

Lords of Gossamer & Shadow

Threats: Echoes of the Typohonians



by Cam Banks





Rite Publishing Presents:

Threats: Echoes of the Typhonians

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Dedication:

This work is dedicated to the wonderful community on AmberMUSH in the mid-90s who did so much to inspire my future work & introduced me to my wife, for which I can never thank them enough

Special Thanks: To Steve, Jason, and Perry for extracting good words from me in the middle of a dry spell.

Based on Lords of Gossamer & Shadow by Jason Durall

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My dearest Lucien,

I've attached the following transcript pieced together from several conversations I had some time ago with a woman named Kenti Iomenta, whom I met in my aetheric travels. I can't be entirely certain that each conversation was with the same Kenti Iomenta, and I'm sure you will understand more when you read it. From what I have been able to ascertain, Kenti Iomenta is one of the Usari (pronounced yoo-SAR-ree), a family or race of genetically and spiritually identical people scattered across the Gossamer worlds and very possibly all originating from a single progenitor. Or, as Kenti herself explains, perhaps they are all heading towards a single collected being. I believe these beings are what some of the Gossamer Lords and others also refer to as "Typhonian Shards," which, until these conversations, I believed to be nothing more than unintelligible automatons. If these Usari are indeed the remnants of a Typhonian, they may pose more of a threat than any of us believed. At the very least, I believe it highly probable that this information is new to you, for until these conversations Kenti and her Usari "brothers and sisters" were completely unknown to me.

And we don't have to go into how rare that is.

*All my best,
Dayle*



Dayle, The Eternal Seeker

In an infinite number of Gossamer worlds, the likelihood of encountering two or more individuals who appear to be the same person is extremely high. Mistaken identity is commonplace; any given Gossamer Lord or Lady has no doubt met their doppelganger at some point, perhaps even on purpose. So it is perhaps not surprising at all that the Usari have managed to hide their secret for millennia — we are everywhere, across all worlds, fragments of a greater whole, rumored by some to be an entity divided since the time of the Typhonians.

Whether the name Usari applies to this original entity or has been assigned to that being's many splinter-selves is a

subject of some debate among the handful of scholars who know of us. At the most basic level, we Usari look very much alike — a prominent nose and chin, dark hair, olive skin, blue or purple eyes. We are women and men and in-between. We come from worlds of any description: worlds of high fantasy, worlds of grim steam and sorcery, or worlds of far-flung starships. Any world may have one of us.

For the longest time, we remained apart from each other, never meeting, unaware of our common origin. At some point, one or more of us gained access to the Grand Stair, whether through the acquisition of a Key or by being brought out of our Gossamer world through a Door by some well-meaning traveler. Not long after, two of us met each other and — to the surprise and alarm of onlookers — merged together, creating a more substantial and powerful individual Usari. This new person had all of the skills, memories, and abilities of both, along with the new understanding that this was not the last time such an event would happen.

There now exist Usari of varying degrees of power, perhaps collected fragments of the whole, some relatively benign and others very much the opposite. We maintain fiercely individual natures, despite containing multitudes; none of us bear the name “Usari” but instead take another name or identifying title. A handful of us are powerful on an order equivalent to the mightiest Dwimmerlaik or Gossamer Lords, and perhaps pose a significant threat to your



A Usari? Or just another Gossamer Adept?

status quo. Those of us like this are only now emerging from Domains and hidden realms of our own making, and our ambition and drive to grow in power and influence escalates at a geometric scale.

Common Powers Among the Usari

The central power of the Usari is our ability to combine with any other Usari to form a single, more powerful individual. This new Usari has a personality derived from the stronger of the two that created it, dominating the merger, although infrequently a strong-willed but weaker one prevails. Typically, two of us can

sense one another from a distance of as much as a mile or two away. When we meet, we lock eyes, and the process of merging begins appearing as a warping or distorting of space as the Gossamer world quickly works to adapt to the presence of two of us in close proximity. We may try to avoid merging, but this rarely holds up unless we are separated from each other soon after we meet. Local reality twists and we are brought together, a new and singular individual forming in the space between us, bound by a tesseract-like spatial contraction. In the case of two strong Usari, this can drastically affect the environment around us; lightning, storms, tremors, and the overloading of electrical or mechanical systems are frequently reported.

Newly merged, we retain the gear, equipment, and possessions of both weaker fragments. Frequently, items possessed by the two are themselves merged together, creating hybrid items capable of more than the originals. More commonly however, superficial or redundant equipment is simply cast aside in the process of merging. If one or both of us had cybernetic or mystical enhancements of some kind, these are retained in some fashion.

Merging takes no more than a couple of minutes, during which time neither of us may act or put up a defense. The Gossamer world usually creates such a significant and potent distortion in space that attacks and harmful effects bounce off us or are somehow absorbed. Onlookers with Eidolon Mastery might

sense the combination of aetheric structures to form a stronger whole; Umbra Masters can pick out the distortion and entropic side effects of the merger. In either case, use of those greater powers can hold off or delay the merger for a short time, but the actual resisting force is not us but the Gossamer world itself. In a sense, the Gossamer world doesn't want two of us in the same place, so the merger is a form of corrective reality surgery.

If two of us meet on the Grand Stair, or in some other place not bound by Gossamer reality, the forces that seek to keep us apart are not as strong. Even so, bound within us are forces of our own, and the urge to become one is powerful indeed. It appears that, as beings tied in some way to our Gossamer worlds, we take some of it with us wherever we travel. Perhaps this power is incarnate within us regardless of where we are.

New Power: Usaran Unity

[10 Points]

This power, unique to the Usari, allows two Usari to combine with one another to create a single Usari of greater strength. It is an unconscious ability for the most part, connected to the reality of the Gossamer world which the Usari are innately connected to. The merger has two stages: the lock, and the assimilation. Some Usari allow the lock to occur because they feel they can dominate the resulting Usari with a stronger

personality. Others don't want to lock in the first place. Most Usari believe this power is a feature of the Gossamer worlds, but it is more complicated than that. The ties between Gossamer and the Usari are inextricable.

- If one or both Usari actively oppose the merger, then it falls to a contest of Endurance (to resist the lock) or Psyche (to resist assimilation). Add each Usari's Points in the Usaran Unity Power to their Attribute.
- If one Usari wants to merge and the other has no preference (or they're unconscious or otherwise helpless), it is automatic.
- If one Usari doesn't want to merge and the other has no preference, the merger is held off for the moment, giving the unwilling Usari time to employ a power or artifact to escape.

When combining two Usari, the new Usari has 20% more power than the two that merged. This is reflected in game statistics by comparing Attributes, Powers, and other Points between the two merged Usari, and adding 20% of the weaker Usari's Points to the Points of the stronger on a case-by-case basis, rounded down. Additional points in any Power do not affect the Power until a new level is reached. Consider them to be "banked" until future mergers increase the point levels to a new degree of mastery. For example, a Usari with 20 Points of Strength and another with 30 Points merge and produce a Usari with 34 Points. Two Usari with the Warden of the Grand Stair (10 Points) power merge to

create a single Usari with Warden of the Grand Stair (12 Points, two of which are banked.) The *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* rules have an option for "incremental Power increases" (page 70); if the Gamemaster is using this optional rule, it would be possible for Usari to then also possess partial powers.

One exception to the point advancement rule is when Superior Ranked Attributes are involved. If a Usari with Superior Rank in an Attribute merges with another Usari with Superior Rank, the new Usari has Paragon Rank in that Attribute. If a Usari with Superior Rank in an Attribute merges with another Usari with Paragon or higher Rank, the new Usari has the Rank of the stronger of the two Usari. In the rare case of two Usari with an Average Rank merging, the result is a Superior Rank in that Attribute.

Note that the Usaran Unity Power is also included in this Point transfer. Powerful Usari usually have more than 10 Points invested in Usaran Unity because even the weakest Usari has 10 Points in the Power, which gives 2 Points to the merger. Every 10 Points of Usaran Unity that a Usari has beyond the first 10 (so, at 20 Points, 30 Points, and so on) the Usari may invest Points in a new Power, Artifact, or Creature of some kind, subtracting them from Usaran Unity. The Usaran Unity Power may never be reduced below 10 Points in this manner. To the Usari, this always operates on an instinctual level when the merger takes place; the new Usari simply

has better power and mastery over their resources and abilities than either of the merged Usari.

The Usaran Unity Power confers upon each Usari the power to sense others of their kind in the same Gossamer world, albeit faintly if there is a great distance between them. On the Grand Stair, this power doesn't operate except in close proximity (a Usari would know if another Usari was in the Agora with them, but not if the other Usari were in Lucien's Domain.) Also, by virtue of its nature as a power that draws upon a collective history and memories, any Usari may reach back into multiple paths of experience to pluck a detail or moment from their union, giving them a distinct advantage when it comes to recalling obscure facts and knowledge.

Other Usari Powers

Over the course of millennia, most of us have learned or manifested the use of powers from the relatively minor Sorcery and Invocation to Wrighting, Warden of the Grand Stair, and even Eidolon or Umbra Mastery. A handful of Usari, especially those of us who are the result of several previous mergers, find that our combined powers create proportionately greater skill at using these powers. From time to time, a Usari appears with understanding or use of powers heretofore unknown, lore that was thought lost to the ages.

None of us have thus far demonstrated any use of the Dwimmerlaik's deeper magic or Channeling. This, at least, may lend credence to the notion that we are not related to the Dwimmerlaik nor are we associated with them.

The Truth About the Usari

Scholars, both Usari and not, have long dwelt upon the true nature of our kind and from whence we sprang forth. In the millennia that I have walked the Gossamer worlds, joining with others of my race to achieve the degree of knowledge and understanding that I have now, I have heard and even gained through unity a great many explanations and theories. I should like to present them to you, but I leave it to you to discover which is truth and which is speculation or fancy.

Usari as Typhonian

For those who know of our existence, one of the most popular theories is that a single Usari progenitor was a Typhonian, one of those impossibly powerful creatures of aeons past that lie sleeping or dormant among the Gossamer worlds. Defeated by a cadre of champions millennia ago, this Typhonian was only capable of being thwarted by separating

him into an infinite number of shards, scattered across the Gossamer worlds.

Usari as Typhonian Homunculi

This origin presents us as shards or pieces of a Typhonian's *essence*, rather than a Typhonian proper. Even on that day when we all merge together as one, we won't recreate a Typhonian but instead serve as the vessel for a Typhonian's apocalyptic return. Perhaps what personality or singular mind we would have acquired will be rendered insensate and eclipsed by the Typhonian's power. Perhaps not.



Typhonian Homunculi?

Usari as God

In this version, Usari was a deity of sorts, the kind of divine being who opposed the Typhonians before the rise of the Gossamer Lords. In the final battle with his foes, our progenitor was betrayed and torn apart by his brother gods, who used the energy released in this process to fell the greatest of the Typhonians. Alternately, Usari did this to himself, willingly sacrificing his own identity to win the day and creating us in the process.

Usari as Gossamer Gestalt

As every Gossamer world is thought to have had its own Typhonian in antiquity — the source of that world's very existence or creation — perhaps every Gossamer world has its own Usari, a ubiquitous avatar that a world produces as a byproduct of the very nature of infinite reality. When these avatars encounter one another, we merge and become more powerful, creating a higher-ranking Usari. Thus, we were never a single being at all, but could potentially become a godlike being the like of which none have ever encountered.

Usari as Cosmic Defense System

With so many tears in reality and conflicting Powers throughout the Gossamer worlds, we may be a form of defense system, created alongside all of reality eons ago as a means of preventing any single Power from becoming too dominant. Along the way, we have strayed from this purpose, or perhaps our individual desires and needs are necessarily ambitious. When our singular merged Usari-self eventually comes about, it is a sign that one or more Powers have become too strong, or that the Gossamer Lords have interfered too much.

Usari as Avatars of the Grand Stair

Every one of us comes from a Gossamer world linked by a Door to the Grand Stair, so perhaps every one of us is an avatar of the Grand Stair itself, an extension into the many countless worlds as a voice and intelligence that the Grand Stair cannot otherwise present. If this is true, then we are growing together and forming collective beings as a reflection of the increasingly interconnected reality. Soon, when a final, ultimate Usari emerges, the Grand Stair may have its own singular representative among the greater Powers, much as the Eidolon or

Umbra may eventually produce their own.

Usari as Constructs of a Greater Power

In this version of our origin, we are splinters of one of the Greater Powers, perhaps Eidolon creatures who draw power from unity, or Umbral wraiths who extend our entropic influence when brought together. If this is the case, we won't be capable of accessing an opposing power, but probably have at least some mastery or access to the Greater Power of which we are but fragments. An interesting alternative is that each Usari is a copy of a sentient Icon, an extension of the Power of Wrighting, and the reason we are all alike is that we are simply reflections of this primal Icon. If this is the case, who was the original subject of this Icon? Are there other primal Icons who, like the Usari, are ubiquitous across Gossamer worlds, hiding among the populace?

Known Usari

I do not have the time nor the willingness to reveal to you how many of us are left, and our identities as individuals. Be that as it may, it is useful to understand the varying degrees of ability and unity that we Usari may manifest when you encounter us in your travels. Hereafter I make account of a

select few representatives — including myself.

For the purposes of classification, you can describe any of us as being ranked on a scale of 1 to 5. With this ranking system, a 1st stage Usari is at best a weak or minor character, while a 5th stage Usari is among the strongest and most whole collective being in our number. A theoretical 6th stage would be equivalent to a Typhonian; such an individual defies conventional description and would only be overcome or defeated outside of personal conflict.

Typical 1st Stage Usari

While they all look alike, no two Usari are truly identical. Male, female, or androgynous Usari are possible. All are olive-skinned, blue-eyed, black-haired, and have prominent facial features. I have stared into the mirror more times than I can count, and I see glimpses and flashes of them, echoes of other lives.

You can add a Power of 10 points or less to a 1st stage Usari but most don't have any ability to leave their Gossamer world. Likewise, a 1st stage Usari may have up to 10 points invested in Artifacts or Creatures, but most don't have anything significant. Usari are often trouble magnets, hence their 2 Points of Bad Stuff. This doesn't make them all antagonists, of course.

Attributes

PSYCHE – Paragon
STRENGTH – Superior
ENDURANCE – Paragon
WARFARE – Superior

Powers

Usaran Unity [10 Points] – The most basic level of this Power, allowing the Usari to merge with another. Some 1st Stage Usari have merged as many as 3 times already, but few have any idea that they can merge with other Usari at all.

Artifacts and Creatures

None.

Stuff

Bad [+2 Points]

Typical 2nd Stage Usari

Kathomet, Remus Elphid, Triaminus, Usweth—names I have had, in earlier lives, Usari that contributed to the being I am today. I am all of them, and there are so many others like them, still independent, still shining with potential.

These Usari are made up of at least 32 Usari, or 5 mergers, and they're at least on par with most weaker or inexperienced Gossamer Lords or Dwimmerlaik. Even so, they're hardly at their peak potential and are ideal candidates for stronger Usari to hunt down and merge with. I speak from experience...

Attributes

PSYCHE – 25 Points
STRENGTH – 10 Points
ENDURANCE – 25 Points
WARFARE – 10 Points

Powers

Usaran Unity [20 Points] – This is after 5 mergers of varying strengths. Some 2nd Stage Usari have racked up as many as 40 Points but have more than likely invested them in new Powers or Creatures, keeping their Points at around 20.

Warden of the Grand Stair [10 Points] – Nothing special here, but has a Key or learned from a knowledgeable Warden in order to get to this point.

Cantrips [10 Points] – Clarity, Dim, Flare, Focus, Invigorate, Jam, Loosen, Nullify, Numb, Quicken.

Artifacts and Creatures

Bodyguards [10 Points] – The Usari has acquired a number of deadly and efficient henchmen to keep him alive.

- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Superior Stamina [1 Point]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Named & Numbered [x2 Points]

Stuff

Bad [+5 Points]



Ash Andjety, a 3rd Stage Usari

I know this one, having seen him from afar. As always, a tall, olive-skinned man with sea-blue eyes. He maintains a smooth, hairless scalp, which is tattooed with curious glyphs and whorls of white ink. He favors spotless white business suits with a blue tie and kerchief in the breast pocket. His shoes are black with white spats. His speech is accented yet measured and clear, and when in conversation he spends most of the time listening with interest, not talking.

Ash is a 3rd Stage Usari, the accumulation of several dozen 2nd Stage Usari and hundreds of 1st Stage Usari over several centuries. From what my sources have gathered, he is patient, thoughtful, and quite aware of the vast

storehouse of knowledge that he has at his fingertips. In fact, one of the key qualities he looks for when casting his net for more Usari to merge with is their academic and arcane record. Unlike many 3rd Stage Usari, he has not turned to martial prowess and violence to achieve his goals. I wonder what I would become if I merged with him.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 65 Points
STRENGTH – 15 Points
ENDURANCE – 40 Points
WARFARE – 35 Points

Powers

Usaran Unity [30 Points] – Over the years Ash has diverted much of his growing Usaran Unity into an assortment of minor powers, skills, and artifacts, but he always maintains at least 30 Points to aid him in merger contests.

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points] – Ash is comfortable with all elements of this Power, but he rarely uses the Grand Stair itself in case he inadvertently runs into other Usari.

Eidolon Mastery [50 Points] – This was a significant addition several mergers ago, from a Usari who had spent thousands of years walking the Grand Stair, a devotee of order and structure.

Umbra Affinity [10 Points] – Ash has developed a sense of how the Umbra is manifested and when and where it is being used nearby. He can detect its use in the past, but he has not yet mastered the manifestation and projection of the Umbra proper.

Sorcery [15 Points] – Ash is a skilled sorcerer, but he is dependent on his Handheld Infodeck to maintain his actual spell library. Without it, he tends to resort to Cantrips.

Cantrips [15 Points] – Charm, Clarity, Dampen, Dim, Flare, Focus, Glitch, Invigorate, Jam, Loosen, Mana, Nullify, Reveal, Quicken, Surge.

Artifacts and Creatures

Handheld Infodeck [17 Points] – This resembles a graven image or icon carved from ebony and inlaid with mother of pearl, but that's just the protective case. Within is a highly advanced storage device holding many worlds' worth of information and data, much of it mystical or occult. Ash can have it read information out to him aloud or he can reveal a holographic screen about twelve inches wide for more detailed reports. It also acts as a surrogate in rituals during which Ash doesn't care to look up formulae or rites.

- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points] – That's a really hard shell.
- Able to Speak [1 Point] – An array of simple voice commands allows Ash hands-free access.
- Psychic Sensitivity [1 Point] – Factory-standard aetheric resonance capacitors installed.
- Psychic Neutral [2 Points] – Ash took the psychic firewall upgrade.
- Contains an Icon [1 Point] – The Infodeck has a holographic Icon image that connects Ash with a



The Great Library of Apis

trusted manservant, allowing for near-instantaneous transport home.

- Capable of Hanging & Using Spells [4 Points] – One of the primary functions Ash uses the Infodeck for. Most spells preloaded into the Infodeck are defensive or manipulation spells.
- Integral to Sorcery [4 Points] – This underscores Ash's reliance on the Infodeck for his magical understanding and use. He will stop at nothing to get it back, and is terrified that another Usari will acquire it before he can.

Domains

The Great Library of Apis [4 Points] – Located on a world of great sorcery, all of it linked or bound by the written word, the Great Library is a city-sized edifice at the headwaters of a tremendous river. Despite the mystical qualities of the Domain, Ash's offices and suites are appointed in tasteful modern décor

echoing the Art Deco era of Earth history. The entire Domain is linked via sorcerous broadband to his Infodeck, allowing him to update the records and files in the Library as often as he updates his device. The world of Apis is inhabited mostly by passive and non-threatening servitor creatures who clean, prepare, and file thousands of books and scrolls a day. At a word, however, Ash can bring forth elementals and other creatures to provide a form of defense.

- Personal Domain [1 Point]
- Restricted Access [2 Points]
- Control of Contents [1 Point]

Stuff

Bad [+5 Points]

Ash Andjetty as an Ally

Because he is an information broker and hoarder, Ash is an excellent ally for player characters who can pay him in knowledge. He rarely leaves his Great

Library, content to scour his impressive collection for hints of ways to gather even more information to his Domain. Ash might even be a worthy mentor for some player characters, especially those who need instruction in magic, although he hides the truth of his sorcery and its reliance on his Infodeck from all but his most trusted companions.

Ash Andjety as an Enemy

If the player characters get in Ash's way, they find him an implacable foe. He seeds lies and falsehood about them well in advance, because it works to his advantage that other worlds and allies of the player characters believe them to be mistaken about their closely held beliefs. Ash toys with his enemies from afar, but when he needs to deal with them personally, he stocks his Infodeck with spells designed to confuse, distract, and rewrite local history to favor his claims.

Objectives

More than anything, Ash wants to know everything. His nature as a collective being of many lifetimes has already instilled in him a thirst for knowledge that drives all that he does. Whether it is finding other Usari to merge with (and he always seeks weaker Usari, so as to remain as dominant as possible) or lost and obscure texts or writings, Ash brings all of his resources to bear.



Cyrus Filo, the Nine-Fingered King, a 4th Stage Usari

Mighty Cyrus is a tall, olive-skinned man with cobalt blue eyes. His long black hair is tied up in a thick knot at the base of his skull. He is encased in gleaming segmented silver armor, with an elaborate helm. His right hand is missing the little finger, and as a consequence he wields his deadly hammer in his left. His voice carries far in battle, every command crisp and precise and inspirational. I knew him in lifetimes before, and know him now, and I struggle to keep my distance.

Cyrus is a tireless crusader and general, a 4th Stage Usari who seeks out others like him and either soundly defeats their armies in battle or simply merges with them and brings their troops under his own banner. He has conquered many Gossamer worlds in this way, most of them already sworn to a Usari before Cyrus even set foot through their Doors. Cyrus earned his title thousands of years ago in battle against one monster or another and, for some reason, has never regained his missing digit despite merging with thousands of Usari of 3rd Stage or lower.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 40 Points

STRENGTH – 60 Points

ENDURANCE – 60 Points

WARFARE – 100 Points

Powers

Usaran Unity [40 Points] – Like most other 4th Stage Usari, Cyrus has maintained at least 40 Points in Usaran Unity while diverting his other points toward greater powers and abilities.

Master of the Grand Stair [35 Points]

Umbra Mastery [50 Points]

Invocation [20 Points] – Cyrus makes frequent use of this Power in battle with others, especially when confronting Usari who oppose a merger. He instinctively knows the True Name of any Usari, an advantage that few of lower stage possess, and a unique oddity available only to his kind.

Cantrips [15 Points] – Charm, Clarity, Dampen, Dim, Eidolon Negation, Focus,

Glitch, Invigorate, Jam, Loosen, Nullify, Reveal, Quicken, Surge, Umbra Negation.

Artifacts and Creatures

Wepwawet, Cyrus' Hammer [20 Points] – Known as the Opener of the Way, this weapon is forged from a mystic alloy of adamant and orichalcum, giving it a shimmering marbled quality. The entire weapon is a single element, rather than being assembled in pieces, making it remarkably robust. Cyrus may use it to literally smash his way through the veils of Gossamer reality, although he could exert its power subtly if he chose to.

- Destructive Damage [8 Points]
- Impervious to Harm [8 Points]
- Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points]

Cyrus' Segmented Armor [12 Points] – Cyrus is rarely seen without his protective shell of Umbra-infused armor. Its miraculous craftsmanship allows him almost total freedom of movement, and at times he has managed to survive catastrophic damage due to the armor keeping his broken body intact until after a battle.

- Impervious to Harm [8 Points]
- Linked to the Umbra [4 Points]

Cyrus' Deathless Legion [30 Points] – Although he has many armies, formed from the inhabitants of conquered worlds or the remnants of weaker Usari, Cyrus prizes his so-called Deathless Legion above all others. These seasoned insect-like warriors are rumored to rise up from the battlefield after being slain, continuing to fight even after death. In

truth, they are creatures that spontaneously spawn new warriors from their own corpses if killed while in the throes of battle.

- Double Vitality [2 Points]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Hardened Weapons [1 Point]
- Resistant to Normal Weapons Armor [1 Point]
- Regeneration [4 Points] – Not so much regeneration as replication or reincarnation.
- Horde [x3 Points]

Stuff

Bad [+2 Points]

Cyrus as an Ally

Having a military powerhouse like Cyrus as an ally might seem to be a tremendous boon, but the Nine-Fingered King is consumed with his dreams of conquest and frequently abandons his allies in the midst of a lengthy campaign to secure his own interests elsewhere. He may best serve as a mentor for martial player characters, lending them his millennia of military expertise and advice without actually having to be on the battlefield (and potentially leaving the player character high and dry).

Cyrus as an Enemy

Those who claim Cyrus as an enemy do not hold onto their Domains for long. Cyrus has honed conquest to a fine art, and he has legions of troops that he cares little for once they have served their purpose. As such, even when he has won

the day, he often leaves behind huge occupational forces whose psychopathic lieutenants have fewer qualms than Cyrus does about war crimes or other horrors. If Cyrus has set his sights on you, your best option is to either give him what he wants, or find allies of your own whose combined strength can measure up to his military might.

Objectives

Much as other Usari are fixated on such things as knowledge, resources, or even raw power, Cyrus thirsts for victory over others and acquisition of their military power. He doesn't hold on to material goods or even territory for very long, tending to strip mine what he needs from conquered worlds and then move onwards. Cyrus is especially interested in adding to his talent in warfare by merging with other militant Usari, and the fact that he makes use of entropic forces via the Umbra and the power of True Names affords him a significant advantage in coming out dominant when the merger is complete. Cyrus doesn't have any special desire to interfere in the activities of Gossamer Lords, knowing full well that were he to attract their attention they might become obstacles to his long-term military operations.



Kenti Tomenta, The Lady of Silence, a 5th Stage Usari

And here I am, a reflection in a tall glass as I survey my realm: A tall, olive-skinned woman with sapphire-blue eyes and close-cropped black hair. Shimmering robes of light and darkness seem to bend space around me. I float inches above the ground at all times, with silver motes of power whirling around me like stardust. All sound and vibration seem dulled or muted in my presence, although my telepathic voice rings crystal clear when I speak.

Kenti is a legend even among those Usari who are aware of their own collective nature. She appears to them in dreams, echoes of countless other lives or memories, interactions and half-encounters. Many powerful Usari have sought to subsume her through conflict and she has thwarted all their ambitions. She resides in the deeper, darker corners of the Grand Stair in a Domain that touches upon the very edges of Gossamer and the unknown, like a great spider in a web. Indeed, she draws Usari to her almost unconsciously, gathering more power and influence without drawing attention to herself. Few ever return.

Attributes

PSYCHE – 150 Points
STRENGTH – 25 Points
ENDURANCE – 65 Points
WARFARE – 65 Points



Powers

Usaran Unity [50 Points] – Kenti maintains a constant 50 Point level in this Power in order to grow and expand her own mystical resources.

Lady of the Grand Stair [50 Points] – Kenti has resided in hidden realms along the Grand Stair for longer than any other Usari, and may even have had a part in its early construction. Only she knows for sure. Her attunement to the Grand Stair, its Doors, and its Keys is such that she has, for the time being, eluded Lucien's notice. She knows immediately when another Usari has set foot on the Grand Stair, and has been known to redirect the Stair's twists and turns to bring them closer to her.

Eidolon Mastery [50 Points] – Although she could have devoted more of her personal resources to greater Eidolon mastery, Kenti has sought to acquire Eidolon-linked Artifacts instead, each of which acts as a surrogate for this.

High Sorcery [40 Points] – Kenti's mystic attunement is substantial, a result of many mergers in the past with sorcerer Usari and those attuned to Gossamer power sources of various types. She is capable of drawing upon power sources throughout the Gossamer worlds in order to fuel and hang her spells, and she instinctively brings up counter-spells when challenged with magic.

Wrighting [30 Points] – Kenti keeps Icons of various Gossamer world agents as well as specific contacts along the Grand Stair, mostly for her servants' use.

Cantrips [20 Points] – Charm, Clarity, Dampen, Dim, Eidolon Negation, Flare, Focus, Foul, Fracture, Glitch, Grasp, Invigorate, Jam, Loosen, Mana, Nullify, Reveal, Quicken, Surge, Umbra Negation.

Artifacts and Creatures

Mantle of Sidereal Majesty [12 Points] – Kenti wears this garment for protection and as a means of drawing and collecting magical power. It appears to flow about her, twisting space and reality as it does, but this is largely cosmetic. She can amplify or diminish light and sound with the Mantle, often for dramatic purpose.

- Linked to the Eidolon [2 Points]
- Mold Gossamer Reality [4 Points]
- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]

- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]
- Capable of Hanging Named & Numbered Spells [2 Points]

Kenti's Spider-Seekers [28 Points] – Although they usually look like dog-sized spiders, these scouts can manifest multiple forms in order to blend in with their surroundings. The Spider-Seekers are almost always white and red in coloration, even if they're taking on the form of humanoid children (which is a common disguise). A handful of Spider-Seekers are active on the Grand Stair at any given time, watching and collecting information for Kenti.

- Double Speed [2 Points]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Combat Training [1 Point]
- Resistant to Normal Weapons [1 Point]
- Psychic Neutral [2 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]
- Named & Numbered Alternate Forms [2 Points]
- Named & Numbered [x2 Points]

Domain

Denderaxos, the Vault of Confluence [12 Points] – This is the primary abode of Kenti in the current era, although she has had many in the past. It is located along the Grand Stair, but the paths and stairways that lead to it are convoluted and double-back on each other to the extent that many Wardens unconsciously skirt alongside it without even noticing its existence. The Vault has a dozen or more Doors that open to Gossamer

worlds of great magical power, worlds from which Kenti may draw servants or protectors as needed.

- Primal World [4 Points]
- Guarded [4 Points]
- Control of Destiny [4 Points]

Stuff

Good [+2 Points]

Kenti as an Ally

Having Kenti as an ally means having an extraordinary advantage on the Grand Stair, especially if she has granted access to Denderaxos. She knows more about those who walk the Grand Stair than most, even more than the majority of Gossamer Lords or Dwimmerlaik, but she rarely exerts this knowledge except to aid in her own protection. Player characters who bring her knowledge of Usari in far-flung Gossamer worlds where her Spider-Seekers cannot travel may be rewarded with minor artifacts and other esoteric items, or perhaps a Door to somewhere they urgently need to travel.

Kenti as an Enemy

With Kenti as an enemy, travel along the Grand Stair itself becomes perilous. She is able to redirect and reposition even common landmarks, albeit only temporarily, but long enough to guide or force her enemies into the arms of other threats. Kenti does not engage directly with her foes. Rather, she prefers to tie them up with dangers, unravel their most carefully guarded secrets, and generally

make life uncomfortable for them. If the player characters are allied with another Usari, Kenti may decide that they are her foes by association, unless they can be convinced to bring their Usari ally to her (and henceforth allow her to initiate a merger).

Objectives

Kenti has the primal urge to maintain a secure and hidden power base at any cost. Because she knows her foremost obstacles in staying hidden are other Usari and various powerful Gossamer Lords or other beings, she prepares and executes plans that stretch out for centuries, plans that result in her getting stronger and staying out of the way of the intrigues of others. She emerges from her Domain only in times of great crisis, such as a war between powerful 4th or 5th Stage Usari, and even then only to protect her own interests. She doesn't necessarily want to be the final Usari, but will merge with and assimilate any Usari who seek to expose, depose, or destroy her.

Using the Usari in a *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow Campaign*

The Usari are a threat whose true nature and full extent may take dozens of game sessions to fully realize or understand. Introducing them to a *Lords of Gossamer & Shadow* story requires a

little planning. Here are two suggested means of doing so.

The Slow Reveal

Because there are Usari everywhere, a Gamemaster might introduce several of them early on almost as an afterthought, describing a bartender in a seedy watering hole, an engineer on a tramp freighter, and a company official all in the same way. Clever players may pick up after a while that they've been seeing a lot of dark-haired, blue-eyed characters in the course of their travels, but as they're never more than passing references or mentions, might not think much of it.

Eventually, one of the stronger Usari appears in the campaign as a character of some significance. A good way to bring one in is as a lieutenant, aide, or henchman of an established villain, perhaps as a member of a corps of mercenaries or bounty hunters. This is the first time the Usari come into actual conflict with the player characters and demonstrate abilities in excess of Paragon rank. Whether the player characters defeat the Usari or they elude capture and flee, the Gamemaster may introduce another one later who looks for all the worlds like the one they tangled with earlier.

This method of introducing Usari into the campaign — slowly over time, giving them their own roles in the storyline — allows for the gradual revelation that there is much more going on here than it appears. It also gives the Gamemaster a

means of setting up a multitude of existing Usari who, when and if they meet each other, might demonstrate with the player characters as witness the merging of Usari into a stronger collective.

A fun twist is to make one or two Usari sympathetic and helpful to the player characters, even allies in their wars against the Dwimmerlaik, rival Gossamer Lords, or creatures from Shadow. The loss of such an ally to a stronger Usari who, in turn, becomes even stronger, is a powerfully emotional moment. It may give the player characters a personal investment in uncovering the Usari's true origins, unraveling thousands of years of mystery in a fleeting hope that somewhere out there is an Usari who feels the same about them as the one they lost.

With the Slow Reveal storyline, one potential ending is that the player characters seek to either bring all of the Usari together and uncover the secret of their origins or instead realize that such a being may be too powerful to exist in this era. In that case, the player characters must discover the means by which the Usari were divided in the first place. Interrogation of Usari usually fails, for they are almost all stricken with no memory of their past (assuming they were once a single creature), at least not until they grow strong with collective memories. And when this happens, they're unlikely to cooperate with the player characters if they suspect that the

player characters seek to defeat or destroy them.

The Slow Reveal can tie into another major storyline that the Gamemaster has planned, especially one that involves an artifact or device that only an ancient being may be aware of. In this case, a Usari could be the missing link in thwarting the rise of the Dwimmerlaik, stamping out a rogue Gossamer Lord, or even preventing the unmaking of the Grand Stair at the hands of a Typhonian who revels in entropy and the End Times. With such a tie-in, the Slow Reveal is not so much a threat as it is a gradual introduction of a significant ally, and this in turn can lead to more adventures after the true threat is neutralized.

The Usari War

In this storyline, the Usari are introduced as part of a warning from a trusted ally such as Lucien or Calais. Dayle and the other Gossamer Lords, in the process of recovering from a recent attack from some other quarter, have learned of the existence of the Usari and require the player characters to look into it. As with the Slow Reveal storyline, you may already have seeded the campaign with minor, unnamed Usari characters in places the player characters have frequented. One or two might even inhabit a player character's Domain. It's best to keep them out of major locations such as Shatterlight or the Agora for the



The Usari War

moment, especially as these are so close to the Gossamer Lords initially.

Once the player characters start investigating, major attacks on Gossamer Lord Domains start happening. These are well-timed assaults, making use of Icons, tears in Gossamer-stuff, even previously unknown Doors. However, they are over in a matter of minutes, and while some destruction of property or defeat of defensive measures takes place, there don't seem to be any real objectives. What's happening, of course, is that two or more strong Usari have learned of each other and, in an attempt to gain advantage, are using their networks of spies, agents, and secrets through the Grand Stair to track down Usari and

either capture them or merge with them directly. These Usari don't want to meet each other in the same Gossamer world, at least not until they believe they have enough collective power to assert their own millennia-old personalities in the aftermath of a merger.

As soon as the player characters realize that the only real missing people after these assaults — which might even taken place simultaneously, given that there are more than one Usari planning and executing them — all look alike, they may turn to their own Domains or favorite locations and see if such an individual is present there. That's when their Domains are subjected to another sortie in the Usari War.

This storyline can go on for some time, with the powerful Usari growing ever more bold and dangerous. As they merge with lesser Usari whom their armies have captured, their personal power grows. One wrinkle in this may be that, at some point, one of the prime Usari undergoes a substantial shift in personality or motivation. They might even turn to the player characters in an attempt to explain that, after a recent merger, they have had a change of heart and now they seek to end the war without further bloodshed.

The war has a number of potential endings. The most epic, of course, is that eventually there are only two Usari remaining. They decide to use their sheer power and scope of abilities to battle long-distance across the Labyrinth or the

Grand Stair, destroying whole Gossamer worlds in their wake, like two Typhonians returned of old. Notable non-player Gossamer Lords may even face their own death in such a conflict, or they may sacrifice much in order to keep the two from raining destruction upon their charges.

Eventually, through the efforts of the player characters, the two titans meet each other face to face, and reality buckles inwards to bring them together as one. Will the lone Usari be some beneficent Philosopher-King who, at the dawn of pre-recorded time, split himself into countless fragments to achieve some noble goal, such as the destruction of the Typhonians? If so, are they the same being they once were, or have the aeons of division and regathering turned them into an abomination? Worse yet, what if the Usari was one of the strongest and most violent Typhonians, and only by tearing him into pieces could he be stopped? See "The Truth About the Usari" for more ideas.

It's possible that the Usari War ends with the deaths of the Usari leaders, or their re-sundering into multiple fragments, scattered across endless Gossamer worlds. This, at least, keeps the singular Usari from returning from infinite exile. The question, however, is what sort of strain this places upon Shadow, and if the Gossamer worlds will be the same again once the smoke clears.

Player Character Usari

As noted earlier, this is a potentially exciting twist, although it is certainly fraught with issues. Any player character may be built at character creation as a Usari by taking the Usaran Unity Power for 10 Points. This may not immediately be seen as an effective use of Points but if the Gamemaster affords opportunity during the campaign for the character to meet NPC Usari and thus merge with them, it gives them a means of getting stronger. A significant caveat to this, of course, is that such a means of power escalation subverts the usual advancement rules. If the players and

Gamemaster agree that this is no problem it can lead to some truly epic adventures.

It's a good idea to establish that if the player character fails to assert his personality when the Usari merge together, this is equivalent to losing control of the character and turning them into a NPC. In some ways, this does counterbalance the intrinsic power creep of Usaran Unity, and acts as a constant threat that may deter some players from choosing such a character in play.

