

*Lords of Gossamer & Shadow*

# Threats: Secrets of the Annunaki



*by H.M. 'Dain' Lybarger*





Rite Publishing Presents:

# Threats: Secrets of the Annunaki

*The Font Atop Sarazur* (Author): H.M. 'Dain' Lybarger

*Kafisthanai* (Editor): Savannah Broadway

*The Geometer* (Cover Artist): Ernanda Souza

*The Namers and Shapers* (Interior Artists): Ernanda Souza,  
& Jason Rainville

*The Exemplar of Blades* (Trade Dress):

James "Devin Night" Hazelett

*The Crawler Upon The Stairs* (Layout and Publisher):  
Steven D. Russell

**Dedication:** To my lovely wife Jill; my inspiration  
and my *raison d'être*.

**Based on Lords of Gossamer & Shadow by Jason Durall**

Threats: Secrets of the Annunaki Copyright © 2015 Steven D. Russell All rights reserved. Lords of Gossamer and Shadow Copyright © 2012-2013 Steven D. Russell All rights reserved. Erick Wujcik's Diceless Role-Playing and associated marks and logos are trademarks of Diceless by Design Publishing, LLC, and are used under license. See [http://Rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=1447](http://Rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product_info.php?products_id=1447) for more information on Erick Wujcik's Diceless Role-Playing.



## On the edge of a precipice

*Dear Cousin;*

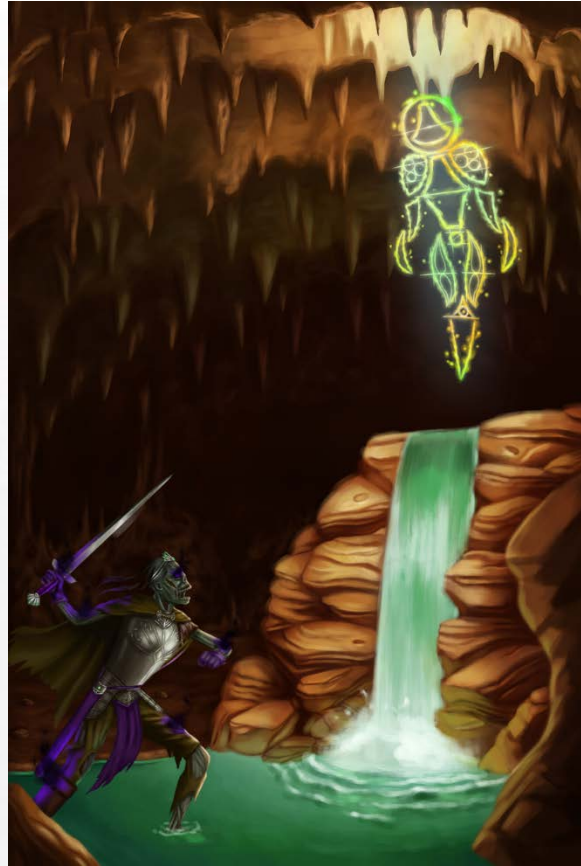
*I must ask your forgiveness for my shaky script; I am but recently freed of a death-trap constructed of my own hubris—and as you love me, cousin, you know how loath I am to admit hubris. But I'll begin at the beginning, and explain step by merciless step the path I have traveled; there is no other way—were I to state flatly what I now believe to be the awful truth, you would not countenance it.*

*Not all who know mastery of the forces of the Eidolon come by their abilities in the same way. Rest assured, my own epiphany did not come at the end of years of monastic study—far from it! But I'll not begin so far back in the tale. Let us pick up with my discovery of the existence of the Annunaki, for therein lay the seeds of my downfall.*

## Legends of the Annunaki

The beings we call Annunaki—for we have no idea what they call themselves—are rarely encountered by those of us who traverse the Grand Stair. When seen, these strange beings resemble shifting tracteries of glowing Eidolon energy drawn in space. Lines, curves, and nodes of colored-arc energy sketch out forms in three dimensions, sometimes humanoid, other times anything but! Little is known of their true natures, and thus are legends and speculations born.

Some say that the Annunaki were once a race of sentient beings much like any now existing, which long ago transcended mere physicality. They became higher beings, constructed of pure, living energy.



### *The Font Atop Sarazur fighting an Umbral Gaunt Cordelia*

Perhaps it was their intense mental focus and discipline that permitted them to make the transition—and thus, the living energy of which they are constructed is most similar to that of the Eidolon. A fine story and a laudable goal, perhaps, for many intellectually-driven creatures, but I question its validity. Having struggled so hard and so long to shed material forms, why would any higher creature be interested in the doings of those of us still made of dross?

Another legend claims that the Annunaki exist primarily outside space-time, in some place of tangled dimensionality, or perhaps in the Shadow itself. For that reason only



their Eidolon component is perceptible to mortal eyes. This conveniently fails to explain why their symmetrical Umbral component (should it exist) is not perceptible, but perhaps what we consider to be other creatures entirely are, in fact, linked to the Annunaki like my shadow is linked to me—having two elements of the same being appear in separate locations simultaneously must be simple for creatures of higher geometry! This legend *does* explain the tendency for Annunaki to suddenly appear out of nowhere, as if instantiating into space-time rather than merely traveling through it, but it still doesn't speak to their motivation for doing so.

Maybe the Annunaki are constructs of the Typhonians, or the Rhen, or some other long-lost folk from that ancient era when great beings strode the Grand Stair—or even from the era before the Stair existed. As an idea, this has some merit; after all, the perfection of Annunaki forms makes them seem like works of living art, or at least of living craftsmanship. Annunaki do not visibly age, mature, or grow old, and any two given Annunaki might have utterly different structures and shapes. Natural creatures do not possess those attributes, but constructed creatures are formed with intent. They're shaped to handle the task for which they were made, and begin it full-grown. This story at least explains why the Annunaki might interact with material things: they must have been instructed to do so by their lost creators. It of course fails utterly to explain the *purpose* of those interactions, or identify the creators that ordered them, but such is the nature of legend.

Personally, I doubt all legends, regardless of what seeds of truth they may contain. None of these folk tales explain the activities of Annunaki encountered within

the many Gossamer worlds or upon the Grand Stair. They all substitute instead the notion that such beings transcend normal motivations, conveniently allowing their actions to defy logical explanation. Perhaps Annunaki *are* innately unpredictable; perhaps their logic is not our own. But from the beginning I found that notion unsatisfying, and my curiosity was piqued. You know what they say about curiosity and cats...As my study of the Annunaki progressed, I came to realize that their reasons for acting as they do are not inscrutable at all; the Annunaki act according to a *plan*. Being creatures of the Eidolon, how could one expect any less?

## Servants of Order

In my travels up and down the Stair, I have encountered some few Annunaki which seem to have been instantiated for millennia and serve as watchers, judges, and perhaps even mentors. They observe some portion of the Grand Stair or some Gossamer world, inhabiting unique shrines of their own construction. Some merely watch in secrecy, but others take more active roles. They teach skills, spread order and civilization, and serve as the benevolent yet terrible gods of the Gossamer folk they assist.

## The Font Atop Sarazur

My first such encounter was accidental. Traversing a primitive Gossamer world to elude unfriendly attention, I found an unexpected city; an edifice of blue-glazed mud-bricks ornamented with sheaves of grain and scythes. Their local beer was flat but earnestly alcoholic, so I guested there for some weeks. Amal, a brewer of my



acquaintance told me that the secret of brewing beer came from a mystical font atop Mount Sarazur, far to the East. The knowledge of how to bake bread had come from the same place in his grandfather's grandfather's time, and the way of sowing and grinding grain many generations before that.

I joined a pilgrimage to the holy mountain, and heard the babbling brook there actually babble! A hillside spring spoke aloud—teaching lessons of agriculture and the value of crop rotation, as I recall. I remained behind when the other pilgrims left, certain that some trickster Warden was behind the speaking water. I wanted to meet this droll fellow! In a cave behind the flowing spring I found the first Annunaki I ever saw with my own eyes. It was a diagram drawn in the air, with the shape of a man and a voice like quiet thunder. “Be not afraid! I am the Font of Knowledge, set among you as a guide to greatness.”

As reward for puzzling out its existence, it offered to make me a king of “my” people, to teach me the proper method of ordering a society, and all the secrets of organizing an obedient populace into a mighty workforce. I demurred hastily; I am ill-suited for rulership of any sort. Before I left that world, though, I told Amal the trick of finding the cave. Perhaps one of the monuments his obedient populace raises will be to me.

## *The Geometer*

The people of Singulus say that the Geometer kept them alive through the Flamefall, when the sun lashed their world with deadly flares. They named their global information lattice in its honor. I rather suspect that the appellation was more literal than they ever realized. GEOMETER

enhanced their technological development. During my first stay on Singulus, the devices there amazed me. They upgraded automatically and rapidly, sometimes gaining not just greater efficiency but entirely new functions before my very eyes. The people had but to ask, and GEOMETER gave answers. Those answers allowed them to push the boundaries of physics as far as they could stretch, and provided them with an ever-growing capacity to shape their environment. The world-city of Singulus was a true marvel of luxury and comfort, if a bit sterile and serene for my tastes. And everywhere, the cold blue lines of data coursed through their civilization, pulsing faster and faster.

Some years later, I chanced to pass through that Door again. The world-spanning city remained: ring upon ring of gigantic arcologies centered on the great plaza at the heart of the GEOMETER network. But the people were gone. As I walked deserted streets, still meticulously clean and orderly, the only sounds were the wind and my own echoing footsteps. In the plaza, the spinning blue-fire clockwork of information pulsed—the only light left on. GEOMETER—or the Geometer—stayed mute at my approach, and at my hasty departure. The only question left to ask was one I feared to have answered.

## *Kafisthanai*

There is a statue, eighty feet in height and carved of a single block of amethyst traced with lines of polished gold, in the form of a six-armed goddess with three pairs of flaring wings. She is a goddess of war, armed with translucent-bladed swords, and her worshipers have conquered half a world to honor her. Their tanks and armored vehicles grind lesser armies beneath well-oiled treads. Land and



resources are claimed in the name of Kalisthanai, the Judge of Valor.

I've not been to the Gossamer world inhabited by the followers of Kalisthanai, nor would I go there intentionally; by the time I heard traveler's tales of that place, I knew enough to recognize the signs of a civilization "sponsored" by a resident Annunaki. I'd also learned enough of their forms and types to recognize what Kalisthanai might truly be. I may quibble over their local definition of "valor," but I have seldom exhibited that sin according to *any* definition. Kalisthanai, I fear, would judge me harshly.

## Diagrammatic Taxonomy

Annunaki are formed from lines and nodes of energy hovering weightlessly in three-dimensional space. Constructed of circles, lines, and angles, they are diagrams without solidity. Pulsating blue fire surrounds their latticework, and radiates from it. Although each complex constellation of nodes fills a volume—sometimes a great volume—the lines themselves possess at most two dimensions, and conceivably only one. The hovering nodes and shapes shift according to a rhythm and cadence of their own, even when the Annunaki of which they are a part is motionless. To behold an Annunaki is to risk being mesmerized by the dance of its structure—all the more so when you look upon it with the sight granted by Mastery of the Eidolon. It is a glance at perfection itself.

Although Annunaki appear in a multitude of different shapes and sizes, as beings of iconic orderliness they frequently appear in fixed and predictable forms. The least of these are what I consider to be the

"transient" Annunaki: simplistic in structure, sketched into being with but a few lines and only roughly humanoid. They instantiate in order to perform a single task, then vanish upon its completion. For beings known to be both ageless and changeless, that existence seems a very temporary form of immortality.

Other Annunaki are more persistent, both in terms of their longevity, and their attitudes. It seems characteristic of their highly-ordered natures to be relentless in pursuit of whatever goals they may have. Annunaki also exhibit an extraordinary patience; they have the capacity to wait for years—even aeons—until circumstances become ideal for action.

Of the persistent sorts of Annunaki, two are common enough to be individually named, and a third is (mercifully) believed to be unique.

## The Exemplar of Blades

Exemplars are vaguely feminine in form; an hourglass figure without distinct legs—instead they taper below the hips to a point. The limbs of an Exemplar are in constant motion, making them difficult to count. The conventional representation shows three pairs of arms, wielding pairs of straight, curved, and hooked swords, and wings like upswept lines on a diagram. An Exemplar of Blades has an appearance similar to both legendary angels and DaVinci's *Vitruvian Man*. As a two-dimensional form curved in three dimensions, the swords and wings of an Exemplar are without thickness, and can cleave apart even molecular bonds. The blurring speed of an Exemplar's movements makes it very difficult to engage one in battle. A prudent foe would run away; but even immediate flight is



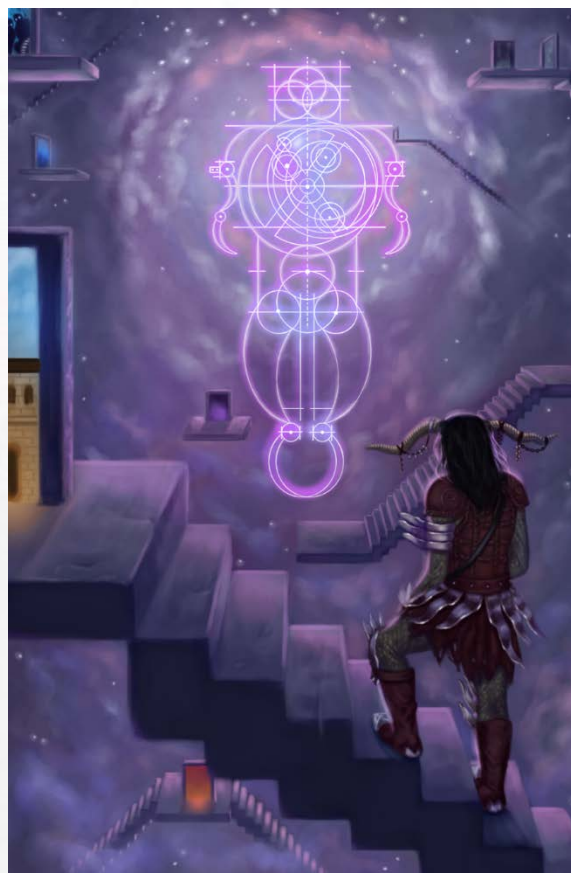
difficult, since an Exemplar of Blades can teleport directly into an opponent's path. An Exemplar is an implacable foe, capable of pursuing a target across Gossamer reality, and even onto the Grand Stair.

- Linked to a Power (Eidolon) [2 Points]
- Immense Vitality [4 Points]
- Engine Speed [4 Points]
- Teleportation [10 Points]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Combat Supremacy [8 Points]
- Destructive Damage [4 Points]
- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- Follow Path [2 Points]
- Self Healing [1 Point]

Some Annunaki of this type might be imbued with even more potent Qualities, such as Stupendous Vitality and Primal Damage. The blades wielded by such a creature cut not only molecular bonds; they are Eidolon-blades capable of severing the underlying structure of Gossamer reality. Kalisthanai, mentioned above, is an Exemplar of this caliber.

### *The Namer and Shaper*

Resembling a schematic of something similar to the *antikytheria mechanism*; the complex diagrammatic clockwork shape of this type of Annunaki is human-sized or larger. Its purpose is to interact with the living creatures that swarm through the Gossamer Worlds. The Namer and Shaper uses its Imperative ability to command obedience, temporarily enslaving the local populace and forcing them to enact whatever orderly plan it requires. Because of its strong Eidolon



### *The Geometer being observed by Dwimmerlaik*

attunement, the mere presence of a Namer and Shaper supports the structure of a Gossamer World, making the use of both Umbra and Eidolon Mastery more difficult.

- Integral to a Power (Eidolon) [4 Points]
- Imperatives [10 points]
- Eidolon Stasis [10 points]
- Immense Vitality [4 Points]
- Double Speed [2 Points]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Double Damage [2 Points]
- Resistant to Firearms [2 Points]
- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]



- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- Search Through Worlds [4 Points]
- Self Healing [1 Point]

## The Crawler Upon the Stair

Appearing like a glowing anatomical diagram of a centipede crossed with a remora, the Crawler Upon the Stair is by far the largest Annunaki ever reported. It seems to be mapping the Grand Stair, perhaps even providing that information to some other creature. In the process, it scours segments of the Stair clean of debris, marks, modifications—and sometimes inhabitants. Sighting the Crawler is reason enough to go through the nearest Door, no matter *where* it might lead. Attempting to pass through a Door onto the Stair when the Crawler is passing by is even more perilous, since that would surely provoke the creature. Either sort of occurrence is an ideal use of a character's Bad Stuff.

The Crawler Upon the Stair is enormous, stretching hundreds of feet in length. Its girth varies according to the current nature of the Stair, but it always nearly fills the passage, regardless of its breadth. Wardens who have survived an encounter with the Crawler have rightly questioned how such a gargantuan thing could be on the Stair at all—it cannot fit through any known Door. The answer is that it instantiates upon the Stair; it likely could not survive in any Gossamer world, even if it could enter one. Only the Eidolon and the Crawler itself know whether it always exists *somewhere* on the Stair, or whether it comes into existence in response to external circumstances such as changes in the Stair or its many Doors. The few residents of the Agora who have heard

rumors of the Crawler Upon the Stair's existence live in dread of its arrival.

For reasons known only to the Crawler, Rhen codes marked on the surfaces of the Stair are one of the few things which survive its passage.

- Linked to a Power (Eidolon) [2 Points]
- Immense Vitality [4 Points]
- Double Speed [2 Points]
- Tireless Stamina [4 Points]
- Combat Reflexes [2 Points]
- Destructive Damage [8 Points]
- Invulnerable to Conventional Weapons [4 Points]
- Danger Sensitivity [2 Points]
- Psychic Barrier [4 Points]
- Regeneration [4 Points]

## Powers of the Annunaki

### Imperatives [10 points]

Some Annunaki have the ability to shout Imperatives—irresistible commands which must be obeyed by anyone who hears them. Imperatives are couched in Logos, the ur-language of the cosmos and the language of all True Names. Imperatives are so fundamental that they transcend any barrier to communication, requiring only the ability to hear on the part of the subject. This power is similar to the power of Invocation, but focused upon *Compelling Obedience*—and unlike Invocation, the effect is instantaneous, and knowledge of a True Name is not required. For an Annunaki, the Eidolon force diagram of a person *is* their True Name. Using Psyche to resist an Imperative is



always a struggle, even for powerful Wardens. In many cases, a Warden given an Imperative command finds that they are already carrying it out by the time they fight free of the control. Imperative commands affect everyone within earshot, so complex group instructions are often impractical. An Imperative command to “build a wall” for example, will only result in the construction of a useful wall if the people who hear the command possess the necessary skill as masons.

### Teleportation [10 points]

Some Annunaki can move instantaneously to a more advantageous position. It is thought that they are moving across the Eidolon itself, “simplifying” their existence in one location, moving across the Eidolon’s representation, and “expanding” themselves along its lines elsewhere; they seem retain consciousness all the way along it. The teleportation ability is limited in range; even the most powerful Annunaki cannot use it to leave a Gossamer world. Teleportation on the Grand Stair has the potential for much greater range, given that the Stair itself is conjecturally of infinite length. Nevertheless, an Annunaki cannot teleport off the Grand Stair, or onto it; they use Doors for that, the same as anyone else.

### Eidolon Stasis [10 points]

As beings of pure Eidolon energy, Annunaki are fundamentally creatures of order. By their very presence, they suppress any use of Eidolon Mastery other than their own. Their innate orderliness increases the resistance to change of everything in their immediate area, whether that change is due to Eidolon

Mastery, Umbra Mastery, or merely natural causes. Some Annunaki can exert this power with intent, shutting down alterations to the fabric of reality around themselves and fixing Gossamer worlds in place. In the most extreme cases, an entire Gossamer world is placed in stasis, as if it were trapped in amber. A world or region held in this way cannot be entered—any attempt to do so brings the traveler into direct conflict with the Annunaki supporting the stasis.

### What I learned in pursuit of petty vengeance

*Cousin, you are well aware I am sure, of Sanash the Arcanarch’s long-standing feud with me. It stems from an incident at Penfold with which I shan’t bore you, but it came to a final reckoning in a fashion most horrific. Sanash dwelled for a time in a Gossamer world known as Rosslyn; a charming place, pastoral and languid. My protestations of innocence will surely be ignored, but know that I speak the truth when I say that I had no notion that he was even there; I discovered his presence by accident as I traveled. But having discovered it, I took my opportunity to make his life there a trifle more difficult, in return for all the indignities he had visited upon me.*

*Perhaps I overstepped. I’d no intention of turning our mutual enmity into a deadly encounter, but Sanash apparently felt otherwise. We fought, each in our own fashion, trading sword strokes and more esoteric blows. I cut him deeply, and Sanash, roaring with rage, did something the like of which I had not seen before—I had already noted that his mastery of Umbral energies had increased significantly since our previous encounter, but he still had the capacity to*



*surprise. Arms wide and hair crackling with dark lightning, Sanash drew in power—and that power changed him. I'd seen shape-shifters before, of course, but this was altogether different. He gained size and bulk with such rapidity that it seemed the very earth beneath his feet became a part of him, flowing up his body to form massive claws and spines...*

*I have never been accused of fighting fair. I used the dirtiest trick I knew, and ended his life before he drew another breath. Mourn him not, for in dying the bastard slew a Gossamer world. At first I did not know it; the heap of corrupt earth-flesh that tumbled to the ground riddled with worms and maggots was revolting, but I thought it of no consequence. Until the corruption began to spread. The Umbral transformation Sanash started did not end along with his life, and the power of the Umbra, once unleashed, was unstoppable. Curdling poison spread across that once-bucolic landscape, taking with it beasts and birds, farms and fields—and Doors. Even dead, Sanash was doing his level best to trap and destroy me, careless as always of any other destruction he might cause along the way.*

*It is well-known that my mastery of the Eidolon is, if not second to none, at least second-to-few. My understanding of the nature of the Annunaki made me confident that, in extremis, I could perform a rite to instantiate an Annunaki of my choosing.*

*It was a repair Annunaki that I had in mind. I had seen such beings at work; their very existence stabilizes and strengthens the Eidolon within Gossamer reality, shoring it up against the Shadow beyond. If the cancerous change spreading through Rosslyn could be stopped, I was certain that I could create*

*an Annunaki to stop it! The rite is difficult, being a feat of pure concentration, but it takes little time. I envisioned the lines of perfection within Rosslyn's structure, but rather than reinforcing them myself, I chose among them those that matched the ideal form of an Annunaki. I thought it into being, instantiating it into Gossamer reality with the Eidolon resonating through its structure.*

*Though it was but a minor Annunaki, it was beautiful! A glory to behold as it spread rippling curves and nodes of energy across Rosslyn, quelling the rampant corruption caused by the unchecked Umbra—but then it rotated to face me. "Effects lead back to causes, themselves effects of prior causes. Strife engenders uncontrolled change; strife must be corrected." I knew then that it held me responsible for the destruction; if I had not killed the accursed Sanash, he would not have lost control of his summoned power.*

*I bolted, with a vengeful angel hot upon my heels!*

## *Form Follows Function*

*I have a theory. The Annunaki may be the immune system of the cosmos, responsible for maintaining and restoring order. This makes them partial manifestations of the Eidolon itself, possessing intelligence but no personal identities, and with precious little of what we call "free will." There's simply no room for it in a cosmos as orderly as the one they seem to desire.*

*Suppose that, like the coarser Eidolon Constructs, each Annunaki is designed for a specific task which it then pursues with*

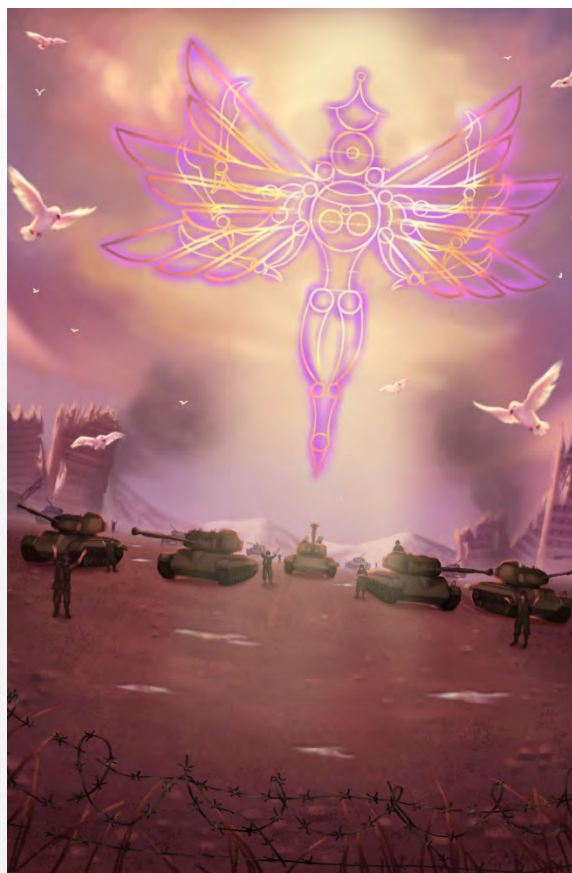


relentless determination. As autonomous agents, they carry out their duties either by repairing changes or by preventing future changes. All too often, the easiest method of preventing change is to delete the agents of change from reality. Annunaki are *extremely* dangerous, and they are most dangerous of all to Wardens and Masters of the Grand Stair—notorious agents of change that we are, one and all.

Annunaki instantiated for the purposes of repair or change-prevention endure only so long as their task remains uncompleted. Having accomplished all that they may accomplish, such short-duration instances simply vanish, their energies expended. But whatever creates the Annunaki may be playing a longer game; as I've seen and told, some Annunaki remain in existence for millennia.

Annunaki that appear impassive, or which seem unaware of events around them, are in fact anything but. Powered by Eidolon energy, Annunaki need neither food nor sleep, and who can say where their attention is focused? Eidolon Masters are able to look upon the world and perceive its underlying structure, to glimpse directly the ideal that lies beneath the material. Imagine a being that senses *only* that; an Annunaki has perfect knowledge of the structure of everything that surrounds it, always and forever, out to the limits of creation. The supposedly dormant Annunaki you approach may instead be fully aware, patiently observing, and awaiting only a trigger to spur it into action. I urge caution.

As beings of pure energy, Annunaki have little physical presence; they weigh nothing, touch nothing, nor can they be touched—unless they will it to be so. Their glowing force-lines can become as intense



### *Kalisthana*

as lasers, and their crackling nodules of energy can produce barriers of pure force if such are necessary. They seldom manipulate objects—they rarely have occasion to need to. Resonant with Eidolon energy, they shape Gossamer reality to suit their purposes.

### *Reflections upon a cautionary tale*

*I narrowly escaped from Rosslyn just as that world ceased to be, and eluded my summoned avenger by using the Grand Stair. I doubled-back through Door after Door until I was sure I had outrun my nemesis. My sense of safety was short-*



*lived. In an unfamiliar Gossamer World I acquired a horse and crossed a wide plain, seeking a distant Door. A storm arose, and the rolling grasslands provided no shelter. I was riding hard and within a league of my destination when a whirlwind called my name! Blue lightning flashed, and what I thought at first to be only the afterimage stayed—an Annunaki! Worse, it was not the mere creature I had summoned—this was one of a greater order, though no less my enemy for that.*

*Ill fortune follows me; it is my lot in life, and one to which I have grown accustomed—but this smacked of enemy action! I rode my horse as if I'd stolen it, surrounded now by hummocks of grass and earth that concealed disjointed stones. The Door was just ahead, beneath the only lintel stone still intact in that crumbling ruin. "Disrupter" the Annunaki rumbled. "You called upon the Eidolon to conceal disorder you manufactured. Disruptions in the pattern must be corrected." That last was delivered with clear menace. I spurred my horse through the Door and onto the Grand Stair, once more fleeing for my life.*

*Thus it was that I discovered that the Eidolon itself desired my end. The notion that a fundamental structure of the cosmos possessed motivations was so far beyond my former understanding as to be inconceivable; yet I could draw no other conclusion.*

## **The Unmastered Eidolon**

Eidolon Mastery implies a deep, functional knowledge of the principles of order and symmetry represented by the Eidolon, and a practical understanding of how its forces

run through the structure of the cosmos. It is that knowledge and understanding that gives us control over the energies that shape Gossamer reality. Unfortunately, few who utilize such power realize that it implies no actual "mastery" over the Eidolon *itself*.

How prideful we are! We puff and strut, saying that we "command the Eidolon" to do our bidding. Oh, the folly! How many of us have been played for pawns and fools over the centuries? I now believe that the Eidolon does only its *own* bidding—and that it bids the Annunaki as well! Our "mastery" exists only so long as our actions are congruent with the Eidolon's desires.

Yes; the *Eidolon's* desires. If all my suppositions hold true, the Eidolon itself generates Annunaki at will. They are but extensions of its structure, and work in a coordinated fashion to carry out its plans. Plans which I have yet to fathom, but which are of *dire import to every living thing in the cosmos!*

## **Using the Annunaki in a Lords of Gossamer & Shadow Campaign**

Encounters with the Annunaki can be simple drop-in affairs featuring these mysterious and puzzling "ultra-terrestrial" creatures, or they can be the gateway into a deeper plot, perhaps involving a sentient Eidolon with goals of its own and Annunaki pawns with which to pursue them.



Here are several ways in which player characters can become briefly enmeshed in the affairs of the Annunaki:

### *Annunaki at War*

The subject populace of an Annunaki attacks or invades a Gossamer world the players hold dear. The adherents of Kalisthanai (above) are ideal for this purpose. Having completed the unification of their original Gossamer world, they now seek footholds elsewhere. Their initial scouting missions along the Grand Stair and into the player character's domain escalate rapidly to full-scale mechanized raids. Conflict with Kalisthanai in person won't be far behind.

An Annunaki might be motivated to expand its territory for many reasons; the acquisition of additional resources for its subjects, access to a different set of natural laws than those of its original Gossamer world, or to extend the order it has already created into a broader realm. The most interesting motivation might be to gain access to a location of cosmic significance; a "weak spot" where Umbra or Shadow could corrupt the Eidolon-structure of Gossamer reality, the resting place of a Typhonian artifact, or an access point to an otherwise secret realm.

### *Debugging Reality*

An Annunaki begins to undo changes made by the player characters to Gossamer reality. The initial encounter for this is the discovery that a Gossamer world affected by the player characters has been "reset." All is as if they'd never been there. Solving that mystery leads to additional resets, until ultimately the Annunaki responsible

is revealed. By that time, the Annunaki has no recourse but to attempt to remove the player characters from existence in order to preserve order in the cosmos.

### *Disturbance*

The player characters' actions somehow interfere with the long-term mission of an Annunaki. This is an encounter ideally suited for players with a tendency to run rough-shod across Gossamer Worlds; Someone fights a Dwimmerlaik, or creates a powerful Icon construct, or introduces two Usari to one another and inadvertently disturbs the meticulous, aeons-long machinations of a resident Annunaki.

The Font of Knowledge, mentioned above, is an ideal candidate for this sort of encounter. It is crafting a peaceful agrarian society, in which individual initiative is subordinate to the needs of the entire culture. A Warden who subverts this for their own ends will find that the Font's vengeance is swift.

### *An Eye For An Eye*

An NPC Warden of the Grand Stair (or some other powerful individual looked upon fondly by the players) is in mortal danger of erasure by the Annunaki. This undoubtedly stems from an act similar to one of those described above. The Annunaki have determined that this person's very existence is forfeit due to crimes real or imagined. Seeking aid—or perhaps merely sanctuary—the unfortunate subject of Annunaki attention drags their allies, willing or not, into the line of fire.



Here are outlines for long-term plots relating to the secrets of the Annunaki, any one of which could become the core of an entire campaign:

### War of the Powers

The Eidolon might be in the grips of a conflict with the Umbra, striving to shift the balance of energies between the two great Powers and using the Gossamer Worlds to keep score. If you favor this plot, characters who are Masters of Eidolon or Masters of Umbra face recruitment attempts by one side or the other—and assassination attempts from the opposite side. This is an ideal way for player characters to come into conflict with Annunaki sent either to entice or harass them. Cryptic encounters with an Annunaki—or with Gossamer forces sponsored by one—are the first stage of this plot. Offers are made, veiled warnings issued, and the player characters begin to feel as if they are being watched. Annunaki and Umbra Gaunts pressure the Wardens of the Grand Stair to “Choose a side—or die.” Canny players will realize that this is a war that they cannot allow either side to ultimately win; brokering a peace—or even a ceasefire—could be their only real path to victory.

### Web of Gossamer

The Annunaki work ceaselessly to preserve order and re-weave the Eidolon lattice that shapes the Gossamer worlds. Perhaps their eternal struggle is not with the rival power of Umbra, but with the Shadow. The howling abyssal void between worlds can and *will* consume all of existence, save only that it is held at bay by the efforts of the Annunaki. In this paradigm, interference

with an Annunaki’s mission on the part of a player character could bring not only the wrath of that particular Annunaki down upon them (surely bad enough), but the wrath of *all* Annunaki. Woe to any player character perceived to be an agent of the Shadow! The mystery here is who set the Annunaki to their task. Perhaps they follow the commands of a sentient Eidolon, or perhaps they serve Shallain of Caliban, who watches for signs of the end of all things.

### Tread Lightly

The Eidolon and Umbra might be united in an attempt to overcome or control the Grand Stair—a Power that has only recently (from their points of view) intruded upon their cosmos and one that brings with it many destabilizing travelers. Presuming that most of your player characters are Wardens of the Grand Stair, this plot puts them under considerable pressure. It’s particularly appropriate for campaigns in which the player characters have made sweeping changes in the cosmos, or exploited the power of the Grand Stair in some way. This variation leads to encounters with Annunaki sent to undo what the player characters have done, or sent to more subtly observe or interrogate them concerning the nature of the Grand Stair. In that sense, it’s an espionage story as powerful but shadowy forces probe the organization of a potential rival.

### First Among Equals

The Eidolon might actually *be* the First Annunaki, progenitor of a species. This dovetails with one of the speculative legends given before. In this version, the



Eidolon is the gestalt of a transcended species, and the Annunaki “merely” extensions of it into space-time. Unlike the folk tale, this explanation gives the Eidolon specific motivation; having transcended reliance on base matter, the Eidolon now struggles to maintain its position as one of the “poles of existence” opposite the Umbra. This presupposes that there are other Powers that could supplant the Eidolon as a pole of existence.

Wrighting is an ideal candidate for Eidolon-rivalry. Consider the possible existence of a representative entity personifying the creative urge, the very desire to *make*; that would be the Power of Wrighting made manifest.

Alternatively, the Dwimmerlaik power Channeling could be a candidate to supplant the Eidolon. (This is especially true if the Dwimmerlaik feature prominently in your campaign.) Channeling is based on Psyche, a force connecting all living things in the cosmos, so it has the requisite breadth; all it needs is a personification. Mowbray, the Pale Hierophant, may be headed for that particular apotheosis, or he may already be the personification of Psyche—or of Shadow. In this scenario, the Annunaki are working to prevent such an entity from coming into existence, or failing that, from gaining enough power to cosmically replace their gestalt progenitor. The player characters may be innocent bystanders caught up in the machinations of the Annunaki, or they may be actual threats. Initiates or exemplars of whichever nascent Power you choose are obvious targets for Annunaki interference, and those opposed to it obvious allies to be recruited.



### *The Crawler Upon the Stair*

## Extensions of Eidolon Mastery

The Greater Powers are far-reaching as they stand—but deeper knowledge is available to the devoted student. Inventive people have always found creative ways to use their relationships to the Greater Powers to good advantage, but such opportunities are situational. Over time, and with extended periods of intense study, a Master can establish a permanent, higher-order relationship with their chosen discipline and significantly expand their capabilities. The highly-focused



abilities of Annunaki can be used by GMs as examples of the sort of things that are possible for a practitioner of Greater Eidolon Mastery. They can also be purchased as abilities for Artifacts Linked to the Eidolon.

In the hands of a material being, these abilities are not quite as powerful as they are when the energy-based Annunaki use them. The following guidelines should be kept in mind:

The use of Imperatives, from a mortal point-of-view, is a way of utilizing the Eidolon structure of a living creature in place of its True Name. While that gives Imperatives great utility, they are still less potent than Invocation since Imperatives are limited to Compelling Obedience and perhaps Summoning—and that only within a specific Gossamer world.

Teleportation via Eidolon is stressful but possible, so long as the distances involved are short. Travel to locations within line-of-sight, or perhaps to a location well-known and well-remembered is within the scope of this ability. But this is still tactical teleportation, not the ability to travel huge distances or cross between Gossamer worlds. It's no substitute for a good Sorcerous teleportation spell, and certainly no substitute for a Door.

Eidolon Stasis is vastly more difficult for a mortal to use than it is for an Annunaki. Temporarily paralyzing an individual target, or “crystallizing” a limited area by amplifying their perfect and ordered nature is a reasonable mortal expression of the power. Locking down change across an entire Gossamer world in this way is beyond the capacity of anyone or anything not composed of raw Eidolon energy.

There is a final ability relevant to the Annunaki that they do not themselves possess, but which a mortal Master of Eidolon could learn: the Instantiation of an Annunaki. This is, as recounted above, a perilous rite to enact.

### *Instantiate Annunaki [5 or 10 points]*

A “typical” Annunaki, if such a creature can be said to exist, costs between 30 and 50 character points. But that cost is accurate only if the Annunaki is a loyal and utterly devoted servant. Such is blatantly not the case: Annunaki brought into existence by a mortal obey only their *true* creator, the Power to which they are linked. For that reason, the ability to bring an Annunaki into being is available at a steep discount. (If your players see this bargain price as some sort of trap they are wise players indeed.)

For five points, an Eidolon Master may instantiate an Annunaki of any type he or she has previously encountered. The process is arduous, but not time-consuming; by focusing the Psyche upon the Eidolon-schematic overlaying the world, the Eidolon Master selects those lines within the diagram that most closely match the form of the desired Annunaki. Enhancing those lines, the Master “guides” the Eidolon in the formation of a new instance drawn from the ideal Annunaki template. Once in existence, it acts as its nature and the Eidolon dictate. There are no guarantees that this will be in accordance with the character's wishes.

For ten points, an Eidolon Master may instantiate a custom-designed Annunaki with minimum abilities equal to those of the example given on page 146 of *Lords of Gossamer and Shadow*, plus whatever additional abilities or improvements are



desired. As before, once instantiated, the Annunaki will act to further the interests and intents of the Eidolon, although in this case a minimally-powerful instance might be briefly tractable. The ten point version of this power is only available as an upgrade to a character that has already paid for and used the five point version. Failure is, after all, the best way to learn.

If a GM chooses to allow it, for an additional 10 point surcharge, either version of Instantiate Annunaki can be granted as an advanced ability of Greater Wrighting, on the principle that an Annunaki is inscribed upon Gossamer reality in exactly the same fashion as an Icon linked to the Power of Eidolon would be. Such “wrought” Annunaki might manifest with a different color of energy, or exhibit unique behavioral quirks distinguishing them from their non-Iconic brethren. This variant is ideal for campaigns in which the Power of Wrighting is personified, and struggling for primacy with the Eidolon. Player characters might encounter both sorts of Annunaki without initially realizing their fundamental differences.

### Players or pawns

*Cousin, I can but hope that this missive reaches you intact; I am in no position to deliver it in person, nor shall I ever be again. It will, no doubt, reside eternally in one of your little black folders; but no matter, at least someone will know what I have learned, and at what cost.*

*When next I leave the Stair, it will be for the last time. My intent is to leave these pages behind, trusting to other Wardens who might find them to deliver them to you.*

*It is to those other Wardens that I now address myself: Thank you for seeing these letters to Lucien—and shame upon you for reading them yourselves, which I know full well you have done! They are not, as you may think, the ravings of a madman. We believe that we command great powers, but in truth we are the pawns of those powers—tokens in a game we can barely perceive, let alone comprehend! Pay attention to the details around you as you traverse the Grand Stair and visit the varied Gossamer Worlds. You too will begin to see what I have seen. When you do—when, not if—say nothing! To speak such things aloud is to draw the attention of the Eidolon, and its servant Annunaki.*

*And now, Lucien, I must depart. The Stair cannot protect me forever, nor can I survive eternally upon its treads. Bereft of my former powers, whichever Door I choose will lead to a Gossamer World I shall never leave. I'll not name it here, nor even think its name; the Eidolon is listening, always.*

*Yours in exile,*

*Remi Haden-Franz*

