]
- Search Through Worlds [4 Points]
- Horde [x3 Points]

Stuff

Bad [+7 Points]

Krovaliss as an Ally

Unless the character is a Dwimmerlaik or a traitor to the Gossamer Lords, Krovaliss is unlikely to be an ally, unless it is one born of some innate scheme of his own requiring collaboration with the enemy. He is not without ambition himself, and if a Gossamer Lord can advance his position somehow within his own culture, he may be of aid. Any reasonable person would be a fool to trust such assistance, however, as the price would be dear.

Krovaliss as an Enemy

Krovaliss is remarkably dispassionate about enemies. Unlike his hot-blooded kinsmen, he is calmer and more resolute about his foes, and does make enemies lightly. He views the Gossamer Lords as the hereditary enemies of his people, and his identity is defined almost entirely in terms of dealing with them, but it is not the fanatic hatred of his folk that he feels: instead, they are a problem to be dealt with tactically and with maximum efficiency. For these reasons Krovaliss has thrived within the Dwimmerlaik armies: a thinker amidst berserkers.

Objectives

His objectives are simple: to ready his people for the inevitable war with the Gossamer Lords, serving his Empress to the best of his ability, and furthering his own standing amongst his people, with an eye towards taking the throne himself if the opportunity presents itself. Currently, Krovaliss sends his Sable Guard into the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds to reconnoiter and learn what they may about the Gossamer Lords, to judge their strength and discover any apparent weaknesses.

Sample Dwimmerlaik Foes

Presented here are three examples of “generic” representatives of the Dwimmerlaik, presented in the same fashion as if they were player characters. Gamemasters can use these descriptions as ready-to-use nonplayer characters, or can further customize them to suit a specific purpose.

Dwimmerlaik Warrior

One of the countless horde of Dwimmerlaik, this doughty warrior is a lesser noble, a son of a mighty and revered bloodline, fierce and loyal, eager to redeem his birthright with a price paid in the blood of his enemies. His armor bears the sigils of his clan and his ornamentation lists his accomplishments thus far, including tokens taken from those he has defeated in sorties across the Gossamer worlds, throughout the Grand Stair. Though he wishes his name to echo across eternity, he is ready to die at a moment to serve the cause of his Empress. Sample Names: Dhunastor, Nemantis, Sanuma, Tarakiel.

Attributes

PSYCHE – Superior Rank

STRENGTH – Superior Rank

ENDURANCE – Superior Rank

WARFARE – Superior Rank

Powers

None

Artifacts & Creatures

Hallowed Weapon [1 Point] - Dwimmerlaik warriors wield weapons handed down across generations, relics used by their forebears in the epic defeat dealt the Dwimmerlaik by the Gossamer Lords. These blades, their wielders claim, thirst for the blood they were denied.

- Hardened [1 Point]

Stuff

Bad [+1 Point]

Dwimmerlaik General

A seasoned leader among the Dwimmerlaik legions, this mighty champion has seen countless wars, and may even have served in the battle against the Gossamer Lords that sent the Dwimmerlaik into exile. She is hardened, cunning, and more-than-capable a combatant, tactically skilled as well as being an impressive hand-to-hand skirmisher. In any battle she will lead her troops from the front line, and will likely challenge any Gossamer Lord she



Krovaliss, Suzerain of the Sixth Reach, seeks glory in the annihilation of the Gossamer Lords.

encounters to direct combat, in order to claim the greatest glory. Sample Names: Alsephar, Lumithu, Sar-Tamesik, Zaphorin.

Attributes

PSYCHE – Paragon Rank

STRENGTH – Paragon Rank

ENDURANCE – 10 Points

WARFARE – 15 Points

Powers

Cantrips [5 Points] – Eidolon Negation, Nullify, Pain, Paralyze, Stun

Artifacts & Creatures

Exalted Weapon [3 Points] – Like a Dwimmerlaik warrior, every general carries a relic blade, enchanted and inlaid with ceremonial glyphs that enhance its destructive virtues. Additionally, each of these weapons is emblazoned with an Icon of Krovaliss, the war-master of the Dwimmerlaik.

- Double Damage [2 Points]
- Contains an Icon [1 Point]

Pathing Amulet [13 Points] – As a people, the Dwimmerlaik are not generally accustomed to the Grand Stair, and thus their generals are equipped with amulets bearing the souls of trapped otherworldly servants (akin to demons). These grant the owners the ability to open Doors and walk on the Grand Stair. These amulets are self-aware, can communicate, and will warn their owner of nearby psychic presences or potentially threatening supernatural influence.

- Able to Speak [1 Point]
- Psychic Sensitivity [1 Point]
- Pass Through Door [1 Point]
- Confers Attunement to the Grand Stair Power Upon Owner [10 Points]

Hallowed Armor [2 Points] – Each Dwimmerlaik general is equipped with sacred armor, emblazoned with images and runic inscriptions to ensure greater resilience against foes' weapons.

- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]

Stuff

Bad [+3 Points]

Dwimmerlaik Witch

A disciple of Mowbray, the Pale Heirophant, the Dwimmerlaik witch has mastered all of the forms of ritual, incantation, and sorcery, and serves her people in their quest to reclaim dominion over the Gossamer worlds. From the midst of the Dwimmerlaik legions she serves as both counsel and disciplinarian, standing outside their martial tradition yet wielding tremendous influence and authority. She is esoteric and proud, though inquisitive of spirit and unlikely to rush to quick action. Sample Names: Chazoron, Dah-Tilios, Shalibri, Tesroian, Uro-Kalaasht.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 25 Points

STRENGTH – Superior Rank

ENDURANCE – Paragon Rank

WARFARE – Superior Rank

Powers

Channeling [40 Points]

Invocation [20 Points]

Sorcery [15 Points]

Cantrips [10 Points] – Charm, Dampen, Dim, Eidolon Negation, Focus, Glitch, Mana, Nullify, Open, Reveal.



A Dwimmerlaik witch seeks esoteric knowledge to guide her people.

Artifacts & Creatures

Totem Array [6 Points] – A number of tokens, magic fetish items, trinkets, baubles, and emblems, each inscribed with complex runic glyphs capable of housing a particular spell. Additionally, each has the property of being able to manipulate some aspect of Gossamer matter in a fashion desired by the owner.

- Mold Gossamer Matter [1 Point]
- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]
- Named & Numbered [x2 Points]

Allies

Dwimmerlaik Ally [4 Points]

Stuff

Bad [+5 Points]

New Power: Channeling [40 Points]

Though the Dwimmerlaik are mighty in the realms of warfare and sorcery, and are able to use all of the great Powers, the most potent weapon in their arsenal is unique to them, a potent psychic discipline called Channeling. This power enables the Dwimmerlaik to direct, or channel, Psyche in a variety of methods, serving both as a useful tool, a handy means of defense, and a devastating and terrible weapon. Channeling is known only to the Dwimmerlaik, and few outside their species have ever mastered it, with any outsiders demonstrating the power slain on sight. Users of this power are called 'Channelers.'

Favored Attributes for Channeling. As Channeling is primarily a psychic ability, Psyche is the most relevant Attribute. For extended uses of the power, Endurance becomes the most useful supporting Attribute.

Channeling Power Abilities

Far Sight. The Channeler is able to refine normal Psyche-based sensitivity (page 50) to a highly specific awareness of a particular being, object, or environment, giving a clear sense of its state, appearance, and location. The Channeler must be familiar with the object, being, or area to be observed, and must be in a physical and emotional state that allows for such intense concentration. While focusing on the desired subject, the Channeler's awareness is channeled away from their body, appearing at a suitable vantage point to observe the subject, and will remain so long as the Channeler concentrates. This awareness is as real as if the Channeler were present, and any psychically- or magically-perceptive beings will be able to detect the Channeler's vantage point. If the Channeler's body is disrupted or the Far Sight is somehow warded against, the ability ends and the Channeler's awareness returns home. This is not a projection of soul, merely awareness, and as such, the Channeler's spirit cannot be trapped or harmed in this place, though it does count as a psychic link, potentially allowing any Sorcery to be cast through the projection. This can be done readily and at unlimited range throughout a single Gossamer world. However, crossing the borders between worlds depends upon a considerably greater degree of concentration, as well as requiring the latent ability to travel through the Gossamer worlds.

Danger Sense. The Channeler is able to detect immediate threats to their person, either latent threats in an environment ("*That bridge will collapse if I walk across it!*") or those relating to actual intent ("*That woman readies a poisoned dagger to thrust into my back.*"). This is a focused ability, not a latent one, and the Channeler must be actively scanning an area for threats. The intensity of the sense and the specific information of the threat is dependent upon the intensity of the danger posted to the Channeler: a threat that is nonspecific and not certain will provoke a vague sense, while an impassioned and direct threat will create a vivid image within the Channeler's mind. The range is limited to the Channeler's immediate vicinity. Someone of sufficient Psyche or possessing some form of psychic shielding can potentially avoid detection, based on relative Psyche and the nature of the shielding.

Mind Shroud. By focusing entirely inward and blanking all conscious thought, the Channeler can shroud their mind to prevent others from detecting them psychically. This ability allows the Channeler to avoid detection from Psyche- or other magic-based means of detection. It requires a delicate form of "unconcentration" in which the Channeler focuses on being "nothing," and as such, it is impossible to do all the time, or to perform while attempting any ability greater than light movement. It can be overcome and the Channeler can be detected by greater-ranked Psyches, but only if the Channeler is being actively sought.

Will Binding. By engaging in and winning a Psychic conflict, the Channeler can dominate and bind the will of the loser, allowing a degree of psychic subjugation. At the lightest and most shallow level, the Channeler can compel information from the victim, or insist on some minor action such as "Drop your sword." The more dominant use of the ability allows the Channeler to compel the victim to perform more advanced or long-term tasks, or to behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the victim's personal goals. The degree of resistance the Channeler receives from the victim intensifies as the commands become more difficult, involved, or uncharacteristic of the victim: compelling a bit of information would be easy, while ordering the victim to slay a loved one or to commit a self-destructive act would require considerable psychic force and concentration. This ability is not coercive or subtle. It does not force the victim to feel any new emotional sensations or believe that the orders are in any way internal, and the victim will be fully aware that the compulsion is from the Channeler. The gamemaster may allow the victim multiple attempts at breaking free from the psychic dominance in instances of self-destructive or abhorrent commands.

Mind Storm. By opening a psychic link with the target, the Channeler can inflict a storm of conflicting thoughts, emotions, desires, and sensory input, creating a sensation of extreme disorientation, dizziness, and confusion. This ability requires an ongoing psychic link and concentration while the attacker creates the storm of unchecked, chaotic mental activity and channels it into the mind of the target, and any significant interruption to the Channeler will stop the Mind Storm instantly. While assaulted by the Mind Storm, the target is highly vulnerable, unable to focus on physical or mental activities, easily overcome by an outside attack. Only the greatest physical reflexes or instilled reactions (such as those granted by high-ranked Strength or Warfare) can keep the target from being utterly powerless. This is not an all-or-nothing sort of power: the target will still be aware of the Mind Storm even if resisting the attack, though it will not cause any discomfort or inconvenience.

Inflict Pain. By establishing an ongoing psychic link with the intended target, the Channeler can inflict psychic pain upon the target, pain that manifests as indirect or direct physical pain, depending on the desire of the Channeler. This pain is intense, and sudden, and though it does not cause any actual physical damage to the target, the sensation is very much as real as if damage is actually being done, so much so that a less intelligent or perceptive being might think that actual harm is being done. The Channeler can choose to inflict this power as agonizing burning, choking, intense muscle aches, uncontrollable nausea, or some other means of pain. While the target's Psyche is the opposed Attribute in determining if the ability has an effect, the Endurance Attribute measures how long the target will be able to withstand the effects of the pain, and how long they will be able to continue moving and acting while suffering.

Mind Speech. The Channeler can link minds with a willing (or unwilling) living being, enabling them to speak mind-to-mind through mere thought. The target must be within the Channeler's line of sight and within earshot, and the ability cannot be attempted through any artificial means of transmitting visual data (electronic devices, etc.). Mind Speech can be used with beings already in psychic contact, including those using Icons or other magic means. This ability does not enable mind-reading, but simply opens a channel of communication through which both parties can openly communicate freely, despite any language barriers that may exist. If performed upon a willing target, this does not require a Psyche vs. Psyche struggle and is considered psychic contact as described on page 79, with all of the opportunities and conditions that entails. Mind Speech can last as long as the two parties involved are willing and are relatively uninterrupted, and can be broken by either party or by suitable interference from outside parties (magic spells, psychic attacks, cantrips, etc.). If Mind Speech is attempted against an unwilling target, it requires a successful Psychic conflict to achieve, and the target can periodically attempt to break the connection if circumstances change or opportunities arise.

Mind Over Body. An inward-directed usage of the Channeling power, the Mind Over Body ability allows the Channeler to withstand the effects of pain, injury, illness, extremes of temperature, or any other environmental conditions that would be incapacitating or otherwise impair activity. The ability does not provide any actual resistance against the effects of these conditions: it merely allows the Channeler to focus their Psyche to withstand the pain and work past it, acting as if normal or with lesser impairment. When this ability is used, the gamemaster should determine how much impairment or injury the Channeler is suffering (see "Consequences of Conflicts" on page 86) as a measure of the internal conflict the Channeler must overcome, using Psyche instead of Endurance. If the Channeler wins the conflict, they are able to act as if suffering no incapacitation, moving through sheer force of will. While Psyche is the active Attribute here, ultimately Endurance determines how long the character can use Mind Over Body to act.

High Channeling [65 Points]

The greatest Channelers among the Dwimmerlaik are those who have embraced the power at its height: the advanced version of the power known as High Channeling. While Channeling itself is wholly concerned with the insubstantial, psychic world, this level of mastery confers upon the Channeler the ability to affect physical matter with the focused force of will. High Channeling is even more devoutly guarded by the Dwimmerlaik than the basic level of the power, and is rare even among their number. Under no circumstances are non-Dwimmerlaik taught this power, a transgression punishable by the deaths of both student and master.

Favored Attributes for High Channeling. As with Channeling, Psyche is the most important characteristic, being the psychic "muscles" that enable the Channeler to perform the abilities granted by the power. Psyche is followed by Endurance in importance, with Warfare becoming useful if the Telekinesis ability is used in physical combat.

High Channeling Abilities

Mind Strike. The Channeler is able to focus Psyche into a weapon and channel in an attack directed at a living being, creating a single devastating psychic blow. This is similar to the psychic attack option in psychic combat, described on page 81. The primary differences between that attack option and the Mind Strike ability is that Mind Strike does not require an existing psychic link, and can be directed at a single target within unbroken line of sight, even if the target is unaware of the Channeler. However, unlike the psychic attack option, Mind Strike is an instantaneous attack, like a sword-blow or pistol shot, and cannot be sustained. It is a quick, vicious psychic attack that can be repeated, but not sustained. Mind Strike is resolved in the same fashion as any other psychic attack, pitting the attacker's Psyche against the defender's Psyche, though it is instantaneous, giving the defender little chance to defend other than simply withstanding the initial blow. A defender expecting a Mind Strike may attempt other psychic defensive options (see page 82 for these) but an unsuspecting target is caught off-guard, almost as if the Mind Strike were a sniper-shot.

Alter Memory. While in psychic contact with another living, sentient being, the Channeler can use immense subtlety to affect the memory of that being by creating false memories, altering existing memories, or hiding existing memories from the target's

awareness. This activity requires that the Channeler defeat the target in a secret Psychic conflict, handled by the gamemaster and based on two things: the awareness the target may have about the Channeler; and the degree to which memories are being altered. The more suspicious the situation or egregious the memory altering, the more of an assault the Psychic meddling becomes, raising the full attention of the intended target, whereas a subtle manipulation of a casual memory by a Channeler who has not raised any suspicions can be accomplished with ease if the Channeler is superior in Psyche. If the Alter Memory ability is used successfully and not resisted, the target will believe the revised memory. The original memory is by no means gone, and potentially can be recovered with deep psychic scanning, but the falsified memory will be the one that immediately rises to mind. Over time, the target can potentially become aware of the memory meddling: the gamemaster should gauge the degree of difference the altered memory has from the original memory, and measure it against the target's own Psyche. A character with a high-ranked Psyche may recognize at once that even a subtle memory has been altered, while a low- or non-ranked Psyche character may remain blissfully unaware that their past has been extensively and retroactively edited.

Telekinesis. Psyche becomes a living extension of will, enabling the Channeler to manipulate physical matter, the stuff of Gossamer reality. With this ability, the Channeler can move physical items in the real world as if with the Channeler's own limbs. This can be used for fine manipulation of items, such as picking things up, catching things, and holding them aloft through force of mind, or it can be used aggressively, throwing items around, even directing telekinetic force against an opponent. When this ability is used, the Channeler's Psyche is used in place of the Strength Attribute to determine how much the Channeler can lift, or how powerful telekinetic "shoves" will be. Experienced Channelers can use this ability to wield weapons in armed combat, or use it in place of fists in unarmed combat. In these cases, the Warfare Attribute is used to determine the accuracy of such attacks or defensive actions. This ability requires considerable concentration to use, and bringing this ability to bear in the midst of a pitched combat is an act straddling the line between desperation and overconfidence. Functionally, it performs almost as an extra limb, capable of feats of extreme delicacy as well as brute force, but it is only comparable to actual Strength or Warfare in highly-specific and advantageous conditions.

Flesh Weaving. Exerting extraordinary discipline of mind over body, the Channeler is able to knit wounded or damaged organs, bone, and tissue, restoring the flesh to an undamaged condition. This ability requires intense, unbroken concentration and is extraordinarily taxing on the Channeler, requiring considerable expenditure of personal energy, supported by the Endurance Attribute. The difficulty is relative to the degree of the injury: a light injury will require only a little Flesh Weaving to restore and will be only a little tiring (like a dash up a few flights of stairs), while a serious, life-threatening injury will be an exhaustive expenditure of personal energy, akin to a marathon or days without sleep. The Channeler can attempt Flesh Weaving on other beings, though it is more difficult and requires an uninterrupted span of psychic contact, in which time both the Channeler and target's energy reserves are utilized to restore the injured or wounded flesh. Flesh Weaving cannot be attempted with an unwilling target. Additionally, it can only repair that which was damaged, restoring it to its previous condition, and does not work against viruses, radiation, poison, or any ongoing source of injury, nor will it work on injuries that have already healed, no matter how imperfect or incomplete that healing was.

A Note About Channeling

Channeling and High Channeling were created for use exclusively by the Dwimmerlaik, specifically as a means of giving them abilities that are simultaneously unexpected, unknown, and unpredictable. The gamemaster is encouraged to keep these powers exclusive to the Dwimmerlaik, and to shroud them in as much mystery as possible. If the powers are used subtly enough, the players may not even be sure that they were powers at all, or what their exact nature might be. Keeping things outside the player's knowledge base may seem unfair, but it is an essential tactic in building a mystery around the Dwimmerlaik. If the player characters encounter Dwimmerlaik and witness Channeling or High Channeling in action, the player characters may not know exactly what they saw. Nonplayer characters may even cast doubt that there could be powers outside of those commonly known.

If, over the course of the campaign, the player characters somehow encounter a Dwimmerlaik in anything other than hostility, this should be a rarity, and any Dwimmerlaik in its right mind should be loathe to give up the immense tactical advantage its race possesses in the form of these powers. Player characters requesting to learn Channeling or High Channeling may be denied outright, or even misled into thinking they are learning it, but are simply wasting their time in esoteric mental exercises with no actual educational benefit. Bad Stuff characters may even find that attempting to learn Channeling has done terrible damage to their psychic makeup, making them more akin to Dwimmerlaik than human (or otherwise). Stricter gamemasters may simply state that Channeling cannot be learned for reasons of genetics: that the psychic framework required for the power is unique solely to the Dwimmerlaik.

Chapter Sixteen: Threats of the Gossamer Worlds

Not all of the threats to the Gossamer Lords come from each other, or even the schemes of the Dwimmerlaik. The Gossamer worlds host countless beings of power, malicious entities that may come to cross purposes with the Gossamer Lords. Any creature that has ever lived, ever strode through myth or dreams, or ever could be imagined can be found somewhere within the Gossamer worlds, so there is no shortage of inspiration to draw from. The following creatures stand tall in prominence and reputation, and are alternately feared, respected, or even utilized by the Gossamer Lords. Each is unique for their affinity with the Grand Stair or the ability to breach the veil of Shadow that stands between Gossamer worlds. Most threats can be locked away behind closed Doors, but these can follow.

The gamemaster may wish to introduce some or any of these creatures as hazards the player characters are familiar with, or can emerge as heretofore-unknown menaces. These creatures can be encountered as part of an overall narrative, used by enemies as assassins or muscle, or can be utilized solely as flavor to give some element of danger to world-hopping. They can be used singly or encountered en masse, as needed.

Each entry is described as if it were an artifact or creature, with some variation or range provided for individuals. The gamemaster should feel free to expand, alter, or customize these descriptions as desired. Additionally, the gamemaster should determine each creature's exact Attribute ranking in context of the existing player characters and the Attribute Ladder.

Annunaki

Strange, formless beings that resemble animate lattices of Eidolon tracery, roughly humanoid but occasionally observed to follow other, more terrible configurations. Little is known of their origins, though there are theories that they are the remnants of a long-vanished race that went sublime, becoming nothing but a higher order of being with only the grand design of the Eidolon left. Others claim that the Annunaki exist in some other place and only the Eidolon aspect of their being is visible in the Gossamer worlds or the Grand Stair. Either way, they are inscrutable and powerful, rare and dangerous... often encountered in places where immense power has been called upon. Annunaki walk the Grand Stair at will, and are dangerous and unpredictable, as liable to ignore a traveler as to attack on sight. The touch of an Annunaki is charged with powerful Eidolon energy, particularly devastating to foes aligned with the Umbra.

- Linked to a Power (Eidolon) [2 Points] – Annunaki are composed almost entirely of Eidolon energy.
- Immense Vitality [4 Points]
- Double Speed [2 Points]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points] or Combat Mastery [4 Points]
- Double Damage [2 Points]

- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]
- Self Healing [1 Point]

Erebi

Creatures born out of the Shadow, the space between worlds. Singly each is known as an Erebi. They project a broken, fragmentary part of their essence into the Gossamer worlds, and as a result, they appear as horrific creatures made of tears in reality, causing physical distress and discomfort. There is no common shape to them: one might appear in an almost humanoid form, another a lengthy tear in the firmament, and another as a swirling cloud of holes in the stuff of reality, each resonating with the emptiness of the Shadow. Erebi do not communicate in any comprehensible fashion, and their motives (if any) are unknown. Their touch is highly destructive to reality, making them dangerous foes if encountered. Powerful Dwimmerlaik sorcerers occasionally capture and bind these creatures to their service, when they wish to send agents to the Gossamer worlds or the Grand Stair.

- Nullify Gossamer Reality [8 Points] – Unlike the Umbra, which warps or weakens reality, the presence of Erebi is actually destructive to Gossamer reality, pulling it into the void of Shadow.
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Paragon Stamina [2 Points]
- Destructive Damage [8 Points]
- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]

Gorgons

Named for the mythological snake-headed beings, these are actually powerful hive entities: immensely powerful puppet-master creatures that destroy the spirits of lesser creatures and envelop them into a hive identity of creatures, overpowering the spirit of the host entity. Eventually, the lesser creatures become a reflexive, integral part of the creature they are connected to (physically or psychically), and in some cases the host can actually “become” the swarm of creatures if the host's original body is destroyed. A Gorgon, for example, could be a woman with a batch of snakes for hair, a shark beset with dozens of lampreys that have assumed control of its higher functions, a druid who has lost his self to a murder of crows, or the grotesque compound creature known as a rat king. A Gorgon's intelligence and efficacy depends on the originating creature. Often used as assassins or spies, Gorgons are astonishingly resilient... if even one aspect of the hive creature survives, it is all that is required for the Gorgon to regroup and re-multiply.



Other foes await the Gossamer Lords: Ur-Orobos, Eidolon Constructs, Gorgons, Annunaki, Erebi, Umbra Gaunts, and Minotaurs are just a few.

- Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point] – The distributed nature of a Gorgon makes it more difficult to kill.
- Self Healing [1 Point] – A Gorgon can rapidly heal by incorporating fresh creatures of its type into its collective self.
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Superior Stamina [1 Point]
- Combat Training [1 Point]
- Able to Speak and Reason [2 Points]
- Psychic Resistance [1 Point]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Combat Supremacy [8 Points]
- Destructive Damage [8 Points]
- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]
- Regeneration [4 Points]
- True Name is Secret [4 Points]

Minotaur

If there was ever a creature suited for wandering the halls of an endless series of passages, it is the Minotaur. Though some Gossamer worlds feature minotaurs as creatures of legend, when the Gossamer Lords use the term they are inevitably speaking of one beast, the original Minotaur, a being so primal and powerful that its existence has echoed across the Gossamer worlds. The creature is hulking, horned, and clawed, possessing a fierce intelligence and relentless hate, stalking the halls of the Grand Stair and occasionally straying into the Gossamer worlds, spawning myths... and monstrous children.

- Exalted Vitality [16 Points]
- Double Speed [2 Points]

Typhonians

The name refers to an ancient race of powerful beings whose passing is beyond the memory of the most ancient of the Gossamer Lords. The Dwimmerlaik make the Typhonians out as demonic figures, gigantic figures with incredible powers, able to shape the raw stuff of Gossamer material into monsters. Their legends hold that these beings made the universe, and that each of the infinite Gossamer worlds was born of the interplay of raw matter around a Typhonian, making each the source of that world. Each world must, by the natural order, slay the Typhonian, and the bodies of each must, by the same token, be trapped or deconstructed so that the world could truly live. Thus, Typhonians dwell in legend and myth, sleeping or dead gods that do not trouble the folk of their worlds, save perhaps through dreams. Other worlds have them as founts of monsters, beings comprised of horrific monstrous elements that separate to populate the universe with awfulness.

Examples of Typhonians across the Gossamer worlds include Ymir, Atlas, Tuisto, Kūnī, and Purusha.

No attributes are provided for Typhonians. If they still exist in some Gossamer world, they are likely too powerful to be rated by a scale player characters can interact with.

Ur-Orobos

Freakish shape-changers with no obvious real body, these chimerical beings are violent predators and hunt in packs... small tribes moving across the Gossamer worlds and into the Grand Stair itself. Their actual intelligence is unknown, though they are able to communicate when in the shape of sentient beings. Once subjugated by the Dwimmerlaik and set in packs against the Gossamer Lords, they have since run wild and are now an uncontrollable menace, albeit a minor one. They remember their subjugation by the Dwimmerlaik almost as much as they remember their hatred of the Gossamer Lords. A powerful Gossamer Lord could handle a few Ur-Orobos... though the outcome would be uncertain, and a larger pack of Ur-Orobos would be a considerable challenge.

- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Double Speed [2 Points]
- Superior Stamina [1 Point]
- Combat Training [1 Point]
- Double Damage [2 Points]
- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]
- Rapid Healing [2 Points]
- Limited Shape-shift [4 Points]

Manifestations of the Powers

The influence of the Umbra and the Eidolon extend through all of the Gossamer worlds, shaping all of reality as if caught in a tug-of-war between stability and entropy. Most Masters on either side of the fence assume that these powers are without personalities or agendas other than the obvious principle each represents. Neither power has an outright manifestation, such as an avatar or symbolic representation, though both can (and often do) exert their will by manifesting agents composed of their specific energy, set into motion.

Eidolon Constructs

Eidolon constructs are golems—artificial or occasionally natural—composed of raw elemental Gossamer reality, shambling masses of dense matter, powered by mana and imbued with resilience by the Eidolon. They are guided by simple instructions imposed by the Eidolon, and can come in almost any shape or solid substance. Most often, though, they are often plain and solid, heavy rather than slight, slow and deliberate rather than deft. These constructs are brute force commandos, with limited re-use and no finesse. A player character might assemble one using the

Artifact & Creature system, or find a naturally occurring construct in a Gossamer world and set it to use by scribing it with Eidolon-based commands upon it. Eidolon constructs are encountered singly or in great number, depending on circumstance.

- Linked to a Power (Eidolon) [1 Point]
- Immense Vitality [4 Points]
- Mobility [1 Point]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Combat Training [1 Point]
- Able to Speak [1 Point]
- Psychic Resistance [1 Point]

Umbra Gaunts

Bodiless spirits, Umbra Gaunts possess dead or nearly-dead beings to effect the Umbra's goals. The creatures so possessed are those in which the power of the Umbra was already strong, with the Umbra Gaunt sublimating or destroying any vestiges of will, though retaining residual intelligence and memory where it might be of service. A being so possessed will take on a visual element of the destabilizing force of the Umbra, corporeal existence rapidly consumed and breaking apart at a primal level. These are thoroughly horrific beings to encounter, rarely lasting longer than the purpose the Umbra puts them to.

- Mobility [1 Point] – This quality is applied only if the being is otherwise inanimate.
- Linked to a Power (Umbra) [2 Points]
- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- Able to Speak in Tongues and Voices [4 Points]
- Psychic Neutral [2 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]



Chapter Seventeen: Adventures

“The Gathering Storm” is an introductory adventure for game-masters to use with *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*. It is intended to begin a campaign, and thus makes provisions for an Attribute Auction and character creation. Several adventure suggestions are provided later in this chapter, each an initial story concept gamemasters can expand and personalize into full adventures, or even campaigns.

The Gathering Storm

AN INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE FOR NEW PLAYER CHARACTERS

This adventure serves a quick-and-dirty, rapid method of throwing player characters pell-mell into the world of *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, introducing them to the grand conflicts and major aspects of the setting. It is based on an adventure run by Kit Kindred and John Lees at Ambercon U.S., 2012.

Adventure Overview

No matter where they are in the Gossamer worlds, the player characters suddenly appear within a side hall at the fringes of the Agora, a vast free market space within the Grand Stair. They appear randomly, not far from one another, and quickly realize that they’ve been summoned through a strange Icon-based ritual. They realize that their arrival here in the Grand Stair was neither incidental nor unnoticed. The body of an unknown magician, their summoner, lies before them, having sustained horrible wounds both physical and supernatural. She gasps a cryptic warning about a traitor, and dies. Before they have a chance to investigate, the player characters are attacked by savage creatures, a pack of creatures out of Shadow, returning to finish the job and destroy any witnesses.

Whether the player characters flee or defeat the Shadow creatures, they are again interrupted by the arrival of a Gossamer Lord, who tells them that something strange is going on here in the Grand Stair. He wants to know how they are involved, and says they should speak to Lucien, the one who sent him. As they ready to go, they see that the Agora is under attack by ancient enemies of the Gossamer Lords... the Dwimmerlaik. The characters can either stay to help the folk of the Agora or leave, but the Dwimmerlaik will be in quick pursuit either way. They must then determine how the Dwimmerlaik got there, and how to stop them!

Steps of this Adventure

Adventures for *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* are generally fairly loosely-described, out of necessity. The array of potential character types and their wide range of abilities makes a linear narrative difficult to pull off effectively without limiting the freedom of player characters. For this reason, detailed

descriptions of particular encounters or outcomes are unlikely to be used as described.

This adventure, for example, follows the five-step adventure outline described in **CHAPTER TWELVE: CREATING ADVENTURES** in that it provides an *Introduction* (the arrival of the player characters and the initial mystery), an immediate *Conflict* (an attack and the arrival of a nonplayer character), an immediate *Climax* (a greater attack), and can then lead to further *Complications* (powerful enemies have now invaded the Grand Stair, and there may be a traitor amongst the Gossamer Lords) and a longer-off *Resolution* (shutting down the gate between Shadow and the Grand Stair).

However, “The Gathering Storm” can also serve as the launching point for a longer adventure to be, in which case the entirety of this adventure becomes the *Introduction* and all subsequent described events are folded into the *Conflict* and *Climax* steps, with later evolutions of the adventure expanded by the gamemaster and representing the *Complication* (discovering the identity of the traitor, and the Dwimmerlaik solidifying their foothold in the Grand Stair), and to be eventually concluded in a grander, more epic *Conclusion* (identifying and confronting the traitor, thwarting the Dwimmerlaik’s invasion).

Background

A relatively obscure and distant member of the Gossamer Lords, Tsianan’oshtra, known only to the older Gossamer Lords, absent for centuries and thought dead, styled herself a master thief of rare and esoteric magic, delving into secrets of power unknown to most. Her searches led her to a unique power source, something related to the Shadow, drawing some strange energy from the void. Investigating further, she discovered the sites of several intrusions into the Grand Stair from Shadow, a sobering thing, and found evidence that there was collaboration from within the Grand Stair, someone creating a magic tether in the Grand Stair so that something there might make contact.

Given the nature of the magic used, and the power required, it could only be of the Gossamer Lords. One of them, she surmised, was aiding something out in Shadow... but who, what, and why? She decided that she needed to know more before being able to proceed.

Because entering Shadow was dangerous, she crept into Lucien’s section of the Labyrinth, bypassing his wards, and stole from him a set of Icons, a set depicting many of the Gossamer Lords. Not knowing who to trust, she took a handful of Icons (the player characters), thinking that she could use the Icons as identifiers to determine if the psychic impression in the Icons matched the one she sensed was responsible for the ritual.

Unbeknownst to the player characters, Lucien fashions Icons of anyone he senses will become worth knowing about. He has several such sets, and does not readily admit this information.

Tsianan’oshtra entered the void, tracing back through the

magic gate that had been created, and discovered that it led to a portion of Khaestaros, the throne realm of the Dwimmerlaik. The region Tsianan'oshtra arrived in was a ritual space, sacred to the Dwimmerlaik, where a grand and powerful magic spell had recently been made complete, turning it into something of a teleporter, a device capable of opening Void Gates into the Grand Stair.

Tsianan'oshtra crept around the place, spying as much as she could, and learned that plans were being enacted to invade the Grand Stair and make an assault on the Gossamer Lords. The invasion is not yet ready, however, and a powerful ally from within the Gossamer Lords would soon alert them to the exact time to strike.

She was discovered by the Dwimmerlaik before she could return on her own, and so she fled through the Void Gate, temporarily disabling it as she passed through, into a place she thought she'd be able to shake off any pursuers, the Agora. Tsianan'oshtra was not fast enough, or did not expect her enemies to pursue so quickly. She was caught immediately by a pack of Erebi, hunter-killers with the ability to manifest in the Grand Stair without the need of a Void Gate.

The horrific creatures tore her apart, leaving her near death. In her dying moments, she scrawled a blood sorcery ritual, calling upon Wrighting to activate a handful of the sole Gossamer Lord Icons she did not recognize, and using the latent power of the Void Gate she had just come through. She pulled the player characters through to her, hoping they would be enough to stop the Erebi and save her. Unfortunately, the effort required to concoct the spell was too great for her, and cost Tsianan'oshtra her life, her final moments spent gasping out a warning about a traitor.

Meanwhile, in Khaestaros, the Dwimmerlaik have re-activated their Void Gate and are ready to send a squad through to find the spy who infiltrated their realm and bring her back, dead or alive, and to eliminate any who may learn of their invasion plans.

Introduction

The gamemaster should ask each of the player characters what they are doing and where they are at the time the adventure begins, giving each of them the chance to introduce their characters in appropriate settings. This should be done one after another, with a few minutes dedicated to each player character. If any of them know one another, or state that they are in the same place, the gamemaster should endeavor to get them together. The more players, the quicker the introductions should be.

At a particularly dramatic or suitable moment, the gamemaster should then announce:

Suddenly... your vision dims and goes red... a blood-colored red. There is something strange happening around you, as if the very stuff of reality itself has been torn and is rebelling in pain. You get a sense of being drawn, more powerful than you can resist, and suddenly you realize you are somewhere else. You can hear a din of many voices, but all you can see is that deep red.

I'll get back to you.

The gamemaster should continue this until all of the player characters have been accounted for.

Because player characters could conceivably have access to artifacts that can block psychic contact, the gamemaster has the choice of either temporarily separating the player character from that artifact for some narrative excuse, or simply saying that it has no effect at this time.

Each of the player characters has been teleported from wherever they were (Gossamer world, Domain, Grand Stair, etc.) to a remote hall within the Agora, the sprawling free market that has taken over a section of the Grand Stair. Each of them experienced the same blood-red vision and sudden sense of movement. The gamemaster should describe the following:

The red sight clears and you realize you're in a long, semi-dark wide section of hallway, lit by flickering oil lamps, obviously some part of the Grand Stair. There is an entrance at either end of this section of hall, and one wall is filled with windows which overlook onto a much larger space echoing with many voices. A number of Doors are set into the wall opposite the open windows.

None of this is as remarkable as the fact that each of you is arranged in a rough circle facing one another, around four yards apart. In the middle, on the ground, is the slumped body of a woman, her clothes stained with a lot of blood, and more pooling beneath her. You hear her low voice, rasping, as she says: 'One of us... a traitor.' She coughs horribly then, and her breath leaves her for the last time.

On the ground at her hand, drawn in blood, is a strange and complicated magical glyph that seems to be steaming. Some small things are standing in the middle of it, and a wooden box lies upside down next to her.

If this is the first session, the gamemaster should encourage the players to describe their characters in the state they were before they appeared here. If the player characters do not all know one another, this is a nice and sudden introduction. If they know one another, the gamemaster should encourage the players to act appropriately. If there are rivalries, they may suspect one another. They may likely consider this a trap. The gamemaster should encourage such roleplaying, until the player characters realize that nothing is going to happen... immediately, at least.

Naturally, with a dead body on the ground, the player characters may want to investigate. Upon examination, they will discover the following:

- The person on the ground is that of a thin, very tall, woman, youngish and humanoid, with golden-colored skin and russet hair. Her features are particularly sharp (pointed ears, stark cheekbones, etc.) and her skin bears an elaborate pattern of faint lines that are either long-faded tattoos or a natural pattern, like a tabby cat's stripes. Her hands are three-fingered, though part of her left hand has been torn away. The nails of her hand are almost claw-like. She wears leather pants, high soft-soled boots, and a toughened jacket covered in overlapping triangular lacquered wood scales.
- Around her wrist is a bracelet made up of metal items, like coins. Each coin has a single side, depicting a variety of people. These, a character with Wrighting will realize, are Icons, and some of them are notable Gossamer Lords.
- Her body is covered with horrible wounds, gashes that seem torn from her flesh rather than cut. The wounds are extensive and penetrate into her vital organs, most likely the cause of death.
- The blood on the ground is obviously hers, and the glyph she drew in her own blood is still giving off steam, as if it were recently charged with a vast amount of magic energy, some of it scorched onto the floor.
- Player characters with Sorcery and/or Wrighting will realize that she combined the two to cast some powerful spell, fuelling it with her own life energy and combining it with some other power, one whose vestiges are still latent in the air. This summoning likely killed her.
- The things standing in the middle of the glyph are similar to chess pieces, each around three inches tall and are stylized representations of each of the player characters, designed to evoke aspects of their personalities more than their specific likenesses. These pieces are arranged within the bloody glyph exactly in the same configuration the player characters appeared in. They are carved of silvery wood and are heavier than they would seem. They have no identifying markings. Any player character with the Wrighting power will recognize the items as Icons, but none of the player characters have seen this particular set before.
- The wooden box on the floor is of fine dark wood, clasped in silver, blood still wet on it, especially around the clasp. Turning the box over or picking it up will cause a few items to fall from it, pieces like those of the player characters. The rest of the set is still stuck snugly in velvet-lined places. Other than those of the player characters, there are a half-dozen more Icons in all, though the case has spaces for at least two dozen pieces.

Anyone familiar with the Grand Stair may have heard of, or visited, the Agora, and recognize the noise as the everyday activity within the immense sprawling free market. Stepping to the window will reveal that this hall is a sort of balcony set into the wall of one of several of the Agora's marketplaces, around ten meters from the balcony edge to the ground. The market is busy. No one is looking up or pays any attention to observers from the balcony.

Complications

After a likely all-too-short bit of investigation, or if things lag and the players begin to lose themselves in debate:

This is all pretty weird and grim, but it gets worse. You all hear a sudden unearthly howl, as space tears itself once more, and a terrible wound seems to open in reality in two places, situated at either of the exits to the Grand Stair. Strange beings form in those places, their very shape defined by non-existence. These horrific absences of matter begin to move towards you, the air itself shrieking as it is drawn into the void of their shapes.

What are you doing?

The creatures are Erebi (described on page 145), freakish creatures born in Shadow. Player characters who have been around a while and know about the Grand Stair may have heard of them, and know they are extremely dangerous. The gamemaster should adjust the number of Erebi based on the number of player characters and their combat ability. They are extremely deadly, so the best defense is to either flee from them or to strike back quickly with ranged weapons, avoiding direct combat if at all possible. One advantage the player characters have is that the Erebi do not move quickly and are not really combatants, and fight by merely extending their touch and harming or banishing the matter it comes into contact with.

At a dramatic moment, or if things look dire for the player characters, the gamemaster should introduce Cal, a Gossamer Lord described on page 124.

You hear a click from the direction of the Doors set into the wall. One is open, and in the doorway is a man. His hair is dark and he's in tan and brown and black. He's pointing a pistol at the lot of you, and his other hand is on the hilt of the long sword sheathed at his hip.

"What the hell is going on here?" he asks.

If any of the player characters know Cal, they'll recognize him. The Door behind him opens into a part of Lucien's section of the Labyrinth. If attacked, Cal will jump back through and close it, trusting to Lucien to keep it secure for him. If the player characters want to talk, he will remain near the open Door.

From Cal, the player characters can learn:

- Cal was visiting Lucien when a magic ward went off. Lucien determined that something had breached the wall between Shadow and the Grand Stair, a rare and always dangerous occurrence.
- Lucien immediately sent Cal to scout it while he examined his ward to learn more.
- Erebi, Cal recognizes, are from Shadow. They rarely make their way into the Grand Stair because it is much more difficult for them to manifest here. One is a freak occurrence, while two has purpose behind it.
- He does not recognize the woman, either, but claims she's likely one of their own number, a wayward Gossamer Lord.
- He does not know what the blood ritual was, only that it is some sort of High Sorcery, combined with a level of Wrihting beyond his.
- One of the Icons in the set is of him. Others are of Lucien, Drake, and even Dayle, plus a couple he does not recognize, and a few that are of creatures he does not recognize.

As Cal is talking, the player characters become aware of a sudden disturbance in the Agora... screams of pain and fear. Looking over the balcony, the player characters see the following:

A wave of chaos and commotion is entering this part of the Agora's market. A group of beings, perhaps two dozen in number, are cutting a swath through the place, overturning tents, attacking merchants and customers, causing as much chaos as they can.

The troublemakers are armored humanoids, at least a head taller than a human, with great curling horns and baroque armor. They are all armed with curved, scythe-like blades, and their faces are long, noseless. One of them, a female in heavier armor than the rest, suddenly looks upward and points her sword at the balcony where you're all standing. She bellows something to her troops and gestures, and they look as if they will head to the section of the Grand Stair leading up to the hall you're in.

"Dwimmerlaik?!?" says Cal. "We need to get the hell out of here, now!"

What Happens Next?

The Void Gate is not precise, and the second use arrived close to where Tsianan'oshttra came through, allowing a group of Dwimmerlaik to pursue. There are two dozen Dwimmerlaik Warriors, a Dwimmerlaik Witch, and one Dwimmerlaik General, all described on pages 140-141. The gamemaster may adjust these quantities as desired, based on the relative ability and readiness of the player characters. The purpose of this conflict is primarily to motivate the player characters to move on, and to introduce the

Dwimmerlaik, rather than have a huge battle at this point.

The player characters have many options at this point, and following are some ways their actions can be resolved:

Fighting the Dwimmerlaik in the Agora. The player characters may decide that they are up to the challenge, and leap to the aid of the folk of the Agora. Some of the people of the Agora may rise to their own defense, but it is a crowd primarily made up of mortals who have found their way into the Grand Stair, and they are not especially effective in combat. The Void Gate could potentially remain open, letting more Dwimmerlaik come through.

Letting the Dwimmerlaik Come to Them. The player characters can allow the Dwimmerlaik to cut their way through the Agora and up the Grand Stair to where they wait, giving the player characters a tactical advantage, defending an uphill position. However, the Dwimmerlaik may be able to use one of the other Doors, and there is another entrance to the hall the player characters are in...

Fleeing Outright. A tactical retreat will be followed by the Dwimmerlaik, who will first go to where Tsianan'oshttra died, and the Dwimmerlaik Witch will get a sense of who was summoned, at which point the Dwimmerlaik will pursue the player characters, depending on where they go. This does not solve the problem, only delays it, and the characters will be forced to deal with the Dwimmerlaik, who use their pathing amulets (page 141) to follow them wherever they flee.

Going With Cal. If the player characters follow Cal's advice (which is not so much fear as letting Lucien know what is up), they find themselves in a remote corridor in Lucien's section of the Labyrinth, his Domain at the heart of the Grand Stair. This is an area he created specifically to trap and waylay intruders, and he knew that if Cal came back through pursued, they would be led into this trap. The Dwimmerlaik will trail the player characters, and Lucien and Cal will readily join any conflict to defend the Labyrinth. Lucien's wards are almost always magical, with spells readied to inflict destruction and calamity on any trespassers.

Talking to Lucien. Once the immediate matter of the Dwimmerlaik expeditionary strike force is dealt with, Lucien will want to know everything about Tsianan'oshttra's death, the glyph, and the attacks by the Erebi and the Dwimmerlaik. He knew her and knew what she was capable of, but had not suspected she'd stolen the Icons from him. The news of a traitor within the midst of the Gossamer Lords is troubling, and he encourages the players to keep a lid on it until they learn more. This might incur suspicion from the player characters, but he will explain that he does not want to alert the traitor that their existence, if not their exact identity, is known.

Calling on Allies. The player characters can seek refuge in Shatterlight with Vala, try to impose on Drake, or invoke assistance from other potential Gossamer Lord allies. Any of them will be greatly alarmed at the notion of an attack on the Agora, and even more troubled by the nature of the assailants, once it is known. The Gossamer Lords will almost certainly want to know more, and will be troubled at the notion of a traitor within their

midst, likely suspecting one of the player characters.

Rousing the Troops. Player characters may have access to soldiers and martial resources of their own, and the gamemaster should accommodate any such intervention. Though the Dwimmerlaik strike force is powerful, they are not overwhelmingly so, and their numbers are limited.

Finding the Void Gate. There is still the matter of the Void Gate, perhaps still active in one of the many side-chambers of the Agora. It is a strange and unsettling tear in the air, a rift in the fabric of reality, charged with Dwimmerlaik magic and opening into someplace in Shadow. The gate on the other end has likely closed, and this remnant is still vestigial. Player characters may choose to try to re-activate the Void Gate, and the gamemaster is encouraged to let them explore their options.

Going Through the Void Gate. This is likely a terrible idea, and one the player characters may regret. If the Void Gate is open, and they choose to use it, they will emerge into a ritual circle within the heart of the war-grounds of Khaestaros, a place with thousands of battle-ready Dwimmerlaik warriors and witches, eager to see what emerges. The gamemaster may, however, assume that the Dwimmerlaik sent the team on a suicide mission and did not care overmuch whether they lived or died, and are not paying attention to the Void Gate. Or it might be that the Void Gate's unreliability works both ways, and that coming back through it puts the player characters somewhere less immediately dangerous. Once there, what will they do?

Finishing Up

The primary goal of this adventure is defeating the initial assault by the Dwimmerlaik, discovering and closing the Void Gate, and learning that there is a traitor amidst the Gossamer Lords. Once these goals are accomplished, the adventure can be concluded, though there are enough dangling plot threads to continue for further adventures, or even serve as the beginning of a campaign.

The identity of this traitor is not provided here, as it is for the gamemaster to determine. It may be one of the existing Gossamer Lords, with the following possibilities:

- Lucien is sort of suspicious and seems to know a lot more than is going on.
- Drake has been secretly in contact with Krovaliss over the centuries in a manner akin to two rival world leaders having secret discussions, but there may be more to it
- Bastiano is always ambitious. How far will his ambition go?
- Dayle has been out of touch for decades, if not centuries. What has she been up to?

Alternately, the traitor could be a Gossamer Lord of the gamemaster's creation, or it could be none of them. The traitor might be a long-missing Gossamer Lord capable of going back and forth to the Grand Stair, who lives amidst the Dwimmerlaik



Dayle, the Eternal Seeker, pursues Truth before all else. What has she found?

now, and was seen and recognized by Tsianan'oshtra. Or in a more complicated turn of events, perhaps Tsianan'oshtra herself was the traitor, betrayed and turned on by the Dwimmerlaik despite her efforts on their behalf. In this case, the gamemaster could simply eliminate her cryptic message about a traitor, and assume that she was trying to summon the player characters wholly to save her from her former allies, the Dwimmerlaik. Or she was trying to throw suspicion off herself if she survived. Tsianan'oshtra summoned the player characters rather than older or more powerful Gossamer Lords because she felt that those who knew her would recognize her potential for betrayal, and might be immediately suspicious.

Adventure Seeds

Following are four adventure seeds that the gamemaster can develop further into longer adventures, incorporating plot threads specific to the player characters, or utilizing these ideas in other contexts.

The Sleeper Wakes

A wave of terrifying creatures are manifesting within the Grand Stair and a number of Gossamer worlds. Investigating reveals that these are all ancient monsters of myth and legend from a number

of similar Gossamer worlds, worlds with Doors in close proximity to one another on the Grand Stair. Player characters visiting that world will get a strange sensation, as if the entire world are doomsayers, or have suddenly become part of a massive cult dimly aware of the rising of some primal being.

Further investigation reveals that this is not far from the truth: one of the ancient Typhonians (page 146-147) is rising, his coming triggered by the actions of a cult of the still-devout. The Typhonian's dreams are causing the creation of these monsters, which are running amok on their world and into the Grand Stair. Similar events are happening in other Gossamer worlds where the same Typhonian still holds sway. Simply shutting down the Doors to that world may not do the trick, as the dream-born monsters are stirring in world after world. Can the player characters stop such an immense being from rising?

The Day the Doors Opened

All of the Doors on the Grand Stair are inexplicably open, all at once, creating utter pandemonium as tens of thousands of beings enter the Grand Stair, wandering its length, mingling and getting into all manner of trouble. Conflicts are arising between these unready universe travelers, and people are getting lost, finding their way into strange new worlds from which they cannot escape. Areas like the Agora are overrun with newcomers, and the nature of those who are entering the Grand Stair ranges from those with a vestige of real magic power to the equivalent of commuters, normal people who went through the wrong door at the wrong time. Now they are struggling to survive in this strange place, exploring their way through it, sleeping on the landings and often dying while trying to find food and shelter. All of them, however, no matter where on the Grand Stair they emerge, are subtly heading in one direction... the Labyrinth. Why? And why are all of them dreaming of a huge, horned being made of darkness and rage? Is that the howl of the Minotaur?

An alternate to this adventure might be "The Day the Doors Closed," where the player characters and all of the Gossamer Lords are suddenly trapped in the Grand Stair, when none of the Doors open and all of the Gossamer Worlds are suddenly shut down to them, even through magical means. What has happened? What force could do such a thing?

The Queen is Dead, Long Live the (Insert Title)

News reaches the player characters that Vala, the unofficial leader of the Gossamer Lords, is dead, murdered within the very heart of her sanctuary in Shatterlight. Drake is demanding that all of the Gossamer Lords gather there at once, that an accounting might be had, to determine who was responsible for her death. He has declared himself temporary leader, a position he makes clear he does not wish to hold for very long, and everyone is under suspicion. The other Gossamer Lords react to the news with a mixture of sadness, shock, anticipation, and in some cases, ambition.

First the mystery of Vala's death must be investigated, and the player characters are among those appointed to determine what happened. Evidence points at several prominent Gossamer Lords, though there is the stink of magic around everything, as if something is deliberately obfuscating the trail and attempting to implicate certain others. Furthermore, some Gossamer Lords have not replied to Drake's summons, and the player characters are dispatched to find them. Doing so, the player characters may learn that some of these missing Gossamer Lords are either also deceased, or are specifically hiding out.

The more pressing matter to many is the question of succession. As Vala was never formally recognized as a monarch (and would have never chosen to be), the issue of who will assume the authority of leading the Gossamer Lords is now of dire importance. Is it time to move to a more formal leader, a crowned King or Queen, and if not, then what form will the rule take? How will a leader be selected, and who qualifies? Can a leader be chosen before the identity of Vala's murderer is discovered? And is Drake telling the truth when he claims he does not wish to be the ruler over the Gossamer Lords?

The Enemy of My Enemy

The player characters are up to their own business, preferably together, when the air shrieks and a huge wave of reality nearby is suddenly drawn away, as if torn apart. In the crater remaining is a group of Dwimmerlaik, led by a Dwimmerlaik general. Before conflict can erupt, the Dwimmerlaik call for peace, claiming that they are merely the guard for an envoy, and wish for this herald to be taken to the leader of the Gossamer Lords. Because of this, all of the Gossamer Lords are summoned to Shatterlight, Vala's Domain and the unofficial center of power for the Gossamer Lords, to hear what the Dwimmerlaik herald has to say. The player characters have a little time to interact with them, and may learn something about this ancient enemy.

Once Vala has sworn that no harm will come to them, the Dwimmerlaik herald reveals herself to be none other than their Empress Ayasha, and alongside her is her general, Krovaliss. She claims that she has come barely-defended into the heart of the Gossamer Lords' power because she wishes to sue for peace, to see that the aeons-old strife is set aside entirely. Her folk wish to leave Shadow and return to the Grand Stair and the Gossamer worlds, to live alongside the Gossamer Lords, treated as a sovereign nation of equals. Surely, she claims, there is enough space for all of them in the infinity of the Gossamer worlds? The Dwimmerlaik then depart.

In a council after the meeting, Vala asks all the Gossamer Lords assembled why the Dwimmerlaik have suddenly returned, and bids each of them to investigate what has brought them here. Are their words what they claim, is this a pretense for invasion, or is there a greater threat that drives them from Shadow to seek refuge alongside their very enemies?

Appendix One: Inspirations

Other than the obvious debt to Roger Zelazny's *The Chronicles of Amber* and Erick Wujick's *Amber Diceless Role-Playing*, this game is inspired by a number of sources. These are presented here for gamemasters and players to peruse and enjoy, and perhaps draw similar inspiration from.

PRINT: *The Chronicles of Amber*, *Roadmarks*, *Changeling*, *Madwand*, *Jack of Shadows*, and *'Mana from Heaven,'* by Roger Zelazny; *'The Somewhere Doors,'* by Fred Chappell; *Orphans of Chaos*, *Fugitives of Chaos*, and *Titans of Chaos*, by John C. Wright; *The Knight*, *The Wizard*, *There Are Doors*, and *The Magician's House*, by Gene Wolfe; *The Well-favored Man*, *A Sorcerer and a Gentleman*, and *The Prince of Blood and Honor*,

by Elizabeth Willey; *The Merchant Princes*, by Charles Stross; *His Dark Materials*, by Phillip Pullman; *Un Lun Dun and The City & ytiC ehT*, by China Mieville; *Dark Cities Underground*, by LisaGoldstein; *Neverwhere*, by Neil Gaiman; *Imagica and The Great and Secret Show*, by Clive Barker; *Transition*, by Iain Banks; *House of Leaves*, by Mark Z. Danielewski; *House of Stairs*, William Sleator.

VISUAL: *Inception*, directed by Christopher Nolan; *The Lost Room*, directed by Craig R. Baxley and Michael W. Watkins; *Monsters, Inc.*, directed by Pete Docter; *The Adjustment Bureau*, directed by Greg Nolfi.



Appendix: Two References

Character Creation Summary

STEP ONE: CONCEPT	The gamemaster describes the setting, and the players devise their character concepts.
STEP TWO: ATTRIBUTES	The gamemaster runs the Attribute Auction. Players have 100 points to spend, and may be limited on the Bad Stuff they can take.
STEP THREE: POWERS	Players spend points on Powers.
STEP FOUR: EXTRAS	Players spend points on Artifacts & Creatures, Allies, or Domains.
STEP FIVE: BALANCING	Players make their points balance, adjusting Attributes where possible, and potentially opting for character contributions. Any remaining points become Good or Bad Stuff.
STEP SIX: FINISHING TOUCHES	Players describe character backgrounds, personalities, appearances, goals, and flesh out descriptions of any aspects purchased above.

Power Summary

These tables summarize all of the powers, and what abilities each confers.

Power	Ability	Summary
WARDEN OF THE GRAND STAIR	Opening and Closing Doors	Unlocking Doors, Locking Doors, Holding Doors
	Wayfinding	Finding places within the Gossamer worlds
	The Warden's Authority	Recognized as a Warden in the Grand Stair
	Piercing the Veil	Being aware of the unreality of Doors in the Gossamer worlds
	Exegesis	Understanding languages when passing through Doors



Power	Ability	Summary
MASTER OF THE GRAND STAIR	Warding Doors	Placing a ward of detection on a Door
	Creating New Doors	Linking a Door in the Grand Stair to one in a Gossamer world
	Keys	Identifying Keys, making new Keys
	Bridging Doors	Linking two Gossamer world doors to one another, skipping the Grand Stair entirely
	Severing Doors	Closing Doors permanently
	Sensing Lost Links	Determining where a Door once led
	Opening "Empty" Doors	Opening Doors to where they used to go
	Manipulating Doors	Shrouding Doors, Diverting Doors, Trapping Doors
	Awareness of the Grand Stair	Extending awareness throughout the Grand Stair, and limited a sense whether Doors were used
	Evoking the Safety of the Grand Stair	The safe envelope immediately surrounding a Door
	Affecting the Grand Stair	Changing its configuration and appearance
	Domain	Claiming a Gossamer world as a Domain

Power	Ability	Summary
EIDOLON MASTERY	Immortality	Character does not age naturally
	Perceiving the Eidolon	Perception of the presence of the Eidolon, even through illusions
	Manipulating Reality	Bolstering Gossamer Reality, Guiding Reality, Editing Reality
	Eidolon Defense	Opposing the Umbra, Opposing Other Powers, Physical Fortification, Sanctification of the Eidolon
	Awareness of the Stair	Recognizing Doors, Forcing Doors Open

Power	Ability	Summary
UMBRA MASTERY	Perceiving the Umbra	Perception of the presence of the Umbra, Detecting Imperfections or Weaknesses
	Affecting Reality	Weakening Reality, Warping Reality, Uncontrolled Transformation, Destabilizing Reality
	Umbra Defense	Opposing the Eidolon
	Personal Transformation	Shape-Changing, Physical Adaptability, Psychological Adaptability, Insanity and Amnesia, Involuntary Shape-Changing
	Adaptation, Evolution, and Immortality	Aging, Regeneration
	Passage Through Doors	Identifying Doors, Forcing Doors Open

Power	Ability	Summary
CANTRIPS	Cantrip Use	Minor and immediate spell-like effects

Power	Ability	Summary
SORCERY	Basic Sorcery Spells	Basic spell repertoire of 15 spells
	Building New Spells	Knowledge of building spells from micro-spells
	Sorcery and Raw Power	Drawing on raw magic energy in sorcery or for other uses
	Impromptu Sorcery	Spellcasting without using prepared or readied spells

Power	Ability	Summary
INVOCATION	Divining a True Name	Understanding a True Name, Concealing a True Name, Warding a True Name
	Using a True Name	Calling, Summoning, Using in Magic, Banishment, Compelling Obedience, Binding
	Purification	Removing corruptive influences through focus

Power	Ability	Summary
WRIGHTING	Creating Icons	Creating Icons linked to the subject
	Impromptu Icons	Temporary or non-representative Icon creation
	Icon Defense	Using one's own Icon for self-preservation against hostile powers
	Identifying Icons	Recognizing an Icon's power and the subject
	Creating Icon-Powered Artifacts	Creating personal Artifacts with Icon abilities

Player and Nonplayer Character Attributes and Ranks										
Name	Psyche (Points)	Psyche Rank	Strength (Points)	Strength Rank	Endurance (Points)	Endurance Rank	Warfare (Points)	Warfare Rank	Good Stuff	Bad Stuff
Cal	85		Paragon		30		25		+5	–
Bastiano	25		50		40		115		+1	–
Dayle	135		10		25		10		.	–
Drake	30		65		45		160		–	+3
Lucien	100		15		35		20		–	+2
Vala	175		25		40		75		+6	–
Ayasha	150		20		50		35		–	–
Mowbray	160		Paragon		35		Superior		–	+3
Krovaliss	10		75		75		180		–	+7
Player 1										
Player 2										
Player 3										
Player 4										
Player 5										

Afterword: Author Note

In spring 2010, after crossing paths on a message board devoted to *Amber Diceless Role-Playing*, Steven Russell of Rite Publishing contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in working on a revision of *Amber* or another similar diceless patronage project. I was barely familiar with the patronage model, and was skeptical a deal could be made.

Steven proved me wrong with his tenacity, licensing the rights from Diceless by Design (thanks, Eric and Edwin!) and putting together a patronage drive that achieved its funding goal faster than any other patronage project had before (thanks, esteemed patrons!). With the rush of enthusiasm from that goal, I plunged into the work, trying to subtract the genius of Erick Wujcik's diceless role-playing system from the *Amber* setting to create a new and original work evocative of *Amber*, but different enough to be useful to players and to stand on its own.

I gauged expectations with the fine patrons on the Rite Publishing forums with discussion threads and polls, and communicated with many directly through chat and email. I quickly assembled a laundry list of "must haves" such as multi-world travel, immensely-powerful player characters, and the fundamentals of the system. Since the system was already worked out, the manuscript should come together quickly. And thus, I set out to write *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*.

Then... life happened. I got a wonderful promotion at work, which came with its own set of renewed challenges and expectations, including longer hours and increased creative demands. Then another promotion, with even more responsibility. My three-year-old daughter became a five-year-old. Minor health issues came, went, and lingered. My family moved from one rental house to another, to purchasing a new home. One computer died, was replaced, and that replacement died and has been replaced. Then in late 2012 the book was finally finished. To those faithful patrons, your patience is appreciated beyond my ability to express.

As far as the actual writing went, I hit a seemingly unbreakable wall when I realized how inextricably tied the diceless role-playing rules were with the *Amber* setting. The gigantic task of trying to condense Erick's wordy, example-rich guidance into something much shorter became increasingly difficult as I tore into the original *Amber* rules and worked on this manuscript. Self-doubt hit, was conquered, to strike again and again. At times I felt like Indiana Jones speaking with Marcus Brody at the beginning of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, brashly thinking this was just another writing project when it was in fact something so much more personal.

You see, I have a quite a history with *Amber Diceless Role-Playing*. I read Roger Zelazny's *The Chronicles of Amber* when I was in junior high, and *Amber* has been at the top of my list of favorite settings, Zelazny one of my favorite authors. I have played many role-playing games and several times ran *Amber* games using alternate, diced rules systems... adapting the setting to *DragonQuest*, *AD&D*, *RuneQuest*, *Palladium Fantasy*, among others.

Then came *Amber Diceless Role-Playing*, which struck me like a thunderbolt. *Amber* was the first game I really harbored any interest in writing for, and when I wrote to Erick Wujcik asking about working on it, he was supportive and enthusiastic, and became both a friend and a mentor. I pitched a unique sourcebook idea: a back-to-back double sourcebook. One side would be about *Rebma*, City *Amber*'s watery double. Flip it over, and there was *Tir-na Nog'th*, the reflection of City *Amber* in the sky. The title: *As Above, So Below*.

Erick gave me the go-ahead for half of the book, the *Rebma* part, but admitted he wanted to do *Tir-na Nog'th* for himself. Erick shared with me the plans for the rest of the *Amber Diceless Role-Playing* line, sourcebooks about the Golden Circle, Corwin's Pattern, Heerat, Texorami, Castle *Amber*, City *Amber*, the *Beyonders*, guides to each of the Powers, and an alternate Chaos-focused rulebook. *Rebma* would fit right in with those. And with that encouragement, I was off.

The next year and a half I worked on various drafts of *Rebma*, making a sometimes-maddening series of changes and rescoping the book. In the middle of that, Erick asked me to backburner *Rebma* in order to do last-minute work on *Shadow Knight*. Once that was done, it was back to *Rebma*, wildly being rewritten in the mad rush to publication. In the middle of that, Roger Zelazny died, a devastating blow to literature, to his friends and family, and to Erick personally. I soldiered on with *Rebma*. I was sending Erick daily rewrites on floppy disks through FedEx priority overnight, as it was that type of deadline.

Eventually I finished with all of the edits, expansions, and revisions Erick required. Art was done by artists Michael Kucharski, Ken Alves, and Matt Howarth, and a breathtakingly beautiful cover was painted by Stephen Hickman. Erick told me he was pleased with the book and that it would go to print soon. I then started work on three other *Amber* projects: a guide to Castle *Amber*, co-editing an adventure anthology, and writing a sourcebook covering the five post-*Chronicles* stories Zelazny had written as the bridge to an intended new cycle of *Amber* novels.

Then... nothing happened. For a variety of reasons, no further *Amber* role-playing materials would come out of Phage Press. Aside from t-shirts and a few issues of *Amberzine*, Phage Press was finished. Erick apologized profusely for the state of affairs (and to his credit, he eventually paid me), but that was the last gasp of the *Amber* license... until now.

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow intends to bring a new generation of gamers to diceless role-playing. Though it is unknown if any new *Amber Diceless Role-Playing* material will ever appear, it is my greatest hope that this work will inspire other gamemasters, players, and even writers to take the heart of the *Amber* game, Erick Wujcik's diceless role-playing system, and with it create new characters, new adventures, and new worlds to stand along those created by Roger and Erick.

So, in the words, of Prince Corwin of *Amber*... "Goodbye, and hello, as always."



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LORDS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW



Character Name _____

Player Name _____

Physical Characteristics

Height _____ Description _____

Hair _____

Build _____

Eyes _____

Personal Symbol _____

Attributes

Psyche: ☐ Rank: _____ (_____ Points) | ☐ Paragon | ☐ Superior | ☐ Average

Strength: ☐ Rank: _____ (_____ Points) | ☐ Paragon | ☐ Superior | ☐ Average

Endurance: ☐ Rank: _____ (_____ Points) | ☐ Paragon | ☐ Superior | ☐ Average

Warfare: ☐ Rank: _____ (_____ Points) | ☐ Paragon | ☐ Superior | ☐ Average

Artifacts & Creatures

Total Points from Artifacts and Creatures Worksheet(s): (_____ Points)

Domains

Total Points from Domains Worksheet(s): (_____ Points)

Powers

☐ Eidolon Mastery (50 Points)

☐ Umbra Mastery (50 Points)

☐ Warden of the Grand Stair (10 Points)

☐ Master of the Grand Stair (35 Points)

☐ Invocation (20 Points)

☐ Wrighting (30 Points)

☐ Sorcery (15 Points)

☐ Cantrips (5 Points)

Allies

☐ Gossamer World Ally (1 Point)

☐ Mentor (2 Points)

☐ Gossamer World Devotee (3 Points)

☐ Partisan Support (3 Points)

☐ Dwimmerlaik Ally (4 Points)

☐ Lord of the Gossamer Worlds (5 Points)

Player Contributions

☐ Diary (+10 Points)

☐ Campaign Log (+10 Points)

☐ Art (+10 Points)

☐ Fiction/Poetry (+10 Points)

☐ Quotes (+5 Points)

☐ Other (+ _____ Points)

Stuff

☐ Good Stuff (_____ Points)

☐ Zero Stuff

☐ Bad Stuff (_____ Points)

Character Portrait

Advancement Points

List of Desired Character Advancements

LORDS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW



Artifact & Creature Sheet

Artifact or Creature Name _____

Owner _____

Description _____

Qualities

Vitality

- ☐ Animal Vitality [1 Point]
- ☐ Double Vitality [2 Points]
- ☐ Immense Vitality [4 Points]

Aggression

- ☐ Combat Training [1 Point]
- ☐ Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- ☐ Combat Mastery [4 Points]

Intelligence and Communication

- ☐ Able to Speak [1 Point]
- ☐ Able to Speak and Reason [2 Points]
- ☐ Able to Speak in Tongues and Voices [4 Points]

Movement

- ☐ Mobility [1 Point]
- ☐ Double Speed [2 Points]
- ☐ Engine Speed [4 Points]

Damage

- ☐ Hardened [1 Point]
- ☐ Double Damage [2 Points]
- ☐ Deadly Damage [4 Points]

Psychic Sensitivity

- ☐ Psychic Sensitivity [1 Point]
- ☐ Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- ☐ Extraordinary Psychic Sense [4 Points]

Stamina

- ☐ Superior Stamina [1 Point]
- ☐ Paragon Stamina [2 Points]
- ☐ Tireless Stamina [4 Points]

Damage Resistance

- ☐ Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point]
- ☐ Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- ☐ Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]

Psychic Defense

- ☐ Psychic Resistance [1 Point]
- ☐ Psychic Neutral [2 Points]
- ☐ Psychic Barrier [4 Points]

Powers

Attunement to the Grand Stair

- ☐ Pass Through Door [1 Point]
- ☐ Follow Path [2 Points]
- ☐ Search Through Worlds [4 Points]

Contains an Icon (Requires Wrighting)

- ☐ Contains an Icon [1 Point]
- ☐ Set of Icons [2 Points]

Quantity

- ☐ Unique [x1 Point]
- ☐ Named & Numbered [x2 Points]
- ☐ Horde [x3 Points]
- ☐ Worldwide [x4 Points]
- ☐ Cross-world Persistent [x5 Points]
- ☐ Ubiquitous [x6 Points]

Control of Gossamer Reality

- ☐ Mold Gossamer Matter [1 Point]
- ☐ Mold Gossamer Creatures [2 Points]
- ☐ Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points]

True Name (Requires Invocation)

- ☐ True Name is Known [1 Point]
- ☐ True Name is Warded [2 Points]
- ☐ True Name is Secret [4 Points]

Healing

- ☐ Self Healing [1 Point]
- ☐ Rapid Healing [2 Points]
- ☐ Regeneration [4 Points]

Cantrip Use (Requires Cantrips)

- ☐ Contains a Cantrip [1 Point]
- ☐ Contains Named & Numbered Cantrips [2 Points]

Spell Storage (Requires Sorcery)

- ☐ Capable of Hanging a Spell [1 Point]
- ☐ Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]
- ☐ Capable of Hanging and Using Spells [4 Points]

Shape Shifting

- ☐ Alternate Form [1 Point]
- ☐ Named & Numbered Alternate Forms [2 Points]
- ☐ Limited Shape Shift [4 Points]

Transferrals

- ☐ Confers Quality on Wearer/Owner/User [5 Points per Quality]
- ☐ Confers Power on Wearer/Owner/User [10 Points per Power]

Total Point Cost: [____ Points]

LORDS OF GOSSAMER & SHADOW



Domain Sheet

Domain Name: _____

Owner: _____

Description: _____

Typical Denizens: _____

Technology Level

- ☐ Animal
- ☐ Primitive
- ☐ Medieval
- ☐ Gunpowder
- ☐ Steam
- ☐ Electric
- ☐ Fusion
- ☐ Other (_____)

Magic Level

- ☐ Magic is Unknown
- ☐ Magic is Rare
- ☐ Magic is Known and Believed
- ☐ Magic is Commonplace
- ☐ Magic Nullifies Technology
- ☐ Magic Works Alongside Technology

Security

- ☐ Communication Barrier [1 Point]
- ☐ Restricted Access [2 Points]
- ☐ Guarded [4 Points]

Type

- ☐ Personal Domain [1 Point]
- ☐ Common Ground [2 Points]
- ☐ Primal World [4 Points]

Control

- ☐ Control of Contents [1 Point]
- ☐ Control of Time Flow [2 Points]
- ☐ Control of Destiny [4 Points]

Influence on the Powers

- Eidolon
 - ☐ Powerful
 - ☐ Average
 - ☐ Weak
- Umbra
 - ☐ Powerful
 - ☐ Average
 - ☐ Weak
- Wrighting
 - ☐ Blocked
 - ☐ Average
 - ☐ Easily Used

Total Point Cost: [_____ Points]

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow

Our world is but one of untold many, a flux of chance caught in the struggle between form and cacophony. Always, these forces are at war, shaping the infinite worlds. The immortal, self-appointed sovereigns of battle move between planes of reality with impunity: they are creators, shapers, and destroyers of worlds.

In *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*, you are caught up in this immense conflict. Possess unique and idiosyncratic magical artifacts, command legions drawn from the myriad of otherworlds, and wield incredible powers that alter the very substance of reality. Whether born into it or discovering it later, your character has inherited a legacy of unimaginable power... and with it great danger!

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow is an original sourcebook and role-playing game using Erick Wujcik's Diceless Role-Playing system (used in *Amber Diceless Role-Playing*). This is a standalone product with an original setting, though it is compatible with *Amber Diceless Role-Playing*.

Find out more at
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