



CITY of MIST

**CULT of THE
GOD-KING**

A CRYPTIC CASE OF ARCANE SECRETS AND ZEALOUS SACRIFICES

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CULT OF THE GOD-KING

A CITY OF MIST CASE



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HOW TO USE THIS CASE IN YOUR GAME

You can use *Cult of the God-King* as a standalone one-shot or as a part of the *Nights of Payne Town* story arc.

Within *Nights of Payne Town*, this case is the second case out of a three-case sub-arc that forms the Mystical Vein. It is preceded by *The Furnace* and followed by *The Alchemist*.

Throughout this PDF, **red clues** (clues given in red cards) point the investigation to another case in the Mystical Vein or in the *Nights of Payne Town* story arc. Reveal them to your players only if and when you wish to lead the story to the given case.

This case mentions **Corbin Payne**, the Avatar of the Fisher King and the main villain for the *Nights of Payne Town* story arc. You can find the full background and game information regarding Corbin Payne and his operation in the complete *Nights of Payne Town* book.

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CONTENT WARNING

This game contains mild language as well as strong themes of violence, crime, and immorality. Parental guidance is advised.

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You can hear it whispered on the cobble streets of the Old Quarter, in the murmur of the ocean by the docks, echoing down abandoned, candle-lit subway tunnels. It's like an ancient spell or a mumbled recipe, a spark that lights the melting fire. They are gathering, they have awakened, and now they must serve their forgotten master. Do you, like them, seek enlightenment or power untold? What are *you* willing to sacrifice to the God-King?

Cult of the God-King is a psychological thriller following a mystical journey for self-transformation, guided by a mysterious and shady cult. Lead characters can attempt the journey themselves as spiritual seekers or they can play the cynics and iconoclasts and attempt to decipher the cult's true motives before it's too late. As the culmination of the cult's Great Work approaches and the stakes become higher and higher, lead characters will break, switch sides, attain a deeper understanding of the City, and reveal their true nature.

This case takes a headlong dive into the occult circles of the City, exploring the rich lore of medieval alchemy as a path to spiritual evolution and combining it with the mystery of the City and the Mist. **It plays best when at least one PC joins the cult and is willing to go all the way to find answers.**

A PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

The Great Work of the medieval alchemists, or **Magnum Opus**, revolved around the creation of the Philosopher's Stone, which could transform base metals into gold and grant life everlasting. The secret behind this highly sought-after recipe is that it is an allegory; while it discusses the transformation of metals, its true use is to **transform the soul**, from a lost and blind state, caught in the trapping of this world (Sleeper) to an awakened state (Rift) and finally a complete state of unity with all of existence, thereby achieving an individual's ultimate potential: reuniting with the Source.

According to the *Magnum Opus*, the four stages necessary to achieve this transformation are:

- **Rotting, or Blackening:** Confronting and ruminating on one's darkness and nothingness
- **Purification, or Whitening:** Purifying oneself from worldly pursuits
- **Awakening, or Yellowing:** Awakening to one's true nature
- **Transformation, or Reddening:** Transforming into the ultimate state of being, uniting with the Source

In the City, "the Source" refers to what exists beyond the Mist, perhaps even beyond the realm of the Mythoi. The ultimate goal of this process is to break the chains of the Mist and to attain the ultimate level of awareness.

THE SACRED IS EXPLOITED FOR POWER LUST

While this recipe may be a true path to enlightenment, the cult that calls itself "*Magnum Opus*" has defiled it, using it for its own dark agenda: **the ritual awakening and harvesting of Rifts**. Masking itself as a promising path to enlightenment, the cult does indeed lead individuals through the first three stages of the process, **turning them into Rifts** while brainwashing them to worship their false idol, **the God-King** (a figurehead that substitutes the ever-elusive "Source").

In the fourth stage, however, the subservient Rifts are **drained of their powers** and then discarded, and their Mythos powers are harnessed to increase the influence of the greedy cult leaders, the council of **the Cabal** (and ultimately, if you are playing the story arc, to fuel Armand Kai's fear of death and search after a literal Elixir of Life).

FROM SEEKERS TO DISCIPLES

The servants of the God-King are divided into ranks based on the stage they managed to achieve in the *Magnum Opus* process (see table). To attain each rank, cult members must complete the stage and undergo a graduation ritual, which initiates them into the next stage.

Based on their nature and desires, the cultists are further divided into two groups:

- **Lambs**, candidates who seek enlightenment, and are destined to be awakened as Rifts and to have their Mythos harvested.
- **Wolves**, candidates who seek power over others, and are destined to become the leaders of the cult and eventually control the power harvested from Lambs.

	I	II	III	IV
Stage	Blackening	Whitening	Yellowing	Reddening
Alchemical meaning	Rotting	Purification	Awakening	Transformation
Mystical meaning	Confronting one's dark side	Relinquishing worldly pursuits	Discovering one's true self	Attaining enlightenment and ultimate power
Rank	Seeker	Follower	Initiate	Disciple
Teacher	<u>Prof. Clay</u>	Whirler (in Whirler's Commune)	Disciples	For Wolves: the Cabal or Armand Kai
Graduation ritual	<u>The Silo Trial</u>	<u>The Feast of the Fools</u>	<u>Anointing in the Catacombs</u>	The Furnace / Canseliet Manor
Wolves	Prove their ruthlessness	Shed their past lives	Receive Transmutations	Gain new Transmutations and Tinctures
Lambs	Prove their innocence		Awaken as Rifts	Harvested

THE BLACKENING

The cult recruits **Seekers** from all across the City, individuals who have shown interest in the occult or in spiritual liberation. The chief recruiter is one of the cult's highest-ranking Disciples, the charismatic Prof. Clay, who doubles as a philosophy professor in the Old Quarter University. Prof. Clay is responsible for the first step of the candidates' journey: confronting newcomers with their flaws and challenging them to strive to be worthy of the secret knowledge he possesses. He also profiles them, assigning them as Lambs or Wolves. At the end of the Blackening, both Lambs and Wolves undergo the Silo Trial to prove their worth to Prof. Clay.

THE WHITENING

Now dubbed **Followers**, aspirants move to a second teacher, **Whirler** (Tincture of Krishna), and live with her for a while on the streets until they learn to abandon their former lives and social norms. Whirler then initiates the Followers in a mass celebration, the Feast of Fools, during which the Followers are whisked away and begin their life as cultists in the service of the God-King.

THE YELLOWING

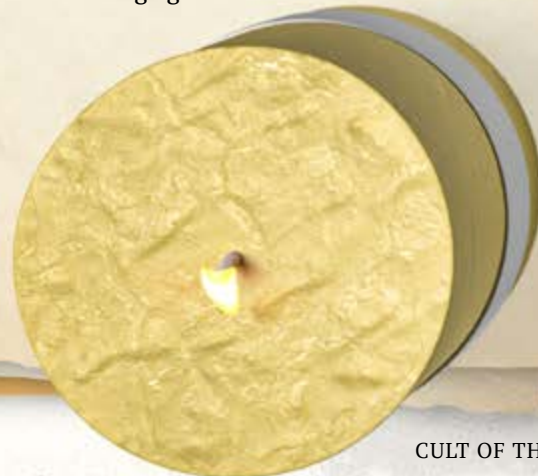
New **Initiates** become cult operatives and are taken into the Catacombs, the cult's base of operations, hidden deep underground in a chain of abandoned subway tunnels and managed by its most devout Disciples. There, they ready themselves for their **Anointing**, the cult's awakening ritual. While Lambs await their awakening in prayer and meditation, Wolf Initiates take part in the clandestine activities of the cult to serve the will of the

God-King: intimidating and harming those who pose a threat to the cult, stealing Relics, guarding cult meetings, etc. This phase culminates with a ritual to awaken Lambs into **Rifts** and to brand Wolves with alchemical symbols, giving them the power of **Transmutations** which finally makes them into fully-fledged **Disciples**.

RIFT HARVEST

In the fourth and final stage, **the Reddening**, Lambs who were awakened into Rifts do not remain Rifts for very long; instead, they are drained of their Mythos powers. Having been brainwashed throughout their time in the cult, most Lambs comply without protest.

Once the Lambs' Mythos powers are extracted and given to "the God-King", the Wolves who perform this so-called sacred duty are granted access to greater alchemical Transmutations and may become candidates for the council of the Cabal. In some of the cases, the God-King allegedly boons the Cabal with a new Tincture, made from the Ichor of the harvested Rift. The soulless husk that was once the Lamb returns to the City as a Mythosless Sleeper, with no hope of ever awakening again.



ALCHEMICAL POWERS

Followers and allies of Armand's so-called Cult of the God-King wield two forms of alchemical magic: **Tinctures** and **Transmutations**.

Tinctures are Relics created by the leader of the cult (Armand) from the Mythos essence harvested from Lambs. They are vials which hold the liquid essence of a Mythos. Unlike most Relics, they do not choose their bearer, but instead grant the power of a Mythos to whoever possesses them.

Transmutations are alchemical formulas that allow the cult's Disciples to control the alchemical elements and manipulate them in various ways. Only Wolves who reach the rank of Disciple are taught Transmutations, becoming fully Touched by Armand's Mythos.

If you are playing through the story arc, harvesting takes place at the old Aurora Glassworks furnace (see *The Furnace*), or, if the cult no longer controls the furnace, at **Canseliet Manor** by Armand Kai himself (see *The Alchemist*). If you are playing this case as a one shot, the Cabal are the ones performing the harvesting ritual in a section of the Catacombs.

THE CABAL

The most loyal and veteran Disciples are chosen by the existing Cabal members to join the Cabal. The Cabal commands a great deal of power, both magically, thanks to the Mythos Tinctures harvested, and politically, in their professional and private lives. Most notably, all Cabal members bear a portion of the Tincture of the biblical Magi (the Three Wise Men who observed the Star of baby Jesus' birth), which grants them powers of **astrological divination** to foresee any possible interferences in the cult's activities.

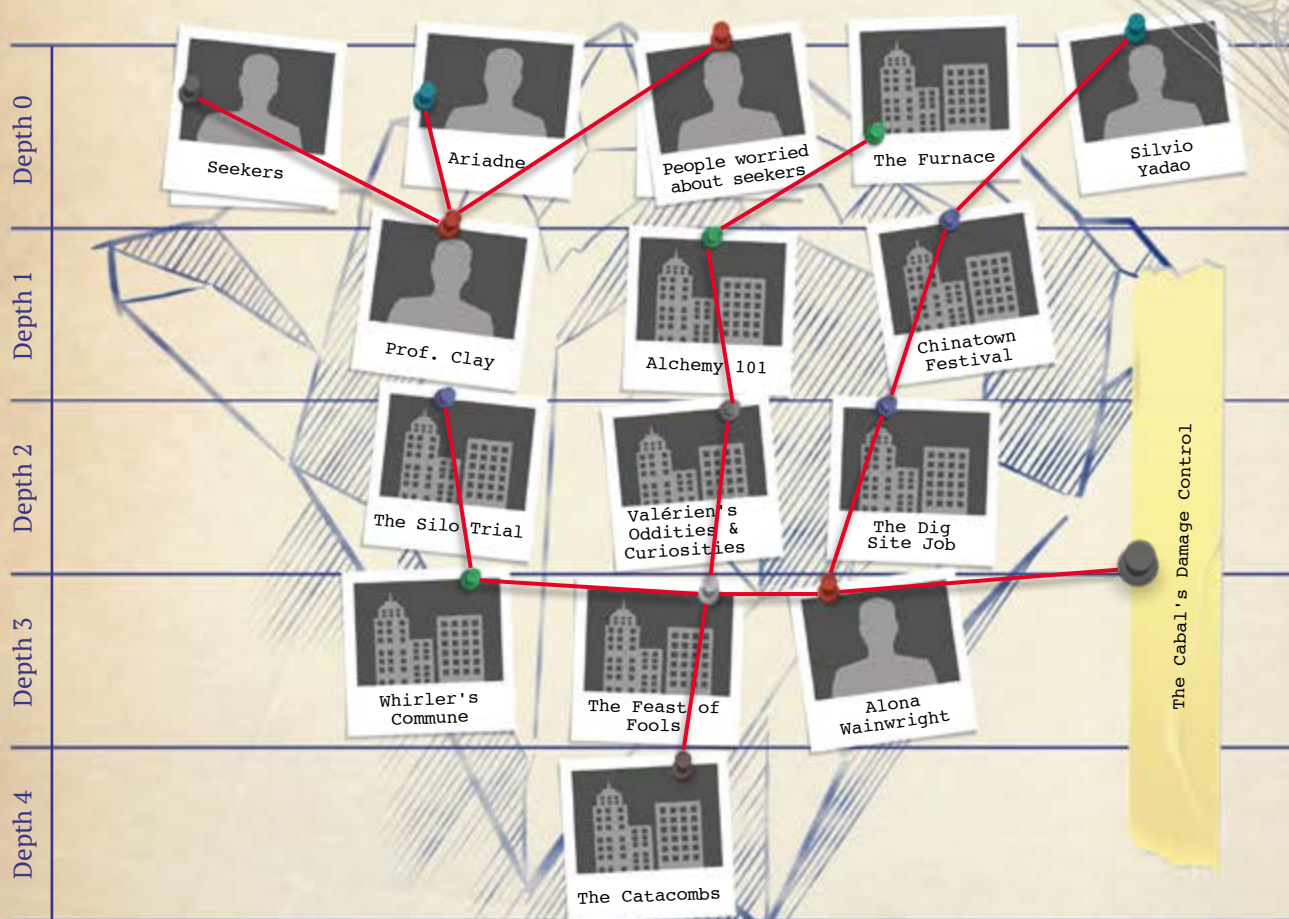
Alona Wainwright is the most prominent Cabal member, a businesswoman and art collector who finances the cult's activities and uses her legal team to rid the cult of any unwanted attention. She has also hired mercenaries and equipped them with Mythos Tinctures to provide additional protection for the cult. As a side business, Wainwright is using her art collector connections to **obtain Relics for harvesting**, gaining additional Mythos Tinctures.

A TRUE CULT CLASSIC

Here are a few cinematic tropes about cults that you should consider when depicting Magnum Opus in your game:

- **The cult is cryptic.** Only those initiated into the secrets of the cult understand its inner working and motivations.
- **The cult is ever present.** Anyone could be a cult member in disguise.
- **The cult is always one step ahead of the crew.** Between the Disciples' thoughtful calculations and the Cabal's astrological foresight, Magnum Opus always seems to already have a solution to any interferences from the crew, to the point of mocking them.
- **The cult is ruthless like only fanatics can be.** Lambs or Wolves, those seeking absolute truth and power unimaginable care not about the lives of Sleepers or Rifts blinded by earthbound morality. The cultists are willing to obliterate anyone standing on their path to the sublime, some with regret while others with zeal.
- **The cult is all-powerful.** At least from the crew's viewpoint, the cult seems to have unlimited mundane influence as well as never-before-seen forms of magic that can rob one's power (Armand's alchemy), characterizing it as a force too strong to contend with.
- **Don't call it "a cult":** When you portray NPCs remember that the followers of Magnum Opus don't consider it a cult or call themselves cultists and that the other NPCs don't know enough to do so. Avoid blowing the lid by using the word "cult" until the PCs figure it out and introduce this word themselves.





THE CABAL'S DAMAGE CONTROL

The Magnum Opus Cabal commands top-quality intel. Members of the council wear vials with the Tincture of the Magi, granting them **astrological foresight**, and their mundane connections span government, criminal underworld, and esoteric circles.

Cinematically, you should make regular **Deny Them Something They Want** and **Complicate Things, Big-time** moves throughout the case to make the crew feel as if they are one step behind the cult and that their plans are thwarted at every turn, such as:

- Treat a lead they have as obsolete (e.g., the cult already knows they are coming and moved its operations elsewhere)
- Have the cult send the crew a threat
- Have a cultist they captured kill herself or assassinated
- Have the cult ambush them
- Have the cult attack their loved ones or favorite hang-outs

You can justify such hard moves by giving them a **fair warning** in the form of an eerie feeling that they are being watched or tracked. Make sure not to overdo these setbacks; balance them with successes to keep the players engaged.

INVESTIGATING THE LEAK

Whenever you choose to have the cult thwart the plans of the crew, drop hints to let the players wonder how it was possible or ask them directly what their characters think about it. If the crew **Investigates**, they may discover the following:

The cult is not technologically spying on the crew nor are they shadowing the crew. There doesn't seem to be an informer from within the crew's circle leaking information directly to the cult.

There are clerks and secretaries collecting information about the crew, running background checks, accessing personal data, etc. Once the crew has reached Depth 2, these individuals can be traced back to Alona Wainwright in Depth 3.

Looking beyond the Mist, using abilities that can detect divination, or consulting Ariadne or another expert (e.g. a psychic reader) can reveal **the crew members' threads of fate are being charted using astrology.**

Aridane or another expert may suggest Rifts have a stronger fate signature than Sleepers. **Withholding the use of Mythos powers for a while may serve as a form of astrological camouflage** and allow the crew to get the drop on the cult.

Looking beyond the Mist can also reveal the **Mythos of the Magi at work: three wise men under a bright star.** However, having been harvested years ago, the three original Rifts of the Magi can only be found through other Rifts who knew them and their former powers back then (presumably Ariadne). Now Mythosless Sleepers, this trio of former rich and wise salesmen (King of Used Cars, King of Mattresses, and King of Hotdogs) have now been reduced to listless, hollow husks.

DISRUPTING THE CABAL'S ASTROLOGICAL CHARTS

Based on their research, the crew may try to disrupt the astrological divination that is betraying their every move to their enemies. This can be done on a temporary basis by:

- Refraining from using Mythos powers to reduce the characters' fate signature
- A successful **Sneak Around** move with powers that can hide one's destiny or dispel divination
- A *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move used to create a Mist-hidden effect
- Obtaining Gatekeeper gear that can mask one from divination powers
- Obtaining Silvio Yadao's Tincture of *Tarnkappe* (Cloak of Concealment) which hides one from divination
- Obtaining one vial of the Tincture of the Magi and using it in a ritual to disrupt the others (this requires adequate knowledge of the occult)

ATTACK OF THE CULTISTS

Whenever the crew is about to meddle in the affairs of the cult, or as vengeful retribution for trouble they have caused, the Cabal dispatches its agents to intimidate the crew or make short work of them.

Choose the agent(s) dispatched based on the Depth of the case, what the crew is about to expose, the challenge level you desire, and any cinematic considerations.

- A circle of Seekers (Professor Clay's students) ★★
- A circle of Initiates ★★★
- A Corporate Lawyer hired by Alona Wainwright to harass the crew ★★★
- Talia Al-Bahar, a deadly mercenary with the Tincture of Wilhelm Tell ★★★★★
- The Yakuza Yōkai, a violent pack of thugs tattooed with Tinctures of Yōkai (Japanese ghosts and demons) ★★★★★
- A circle of Disciples who control elements tailored to the crew's powers ★★★★★
- A Nemesis armed with a Tincture tailored to a specific PC's powers

The cult can find the crew anywhere (unless steps are taken to prevent this), and is likely to attack in places such as:

- Wherever the crew is conducting the investigation
- A sewer or subway tunnel to which the crew was lured by a cultist
- A cult ritual the crew plans to infiltrate and/or storm (e.g., the Silo Trial, the Feast of Fools, or the Anointing ritual in the Catacombs)
- Locations related to the PCs' private lives

INVESTIGATING THE AGENTS OF THE CULT

Once defeated, each agent can point to a different part of the case:

Cultists in general ooze alchemical symbolism (chants, recipes, sigils) and powers (Transmutations, Tinctures) that can be researched (Alchemy 101).

Seekers are usually members of Prof. Clay's Philosophy Club and can be followed to a club meeting or to the professor's office.

Initiates and Disciples are harder to crack or track (see sidebar) but they serve as the foot soldiers and couriers of the cult and can be followed to almost any location with cult activity (as long as it is no more than one Depth below the current). Most importantly, starting at Depth 3, they can lead the crew to the Catacombs, especially if the crew missed their chance to sneak in during the Feast of Fools.

The Corporate Lawyer, Talia, or the Yakuza Yōkai are handled by Cabal member Alona Wainwright and can be traced back to her company, Wainwright Auctioneers.

Disciples are entrusted with the cult's most valuable operations such as harvesting Rifts and collecting Ichor from the furnace. If the crew can circumvent the Cabal's astrology and the Disciples' unwavering loyalty, they may lead them to the old Aurora Glassworks factory (The Furnace) or even to Canseliet Manor (The Alchemist).

UNDER-LAMP INTERROGATION

Captured cultists at the rank of Initiate or higher possess the potential knowledge to blow the lid on the cult's operation all the way down to the Catacombs. Fortunately for the cult, the cultists' zeal (see Magnum Opus Dangers, below) could make interrogating a cultist a long and tortuous process for both sides, as it should be, cinematically. The interrogation can stretch out over several scenes and downtimes, parallel to the main investigation.

- Interrogating a cultist is a great cinematic opportunity to build up suspense and creepiness, and to dive into the brainwashed mind of a power-hungry or spiritually-driven fanatic. Drop some alchemical cryptic lines from the **Initiate's Chant** (page 40).
- Even when a player generates Clues, the cultist still speaks in riddles; give leads and hints that point at locations on the same Depth or one Depth lower, never further.
- When you get a hard move, a cultist prisoner could attempt to recruit her interrogators, especially if they spend a lot of time together. They may regress, regaining their *zealous* status. Or, the Cabal can astrologically predict the weak point and send **Talia Al-Bahar** (page 14) to assassinate the cultist from afar with a carefully placed sniper shot.



MAGNUM OPUS DANGERS

Magnum Opus cultists operate in small groups. Unless otherwise stated, a group of cultists usually has a handful of members and a size factor of 1. The cultists' Size Factor helps them resist and dish out not only greater physical statuses but also greater emotional and social statuses as they support one another in their faith.

The cultists' earnest faith in the Magnum Opus makes them virtually immune to mental influence. As they advance in ranks, they increase both their *turn-away-from-cult* maximums and their *zealous* statuses provided by the **Drinking The Kool-Aid** custom move. Removing a cultist's *zealous* status puts her in a vulnerable position, where her defenses are down and she may question her commitment to the cult; however, only maxing out *turn-away-from-cult* will make her betray or leave the cult.

The following Danger profiles describe Seekers, Followers, Initiates, and Disciples; individual Danger profiles are given for advanced Disciples, such as Prof. Clay, Whirler, or Alona Wainwright, in their relevant locations.

MAGNUM OPUS FOLLOWER ★★

Followers are cultists who endured the Silo Trial and are on the path to initiation. During their sojourn at Whiler's Commune, they are guided by their guru (who possesses the Tincture of Krishna) to refrain from all mortal attachments and practice compassion, tenderness, and love. Mildly Touched by their guru's powers, they exude a calm air and avoid violence. They still retain their everyday appearance but may be wearing white or cream-colored linen robes when in Magnum Opus functions.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 4

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When a Magnum Opus Follower enters the scene, give her *zealous-2*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Violence is not the Answer:** When you attack a Magnum Opus Follower, you first take *peaceful-2*.

MAGNUM OPUS SEEKER ★

Seekers are candidates who are being considered as potential cult members by Prof. Clay or any other cult recruiter. They are a hodge-podge of individuals of various ages, backgrounds, and walks of life, who share a yearning for *something* more in their lives. At the start of their mystical journey, they are merely cultist wannabes; they don't possess any magical powers. Instead, they rely on home-made chemical compounds based on basic alchemical recipes.

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 3

- **Not Sure About This:** When a Magnum Opus Seeker enters the scene, give her *hesitant-1*.
- **Hide in Plain Sight:** When you try to find the Magnum Opus Seeker, she first gets *inconspicuous*.
- Commit herself to the God-King's will (remove *hesitant-1* or 1 tier of emotional statuses)
- Hit someone (*ouch-1*) or use a common tool as a weapon (*bruised-2* or *stabbed-2*)
- Use a home-made chemical compound, such as:
 - » Corrosive: burn one armor tag
 - » Lubricant: make an area *slippery*
 - » Flammable: everyone nearby takes *charred-1*
 - » Flash bomb: everyone nearby takes a temporary *dazzled-2*
 - » Smoke bomb: one or two Magnum Opus Seekers escape (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Awkwardly announce their intentions
- Hesitate before moving to strike
- Steel her resolve with words in broken Latin: "O, pater animans!" ("Oh, life-giving father!")

- Ask someone to lay down their arms (*peaceful-2* or burn one tag)
- Inspire someone to lose inhibitions (*uninhibited-2* or burn one tag)
- Talk enthusiastically about her guru (*listening-2* or burn one tag)
- Share a profound perspective that makes aspects of someone's life seem empty and futile (*self-doubt-2*, burn one tag, or narratively give the player cause to mark Crack)
- Bow to someone with eyes shut and hands clasped together
- Praise her guru, Whirler
- Say a prayer to compose herself: "Spiritus meus mercurio lavatur" ("My spirit is washed by Quicksilver.")

MAGNUM OPUS INITIATE ★★

Initiates are the classic cult minions: they follow commands unequivocally but know nothing of the shocking truth at the core of the cult. At this point in their journey, they are too far deep and too close to their goal to turn on the cult. When out on the field, Initiates dress in everyday wear but identify themselves by wearing a light yellow-brown tunic under their clothing.

Thanks to the Cabal's astrological powers, Initiates are often uncannily well-prepared for their tasks, carrying alchemical compositions that are designed to handle a specific threat, such as the PCs and their unique powers and weaknesses.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 5

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When a Magnum Opus Initiate enters the scene, give her *zealous-3*, renewable as a hard move.
- Intimidate or recruit someone with profound-sounding babble (*apprehensive-2* or *listening-2*)

- Throw vials of advanced alchemical compounds especially designed to counter the PCs powers or for a specific task, such as:
 - » Salts against liquid (*dry-2* or *crystalized-2*)
 - » Adherent against strong hand-to-hand fighters (*rooted-2* or *stuck-2*)
 - » Quicksilver against electricity (the environment becomes *conductive*)
 - » Explosives against speedsters (everyone nearby is *knocked-back-2* and *bruised-2*)
 - » Poison against plants or animals (*withered-2* or *poisoned-2*)
 - » Sulfur against acute senses or mentalists (*overwhelmed-senses-2*)
 - » Stink bomb: all Magnum Opus members escape (**Deny Them Something They Want**) and everyone else takes *coughing-2*
- Face the enemies of the cult with burning eyes
- Cry out a battle cry in Latin: "Ut sol elucidatur!" ("Luminous as the sun!")

MAGNUM OPUS DISCIPLE ★★★

Only Wolves become Magnum Opus Disciples – the Lambs who attain this level are awakened as Rifts instead. Disciples are fully-fledged members of the cult. Upon their initiation, they are taught their first Transmutation and branded with an alchemical symbol representing an element, becoming Touched by Armand's Mythos. They then gain magical control over that element. A Disciple often carries a supply of her element if it is not ubiquitous. Disciples wear burgundy red robes or red tunics under their clothing.

As with Initiates, the Cabal deploys Disciples who control elements needed for the task and any foreseen challenges based on their astrological predictions. Therefore, Disciples sent to counter the PCs usually command Transmutations befitting the PC's powers and weaknesses, unless the PCs have circumvented the Cabal's divination.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When a Magnum Opus Disciple enters the scene, give her *zealous-4*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Trained Practitioner:** Once per scene, a Magnum Opus Disciple can make a Transmutation hard move as an intrusion.
- Manipulate her Transmutation element to her advantage:
 - » **Earth:** Create a barrier that protects the cultists (*smash:4*) or blocks a path (**Deny Them Something They Want**)

- » **Fire:** Make a fire lash out at someone (*burnt-3* or *blinded-3*)
- » **Water:** Cause dehydration (*dehydrated-3*) or drive a surge of water (everyone affected takes a temporary *knocked-down-3*)
- » **Air:** Make the cultists *hidden-by-fog-2* or cause someone to stop breathing (*choking-3*)
- » **Lead (or Silver):** Shield the cultists from lead bullets (counter the next 3 tiers of gunfire) or propel nearby lead bullets (*gunshot-wound-3*)
- » **Iron:** levitate and propel heavy objects made of steel (*crushed-3*) or bend them to create a cage (*caged-3*)
- » **Salt:** Spray an area with salt, shredding it to pieces (*shredded-3* or *salt-cuts-3*) or crystallizing liquids (*crystallized-3*)
- » **Arsenic:** Infect someone with a deadly arsenic poisoning (*poisoned-3* and again *poisoned-3* every downtime) and force them to yield in return for removing the arsenic from their body
- » **Phosphorous:** Create a white smoke screen (*cover-3* for her group or **Deny Them Something They Want**) or cause *chemical-burns-3*
- Fervently attest that Magnum Opus can grant someone the power to fulfill their wishes (*tempted-3*)
- Express complete calm in the face of danger
- Invoke her Transmutation, making its sigil glow, while whispering "Deus in orbe terrarum." ("God on Earth.")
- Respond to a command with a composed "Cum pyra tua sacra." ("With your sacred fire.")

YAKUZA YŌKAI ★★★

This pack of former Yakuza mobsters had their tattoos embellished with ink mixed with the Tinctures of Yōkai Mythoi (Japanese evil spirits, ghosts, and demons). When they activate their powers, smoke swirls around their tattoos, which seem to come to life and transform the mobster's body or materialize objects and substances around him. In exchange for these demonic powers, the Yakuza crew swore an oath to serve the Cabal for seven years. The five crew members Yōkai are:

- **Akaname (Filth-licker)**, a bathroom goblin that enjoys licking, as well as producing, slime and filth
- **Aobōzu (Blue Monk)**, a one-eyed buddhist Monk of uncanny perception and might
- **Chōchin-obake (Paper Lantern Ghost)**, a floating demonic paper lantern that wreaks fiery havoc
- **Enenra (Smoke Shroud)**, a demon of darkness and smoke visible only to the pure of heart
- **Jubokko (Tree Child)**, a vampire tree, capable of growing branch- and root-like tentacles that suck out blood

This Danger profile represents a single Yakuza Yōkai.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN AGAINST THE CULT 6

- **Tinctures of Yōkai:** Each of the Yakuza Yōkai possesses a different ability:
 - » **Akaname:** When you attack Akaname, he first sprays you with a jet of disgusting slime (*slipping-2*).
 - » **Aobōzu:** When Aobōzu enters the scene, give him *sees-the-unseen-2*, renewable as a hard move. For Aobōzu, **Tough as Nails** reduces 2 tiers instead of 1.

- » **Chōchin-obake:** When Chōchin-obake enters the scene, give him *floating-evasively-2*, renewable as a hard move.
- » **Enenra:** Enenra can dematerialize into smoke as a soft move and materialize as an intrusion. While in smoke cloud form, Enenra's *hurt-or-subdue* spectrum maximum is (-) and he becomes *invisible-5* (except to the eyes of the pure of heart). This status may affect **Facing Danger** against attacks he makes immediately after materializing.
- » **Jubokko:** When Jubokko inflicts a *drained* status, he gains a *revitalized* status with the same tier. He can use tiers of *revitalized*, one-for-one, to remove tiers from a negative status he has.
- **Tough as Nails:** When the Yakuza Yōkai take a status of physical harm, subdual, or mental harm, reduce its tier by 1.
- Attack, employing unarmed martial arts (*broken-arm-3*, *pinned-3*, or *winded-3*) or high-caliber pistols and submachine guns (*gunshot-wound-3*)
- **Akaname:** Spray an area with *slippery-2* slime
- **Chōchin-obake:** Create a new *lantern*
- **Chōchin-obake:** have each lantern spew a jet of hellish fire (*hellfire-burns-3*)
- **Jubokko:** Attach his branches to someone and drain their blood (*drained-3*)
- Face off with the crew, striking a pose and weighing their opponents
- Charge!



TALIA AL-BAHAR ★★☆☆

Talia Al-Bahar is an ex-commando hired gun who accepted the Cabal's offer to up her game with some "top-secret tech". She bears a pendant of reinforced titanium on her neck (reminiscent of army tags) that contains the Tincture of Wilhelm Tell, augmenting her accuracy, combat prowess, and valor (and making her aware of the legendary). On the job, she wears typical mercenary garb: combat boots, camo cargo pants, tank top, army jacket, and shades, and carries an impressive assortment of weapons. While she's not a person of strong morals, the same cannot be said of the Mythos of Wilhelm Tell; the Tincture pushes against the cult's tyrannical agenda, and Talia can only use it for a short amount of time before having to let it "cool off".

Talia's moves reflect her abilities as enhanced by the Tincture. If she loses it, reduce her hard move effects by 1, limit **Seize the Initiative** to melee attacks only, and remove **Heroic Fortitude**.

HURT OR SUBDUED 3 / BRIBE 6 / TINCTURE CONFLICT 5

- **Sniper:** When Talia enters the scene, if she's in a sniping position, give her *hidden-2*.
 - **Seize the Initiative:** When you attack Talia, she hits you first with one of her hard moves.
 - **Heroic Fortitude:** When Talia takes a mental or emotional status, reduce its tier by 2.
 - **Mythos Backlash:** When Talia takes action to secure or support an oppressor, the freedom-fighting Mythos of Wilhelm Tell backlashes; give her *Tincture-conflict* with an appropriate tier. When *Tincture-conflict:5* maxes out, she must cease all such actions or drop the Tincture (MC's call).
-
- Take her aim (give someone *in-her-sight-2*, applied to all **Face Danger** moves against her gunfire)
 - Shoot a single, deadly, accurate shot (*severe-gun-shot-wound-4*)
 - Provide suppressive or cover fire (**Force Them To Choose:** stay in cover or take *gunshot-wound-3*)
 - Accurately shoot an object out of someone's hand, hit a switch, etc. (**Complicate Things, Bigtime** or **Deny Them Something they Want**)
 - Bounce a bullet off a hard surface or curve it around a corner (*gunshot-wound-3*)
 - Draw out a combat knife when fighting hand-to-hand (*vicious-stab-wound-4*)
-
- A glint of light flickers up above
 - Expertly change a magazine while scoping her next target

DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

Cult of the God-King plays best as a psychological thriller when at least one PC who is serious about getting answers goes through the process of the *Magnum Opus*. While the cult's ultimate goal is corrupt, the journey the PC undertakes with the guidance of Prof. Clay, Whirler, and others, can still be a meaningful one (and in the context of the Grail story arc, a preparation for things to come). For her, it could be the first steps on her path to the ultimate truth.

On the other hand, PCs who mistrust the cult's teachers or are uninterested in what the cult has to offer can investigate the cult from the outside, through research or through uncovering and sabotaging its operations. This inevitably leads to a direct and ruthless confrontation with the cult.

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **Seeking answers or power:** PCs who are seeking answers about the City, the Mist, and beyond are perfect candidates for joining the cult. Characters who are interested in the occult as a vocation, as a means to answer their Mysteries, or as a path to more power may also become cult recruits. They may come across Prof. Clay's calling card in the back of a dusty library book or hear him speak in the Speaker's Corner. If they are advised by **Ariadne** (see sidebar) she may point them to Prof. Clay as "a man who guards the path to many answers".
- **Commissioned to investigate the cult:** Relatives or friends of cult followers could approach the crew and hire them to save their loved ones (see sidebar for potential NPCs). **Ariadne** may send the crew into the cult undercover to reveal its secrets. One of the supporting cast members could get involved with the cult, leading the crew to trace her steps. Investigating the cult begins with Prof. Clay and his Philosophy Club.
- **Following up on *The Furnace*:** If the crew already came upon the cult's artifacts during *The Furnace*, such as the Tincture of the Gingerbread Witch or the Rift-harvesting furnace itself, or if they had a run-in with the cult's Disciples, they may already be looking for answers about the cult's strange magic. Researching the secret art of the cultists can lead to answers (*Alchemy 101*). Seeking out the cult's operation will initially lead to a dead end or to an ambush (*The Cabal's Damage Control*).

- **Crossing paths with the cult's Relic hunt:** Contacts in the art or antiques dealing world, including smugglers, fences, and forgers have all caught wind of a heavyweight collector that is buying up artifacts, creating a market hype and a rush for antique heists (one such contact is Michel Ahmagi of Ananda Gallery, see the free case *Demons in Cross End*).

The person to talk to is **Silvio Yadao**, a cat burglar who has been working for that anonymous collector (Alona Wainwright) but is now eager to go legit and is being threatened by the cult. Silvio would suggest meeting at the Chinatown Festival, a crowded place ideal for furtive meetings with ample escape routes.

Crew members may also happen to be present at the Chinatown Festival when the cult's attack on Silvio takes place, prompting them to act and later investigate. Supporting cast caught in the mayhem may call the PCs for help.

CULTISTS ARE PEOPLE, TOO

If neither the PCs nor their supporting cast are drinking the Kool-Aid, use the following NPCs as victims of the cult in order to keep the crew emotionally invested.

Peter Hill, a tall and broad-shouldered jock, is an angry young man and a bully. His sense of entitlement and ambition to tower over his peers do little to hide his insecurities. Peter is not interested in unpacking his rough childhood and lack of a role model. Instead, he wants to possess power that will help him shut up anyone who tries to talk about these things.

Sloane Martinez (Nymph) is a petite and mousy bespectacled bookworm who has grand questions about the mysteries of the universe. A gentle soul, Sloane nonetheless is willing to sacrifice anything for the truth and for magic. Initially, she is able to hide the fact that she is a Rift, but if the cult finds out, they'll watch her extra carefully.

Jiahao "Jaja" Zhang is a podgy, ever-smiling follower of the other two. He joins the cult because his friends are there and will go to great lengths to follow them, even though he maintains a lukewarm attitude toward the cult's teachings. Jiahao seeks to belong more than anything else; once he experiences the cult as a group, he may become the most zealous cultist of the three.



ARIADNE

In the spiritual and occult circles of the Rift underworld, **Ariadne** (Ariadne, wife of Dionysus, who gave Theseus the ball of thread to lead him out of the Minotaur's labyrinth) is a well-known figure and highly sought-after mystical guide. A powerful Rift who keeps to herself, she nonetheless is driven by her Mythos to guide those who are worthy out of proverbial labyrinths, perhaps even out of the illusion of the Mist itself.

Ariadne knows a great deal about all that is going on in the underworld of Rifts and particularly in its esoteric and magical subcultures; you can use her to dispense wisdom and information to characters who seek mystical answers. However, she usually shares her knowledge sparingly, giving the PCs just enough to make the next move, not unlike a string that hooks around a corner in a labyrinth. During a scene, she acts all *cryptic-3*, making it hard to glean information she doesn't want to share.

No-one truly knows who or what Ariadne is. She may be a powerful (Legendary) Rift on the brink of Avatarhood, ready to take on the guardians of the Mist, or she could be a Gatekeeper herself. More likely than not she is both, playing the Gatekeepers and fellow Rifts to further her Mythos' agenda: to help those who wish to awaken transcend the labyrinthian prison that is the City.

ARIDANE AND MAGNUM OPUS

Aridane can sense in her heart of hearts that the Magnum Opus cult is a sham, that it is more likely a labyrinth hiding a devouring "minotaur" than a ball of thread leading to true liberation. This tingles her Mythos' sensitivities and makes her want to help those who have fallen prey to the cult's scheme find their way back out to the light.

At the same time, she can sense that there is a core of truth behind the lies, though she does not know what it is exactly (she could be sensing the Grail Water used to awaken new Rifts, see the Catacombs). While this piques her curiosity, it's a mystery that remains outside of her reach: Armand's alchemy is strong enough to interfere with her divinatory powers and the Cabal's astrology will mark her as a target if she intervenes directly.

Ariadne is not one for direct confrontation – she is much more inclined to recruit "Athenian" heroes and send them into the maze to do her dirty work. The crew (or at least some of its members) fits that profile perfectly. Ariadne won't reveal all she knows and feels about the cult, just enough to spur the crew to investigate.

INTRODUCING ARIADNE

Contact with Ariadne begins with a thread one must pull on: a physical red thread hanging conspicuously on a doorknob, a hinted opportunity in a conversation, or a mystical trail a magician Rift can trace back to her. She often meets her protégés in secrecy, down a dead-ended smoky alley, up on a random rooftop, in a shady warehouse off a bustling market, or in a quiet church or temple alcove. There, she will loom silently out of the shadows, a gray-haired and hooded middle-aged woman in silver robes woven of spider silk. To Rifts, she almost appears to be an apparition; to Sleepers, she's just a creepy old chain-smoking lady in an ashen trench coat.

Ariadne will offer to guide the crew out of the labyrinth of lies and deceit that is the City. As a first step, she will point the crew to Prof. Clay, either to investigate him or to learn what he has to teach. She may gift a PC that is likely to get lost with a woolen garment, which will reveal itself as one of her balls of thread in a time of need (the PC gains a temporary Extra Theme).

ARIADNE'S BALL OF THREAD

Relic

MYSTERY

How can I stop the devouring of that which is pure?

POWER TAGS

find the best path, dispel confusion, lead the lost to safety, weave itself into a woolen garment, warn against monsters, discern a dead end, more powerful in the hands of a hero/ine, decipher cryptic message, see the threads of fate, demystify the Mist

WEAKNESS TAGS

attracts monsters, fear leads to doubt, easily burns, blind follower

THEME IMPROVEMENT

❑ **Demystifier.** When you **Change the Game** with tags from this theme to remove tags and statuses that describe confusion or misguidance, you generate +1 Juice.

DEPTH 1: A CANDLE IN THE DARK

PROFESSOR CLAY

You sneak in and take a seat at the back of the lecture hall. Across the crowd of listeners, the burly, bearded man on the podium is captivating his audience with his profound, poignant questions. Behind him on the board, there are symbols and diagrams, and the word TRANSFORMATION? encircled many times. You slowly begin to heed his words: “So, is it possible for us, then, to go through the same process, let go of all the noise and contaminants, and become what we are in essence? The ancients thought so, and they left us with specific instructions...”

Officially a respectable (albeit unorthodox) professor of philosophy and antiquity in the Old Quarter University, **Prof. Gregory Clay** is in fact a Disciple of Magnum Opus and their main recruiter. He is the frontliner of the cult in this case, recruiting both pliable individuals for Mythos awakening and harvesting (Lambs) and ambitious go-getters to grow the ranks of the cult’s Disciples (Wolves).

Professor Clay possesses a magnetic personality and years of experience in bringing seekers through the first stages of awakening. Fancying himself a free thinker, he believes wholeheartedly in the Magnum Opus path to illumination, and preaches to his followers not out of malintent, but out of deep, burning, horribly misguided, fatherly love. More than he aspires for the political power of membership in the Cabal, he yearns to unite with the source of life as he understands it: the God-King.

The professor is middle-aged, thickset, with a barrel chest, arms like logs, and an impressive, voluminous, salt-and-pepper beard. His voice is harsh and raspy, and his eyes are almost black, but they seem to smolder like embers. He dresses formally as fitting his academic position; when passionately sharing his ideas, he is often seen perspiring in his dress shirt and suspenders, with his sleeves rolled up and his tie loosened.

The professor operates in four locations, all in the Old Quarter:

- **The university lecture hall**, where he lectures on religion, spirituality, and ancient paths to transformation to attract candidates. Use this location to establish him as an authority on these matters.

PROFESSOR CLAY’S ABILITIES

Beyond his remarkable esoteric knowledge and mentoring techniques, the professor also secretly commands two elemental Transmutations, one for Water and one for Earth, having earned them through years of loyal service to the cult. The sigil brands for these Transmutations are burned into his flesh in two concentric circles covering most of his back. While they glow neon-bright when activated, they are usually well-hidden under his thick shirt.

The Transmutations of Water and Earth allow Prof. Clay to shape these elements freely with a motion of his fingers or arms. Most usefully, he can manipulate the water in a person’s body, causing paralysis or even crudely controlling their movements. While undercover, the professor never uses his alchemical gifts, unless he is in grave danger.

See Clay’s Danger profile as a Disciple on page 26.

- **The professor’s university office**, where he holds his private meetings with candidates. This is a dark, musky room, decked in wood, lined with bookcases, and draped in velvet curtains. It’s notably spacious and plush for a philosophy professor, overlooking the campus grounds. The office is decorated with several pieces of medieval art including a tapestry, a bust, and a laboratory set. There are numerous texts on spirituality and alchemy ([Alchemy 101](#)).
- **The Philosophy Club**, where he teaches his Seekers. Prof. Clay uses a university-run study group, officially open to the public, to run his recruitment environment for Seekers and guide them through the first steps of their spiritual path. The Philosophy Club meetings take place regularly three nights a week at the campus house of the preppy and learned **Mu Omicron fraternity**, many of whose members are in attendance. During a meeting, the house is guarded by [alert-1](#) club members. Meeting nights are [foggy](#), providing additional cover. Inside, Prof. Clay is as [mindful-3](#) as ever and may spot an intruder. The secretive meetings take place by candle light, for effect, as Prof. Clay teaches his students the basics of alchemy and the Magnum Opus, often using “**The Alchemy of the Soul**” book as reference (see [Alchemy 101](#)). When a newcomer is present, Prof. Clay first studies her reaction to the group before breaking out the burners and mortars.
- **A private log cabin** in the forested hills just out of town, where he takes small groups of promising students on spiritual retreats complete with late-night fireside talks and outdoor challenges.

When the PCs first arrive on the scene, the Professor will try to pick out a PC to recruit. If some PCs show distrust, he won't push but will enlist his Seekers to ensure inquisitive PCs stay out of his business. Once the crew gets into an altercation with cult Seekers or the Professor himself, they will start showing up on the Cabal's astrological charts, leading to a retaliation ([The Cabal's Damage Control](#)).

Note that when you use hard moves to reflect Gregory Clay's convincing a PC (e.g., giving her [convinced-3](#)), you automatically expose him as a Danger and a villain. Instead, when a PC genuinely takes interest in what Clay has to say, consider foregoing the hard moves in order to leave his motivations shrouded in mystery. Continue to play through the story and try to present a convincing Prof. Clay. If the PC decides to follow him for the value he offers and not because the player is compelled by a status, the cinematic effect will be much more powerful.

INVESTIGATING THE PROFESSOR

The professor's background check is impeccable. He seems to be a valued member of the faculty, other than a comment about taking his class on an unapproved field trip long ago. A forger could detect the comment was left there to avoid making this doctored file look too perfect. Pulling on this thread leads to Silvio Yadao (see [The Hooks](#), page 14, leading to [the Chinatown Festival](#)), who swapped the previous file at the request of financier Alona Wainwright. The previous file is full of entries casting doubt on the professor's far-reaching ideas and strict educational methodology.

Prof. Clay leads the Philosophy Club, an extra-curricular society meeting at the Mu Omicron fraternity house on the university campus.

The preacher is a man of many faces. When lecturing he is impassioned, in a conversation he is pleasant and charming, and among his students he is stern (even abusive when they disappoint him), though he tries to hide the latter behavior in public.

INVESTIGATING THE PHILOSOPHY CLUB

The Philosophy Club members aren't there to study theoretical philosophy – **their clique seeks to obtain real power through occult knowledge.** To join this group, one must approach the preacher personally.

While it is composed of both men and women, the philosophy club has taken on a "good old boys" mentality, fostered by Clay's demand to bravely contend with their faults and dark urges.

Some members of the club aren't as sure as the others that this is the right path for them. They may talk if separated from the group.

Prof. Clay is teaching his students basic chemical recipes to give them a taste of the power that may become available to them in the future.

Most of the teachings come from "The Alchemy of the Soul", a medieval book by Mathilda DeAquino. Researching the book leads to [Alchemy 101](#).

The candidates are eagerly awaiting their "final trial" (the Silo Trial), after which they will be initiated into the "Mystery of the God-King".

THE BLACKENING: CONFRONTING ONE'S NOTHINGNESS

As the first line of recruitment, it is the professor's job to separate the serious Seekers, who can go all the way, from the lightweight, fake, or snoopy candidates. This is done by **offering answers** on the one hand, and on the other hand forcing the candidate to **look at her own faults over and over again**, a most unpleasant experience which only the most earnest seekers endure.

RIFT RECRUITS

Magnum Opus accepts Rift recruits but they must go through the same process as Sleepers do to prove themselves. A Rift is considered valuable to the cult only after she fully accepts the Magnum Opus teachings and is willing to sacrifice herself to the God-King.

Rift candidates are expected to set their powers aside until they witness the power of the God-King, in the Anointing ritual. Failure to do so results in expulsion from Magnum Opus.

When recruiting a new Seeker, PC or NPC, the Professor uses the following outline:

1. **Read the Seeker** (if applicable, using the custom move **Dark Mentor**) trying to establish if she is a Lamb or a Wolf, what interests her, and how to approach her (kindly, authoritatively, charmingly, etc.)
2. Based on that, **build rapport**, and talk about the subjects that interest the Seeker
3. **Invite her to undergo the Magnum Opus**: Promise answers to her questions or the power to change her position if she is willing to walk the path of transformation
4. **Demand that the Seeker first prove her earnestness by confronting her weaknesses**; Choose a task that would be difficult for the Seeker to do, such as a situation that triggers a PC's weakness tags (see custom move **Dark Mirror**) or challenge her to do something that would be difficult without her Mythos powers.
5. **Reward efforts with some answers**: A free Clue about alchemy or *a copy of "The Alchemy Of The Soul"* which the Seeker can study (see clues in [Alchemy 101](#))
6. **Repeat steps 4 and 5**, appointing increasingly hard tasks and granting greater rewards
7. **The final trial**: Once the candidate has shown enough commitment and the professor thinks she can withstand the trial, she is invited to [the Silo Trial](#)

QUOTES FROM THE PROFESSOR

- **"You are blind.** That is why you cannot find what you seek. The first step on the path is to awaken to what you cannot see – your own darkness, your own nothingness."
- **"Alchemy is the path to the transformation of the soul.** Me, and this book, we are just guides. You are the one who must walk the path."
- **"Your powers are what we call Fool's Gold.** Do you know where they come from? What they are? Are they truly *your* powers? No. To know the truth, you must abandon this lie. To become the Philosopher's Stone, you must first melt yourself and clean all these impurities and contaminants."
- "If you are not ready to sacrifice for the truth, you are not ready for the truth. **Only the initiated can grasp the ultimate reality.**"
- **"I am not asking you to succeed in your task, I'm asking you to try,** so that you will witness your own failings and learn to know them."

- "Beyond the confines of this City, of this twisted world, there lies **the God-King**, the source of all existence. To reunite with him means to become absolute, omniscient, and omnipotent. This is the possibility hidden in your soul."

UNDERCOVER PROF. CLAY ★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / THREATEN, FOR NOW 3

- **Disciplined Mind**: When Prof. Clay enters the scene, give him *mindful-3*; he is both mindful of what he says and mindful of his surroundings.
- **Dark Mentor**: Whenever you ask Prof. Clay for answers (whether you **Investigate** or not), the MC asks you "What do you seek?" Prof. Clay knows the answer. You also take a relevant tier-1 status, e.g. *seeking-to-belong-1*, *seeking-arcane-knowledge-1*, etc. Multiple statuses stack normally.
- **Dark Mirror**: Whenever you invoke a weakness tag while performing a task given to you by Prof. Clay, it reduces your Power by 3 instead of 1.
- **Roll Up The Sleeves**: If Prof. Clay is in mortal danger or if he is about to reveal secret cult information, he blows his cover before it happens. Use the **Disciple Gregory Clay Danger** profile (page 26).
- Speak a universal truth that makes someone *con-templative-2* or *hesitant-2*
- Help someone cope with fear or confusion (remove up to two tiers of appropriate negative statuses)
- Identify what someone seeks (giving them a status as in **Dark Mentor**)
- Cleverly entice someone with the possibility of finding what they seek
- Stare at someone with his smoldering soul-piercing gaze

ALCHEMY 101

"Here it is," says the austere librarian as she softly slides the worn-out book across the counter, "'The Alchemy of the Soul', 1233, by Mathilda DeAquino. It's a modern printing of the original medieval manuscript, but still quite hard to come by." You pick up the leather-bound book and flick through its pages, skimming over cryptic words, sacred verses, forgotten formulas, and strange sigils. It looks like you have your work cut out for you.

Sooner or later, the crew will have to delve into the mystic arts that lie at the base of the cult's power. This can be spurred by witnessing signs that the cultists study or wield alchemical power, such as:

- A cultist calling out phrases in medieval Latin
- The alchemical powders and concoctions used by Seekers and Initiates
- The glowing alchemical sigils of a Transmutation activated by a Disciple
- A Mythos Tincture
- From *The Furnace* case: the furnace itself, or Ichor (the raw product of the Mythos harvesting process)

Academic crew members or those versed in the occult should **Investigate** in order to obtain the following clues about Magnum Opus; other characters may reach out to knowledgeable contacts. The more the crew learns about the cult and its form of alchemy, the more they draw the attention of the Cabal, eventually triggering an attack when it is most dramatically appropriate (The Cabal's Damage Control).

INVESTIGATING THE CULTISTS

Adherents of Magnum Opus speak catchphrases and battle cries in medieval Latin. These refer to a "life-giving father", being "washed by Quicksilver", something "as luminous as the sun", and a "sacred fire". These are all lines from the **Initiate's Chant**, a prayer which appears in the book *The Alchemy Of The Soul*.

The chemical formulas used by Magnum Opus date back to the ancient science of alchemy. **The glowing sigils** from which the Disciples draw their power are alchemical sigils representing different elements; **their power to manipulate elements** may be alchemical in nature. The source of this specific symbolism originates in an **esoteric medieval book titled "The Alchemy Of The Soul"** by Mathilda DeAquino, found in the back of the library or in an old book store.

INVESTIGATING THE ARTIFACTS

A (Mythos) Tincture contains the essence of a legend inside it (**Ichor** in its raw form). The only possible source of such potent Mythos power is the Rift of that Mythos.

The furnace was built by a master of the occult arts, someone who knows how to extract spiritual essence out of matter – most likely an alchemist. It is impossible to decipher who engineered it or how it works without vast alchemical knowledge.

Alternatively, if you wish to connect the cases, studying a Tincture with divinatory powers could lead to:

- The furnace where it was harvested in its raw form (the old Aurora Glassworks factory in The Furnace);
- The co-creator of the furnace, Rosina Leckermaul (the Leckermaul house in The Furnace); or
- The creator of the Tincture(s), Armand Kai at Canseliet Manor (in *The Alchemist*).

READING IN "THE ALCHEMY OF THE SOUL"

On the inner side of the back cover, someone scribbled: "**Still seeking answers? Call Prof. Gregory Clay**" along with Prof. Clay's phone number.

According to the book, alchemy is not concerned with turning base metals to gold. The process of creating the Philosopher's Stone, called **the Great Work, or Magnum Opus, is an allegory for the transformation of the soul**, from a coarse sleeping state to an awakened state that can merge back with the source of all life.

The source of all life is referred to as "the godhead" or "the God-King". While revered as a god, this being is not described as a moral foundation or a personified deity, but as a source of unlimited knowledge and power to be sought, with whom alchemists and gnostics seek to unite.



As the crew has witnessed, in this City, people's souls contain a specific type of magic inside them (their Mythos). **Theoretically, this form of alchemy can be used to manipulate mythic powers, maybe even awaken them.**

The alchemical Magnum Opus consists of four stages: blackening or rotting, whitening or purification, yellowing or awakening, and reddening or transforming.

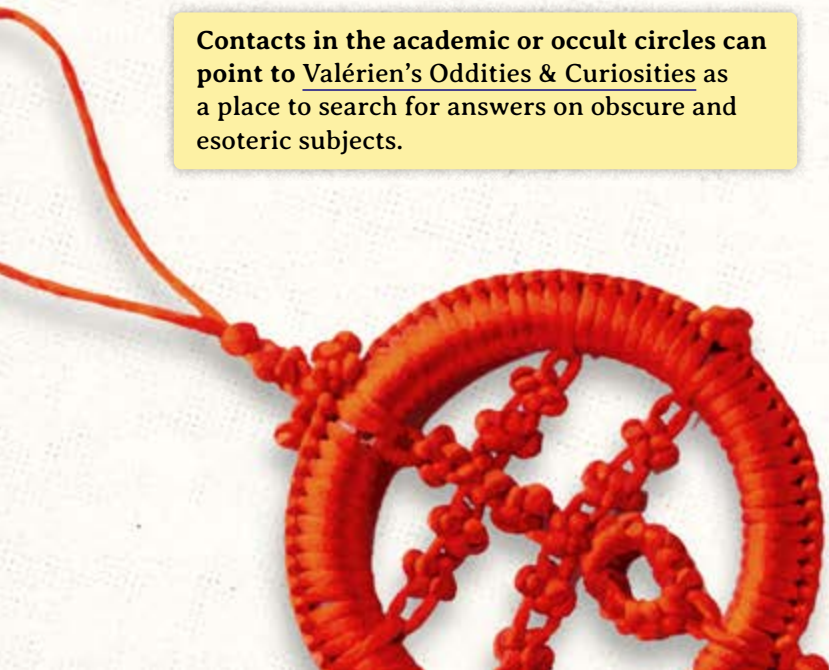
The book contains the Initiate's Chant, which may be a prayer to the God-King or a meditative chant. There are some inaccuracies in both the original and the translation (see next clue).

Further investigation into the book cannot connect it with any other literature; it seems very obscure. An especially scrutinizing researcher may discover **the text is actually a fake, written in modern times.** (The true author is Armand Kai.)

There is a recipe in the book for creating and revealing invisible ink. Using it successfully on the book reveals additional hidden annotations, removing its *obscure* status (see below) and unlocking advanced clues (see Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities). Failing the process destroys the copy.

Investigating PCs can discover the basic clues above; when they attempt to delve deeper, however, they hit a wall: the alchemical symbolism and lore become *obscure-3* or *esoteric-3*, unless the PC is an expert in this type of alchemy.

Contacts in the academic or occult circles can point to Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities as a place to search for answers on obscure and esoteric subjects.



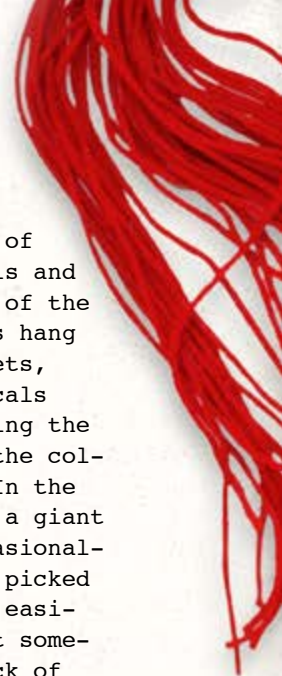
CHINATOWN FESTIVAL

The constant whistling and crackle of firecrackers and the jingle of bells and cymbals almost drown out the sound of the crowd swarming around you. Lanterns hang from every house and over the streets, where thousands of visitors and locals stroll in a meandering flow, sampling the street food and stopping to watch the colorful and fantastic performances. In the center, a procession of floats and a giant dance figure of a dragon flare occasionally with pyrotechnics. Your contact picked this place for a reason: one could easily disappear in the crowd here. But something's wrong. The hairs on the back of your neck bristle when you look down the dark Chinatown alleys all around. Then you hear a scream over the festive music. When you turn back, the flames are everywhere and within them the dragon, coiling in the air as its operators flee in panic.

When cat burglar and Relic thief **Silvio Yadao** (Tincture of *Tarnkappe*, the cloak of concealment of *The Song of the Nibelungs*) decided to go legit and avoid his mysterious employer (Alona Wainwright of the Cabal), they sent him an unequivocal threat. While Silvio and his daughter Helena (Sleeper) are waiting to meet the crew at Chinatown's Mid-Autumn Festival, one of the vendors, who was paid off by the cult, pretended to kindly gift Helena with a rattle drum.

The rattle drum is a Mythos-powered "bomb": it contains the accident-prone Tincture of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, the Mythos of magic going out of control. Every time Helena shakes the drum, she enchants an object and brings it to life. Because of the Mythos, any haphazard attempt to stop the animated object causes it to duplicate, breeding more mayhem. Unfortunately, one of the first things Helena enchanted was the festival's huge fire-breathing dragon figure.

In addition, the rattle drum is especially dangerous for magic-wielding Rifts who are prone to lose control over their powers. Sorcerers and witches who touch the drum must **Take the Risk** to control their powers. A 7-9 means keeping control over their powers takes its toll or demands some concession (**Force Them to Choose**), while a miss causes them to momentarily lose control over their powers (similarly to a missed **Stop. Holding. Back**), with mild or severe repercussions, as appropriate. Optionally, give such a PC *uncontrolled-powers-2*.





This dramatic incident at the festival serves as an action-packed sizzler which can open the case or pick up a slow investigation. At the very least, the crew must locate and save their informant, Silvio Yadao, who will beg them to find and save his daughter. The crew members may also be involved with protecting innocent bystanders. Investigating the incident can take place as it unfolds or after the drama is over.

Helena's rattle drum is causing all the trouble. Studying the drum shows it contains a highly-volatile magical liquid (a Tincture). Beyond the Mist, the Mythos of the Sorcerer's Apprentice is revealed, a vision of a helpless young man in a magician's robes who has lost control over a host of animated brooms.

According to Silvio, this is all the doing of an antiques collector he has been working for. He doesn't know her name, but he knows she has been gathering ancient artifacts to add to her collection. Silvio used to steal items of great value for this employer, but now that he's trying to go legit, she wouldn't have it.

The threat worked: Silvio is shaken and resigns to attempt the Dig Site Job to avoid endangering his little girl. He was taken aback by his employer's ruthlessness; he didn't think she would dare to hurt his daughter. If provoked, Silvio warns the crew not to try and stop him.

Silvio is hiding his feelings and would say nothing about the Dig Site Job, fearing-for-his-daughter-3. He knows that the Dig Site Job involves stealing an ancient tablet. If the crew exposes his plan, he begs them not to interfere.

Silvio neglects to mention that he carries the Tincture of Tarnkappe – which was given to him by his employer. The vial allows him to turn invisible and conceals him from surveillance and divination, which he has been using to make his life as a cat burglar much easier.

His employer's henchmen – Magnum Opus Initiates – are watching over the unfolding of the trap from a safe position on the rooftops of Chinatown.

For information garnered from studying the Tincture, see [Alchemy 101](#).

FLAMING ANIMATED DRAGON FIGURE ★★★

TEAR 2 / DISENCHANT 4 / EXTINGUISH 4

- **Monstrous:** When the Dragon Figure takes a status that is countered by its large size, reduce the tier of that status by 1. When the MC makes a hard move with the Dragon Figure, she can hit two targets or hit a single target for +1 tier.
- **Misfortunate Enchantment:** When *tear:2* maxes out, the Dragon Figure splits into two separate dragons (create two new Dragon Figure Dangers instead of this Danger).
- Someone is burned by the flames (*burns-2*)
- The Dragon Figure drops someone it is carrying (*broken-rib-3* or *concussion-3*)
- Set a section of the street ablaze with a shower of fireworks from its mouth, endangering Helena, Silvio, a PC, or a bystander
- Carry Helena, Silvio, a PC, or a bystander up in the air as they hang on by a thread
- Coil and dance in the air, partially on fire

MOONWRAITH

To complicate things, also observing the chaos from the rooftops is **Tracy Chang** (Chang'e, Chinese goddess of the moon), more commonly known in the criminal scene as the vigilante **Moonwraith**. An athlete trained in a wide range of aerial gymnastics and martial arts, Moonwraith has recently awakened to her ability to fly in the moonlight and has been fighting crime ever since. Unbeknownst to her, her Mythos also makes her immortal, a fact that will remain hidden until she is killed for the first time.

Moonwraith is attracted to the scene because her Mythos goddess is popularly associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival and because she's a crime-fighter. To add fuel to the fire, her Mythos also pulls her there because Silvio Yadao is going to steal the recipe for the Elixir of Life (Chang'e became the moon goddess by consuming such an elixir). All this makes her involvement with Silvio, the crew, and the cult nothing short of inexorable.

Moonwraith may team up with the crew to stop the mayhem at the festival or get in an altercation with them if they wrongly associate her with Silvio's employer or if she discovers they are after the tablet. Ultimately, however, she will do what it takes to protect the tablet during the Site Dig Job.

MOONWRAITH ★★★

Moonwraith is a curvy young woman dressed in sporty street-wear: a hoodie over a sports tee, sweatpants or tights, and sneakers. Agile and strong, she can easily cling onto fire escapes, drain pipes, and other building wall fixtures to quickly scale urban terrain. In the moonlight, she can simply fly over any obstacle.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / CATCH 4

- **Immortal:** When Moonwraith dies, unless her Mythos powers are hindered, the MC may reset her *hurt-or-subdue* spectrum as a hard move.
- **Ethereal:** Moonwraith can choose to become ethereal. In this form she can only be seen; her presence cannot be detected by devices or senses that detect weight, motion, heat, or sound.
- **Moonlighting:** When Moonwraith is in the moonlight, she can fly. In addition, increase the tier of all of her hard moves by 1.
- **Reawakening +★:** When Moonwraith dies for the first time, she transforms from a Touched Rift to a Borderliner. She becomes her own source of moonlight; consider her **Moonlighting** move as always applicable. In addition, she gains **Celestial Moonlight Radiance** and a new hard move.
- **Celestial Moonlight Radiance:** When Moonwraith takes a status of physical harm, subdual, or restraint, or a status emanating from a dark or evil source, reduce its tier by 2.
- Fly through the air, performing superhuman acrobatic feats (giving herself *evasive-1*)
- Swoop down or fly by with a martial arts strike move (*dizzy-2*, *bruised-2*, or *prone-2*)
- Show up to interrupt any shady activity taking place in the moonlight (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- The moon looms out of cover or reflects on a reflective surface (**Complicate Things, Bigtime** or remove one tag obstructing the moonlight)
- (After **Reawakening** activates) Blast brilliant moonbeams out of her fingertips (*zapped-2* three times; the effects of **Moonlighting** are already factored in)
- A dark silhouette flutters across the moon

MOONWRAITH

Ally

MYSTERY

What is the price of life everlasting?

POWER TAGS

Expert martial artist, immortal, fly by the moonlight, crime-fighting, blasts of moonbeam, moonlight radiance, informants in the criminal underworld, training room, Queen Mother of the West, incorruptible

WEAKNESS TAGS

impulsive, weaker when the moon has set, ignores the law, weakness for archers

THEME IMPROVEMENT

□ **Immortal:** When this Ally takes a tier-6 status of physical harm, remove it after the next downtime.

DEPTH 2: DANGEROUS EXCAVATIONS

VALÉRIEN'S ODDITIES & CURIOSITIES

Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities shop is nestled under layers and layers of Old Quarter construction with nothing but painted lettering on a quaint door to hint at its entrance. Inside, however, it is surprisingly voluminous, but not spacious; the store is packed floor to ceiling with books, trinkets, archaeological artifacts, jars full of strange ingredients, and crumbling scrolls. "One could get lost down there," warns the owner, Valérien, an aging bespectacled man in a tweed vest as he points to the pathways in the vast repository of esoteric knowledge he curates. "Better take a light," he adds.

Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities (The Rabbit Hole of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*) is the go-to shop for anyone dabbling in the occult. PCs who actively practice the magical arts may already know it or of it, or they would be delighted to discover it. Its only visible entrance is a door in an Old Quarter alley, but inside it seems to extend deep into the building. Those who explore the store always find another passageway, another small room, or another spiral staircase; in the deep recesses of the store it seems to overflow into a cellar carved in the earth, and unwary visitors may even fall into a lower level, only to land safely on an old armchair covered in leaves.

Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities offers an opportunity for academic and occult crew members to research the Magnum Opus lore. As the Enclave of the Rabbit Hole, it presumably holds any imaginable book or object that a researcher or an occultist might need and its mysterious ways can even contrive to help PCs who aren't great researchers find answers. While the front of the store seems to hold books about interesting but ultimately trivial or common topics, its deep interior contains ancient manuscripts and objects with magical properties that can unlock the most esoteric mysteries.

VENTURING INTO THE ODDITIES

Venturing into the shop is a **Change the Game** move that can only be attempted once per scene. A PC who

is exploring the shop chooses how deep she goes and receives a status to reflect this – curious-1, exploring-2, venturing-deep-3, or lost-in-books-4 – which enhances her **Change the Game** move. PCs who explore together must choose the same tier of status and only one of them can take the action, with the other PCs assisting. If the move was successful, the Juice that is generated by the move can be spent on generating tags of useful objects or on obtaining relevant Clues, one-per-one.

Once the move is resolved, all the characters in the exploring party take a lost status with a tier greater by one than the tier of their exploration status. If the **Change the Game** move was successful, they may **Face Danger**; if it missed, the MC can impose the lost status without allowing a **Face Danger** move. The condition of being lost in the shop can be a practical one (actually lost or stuck in some part of the store) or a mystical one (opening books and not seeing any writing, falling endlessly in a psychedelic space, etc.). A PC can recover from this status normally over time or by using other means; to end her state of bedlam immediately and remove the status, the player may also burn a tag representing order, structure, or logic or mark one Crack on a Logos theme that keeps her grounded.

Magnum Opus isn't training alchemists to do the Great Work of the Alchemists. The adherents are the base material and the Great Work is the process of making them into something else.

Blackening stands for rotting. At the beginning of the process, the base materials must rot and decompose. Psychologically, it represents facing one's nothingness and corrupted nature. Only by wallowing in one's festering failings and meaninglessness can one be free of it (Prof. Clay's impossible tasks and the Silo Trial).

Whitening stands for purification. After breaking up the base material's resistance, it can be purified, leaving the gross matter behind. In this stage, one must let go of all attachments and worldly desires, becoming "refined". Thus inner peace is achieved and all sins are absolved.

Experts or local guides can link this denial of mainstream life with some communities that live underground (Whirler's Commune) or with a medieval celebration called the the Feast of Fools which is reenacted occasionally in a big avant-garde rave.

Yellowing stands for awakening. A purified substance (or soul) can begin to contain the light. Exposing it to divine light (or knowledge) illuminates it from within and awakens it. The soul becomes infinitely aware (and a Rift in the Mist is formed).

If the crew reached the Catacombs, the Anointing ritual can be linked with this stage. Otherwise, they can speculate that the cult has a third location where this awakening stage takes place.

Reddening stands for transformation. The awakened matter can now be transformed into another matter, of a higher order. Likewise, an awakened soul can transcend humanity and reunite with its source, the God-King.

Even if the crew saw the furnace, it's difficult to link it with this stage. This is where the cult's lies finally unravel: at the end of the road there is no union with the God-King, only greedy Wolves feasting on the Lambs. However, this only clicks once the crew understands the entire process.

Reddening can be linked with the furnace at the old Aurora Glassworks factory (*The Furnace*) or Canseliet Manor (*The Alchemist*).

THE SILO TRIAL

It's hard to breathe or see in the dank, dark silo. Echoing in the cylindrical chamber is an eerie, murmured Latin chant. Somewhere at the ground level, you hear stifled weeping and clanking teeth along with a constant drip. As your eyes adjust, you see human shapes chained to the pipe-work. Above them, on the catwalk, cloaked figures begin turning creaky valves. The drip grows to a trickle, then to a flow, then to a gush. The chanting increases along with the rising water, choking out the gasps of the victims below until a single blood-curdling scream penetrates your shock — and spurs you into action.

The Silo Trial is the first true test of the Magnum Opus, testing the candidates' suitability to become Lambs or Wolves and attain the rank of Follower. More than anything, it shows candidates their dark side: either complete vulnerability and helplessness for Lambs, or cruelty and ruthlessness for Wolves. Once they accept their failures, they pass the test.

The test is simple: Lambs must agree to be sacrificed by Wolves, Wolves must agree to kill Lambs. For this purpose, the Seekers are brought to an abandoned and retrofitted agricultural silo at the edge of town. The bottom of the silo is sealed and can be filled with water through multiple pipe mouths at ground level. While chanting the Initiate's Chant (page 40), the Wolves shackle the Lambs to steel rings adjacent to the pipe mouths, climb a ladder to a circular catwalk 20 feet overhead, and draw up the ladder. The Lambs' test is not to resist. The water flow is controlled by multiple valves that are fixed around the Wolves' catwalk. The Wolves' test is to turn on the water and watch their fellow Seekers drown. Amid gushing water, tragedy and drama ensues, with Lambs screaming for their lives and Wolves shaking as they push past their morals. Lambs who "drown" pass the test, as do Wolves who did not break.

Before the trial, both groups are promised by Prof. Clay that no one will be harmed and that this is just a test to reveal to them the glory of the God-King and their own darkness and insignificance. Indeed, once everyone's true colors are revealed, Prof. Clay, who watches from another catwalk at the top of the silo, uses his Transmutation of Water to push water away from the submerged Lambs' lungs and keep them alive underwater.

At the end of the test, the Seekers are physically safe, even if mentally *broken-3*. The professor bids farewell to those who would not shackle themselves or watch their friends drown, warning them never to speak of this again (they know what would happen if they do not comply). Those who completed the test also become *zealous-3* and are sent to cool down for a few days before moving to live in Whirler's Commune as Followers.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this ritual can be connected with the Blackening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus.

Inspecting the Lambs' miraculous survival points to Prof. Clay, who is using a Transmutation to control the water. Investigating this power leads to Alchemy 101.

After the trial, the Seekers who were initiated as Followers gradually abandon their everyday lives and move to live on the streets, in the sewers, and in abandoned subway tunnels. Following them for a while could eventually lead to Whirler's Commune.

THE GUARDS OUTSIDE

Like all initiation rituals, the Silo Trial is a high-stakes event for Magnum Opus, a part of its Mythos harvest supply chain. Unbeknownst to the Seekers, the trial is guarded by the cult's agents.

After all candidates enter the silo and its pressure-resistant blast door is sealed, guards deploy around the silo to prevent unwanted interference. Normally, these are a handful of **Magnum Opus Initiates** (page 11) but if the crew bested them before, they may show up in greater numbers this time (for powerful crews, replace them with the **Yakuza Yōkai**). However, be aware that inside the silo, the crew must still contend with Prof. Clay and his Wolves (Magnum Opus Seekers, page 10); adjust the challenge level accordingly.

DURING THE TRIAL

Lead characters who follow or pretended to follow the Magnum Opus teachings may wish to complete the trial or at least allow it to unfold. This could turn the scene into a moral dilemma which may lead some PCs to mark Fade/Crack or render them *upset-2* or *shaken-3*.

PCs who are not Seekers may still have to circumvent the guards and Prof. Clay if they want to watch the trial. Watching remotely, e.g., with a drone or with scrying, may trigger the Cabal's astrological sense and have them send cultists to eliminate the spy.

PCs who wish to interrupt the trial must handle or trick the guards, reach the silo, battle it out with Gregory Clay and his Wolves, and save the drowning Lambs even as they resist. Unfortunately, the PCs' intervention turns out to be unnecessary or even tragic: they can cause someone to drown if they distract Prof. Clay.

THE SILO TRIAL ★★

LAMBS SUBMERGED 5 / BREAK THE SILO 6

- **Reinforced:** When the silo takes a status of physical damage, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Shackled:** Each Lamb is *chained-3*. This status can be reduced or removed tier-for-tier with an opposite status (e.g., give the chains *broken*).
- **Drowning Ritual:** As a soft move, give the silo *water-level-rising-2* on the *lambs-submerged* spectrum. When the spectrum maxes out, everyone underwater who cannot swim to the surface starts taking *drowning-3* as a soft move. When a Lamb gains *drowning-5*, if Prof. Clay is not preoccupied, remove the drowning status from the Lamb.
- One of the Lambs pleads a crew member NOT to rescue them and "witness the miracle of the God-King" (*hesitant-2*)
- The crew's interruption prevents Prof. Clay from saving a Lamb and she drowns (**Make Something Horrible Happen**)
- A Lamb's scream for help is muffled by the gushing water
- A Lamb is gasping for air
- Silence takes over the silo as the last Lamb is submerged

DISCIPLE GREGORY CLAY ★★★

The Silo Trial is the consummation of the professor's hard work for Magnum Opus and a crucial turning point for his followers so he isn't about to let anyone spoil it. During the trial, the gloves are off; he'll use his Transmutations to rid himself of interlopers and saboteurs, manipulating their bodies like little clay figurines. The silo contains ample supply of water and dirt (earth) for him to work with. If his dress shirt gets sweaty, wet, or torn, the neon-bright glow of the sigil brands on his back can be seen.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / EXHAUST 6 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When Gregory Clay enters the scene, give him *zealous-5*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Protective Barrier:** When Gregory Clay or someone he is protecting within range takes a status of physical harm, he first encases himself or the target with a massive barrier of earth, water, or clay, reducing the status by 3. The barrier then melts away. For each target he protects, he takes *exerted-1*.
- Force someone to shut their mouth (*zip-it-3*), freeze in place (*held-back-3*), or walk out of the silo (*controlled-3*), exerting himself (*exerted-1*)
- Preach to a student or two (remove up to 3 tags or status tiers representing doubt)
- Create a spectacle of water, telling his students to behold the power of the God-King (remove up to 2 tags or status tiers representing doubt from each student, giving himself *exerted-2*)
- Create a tidal wave of water that slams someone against the silo wall (*crushed-3*) or a surge that pushes them through a hatch out of the silo, exerting himself (*exerted-1* for each target)
- Punch or wrestle an intruder (*bruised-2* or *restrained-2*), sometimes augmenting his attack with his Transmutations (burn one tag of strength or combat prowess before the status applies, giving himself *exerted-1*)
- Enter a seething fanatic rage (reduce *exerted* by 1 tier; note that this is more effective at higher tiers)
- Roll up his sleeves and glare down furiously from the top catwalk

LEAD CHARACTERS IN MAGNUM OPUS

A lead character's commitment to the Magnum Opus path can be purely narrative (as explained under Prof. Clay, page 18, in some cases, it is better to keep it this way to avoid portraying the cult as an antagonist). Alternatively, it may be reflected in a *zealous* status, which compels her to obey her teachers and impedes any actions against the cult.

PCs who are following the path of Magnum Opus may also be required to make sacrifices on their journey and may replace a theme as a result. No matter the type of theme the character loses, the player may choose to replace it with a Logos theme based on the following Theme Kit. The MC may also give it to the PC as a temporary Extra Theme.

FOLLOWER OF THE GOD-KING

Mission

IDENTITY

I seek to unite with the God-King.

POWER TAGS

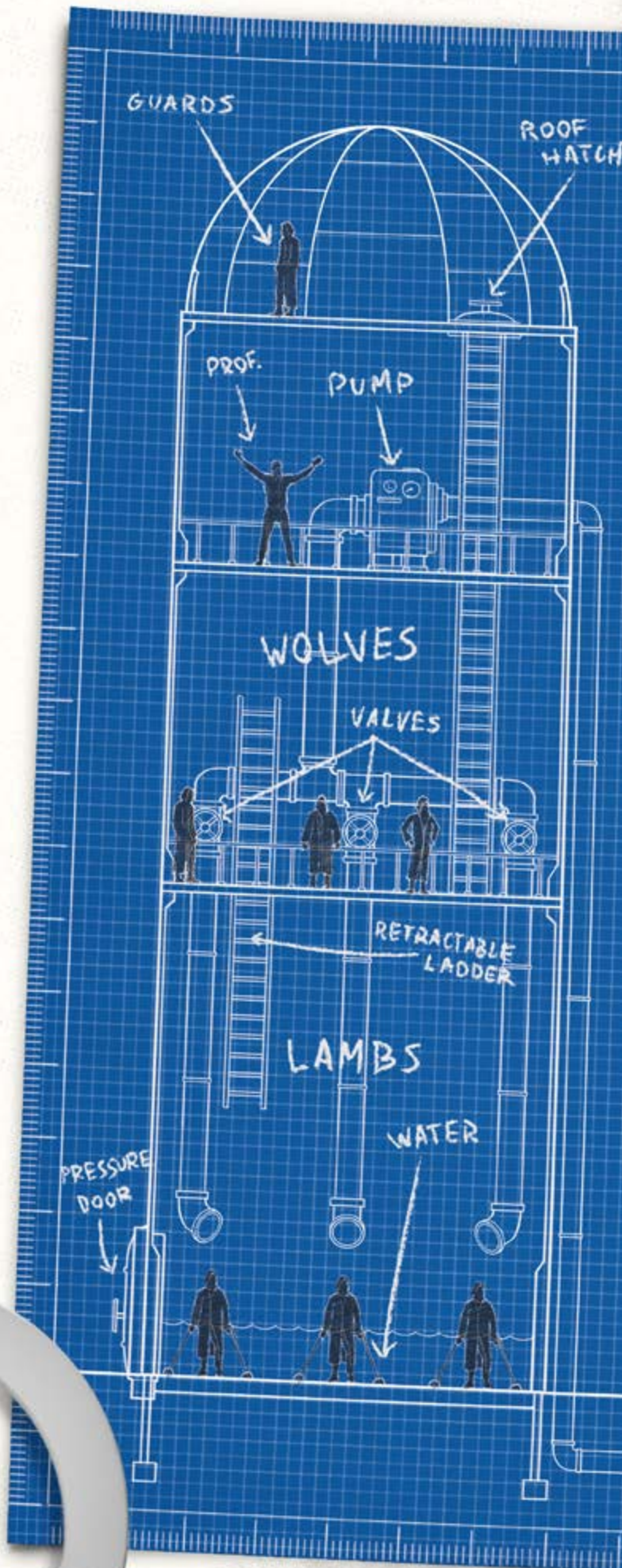
unwavering faith, useful chemical recipes, stronger in groups, theoretical alchemy, follow my teacher's instructions, mock the mainstream, burning spiritual questions, earn the teacher's respect, a copy of "The Alchemy of the Soul", loyal to Magnum Opus

WEAKNESS TAGS

cryptic guides, my old life, gnawing doubt, I'm resisting the truth

THEME IMPROVEMENT

☐ **Zealous:** Once per scene, you can give yourself a *zealous-3* status when someone attempts to convince you to turn away from the Magnum Opus path.



THE DIG SITE JOB

This unlikely dig site, at the heart of the City, lays silently in the moonlight, walled off from the public by glass barriers that allow passersby to peer into the dusty archaeological pit. You, on the other hand, aren't fooled by the neighborhood-friendly facade. CCTV monitoring and counter-intrusion sensors line the walls, ominously labeled as property of "Helix Labs". Whoever is running the show here knows they hit the jackpot and they're ready for any unexpected guests.

Legend has it that the Chinese Emperor Wu received **the secret recipe to immortality** from Xiwangmu, Queen Mother of the West, cultivator of the Peaches of Immortality (she's the one who made the Elixir of Life consumed by Chang'e, see page 23). While Wu was never able to achieve immortality, he kept this sacred text in the form of a **tablet** which he hid in the Cedar Beam Terrace palace. His predecessor, Qin Shi Huang, also sought immortality and failed; his earthly legacy included both the inception of the **Great Wall of China** and the creation of the **Terracotta Army** (an army of lifesize terracotta soldiers) as his guard in the afterlife.

Somewhere below the Old Quarter, all these myths and stories brewed and melded, creating a thin place: an impregnable mausoleum guarded by the Mythoi of the Great Wall of China and the Terracotta Army, and holding the tablet with the secret to immortality. Quickly after the site's discovery, **Helix Labs** took over the dig under the guise of academic research but, as of yet, they have not been able to breach the wall and reach the tablet. Working for art collector Alona Wainwright of the Cabal, expert burglar **Silvio Yadao** (Tincture of *Tarnkappe*, the cloak of concealment of *The Song of the Nibelungs*) was tasked with obtaining the tablet so it can be harvested for its Mythos essence.

Depending on the involvement of the crew and your cinematic considerations, the dig site job can be a single scene or an entire heist. In addition to the crew, multiple parties of interest have a stake here:

- **Silvio Yadao** wants to steal the tablet for the Cabal, after receiving threats to his daughter's life from Magnum Opus (see Chinatown Festival).
- **Helix Labs** Black Ops leader **Jakub Krask** was ordered to safeguard the tablet from theft, but resident archaeologist **Macey Reynolds** can't access the mausoleum and needs supernatural help so she might seek to enlist Rifts for the job. Both are Touched by Helix Labs and can perceive the legendary.

HEIST RULES

If you're using heist rules given in *Fortune Row*, the three cards of the dig site job are:

- **Silvio Yadao**: A master-thief/trickster Rift is tasked with stealing the prize back from anyone who steals it (9♠).
- **The Great Wall of China**: Access to the prize is guarded by a Relic of a legendary security measure (4♦).
- **The Terracotta Army**: The mark is guarded by an innumerable horde of monsters, beasts, or foot soldiers (3♣).

- **The Cabal** want the tablet and Silvio's skillset and Tincture are their best shot at getting it; unless somehow thwarted by the crew, they have kidnapped his daughter Helena and plan to trade her for the tablet. At least one Disciple and a group of Initiates are lurking nearby, waiting to make the trade.
- **Moonwraith**, if she is involved, is driven by her Mythos to protect the site and the secrets of immortality.

THE DIG SITE

The dig site is an excavated area locked between alleys where a large house once stood. It contains mostly dirt, rocks, some half-buried stone walls, and perhaps worthless century-old coins. At the center of the dig, the Helix Lab team excavated a buried stone complex that seemed out of place. As they dug closer to the stone complex, from any direction, the archaeologists found themselves facing a rising Great Wall of rock, packed earth, and bricks. They soon established that this *thin place* defies the laws of space or gravity; even if one rappels onto the exposed complex, one will find oneself standing before the Great Wall (see Danger profile below). Therefore, jumping or flying over the Mythos wall isn't possible; gravity simply shifts again and the interloper finds themselves facing the wall once more.

If someone scales or breaches the wall, they find themselves in a dark space reminiscent of Emperor Qin Shi Huang's mausoleum. The cavernous room is laid with thousands and thousands of terracotta soldiers, ready to annihilate anyone who attempts to reach the center, where the tablet with the recipe for life everlasting rests, illuminated by a beam of moonlight.

AFTER THE HEIST

If the cult obtained the tablet, it can be traced to art collector Alona Wainwright. This can be done using divination, e.g., by following its magical trail; using detective skills, by finding and following the cultists; with technology, by planting a homing device, and so on.

If the cult failed, Alona Wainwright will try to buy the tablet from whoever has it, offering a stupendous sum of money (Helix Labs would decline). The financial paper trail and rumors among dealers, smugglers, and fences, would be enough to lead the crew to her company, **Wainwright Auctioneers**.

Ignoring cultural differences, the tablet text describes a path to immortality remarkably consistent with the teachings of Magnum Opus (see clues in Alchemy 101 and Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities).

SILVIO YADAO ★★

With his Tincture of *Tarnkappe* and knowledge of security systems, Silvio Yadao is a man almost impossible to catch. The crew may try to convince him to turn himself in or help them against the Cabal, but his daughter's life is still on the line. Note, however, that Silvio can't go through solid matter or magical barriers, hold his breath indefinitely, or resist mental influence very well, so a clever crew could still manage to catch him.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / CATCH 4 / CONVINCE TO SURRENDER 4

- **Tincture of *Tarnkappe*:** Once per scene, while he is wearing his windbreaker, Silvio Yadao can turn completely *imperceptible-5* except through touch, as a soft move. No other sense, surveillance, or divination ability can detect him and **Investigate** moves using these methods cannot be initiated against him. **Looking Beyond the Mist** is also ineffective. He may activate this move again in the same scene as a hard move.
- **Threatened:** When you try to change Silvio's mind for the first time, he takes *fearing-for-his-daughter-4*.
- Easily slip through security systems while the crew is left behind (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Steal something valuable or important from someone (burn up to two appropriate tags)
- Use Brazilian jiu jitsu and contortion techniques to escape holds and restraints (remove up to three tiers of restraint statuses) or to restrain others (*tangled-2* if he then leaves the target, *restrained-3* if he maintains the hold)
- Disappear altogether and flee the scene (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Pick up the object he's after, hide it in his windbreaker, and vanish
- Make a run for it

Beyond the Mist, the celestial deity Queen Mother of the West can be seen hovering above the tablet. She can bestow immortality upon the bearer of the Relic, but has not found a worthy one yet.

If the crew knows about **Tinctures**, they can speculate that the cult intends to harvest the Relic for its Mythos essence.

THE COMPLEX WALL ★★★

Imbued with the three legends of the Great Wall of China, the complex wall is mythically-empowered to stop invaders. While it can be chipped and dented, no amount of physical punishment – legendary or mundane – can punch through it. However, the same legends impart unusual weaknesses on the wall: it can be broken down by tears; its power stems from one supernatural brick; and its signaling tower, when misused, causes its guards to become complacent. The wall can also be scaled and it is susceptible to erosion.

SMASH - / ERODE 5 / SCALE 4

- **Tears of Meng Jiang:** When the Complex Wall is washed with tears of great sorrow, add the resulting emotional status to the *erode* spectrum.
- **Jiayuguan Wall-Stabilizing Brick:** Incorporeal beings and teleporters cannot pass through the wall due to an inconspicuous yet magical brick that was purposefully left out of the wall and placed on its inner side. This property as well as the wall's physical immunity (*smash:-*) end when the brick is moved from its place (change the spectrum to *smash:6*).
- **Bao Si's Amusing Signaling Tower:** When an intruder approaches the Complex Wall, the signaling tower lights up. Create a Danger: **Terracotta Soldiers** (size factor 1). The intruder may **Sneak Around**. If the Terracotta Soldiers cannot locate the intruder, the intruder gains *laughing-1*. When the alarm is raised a third time after two false alarms, the Terracotta Soldiers cease to respond to the signaling tower.
- Bricks crack underfoot, making a climber slip (remove two tiers from *scale* and climber takes *sprained-ankle-2*)
- The Signaling Tower lights up (trigger **Bao Si's Amusing Signaling Tower**)
- Tower overhead, monolithic and foreboding

TERRACOTTA SOLDIER ★★

There are thousands of Terracotta Soldiers within the complex (size factor 4) and dozens of them (size factor 2) can gang up on each interloper at a time. Made to protect their Emperor from evil spirits in the afterlife, these clay statues are immune to Mythos powers and must be smashed with ordinary means or with Mythos powers that hurt them indirectly, e.g. by manipulating nearby rocks.

SMASH 2 / DRY OUT 1 / AFFECT MIND -

- **Guardians Against The Beyond:** Mythos powers cannot directly affect the Terracotta Soldier.
- Attack, slashing and stabbing with their metal weapons (*slashed-2*)
- Tighten their ranks and listen carefully (give themselves *alert* with a tier equal to their size factor; this status cannot exceed their size factor)
- Stand silently, dusty and yet lifelike

HELIX LABS BLACK OPS ★★★ (+ ★)

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / DRAIN THEIR GEAR 4

- **Collective:** This collective has several members and a size factor of 2.
- **Advanced Technology:** When you make a move against Helix Labs Black Ops gear and weapons, you cannot invoke tags from your Logos themes.
- **Automatic Ignition:** When Helix Labs Black Ops enter the scene, unless their gear is disabled, the MC can make two of their hard Danger gear moves as an intrusion.
- **Gamechanger:** As a hard move, Helix Labs Black Ops reveal a specialized piece of tech that changes the battlefield (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**), following which they can make a hard move with a tier-6 effect.
- Activate a piece of equipment:
 - » Force-field generator (give themselves *shielded-3*)
 - » Multi-spectral scanner (give themselves *alert-2* or gain specific knowledge of nearby threats, especially Rifts)
 - » Bio-matter patch (remove up to 2 tiers of medical statuses)
 - » Ion-9 assault rifle (*perforated-3* or *pinned-down-3*)
 - » Web-shooting spiders (*bound-3*)
 - » Laser pointers (*cornered-3*)
- Deploy silently and quickly around a target, guns ready

DEPTH 3: WHAT LIES BENEATH

WHIRLER'S COMMUNE

Around the corner of the tunnel, unexpectedly, you find a decommissioned subway station. The tiles that once lined its walls are now cracked and grimy, but the place is far from abandoned. The platform and train tracks are built over with planks, pallets, rugs, and sheets to form a warren of hovels. Colorful strings of prayer flags stretch from side to side, faintly illuminated by trash fires in barrels and tall candles scattered around the station. Dirty, unkempt shadows creep around amidst tents and graffiti of strange sigils: concentric circles, triangles, and squares in black, white, yellow, and red. At the center of it all, hovering over an improvised altar and wreathed in otherworldly flames, is a mural of the God-King, a shadowy crowned figure offering life everlasting in the form of a shining chalice.

The Seekers who complete the Silo Trial become Followers of the cult and move to the next step: a life of poverty and asceticism with the serene guru **Whirler**, aimed at releasing them from their mortal attachments. They pack a few essential belongings and find their way to the mystic's commune, somewhere in the underground tunnels below the Old Quarter.

If this happens to NPCs such as Peter Hill, Sloane Martinez, or Jiahao "Jaja" Zhang (page 15), or the crew's supporting cast who became embroiled with the cult, it creates an opportunity for interpersonal drama (if they are intercepted) or sad revelations (if the PCs simply discover they are gone). If a PC attempts to dissuade a Follower, she finds the Follower much harder to influence than they were as Seekers; use the Magnum Opus Follower Danger profile.

THE COMMUNE

The commune is a shanty village set up in an abandoned subway station. The way is marked for Followers using the cult symbols and Initiates in disguise who both guide Followers onwards and watch for intruders. Finding the way there without guidance requires divination, shadowing or tracking skills, or contacts in the Undertrash (the underground territories below the City, full of outcasts and monstrosi-

ties, see *The Undertrash* district). If the cult foresees a danger to the commune, they tackle it with full force (*The Cabal's Damage Control*); it is, after all, their Rift incubator.

WHIRLER

Upon arriving, Whirler welcomes everyone, Follower or not (she believes the cult will foresee the arrival of any dangerous interlopers and deal with them before they arrive at her doorstep). This petite monkish lady – formerly an insurance agent and later a self-help guru – meanders around the encampment in orange robes, bare feet, and a clean shaven head. She speaks softly, smiles heartily, and sympathizes sincerely with the suffering of the Followers who had to leave their lives behind, but stresses the need for complete purification in order to open up to the power of the God-King. Whirler is a Disciple in possession of the **Tincture of Krishna** (Hindu deity of compassion, tenderness, and love), which she uses to placate and sedate the Followers as they go through this “purification”, filling them with inner peace and tranquility.

Behind the guru facade, Whirler is more interested in playing the savior than she is in pursuing the spiritual journey to its end or actually guiding others in a helpful and meaningful way. She guides the Followers through a real transformation, but she does so mostly because this is crucial for the cult which supports her. She is comfortable where she is and wants to protect the commune above all else.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, life in the commune can be connected with the Whitening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus. Knowing the Magnum Opus way, one can deduce another initiation ritual will take place at the end of this period (the Feast of Fools).

Whirler says the next initiation ritual (the Feast of Fools) will be “the end of life in the City as it is now” for the Followers. Undercover PCs feel they must keep a close watch on the Followers during the ritual.

Beyond cooking and studying “The Alchemy of the Soul” (see *Alchemy* 101), everyday activity in the commune involves preparation for a celebration of some sort: **Followers sew together costumes, especially animal costumes, as well as banners, streamers, and prayer flags, etc.**

Once or twice a week, a hooded Initiate in streetwear shows up to convey messages from the Cabal to Whirler and receive her report. They can be followed to Alona Wainwright or the Catcombs. Whirler tells him which costume each Follower will wear in the Feast of Fools.

Behind the brick wall with the mural of the God-King there is another abandoned subway tunnel. It leads to a large underground cave, the future location of the Feast of Fools. At the base of the wall there's a brick-and-mortar patch job that shows it was used as an entrance before multiple times and then resealed.

THE WHITENING: PURIFYING OF ALL ATTACHMENTS

Life in the commune serves as the second stage of the Magnum Opus, **the Whitening**, and strips away a Follower's life, preparing them for Mythos awakening.

PCs who wish to follow the Magnum Opus path and join the commune must abandon, at least temporarily, their Defining Relationships, Routines, Turfs, and possibly Missions and Possessions; this may potentially force them to **Make Hard Choices**. Don't make it easier on them; instead, **Complicate Things** and have their Logos themes generate problems: someone slips them a note with news about their old life (true or false) or their old life somehow finds them down there (perhaps with the help of other PCs).

While in the commune, PCs may not choose to *Give Attention* during **Montage (Downtime)**. Sneaking out is possible, but any *zealous* statues left over from the *Silo Trial* impede such an action. If discovered, the offending Follower may be punished with a demand to renounce her attachment entirely or be ousted from the commune and the Magnum Opus path (**Force Them to Choose**).

Followers may spend weeks at the commune until their old lives seem like a distant dream. Only when Whirler deems enough of the Followers ready to move on does she signal the cult to begin preparations for the Feast of Fools.

On the fateful day, Whirler instructs the followers to dismantle the mural-covered brick wall that hides the opening to a subway tunnel that will lead them to the ritual. She warns them that **during the Feast of Fools, a guide will approach them to take them to the God-King. This will be their only chance and to do so they must leave the City forever.** Then they put on their costumes and march into the dark tunnel.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM WHIRLER

- “Your eyes have opened, but you are still yearning to go back to sleep. Don’t let this undo all the work that you have done.”
- “Everything that you have left behind was not enough to make you happy, to answer your questions, or to change your fate. The only way to reveal the truth is to let it all go.”
- “You were taught to fear emptiness, but emptiness is the foundation for illumination. If you cannot become an empty vessel, you cannot admit the light.”
- “I cannot describe to you what will be revealed to you when you unite with the God-King. But know that it is beyond your wildest dreams. Everything that you desire now will be yours, without struggle or conflict. But for now, desire is an obstacle.”

WHIRLER ★★★

Despite and perhaps because of her tranquil nature, Whirler is just as dangerous as her fellow cult Disciples. While she poses no risk to the crew’s safety, she may very well be a threat to their personal lives.

Whirler’s supernatural air of tranquility and mental resilience emanate from the Tincture of Krishna, which she carries in a glass vial tied in a necklace around her neck. Without it, she is just another guru wannabe; the trick lies in removing the Tincture before it fills you with good intentions.

HURT OR SUBDUE I / EMOTIONALLY OVERWHELM 4 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When Whirler enters the scene, give her *zealous-5*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Peace & Love:** Whenever you take a malicious action against Whirler, you first take *peaceful-and-benign-5*.
- **The Diamond Mantra:** When Whirler takes a status of emotional or mental influence, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Bodyguards:** When Whirler takes a status from which her bodyguards can protect her, the bodyguards take the status instead (use **Magnum Opus Followers**, page 10).
- Encourage someone to abandon their worldly attachments in order to progress in the Magnum Opus (*tempted-3* or *zealous-3*, or **Complicate Things, Bigtime** in a way that invites the player to mark Crack on a specific theme)
- Fill someone with well-wishing and good-intentions (*peaceful-and-benign-5*)
- Call her Followers for help (create a new Danger: **Magnum Opus Followers**, page 10)
- Take someone’s hand in hers and smile at them compassionately

THE FEAST OF FOOLS

Strange twisted music, a rabid mongrel of modern beats and medieval tunes, echoes from the deeps long before you arrive. There, under the vault of an enormous natural cave, you are struck by the sight of thousands of ravers dancing, frolicking, and fooling around wearing animal heads and everyday suits, uniforms, and work clothes. Somewhere in all this revelry hides the one who could show you the way deeper, where all mysteries are unlocked. But you wonder if you can find them, and if so, whether you will be ready to take the final step into the abyss.

The Feast of Fools is Magnum Opus’ second initiation ritual, one that represents the Followers’ liberation from their old lives, mainstream society, and traditional concepts of morality and sin. It is the culmination of the second phase of the Magnum Opus: **the Whiten-ing** or purification.

As in the Silo Trial, the test is simple: Followers must choose to follow their Guide, foregoing their lives in the City completely, knowing that they may never return (at least not as they are now).

This rite of passage takes place during a massive and chaotic underground rave organized by the cult, where thousands of intoxicated people dance and drink in an enormous cave, completely unaware that they are a part of the ritual. All participants are wearing masks and heads of animals – donkeys, foxes, crows, fish, and tortoises – while wearing caricature costumes of various everyday City dwellers – cops, judges, bank clerks, cooks, etc. – making a mockery of life in the City, social roles, and normality.

The Magnum Opus Followers (PCs and NPCs) participate in the rave but abstain from intoxication until, amidst all this chaos, someone in the crowd stares at them intently (while still wearing an animal head) and beckons them to come along. This is **the Guide**, whose appearance spells the moment of truth for the Follower.

The Guide is a Disciple who mastered the Transmutation of Earth. If the Follower follows the Guide, he secretly admits her into a narrow mining tunnel by shifting the earth aside and then sealing it behind her. The tunnel is dark, and the Follower must feel her way in the dark for a long time, until the tunnel suddenly ends in a stone door engraved with the secrets of Magnum Opus: triangles and squares inscribed in circles, formulas, and alchemical symbols. The earth shifts again to seal the tunnel behind the Follower.

She is then expected to sit for hours and ruminate on her transition. During her stay in this sealed chamber, the earth beneath her seems to shake – unbeknownst to the Follower, the Disciples are relocating her chamber to the Catacombs, far on the other side of town and deeper underground.

This ritual both serves to impress and frighten the Follower and as a security precaution, preventing anyone who isn't authorized from finding the Catacombs. When all Followers have been whisked away, the rave ends abruptly, clearing the cave in minutes. Any Followers who did not follow their Guide into the tunnels are left behind and never hear from the cult again.

CRASHING THE PARTY

PCs who are not Followers can locate the rave by following the procession of Followers from Whirler's Commune or by crossing rumors with the clues in Valérien's Oddities & Curiosities.

Attacking the ritual is impractical, what with swathes of cultists everywhere, **Whirler's** tranquilizing presence, and optionally **Talia Al-Bahar** in a sniping position and the **Yakuza Yōkai** mixed into the crowd. Even collapsing the cavern is unlikely with so many Disciples around versed in the Transmutation of Earth, nevermind thousands of more-or-less innocent ravers.

Instead, this scene is a great opportunity to infiltrate the gathering (with costumes!), learn more about the cult, and try to save Followers with whom the crew is invested – all against the backdrop of unhinged festivities.

- Locating the Followers is difficult amidst the *chaos* of *costumes* and *inebriated crowds* but these exact conditions make **Sneaking Around** easier.
- The Guides (Disciples) assigned to each Follower will not open the tunnel for anyone else, unless they mistake them for their Follower, in which case the interloper gets an express ticket to the Catacombs.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this ritual can be connected with the Whiten- ing stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus.






A smuggler could infer the festivity provides cover for whisking away the Followers to some safehouse or haven. **Tailing a Follower** will reveal that they are being led into a tunnel by a Guide. **Identifying a Guide** and following them will show they are looking for someone in a specific costume.

Connecting the dots with the Magnum Opus teachings, **one can infer the next step is the Yellowing** or awakening the candidates to their true selves. The final step, Reddening or transformation, will be their complete union with the God-King.

THE INITIATE'S RIDDLE

Before the chamber reaches its final position at the Catacombs and as a final security measure, the Follower (or interloper) is presented with the Initiate's Riddle: she must complete a sequence of four alchemical symbols that correspond to the verses of the **Initiate's Chant** from "The Alchemy of the Soul" book. Some of the alchemical symbols appear on the stone door as glowing sigils. **The Follower must complete the remaining symbols by drawing them on the door.**

The complete sequence represents the words "Body", "Quicksilver", "Sun", and "Fire" that appear in the verses that correspond to Blackening, Whitening, Yellowing, and Reddening; it is represented by the symbols in the table. In the easiest version of the riddle, the sequence is missing only the last symbol (fire). You can make the riddle more challenging by removing additional symbols or raise the stakes by giving the PC just one attempt.

BLACKENING	WHITENING	YELLOWING	REDDENING
When my body rots, I will be absolved	My spirit is washed by Quicksilver	My soul becomes luminous as the sun	I burn to unite with your sacred fire
Salt or Body	Mercury (Quicksilver)	Sun	Fire
		 Or alternatively, the symbol for Sulfur , which also stands for soul : 	

You can assume that a PC that has been a serious follower of Magnum Opus knows by heart the four stages, the Initiate's Chant, and the alchemical element symbols. This should be enough for her to infer the answer.

PCs who do not know the answer can **Investigate**, if they have the required knowledge or some way of accessing it. *A copy of "The Alchemy of the Soul"* is especially useful in this situation and may provide some free clues, at your discretion.

While the Follower is solving the riddle, they can faintly hear the **Initiate's Chant** mumbled behind the door.

The riddle is literal, not symbolic; the signs stand for words.

The alchemical element which represents the body is salt.

If the person in the chamber solves the riddle, the chamber moves to its final position. A Disciple holding a candle opens the door and ushers the Follower into the Catacombs, giving her yellow-brown robes to don as she becomes an **Initiate** (taking *zealous-4*).

If she fails, the Disciples consider her an invader and either collapse the chamber or simply leave her there to starve to death, stuck under dozens or hundreds of feet of earth (*buried-alive-5*). To make things worse, *sigils on the door* inhibit powers of magical transportation or incorporeality.

ALONA WAINWRIGHT

The rain falls incessantly as you stop in front of the impressive, immaculately restored house, next to a gold-tinted sign spelling WAINWRIGHT AUCTIONEERS. Somehow, you're not surprised it all boils down to an auction house. This covetousness, this desire to possess, hangs about the place like foul breath. This is where the ancient and the priceless get labelled with a dollar sign and sold to the highest bidder. You doubt that these people, who crave to privately own collections of museum-worthy treasures, stop there; surely they must feel the urge to deal in far more sacred commodities.

Like her fellow members in the Cabal, **Alona Wainwright** is a Magnum Opus Wolf through and through: for her, the worship of the God-King is only a path to

unmatched power. One of the City's most prominent art collectors and dealers, she came in contact with the cult several years ago after stumbling upon a manuscript of "The Alchemy of the Soul" and identifying it as a fake. Threatening to blow the lid on Prof. Clay's operation unless he lets her in on his secrets, she got herself an instant seat in one of the first Silo Trials, which she aced. A year later, she was accepted into the Cabal and started to greedily collect Tinctures of Mythoi as she grew the cult's operations further and further.

An attractive, accomplished, and assertive woman in her 40s, Wainwright is the cult's financier and legal advisor. She funds the battery of lawyers that protect cultists and harass the enemies of the cult and she uses her influence and connections to draw attention away from the cult's activity in the high rungs of law enforcement and the media.

As a bearer of the **Tincture of the Magi**, Wainwright possesses vast magical and astrological knowledge, although her magic is ritualistic and is not suitable for conflict. She keeps the Tincture in a small receptacle cut from ruby that is fixed into her belt buckle. She often wears expensive jewelry to lure thieves away from the Tincture.

The crew can trace cult activity back to Ms. Wainwright. Mercenaries working for the cult like **Silvio Yadao** (the Dig Site Job) or the **Yakuza Yokai** and **Talia Al-Bahar** (The Cabal's Damage Control) report directly to her, as do the cult's lawyers.

INVESTIGATING ALONA WAINWRIGHT

Wainwright conducts her business from her offices at **Wainwright Auctioneers**, based in a regal historic building on the border of the Old Quarter and Downtown. The difficulty in pinning her down lies with her **daily horoscope**, which predicts any interferences or threats to herself or the cult's work (see *The Cabal's Damage Control*, page 7, on how to counter this power). Just when the crew finally thinks they have her cornered, she is simply not there, and a nasty surprise could be waiting instead. If the crew does find a way to circumvent her horoscopes, they may discover the following.

Together with the other members of the Cabal, **Wainwright's main job is to keep the cult's operation running smoothly like a well-oiled factory line**. She follows closely the number of graduates from the Silo Trial, **Whirler's Commune**, and the **Feast of Fools**, as if there is some quota or demand she is trying to meet.

As with all members of the Cabal, Ms. Wainwright's arrangement with the cult is no longer spiritual but transactional: generate more power, and you'll be rewarded with a share of the power. The currency of power is Tinctures.

The final two phases of the Magnum Opus process take place in the Catacombs. Ms. Wainwright seems to receive her payment for graduations in Tinctures, but only after the fourth and final phase is complete.

Once or twice a week, a suited Initiate shows up to convey reports from Whirler's Commune or the cult's Anointing rituals in the Catacombs. They can be followed to either location.

Wainwright collects Relics, such as the tablet from the Dig Site Job, as a side business for the cult. The Relics are sent to the furnace / Canseliet Manor (to be harvested). She keeps an *encrypted-2* ledger listing which Relics were sold to the cult (it does not contain information about human Rifts).

Wainwright keeps about half a dozen Tinctures in an ornate *locked-3* and boobytrapped (*poisoned-4* and *starcrossed-4* if triggered) jewelry box. The box is kept in her auction house vault among many other objects of refined craftsmanship and great value, including a few Relics (awaiting harvest).

Wainwright uses the Tincture of the Magi to magically communicate with the other Cabal members: they can see and hear each other through a basin of water, in the flames of a fireplace, or in a cloud of smoke and mist.

In the same way, Wainwright communicates with someone she calls "Great Teacher". This can lead to Canseliet Manor and Armand Kai, in *The Alchemist*.

If the furnace is still operational, Rachel Woods reports to Wainwright by phone or through a Disciple courier. This could connect this case to *The Furnace*.

ALONA WAINWRIGHT ★★★★★

Alona Wainwright has mastered the Transmutation of Metals and the Transmutation of Precious Stones, both branded on the back of her neck under her flowing hair. She also holds the Tincture of the Magi, granting her mastery of the magical and astrological arts.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / TURN AWAY FROM CULT 6

- **Drinking the Kool-Aid:** When Alona Wainwright enters the scene, give her *zealous-5*, renewable as a hard move.
- **Master of the Arcane Arts:** When Alona sees or detects the presence of a Relic or magical effect, she immediately knows its nature and how to counter it. When you use a Relic or magic against Alona Wainwright, she first gives herself a temporary *counterspell-3*, impeding your move.
- **Bodyguards:** When Alona Wainwright takes a status from which her bodyguards can protect her, the bodyguards take the status instead (use **Magnum Opus Initiates**, page 11, or **Corporate Lawyer**, *MC Toolkit*, page 142).
- **Transmutation of Metals and Precious Stones:** When Alona Wainwright takes a status involving metals or precious stones, she can redirect up to 3 tiers of it to another target.
- Order the cult's agents to attack (Create any of the Dangers under *The Cabal's Damage Control*, page 7)
- Counter a magical ability or Relic (burn two relevant tags)
- Cause guns to misfire and metallic weapons to slash, stab, and smite (*gunshot-3* or *wounded-3*, one target per loaded gun or metal weapon at the scene)
- Scoff at the interruption to her busy schedule
- Twiddle her fingers and thumb her bejeweled belt buckle, casting a spell



DEPTH 4: THE SACRED FIRE

THE CATACOMBS

To the sounds of a repetitive Latin chant and an occasional stifled whimper, you make your way through the underground tunnels. The empty eye sockets of a thousand human skulls embedded in walls follow you mockingly. You pass by torchlit alcoves and see in each the shuddering body of one of the initiates, shackled to a heavy altar, a boulder, or a subway car. Passing solemnly from one sacrificial lamb to the next is a procession of robed and hooded cultists carrying a golden basin. As they stop next to a stupified victim, they chant, and an unearthly crackle roars as the walls are lit by eldritch flashes of green glow, showing their long shadows. A moment later, the procession continues its path, a little worse for wear, yet with greater zeal.

The Catacombs are the secret headquarters of the God-King's cult. Originally a complex of burial chambers underneath the Old Quarter, where the alchemists of old reputedly gathered in secrecy to conduct their forbidden experiments, today the Catacombs is a barracks the size of an army base buried much deeper under the City. Thanks to the power of Earth Transmutation possessed by the cult's Disciples, the entire complex can be transported to a new location as necessary, while accessways in the form of abandoned subway tunnels can be put together and disassembled like toy bricks.

The candle-lit tunnels, corridors, and chambers of the catacombs are lined with the original skulls and bones of those buried here, a constant reminder for the cultists of the mortal fate that awaits them if they fail to fulfill their mystical calling (or if they betray the God-King). The complex is built in three sections, each enclosing the next: the Initiates' Court, the Disciples' Court, and the Sanctum Sanctorum.

THE INITIATES' COURT

When Initiates first arrive in the Catacombs, they don the gold-hued robes – marking the beginning of **the Yellowing** stage – and join the life of servitude of the other Initiates and Disciples. They are shown



to their meager living quarters. The atmosphere is severe and austere. There is no room for socializing or time-wasting; everyone understands they have a role to perform and the ultimate goal of the Magnum Opus is ever-present. They are forbidden from entering the Disciples' Court and beyond without an accompanying Disciple.

Lamb Initiates are confined to their chambers. They are expected to study the texts and secrets of alchemy to prepare for their awakening. In fact, the cult merely holds them there temporarily until the preparation for the Anointing ritual is complete.

Wolf Initiates are assigned to a Disciple who commands them, and partake in cult activities in the City, like the Chinatown Festival attack or the Dig Site Job. They prepare for their missions in a series of labs within their Court, concocting their chemical formulas. Wolf Initiates work under the assumption that the cult has enemies and that in order for the cult to complete the Magnum Opus, they must do what it takes to ensure its survival.

PCs who are in this stage may begin to feel that something is amiss. After the life-shattering sacrifices they made in **the Blackening** and **the Whitening**, studying scriptures and running errands may not seem a very mystical experience. The Disciples promise them that the next ritual will be worth it all.

THE DISCIPLES' COURT

While Disciples are stationed in key roles all over the City (most notably Canseliet Manor in *The Alchemist*), the Catacombs is their central barracks. Versed in elemental Transmutations, Disciples seek to grow their alchemical powers through service to the God-King in hopes of learning from the Great Teacher (Armand, or the Cabal if you are playing the case as a one-shot) and gaining the ultimate power promised to them. They train tirelessly in special facilities in the complex and prepare for the moment they receive orders from the Cabal, communicated via **an eternal flame** that burns in one of their halls or through a messenger sent from Cabal members such as Alona Wainwright.

THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM

At the center of the Catacombs, there is a system of tunnels and chambers that is used for **the Anointing ritual**, the Rift awakening ritual. At its heart is a golden basin with the Magnum Opus' most important Relic and ingredient: the twice-diluted water from the Grail, purified water in which one drop of Armand Kai's Grail Water was dissolved. Access to the Sanctum Sanctorum is blocked by solid earth and guarded by Disciples at all times; it is only ever made accessible during the Anointing ritual.

SECURITY IN THE CATACOMBS

The cult has put in place multiple defense systems to protect its underground stronghold from snoopy Rifts:

- **Access by Earth Transmutation:** Positioned deep underground and movable at the whim of the Cabal, the Catacombs can only be physically accessed by those who (a) know where they are at the moment, and (b) can travel through solid earth. Disciples with Earth Transmutation serve as gatekeepers and ushers, dismantling and reconstructing old subway and service tunnels to connect and disconnect their base.
- **Astrological divination:** The cult monitors the astrological chart of the Catacombs a hundred times more intensively than it does any other aspect of its operations. If you haven't used The Cabal's Damage Control to bring the PCs to a dead-end or ambush, this would be a good time to do so.
- **Magical Wards:** The Cabal are powerful ritual sorcerers, especially when they work together. They have placed magical wards on the Catacombs that counter divination powers or magical infiltration attempts (teleportation, shapeshifting, etc.) and alert the Cabal. The Initiate's Court is *warded-1*, the Disciples Court is *warded-2*, and the Sanctum Sanctorum is *warded-3*.
- **The Initiate's Riddle:** The mystic's version of a keypad, this riddle serves as another barrier for interlopers (see the Feast of Fools, page 32).
- **Cultist patrols:** Initiates and Disciples on guard duty (*alert-1*) patrol the corridors of all three sections of the Catacombs at all times.
- **Other cult agents:** If the Cabal are concerned of an imminent attack on the Catacombs, they may post Talia Al-Bahar or the Yakuza Yōkai in the Sanctum Sanctorum with clear instructions to either engage the interlopers or secure the Twice-Diluted Grail Water.

THE ANOINTING RITUAL

The Anointing ritual completes the Yellowing stage. Each Initiate is carried to a different chamber in the Sanctum Sanctorum and chained to an altar or another heavy object.

- **Whether Lambs or Wolves, Initiates who the cult identified as Rifts** are still chained, but are subjected to neither treatment. At the end of the ritual, they are treated as anointed Lambs (any resistance is impeded by their *zealous* statuses, if any).

- **Wolves are given a Transmutation** by branding the alchemical symbol of their element in their flesh. This *hurts-like-hell-3* and permanently transforms them into individuals Touched by Armand's alchemist Mythos. They each gain control over their element and become **Disciples**, but initially they *can't-control-their-powers-2* and must train to remove this status. **At the end of the ritual, they are carried to the Disciples' Court for recovery, never to see their fellow Initiates, the Lambs, again.**
- **Lambs are Anointed with the Twice-Diluted Grail Water and become Rifts.** They erupt with the legendary power of their Mythos, sometimes leveling their chamber or harming the Disciples who perform the ritual. While still *overwhelmed-3*, they gradually regain their bearings, their *zealous* status helps them control their power and compels them to obey the Disciples' commands. **At the end of the ritual, Lambs and previously-awoken Rifts are gathered and promised that they are a step from uniting with the God-King and achieving total illumination and omniscience. They are then sent to be harvested.**

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this ritual can be connected with the Yellowing or Awakening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus. The next step is the final step, Reddening or transformation, which will unite the aspirant with the God-King, the source of all life.

The water in the golden basin has the power to awaken Sleepers into Rifts.

The branding of alchemical symbols grants Disciples their alchemical powers.

THE HARVEST RITUAL

The cult does not wait long to harvest the newly-awakened and veteran Rifts, leading them soon thereafter into the "Sacred Fire": a Mythos-melting flame which can strip the legendary from a Rift, collecting it as a volatile and corrosive substance called Ichor, which is later refined into a Tincture. See the exact rules for the effects of this process in *The Furnace*.

If you are playing through the story arc, the harvesting site can be at the furnace (*The Furnace*) or the Ichor refinery in Canseliet Manor (*The Alchemist*). If you are playing this case as a one shot or if it better fits your cinematic considerations, the Cabal has another inner room at the center of the Sanctum Sanctorum, where the "Sacred Fire" is burning and where they personally conduct the harvesting.

Whatever the location of the harvest, the Disciples herd the Rifts together and usher them into the flames one by one, praising their coming transformation and union with the God-King while the *zealous* Rifts can do nothing but comply, believing they will attain their long-awaited answers or ultimate powers. Instead, the Lambs emerge from the "Sacred Fire" as soulless Sleepers, devoid of their unique animating force – their Mythos – and of any hope to ever awaken again.

With the necessary alchemical knowledge, this final ritual can be connected with the Reddening stage of the alchemical Magnum Opus: the coveted union with the God-King. **However, something is amiss here: it doesn't feel like anyone here is any nearer to the truth.**

The Disciples who usher the Lambs into the "Sacred Flame" have seen this ritual before; they don't believe a word they say to the Lambs about their upcoming union with the God-King.

Walking into the "Sacred Fire" is not the gate to ultimate illumination but to permanent Sleep. The "Sacred Fire" melts down one's Mythos into a glowing, corrosive goo. Rifts come out of the "Sacred Fire" virtually brain-dead, remembering nothing at all. At first this may seem like a state of enlightenment, but very soon it becomes evident: they are completely ordinary people with no power nor connection to the Source. In fact, any glint they had in their eyes seems entirely snuffed out.

This shines a light on the true motives of the cult of the God-King: **"Magnum Opus" is a manufacturing operation driven by power lust, harvesting people of their innate mystical powers.**

OPERATION CLEAN UP

Once the cat is out of the bag about the cult (or once there is enough evidence to prove it), the crew may wish to take any of the following courses of action:

- **Rescue Initiates from awakening or harvesting:** The crew can try to sabotage the Anointing or "Sacred Fire" rituals. They may also attempt to convince the Initiates of the truth: seeing a fellow Initiate emerge numb and empty-eyed from the "Sacred Fire" or seeing the Ichor harvested from them has a sobering effect. Give the PCs story tags for every piece of hard evidence they show the cultists to help them break through their *zealous* statuses and *turn-away-from-cult* spectrums (see *Magnum Opus Dangers*, page 10).

- **Bring down the Catacombs:** This could entail defeating the villainous Disciples and any remaining cult agents at the scene, and physically demolishing or collapsing the compound. The crew may wish to somehow save the Twice-Diluted Grail Water.
- **Shut down the entire cult operation:** The crew could set out to apprehend key figures like Prof. Clay, Whirler, and Alona Wainwright and the remaining Cabal members, or at least sabotage their operations. There may also be a battle of political influence as the Cabal try to pull strings to get rid of the crew once and for all.

If you are playing the story arc, the trail leads to the man behind the cult: the Great Teacher, the alchemist Armand Kai, who resides in his Old Quarter Canseliet Manor (described in the final case of the mystical vein, *The Alchemist*). The crew can find the manor by following a delivery of harvested Ichor, tapping a communication from the last Cabal members, chasing escaped Disciples, or investigating the source of the Twice-Diluted Grail Water.

Furthermore, the Twice-Diluted Grail Water is a link to the Mythos of the Fisher King (Corbin Payne). Investigating it should yield clues based on the current act in the overarching case, *Percival*.

THE TWICE-DILUTED GRAIL WATER

The substance used by Magnum Opus to awaken Rifts is a diluted solution of purified water and a drop of water previously contained in the Grail. Water from the Grail was given to Armand by Corbin Payne, perhaps in the hope that the alchemist could find a cure to the king's legendary ailment. While Armand still keeps the original Grail water in his lab (see *The Alchemist*), he gives the cult a diluted version of it, thus diluting the raw power of the Grail a second time.

In this story arc, the Grail represents the ultimate power of the truth, of transformation, and of healing. Armand and his cult use it to awaken individuals to their true nature, their Mythos, before cruelly ripping its essence out of them, turning them into hopeless shades.

Treat this substance as a wild card. If a Rift is Anointed with it, she may awaken further, replacing another Logos theme with a Mythos theme, or she may See Through the Mist, at least temporarily (as in the Moment of Evolution, *Player's Guide*, page 269). The power in the diluted version could be tapped to power a miracle equivalent to a significant sacrifice on a **Stop. Holding. Back** move. Narratively, it could make someone see a truth they've been ignoring or heal grave physical or emotional wounds.

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- How did the crew emerge from their interaction with Magnum Opus? Did any of them follow the path offered by the cult and if so, how far did they go? Whose life was altered forever, whether by the cult's intervention or their own willing sacrifices?
- What is the state of the Magnum Opus operation at the end of the case? Was it completely decommissioned or can the cultists rebuild? Where are key figures such as the Cabal, Alona Wainwright, Professor Clay, and Whirler? If the truth came to light, does Prof. Clay continue recruiting for the cult or seek a new way to realize the alchemical Magnum Opus?
- What was the fate of the cult members in the end? Seekers, Followers, Initiates, and Disciples – did they sacrifice everything for ultimate knowledge and power? Were some of them able to break free from the cult and rebuild their lives? If Armand's power still holds, did they retreat to Canseliet Manor? Or do some of them continue the quest on their own? What of the cult followers the crew was sent to rescue from the cult? Were they returned to their families?
- What of all the Tinctures the cult left behind, and the Twice-Diluted Grail Water? If the cult or Armand fall, do they lose their power? These powerful artifacts can wreak havoc in the wrong hands. How does the crew intend to dispose of them? Can the crew find a way to return the Mythos essences to the people they were stolen from, and if so, should they?
- Did the mysteries of the Magnum Opus and the possibilities it offers made a lasting impression on the crew members, supporting cast, or the NPCs in the case? Will they continue the quest to discover what lies beyond this world? Perhaps Ariadne would be willing to guide one of them.
- What ever happened to those embroiled in the dig site job: Silvio Yadao and his daughter, Helena; Moonwraith; and the Helix Labs archaeological team? Who ended up with the tablet with the recipe for the Elixir of Life, and how do they use it?

THE INITIATE'S CHANT

O, pater animans,

Life-giving father

Sequor aranei filum mysticum

I follow the thread of the mystic spider

per labyrinthum mendaciorum tuum

Through your labyrinth of lies

ut adiungam tibi in sancto sanctorum.

To join you in the holy of holies

Corpore meo putrefacto absolutus ero.

When my body rots, I will be absolved

Spiritus meus mercurio lavatur,

My spirit is washed by Quicksilver

Anima mea ut sol elucidatur,

My soul becomes luminous as the sun

Ardeo ut coniugem cum pyra tua sacra,

I burn to unite with your sacred fire

Factus sum

I have become

Deus in orbe terrarum.

God on Earth.

LATIN CHANT	ENGLISH MEANING	USAGE OF PHRASE IN EVERYDAY
O, pater animans,	Life-giving father	Exclamation or swear word
Sequor aranei filum mysticum	I follow the thread of the mystic spider	Facing the unknown or the terrifying, such as torture or leap of faith
per labyrinthum mendaciorum tuum	Through your labyrinth of lies	Revealing deception or treachery
ut adiungam tibi in sancto sanctorum.	To join you in the holy of holies.	In the presence of the sublime or transcendent
Corpore meo putrefacto absolutus ero.	When my body rots, I will be absolved (Blackening)	Battle cry, especially the first three words and the last two words separately
Spiritus meus mercurio lavatur,	My spirit is washed by Quicksilver (Whitening)	Composing oneself to avoid violence or aggression
Anima mea ut sol elucidatur,	My soul becomes luminous as the sun (Yellowing)	Rejoicing or committing to a cause
Ardeo ut coniugem cum pyra tua sacra,	I burn to unite with your sacred fire (Reddening)	Response to commands from a higher-ranking cultists, also the last four words
Factus sum	I have become	
Deus in orbe terrarum.	God on Earth.	Activating transmutations.