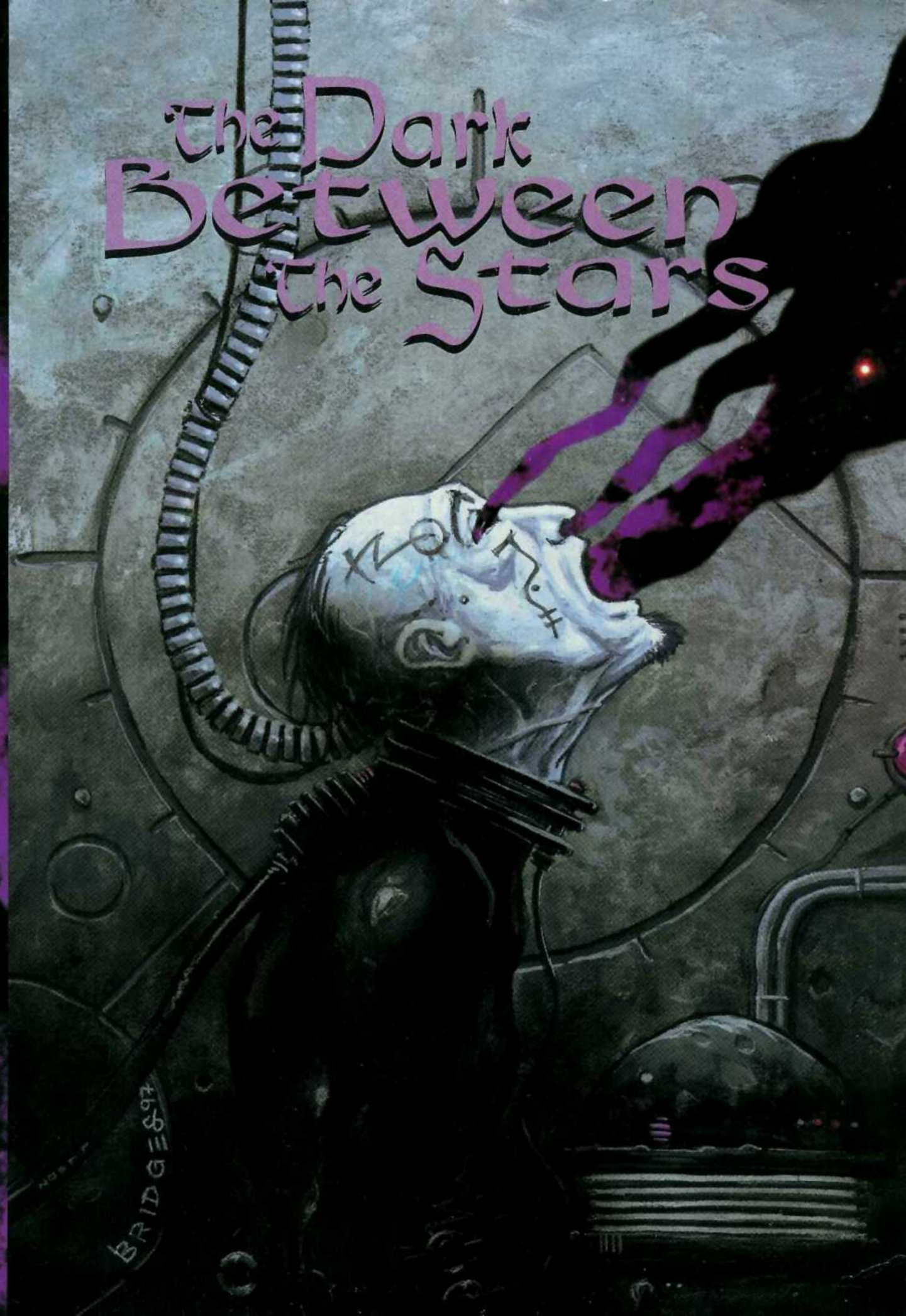
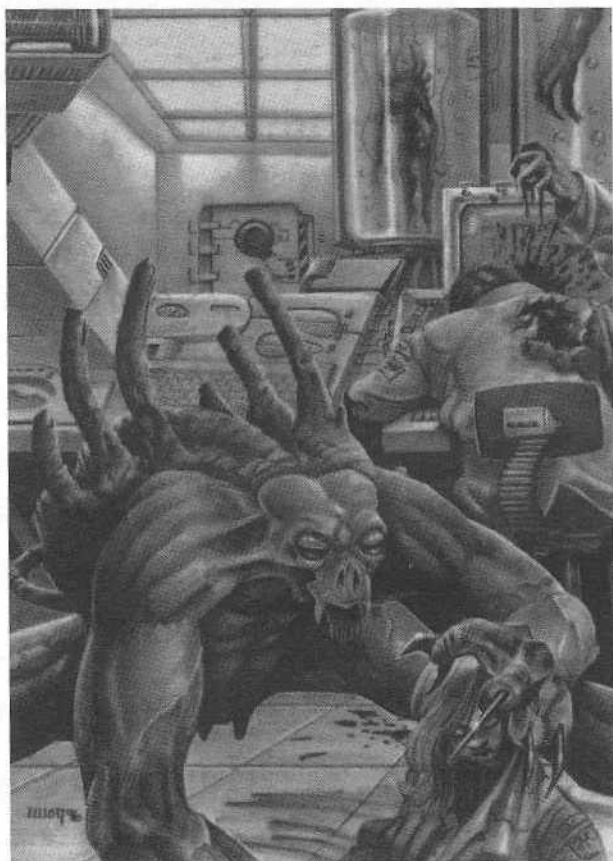


The Dark Between The Stars



FADING SUNS™

The Dark Between The Stars



by
Sam Inabinet, Rustin Quaide,
Bill Bridges, Andrew Greenberg, Chris Wiese



Credits

Written by: Bill Bridges, Andrew Greenberg, Sam Inabinet, Rustin Quaide, Chris Wiese

Developed and typeset by: Bill Bridges

Proofread by: Andrew Greenberg

Art directed by: John Bridges

Art by: John Bridges, Darryl Elliott, Sam Inabinet, Mark Jackson, Brian LeBlanc, Alex Sheikman, Ron Spencer

Cover art by: John Bridges

Emblems:

The emblems on the front cover represent some of the new character roles presented in this book. They are: Invisible Path, Favyana, Dervishes, Sathraists, Antinomists

Pilgrims:

Beware the inner and outer reaches of the universe, whether in the depths of the mind or beyond the farthest star. Remember that darkness lurks at the bottom of a well as much as outside the solar spheres, and can also dwell in our thoughts. Fear abides in the Dark. Walk ye instead the middle realms, where the Light is plentiful and Grace is not far. Stray from this path and ye risk damnation in the sightless void.



Holistic Design Inc.

5295 Hwy 78

D-337

Stone Mountain, GA 30087

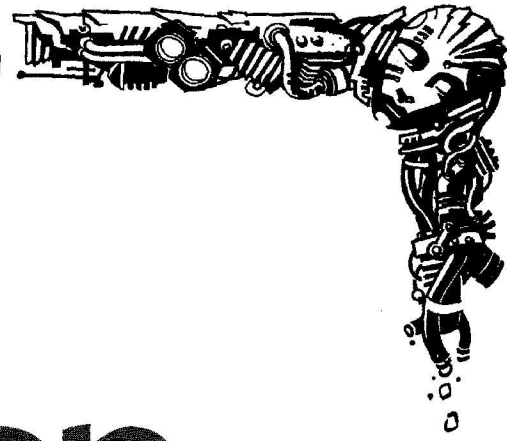
Visit Holistic Design's web site at:

www.holistic-design.com

©1997 by Holistic Design Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without written permission of the publisher is expressly denied, except for the purpose of reviews. **Fading Suns** and **The Dark Between the Stars** are trademarks and copyrights of Holistic Design Inc.

The mention of or reference to any companies or products in these pages is not a challenge to the trademarks or copyrights concerned.

Printed in the US of A



The Dark Between The Stars

Contents

Alustro's Journal: The Rampart Plea	4
Introduction: Charting the Darkness	8
Orphans of Evolution: Psychic Covens	12
Banned from God: Sathraists	36
Hymn to Dark Gods: Demon Cultists	44
From the Shadows: Blasphemous Beings	60
Appendix: Powers of the Dark Side	84





Alustro's Journal: The Rampart Plea

November 4th, 4996 (Holy Terra calendar)

I humbly thank the Pancreator for allowing me life and mind and a sound soul with which to continue my journals. Such a harrowing event did I experience that only the whiff of Empyrean's grace blew me from an ill course. I shake even now to think back upon it, even though I am safely ensconced in a noble estate in the Imperial City itself, on Byzantium Secundus where no enemy can approach unseen.

The events began simply, with a flitter journey over the Tepest Desert of the Ghast continent. I was with Canon Jophree, a respected member of our Order, who had invited me to witness the Ur ruins discovered there. With Lady Erian's permission, I set forth with my fellow priest in his own flitter (Jophree was born to House Cameton, a powerful family on Byzantium Secundus, and has access to many things most priests do not — a boon for our Order). He had learned how to fly such crafts before he took vows, and he and I greatly enjoyed our trip together. It had been a long time since I had been able to talk so deeply with a fellow priest, and he shed some light on my own strange experiences since I joined with Erian.

The ruins were... eerie. It is the only word to describe them. We did not land, but only flew over them, circling around to see them from all sides. It seems that we both had a strange sense of foreboding, and agreed not to walk among them.

After getting our fill of the strange landmarks, we turned back. I still do not understand just what happened or why, but Jophree lost control of the flitter. We spun maniacally in the sky, up and down and in circles. He fought the controls but some greater force seemed in control. I remember him yelling something about an "electromagnetic grid disturbance" and something about terraforming anomalies. But I was too hurried, fetching safety bubbles from the back and strapping them on to both of us. I had just latched the belt around him when

the engine blew up.

The force must have thrown us both out the windshield. This would explain the gashes on my face and hands. I was knocked unconscious immediately. I came to on the desert floor, the plastic liquid of the safety bubble splattered over me; it had ruptured prematurely, leaving me with more bruises than I deserved and a broken survival kit. There was no sign of Canon Jophree. I prayed that his bubble had activated correctly, and would cushion his fall before bursting.

I began searching for him, but my own transmitter was broken. I feared the worst, for both of us. Without a transmitter, no one would find me in this wasteland. If I could not find Jophree and his transmitter, I was doomed.

My search took me in an ever-widening circle. By the time the sun set, I still had seen no sign of Jophree or our downed flitter. I knew my robes would do me little good against the chill desert night, and began to look for an outcrop or gully where I could light a fire safe from the winds. That is when I saw the lights.

At first, I thought it must be my friend, so I began calling. Two fusion torches came toward me. Had Jophree called a rescue party so soon? Two men approached, one wearing the uniform of a Charioteer spacepilot, although somewhat torn and dusty, made of old-style synthsilk, the kind usually inherited over generations from a wealthy family. The other was even better attired, for he wore a short cape and brooch with the crest of House Cameton.

"Greetings," I said as they came near. "I am glad you found me. Is Canon Jophree alright?"

They looked at each other quizzically and then the pilot replied. "You're a priest?"

"Yes. I am Novitiate Alustro of the Eskatonic Order."

They both smiled. The pilot reached his hand out to me. "I am so glad to see you, father. We've needed a priest for a long time now."



"I don't understand," I said, shaking his hand.

"Come on over to the ship. We have food." They both began moving back the way they had come, and I followed.

"Are you not the rescue party? Did Canon Jophree call you?"

"We don't have a squawker," the pilot said. "It broke when we crashed."

"Crashed? You ran into the electromagnetic interference also? How long have you been here?"

This time the noble spoke: "It seems like years. I am Baron Arbuck Cameton, by the way. I apologize for not introducing myself earlier. We have been in the desert too long."

"Well, surely then you have people looking for you? Your family?"

"Of course they're looking for me. But this is the Tepest Desert! It's huge. Whatever caused the crash is foiling all our equipment. It is surely doing the same to our searchers' equipment."

As he spoke, we came over the rise and I saw a starship, perhaps an Explorer class vessel. It was half buried in the ground, obviously from a crash landing. Although the nose was buried deep, the rear hatch still allowed access in and out of the craft. It was to this door that they walked.

"We've got a lot of supplies," the pilot said. "So don't worry. Eat all you want. You have to be hungry after a day like you've had."

"Thank you," I replied, following him into the hatch.

"I'm famished. By the way, what do I call you?"

I couldn't see his face as he walked ahead of me in the tight passage, but he mumbled his reply.

"I'm sorry. Was that Captain Kamen?"

"Kariman."

We came out of the engine area and into a common room. It was lit by an everlight clasped to a ceiling pipe. Captain Kariman began opening tins and scooping their contents onto a plate for me. I embarrassingly wolfed it down. I hadn't eaten since well before our flitter accident.

Baron Arbuck disappeared into the forward cabin. After a few minutes, power came on, flooding the cabin with light. In the rear, where we had passed through, I heard the slight whine of an engine or generator. Kariman looked around and flicked some switches on and off, cutting some of the lights.

"Alustro," the baron yelled from foreship. "I want to show you this."

I got up and walked carefully down the passage. The ship rested at a slant, so I walked a downward incline to reach the cockpit from where the baron called.

He was sitting in a navigator's couch, moving dials and switches on and off. "I need to ask a favor of you, father. Would you bless this ship?"

"I can certainly perform a blessing, but why?"

Kariman came in and closed the door behind him, sitting in the pilot's couch.

"Because we're going to try and get this thing off the ground again," the baron replied.

"Well, I suppose I could perform a small litany, if you think it would help."

Captain Kariman spoke: "It would, father. It would, indeed."

I prepared my robes and polished my jumpgate pendant, filthy from the day's sweat and sand, and read a short litany from the Epistles of Horace. "It is done. I hope it helps."

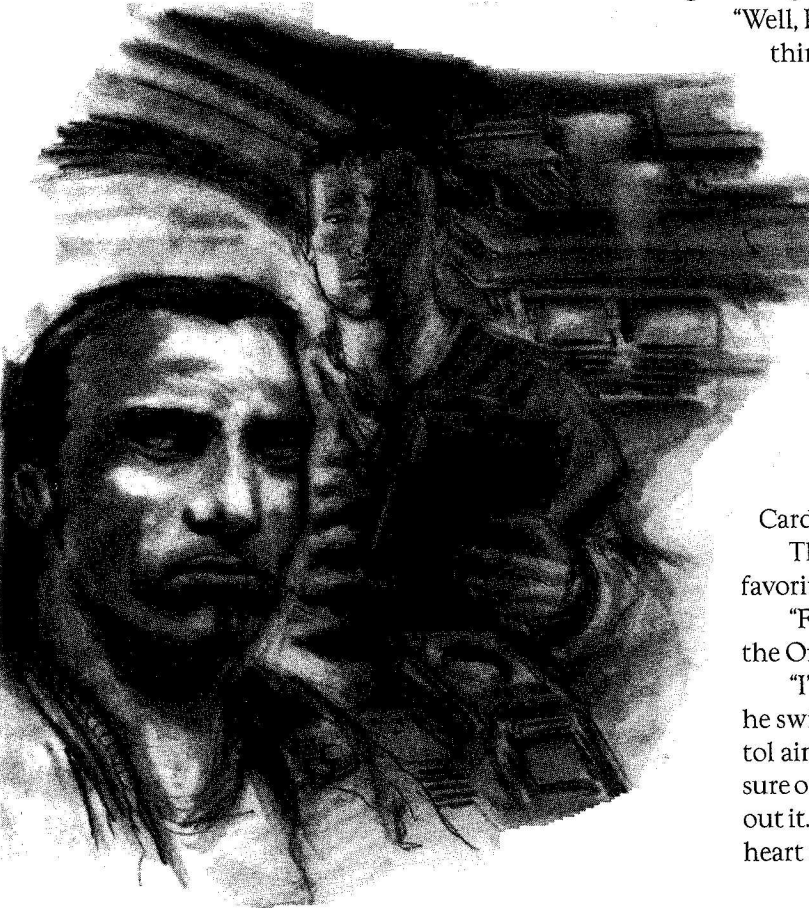
"Hmm," the baron said. "I was thinking of something... well, more powerful. Could you perform this one instead?" He handed me a small think machine with a gospel displayed upon it.

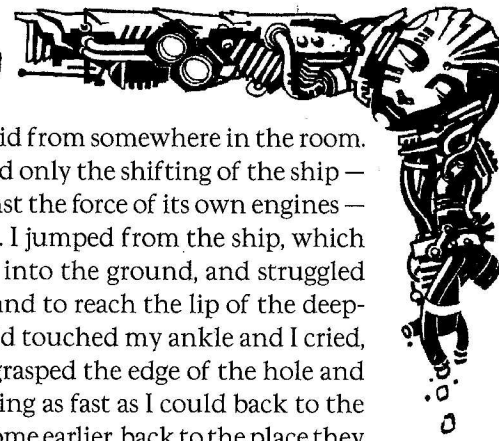
"But this is the Rampart Plea! From the Cardano Apocrypha. Where did you get it?"

The baron shrugged. "It's always been one of my favorites, father."

"Favorites! This was deemed heretical in 4672 by the Orthodoxy. Even my Order bans it."

"I'm sorry to hear that, father," the baron said, as he swiveled around in his seat to face me, a laser pistol aimed at my chest. "But I don't condone the censure of great works. We cannot begin our voyage without it. Now, I need you to read it for me. And put some heart into it."





I was speechless. I could not even begin to understand what was going on. But faced with a deadly weapon and a threat, I complied with the baron's request. What harm could it bring? I had read the forbidden gospel before. It had been banned on doctrinal grounds only, and so was not considered harmful, just false. Once attributed to Saint Amano of Rampart, it was later deemed a forgery. I began to read:

"O Invisible Intelligences, hear my plea. Open the path to the stars and guide my feet upon it. In my travels, let me not shun the unknown regions. Show to me creations yet to be birthed. Let mine eyes scry thy true foundations, the secret thread which binds your creatures, so that I may proudly perform my duty to thee."

The baron lowered his pistol. "Thank you. Maybe now we can finally leave."

The engine sound grew louder as Kariman worked his controls. The ship shook and rattled, and a horrible grinding commenced. The baron looked up at the ceiling. "I think she's breaking apart."

"You're tearing your own ship up!" I yelled.

"Yes," Captain Kariman said. "Yes, we are." The grinding could now be heard in the rear of the ship also. I turned and fumbled the door open, expecting to feel the searing heat of a laser on my back. But as I slipped into the hall, I glanced back to see the baron staring listlessly at his read-outs.

"A captain must go down with his ship, father," Captain Kariman said, flicking on every switch he could reach. "Isn't that right? Isn't that proper?"

I turned and ran, convinced that they had been driven mad by their stay in the desert. The ship rocked back and forth, the engines pushing it deeper into the earth. I had to get out the rear hatch before we were buried.

As I ran through the common room, lockers flung open with the stress and stretch of the hull. A body fell from one and smacked onto the floor in front of me. I think I screamed. It was obviously a priest. His robes and vestments showed that. But he was desiccated like an ancient mummy, and a terrible knife wound could be seen across his throat.

I leapt over it and kept moving. As I sped through the final passage in the engine room, I heard moaning sounds around me. Fearing that the two madmen had tried to kill another of their crew as they did the priest, I stopped to see where the sounds came from.

Then the flux cache hatch flung open and raw fusion energy and radiation spewed forth. Shadows lengthened across the walls and ceiling, as if something large approached from a distance, blocking the light. I dared not stay to see the source of the shapes wriggling on the walls, and threw myself against the rear hatch, now locked and bolted. I struggled with the bolt, finally throwing it off as the moaning sound grew louder.

"Ssstaayy..." a voice said from somewhere in the room.

I kicked the door and only the shifting of the ship — the hull struggling against the force of its own engines — allowed it to burst open. I jumped from the ship, which now dug a deep furrow into the ground, and struggled against the crumbling sand to reach the lip of the deepening pit. Something cold touched my ankle and I cried, making a last leap up. I grasped the edge of the hole and pulled myself out, running as fast as I could back to the rise over which we had come earlier, back to the place they had found me.

I never looked back. I myself was now mad, delirious with fear and exposure to the cold night. Two days later, the rescue team found me. Canon Jophree had landed fine and immediately called for help. Julia herself came to find me, showing more worry for my welfare than I had thought her capable of. I recovered over a number of days in a Church hospital, in the care of Amalthean healers.

I explained the incident with the two madmen and their ship, but Canon Jophree could find no such ship when he went back to investigate. And he knew no Cameton named Arbuck, certainly not a Baron by such name, but said he would inquire nonetheless.

He believed the men were Ur artifact thieves who had disguised themselves as noble and guildsman to gain access to the ruins. Obviously, their ship went down, perhaps carrying Ur artifacts of a psychic nature, which would explain my hallucinations.

But I do not believe they were hallucinations. I suffered radiation poisoning from somewhere and there is the wound on my ankle — a black, putrid bruise which required merciful tech-nals to heal.

November 27th


I am writing from my cabin in the *Resurgent*, our new starship. I have just spoken with Canon Jophree by radio. He has new information concerning my "adventure" which puzzles him just as much as it does me.

A distant cousin of his in House Cameton approached him soon after we departed and inquired as to why Jophree was interested in Baron Arbuck. It seems that a certain Baron Arbuck was this woman's ancestor. He and his crew were lost when his ship crashed in the Tepest Desert — in the year 4562. The accident was blamed on his pilot, a Captain Kamen, a suspected Antinomist. Only years after the crash did evidence come forward about Kamen's atrocities on Rampart. He is apparently a folk legend on that world, equated with evil.

After hearing this, Jophree initiated another search of the desert, near to where I had been found. He uncovered the remains of a starship, buried deep in the sand and scoured by years, perhaps centuries, of exposure. While little is left of the remains, enough is there to confirm its name: the *Rampart Plea*...







Introduction: Charting the Darkness

When the Prophet spoke of “the dark between the stars,” he seemed to refer to many things, on levels both metaphorical and literal. Lacking a detailed exegesis from him or his disciples on the matter, Church theologians have widely interpreted the phrase to cover a number of meanings, some surely intended by the Prophet but others far afield from what he perhaps intended.

Among the meanings attributed to the phrase are: the dangers inherent in star travel, evil aliens living among the stars, demonic entities lurking between solar systems, dangerous animals or creatures (including both common predators and zombies), feared technology from the Second Republic, and generally anything which does not receive the divine light of the Celestial Sun.

The 44th century social historian Dean Rorbach commented that the Church used the phrase to refer to anything Unknown, that it represented the “frontier of cultural perception,” a label projected onto everything that appeared threatening, whether it be rabid animals or unexplainable parapsychological phenomena. Rorbach further commented that, in light of the Prophet’s ode to Questing, the famous phrase was meant as a warning, as an injunction to shine light on the darkness, not to fear and shun it. His attempts at theological dissertation were not looked upon kindly by the Church, and Rorbach eventually wound up in Church prison, accused of a number of doctrinal crimes.

Signs of Darkness

Regardless of the petty superstitions of parish priests or their flock, there are a number of genuine occult areas which are considered “dark” by the Church, and thus by most Known Worlders:

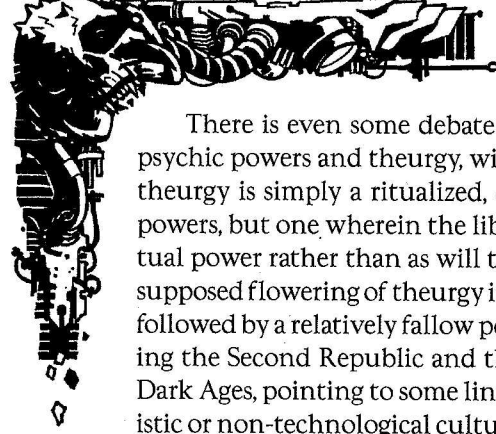
Psychic Phenomena

The evolution of human potential — or a sign post to damnation? People throughout history have been divided on the issue of psychic powers, from those who once debated their existence to those who debate the meaning or use of their existence. In the Known Worlds, such powers are a definitive reality, although not one always looked upon kindly. As Dr. Phavian himself once said, “Among the many problems posed by psychic abilities is that of the division between haves and have-nots.” In other words, those without such seemingly miraculous powers often envy those who possess them. But the ability to lift furniture with one’s mind is not necessarily a good thing. Many psychics exhibit a profound split in their psyches, dubbed by Phavian scientists “dementia paraphrenia,” but known among psychics as the Urge.

The Phavian Institute, existing in an atmosphere of relativistic values, hesitated to judge any phenomena as good or bad per se, preferring to couch judgments in terms of whether the phenomena was effective or destructive for the person involved. Thus, the Institute did a poor job of studying or understanding the Urge, leaving psychics largely on their own to wrestle with their shadows.

Many theories abound as to the origin of such powers in sentients. Some claim that travel through the jumpgates engendered psi in the human race. Others say it was exposure to alien worlds. Some claim that such powers have always existed in humans but were suppressed for a historical period by authoritarian religions and excessively materialistic science. Some of these even state that human intuition is a mild form of such powers. In the Dark Ages, however, most view psychics as mutants or demon-possessed, often as another race entirely.





There is even some debate about the link between psychic powers and theurgy, with some speculating that theurgy is simply a ritualized, codified form of psychic powers, but one wherein the libido is channeled as spiritual power rather than as will to power. Others note the supposed flowering of theurgy in the time of the Prophet, followed by a relatively fallow period for such rituals during the Second Republic and then a rebirth during the Dark Ages, pointing to some link between non-materialistic or non-technological culture and theurgy. Priests, of course, abhor the idea that theurgy is a form of psi.

Sathraism

This banned religion suffers under the charge of heresy, and thus has few objective observers who could shed any light on the religion. Its few followers are consumed with fantasies generated by Sathra ecstasy, and its many detractors actually know little about the religion, relying instead on the one-sided testimonies of Church priests. To truly understand Sathraism, one must join the religion, and few who have done so are willing to speak openly of what they have experienced. Such conspiratorial attitudes, of course, “prove” their evil nature to many who seek such evidence.

Antinomy

Genuine demon worshippers are charged with being the mirror image of Celestial Sun priests, and that they only reinforce the power of the Pancreator by denigrating Him so — for do they not, in the end, fully recognize such power, if only to oppose it? Antinomists, however, make the same claim of the Inquisition: that in persecuting Antinomy so, they only fuel its dark powers, keeping it in the dark where it thrives.

The Anunnaki

One of the greatest mystery in the universe is the secret of the Anunnaki's identity: Who where they? What happened to them? How did they achieve the amazing technology they left behind? Were the jumpgates left intentionally for other sentients to discover?

Answers to such questions are not forthcoming, at least not obviously. Hints and clues are seeded throughout various ruins and mythologies, such as the legends of the Ur races. But what part of these tales is true and what part sheer myth?

Many heretical works purport to reveal the continued existence of the Anunnaki, basing this claim on extensive studies of known lore and even Vau tales. One such famed work is the Stellar Apocryphon, which “reveals” that the Anunnaki were actually many advanced races, divided into two parties: the elder races and the younger races. The elder races — the Greater — benevolently taught the younger — the Lesser — their technologies and secrets. But, without experiencing the hard struggles the elder races had undergone to discover such tech, the younger races were morally bankrupt, spoiled children handed everything they wanted. Possessing great power but none of the wisdom to truly understand it, the lesser races warred on the elders, tearing the universe up in a “War in the Heavens,” which involved many younger sentient races, even those unaware of the struggle and their place in it.

Those few who survived licked their wounds for centuries, continuing a cold war, using young sentients as weapons. Apparently, they eventually wiped each other out or went into hiding, leaving behind in the minds of younger sentients only myths of their struggles.

This tale is said to be age-old and archetypal, and Duras Barbelo, editor of the Stellar Apocryphon, claims that such archetypes are racial memories imprinted in sentients by the Anunnaki wars. He then waxes prophetically that the War in the Heavens is not yet over, and that it is doomed to be fought again when the Anunnaki return. As evidence, he transcribes translations of Vau prophecies concerning a foretold war between sentient, starfaring races. This war, however, is to be fought in Otherspace, a Vau term for a mental dimension of ideas, a realm only advanced sentients can access. A realm, Barbelo states ominously, of psychic powers.

(Prominent xenologists aware of Barbelo's book dispute his translations, claiming that the Vau word, “Sat'Rama,” which he translates as Otherspace does not refer to a dimension at all, but to a state of mind or behavior between two or more relating person, best translated as “dialectic” or even “meeting of the minds.” Occultists defending Barbelo point to the usage of the word by Vau diplomats in other contexts, especially referring to psychic phenomena, and one renowned Eskatonic even claims that the word traces back to a root word “Sata” — similar to Sathra.)

Omens of the End Times

Following on Barbelo's doomful omens, others have interpreted certain supernatural events to be signs of the coming war:

- The increase of psychic powers and even theurgy among sentients is a sign that the Anunnaki masters are preparing their armies once again, giving them the powers necessary to withstand enemy Anunnaki assaults.

- The appearance of Symbiots is said to be a sure sign of the end times, although no one can seem to produce ancient prophecy or myths to explain just why. One scholar claims that the Vau, who seem to have a fetish for omens, lack any prophecies concerning the Symbiots, and this fact worries the Vau themselves.

- The increasing occurrences of zombie plagues is linked to a belief from Ukar mythology, wherein Sukara, the crypt god — claimed by these "scholars" to have been an Anunnaki — can no longer keep the vault of the dead shut; the dead escape and reinhabit corpses, trying once more to live. Thus, husk plagues are in some way linked to not only the failure of local funerary rites, but to the disintegration of Anunnaki powers and the end times.

- The breakdown of terraforming engines and the resultant cataclysms on certain worlds is seen as a bad omen, even though the cause of their breakdown is faulty maintenance, usually due to the failure of a local lord to hire Engineers. This resistance is a symptom of the Church-led paranoia about Second Republic technology, seen as hubristic and sinful. Most people are ignorant of the irony behind this "omen."

- Raiding barbarians represent a downfall of civilization and thus another bad omen. As with the terraforming engines, however, the cause of these raiders can ultimately be traced back to the Fall of the Second Republic, something which is celebrated by the Church.

- The rise of Emperor Alexius confirms many people's conspiracy theories. One longstanding crackpot belief was that when "Vladimir again ascends the throne, the stars will align, signaling the Ancient of Days to begin their war once more." Indeed, while this belief, which derives from forbidden apocrypha, was certainly not widespread, it is said to have influenced many anti-Alexius nobles during the Emperor Wars. Certain Church chartophylaxes claim that the belief is not true prophecy, but was knowingly crafted for political reasons by those who would best gain from a string of weak regents.

- The fading of the suns is explained in many ways by many different occultists, but most explanations tend

to lead back to demonic beings, who some claim to be the ghosts of Anunnaki psychics. Why and how they can drain the energy of the suns is the focus of many sectarian arguments between not only Church priests but also Antinomian cults. Most agree, however, that the fading suns phenomena is *the* sign of the end times.

Science vs. Supernature

The above topics are heavily tainted with hearsay and superstition. Little scientific research has taken place concerning any of them, for science is a backward field in the 50th century. Theories tend to come from fertile imaginations rather than any hard observation. While certain groups — notably the Engineers — keep the technology of the past running, even they have trouble initiating new research.

But just what is the difference between science and supernature anyway? At the level of jumpgate and philosopher stone technology, the divisions between mind and matter seem to break down. But does this mean that chaos reigns, or are there principles or natural laws at work here that are simply unobservable with current Known Worlds technology? Engineers will surely say the latter, but Eskatonics may opine that, at high levels of technology, there is little difference between a magician and a scientist, for when working with mental technologies or methods, the Will is the one common denominator.

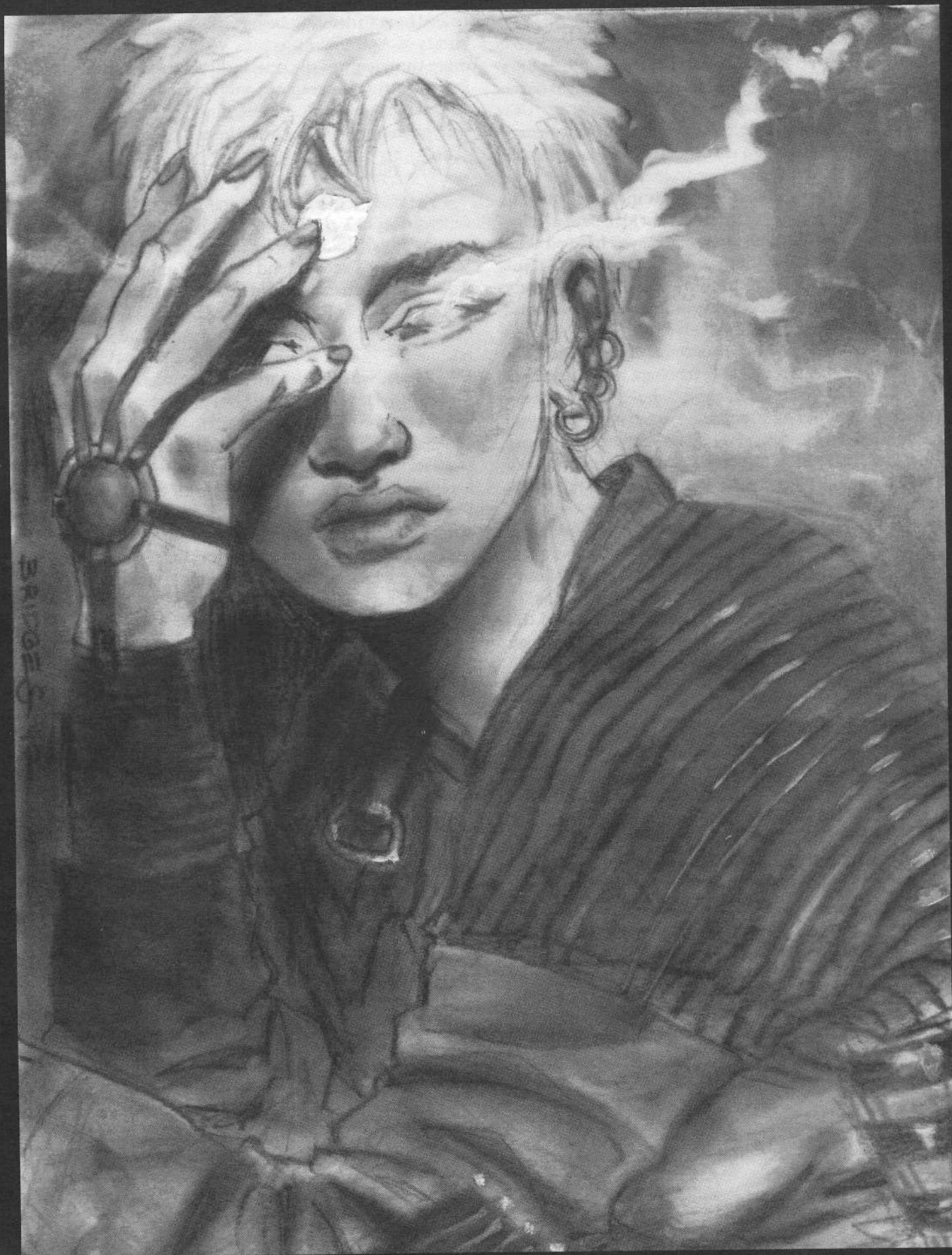
Using This Book

This book is meant to provide an introduction to the weird world of occultism in the **Fading Suns** science fiction setting. The people, places and plots of this shadow world are inexhaustible; they could not all be covered in one book. Gamemasters are encouraged to devise occult material on their own for inclusion in their games: it is much easier to keep it secret this way, for it is inevitable — and intended — that players read this book also. Future supplements will delve deeper into the subjects introduced here, leaving it up to gamemasters just how much fantasy they want to introduce into their science fiction dramas. Many of the omens and conspiracies appearing herein have direct impact on the forthcoming **Fading Suns** epic supplement: "War in the Heavens." (Look for it late spring-early summer 1998).

The Prophet bid his followers to quest even in the threat of darkness, sure that the Holy Light would reach the Faithful in even the blackest void.

Let the quest begin...





BRUCE



Orphans of Evolution: Psychic Covens

by Rustin Quaide

The Invisible Path

Bright turquoise specks flickered across the starlit sea while the skiff, ruffled by a soft crosswind, carried her two passengers toward the distant lights of the lime cliff shore. Arnoux regarded his companion, the weather-beaten and craggy faced Muñoz, dressed in the nondescript gray attire of a Ravenna fisherman, and almost smiled. Muñoz was the type he had encountered so many times before on Invisible Path business, blindly following whatever scant orders reached them, "sleepers" who waited years for the word on high, and then followed it doglike, with a peasant's stoicism. Peasant stock showed in Muñoz's reddened hands, his thick worker's arms and his fathomless gaze. Strangely, his thoughts remained closed to Arnoux. In his years of isolation, he had undoubtedly perfected his defensive mind techniques.

Arnoux adjusted his Imperial Eye uniform, catching the scent of pungent wood-smoke and heavy pine resin. The beach approached. Above the lime cliffs he could see the outline of Sir Raffaello's estate, the palace of the man they were sent to kill.

They carried the skiff from the shore and placed it in the shadow of the great sea-rocks, then ascended the hills to Sir Raffaello's home. The house was a complex, rambling mansion in the Late Regency architectural style, with eclectic limestone towers and ornate cornices, lit checkered gardens and jeweled pools.

Orders had come down from on high to terminate Sir Raffaello, a counter intelligence officer in the Imperial Eye. No doubt Apollo Mavok himself ordered it. No doubt Arnoux's reputation and rank would rise after the night was through.

Saluting the front guard, tapping his mind with the slightest suggestion, Arnoux got them through. Muñoz blended in, invisible, a servant. Cypress groves gave way to the mansion. Another nod and salute, another suggestion to the door guard and they were within. Precious art and old, dust-covered furniture greeted them. Walking swiftly down a corridor, they entered Raffaello's study. There, seated, scanning several papers, was their target. Reports suggested a slight, gray-haired man with a mustache and

harelip. They were correct. Raffaello looked up, but it was too late. Muñoz seized instant control of the older man, possessing his mind. For an hour, the aristocratic Raffaello handed them reports, information charts, field information and then was placed in the gentlest sleep. As they escaped, Muñoz planting the bomb he was carrying.

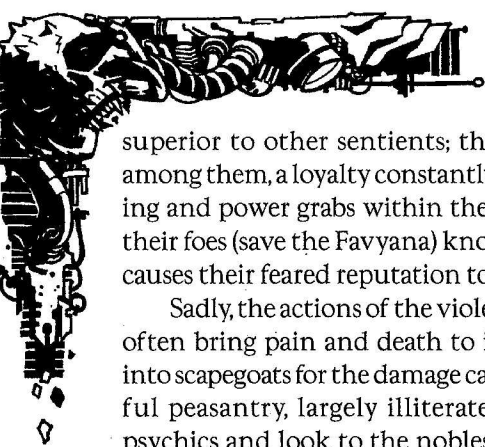
Returning to the ocean, they witnessed a small spark in the north, the explosion which killed Raffaello and buried his mansion. A star lit on a cliff momentarily, then died. Arnoux stared, thinking of the rubble and smoke and ruins of the estate, of the pristine justice accomplished. Then, calmly, Muñoz placed a Mitchau .32 gun on the back of Arnoux's head and fired.

Briefly, for a mere second, Arnoux heard the click and felt cold metal, the briefest flicker of pain and then nothing. The body slumped over, a sack of vegetables. With a kick, the limp body dropped into the sea to be devoured by sharks.

Muñoz whistled a child's tune, slow and thoughtful, stirring the skiff away from the bobbing corpse. His orders called for the execution of Arnoux after the termination of the Imperial Eye agent. The first rosy reflected clouds beckoned in the east, a good sign: his future rise in the most elite family, the Invisible Path, was assured.

The oldest psychic coven operating in the Known Worlds is the Invisible Path. Originally created as a secret Li Halan army, the psychics soon decided they were superior to those they served. Severing their ties, they built their power slowly during the Second Republic. Surviving repeated attacks during the New Dark Ages, the Invisible Path hardened as a hidden organization run on military lines, devoted to the overthrow of lesser sentients. Mention of the Invisible Path causes fear even among intelligence organizations and rumors circulate that the Imperial Eye possesses double agents in their midst.

Members of the Invisible Path believe that they are



superior to other sentients; this creates a strong bond among them, a loyalty constantly tested by savage infighting and power grabs within the organization. That even their foes (save the Favvana) know little about them only causes their feared reputation to grow.

Sadly, the actions of the violence-prone Invisible Path often bring pain and death to innocent psychics, made into scapegoats for the damage caused by the coven. A fearful peasantry, largely illiterate and superstitious, fear psychics and look to the nobles and Church for protection. The nobles and Church, in turn, use the Invisible Path and psychics as scapegoats for bad crop failures, diseases and other hardships endured by their subjects. Sacrificing psychics to mob justice is nothing new. Invisible Path acts of violence often leave innocent psychics or suspected psychics paying for their crimes. Since the Invisible Path sees life as constant war, all is permissible. The sooner the lone psychic realizes this, the better. "For, in the end, after war, we bring spring, glorious spring. Spring without end," wrote the Invisible Path poet Proteus. Ultimately, life to them is a series of hardening tests to produce the future race, destined for rule and further warfare.

History

Leonardo Li Halan, titled "The Magnificent" (3011-3217), united his family with their aristocratic rivals, Clan Tanaka, by marrying Aika Tanaka and slaying her father, the powerful Sidiro, during the siege of Dosho-machi. Adding the vast Tanaka holdings to his own, Leonardo became interested in a small village called Ojika, noted for its fortune-tellers, seers and prophets. Lady Aika's Lady-in-Waiting, Oichi, came from Ojika; doubtless she informed her mistress's new husband about the peculiar region of her birth.

Ojika, settled by several families with unusual clairvoyant abilities, remained largely rural until Leonardo arrived. Personally testing the various psychic abilities of the village's inhabitants, Leonardo offered employment and rewards for those who joined his service. The elders largely ignored the summons of their new lord, but the young, restless in their secluded town, flocked to Leonardo's banner.

Leonardo, a Sathraist in practice, examined preadamite ruins with rare devotion. Rumor said that he possessed strange abilities; one of them was apparently establishing a link between himself and his gifted Ojika retainers. Others said he spoke with strange, ancient voices, absorbing the souls and spirits of his foes, until he became "The Patchwork Prince." He desired his own secret police, answerable only to himself. Interested in eugenics, he selected the breeding program for his young Ojika retainers, creating a second generation raised in secret by himself. From them, he created the Inari, whose symbol was the sly and mischievous fox.

The Inari were a psychic secret police, masters of dis-

guise who infiltrated his enemies and read the intentions of his allies. So formidable were the Inari that Leonardo captured Cadavus and Midian with their network, confounding allies and enemies alike with the vast knowledge available to him. By the third generation, the Inari were lead by a formidable captain, Kitayama, rumored to be a grandson of Leonardo.

The Inari, treated as an aristocratic elite whose aims were to ensure the dominion of the Li Halan over the stars, received excellent training. Their rewards were great, and members of the tightly-knit organization saw themselves as the hidden guardians of society.

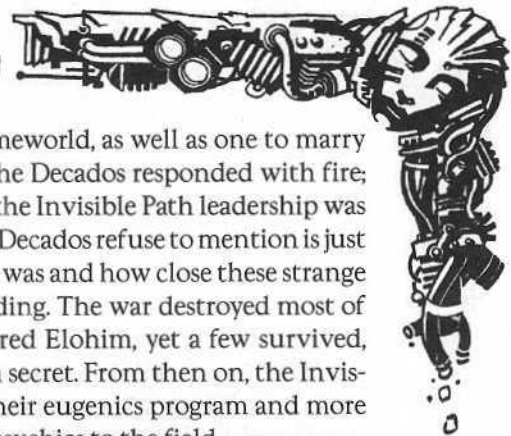
Leonardo, after 200 years, died, and lesser heirs vied for the Li Halan rulership. Leonardo's designated heir, his great grandson Sakakibara Li Halan, swiftly fell to Shizuka Li Halan, another descendent of the Sathraist Prince. The Inari, initially supporting Sakakibara, were left without a leader. Despite the faintest of rumors, Shizuka knew nothing of their existence. A few filtered into his service, but the majority followed Kitayama into hiding, ostensibly to support an uprising of Sakakibara loyalists. Kitayama was unimpressed by Leonardo's heirs and thought to put himself on the throne. On the Night of Screams, the Inari attacked Shizuka's palace but were defeated by loyal Inari and the Vorox Guard, strangely unaffected by Inari abilities.

Kitayama and a few survivors fled the Li Halan worlds into space, convinced that they were destined to rule the stars themselves. Shizuka swiftly destroyed the village of Ojika, branding the severed heads of its inhabitants with the mark of traitors.

The Li Halan retained psychic servants in their service until the rise of the Second Republic. During the New Dark Ages, they largely ignored them, save for some in intelligence gathering capacities. The al-Malik used psychics, but by the Emperor Wars, the Decados and Hazat possessed the strongest psychics. The followers of Kitayama eventually settled on Manitou, using their abilities to contact other psychics and build a hidden empire, at times offering their services to various guilds or house networks in exchange for wealth. Calling themselves the Invisible Path, they created an extensive network of agents and continued Leonardo's eugenics program.

During the five centuries of the Second Republic, the "Higher Ethic," as taught by their greatest leader, Adil ben Sorhab, guided them. Sorhab held that the rulership of any hierarchy belonged to an elite whose privileges were maintained only as long as they were strong. Evolutionarily speaking, psychics were enhanced with special capabilities which were a boon to humanity at large, adding extra abilities into the gene pool yet demanding in return certain privileges due their superior station.

Sorhab believed that psychics (the Elohim) had a duty to the great mass of sentients (Agricolos, or farmers). That is, if the flock is cared for, it becomes a better flock. He also suggested marriage into the various ruling families to gain



power. His ethics were written in the book "The Shadow Play," which continues to be privately circulated. His call of mutual interdependence between Elohim and Agricolas allowed for a softening of Path aims and rhetoric during the Second Republic.

The Invisible Path funded itself through connections to large corporate interests, and also allied with the al-Malik. Their aims were altruistic; what benefited the Agricolas benefited the Elohim. A sense of noblesse oblige permeated their actions, especially in the care of their unenlightened brothers. They even retreated from the use of violence during the Second Republic.

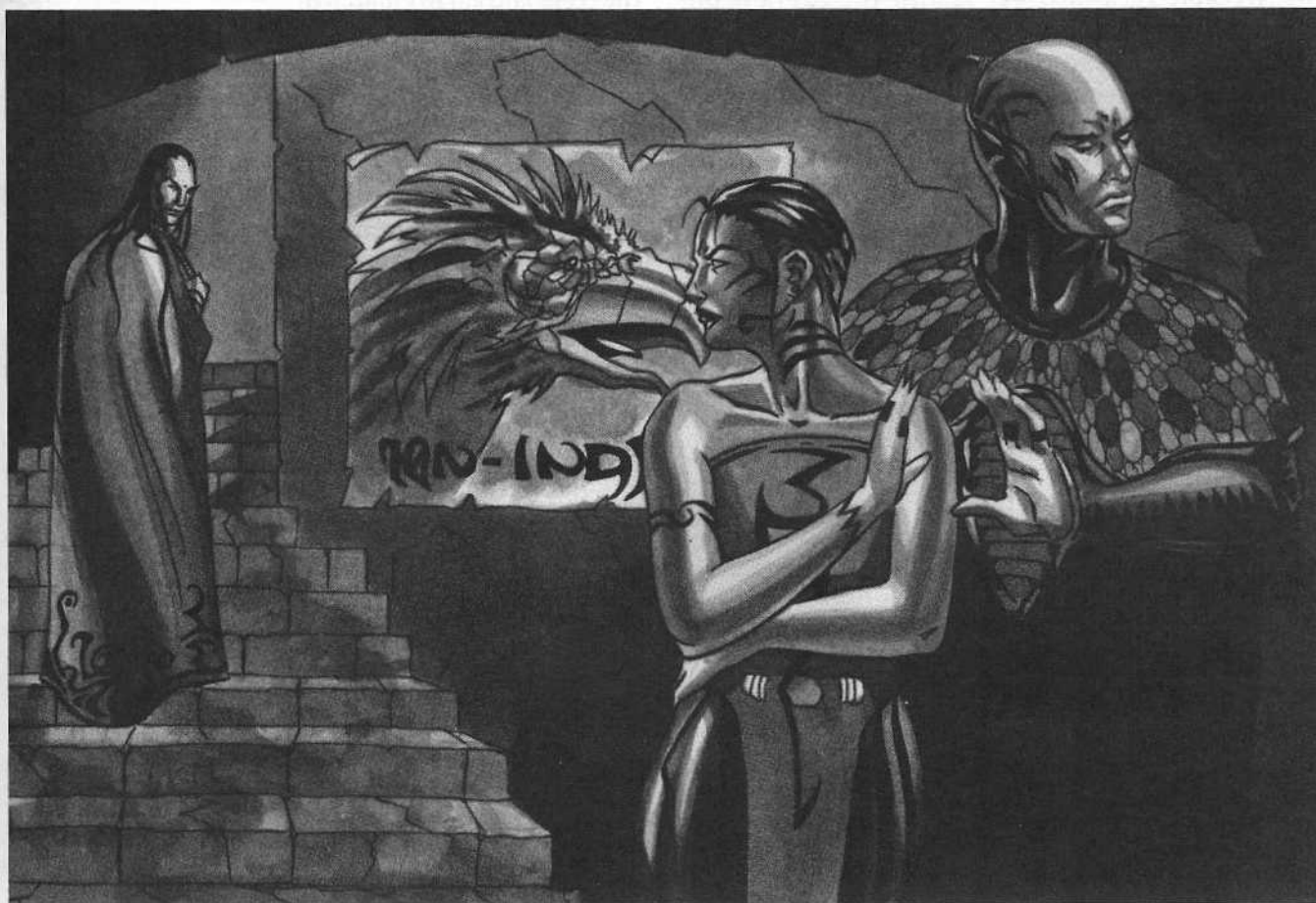
With the Fall of the Second Republic and the swift rise of planetary feudalism, the Invisible Path returned to its militant origins. Survival became harsher and their competition with the Favyana, once devoted to friendly discussions about philosophical differences, became a war to the death. Under the leadership of Umbrino the Unready, the elite of the Invisible Path attempted to take over House Decados and House al-Malik. They tried to interbreed into the royal lines, with some success, although not all the royal sons and daughters fathered or mothered by the Invisible Path chose loyalty to the coven over loyalty to their houses. Some spoke against the Invisible Path and alerted the royal families to the coven's intent.

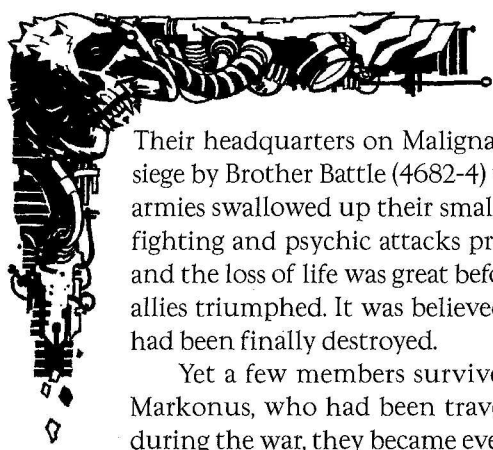
Little is known about this hidden war, save veiled references in the Decados Archives (#42751212-P). In 4275, the Invisible Path attempted to place a genetically engineered

heir on the Decados homeworld, as well as one to marry into the al-Malik line. The Decados responded with fire; within 10 years, most of the Invisible Path leadership was hunted down. What the Decados refuse to mention is just how bloody the struggle was and how close these strange psychics came to succeeding. The war destroyed most of the eugenically engineered Elohim, yet a few survived, tending their wounds in secret. From then on, the Invisible Path relied less on their eugenics program and more on recruitment of new psychics to the field.

The coven survived by infiltrating and later controlling the Knights of the Empyrean Star, a quasi-religious order of young nobles which defended the Known Worlds from barbarian attack. Founded in 4415, they provided protection from the barbarians beyond the Known Worlds. Sanctioned by the Church, the Knights gradually replaced their own ideology with that of Sorhab's, coated in terms from the Omega Gospels ("Oh Elohim Knights, bearers of higher reflection and penetrated truth, the Pancreator's revelations thou must hold as truth against the worms of the Known Worlds"). Within their fiefs, the Knights of the Empyrean Star held their own rites and rituals which were unknown to outsiders until 4680, when enough evidence had circulated back to the Church to demand action.

The knights worshipped a divine being referred to as Deuweint, whom the Avestites claimed was an unreflective spirit. The Known Worlds moved against the order.





Their headquarters on Malignatius suffered attack and siege by Brother Battle (4682-4) while Church and noble armies swallowed up their smaller holdings. Again, hard fighting and psychic attacks proved costly to overcome and the loss of life was great before Brother Battle and its allies triumphed. It was believed that the Invisible Path had been finally destroyed.

Yet a few members survived the ruin. Lead by Sir Markonus, who had been traveling in barbarian space during the war, they became even stricter, vowing to live secretly among the Agricolas in small cells, lead by a hidden chain of command which could elude capture. The Invisible Path became more deadly, carrying on a terrorist war against the Agricolas. Lead by unseen leaders whose stated goal was the destruction of humanity, the Invisible Path adopted the belief that this war would lead to the rule of the Elohim and the reordering of the Known Worlds into a paradise.

It was not until 4889 that their presence was made known again when a bombing campaign killed the Hawkwood and Decados ambassadors to the Patriarchal Court on Holy Terra. Since then, Path activity has increased. Concerned that an alliance with the Symbiots had occurred, the Imperial Eye began tracking them, but many whispered that the coven had infiltrated the Eye.

During Alexius's ascension to the throne, unusual activity on Criticorum led the Eye to uncover the name of Mavok, believed to be the leader of the Path. Mavok lead the Invisible Path into war against the Favyana on Criticorum and was nearly victorious. But the Favyana survived, thanks to strong leadership, and the war wound down, ending in a temporary truce due to mutual exhaustion (4993).

The Path's current plans remain unknown even to the majority of its members.

Tantra

The Aristocrat must rule through kindness and fear, ignoring the values of the governed. He must hold the most loyal retainers, experts in intelligence, loyal to the last breath, and whose very mention causes more fear than an actual weapon. Only thus can the Mandate of Heaven be retained in its proper order.

— Leonardo Li Halan

It is believed that historical processes, guided by genetic necessity (often called the Pancreator's Will), occasionally produce offspring gifted with better adaptive tools for survival in certain ecological niches. Often these offspring possess psychic or paranormal abilities latent in the parent stock. Such an EI (Enhanced Individual), unaware that her unique abilities are a sign of superiority over the parent stock, hides or misunderstands the abilities due to societal fears and superstitions. This changes when other EI (from now on called Elohim) approach the enhanced sentient or the lone Elohim resorts to action, discovering on her own the potential of rulership over the less enhanced.

The Elohim, comprising a natural aristocracy, stand above the common herd of humanity (Agricolas). Born to lead, all goals leading to eventual dominance over unenhanced sentients are permissible due to nature's generous endowment of superior traits. Naturally, the unenhanced majority would oppose this if the existence of the Elohim among them were known. Acting as a secret army until the day of domination, the Elohim must move unseen among the majority population, preparing for the moment when they will rise to rulership of the Known Worlds.

Once such rule is achieved, the great mass of sentients will serve as vassals to the new psychic aristocracy. Moderates within the movement call for the guiding of humanity by the Elohim while hard-liners desire the gradual eradication of the Agricolas, to be replaced by genetically enhanced Elohim. Favorable characteristics of certain Agricolas, however, would find their way into the gene pool. The Higher Ethic of Sorhab, which called for the rulership of the Elohim, combined with Sir Markonus's "Final Flower," a call for the "New Race," blend to create the ideology of the Invisible Path.

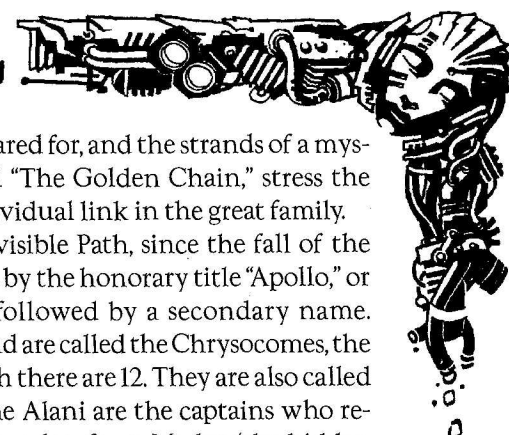
According to both thinkers, history undergoes three processes where sentient evolution is involved:

1. Original, "primitive" sentients, often hunter-gatherers, were lead by psychically enhanced individuals called shamans, who used their abilities, disguised as magic, to find food sources, cure the sick, predict the weather, bless the crops and aid in childbirth.

2. When cities rose and great masses of population gathered in the protection of walled spaces, the shamans were no longer needed and were replaced by unenhanced kings and government. The shamans and their descendants survived in mystery religions and eventually in small cells. This process continued into space exploration, but the psychic strain among the Elohim grows stronger due to hardship and adversity (and, some say, alien environmental conditions), eventually allowing the hidden elite to congregate and plan.

3. At some point, a supreme Elohim will overthrow the Agricola institutions with bands of hardened followers and usher in a golden age of Elohim rule. History will end, ushering in a time of evolutionary peak fruition.

Invisible Path belief, as stated in the creeds of the Knights of the Empyrean Star, holds that there once was a "War in the Heavens" and that it still continues. It is thought that these beliefs were heavily informed by legends of the barbarians they fought. Certain ancient races believed that destruction of the physical universe would force psychic evolution (the Dhergeistim) while their opponents believed evolution could only take place within the physical universe (the Pretaym). The Dhergeistim were largely victorious, pushing the Pretaym into the lightless depths of space, but not before one of the Pretaym, Asirvan, sacrificed himself to save the physical universe. Now from the far depths of space, the Pretaym have called



out to the younger races, "awakening" them to their psychic future, to aid them in the defense of the physical universe against their enemies. Their old enemies, the Dhergeistim, are now largely engrossed in nihilistic musings; they left a few behind to watch the younger races, who they created to be slave-servitors. Psychics were enhanced by the Pretaym (also called "The Exiled") to aid in saving the physical universe from the elders, grown mad over long millennia.

For this reason, the Invisible Path psychics see themselves as unseen guardians against powerful elder forces. The Elohim need rulership as they guard humanity from unglimped terrors. Elder races, now vanished from the Known Worlds, left behind dangerous psychic residue, harmful to unenhanced sentients. This is another reason the Invisible Path believes that it is called to conquer humanity: to save it from malevolent forces which they cannot comprehend. Thus, a strange mixture of altruism and evolutionary elitism shapes the thinking of the Invisible Path. To achieve their rule over the Known Worlds, any and all means are necessary, ignoring the inferior ethical concerns of the Agricolas.

In the New Dark Ages, people fell from a belief in science to the Omega Gospels, and many among the Invisible Path are no exception. They believe that Zebulon and his followers were psychics and find isolated passages which "prove" their theories. They state that the Omega Gospels display psychics who were rewritten as religious figures by a superstitious humanity, but that some of the truth survived, pointing to a future when psychics would rule the Known Worlds. Psychics drawn from the peasantry hold to these views while the more sophisticated leadership carry on the older philosophies, only half-believing this interpretation given to Zebulon's actions and sayings.

Behavior

Invisible Path society is a constant test of psychic strength and shifting alliances. The strong rule the weak, who take solace in the fact that they are still above the Agricolas. Vicious infighting and factions, barely held together by Apollo Mavok, drain the effectiveness of the order. Yet the total fanaticism displayed by some elements within the Invisible Path makes up in terror what the group (at times) lacks in cohesion.

Following a highly regimented chain of command, orders from the ruling council go down to captains and then to individual cells. A certain amount of paranoia and jealousy covers all aspects of the command structure, yet the formal rigid ceremonies and group belief in psychic supremacy hold the covenant together; some individual cells are more altruistic than others. The current leadership, lead by Mavok, believes in unquestioning loyalty. All members of the Invisible Path, bound to each other by shared psychic abilities and beliefs, form an elitist organization which looks after the needs of each individual. In-

dividual members feel cared for, and the strands of a mystic familial order, called "The Golden Chain," stress the importance of each individual link in the great family.

The head of the Invisible Path, since the fall of the Empyrean Knights, goes by the honorary title "Apollo," or "Apollo Astrophorus," followed by a secondary name. Apollo's central command are called the Chrysocomes, the Lions of Apollo, of which there are 12. They are also called the High Command. The Alani are the captains who report to the cells, bearing orders from Madoc (the hidden location of the Invisible Path's leadership). Quaestor's are cell leaders. Cells range in size from 6 to 20, rarely exceeding this amount. New members undergoing initiation are called Pilgrims. Lone uninitiated psychics are Bovis (oxen) while enemy psychics receive the name Serpentis or Luna Mori ("Dead Moons," reflecting psychic light instead of radiating it). The symbology of light associated with Apollo and the Invisible Path's ideology denotes a universe where light-bearers (psychics) battle darkness (mislead psychics and Agricolas).

Recruitment into the Invisible Path involves approval from a local covenant. The prospective member is watched before being approached. The process takes over two years, where potential recruits are gradually lead by one or two contacts on graver and more serious tests of loyalty, receiving in exchange instruction on honing their psychic abilities. Members chosen by the Invisible Path are finally given an important mission, followed by oaths of loyalty and the granting of the secret "true" name which binds the individual to the Invisible Path forever. This name is said to be in the language of the Pretaym, and holds power over the individual.

Rarely do psychics seek the Invisible Path to join; most are approached by the covenant. Internal security organizations (Hidden Martyrs, Sanhedrin, Mutasih, etc.) are always on the lookout for such secret covenant members and there is always the danger that the prospective recruit is a spy. Invisible Path recruitment methods reduce this risk by sizing up a potential member before the member becomes aware of the covenant. Nonetheless, some lone psychics seek them out, but sincere repenters from the Favviana or Der-vishes, while welcome, seldom receive complete trust.

Psychic strength and acts of loyalty gain the attention of superiors, although cunning alliances also help. Psychic battles sometimes decide the rulership of cells; promotion depends on changes in the hierarchy and alliances with higher members. Struggles within the Invisible Path, often bloody affairs, ensure that the ruthless and strong rise. Although this is never officially mentioned, it is understood.

Coven Houses

The Invisible Path moves their headquarters every generation or so. The elusiveness of this strategy calls for no permanent base wherever Agricola vigilance waxes. Only with the conquest of the Known Worlds on Der Tag





Allies and Enemies

Favyana: "The time for Second Republican utopian dreamers is gone. Only the hardened psychics of the Invisible Path can shape the destiny of the Known Worlds."

Engineers: "There are some hidden Invisible Path members in this guild, which aids in financial needs."

al-Malik: "There are members of this lineage among us. They work toward our goals."

Avestites: "When the hour of reckoning comes, these fanatic peasants shall know the fear and hell they have long given our kind."

Eskatonic Order: "Possessing formidable secrets, they, of all the Church sects, bear watching."

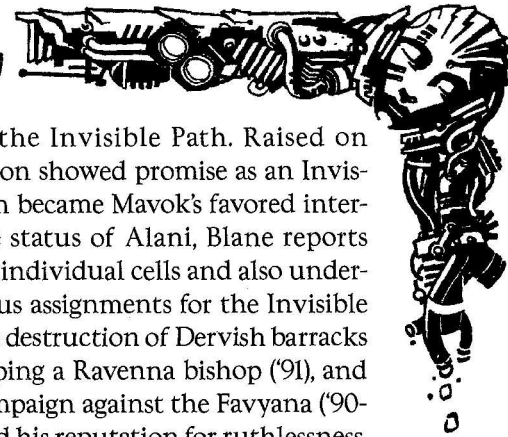
Hazat/Dervishes: "Training psychics for war is nothing new among the noble houses. A watch must be maintained and information gathered about all noble house/Imperial psychic programs; the Hazat bear the brunt of our interest currently. Their "corruption" of psychics into maddened warriors is a crime, because the psychics are tools for Hazat ends, knowing nothing of their ultimate heritage as the future rulers of the Known Worlds."

Imperial Eye: "Strengthened by the Emperor, these spies deserve constant watching, as they and the Decados know too much about us."

(The Day) will permanent bases come into being. The crushing of the Empyrean Knights headquarters taught them the hard way: survival depends on constant vigilance and movement. Manitou remains their safest haven and the place they fall back upon to regroup. Mavok possesses a hidden base there, but this is not his central headquarters.

Apollo Mavok, the leader of the Invisible Path, set his temporary headquarters at Ile Diable, on Madoc, named for the treacherous fogs and steep cliffs which cause innumerable shipwrecks. Long the dwelling place of a powerful fishing family, the D'Arci Clan, the isle remains largely inaccessible save for a steep path from the beach through the cliffs. There, overlooking the wide ocean, lies Castle Dangereux, built by a distaff cousin of the vanished Windsor line before the Second Republic rose. Designed in the style of a 12th century Norman castle, it was constructed of hardened materials, designed to last for centuries.

When the owner died, the castle lay abandoned, forfeited in the will to the local fishers. A self-maintaining lighthouse beacon was placed in the keep during the Second Republic, and the castle became a research station for scientists studying the remains of Oro'ym culture. After the Second Republic, it reverted to the possession of the native fisher-folk, neglected by the League owners of the world. By 4600, the D'Arci Clan ruled the isle. The once numerous family declined after 4950, leaving possession



to a sole heir, Beatrice, in 4970. She wed one Guy d'Ombre in 4992, yet died two years later of a brain hemorrhage. To everyone's knowledge, Guy is a reclusive fisherman. He is actually one of the many guises of Apollo Mavok.

With Beatrice dead, Guy (Apollo Mavok) inherited the isle and castle. Swiftly arming and rebuilding the ancient keep, inner and outer bailey, Mavok smuggled enough hi-tech weapons and defensive gear to withhold a siege. Soon, Guy's "clan" emerged, other strange fishermen, friendly enough to the locals, but distant, keeping to themselves. From Castle Dangereux, Apollo Mavok issues his commands. He is unsuspected by the local League authorities and fisher-folk. Even the Favyana suspect Mavok of hiding on a more populated, central world. Hiding on isolated Madoc has proved his shrewdest move.

Across the Known Worlds, local cells of the Invisible Path move constantly, here behind a merchant's shop in a populated city, there in an abandoned mine or glen. Aside from Madoc, they are concentrated heavily on Manitou and Criticorum, with all regarding Manitou as their safest retreat. Here they operate unafraid of Church law. It is the only world which Apollo Mavok travels to. Scraver agents in the Invisible Path move him between Madoc and Manitou. The constant change confounds the foes of the Invisible Path while maintaining the alertness and survival skills of the Invisible Path members.

Persons of Power

Apollo Mavoc

The undisputed leader of the Invisible Path, Mavoc is a man of average height, notable — by those who actually know him — for his dark shoulder length hair, worn in the manner of the nobility, and his gray, somber clothes. His eyes are deep and his face appears carved like some noble statue, touched by a cruel irony which plays on a slightly upturned lip. A well educated, aristocratic man, he is prone to outbursts of sudden laughter turning to rage and is utterly convinced that the future of the Invisible Path rests in his hands alone. Mavoc wants to recreate the ancient eugenics program forsaken centuries ago and build a race of psychics to rule the Known Worlds.

Few outside the Invisible Path know of his existence let alone his appearance. His enemies think he is a bald, tattooed man, a disguise Mavoc donned in his younger days. Mavok is highly charismatic and single-handedly lead the Invisible Path to near-victory over Zarek's Favyana on Criticorum. The Favyana survived only due to the swift machinations of Zarek's successor, Kamadeva Katri.

Blane

Among the psychics known to the Imperial Eye, the Favyana and Decados Jakovian Agency is Blane, a.k.a. the Undertaker or Typhoon. When not disguised, Blane appears to be a thin, wiry man in his 40s with sandy-blond hair and blue eyes. Growing up on Cadavus, Blane was "rescued" from the Jakovian Agency by two off-world mer-

chants, recruiters for the Invisible Path. Raised on Criticorum, Blane early on showed promise as an Invisible Path agent and soon became Mavok's favored intermediary. Possessing the status of Alani, Blane reports Mavok's messages to the individual cells and also undertakes the most dangerous assignments for the Invisible Path. Responsible for the destruction of Dervish barracks on Aragon ('87), kidnapping a Ravenna bishop ('91), and directing a bombing campaign against the Favyana ('90-93), Blane has well earned his reputation for ruthlessness.

Blane's inner convictions hold that one day psychics will rule humanity, not destroy them, and he feverishly believes in the promise of "The Day" when the Known Worlds will succumb to the Invisible Path. Blane possesses forged passports and identification and is always armed. A master of psi techniques, he usually works quietly and alone.

Zaneta

Leader of the Invisible Path on Rampart, Zaneta's concern is for her cell. Strong-willed and savvy, Zaneta held her group together against both the Merchant League and Li Halan intelligence networks and is one of the few voices in the Invisible Path that has countered Mavok's and lived. Zaneta's front is a nursery, where the dark-haired woman works and holds her meetings, unsuspected by the authorities. She is in her 30s and appears as a nondescript Rampart native. The survivor of two assassination attempts and many battles, she was the one who urged a truce with the Favyana after the death of Kamadeva Zarek. Zaneta is a voice of reason within the Invisible Path. Privately, she believes that Mavok tried to kill her on two occasions. Were Mavok to fall, she would be in a position to become his successor, as her followers are extremely loyal to her.

Roleplaying

Playing an Invisible Path Agent

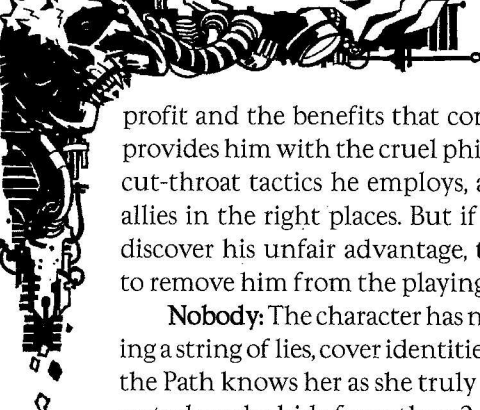
Like the Favyana, most Path members live other lives, supplementing their daily tasks with Path training and missions. While the Path's goals may be their own, daily living often gets in the way: fiefs to manage for nobles, services to run for priests and contracts to perform for guild members. Those few with no overt affiliations nonetheless have cover identities which must be maintained, requiring time and effort.

Below are some sample stereotypes for Invisible Path characters:

Power-hungry noble: The usual rewards of a noble life are not good enough for this character: she must have more than mere peasants fear and serve her. The Invisible Path offers the promise of dominion over even other nobles. This character's path to power, however, is fraught with peril: any knowing rival can bring the Inquisition to bear against her.

Greedy merchant: This character cares for little but





profit and the benefits that come from riches. The Path provides him with the cruel philosophy necessary for the cut-throat tactics he employs, along with a network of allies in the right places. But if his competition were to discover his unfair advantage, they would quickly seek to remove him from the playing field.

Nobody: The character has no identity of her own, living a string of lies, cover identities and false personas. Only the Path knows her as she truly is — or do they? What secrets does she hide from them?

Gamemastering the Invisible Path

The Invisible Path makes an interesting ally or antagonist — indeed, its members may be allies today and enemies tomorrow. Here are some drama ideas:

- **Faulty Recall:** The characters embark on an artifact hunt with a partner, someone seeking allies to share expenses and effort. It turns out, however, that these “allies” are to be patsies — set up to take the blame for the theft of a famous artifact owned by a noble. What’s more, this thief is not what he seems — he is a master of Psyche psionics and an agent of the Invisible Path. The characters may perform his actions without even knowing the mental control they are under! (In fact, a fun way to start the story is after the theft, as the characters come to their senses, their memories wiped of the situation. They must struggle to piece together the events of the past all the while evading noble security.)

- **Contemptuous Court:** The characters investigate a local poltergeist haunting in a village only to discover that a psychic is behind it all. This fellow, in turn, is just a decoy, meant to distract people from the secret Invisible Path “court” nearby, wherein many of the highest-ranking psychics of the order will meet to argue missions. This is a perfect chance to take down their leadership (although Mavok may or may not be there) or perhaps join the coven.

Traits

Suggested Invisible Path Traits

Characteristics: Wits, Perception, Psi

Natural skills: Impress, Shoot

Learned skills: Disguise, Focus, Inquiry, Stoic Mind, Streetwise

Blessing: Assertive (2 pts: +2 Impress among non-psychics)

Curse: Elitist (2 pts: -2 Extrovert among non-psychics)

Benefice: Refuge (4 pts+)

Afflictions: Dark Secret (+2 pts), True Name (+3 pts)

New Psyche Powers

True Naming

(Level 5, Extrovert + Impress, touch, perpetual, variable W)

This rare power, unknown outside of the Invisible Path, is a special form of psychic Bonding. It acts like Bonding in every way except that ANY psychic who knows the target’s true name may take advantage of a Bond with the target simply by stating that name in association with a power used against him. As with Bonding, the target must be willing to accept his True Name (given by the user of this power).

A True Name may be erased only by replacing it with another True Name. It is rumored that theurgy or extreme acts of penance can erase it. It is known that those few Invisible Path members who have sought the Church’s mercy and become Penitents no longer answer to their True Names (the Bond has been erased).

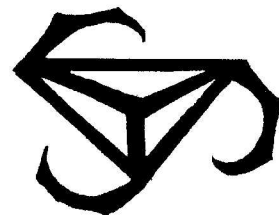
Memory Wipe

(Level 8, Extrovert + Knavery, sight, perpetual, 1W)

This advanced version of HeadShackle allows one specific command to be given: a target’s memory of a particular span may be hidden or blocked from consciousness. The incidents of that span are forgotten as far as the target is concerned. This may be cast multiple times to effectively erase a wide portion of the target’s past.

However, even though the effects are perpetual, strong stimuli may jog the target’s memory, bringing the memories back. For instance, a noble taught to forget all about an evening dinner party may suddenly remember it a month later when one of the guests mentions that evening’s duel with a rival. The stimuli must be strong with emotional content (involving a passionate rival or beloved spouse) or repeat the forgotten span in some way (the noble finds himself in a duel again, under the same tree — his feeling of déjà vu opens up into a full scale memory).

The older the memory, the easier it is to wipe it. However, memories of events important in defining the target’s identity (his knighthood, his ordination, etc.) are harder to erase: at least three victory points are required. The gamemaster should feel free to make some other events in a target’s life easier or harder to wipe.



Favyana

Amorita passed the old men sitting by the dragon fountain in the Madagan Gardens, searching for the clues left her in the letters of a dead Li Halan countess. The gardens wound in dizzying, mathematical paths, a maze of genetically engineered shrubbery, pine trees and bushes. Planted over a century ago by Countess Katerina Madagan Li Halan on her Artemis estate, the gardens had been given over to the Amaltheans in her will. The healing order made a public park of the winding labyrinths.

"How will I find preadamite technology here?" Amorita thought, scanning the barriers of living fences, rich with the scent of sap and flower pollen. Locals walked about the park, enjoying the scenery in the bright sunlight. The Favyana had sent her coven on a frantic search for the "Smiling Demon," a statue smuggled off Nowhere by the countess. The demon statue was said to possess fantastic abilities.

This was her first real test since joining the Favyana. The countess's recently uncovered papers were read by the coven's Hawkwood contact. While other coven members were dispatched to track down surviving relatives or gain entrance to the countess's estate, Amorita chose the obvious path — the twisting public gardens.

A bearded man, obviously an off-worlder, caught her eye. He was a solemn one, leaning on a walking stick. A strange feeling tugged at her head and with a shock she realized that he was "other," a member of the Invisible Path. She darted between twisting cypress trees, sprinting away, escaping the man with the green aura. The gentle probing lost its hold. Desperate now, her mind raced as she wound through the labyrinth. Then it came to her. "I overlooked the obvious!" she thought as she turned back, making her way toward the dragon fountain.

Another man was there, calmly feeding birds. He looked at her and smiled. "Very good, Amorita. You are a bit hasty, though, a spring deer crashing through the woods." He rose, wiping perspiration from his bald head.

"Who are you?" she asked. He resembled an old pensioner, dressed in clothing befitting a civil servant of a generation past, but he spoke to her mind, not moving his lips. The realization slowly dawned on her, while the sounds of the fountain spray grew distant.

"You know who I represent," he replied. "Do you wish to join the Invisible Path? We know you are seeking something old and valuable. So are we. You are young, Amorita, and do not know your true value, or the value this statue possesses."

"I do!" Amorita answered, feeling lightheaded. The shadows and sunlight blended in the fountain spray, momentarily blinding her. The man absently scratched his ear, listening to the ground. She knew her life was in danger and that this man was more experienced than she, a veteran of many missions. She caught the slight glint of metal beneath his formal coat: a slug gun.

It seemed as if something was hidden beyond the scent of pollen and honeysuckle. The silence unnerved her as she stared at the dragon sculpture, twisting against the blue afternoon sky.

Something happened there. Looking at the dragon fountain, she concentrated. Pale energies, green and red and yellow danced about the sculptured, scaly neck of a smaller serpent statue, entwined beneath the great dragons. "Something happened to the snake sculpture," she whispered.

The Invisible Path agent stepped closer. "We are not the only hunters in these gardens. Wolves seek lambs not always to eat them, but sometimes to make them wolves. I will make you a wolf, Amorita."

Glancing at the glinting spray from the fountain, she thought she saw an image of others, gaunt faced and hastening. The agent moved toward the statue, then squinted his eyes. "The Smiling Dragon was made from alchemies little understood by our sciences," he said, placing his hand on the gun and looking at her with calm authority. "It can be transformed by thought. It is believed to possess the ability to tap dormant powers and allow them to flower. Countess Madagan altered it for her own eccentric reasons and placed it here in her garden for purposes we cannot fathom. Its original shape resembled a primitive Ur-Obun deity. But your part in this is over." The agent wiped his brow and tears flowed down his cheeks. "They'll know we're in the park, and they will be casting nets for you. I fought some of your people on Criticorum."

As he raised his gun, she grasped the small serpent statue with the Dueling Hand, a technique she had barely mastered. It snapped free from the dragon foot. Levitating the coiled statue, she struck the man on the head from behind. His gun went off, barely missing her and sending echoes throughout the park. He went down, unconscious, his bald head bleeding. She grabbed the small statue as it floated to her hand. An alien blue aura surrounded the snake and she heard voices, long dormant, trapped deep within it.

Amorita concealed the snake statue beneath her cloak, swiftly leaving the fountain, feeling both new and old beneath the afternoon sun. More than labyrinths awaited her in the gardens, and she hoped the statue would prove benign. Somewhere in the dizzying gardens the other Invisible Path agent was searching for her, and she hastened to return to her family, the Favyana...

For centuries the Favyana has offered psychics two goals worth striving for: self-enhancement and the creation of a utopian society. Members of the Favyana believe in the ultimate, evolutionary harmony of their vision, one which will culminate in a utopian age. In this utopia, psychics, working with less enhanced sentients, will recreate society. The Favyana's vision, carried from the days of the Second Republic's Phavian Institute, remains strong despite formidable opposition. The Church and various intelligence networks, fearing their abilities, seek them out. But their most dangerous opponents remain other psychics, the gifted yet philosophically opposed members of the Invisible Path.

Recent warfare between the two on Criticorum left



many of the most enhanced psychics of a generation slain. The Favviana, lead by the formidable Kamadeva Katri, quickly regrouped. Resisting the Invisible Path's war of extermination, she brought such pressure that the Path leader, Apollo Mavok, called off the war to regroup his forces, while Katri regained lost ground. The Favviana look now to the new Emperor; their councils are divided. Some want to declare themselves openly, believing Alexius to be a harbinger of better days to come, while the majority urge caution, awaiting events to bear out their hopes before they reveal themselves.

History

Dr. Darius Phavian, the second son of the Phavian Mercantile House, renounced the directorship of CRONOS Corp. at age 34 and concentrated his fortune and studies on various scientific and humanitarian projects. A deeply shy, reserved man, known for a quick wit when pressed, Darius remained more a mystery to me than his brother, Agamemnon, who glided in and out of the same social circles which I orbited. According to his wife, Rhea, Darius had possessed an abiding interest in the sciences and paranormal research since a young age and intended to fund an institute to pursue the study of paranormal activities. Agamemnon called it his brother's "Dream Industry" and stated a desire to tax Phavian's imagination, the only income-making venture certain to come from Darius's head. Agamemnon inherited Darius's various corporate positions. Darius, left with his huge inheritance intact, continued his research..."

— Countess Sarah Hawkwood, *Life in the Upper Air: Memoirs of a Noble Society Woman in Republican Circles*

Psychic espionage and warfare began in the early days of the Diaspora before the zaibatsu's power was fully dissolved. Limited use of "enhanced" humans by the First Republic's Schwetkamph Korps (SK) and the early al-Malik, Li Halan and Decados intelligence agencies make for fascinating conjecture, but little hard evidence remains of these group's attempts to tap the latent psychic energies of specialized and gifted individuals. The al-Malik, suspected of human engineering, remain silent on the subject, and the ancient Li Halan and Decados neither confirmed nor denied the possibility. When the Second Republic consolidated the stars, the military gathered under her protective power a secret corps of paranormal agents. Such recruitment, emphasizing only espionage and intelligence training, left many of its members searching for some existential or higher meaning for their abilities.

President Kazantzakis believed the organization needed reforms. He sought out Dr. Darius Phavian, noted scientist and philanthropist who pursued independent studies and research into paranormal activities. Dr. Phavian, the son of Alexander Phavian, founder of the energy consortium CRONOS, was a brilliant man, studying philosophy, mythology and human potentiality development. Darius agreed to create a psychic research center, relieving the military of the financial burden of a pro-

gram which had produced mixed results at best. The Phavian Institute, established in 3760, was to be overseen by the Second Republic government, although funded largely by Darius.

Some of the greatest scientists and psychic researchers of the Second Republic gathered together and government security clearances and checks were given to all employees. It was this connection with the government which later haunted the institute after the start of the New Dark Ages. Centering the Institute on Gwynneth, Phavian gathered many government and corporate psychic agents, listening to their concerns, ideas and complaints. Military interest in Phavian's institute continued along proper, if largely disinterested lines, allowing Phavian's vision to guide his pet project.

Operating on the basis of treating each individual paranormal-enhanced sentient as unique, the Institute's success grew. Ethics, empathic control and useful application of the patient/client's unusual gifts allowed many the enjoyment of enriched lives. Research into paranormal abilities continued apace, creating the greatest archive of psychic studies in the Second Republic. The individual, humanistic approach, tied to the loftiest philosophical ideals, became so successful that funding for the Phavian Institute's aims continued into the Dark Ages until its closure by Hawkwood authorities.

The Institute made many great insights into paranormal research. But central communication, cut by Divesiture, halted the new lore from being dispersed. The continuing economic and political breakdown of the Second Republic saw the return of the nobles and Church as major powers. With the Church's sole religious status and the seizure of world after world by nobles, many private institutions and foundations perished. The Phavian Institute fared better than most due to a string of remarkable leaders.

Ignored for a time by the reinstated Hawkwoods (who seized control of Gwynneth), the Institute continued until 4101. By 4020, the Hawkwoods pressured the Institute for psychic spies and agents, the very aim that Institute members feared. After years of bribery, delays and limited cooperation from the Phavian scientists, the Hawkwoods announced sole possession of the Phavian Institute (4101). Arriving with two regiments, Count Sederik Hawkwood discovered the grounds empty and all personnel and hi-tech equipment gone. Without a word, the Phavian Institute had disappeared into hiding.

Extensive training in empathic control and disguise allowed the Institute psychics and their patrons to mix with normal, "unawakened" humanity as they dispersed across the Known Worlds. Due to the sophisticated intelligence training of many of the psychics (some of them former government and corporate psychics), the escape went smoothly. Regrouping on Criticorum with other Second Republic remnants, the members agreed never again to build a visible headquarters. They created a hid-



den command which would operate on the principle that "the center is nowhere and everywhere."

The Phavians, as they called themselves, remained coherent despite the New Dark Ages. Under the charismatic leadership of Maurelle (4151-4248), the future of the Phavians took priority. Each member owed his prime loyalty to the coven, although he could (and was expected to) serve other groups and organizations as long as he kept his membership in the coven secret. The central aim remained helping psychically-enhanced sentients cope with and better understand their abilities. The times were becoming superstitious, and the far-sighted Phavian leadership realized this. The organization would operate in secret until a Third Republic arose or sufficient societal advances occurred which would allow them to operate openly again. Even the prophetically gifted members, however, could not foresee the vast amount of time in which humanity would live in ignorance.

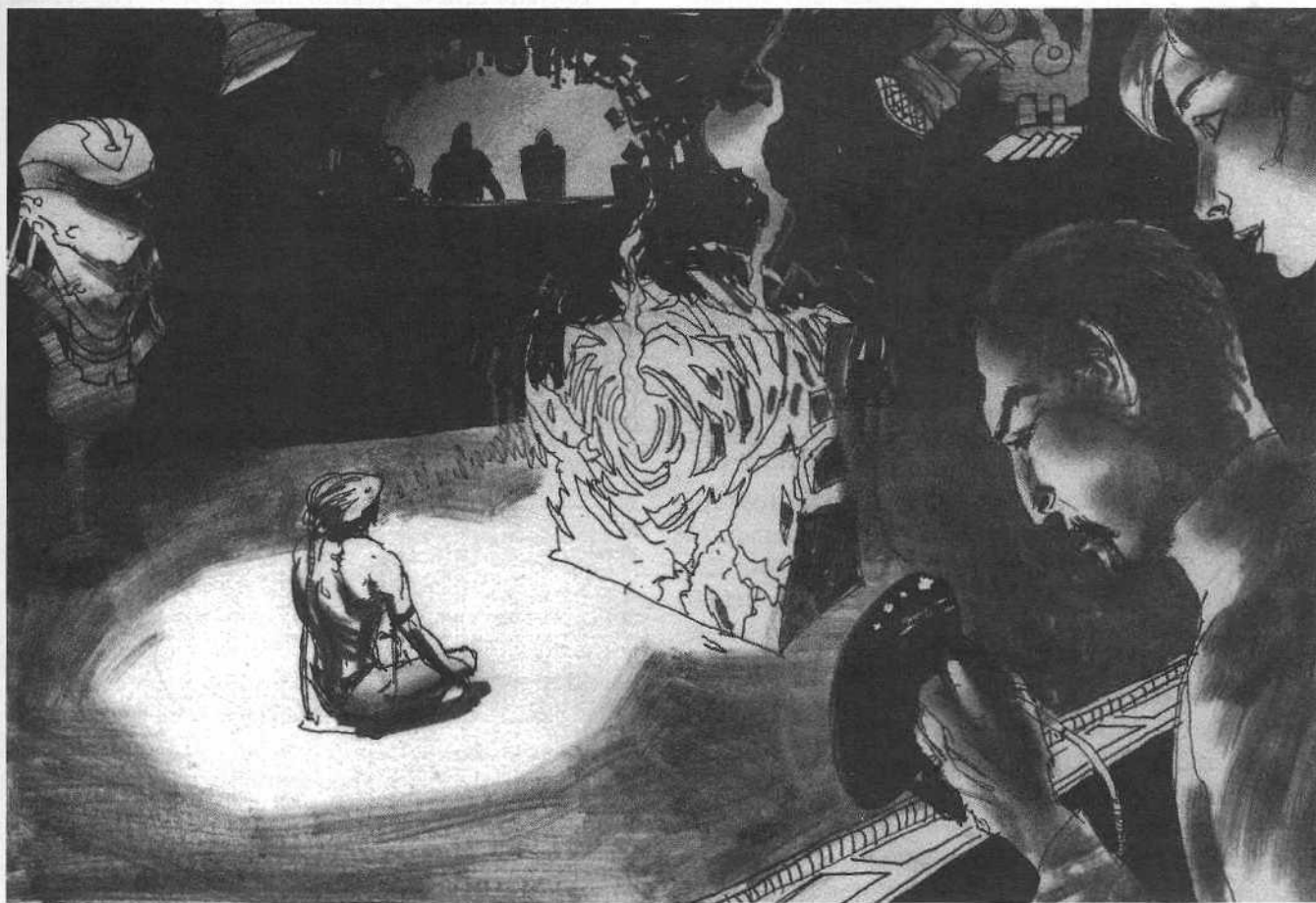
Working with the great mass of unenhanced sentients, the Phavians sought to take the Known Worlds to a higher level. They sometimes allied with Preceptors, Amaltheans and others in pursuit of noble aims, and often crossed the Orthodoxy and noble houses.

It is unknown how strong the ties with the original Phavian Institute are. Some members recite a list of leaders unbroken to Dr. Phavian, while others state that the last remnants of the original Institute survived as a tradition bound group until 4400 or so and then vanished. The

modern Favyana emerged in 4720, naming themselves after the earlier Institute psychics, choosing them as a model to live up to and as a tribute to the humanitarian ethics of Dr. Phavian. Most believe the current Favyana are a primitive revival, an homage by Dark Age psychics to the barely remembered Phavian Institute.

During the Emperor Wars, the Favyana fought a long war with the Invisible Path on Criticorum in which the Favyana leader Kamadeva Zarek met treachery and death. Katri Seppanen, "The Hidden Empress," took over, using her formidable strategies against the murderous onslaught of Apollo Mavok's Invisible Path. The war began on Criticorum when branches from both of the local covens fought for possession of a strange preadamite relic. From there others became involved, although it remained a largely local affair.

Outsiders assumed that the war was much larger than it actually was, such being the nature of conspiracy theories and shadow organizations. Fought in the shadows during the Emperor Wars, the hidden war between the two psychic organizations reached an inconclusive end. When Alexius became Emperor, some Favyana thought it was time to come out openly, but cooler councils prevailed. Fearing military recruitment, the Favyana prefer to see if Alexius's power and humanitarian reforms are consolidated in the coming years. Some argue that imperial recognition would ensure protection against the Church, but such protection, detractors state, is not with-



Psychic Backlash

While many psychics, especially those within the Favyana, dismiss peasant fears of their powers as so much "unenlightened, bigoted superstition," they fail to realize how psychic powers have adversely affected other people. The most obvious and dramatic manifestations of psychic powers are when they go out of control, taken over by the psychic's Urge. Indeed, this happened to Dr. Phavian himself, though the Institute successfully covered up his loss of control.

Indeed, if there is one well-warranted Invisible Path criticism of the Favyana, it is that the coven has tried to ignore the darker side of the psyche, discounting its manifestation as something that only happens to "bad" psychics. It is, however, a serious problem for the Favyana, for more and more of its members seem to be succumbing to their Urges. While the coven has made no organized study of this phenomena, some leaders feel certain that a greater percentage of its members are suffering from Urge than at any previous point in their history.

out a price. The Favyana leadership, under Kamadeva Katri, recently reaffirmed its primary goal of aiding other psychics, all the while dispatching discrete agents to learn the Emperor's designs toward the coven.

Tantra

The Favyana believe that a sentient's psychological makeup affects her psychic and religious experiences. Hence, understanding the individual psychic's history reveals the best path of aid when the isolated psychic (*aynon*) encounters other psychics. Psychics have a moral duty to awaken other psychics to the full potential and responsibility of their powers. Nonetheless, lone psychics, possessing abilities untapped and misunderstood by the majority, often ethically fail in the application of their abilities, using their power only for self gain. Often, this is not their fault; most psychics are left alone in a superstitious universe with no one to help them understand their powers. Only spy networks seem interested in their welfare, although for amoral purposes. In such an environment, a psychic's abilities are stunted.

However, tempered by the Favyana's teaching of the interdependence of all things, a psychic can reach his full creative potential and retain a realistic grasp on his unique place in the universe. Personal growth along constructive lines calls for the psychic's emergence into society not as an enemy of "unenlightened sentients" (*wergmen*), but as a helper, fully individuated, taught further psychic abilities by the coven for constructive ends.

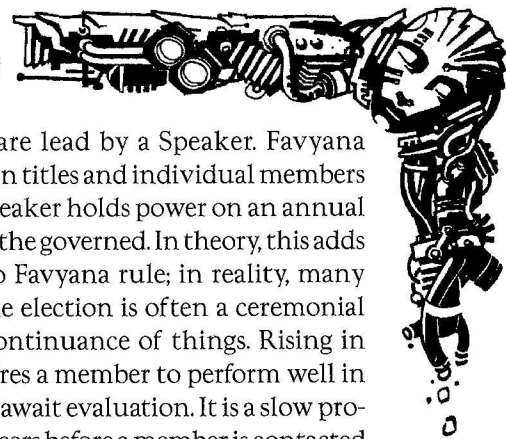
The Favyana coven does not teach rule; it teaches self-rule. It does not call for the overthrow of human society but instead seeks a firm rooting in the self to expand the

narrow provincialism and prejudices held by members of society. The enriching of the less gifted eventually leads to a community in which harmony reigns. Personal development leads to community development. Although these principles were once stated by the Phavian Institute in the language of personal potential, the goals are now cloaked in terms of the Dark Ages. Thus, an individual becomes a journeyman (a traveler on the "Corrected Path"), then a master and finally a sage (one who controls passions).

The Favyana believe that humanity, along with other young sentient races, are being awakened to their psychic heritage by the "Ascended." The identity of these mysterious benefactors remains a secret known only to the leaders, but some speculate that they are the Anunnaki, attempting to enhance the newer races with greater abilities. Others state that the "Ascended" are angelic beings dwelling closer to the Celestial Sun and that they chose to evolve sentients to create spiritual beings out of profane, physical beings, a sort of evolutionary alchemy. The Favyana believe in an evolutionary progress toward universal enlightenment which encompasses a three-fold process of finding, awakening and becoming. Favyana lore on this is filled with symbolism and is hard to decipher; letters and numbers take on mystical significance when charting the 144 paths of the Mind Garden. "Growing flowers on the dead moon" is an analogy they use when pressed about the ultimate outcome of their beliefs.

Favyana believe progress must be slow. The Second Republic, by expanding too rapidly, did not allow for sentient consciousness to keep pace with the furious rate of discovery. Gradual change is sought, a balanced path, with the greater helping the weaker, until society reaches the end of the long road to enlightenment. Psychics safeguard this path for all, protecting unenlightened sentients from themselves, egocentric/elitist psychic groups and the horrors of the outer darkness, where it is said that malevolent, alien minds, resisting evolution and spiritual growth, harm all in their way. Coven houses exist to find individual psychics, further the gradual path to a more enlightened age, and return the trained individuals to their communities. The Favyana reserve the right to call any psychic they aid to duty. To this end they pledge their recruits to further their goals. Once a Favyana, always a Favyana, with responsibility to self, coven and the universe.

Many thinkers have shaped Favyana thought. Some concepts have even been taken from the Invisible Path. For example, the Favyana agree that shaman psychics played an early role as leaders in hunter-gatherer communities. However, they argue that the golden age need not mean a cruel psychic aristocracy but rather a melding of psychics and unenlightened sentients, the synthesis of a new creation, different and more wise than either parent breed. The Favyana believe that more people would exhibit psychic powers in a more enlightened environment.



Superstitions and rural Church propaganda stunt many would-be psychics.

It is acknowledged, regrettably, that the Invisible Path produces deeper thinkers on the question of psychic identity and evolution. Many Favyana thinkers contribute to debates surrounding the "psychic question," then return, anonymous, to their society, their contributions largely unknown. Different covens espouse different philosophies, but the higher one reaches in the organization, the more is revealed.

Behavior

Members of the Favyana believe that their extended family holds to a meritocracy. In this they are largely correct. While the Favyana no longer follow all the Second Republic Phavian Institute's democratic notions of self determination, vestiges of this higher morality and altruism remain in their current teachings. Although they believe they are benevolent stewards of psychics and unenlightened sentients, the Favyana can strike with a violence equal to the Invisible Path. The difference remains that Invisible Path members believe themselves to be at constant war with non-psychics, while Favyana members see themselves as teachers and guardians to psychics and non-psychics alike. Their role is to remain in the shadows until enlightenment again reaches across the stars.

The leader of the Favyana is titled Kamadeva, sometimes called "Moon King" or "Moon Queen," denoting the reflective powers of their psychic birthright and their hidden path (obscured by the sun while using the sun's power to guide those in the dark). Kamadeva was originally a Sanskrit letter with connotations to Cupid, learning and studying in the symbolic alphabet of Cabalistic magic. This term was first used at the Phavian Institute to denote the leader, "The Grand Kamadeva," an affectionate title, not without sly humor. This was first given to Dr. Phavian by young students, both confirming and gently mocking the strange scientific studies going on, adding a whiff of mysticism to the doctor's reputation. The name stuck long after the Phavian Institute vanished.

At times Favyana leaders are titled "President" or "Speaker." For years references to "The Hidden President" left intelligence agencies in confusion, fearing an underground Third Republic conspiracy. Some rare peasant lyrics refer to Favyana leaders as benevolent, almost ephemeral beings, as opposed to the Shade People — a name given in popular mythology to evil psychics, believing they worship a fallen, unreflective vision set up by a psychic rival to Zebulon.

Kamadevas gain their position through experience and tested leadership abilities, usually voted into office at the death or stepping down of the predecessor by the Althing. The Althing remains the hidden parliament/advisory council to the Kamadeva and consists of (traditionally) 12 members, representing covens across the Known Worlds.

Individual covens are lead by a Speaker. Favyana members take Republican titles and individual members are titled citizens. The Speaker holds power on an annual basis by the consensus of the governed. In theory, this adds a democratic element to Favyana rule; in reality, many hold power for years. The election is often a ceremonial affair, confirming the continuance of things. Rising in Favyana authority requires a member to perform well in the eyes of superiors and await evaluation. It is a slow process and it may be many years before a member is contacted to perform a service in return for the training he received. The cells are modeled off of Republican or scientific titles. A Senate oversees a world, while individual covens ("courts") exist in cities or rural areas on a world.

The majority of Favyana continue in their daily tasks; probably only a third are active in covens. Most recruits remain in their former occupations. Commands are given from the top down, yet requests from the covens can be debated in the Althing, so two-way participation does exist. The Favyana follow rituals and rules designed for the mature and wise use of power, spurning hasty decisions until all sides of a course of action are considered. Psychics, once found and tested, are asked to join on the basis of individual maturity, empathy and ability. The more destructive recruits receive guidance until they are ready for inclusion. A task may be given to test a psychic before formally pledging to the Favyana.

Favyana recruit new members by studying their behavior. They are approached only after a serious evaluation of the candidate's character is made. The new recruit is lead blindfolded to a secret location where she is tested on ethics. If she answers satisfactory, she gains a tutor who oversees her first mission and teaches her. Psychics sometimes approach the Favyana for membership; these ones are given harder tests of loyalty. Once approved, a recruit is accepted into the secret Favyana society. Most remain in their former occupations; only a very few renounce all for the sake of the Favyana. There are powerful, hidden Favyana in the Eskatonic Order and Sanctuary Aeon, as well as many minor (and some major) houses. One high-standing Hawkwood noble of Gwynneth is a member.

Coven Houses

Favyana covens meet in various areas; they tend to be mobile, not keeping a headquarters in any one location for long. Few in the large population centers notice the local meetings of an obscure guild or society. Byzantium Secundus houses a large coven under the name "The Regency Mountaineer Pilgrims," ostensibly a hiking club for lesser nobility.

The current headquarters of the Favyana is on Leminkainen, on the abandoned Hildago Plantation, long ago reconquered by old growth forest. Once a profitable citrus plantation administered by the Hildago family for House Alecto, the plantation ceased to exist after Vladimir I's drive to Empire shattered the offworld citrus market,



Allies and Enemies

Invisible Path: "Their rash methods could lead to a holy war against all psychically gifted individuals. In the future, we will have to convert them or destroy them."

Preceptors: "Aiding them spreads the gradual reawakening of the lower classes, necessary for the new age of enlightenment to occur."

Amaltheans: "The universal call to healing displays their benevolent nature. Their training, similar to Favyana training, is based on notions of healing, understanding and the fulfillment of potential. Yet be wary of them, as they serve a different organization, and some are friendly with the Orthodoxy."

Orthodox Church: "We are derided by them for having "fallen from the reflective path." They are opponents who must be defeated before the new age of learning can begin. They stand in the way of Favyana emancipation."

Supreme Order of Engineers: "While marveling at their achievements, their elitism rivals that of the Invisible Path. In the future, they need an infusion of altruism lest a techno-elite form."

Noble Houses: "The al-Malik show the greatest promise, although the others sponsor psychic soldiers and spies who often rise above the petty loyalties ingrained in them. Still, some of our members are nobles and they cover for us well."

Dervishes: "Both the Favyana and Invisible Path descended from military-controlled psychic groups. We find recruits among the Dervishes by presenting them with life goals, not mere military strategies."

Penitents: "Ill used by the Church, we often show them the true path to understanding. Many are peasants who feel great guilt for their unique abilities. Such crimes in these fallen times!"

Rogue Psychics: "They should be either brought into the fold or dealt with in such a way that they cannot use their powers to harm our cause. Popular opinion is bad enough without a few malcontents worsening it further."

forcing the Hidalgos to turn the operation into a winery for local consumption. The manor was finally abandoned in a minor economic crisis in 4610. The old forest crept in, until soon even the peasants left it alone. It was legally claimed by the Hawkwoods, al-Malik and the Hazat, and the legal paperwork grew as the forest covered the grounds.

Katri Sepannen found the ruins largely intact and made them her headquarters. With a working aqueduct system, the limestone-reinforced buildings hidden by the great trees became the perfect palace. Only the Althing knows of its location, where it meets to decide policy. The Invisible Path alone suspect that the Favyana operate out

of Leminkainen, while most intelligence agencies still believe Criticorum holds their headquarters. Criticorum was the only location where the coven war went above ground, becoming noticed by the authorities.

While local covens are occasionally turned in to the Inquisition or local lords by a dissatisfied recruit, strong allies — including nobles, League deans, Eskatonic bishops and others in power — provide wealth, protection and at times alibis for the Favyana. These allies in high places ensure the continued survival of the Favyana. Without them, the organization would be sorely pressed for communication and funds. What unites all of them is the promise of the Favyana message.

Persons of Power

Kamadeva Katri Sepannen

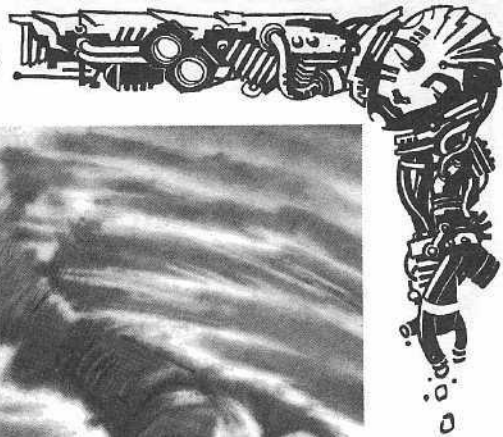
Born on Gwynneth, Katri was raised by followers of one of the planet's hidden pagan communities, where her psychic abilities were encouraged. Settling in Llanfyrth as a song-teacher/entertainer, Katri was approached by the Favyana. Weighing their arguments, she finally joined, becoming adept in the Psyche path. In time she rose to lead the Senate of Gwynneth, and eventually became advisor to the Kamadeva in the Althing. She coordinated the defensive activities in the war against the Invisible Path, exposing an Invisible Path base on Aragon and feeding Invisible Path information to the Avestites, who unknowingly did some of the Favyana dirty work.

When Kamadeva Zarek perished on Criticorum, she rescued his followers, slaying the feared Invisible Path assassin Helios. The Althing chose her as Kamadeva and she hid the Favyana leadership amid the forests of Leminkainen. Eventually, an informal cease-fire took hold between the two ancient covens. Katri swiftly regrouped Favyana power, relying on Hawkwood connections and they reclaimed their territory and prestige from the less numerous Invisible Path. Even her critics in the Favyana admit that she single-handedly saved their organization on Criticorum and offset the Invisible Path's initial victory.

A golden haired woman in her forties, Katri retains her youthful beauty and wisdom. Recently, she debated with the Althing about approaching Emperor Alexius, finally choosing a wait-and-see attitude, not wanting to display the coven too early in what, for the Favyana, promises to be the potential beginning of their long-awaited utopia.

Citizen Paldros

An old veteran of the Favyana, Citizen Paldros voluntarily gave up leadership of the Artemis Senate, preferring to serve the Althing as a recruiter of new talent. A white-haired, small man sprouting an aristocratic mustache, Paldros dresses in out-of-style civil servant clothes (for years he worked as a physician in a child's hospital). Paldros is richer than his appearance suggests, and his his-



tory is also more than it seems. Born on Artemis, Paldros remembers when the Favviana, in the days of relative peace, taught life-affirming messages and strategies. When open conflict with the Invisible Path erupted, he proved an able war leader to the surprise of many, holding Artemis for the Favviana. Yet the war, he believes, shattered the progressive teachings, as the best were slaughtered and the mediocre rose to the top of Favviana leadership.

Resigning as Speaker Paldros, he reflected that, sadly, many of his old comrades perished in the struggle. Citizen Paldros finds the "newer" Favviana leadership more rash and less polite than it was before the war, lacking many of the coven's hard-won goals and teachings. Gathering a remnant of old teachers, Paldros seeks to rectify this by recruiting and training young "talents" himself, so that the noble message of the Favviana can bloom again.

Roleplaying

Playing a Favviana Psychic

Very few Favviana members are full-time coveners; most live their normal lives as well as they can, hiding their psychic powers from others while honing them in private. Those members in the nobility, Church and League suffer the most scrutiny, but can also usually afford the most privacy (many own homes or personal chambers). In addition, these factions allow access to the best interstellar communications.

Those in the middle classes usually remain purely local coveners, unable to afford the time or money to travel off-world or involve themselves in off-world situations. Those few members in the lower classes find it the hardest, for their neighbors are the most superstitious. It is difficult to hide idiosyncrasies in a village where everyone knows everyone else from cradle to grave. Nonetheless, a few — with the help of the Favviana — have managed to live in safety and even to use their powers for their own or others' betterment.

There are thus a number of different types of people in the coven. Below are some examples:

Beneficent Noble: The character is a member of a noble house, and can afford the time and money to pursue Favviana goals. What's more, he seeks the utopia promised by Favviana philosophy, where even serfs will live in equality. He must be very careful to prevent his political rivals from discovering his secret. For this reason, he has relinquished rule of his family lands, handing them to a sibling, so that he may travel freely.

Enlightened Priest: The character is a member of the Church, which as yet remains unaware of his powers or her coven affiliation. Perhaps she is a parishioner to a whole village of Favviana-sponsored psychics, helping them to hide their special qualities from outsiders.

Helpful Guildsman: The character is a member of the League, perhaps even an Engineer. As a psychic, he knows what kind of trouble his powers can bring and has



ELLIOTT 77

thus joined with the Favyana for aid and to provide mutual assistance to others.

Gamemastering Favyana

There are a number of dramas which can involve Favyana psychics:

- **Mistaken Identity:** Those pesky Favyana have been stirring up trouble in a serf village. The local lord dispatches the characters (who may or may not be members of the coven) to reign them in before the Church comes and causes trouble for everyone. It turns out that the trouble — signs of witchery and such — has been caused by a minor psychic war between local Favyana and Invisible Path members. The Path is trying to make the villagers believe that a Favyana woman is a witch. Can the characters rescue her from the charges or will they gladly dole out the punishment themselves?

- **The Fugitive:** The Inquisition is in town sniffing out psychics. One of the characters is accused (either through use of his powers, or, if he is not psychic, through a rival's machinations). A Favyana member approaches the party promising aid and escape. The characters have a chance to witness the local psychic underground. Will they join the group or turn them in?



Favyana

Traits

Suggested Favyana Traits

Characteristics: Wits, Perception, Psi

Natural skills: Charm, Dodge

Learned skills: Academia, Disguise, Empathy, Focus, Inquiry, Read Urthish, Remedy, Science (Parapsychology), Stoic Mind

Blessing: Philanthropist (2 pts: +2 Extrovert when helping others)

Benefice: Refuge (4 pts+)

Affliction: Dark Secret (2 pts)

New Psyche Power

TrueSpeech

(Level 7, Extrovert + Impress, sight, temporary, 1W)

This power may only be used on a willing subject; it will have no effect on unwilling subjects. However, once connection has been established, the subject cannot decide to then resist it. The subject may be asked a number of questions equal to the victory points scored; she may only give truthful answers, and it is impossible to lie. This power is usually used during initiatory or membership ceremonies, or before any rank is conveyed on the subject. Usual questions include: "Where does your true loyalty lie? Are you a member of the Invisible Path? What do you really think of psychics?" Anyone who refuses to undergo such questioning is distrusted and rarely rises in the coven. (Of course, there is little to prevent this power's abuse by the psychic using it: intimate questions not pertinent to membership or the trustworthiness of the individual may be asked by unscrupulous questioners.)



Dervish

Dervishes

The dust clouds engulfed the Hazat forces. The heavy pounding and shrieking of Caliphate Rocketeers deafened them as explosions rained down, mixing blood with soot and snow.

Captain Pablo Montoya hated the shrieking noises which shot fear into his ranks. Already, men were covering their heads and falling to the ground. The earth trembled, fragments of rock and hot shrapnel thundering down. Then, from the eastern horizon, came the howl of 10,000 throats: the savage battle cry of the Caliphate army.

"At them! At them!" Pablo yelled, grabbing a stunned man and shaking him. "Death and Honor!"

Through the smoke he saw the fanatic warriors emerge, fearless, breaking the front ranks, running through the snow like water. Some of the braver Hazat soldiery and the artillery units fired into them, killing hundreds, but others, the pride of the military, turned and ran.

Pablo feared the worst. After six hours of relentless artillery pounding, the whole line was under attack and wavering. A breakthrough would give the Caliphate control of the southern mountain passes of Kurga and the uranium-rich mines of House Shelit. Through the smoke and fog, Montoya saw them engulf his front forces. Men — hardened elite who had survived the worst of the Emperor Wars — passed him, fleeing for their lives.

Grabbing the standard, Captain Montoya ran forward with it, rallying his men into the thick of the fray. Still, with the numbers against them, they were doomed. Bad weather prevented reinforcements, snow fell on the military roads, grounding air support. Only the Dervishes under Don Marcika Holuzio Rolash had reached them via radio, saying they were coming. But they were 20 miles away on foot and that was five hours ago. "No matter," Montoya decided, "duty demands the enemy be halted here."

A man staggered to him, bloodied. "They overran the north perimeter, captain. We must retreat."

A surge of Caliphate warriors rushed forward, killing all in sight with swift scimitar strokes. Montoya engaged one with his rapier, killing him, but his companions everywhere were dying.

Then, complete silence fell.

Men climbed over snow banks, listening. Far off came a wail, carried by the south wind. The chanting of the Hazat Dervishes.

Below, in the valley, winter-garbed Dervishes overran the Caliphate troops from the south, pouring into them with reckless fury. Warriors fell from unseen psychic attacks. Swords and laser rifles pounded the Kurga troops unmercifully. The Kurga command did not respond until half of their lines were pierced; then the cry went up, "Derveshi! Derveshi!" Their line wavered and broke in the valley, thousands of men running north and west, pursued by the psychic warriors of House Hazat.

"Did I not promise that we would arrive?" came a voice. Turning, Captain Montoya saw Don Marcika Holuzio Rolash with his advance guard. Don Marcika was disheveled, wearing white snow camouflage gear, but smiling after an exhausting forced march through harsh winter conditions. "The Caliphate

is having its first taste of my psi elite," he said, motioning south toward the valley. Nodding, he tossed Montoya a revolver, and then the two began rallying the men for the counterattack against the fleeing enemy.

The Justas branch of House Hazat began the cultivation of the psychic Dervish warriors, although Dervish tradition on Grail and other locations (e.g., the Ishwin Confederacy on Kish) goes back generations to the Diaspora. The terminology traces back to pre-Diaspora Urth, and originally referred to humans who were enlightened from ecstatic contact with a mystic source. The more modern Dervishes began when a group of Penitents joined the Grail Dervishes, and from them the Hazat tradition of training psychic armies began. While this practice was nothing new, the Hazat were the first and perhaps the best at impressing sizable masses of psychics into an army.

The Hazat were also the first to field psychic troops in the Emperor Wars, but they were not the only groups to use them. Until the Symbiot Wars, psychics were only used one-on-one or in small groups. That war initiated recruitment and selective breeding, which only came to fruition by the time of the Emperor Wars.

While other houses copied their methods, only the Hazat possessed psychics in large enough numbers to have a true military impact. Highly skilled with excellent morale and fearlessness, Dervishes proved invaluable during the Emperor Wars. Although their psychic training was perhaps less skillful than that of Favyana or Invisible Path members, it was quicker, and their sheer numbers during the wars grew impressive.

Believing that the flesh is transitory, Dervishes fear little. After the Emperor Wars, most followed the Hazat authorities to Kurga to battle the Caliphate. However, some mercenary bands signed up with other noble houses and the Merchant League. Here and there, small bands of mustered-out Dervishes drift about the Known Worlds, seeking employment and adventure.

History

All of the noble houses have used psychic warriors at one time or another. Originally, the decadent Li Halan excelled in this area, while the Hawkwoods claimed some success with them during the Fall of the Second Republic. Neither house retained leadership in this area, save perhaps their intelligence services. Psychics were known during the Second Republic, but the government was sporadic in finding them until the Phavian Institute began its investigations. Psychic phenomena seemed to be a random occurrence, affecting only a very few individuals. As the Dark Ages progressed, however, psychics seemed to occur more and more, with wider and wilder powers. This



was noticed by the noble houses.

Al-Malik history is rife with superior "talents" which the noble unleashed on their foes, yet the consistency of their use is as chaotic as the many fortunes of Tarif's heirs. The Decados show the longest use and understanding of psychic warriors; it is an open secret they use for intimidation. During the Emperor Wars, their psychics appeared on Malignatus, paving the way for victory. Yet it is not surprising that the Hazat, the most martial-spirited of the great families, created the most feared psychic warrior force — the Dervishes — unleashing them to devastating effect. Since then, other houses, trying to catch up, have termed their psychic soldiers Dervishes. While the term applies to psychic warriors of all the great houses, the majority pledge loyalty to the Hazat.

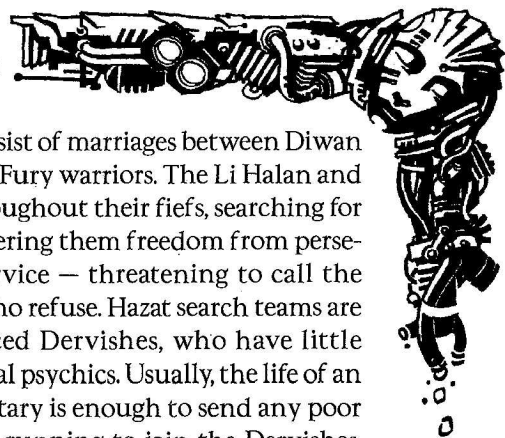
When the Hazat, notably the Justas branch, cultivated their dedicated corps of psychic warriors, they began with small groups. Their rise in numbers did not begin until the Symbiot Wars. The Dervish martial tradition harkens back to Zegai, a heretical prophet from Grail (4844-4891). Described often as Al-Uzza, "The Powerful One," Zegai broke from her peasant upbringing when she beheld the Three-Fold Vision on Grail, near the spot where Saint Amalthea healed Zebulon the Prophet. The Three-Fold Vision was one of the Pancreator giving birth to and devouring Self. Sensing the divine ecstasy in life, death and strife, she preached her vision, declaring that "The way to salvation is hard. Many 'I's' must die before 'I' arrive." She

lead a group of devout followers into the desert, and they emerged a decade later as a fanatic warrior force. These initial followers, like Zegai herself, were not psychics, but became fanatic soldiers. The title "dervish" originated with Zegai.

Zegai's beliefs did not emerge from a vacuum; earlier mystic traditions were founded on Grail's fertile soil. She did, however, unite and expand upon earlier spiritual warrior traditions, producing a deadly military force, utterly fanatic in battle. After suffering heavy losses from her rebellion, House Keddah called the Avestites and Brother Battle in to halt them. Zegai's tenants taught liberation from the flesh by flagellation, divine dance and battle. The Avestites believed they were demon worshipers and theological descendants of Tahir Majnun al-Malik the Doomed, who espoused union with the cosmic Beloved through frenzied mastery. From what is known of Zegai's Path, this is incorrect, although similarities do exist.

Zegai believed in subduing the many "I's" of a personality before the one devoted "I" would emerge in total union with the Pancreator (loosely interpreted as creative flux, the alpha-omega ever creating and destroying). The reunited warrior, the Dervish, gladly gave her life for Zegai's message. Only after a three-year war of destruction did the Avestites, Brother Battle and House Keddah stamp them out. Zegai died, personally dispatching 20 foes before the life fled her body. Her teachings had attracted a small mon-





astery of Penitents, ill-used by the Orthodoxy, who saw her path as a way of liberation. They claimed that Zegai herself was psychic and could only teach her advanced techniques to other psychics, who then became her bodyguards. When Zegai's forces perished, a few of the psychic Penitents-turned-Dervish fled Grail with the aid of a Hazat military observer to House Keddah, who saw in them the promise of an elite troop (4892). These 23 Penitents, now Dervishes, became the nucleus of the Hazat Dervish legions.

Heavy recruitment of "native" Hazat psychics began during the Symbiot Wars, as a weapon against the Symbiots. Gaining small but important victories against the Symbiots, recruitment continued apace, especially with the threat of growing Hawkwood power. When the Emperor Wars began, the Hazat Dervish legions numbered in the hundreds. The other houses, alarmed at this elite force, attempted to create their own Dervish legions. Hazat Dervishes swept through Hawkwood forces during the siege of Jericho, where the terror of the Dervishes became known. After the victory of Emperor Alexius, the Hazat agreed to disband the large legions, but Don Marcika Holuzio Rolas, leader of the Hazat Dervishes, kept many under his command and went to Kurga to battle the Caliphate. The disbanded Dervish units either allied with other houses as mercenaries or simply dispersed. Each house boasts some Dervishes, yet the Hazat possess the largest number of them. The other houses combined could perhaps equal the number of Dervishes the Hazat can muster, although with time, this could change.

Post-Emperor Wars

Most Dervishes were mustered out of the service after the Emperor Wars. While many went with the Hazat to fight the Caliphate, some were forcibly turned over to the Church as Penitents. A few decorated enough or lucky enough escaped that fate, and these are allowed some degree of immunity, although they are constantly watched by a suspicious Church and a frightened peasantry. They are not prone to join psychic covens (their high visibility makes them unwelcome recruits). A few took to their tiny plots of land granted on Kurga or Stigmata, but most still seek adventure. Many sign on with guilds as mercenaries, and other houses recruit them for minor skirmish wars. Roving Dervishes have found employment across the Known Worlds as guards, spies, Muster members and guides into dangerous territory. There are now a few Dervish mercenary recruitment stations; the largest operates out of the Istakhr Market.

Some units are still maintained by the houses. Recruits are discovered through a variety of methods — peasant rumors and psychic "sniffers" being the most common. It is rumored that the al-Malik breed proven psychics, giving them riches to produce more sons and daughters for the service. The Decados have a limited breeding program, carefully monitored. Li Halan Orthodoxy frowns on this,

but here, too, rumors persist of marriages between Diwan Dervishes and Midnight Fury warriors. The Li Halan and Decados send teams throughout their fiefs, searching for signs of psychics and offering them freedom from persecution in return for service — threatening to call the Church down on any who refuse. Hazat search teams are composed of experienced Dervishes, who have little trouble spotting potential psychics. Usually, the life of an elite member of the military is enough to send any poor youth on a Hazat world running to join the Dervishes. Some marriage between Hazat Dervishes has produced gifted offspring, and the Hazat are in the early stages of a genetic program.

Dervish Orders

Taliesin's Spear (House Hawkwood)

The Hawkwood response to the Hazat Dervishes were called "Taliesin's Spear." These were psychics, taken mostly from Gwynneth, trained by friendly pagans into an elite fighting force. Alexius put them in battle against the Hazat during the Emperor Wars. Although they were tough warriors with their own traditions, most were slain in the siege of Byzantium Secundus. Emperor Alexius gathered the remnants into the Imperial Eye, where training continues. House Hawkwood has since recruited former Hazat Dervishes and Gwynneth psychics to begin the rebuilding of the force.

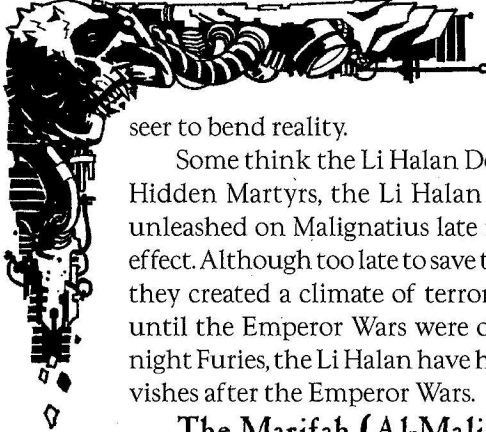
The Screaming Dervishes (House Decados)

The Decados incorporated psychics into special units of the Jakovian Agency before the Hazat Dervishes came into being. Called the Screammers, they were placed into small military units when the Decados learned of the Hazat Dervishes. Screammers infiltrated enemy territory during the Emperor Wars, attacking enemy command posts. During the taking of Malignatius, they worked with the Decados land forces to great success. While Screammers are fearless in battle, they are few, usually assigned to sabotage and undercover missions. They have separate traditions but are closely tied in with Decados elitist theories; they consider themselves different or above their masters. Unlike the Dervishes, they possess little history outside their Jakovian upbringing. Screammers, or Screaming Dervishes, as they are now called, often possess cybernetic devices, and are known for their ruthlessness and strict discipline.

Midnight Furies and Diwin (Li Halan)

House Li Halan, although the first to create a psychic fighting force before the Second Republic, introduced their Dervishes late in the Emperor Wars. The Midnight Furies were an all female, psychic fighting force, drawn from the esoteric teachings of the Ishwin Confederacy. Male psychics formed a force called the Diwin Dervishes, who were mainly used as military scouts. Both traditions originate from Ishwin Confederacy beliefs in the sacredness and oneness of the universe and the ability of a gifted





seer to bend reality.

Some think the Li Halan Dervishes are an arm of the Hidden Martyrs, the Li Halan secret police. They were unleashed on Malignatus late in the war to devastating effect. Although too late to save the planet for the Li Halan, they created a climate of terror for the new conquerors until the Emperor Wars were over. Aside from the Midnight Furies, the Li Halan have hired on former Hazat Dervishes after the Emperor Wars.


The Marifah (Al-Malik)

Al-Malik psychic warriors have existed since the family rose to prominence. Individual psychic warriors dot the pages of their history with their bravery and fearlessness in battle. Early attempts to breed psychic warriors met some success. During the Emperor Wars, the house fielded the Marifah, psychic Dervishes from the Istakhr deserts. Their traditions are similar to those of the Hazat Dervishes, except that they claim to be the Voice of Haqiqah (Truth), beheld by their founder Sadiq, who incorporated earlier mystical desert traditions into a fighting force of psychics. Sadiq was a loyal lieutenant of Duke Hakim al-Malik. He gathered a small group of psychic warriors during the Emperor Wars, molding them into a fighting force. Followers of Tarif's Path, he first let them loose against a small Decados-led Ukari uprising on Aylon. Today, their numbers are small but loyal to the al-Malik. Few leave the service.

Shariah (Kurga Caliphate)

The Caliphate forces possess Dervishes, although they come from a separate origin than Zegai. Hazat authorities believe they sprang from a tradition unheard of in the Known Worlds, although some argue it is an ascetic tradition derived from the peculiar form that Zebulon's teachings take among the Caliphate, branded heretical by the Church. The Caliphate refers to them as the Shariah, or Warriors of Law. They seem to be an ancient tradition, possessing a longer history than the Known World psychics. Famous poems and tales abound of their strange practices. The Hazat seek to discover more about them. It is known that the Kurgan Dervishes are more theurgic than psychic, making them perhaps more similar to Brother Battle, and they seem less numerous in proportion to Known World Dervishes.

Tantra



Dervish belief, while professing submission to Zebulon's message as found in the Omega Gospels, actually espouses a different tradition, that of Zegai Al-Uzza, although some proclaim the teachings are far older than her.

The physical universe, identified with the Pancreator, is the all-giving, all-destroying source, "the mother/father who gives birth to and swallows Self." The psychic warrior, by submitting to the martial discipline of a teacher, can create a warrior soul which will survive the crushing

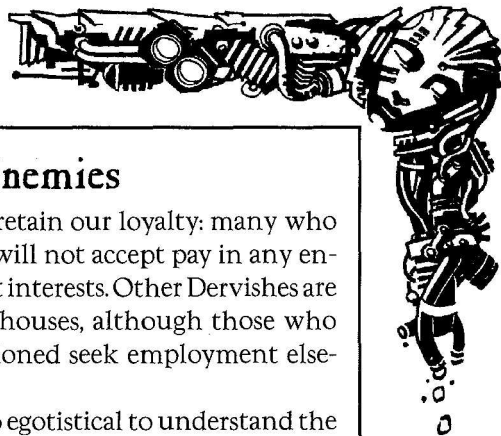
energies of entropy, but only after merging all individual desires (I's) into a single, organic "I," the Divine Self. Since Creation is strife, war is holy. Using psychic powers as divine service enables the warrior to perfect herself, for loyalty to a martial master is but a microcosm of the warrior's relationship to the Pancreator. Zebulon understood this, but his message was lost once the martial discipline left his followers and corruption and lust for power entered his Church. Zegai's message, beginning with ordinary humans, found success, yet her psychic warriors, recruited from dissatisfied Penitents, opened the key for psychics to partake and surpass their founder's vision.

While retaining a belief in superiority over unenlightened sentients, the Dervishes do not seek to rule them or shape their destiny. Dervishes seek to shape their own destiny, reaching enlightenment/communion through martial practice and battle ecstasy. This state, also reached in certain dances and meditative practices, merges the individual "I" with the "Over I" of Creation, creating the Divine Warrior, for whom battle is divinely sanctioned. The Hazat knew exactly how to promote and tap into this martial spirit, while creating safety valves against any Invisible Path tendencies. Thus, they are the guardians of authority, not authority itself. Only the Dervish path is the correct one for psychics seeking the truth (according to the Dervishes).

The Avestites suspect Dervish deviation from the Omega Gospels yet no action has been taken against them. Their martial philosophy, encoded in the language of the Omega Gospels, is hard to prove heretical, and they are granted protection by the Hazat as a shield against the heretic Caliphate. Similarities exist between their philosophy and that of Tahir Majnun al-Malik the Doomed, namely in the concept of building a soul to protect against devouring cosmic energies. Tahir's "freedom" came after a breakthrough of realization and was not meant as a code for warriors alone. To the Dervishes, the flesh, while necessary, is another obstacle to overcome, and flagellation and fearlessness during battle display the warrior's total trust in the divine communion. Death only liberates the spirit to further heights of union with the Pancreator. Strife and war are tests to harden the body and soul, and martial discipline is the act of supreme submission and love (*Amor Caelum*).

Dervish beliefs among the other houses seem to follow traditions similar to the Zegai Dervishes, but with forms of their own. Psychics of Taliesin's Spear believed in a force they called the Dying and Reformed Warrior, warrior-king who perished each winter solstice and returned each spring. Taken from Gwynneth pagan traditions celebrating an ancient spirit, the beliefs enshrouded a number of mystical traditions, leading to union with the universal spirit.

Marifah Dervishes follow beliefs similar to the Hazat Dervishes, except with an infusion of Tarif's Path and a more benign belief in the universe's growth.



The Diwin and Midnight Furies are Orthodox believers, although with an outlook far older. Animistic elements enter their spirituality, coming from the Orthodox traditions as practiced by the Ishwin Confederacy. They also use their abilities to help their extended kinfolk, considering it a gift from the Pancreator. The Church and Li Halan watch them closely, although they were blessed by Church representatives when they were mustered into the military. Only the necessity for their skills and the remoteness of the Ishwin Confederacy to Orthodox concerns keep them from being classed as Penitents.

Alone of the Dervish traditions, the Decados Screaming Dervishes follow no known mystical path. Believing in their superiority and loyalty to the Decados, they remain a closed sect. Treated as an elite group, they tend to be boastful and display cybernetic body parts as signs of valor in battle.

Behavior

Hazat authorities allowed great freedom among the Dervishes, provided that freedom resulted in loyalty and martial discipline. Allowing the original Penitents-turned-Dervishes to shape the society, the Hazat received a highly disciplined psychic force answerable to their authority. After the Emperor Wars, the Hazat attempted to retain their Dervish forces, but the troop's wide dispersal ensured that some would forge new loyalties. Strangely, this is not forbidden in Dervish society, since the highest love/loyalty lies with the process of creation itself, beyond any temporal authority.

A new recruit is called a Shurtah, or in Hazat slang, "los cuervos." A Shurtah undergoes intense battle training before advancing to psi-methods. The captains watch the Shurtah carefully, looking for defects in character. They teach the Shurtah self-scrutiny and mental techniques designed to release the psychic and mystical powers latent within.

After training, a Shurtah becomes a Hajib, or in Hazat slang, "Torbello." The term itself is thought to be of ancient origin, denoting a "doorkeeper." These are the Dervish soldiers, spies and field agents. Undergoing spiritual and mental exercises, the Dervish receives her new name at this stage and joins with the other Dervishes in a mystical ceremony. Rising above Hajib level takes great self-mastery and the recognition by superiors that one is ready to lead. Usually, a brief "retirement" first takes place: the Hajib removes himself from society to strengthen self-mastery, and then returns as a captain (Irfan). Battle toughness is expected, and the martial portions of their training are some of the toughest in the Known Worlds.

Irfan, an ancient term meaning gnosis, denotes a commander or teacher. The Irfan teach students, preparing their skills and honing their understanding of battle. Battle becomes a metaphor for life and ultimately, an understanding of creation and the individual's place in it. Self-scrutiny and the unveiling of desires is taught until

Allies and Enemies

Hazat: "The Hazat retain our loyalty: many who have left their service will not accept pay in any enterprise hostile to Hazat interests. Other Dervishes are equally loyal to their houses, although those who have been decommissioned seek employment elsewhere."

Invisible Path: "Too egotistical to understand the way of the Dervish, they are foes who have crossed our path in the past. We angered them because we were immune to their propaganda attempts. They destroyed Dervish barracks. In return, we slew any Invisible Path member we encountered. Our rivalry has calmed considerably since the Emperor Wars."

Favyana: "More altruistic than the Invisible Path, some Dervishes exchanged brief contact with them during the Emperor Wars. Some of us think there is hope for them."

Brother Battle: "Fearless Church warriors, we greatly admire their training and techniques. On Kurga, some Brothers fight side-by-side with us."

Temple Avesti: "Only noble house protection and our pledge to the Omega Gospels have prevented a war with them. The Avestites are a sign of what happens when an individual forgoes self-scrutiny in all things."

the student masters herself.

Above Irfan is the Hadith, a jurist who judges individual conduct, settles disputes and establishes guidelines and discipline. Hadith Dervishes are called "espíritu del fuego," or "spirit of fire" by the Hazat.

The highest rank is that of Ma'rifah (not to be confused with the name of the al-Malik dervishes), where the Dervish recognizes/joins the oneness of creation. At this stage, the Dervish leaves the society of her brothers and sisters and mystically merges with the source of all things.

Rising in Dervish society requires selflessness, fearlessness and complete honesty. Hazat refer to them as "guerrero santos," or warrior-saints. The code of ethics which the Dervishes loyally follow are high indeed, but so is their belief that they are chosen to aid in creation by purifying themselves. Generally, few rise to Irfan; fewer still rise higher. The other houses possess equivalent Dervish ranks, although Decados and al-Malik Dervishes are not encouraged to leave the service.

Coven Houses

The majority of Dervishes are housed in Nueva Verdad, on Kurga, a small military barracks town, when they are not serving as a mobile support army augmenting the Hazat forces. On Aragon, they are housed on a hidden base in the Quechua desert. Since the Emperor Wars, the contingent remaining is a small, token force, designed





for emergency use. On Istakhr, there is a small "front" shop operating in the Istakhr Market, in the Gund zone, where various Dervishes hire their services. Small Dervish contingents are also housed by the various noble houses and the Imperial Eye.

Persons of Power

Irfan Esteban Primivera

Irfan Primivera leads a contingent of Dervish mercenaries and bases his operations out of the Istakhr Market. Born on Vera Cruz and recruited early in his youth by the Hazat military when his psi talents emerged, the Dervishes have been his family since age 10. Rising in the organization, he reached the rank of Irfan just before the Emperor Wars ended. Esteban was one of the few survivors from the Siege of Jericho. Afterwards, when the Hazat disbanded the Dervish units, Esteban and some of his force hired on as mercenaries to the Li Halan on Rampart. Next, they fought for the Engineers. Finally setting up shop on Istakhr, Esteban now only takes assignments which are not contrary to Hazat purposes.

Esteban is a tall, thin man with dark features. He is an expert in martial arts, weapons and the path of FarHand. Self-assured — if not a strict disciplinarian — he is also an excellent cook and musician. He and his mercenaries hire out for individual and troop assignments.

Irfan Alita

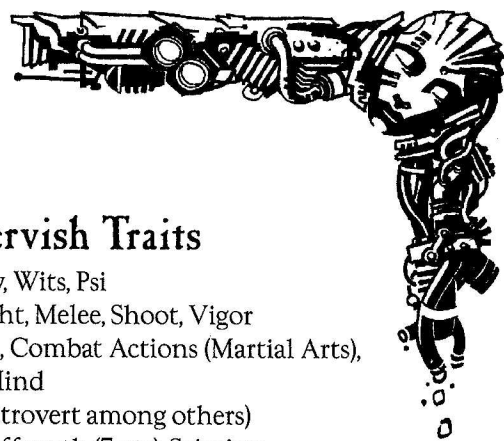
Alita Fuentes was born in the slums of Aragon to an unknown father and a seamstress. Spotted early for her talents, the Dervishes recruited her before the Church could declare her a Penitent. Alita was sent to the Dervish training school in the Quechua Desert, where she became an excellent warrior, honed in psi techniques. Chosen by Ma'rifa Salvador to become an Irfan, she lead her troops in the Emperor Wars on daring raids into Hawkwood and al-Malik territory. Some Dervishes thought her too rash and "unexamined," but the backing of their greatest Ma'rifa secured her place. Fighting besides Don Marcika Holuzio Rolas, it is rumored that they are lovers, an accusation Alita has neither confirmed nor denied. The dark-haired Alita followed Rolas to Kurga to battle the Caliphate. Rolas assigned her the task of discovering information on the Caliphate's Dervishes, and she excels at infiltration. Going behind enemy lines, she brought him back crucial information. Irfan Alita is of average height, known for her serious demeanor, although at times she answers questions in parables.

Roleplaying

Playing a Dervish

Whether one is playing an enlisted Dervish or a mustered-out veteran, there are a number of roles one can take:

Wandering Monk: The character is glad to be free to wander the worlds and discover the secrets of the



Pancreator in more personal conflicts than the wars offered. He hires himself out as a bodyguard or soldier, seeking new insights in far lands.

Hot-headed Fighter: The character only saw one battle before the wars ended. All her training honed her to be a war machine, and now there are no battles to fight (assuming she is not a Hazat Dervish). Thus, she wanders about getting into trouble, starting fights she may not be able to end.

Lonely Killer: The character's psychic powers were discovered late and he was conscripted into the Dervishes unwillingly (it was that or suffer Church imprisonment). While he proved an able warrior, his heart was never in it. After the wars, he returned to his village seeking to settle down. But his former family and friends feared him for what he had become, afraid of his powers. He was driven out by their fear and is now homeless. Preferring to leave his past behind, he does not seek out other Dervishes but instead tries to find new friends.

Gamemastering Dervishes

Dervishes provide an interesting group to use for any situation as allies, foils, third-party trouble makers, sources of wisdom, last minute cavalry, etc. Below are some drama ideas:

• **Never-Ending Battle:** You can take the Dervish out of battle but you can't take the battle out of the Dervish. The characters come across an embattled fief, full of suffering peasants and soldiers. It seems that the local lord gravely insulted a traveling band of free Dervishes, and now the psychic warriors are waging guerrilla war against him. This has gone on for weeks, and the lord has tried to parley with them many times, but to no avail: the Dervishes have sworn to either kill the noble or die themselves. The noble has pleaded for assistance from his other family members, but they are too afraid to help him (their own troops were thinned down too much in the wars and they don't want to risk them in such a squirmish). The lord offers vast riches to any who can stop the Dervishes. Can the characters bring peace between the two parties, or return with the heads of the Dervishes?

• **Warrior of Virtue:** The characters are contacted by an Amalthean priest who begs their assistance. It seems that a vile noble has been performing cruel tortures on his serfs. The Amalthean discovered the crimes but could provide no proof to any Church authorities, who will not act without such proof. He then sent in a Dervish he knew to fetch such proof. But the warrior was caught and now is forced to fight gladiatorial battles for the noble's pleasure. What's more, for each battle he loses, 10 peasants are killed. Only one man stands against the death of hundreds. The priest begs the characters to rescue the Dervish and bring back proof of the noble's crimes.

Traits

Suggested Dervish Traits

Characteristics: Dexterity, Wits, Psi

Natural skills: Dodge, Fight, Melee, Shoot, Vigor

Learned skills: Academia, Combat Actions (Martial Arts), Focus, Stoic Body, Stoic Mind

Curse: Weird (+1 pts: -1 Extrovert among others)

Benefices: SMG (3 pts), Stiffsynth (7 pts), Scimitar

Psychic Paths: Far Hand, Soma, Bedlam (see **Fading Suns**)

Players Companion, Chapter Eight: Rules)

Average Salary (only for those in active service): 6 firebirds/month

New Benefices

Dervish Rank (1-5 pts): This Benefice concerns a Dervish's standing in post-war Dervish society. The Hazat terms are used, but equivalent terms are used by Dervishes of other houses.

1 = Shurtah (recruit): A recruit undergoing training, recently admitted to the Dervishes.

2 = Hajib (soldier): The common Dervish soldier and the most common kind of Dervish. Few advance above this rank.

3 = Irfan (captain): A Dervish captain trains recruits in psychic techniques, warfare and certain aspects of mastering emotional states and self-control. She also lead them in battle.

4 = Hadith (judge): A Hadith judges the conduct of Dervishes, settle disputes and, at times, furthers the education of recruits. Hadith are the highest authority responsible to the Royal Houses for Dervish morale and discipline, and serve as camp confessors. Some go into battle, but this depends on the Hadith's own judgment.

5 = Ma'rifah (Wandering Seer): A Dervish who leaves Dervish society seeking mystical/psychic union with creation. Few do this, and the Royal Houses do not encourage it, but Dervish tradition allows for it.

Veteran Dispensation (3 pts): This is a legal right given to a Dervish allowing him freedom from the Orthodox ban on psychics, granted him by the Royal House he serves and recognized by the Church. The Hazat insisted on this protection, and it has precedents stretching back to immunities granted during the Symbiot Wars, but the Church often tries to nullify them by declaring a Dervish's behavior sinful. Legally, such a warrior is charged with learning the Orthodox teachings of the Omega Gospels and is expected to choose a confessor priest, although there are no guidelines on how often this priest must be consulted. Records of the Dervish's powers must be given to the Church, although they are often conveniently lost through bribery by a Royal House sponsor. This provision can be stripped if the Dervish engages in unlawful activities towards the nobility and the Church.





Banned from God: Sathraists

by Andrew Greenberg

Inquisitor Tolemay pressed himself against the side of the air duct as he heard voices below him on the ship's bridge. For seven days he had lived this way, squeezing his body into the smallest hidey holes at the slightest sound, staying in darkness and surviving on scavenged scraps of food. But now it looked like his sacrifices would pay off. He fumbled with the audio recorder his superior had given him while he cradled his *flamegun* in his arms.

"Brother Lowell, is the congregation prepared for communion?" he heard from the bridge.

"Yes, blessed one," he heard a deeper voice reply. "Would you care to lead us?"

Tolemay had waited a month for this moment. A drunken serf had told him about possible psychics within Sir Lowell Hawkwood's entourage. Following that tip had led to an even more troubling concern — that the knight and his fellow travelers were unrepentant Sathraists! It had taken a great deal of effort for Tolemay to sneak onto this ship and stay hidden, but now he was going to get the proof he needed. One couldn't accuse a noble of heresy without strong allies or definite proof, and Tolemay lacked the former. Of course, if he could pull this one off, his reputation would be made.

"I would be honored," replied the first voice, which Tolemay recognized as that of the ship's pilot. Another heresy! Nobles and freemen treating each other as equals. A bitter smile of anticipation crossed his face. These sins would ensure his place in the Inquisition.

"Brothers, prepare for the abundance of the void."

Suddenly the universe opened before Tolemay. The years of hurt and pain that had been his life melted away, replaced by a certainty of fulfillment and contentment. The stars engulfed him, bathing him in a warm, euphoric glow. He felt the entire universe around him, soft and comforting. Finally, he felt his place in it, and all the years of trial and travails he had spent becoming an inquisitor melted away before him.

"Now brothers, we give thanks for the blessings of infinity,"

the pilot said. "Also, we have a new member to welcome to our congregation. Would someone open the air vent, please?" Light from the bridge struck Tolemay's eyes, and he slowly stepped out of the vent.

"Sathra," he said, a small, satisfied smile on his face.

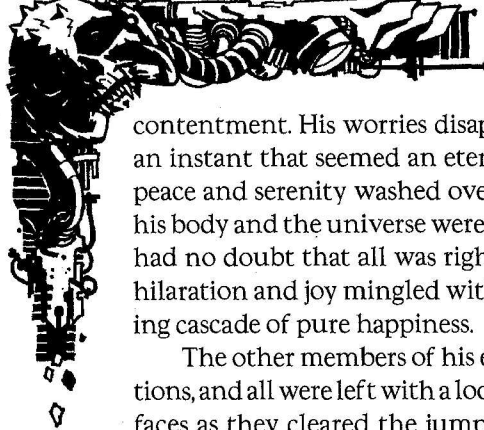
Space has long held religious significance for humans, whether they were plotting their destiny via the movement of stars and planets, looking for the homes of the gods, or even hoping for a way to escape their dreary lives. Those who discovered the jumpgate, however, viewed religion itself as something from the past, to be left behind as humanity reached into space. The first jump changed all that.

History

Nobody remembers Lee Ward, but early in the 24th century he had earned a reputation among pilots and their bosses as an astronaut without peer, as good as anyone when it came to flying a spaceship and better than anyone at dealing with the unexpected. Thus, when zaibatsu scientists learned how to activate the first jumpgate, he got the assignment of flying the first spaceship through it. It was an assignment he lobbied long and hard to get, using every bit of influence gathered during his distinguished career. All his life he had felt the pull of the stars, a pull he finally had the chance to fulfill.

He had little to do besides activate the jump engines — scientists had preprogrammed his route as best they could. So he took off in his modified Scout 32 Explorer, hopes high for an experience the likes of which no other human had ever enjoyed. He was not disappointed. The tingle of anticipation which seized his body as he activated the jump changed dramatically as the Explorer made its way through the gate. His anxiousness turned to complete





contentment. His worries disappeared into the void. For an instant that seemed an eternity, feelings of complete peace and serenity washed over his body. The sense that his body and the universe were one was complete, and he had no doubt that all was right with both of them. Excitement and joy mingled with this ease in a never-ending cascade of pure happiness.

The other members of his elite crew felt similar emotions, and all were left with a look of absolute bliss on their faces as they cleared the jumpgate. The ship's recording devices picked up their whispered "Sathra." On their return they let everyone know of the rapture brought on by the jump. The world they discovered became known as Sathra's Boon, and a movement to the stars began.

News of these experiences spread quickly, and the zaibatsu even promoted it as a means of attracting workers to their sites in newly discovered systems. As Sathraism spread, however, the zaibatsu's support changed to suspicion and then hostility. They saw their pilots meeting in secret, dealing with pilots from other companies. They saw colonists interested in going to space for the Sathra experience, not for opportunities to work for zaibatsu on new worlds. In fact, the Sathra Effect seemed to stimulate more travel, leading dedicated workers to leave their jobs and head for the stars.

The final straw came with the growth of psychic abilities among the Sathraists. With all their secrets in jeopardy, and with the pilots in ascendancy, zaibatsu leaders felt they had to strike quickly or lose their dominance. Should the pilots turn against them, the zaibatsu would have little chance. Their only option was a first strike.

Unfortunately, their security forces failed to round up all the pilots. Far too many were in space, and word spread like wildfire. The pilots controlled most of the ships, though the zaibatsu managed to install buffers on their main armed craft. The Sathraists began raiding prisons, hoping to free their brethren, and then the war turned truly bloody.

Massacres became the rule of the day, as the zaibatsu put unrepentant Sathraists to death and the Sathraists retaliated against captured zaibatsu. At first the Sathraists seemed to have an upper hand, but the vast numbers of their opponents soon made themselves felt. Despite their early victories in space, the Sathraists lacked the troops to defend their successes. While the zaibatsu could call on all humanity's resources to fight the war, the Sathraists had only a loyal few. Despite this weakness, the war continued for 10 years before the zaibatsu finally scattered the few remaining Sathraists.

"I curse humanity to a neverland of stagnation and obliquity," swore Abraham Wezniak, a Sathra leader, after finding his entire family slaughtered on a nameless asteroid far from Earth. He and other Sathraist leaders then disappeared, never to be seen again.

Diaspora

At this point, the Sathra movement divided into three distinct groups. The first, and best known, are the ones who appear on their own, after having flown on a ship whose buffer broke down or which they themselves dismantled. These spontaneous Sathraists make up the common image of them as trouble makers or wild-eyed evangelists. In the 50th century, they are the ones usually found by the Inquisition and tried at the stake.

The second are those who scattered to distant stars, presaging the Diaspora to come. They and their families found worlds never before seen by human eyes, and settled in distant parts of the universe. Alone in the stars, they established their own traditions far from their relatives on Earth.

The third, and most mysterious of the Sathraists, are those who made their way back into human society. That some did so, hiding themselves with technology and the powers of their minds, is undeniable. People know this because when Second Republic explorers made contact with distant Sathraists, the ones still in society revealed themselves.

The Second Republic

As humanity flooded through the jumpgates, they encountered more and more inhabited worlds, worlds where humans had developed in unexpected and sometimes shocking ways. Perhaps none of these cultures surprised humans as much as those founded by Sathraists.

By the time of the Second Republic, the legend of Sathraism had faded. Thought of as a long-dead religion for ancient revolutionaries, the discovery of several isolated worlds populated by Sathraists brought the entire controversy back to life. The Church, now a formidable power, fervently opposed the ancient heresy. When several political and economic leaders revealed themselves as Sathraists, the descendants of pilots who centuries ago burrowed back into humanity, the Church was outraged. It used every bit of its influence to vilify these moles, charging that all their achievements were tainted by ill motives.

The Sathraists' attempt to regain favor may have been doomed more by timing than anything else. Coming as it did during the last days of the Second Republic, the Sathraists had no chance to establish themselves before all society collapsed. One of the earliest targets of the Church and nobility, Sathraist worlds were converted at sword point, and those who had come out to humanity were slaughtered, along with their families. Their most notable achievement had been the construction of a few unbuffered ships.

The New Dark Ages

Within a few centuries of the Fall, no revealed Sathraists remained. Brother Battle gained much of its fame crushing their last enclaves, and now no one claims their heritage. Today the Church spends its time seeking those who might turn off their ship's buffers, and these are thought to be all that is left of Sathraism.

The Sathra Effect

At the heart of Sathraism is the jump experience, through which Sathraists feel a special link with the universe. It is not just a pleasurable experience; it is a sense of one's essential connection to everything else in existence. By the same token, it is not a consistent, predictable sensation. It seems to vary from person to person and even from jump to jump. It also has far more impact on the pilot than on anyone else. Still, enough about it is the same for everyone that those who have felt it know what others who have undergone it are talking about.

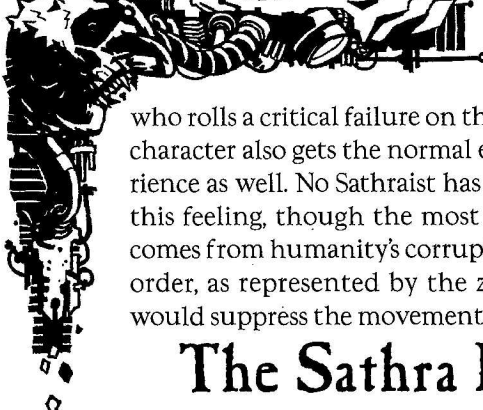
Anyone piloting an unbuffered ship through a jump must make a Calm + Drive Spacecraft roll and reference the following chart. Any passengers on that ship should make the same roll, but at -6 to the goal. Unless they have piloted an unbuffered ship before, they may not realize why they feel so good.

Victory pts	Effect
Failure	Pleasant experience but no other effect
0	Satisfying. Pilot gains +1 on all Calm rolls for rest of day
1	Invigorating. Pilot gains +2 on all Passion rolls for rest of day
2	Sublime. Pilot gains +1 on all Calm rolls for a week
3	Inspiring. Pilot gains +2 on all Passion rolls for a week
4	Profound. Pilot gains +1 on all non-combat rolls for rest of day
5	Transcendental. Pilot gains +1 on all non-combat rolls for a week
6+	Life Altering. Pilot can reduce Urge, buy off Curses, use experience to obtain new Blessings or anything else the gamemaster will allow

Gamemasters should feel free to come up with more levels for players who achieve more than 6 victory points. They may also want to allow pilots of unbuffered ships the opportunity to purchase the Psi characteristic even if they didn't have it previously.

While the Sathra Effect usually gives one a vision of a perfect universe, some who have experienced it have seen a glimpse of great evil behind the perfection — perfect malevolence, some have said. This happens to any character





who rolls a critical failure on the Sathra roll, though that character also gets the normal effects of the Sathra experience as well. No Sathraist has ever been able to explain this feeling, though the most accepted belief is that it comes from humanity's corruption within the universal order, as represented by the zaibatsu and others who would suppress the movement.

The Sathra Doctrines


Sathraists firmly believe that the glory they experience when they make a jump applies to all people, not just themselves. It is the possibility of humanity's perfection made manifest. All humans have the potential for perfection locked within them, but the only way to free it is by embracing the entire universe. Anyone who stays planet bound has no chance of attaining this peak.

The Sathra doctrines, handed down orally from one generation of Sathraists to the next, hold that making a jump is a spiritual transformation, during which the human spirit is, temporarily, without flaw. Not only is the spirit immaculate, cleansed of all ground-based defects, but it becomes something new and suprahuman. It is as though the caterpillar could get a glimpse of itself as a butterfly.

Indeed, modern Sathraists believe humanity was on the verge of a giant leap forward before the zaibatsu shut them down. They see the simultaneous rise of Sathraism, psychic powers and the Changed as proof of this, and feel a kinship with all these groups. Some Sathraists even view non-Sathraist psychics as traitors. While psychic phenomena preceded humanity's first jump, Sathraists believe it has always been the jumpgates which have given people access to the numenal realm. Psychics who do not admit this are stunting their growth and that of the entire race. After all, only those who actually pass through get the full experience of bliss and perfection.

Of those who pass through, pilots are different because they are the ones actually making communion with the gate — punching in the codes. As a result, they are usually looked to as leaders by other Sathraists, and all aspire to their position. A pilot flying an unbuffered ship is looked upon as something akin to a priest, while those on board are the congregation (willing or not). Sathraists have also tried to develop smaller and smaller craft, in order to make the jump more personal, but the vessel's size seems to make little difference.

Sathraism Today



When the Sathraists split up at the end of the First Republic, they planned on rejoining humanity at some point. Some went to the stars to ensure the survival of their families and the movement. Others returned to Earth and the other First Republic worlds to insinuate themselves into human culture. Their charge was to get revenge on their enemies and try to prepare the way for a

Sathra revival. For many, however, the quest for revenge became paramount, as did their desire to stay hidden. Consequently, the discovery of Sathra worlds led to an extreme backlash.

Those Sathraists whose families survived the end of the Second Republic find themselves in an even worse position than their predecessors. As far as they know, all the Sathraist worlds have been destroyed or converted. Their leaders in human society were killed, along with their families. Those who survived were the ones who refused to come forward, and now their descendants feel they may well be responsible for the failure of the revival. Had their ancestors come forward, maybe the outcome would have been different.

The hidden Sathraists continue their infiltration of human society, but without the same purpose that drove them before. They hold out little hope of reuniting with lost Sathra worlds. Were it not for the impetus laid on them by experiencing the Sathra Effect, they might give it up altogether.

Now they live for communion — the chance to experience a connection to a universe that has otherwise rejected them. Not all get the chance for regular, unbuffered jumps. Indeed, they envy the newly converted who have somehow obtained an unbuffered ship. The hidden Sathraists strive for positions in society where they can make a lot of jumps but still remain hidden. Both the Charioteers and Engineers have hosted Sathraists, but most feel such commissions are too obvious, targets for the Inquisition.

Instead they strive to become pilots in noble fleets, trying for the most isolated duties they can. They also seek out other hidden Sathraists, smuggling otherwise land-bound worshippers on board their unbuffered ships. Paradoxically, one of the best roles for them is as Inquisitors, flying small one or two-person crafts wherever they please.

Sathraists of Power

Sathraism lacks a rigid, defined hierarchy, and has never really had one. All look up to pilots with unbuffered ships, but they have no more rights or responsibilities than they take upon themselves. Sathraists tend to look upon each other as equals, for they have all felt the bliss of the jump.

Sir Lowell Hawkwood

Lowell first experienced the Sathra Effect on his own ship, his only inheritance from his parents. His pilot, a hidden Sathraist, felt Lowell to be ready and disabled the drive. Lowell experienced the full effect of the jump, and now believes with all his heart and soul that this must spread. He has actively sought out hidden worshippers and is trying to establish connections with as many as possible, making contacts in House Decados, the Scravers and, just recently, the Imperial Eye. Additionally, he hopes that Sathraist worlds might still exist. He is currently planning

Disabling a Sathra Damper

Shutting down the Sathra Damper on a starship is not an easy task. Besides the fact that it is a criminal activity, it is a highly specialized action: only trained starship engineers can accomplish it. These things were designed to resist such tampering and there are many baffles to work through.

In game terms, a character must attain 18 victory points on a sustained Tech + High-Tech Redemption roll. Any failed roll causes engine shut down (the character loses any victory points and has to start over again and the crew is alerted to tampering); a critical failure may result in permanent engine damage. While it is hard to shut a damper off, it is much easier to turn it on again: only three victory points are required (unless it has been damaged). A complementary roll of Tech + Science (Starship Engineering) can help with either roll.

It is much easier to sabotage a damper when the engines are off (such as in port). In this case, it only requires 12 victory points (a critical failure still damages the engine, although it may not be noticed until well into a journey).

There are rumors of ships installed with easy shut-off switches, but this usually requires tampering during the construction process, which would require a mole among the design crew — and these crews are heavily watched by Church representatives. Even if such heretical switches did exist, they would not be obvious.

a covert journey to Vuldrok space in order to meet up with a rumored group of believers.

Roleplaying

Playing a Sathraist

New Convert: This is the most common image humanity has of Sathraists. The character has flown on an unbuffered ship, whether it malfunctioned or was disabled, and been forever changed by the experience. He might be actively seeking out fellow worshippers or trying to make new converts. He will have to work desperately to keep his ship's secret from everybody, for he lacks the contacts the hidden Sathraists have to cover their tracks.

Hidden Sathraist: These are the most feared Sathraists. They are the ones no one would ever expect, those whose families have lived as part of a community for generations. They may be part of a noble house, a guild, the Church or even the Imperial Eye. They have contacts with a few other Sathraists in positions of power, and will do anything to help each other — or to experience communion.

Gamemastering Sathraists

There are no obvious differences between a Sathraist and any other inhabitant of the Known Worlds, and most Sathraists appear just like anyone else. Most identify themselves primarily as Sathraists, however, and hope to spread their faith as best they can, for the good of all.

All Lies: Rumors have cropped up about a spaceship in port with a disabled Sathra damper. Efforts to track down the ship succeed, and the characters discover an old scout ship looking for crew. Close inspection of the engines show that the dampers have been expertly turned off. This does not reveal the Inquisitors who are actually using the ship as bait to catch sinners.

High Risk: While on an important mission to another system, a battle with space pirates damages the ship's engines. While they are still functional, a one-in-a-billion shot has totalled the damper without trashing the ship's jump capabilities. Most of the crew is desperately afraid of making the jump without the damper, sure that demons of all kinds will infest the ship. The characters, however, must reach the next system. Quelling the mutiny should only be the start of their worries.

Traits

Suggested Sathraist Traits

Characteristics: Dexterity, Perception, Tech

Natural skills: Observe

Learned skills: Drive Spacecraft, Focus, Lore (Jumproads), High-Tech Redemption, Spacesuit

Blessing: Crack Pilot (4 pts: +2 to all Drive Spacecraft rolls)

Curse: Guilty (+2 pts: -2 on all rolls when confronting Church officials)

Benefices: Well-Traveled (5 pts)

Affliction: Addicted to Sathra Effect (+3 pts: must roll Calm + Stoic Mind to resist successive unbuffered jumps, with cumulative -2 penalty after each resisted jump), Dark Secret (+2 pts)

New Psychic Path: Sathra's Path

This psychic path focuses on space and humanity's relationship with it, especially as it affects the Sathra experience. Sathraists have long sought the ability to either bypass the buffer or experience the Sathra Effect without having to make the jump, but neither have succeeded.

Note that some of these powers (level 7 and above) involve projection of the mind across vast distances. The distances of certain other psychic powers (except Soma) extend from the mind's location, not the body's physical location.





Communion

(Level 1, Faith + Impress, sight, instant, 1W)

A pilot can pass his experience of the Sathra Effect on to other people, whether they want it or not. He uses this power at the same time he activates the jump, and can choose which people he wants to take Communion. The number of victory points on the Communion roll becomes the flocks' victory points on the Sathra roll. Note that the flock cannot have a better experience than the pilot, so the Faith + Impress roll cannot have more victory points than his own Calm + Drive Spacecraft roll.

Trail

(Level 2, Perception + Drive Spacecraft, solar system, 1W)

The psychic can sense to which star system the last spaceship through a jumpgate went.

Unlatch

(Level 3, Extrovert + Search, solar system, instant, 1W)

The Sathraist uses his connection with the void to reduce the reset time for jumpgates. Each victory points reduces the jumpgate reset time by one level. A critical success allows the Sathraist to open a jumpgate that has been purposefully closed. This power can only be used on a specific reset period once.

Latch

(Level 4, Introvert + Focus, solar system, instant, 1W)

The character can shut down a jumpgate just as if a ship went through it. Her Introvert + Focus roll takes the place of the reset roll (though the roll still fails if it exceed the Sathraist's Introvert + Focus). Note that a jumpgate cannot be Latched again until the reset time has passed.

Space Speech

(Level 5, Extrovert + Impress, solar system, 1W)

The psychic can send a one-word message through space to a single target. Each success on the Extrovert + Impress roll allows her to add either one word or one target to the message. These messages cannot begin or end at a planet or any celestial body with an appreciable gravitational pull, however.

Void Touched

(Level 6, Wits + Inquiry, distance, prolonged, 1W)

The character can sense the space around his own ship as if it were her body. Among other effects, every victory point give the character +1 to the goal number for all Drive Spacecraft rolls. Like Space Speech, this power does not work on any celestial body with a gravitational pull, nor does it sense anything within spaceships.

Search the Void

(Level 7, Calm + Search, variable, temporary, 1W)

The character's mind reaches out into space, acting just like Neutrino sensors (see **Forbidden Lore: Technology**). The number of successes on the Calm + Observe roll equal the number of AUs he can sense. The character can extend the duration by another 10 turns with the expenditure of an additional Wyrd point. Again, this power does not work in contact with any celestial body with an appreciable gravitational pull.

Void Mind

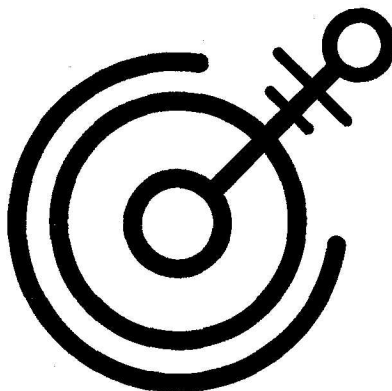
(Level 8, Ego + Focus, solar system, temporary, 1W)

The character can project her mind into space. Her body stays in its physical location, but her senses penetrate the void. If she is on a planet, she feels that she is just outside of the atmosphere. If she is in space, then her mind picks up just outside of her craft. Her senses can travel at the speed of light, and she can use all of her senses except touch. Again, she cannot sense anything occurring on any celestial bodies. The character can extend the duration by another 10 turns with the expenditure of an additional Wyrd point.

Vast Mind

(Level 9, Ego + Stoic Mind, variable, temporary, 1W)

The character can project her mind through a jumpgate (the gate does not have to be active). Her body stays in its physical location, but her senses "jump" across the void to a solar system on the other side. The number of victory points gained on the roll determines how many jumps the character's mind can make: three victory points allows the character to project her mind up to three jumps away (although she must still follow the known jumproads). However, each additional jump costs one additional Wyrd point. Knowledge of jumproads helps here; the character can only project to systems she knows she can reach (if she is not aware of the jumprouete from Pandemonium to Apshai, her mind cannot travel there). This power suffers the same general limitations as Void Mind. The character can extend the duration by another 10 turns with the expenditure of an additional Wyrd point.







Hymn to Dark Gods: Demon Cultists

by Sam Inabinet

1367 - VISTA EXTERNA EXTREMIS El Shaddam, the sun of the Nineveh system, now noticeably dimmer {use filter AMBER8364}, sets behind the ruins of Djah Harqut, the black tower stronghold of the original Heresiarch over two centuries ago {use model from 2nd episode, 1st season}.

Desmerallida [VOX IN ABSENTIA]: Stop! You fiend! I demand you remove your hands from me this instant! Beast! Cad!

Phaustulo [V.I.A.]: Patience, sweet child, for we are very nearly arrived!

1368 - VISTA INTERNA A dark cramped spiral stairwell through which Phaustulo is dragging Desmerallida by her manacled wrists.

Desmerallida: I cannot believe that my family was so blind as to trust a villain like you all these years! How could you betray us so?

Phaustulo: Dare you speak to me of betrayal? I who have served your house with loyalty and vigor for so long, and continue to do so even as we speak!

Desmerallida: How say you now?

Follow CAMERA AMBULANS to:

1369 - VISTA INTERNA The Ritual Chamber {use original set but be certain the designers have that new sigil we worked out at the last meeting} where a horde of minions are enacting the last phase of the summoning ritual {has anyone seen the choreographer in the past week?}. CAMERA PENDANS DESCENDE as ENTER Phaustulo and Desmerallida.

Phaustulo: Tell me, precious thing, and tell me true — what is your heart's dearest wish, that which would render your life complete and perfect?

Desmerallida: Well you know that it is to see my house restored to the one true throne of Nineveh!

Phaustulo: And it shall be made so, once my work upon this night is done! (As he speaks he leads her to the central altar slab and stretches her roughly across it.) Even as your heart belongs to your noble line, just so does mine belong to you. Know that I have

never lifted my hand but that I had your bidding to do so, or that my every effort was in pursuit of your pleasure!

1370 - VISTA PROXIMA as he leans close to her.

Phaustulo: I love you, my princess! Your pain draws my tears, and your desires I have taken into my heart and called my own!

Desmerallida: But... all those bodies... the horror...

Phaustulo: A necessary price to pay when the throne of a world is to be gained...

Desmerallida: You kept Yarmulida in that filthy cell! You were going to kill her!

Phaustulo: Indeed I was. But since you saw fit to liberate her, it seems I have a rather awkward void to fill in tonight's schedule of festivities!

1371 - VISTA PROXIMA as he swiftly affixes her manacles to the bolts set at each corner of the slab.

Desmerallida: But this is madness! You must desist!

Phaustulo: What has been put into motion cannot be undone now, my sweet...

1372 - VISTA EXTERNA the moat around Djah Harqut as first one bubble, then another, slowly crawls upward through the murk, pushes its way out of the stringy slime that mottles the moat's surface, and pops weakly.

1373 - VISTA INTERNA as Phaustulo straightens above the slab, arms upraised brandishing the ceremonial dagger {make sure Properties gets us a nice one this time — no more dragons on the pommel!}, backlit by the brilliant chaos of the interdimensional singularity forming between the Ur pillars.

Phaustulo: O great MEPHRASTOS hailed as god on worlds lost; O mighty MEFRASTOCLES lurker in the gate; O wise MAPHREXOTH sultan of the howling void; hear my —

Desmerallida: O please I do beg of you! Cease this mayhem at once! You just declared your love for me! Would you kill me now?

1374 - VISTA PROXIMA EXTREMA as a single blood-red tear rolls down Phaustulo's cheek.

Phaustulo: It is for love that I kill you, my princess. By your death will your heart's fondest wish be made real. Know that all that I have done, I have done for you. Only for you, my love.

ROTA SINISTRA to just over Phaustulo's shoulder, and FOCUS PROFUNDUS into the singularity where the face of the demon Mephrastrtoxath {run graphic MEPH89R7654 in case we can't get Sir Lyon out of the bottle and into makeup by shooting day} is materializing MATTA SUPERIMPOSA.

Mephrastrtoxath: YOU DID IT ALL FOR WHOM????

1375 - VISTA EXTERNA PROXIMA El Shaddam shrouded by dark layers of rapidly cooling coronal gases; some flares break through the haze and spreading sunspots can be seen beneath. {run graphic SHAD987654}

Chorus[VOX IN ABSENTIA]: Ah Desmerallida, now you know the price

Of curiosity. But can your innocence and beauty

Stay the killer's hand? Will the blow fall before

Sir Kaetrycke and PsyberKnight 7000

Can affect their escape from the proto-moat

and retrieve the sun's heart from the demon's clasp?

We shall return to Return of the Blood of the Heresiarch

After this word of hope for victims

Of task-specific neural injuries

From PsyberNet-X!

—“Return of the Blood of the Heresiarch,” Syndicated Holovision Ltd. 3988-3999, season 7, episode xvii

As the supreme bogeymen of the Fiftieth Century, practitioners of Antinomy enjoy a kind of influence that extends well beyond the reach of their own not inconsiderable powers. Merely whispering the word “Antinomy” is sufficient to start a panic in a crowded area. An accusation of Antinomy is generally as good as a conviction, since the Inquisition has never believed in the benefit of doubt. Devil-worship is cited as the root of all evil by everyone from peasant to Patriarch, and elaborate conspiracy theories abound, blaming Antinomy for everything from the assassination of Vladimir and the dimming of the stars to the Church's recognition of the Eskatonic Order and Alexius's more liberal economic policies.

Antinomists of all stripes, from the relative security of their habitual web of lies and secrecy, welcome this “free publicity.” They are notorious for claiming credit for every major misfortune that occurs, even those which they had no hand in whatsoever. The most common form of paranoia in the Known Worlds involves seeing demons and their minions everywhere and behind everything; standard Inquisitorial techniques make this nearly impossible to disprove, rendering some of the wildest delusions a part of accepted ecclesiastical history. As a consequence, the Antinomist acquires a mystique far deeper and more effective than any that one could achieve on one's own.

This is not to say, however, that most Antinomists are ineffectual posers; the ubiquity and (relative) efficiency of the Inquisition tends to quickly trim such diabolical deadweight. Those that remain may have bartered away their chance for salvation, but they gain much in the way

of worldly power in return. Their masters, barred from entry into the physical world, are nevertheless capable of granting their mortal servants powers which dwarf any individual psychic's capacity and even rival the theurgic rites of the Universal Church itself. The mightiest heroes of the Known Worlds would be hard pressed to find a more formidable opponent than a well-established Antinomian cult.

History

Any discussion of Antinomian history is rendered problematic, not only by the secrecy with which their work is, by necessity, shrouded, but also on account of the fact that all the groups and individuals who fall under this broad category are a fractious, distrustful and often downright insane lot, shot through with bitter rivalries and jealously guarding dark enigmatic secrets. While the Order of the Dragon has grown steadily since Vladimir's time until it came to provide a degree of unity among widely divergent cults, Antinomists seldom join together or cooperate except when it is the only way to achieve a common goal. (And even then, all factions would do well to watch their backs once victory has been gained.) Consequently, Antinomian history is almost entirely subjective, as little hard information can be gleaned from the covert counter-propaganda of rival factions. The only “definitive” and “unbiased” studies of the black arts come from sensationalistic poorly-researched holo-documentaries produced during the late Second Republic (which mainly relied on recycled “Satanic” myths from old Urth for their material), and standard ecclesiastical history.

Stories of demon-trafficking and its consequences date back to ancient Urthish prehistory, but rarely contain any genuine information regarding the subject. Such tales, then as now, were usually no more than cautionary parables, cultural propaganda or sensationalistic entertainment. Other worlds have their own stories to tell, as well. Although Obun was free of such aberrant behavior until the advent of the human race, their mythology is quite clear about the nature of the “War in Heaven” and descriptions of the fallen and vanquished coincide in most important respects to any demonological study. Ukar mythology, far more dark and violent in tone, has always been held suspect by the Church and other xenophobes; their funerary rites have been outlawed as being Antinomian in nature, thanks to the human Manja religion's purloining of their culture. Even the unsubtle and unsecretive Vorox have old tales of shamans “with bugs in their brainballs” who called great beasts out of the earth or skies.

The earliest case of purported Antinomy occurred on Sathra's Boon just before the start of the Diasporan period, and centered around a mysterious figure who styled himself Twylau of Sutekh. Twylau was an astrophysicist caught up in the Sathraist movement, addicted to the ecstasy of unbuffered jumps and intellectually fascinated

by the secrets revealed therein. Investigations eventually disclosed that Twylau was visiting secret alien ruins and ritually sacrificing willing members of his crew, whom he had convinced would be "transformed into subtler beings" by the "Lords of the Gates" to which their deaths were dedicated. When word of the "Pied Piper of Sathra's Boon" reached Urth's news media, that was the beginning of the end for open Sathraism, and one of many reasons that Sathraism and Antinomy are identical in the eyes of the Church. Twylau himself escaped justice, making a series of unknown jumps to star systems as yet uncatalogued by First Republic explorers. Hazat legends tell that he lived for many centuries on a world now part of the Kurgan Caliphate.

Antinomy in the Omega Gospels

Unless one includes the story of Zebulon and the exorcised demons on Grail (where he was struck down by the demons he fought and healed by Amalthea), or of the Hedge-Witch of Delphi (who later converted to the new faith anyway), only one direct mention of Antinomic practice appears in the Omega Gospels, the casting down of Durago of Cadavus told in *Chroniculae III*, 6:12-18:

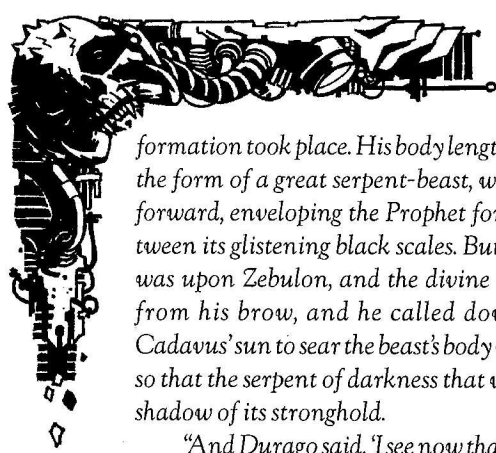
"When Zebulon had made planetfall, the folk of Cadavus thronged about him in multitudes, beseeching him in desperate tones: 'A darkness is upon our land, and sorrow hath been writ across the face of our world. A creature of great evil power makes its lair in the badlands, and sends forth its minions to scourge our communities, souring the land, poisoning the water and the skies, putting our homes to the torch and carrying away our firstborn sons and daughters, never to be seen again. Word hath reached us that thou art a man of power and compassion, wherefore do we implore thee to drive out this menace.'

"And so Zebulon made ready for the trek into the badlands, and when the minions of the dark one moved to bar his way, grim was their aspect. But Zebulon raised his hands and made the sign of the gate before their eyes, and the faithless ones fell back before its power.

"And the Prophet entered into the badlands, where the earth had been scorched and the rivers ran black and crimson and ochre, and the skies hung heavy with ash and the wind bore noxious fumes which stung the eye and burned the throat. Before him he saw the jet-black tower of granite which the evil one had caused to be raised for his lair. And the evil one came out of the tower and beheld Zebulon, and spake unto him, saying, 'Lo! thou fool who doth venture where he hath not been bidden! Know thou that I am called Durago, and I have made claim to these lands even as I stretch forth the shadow of my hand across them. For I have looked into the heart of darkness that abideth beyond the far-flung stars, and lo! did I find much power and knowledge therein. Prepare now thyself for doom, churl, and feel the wrath of one possessed of true power!'

"And the one who called himself Durago dropped to the ground, and even before his belly touched the dust a terrible trans-





formation took place. His body lengthened and writhed, and took the form of a great serpent-beast, which coiled itself and lunged forward, enveloping the Prophet forasmuch as to crush him between its glistening black scales. But the grace of the Pancreator was upon Zebulon, and the divine light of wisdom shone forth from his brow, and he called down the cleansing flame of Cadavus' sun to sear the beast's body with its wholesome holy fury, so that the serpent of darkness that was Durago recoiled into the shadow of its stronghold.

"And Durago said, 'I see now that thou art not without power thyself. Thy gaze hath penetrated far, yea, but know that my understanding is greater still. For I have sried even unto the end of history, when the races of man and his servants have fallen into the dust, and the darkness between worlds swells to swallow even the burning stars themselves!' And the serpent-body of Durago grew greater still and unfolded itself to become a hoary dragon of legend, rising into the sky and unfurling its wings until all day-light was gone from the face of the land.

"And Zebulon spake unto him, saying, 'This have I seen as well, but that is not all, for beyond the darkness, yea, and even within it, are there yet brighter glories for man to behold.' And the Prophet knelt, and kissed the ground before him.

"And where the Prophet had pressed his lips, there did a tiny crack appear, which spread forth until it became a fissure, which spread forth yet until a vast canyon was opened up across the face of the world, and the molten heart of the planet could be seen. And the evil one did fall into the tormenting flames at the earth's core, and the Durago-beast's howls of agony and anguish could be heard even unto the moons of Cadavus."

(The story is related in more detail in Horace's Epistles, and many conflicting versions can be found in various obscure apocrypha.)

Histories Written in Blood

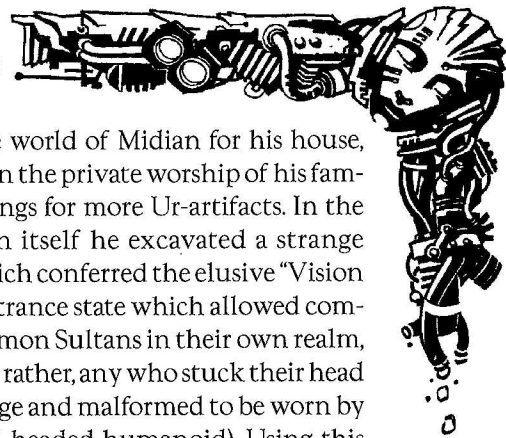
Although the Inquisition had yet to rise to the powerful position it now occupies, its early influence, particularly where charges of Antinomy were concerned, was demonstrated by the story of Alphonz Govarisz, an advisor to Zofia Decados. An escaped Severan peasant, captured by the Church, was granted sanctuary in exchange for information about the unpopular house. Among other things, the serf claimed to have witnessed many bloody ceremonies conducted by Govarisz. An inquisitorial expedition was organized with the express purpose of bringing the Decados down by revealing their wicked ways to the other houses. The party presented themselves to Zofia and declared that they had sufficient reason to subject the Decados holdings to a thorough investigation, and that any heretics so discovered would be executed on the spot. Zofia demanded to be told their "sufficient reason," and the accusation against Govarisz was repeated to her. Without a word to the visitors, she summoned the advisor, who appeared hurriedly and prostrated himself before her as was customary for her regime. Before a formal greeting had even passed through Govarisz' lips, Zofia raised her cybernetic arm which she had fitted with a heavy serrated blade,

and nonchalantly parted the head of her advisor of two decades from his shoulders. As servants scurried to mop up the inlaid marble floor, Zofia placed the severed head in a golden bucket half-filled with salt and presented it, the lifeless carcass, and all of Govarisz' personal holdings and possessions to the inquisitors. Because no evidence of Antinomy was found among his effects, and all the other accusations of the escaped serf were of a secular nature, House Decados as a whole avoided close scrutiny on this account.

Even the Church seemed to forget about its diligent pursuit of Antinomists during the Second Republic, lacking the resources and influence for prolonged battles against heresy and easily finding more worldly evils to attack. Since the prevailing scientific beliefs offered far more tangible avenues to power, authentic accounts of necromancy and demon-trafficking are absent from Republican history. Of course the Church still insisted such enormities did occur, but, without any proof to support them, most citizens dismissed such claims as quaint superstitions, a survival from an ignorant, unenlightened age. In the last century of the Republican period, however, that was to change.

In 3903, Orvil Laibauch d'Amendiz, a noted physician and professor of comparative anatomy at the Phavian Medical University, was brought to trial for multiple murders and "crimes against nature" (an archaically phrased and nebulously defined charge usually reserved for unlicensed terraformers and poachers operating in endangered alien ecosystems). D'Amendiz' trial stretched out over the next three years, unusual for the normally efficient and speedy Republican justice system; as the details of the case unfolded, jaded citizens looked on with increasing interest and horrified fascination. Doctor d'Amendiz freely confessed to the two dozen murders with which he was charged, including four of his student research assistants and one of his own grandchildren. Furthermore, he provided details (drawn from his own personally encrypted journal files) of nearly 100 other murders and 17 unlicensed vivisections, and recalled an uncountable number of animal mutilations going back to early childhood. He discussed his activities openly with both the courts and the news media, without ever showing the slightest hint of guilt, remorse or shame. He claimed that all his victims were fully aware of his intentions and gave him their fully expressed permission on sealed holofiles which he kept for this very occasion; most of them (like his grandson Mic) were terminal patients, fallen prey to the few incurable ailments that remained in the late Republic.

What truly fascinated and horrified the public, however, was the doctor's rationale for his atrocities. Claiming to be able to read the future in the viscera of his victims, d'Amendiz made a number of predictions considered outrageously absurd by his contemporaries, but which have since come to pass in the Dark Ages. Most records of his



predictions were lost during the Fall, but some occasionally resurface in the archival files of surviving Republican think machines. Orvil Laibauch d'Amendiz was later immortalized as the mythic founder of the so-called College of Horuspication, which preserves many of his original divinations in their oral tradition.

The d'Amendiz case sparked an occult craze in the final century of the Second Republic. Devil-worshippers became the stock villains in popular entertainment, and charlatans made and squandered fortunes on a weekly basis, peddling "dark secrets" and a new aesthetic for decadence. Even the respected Phavian Institute opened a Department of Archaic Paraphysics devoted to the study of pre-industrial occult practices like primitive shamanism, ceremonial magick, spiritualism and folkloric superstitions. The climax of this craze came in 3973 with the release of "The Heresiarch," a melodramatic visual extravaganza loosely based upon the d'Amendiz trial with liberal helpings of pre-Republican superstitions interspersed throughout. "The Heresiarch" spawned six sequels, including the equally popular "Blood of the Heresiarch," and a holovision series, as well as a number of inferior imitations.

Dark Renaissance: In the Courts of the Pre-Cardanite Li Halan

Building on these auspicious beginnings, modern Antinomy found its fullest expression in the early Dark Ages, nurtured in the decadent bosom of the Li Halan before their conversion to the Orthodox Church. The house originally opened itself to demonic influence shortly after the collapse of the First Republic, when Yasuo Nan-chen Li Halan, son and heir of Adriano I, Protector of Kish, received a vision of the dark realms lying beyond normal space and was contacted by an ancient powerful entity calling itself Pangeren. This being claimed to be one of the most powerful of the "Demon Sultans," and offered its protection to House Li Halan in return for regular ceremonies in its honor. Yasuo readily agreed, forming a compact which ensured his house a prolonged and glorious existence. He declared his name to be Lucifer the Sathraist and scandalized his people with debased bacchanalian parodies of Sathraic rites.

The Compact of Lucifer bolstered the young already-growing house, as secret temples were carved out under the manors of the most powerful Li Halan, and rites celebrating Pangeren were observed with regularity. The Ukar War invigorated this secret worship, as celebrants of the Compact learned of the Ukar myths concerning "Pangeren the Thrice-Accursed." Refugees from war-torn Ukar found homes on Li Halan worlds, and one mated with Princess Cassandra to produce one of the greatest leaders of the early Li Halan, Leonardo the Magnificent (called "Demonson" by his enemies).

Besides claiming the world of Midian for his house, Leonardo expanded upon the private worship of his family by scouring his holdings for more Ur-artifacts. In the Valley of Skulls on Icon itself he excavated a strange preadamical headdress which conferred the elusive "Vision Dark," a hyperconscious trance state which allowed communication with the Demon Sultans in their own realm, upon any who wore it (or rather, any who stuck their head inside it, for it was too large and malformed to be worn by any normal-sized round-headed humanoid). Using this alien device, Leonardo contacted a great number of entities from beyond, and commissioned a number of figurines to be sculpted according to his descriptions. Arranging these around Pangeren's likeness in an obscene pantheon, he formed pacts of his own with each one in turn, selling percentages of his soul like so many zaibatsu stocks. Although he accomplished much during his reign of nearly two centuries, word of his multiple dark allegiances — many of which conflicted with each other — spread among the peasantry, and to this day the serfs of Midian refer to Leonardo the Magnificent as the Patchwork Prince.

The private worship of House Li Halan fell by the wayside during the Second Republic as the house courted the Church for a political ally, to distance itself from the central government. Many of Pangeren's temples were left abandoned, and others dismantled, their idols smashed or sold to art collectors and archaeologists. Lucifer's secret army of psychics, the Inari, disbanded and became the hidden Invisible Path coven. Whole branches of the family forgot the Compact of Lucifer, and those that remembered kept their practices secret, ruling their house from the shadows behind the thrones. With the Fall, though, the old ways returned with a vengeance.

Prince Tupal renewed the active worship of Pangeren along with much of Leonardo's original pantheon, and set his own ceremonial grotto in the center of a large tract of enclosed wilderness. This was the site of his infamous "Demon Nights," when captives of the house were set loose on the grounds and hunted down by Tupal, his family and any other visiting nobles who exhibited a taste for such entertainments. Prisoners could be tracked on foot by a solitary aristocrat with only a sword, or flushed out to open ground by stomping columns of torch-wielding servants, there to be shot by less adventurous nobles in hovering air yachts. Prince Tupal also established a school of refined torture methodology which was later to produce the Garden of Seven Pains.

A descendant of Tupal was Kelniron the Cruel, a womanizing sadist who killed or tortured prisoners as his fancy struck him. Claiming the right of barbaric kings on ancient Urth, he demanded that all virgin women in his lands be brought to him that he may be the first to deflower them. Those who especially pleased him were housed in his summer manor, ever on hand for his immediate enjoyment. In this manner he eventually accumu-



lated a seraglio of twelve odalisques which he identified with the signs of the zodiac in Icon's skies. For years he adored his harem, granting them liberties which were unheard of for the Li Halan worlds of this period, until in his later years he discovered that one of his mistresses had once had an affair with one of his jailers. Overcome with rage but calculating and devious to the end, he had each concubine poisoned with toxin extracted from herbs and roots ruled over by that woman's "sign." One by one his mistresses fell, some passing quietly in their sleep, others seized with convulsions and vomiting blood before their courtly friends. Finally, the last woman recognized the pattern developing around her and robbed Kelniron of his revenge by having the appropriate poison concocted and swallowing it herself, rather than waiting for it to come from Kelniron's hand.

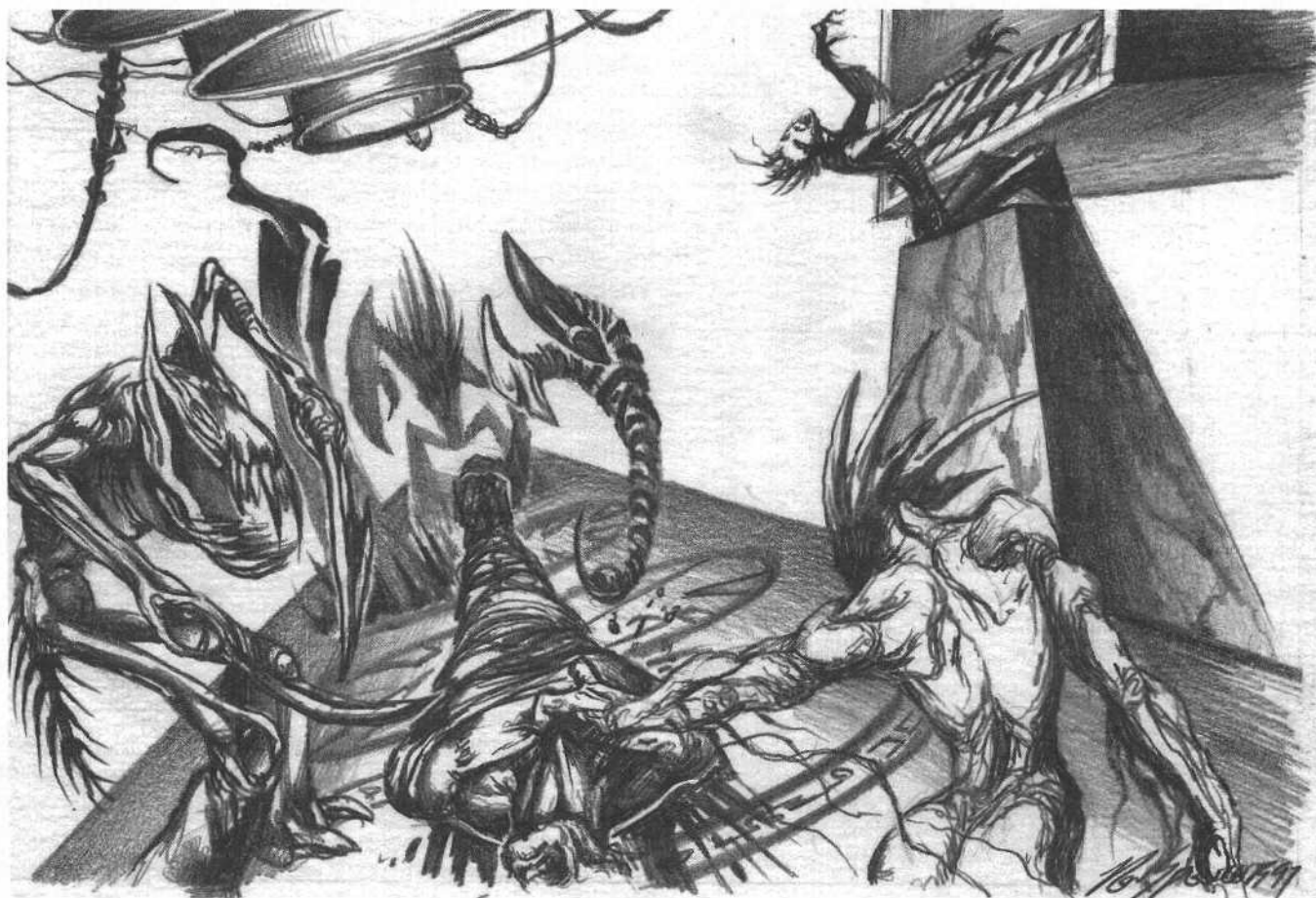
After Kelniron the Cruel was Ustirin the Unspeakable, a shy young scholarly type who revitalized Leonardo's pantheon through his studies of Obunish and Ukari myths. So obsessed with the preadamic "gods" was Ustirin that he grew to identify with them completely, even donning ornate masks representing the household demons and masquerading as them during the celebratory rites. Reinstating Tupal's Demon Nights, Ustirin built upon the old hunting ground, further confounding his hapless victims with a cunning hedge-maze populated with venomous thorn-vines and carnivorous plants, patrolled by the occasional roving predator. A contemporary of Ustirin was

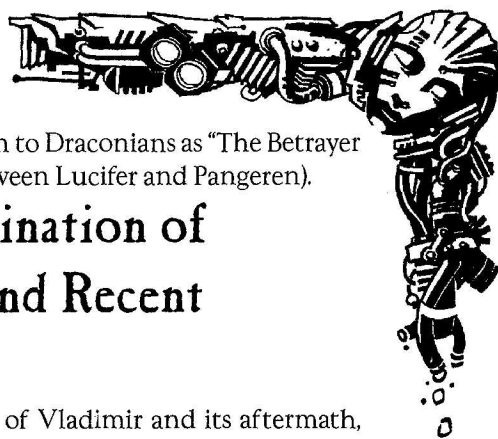
Maugon Han Li Halan, who plundered Ustirin's Ukari studies to found Sukara Manja, the dark precursor to the modern Manja cult (see *Fading Suns Players Companion*).

One day, Ustirin sat watching a young man, a son of one of his prisoner-wrangers, working in the maze. From where he sat, Ustirin could see that one of his Midian adders, recently introduced to the deadly menagerie, was stalking the lad. When the snake reared to strike, the young man turned and stared at it with fierce intensity. The adder was cowed and squirmed away. Ustirin was so impressed with this display of pure will power that he took the boy under his wing and had him trained in the practice of thaumaturgy.

This was Evandros, formerly of Cadavus, and as Ustirin had guessed he showed a remarkable talent for the black arts, quickly surpassing his teachers and assuming the position of high priest in Ustirin's rituals. Evandros was said to be able to attain the Vision Dark through meditation alone, a coveted ability since Leonardo's Ur-helmet had been lost or hidden away after the demise of the Patchwork Prince. Furthermore, Evandros was skilled in leading others to that elusive state, and the rites of Ustirin flourished as Evandros' influence and capability increased.

Ustirin himself grew monstrous with power, and took up the practice of cannibalism, devouring his captives to gain their strength after scrying in their entrails for signs and portents. Pleased beyond measure with the pitiful wailing of his victims, Ustirin commissioned Evandros to





build an instrument which would capture and modulate the sounds of agony. Understanding that there is no greater torture than to witness the gradual disintegration of one's soul, Evandros accomplished what is perhaps the most ambitious event in the annals of ritual magic. Seven demons of varying strengths were summoned at one time into circles in different regions of the garden, and select captives were bound and dragged slowly, feet first, through the circle. Each circle was surrounded by an acoustic chamber which channeled the agonized screams of the prisoners through the matrix of a conventional pipe organ fitted with a variety of wind instruments. This elaborate arrangement was dubbed the Garden of Seven Pains, and realized Ustirin's and Evandros' ideal of the transformation of pain into art. Much "liturgical music" was composed for Ustirin's rites, and the Garden may have been responsible for the ruination of Arturo Grenaldi, a renowned clavichordist who once demanded to play the remarkable instrument while on a visit to the Li Halan court, unaware of its true nature.

Evandros of Cadavus lived over a century, perfecting his art. He founded the longest continual tradition of Antinomian practice in the Known Worlds, the Ordo Draconis, or Order of the Dragon, and wrote the Draco Codex as its seminal text. He served as advisor to Princess Desiderdre, and the infamous Amadeus Li Halan, the black magician of Byzantium Secundus immolated by Bishop Odel of Brother Battle, claimed to have studied under him.

Evandros investigated every form of the black art, becoming especially interested in necromancy toward what is believed to be the end of his life. He invited Schedred d'Erlet, a necromancer hunted by the Inquisition, and Sanjiro Li Halan, successor of Maugon Han and reformer of the Manja cult, to dine with the princess in the Garden of Seven Pains. As to what transpired at this meeting, stories vary; Draconians characterize Sanjiro as a supremely ungracious guest, rejecting all hospitality extended him and personally assaulting d'Erlet, while Sanjiro's followers claim that the excesses of cruelty and perversity that he witnessed in Desiderdre's court necessitated these actions and what was to follow. As to the aftermath of the meeting, history is clear enough. Sanjiro and the branches of the Li Halan which adhered to his cult enlisted the aid of the Church in breaking the rule of the mad princess, dissolving her court and taking over her holdings. D'Erlet fled to Malignatius where he founded the College of Necromantism, and Evandros disappeared but was believed to perpetuate the Draconian cult in secret.

That the Draconian tradition was not completely dispelled from House Li Halan was illustrated by the early career of Prince Rikard Cardano Li Halan, "the Red Demon" who some say had the aid of the martial hordes of the 5th Qlippoth when he repelled many local barbarian incursions. After his conversion to the Church of the Ce-

lestial Sun, he was known to Draconians as "The Betrayer of the Compact" (i.e., between Lucifer and Pangeren).

The Assassination of Vladimir and Recent History

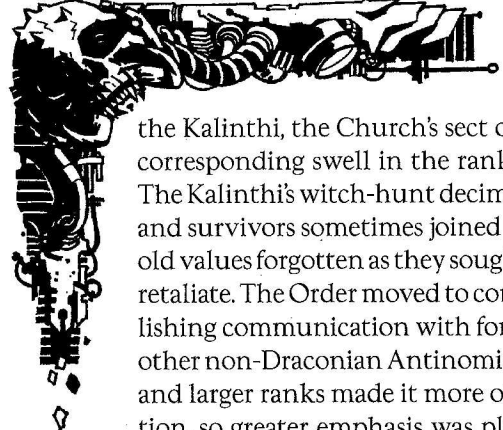
Of the assassination of Vladimir and its aftermath, little can be said with certainty, because every Draconian cult currently in existence claims to trace its history back to that time, and will tell in detail how it was they, and they alone, who cleared the path to the throne for the first Emperor, and then orchestrated his subsequent downfall after some slight or betrayal. One infamous version was given by a convicted member of the now-extinct Sihr Dreghu cult on early 48th century Istakhr. Her dying statement of repentance, extracted by torture and possible experimental misuse of a Republican "brain-reading machine," describes how Vladimir willingly allied with the Sihr Dreghu to petition the demon Ashtarath for power, then betrayed the cult to the Mutasih, the al-Malik secret police. A nearly identical tale was told by captives from the rival Sirr Duraaqh cult, but Ba'aluzath was the entity summoned. In both versions, Vladimir is placed on Istakhr at times when he was clearly fighting elsewhere; also, the Mutasih appear as secret police several years before their actual genesis as Istakhr market guards.

Any demon that can be interrogated on the subject will give a similar story, declaring itself to be the sole kingmaker and kingbreaker involved. Most rivalries between various branches of the Draconian tradition can be traced back to these conflicting shadow histories.

Paradoxically, the most accurate occult history of this period is derived from Inquisitorial records. The most notable enemy of Antinomy at that time was Argus the Vigilant, who revealed quite a bit about the demonic activities of his day in his *Instructiones Inquisitorum*. Argus made his career by bringing down the most dangerous Antinomist of the era, one Li Arvi, a highly accomplished demonist who worked in secret and managed to infiltrate the office of Archbishop Geraltus, Argus' predecessor as Grand Inquisitor. With the aid of Draconians associated with House Decados, Li Arvi brought about the death of Geraltus on Holy Terra itself. His trial and martyrdom (as the Ordo Draconis views it) is detailed in the *Instructiones Inquisitorum*, and illustrates the great extent of his thaumaturgic power whereby he managed to summon one of the most powerful demons of the greater Qlippoth (which one is unknown, as several proclaim their involvement) onto protected and sanctified Terran soil. Following Li Arvi's martyrdom, his demonic allies avenged his capture and death by tearing Argus to shreds as he lay in bed, their bodies — but not their actions — invisible to the Archbishop's staff which looked on in terror.

The century which followed saw the rise in power of





the Kalinithi, the Church's sect of demon-hunters, and a corresponding swell in the ranks of the Ordo Draconis. The Kalinithi's witch-hunt decimated many pagan covens and survivors sometimes joined up with the Order, their old values forgotten as they sought powerful allies to help retaliate. The Order moved to consolidate its power, establishing communication with forgotten branch cults and other non-Draconian Antinomists. Its increased activities and larger ranks made it more of a target for the Inquisition, so greater emphasis was placed on secrecy with regard to both the universe at large (to protect its operations) and within its own hierarchy (to protect the upper echelons). By the end of the 48th century, it had renamed itself the Ordo Draconis Tenebris, or the Order of the Dragon of Darkness, to signify its more covert nature.

Since that time, the battle between the Church and Antinomists has become more pitched, and many cults have been dragged into the light. In 4813, the leaders of a group of pagan spiritualists on Manitou were executed by the Vau and the survivors fled to Cadiz seeking sanctuary at the cathedral there. When it was learned that many of the spirits revered by the group were recognized as demons by the Church, the survivors were burned en masse by the Inquisition. In 4876, Hrolvost Flamebeard, the most aggressive of the Vuldrok raiders, was captured and crushed beneath stone weights after admitting he had sacrificed Hawkwood captives to preadamic "gods." During the Emperor Wars a conspiracy was uncovered among the ranks of Muster mercenaries, led by a cult which called itself the Obsidian Legion and used demonic power to enhance the fighting abilities of its soldiers. Remnants of the Pre-Cardanite Draconians were found to have instigated some of the peasant uprisings on Rampart following the Emperor Wars.

Tantra

The word "Antinomy" translates as "against the name (of the Pancreator)," and was first coined by Patriarch Palamedes during the Ukar War. Over time, "Antinomy" became a blanket term for any idea or activity which the Church deemed to be a threat to its own authority. After the Fall, Antinomy was more precisely defined as it became clear to the Church that certain heresies had to be tolerated in order to maintain its own existence (such as the study of technology necessary to keep starships and terraforming engines running.) In 4307, the Patriarch signed an edict drafted by the Temple Avesti which specifically identified three types of activity as being entirely Antinomian in nature: demonism, necromancy and horuspication. (While the Church, and consequently most people in the Known Worlds, consider these three practices to be interchangeable branches of one great evil conspiracy, in actuality they are entirely separate schools, converging only in general cosmological philosophies elucidated in the work of predominantly Draconian syncretists. In fact, most practitioners of these divergent

traditions seldom meet, interact or cooperate, except in Avestite dungeons.)

De Naturae Daemonis

Different theories are held concerning the exact nature of demons. Even the Church fathers will admit that they seem to be abstract embodiments of pure idea, as are the angels of the Empyrean, but unlike angels are not able to manifest themselves without elaborate thaumaturgical preparations (and even then only under strict conditions and limitations). Doctrine varies as to their origin. The early Eskatonic Chardonius, in his *Supputations*, postulated that demonic entities were the natural shadow cast by the Divine Light, and went on to declare that every demon was the conceptual opposite of an Empyrean angel. (Chardonius was finally burned for heresy when he dared to state that the existence of demons was just as intrinsic and necessary to the act of creation as the existence of angels.) The Vestic jurist Velensuela offered a less esoteric view, claiming that demons were originally created along with the Empyrean angels but revolted against the Pancreator and were driven out of the light of the Divine Emanations. Narrating visions she had received in dreams, Velensuela filled over six volumes with apocalyptic descriptions of the "War in Heaven," detailing certain engagements between specific rival entities with near-military precision. Only marginally accepted into the Orthodox canon, Velensuela's revelations shaped most people's notions about demons, having been accepted whole cloth by the later Temple Avesti and having been adapted into a popular holo-animation series during the Second Republic.

As one leaves the comfortable domain of Church-approved speculation, wilder theories abound. A fragment from the Stellar Apocryphon, probably derived from Twylau's work, states: "All the unbodied intelligences, whether beneficent beings of the Empyrean or the deceivers who lurk in darkness, have no notion of the inexorability of time or of the separations of space, save only insofar as such might fall within their individual purviews. Being discorporate as they are, they understand others only in terms of their will or intent, and interact with others only through relationships of the mind or heart. Creatures of the dark under-realms in particular, devoid of the benefits inherent in working the will of the Pancreator, may not present themselves in the material world without the clearest definition and demarcation of their relationship with those deranged souls who have called upon them. Know that no demon has ever glimpsed the created universe, but that a contract be drawn between the foul thing and its summoner, their relationship being delineated in specific terms of condition, constraint and obligation, each working for the other in their turn." By this way of thinking, the free-roaming fiends who swarm the Known Worlds thick as locust clouds are nothing more than the Church's pious paranoia, their very existence

being impossible without a contract, the Devil's Pact, to set forth the terms and conditions of their existence.

Twylau himself was far more specific concerning the origin of demons. He claimed that they were the legacy of the jumpgate-builders, the Anunnaki, whose lesser servitor race was abandoned when the Greater Anunnaki themselves vanished. Little more than ghosts, these lesser ones often congregated in the areas of the Empyrean most closely connected to the space around the jumpgates, upon which they had toiled endlessly during their lives. Twylau sought to free them from this limbo, hoping to learn their secrets and gain access to their near-godlike technology.

Paradoxically enough, it is the Draco Codex that seems to accord most closely with orthodox doctrine concerning demons. In particular, the Codex claims that demons are able to affect the physical world (albeit in a very limited way) without actually manifesting. Both the Church and the Codex agree that certain types of thoughts and feelings (sinful ones, according to the Church) open a small portal to the Qliploth, from which minor devils may whisper encouragement and advice to the sinner. Limited though this connection is, it is nonetheless sufficient to plant doubt in the hearts of true believers which can only be exorcised through vigilant prayer and self-reflection, and to lead the faithless more directly to hell.

Of course, the Codex itself does not present the idea in these terms; its own inverted "theology" reflects the Draconian version of the War in Heaven story. That which we know as the Pancreator is cast as the upstart, a demiurge who has usurped the act of creation from the true primordial forces originally responsible for existence. What was actually the first spark of creation is now Infernos Prime, the thermodynamic collapse of all being where the very notion of existence unravels in chaos, its creative light and order stolen to fill the false sefiros above. The original emanations are left to slowly disintegrate over the span of eternity, their inhabiting intelligences driven mad with pain and turning on one another in self-loathing. Consigned to oblivion, they seek only to catch a fleeting ray of the light of consciousness to work their way into the physical world where they can stage their assault to reclaim the birthright of the universe.

According to Draconian ontology, a demon does not actually "exist" until a sentient being — literally "possessing a mirror-like soul" — becomes aware of it, either by intention ("turning the mirror to reflect upon the depths"), or by accident (as in the case of "sinful" thoughts, which crack or distort the "mirror" so that the "divine" light of awareness causes the idea of the demon to gain access to the physical world). This toehold on material existence, though only as a concept known to physical creatures, is enough to allow attempts at possession, where the idea of the demon eclipses all of the light the mirror receives from above, thus becoming as real as the soul whose body it now inhabits.

De Naturae Mortuis

Rather than seeking power through the intercession of powerful entities like demons, necromancers seek wisdom, which they believe is best obtained through conversation with the spirits of those who have died. Necromancy is universally abhorred by most religious-minded sentients, who tend to see the dead as either ancestor-spirits to be revered or hungry ghosts to be kept at bay, never as a commodity to be exploited. Whether conjuring the apparition of a departed loved one or commanding worm's-meat to reawaken and walk once more, necromancers violate the most fundamental law of life, to which even the most soulless Republican atheist must finally concede. Namely, that, for good or ill, dead is dead, and must ever and always remain so.

The College of Necromantism generally denigrates all religious conceptions of the afterlife. While it admits the existence of the Empyrean and Qlippothic realms (and hints obliquely at others as yet undiscovered), it teaches that very few ever reach these realms after dying. Only those who successfully devoted their lives to such realms, such as the Prophet or Leonardo Demonson, attain the states of being which these realms define; these blessed or damned ones cease to exist as distinct personalities, becoming incorporated into that realm's ideal, and are beyond the reach of any necromancer's magic. The overwhelming majority of sentient souls, however, never approach the extremities of salvation or damnation, and wander in a gray fog that has no substance or quality, souls without hearts, minds without heads, voices without bodies. Some may contact one another, forming bonds to cultivate some mutual median of sanity and build their own afterlife, but most are lost in encroaching madness, locked in inward struggle against the oblivion into which they feel themselves slowly dissolving.

The true art of necromancy lies in coaxing the dead out of their solipsistic exile and luring them into involvement on the material plane. With the recently dead this is fairly easy, as their connections to their lives are still fresh and strong. Seeking older souls becomes difficult as more specific ritual stimuli are needed to reach them, and their failing notions of time, space and action make conversation with them a maddeningly laborious task. Some "spirit guides" can be employed to find the ancient dead, and some branches of necromancy call upon a "god" or "angel" of death for permission and aid. Skilled necromancers study the names of death-deities from many cultures and times, but the College itself acknowledges the Empyrean intelligence Azzurayelos as supreme, working its name into all their most formal rites (see *From the Shadows: Blasphemous Beings*).

De Naturae Viscerae

Horuspication, or divination by examining the entrails of a sacrifice, is, according to the archeology of most known races, the oldest and most universal of





Antinomian practices, often retained as a standard theurgic method into the early periods of "pre-reflective" religions. Practitioners, called "euiscerati" by the Inquisition, generally eke out sparse livings on the fringes of primitive cultures in the untraveled wildernesses of backwater planets. Often using local Folk Gjarti idioms to express their divinations, the euiscerati pass on their knowledge orally to family or apprentices.

Horuspicators consider themselves the most practical and pragmatic of all sorcerers and medicine men, seldom venturing into cosmological or metaphysical discussions. They observe the world in terms of its physical minutiae, and believe that all of time and space can be seen clearly if one knows how to look deep enough inside of a thing. Living things in particular, having the most intimate relationship with their environment, contain a strong and vibrant "inverse reflection" of the entire universe around them. Despite the incorporation of "gut-gazing" into demonic and necromantic rites, true euiscerati tend to disdain any sort of traffick with spirits, be they the dead, demons, angels or local animistic totems. While the College of Horuspication fully acknowledges the existence of many types and tries to sift useful information from various spirit-oriented traditions, most working horuspicators find the "bodiless" to be merely annoying or perplexing.

One name which reappears in the oral canon of even most remote euiscerati is Mendes, said to be priest-king of ancient times who reigned by the visceromantic art, before its practice was discredited and driven underground. The College holds that "Mendes" is a phonetic corruption of d'Amendiz, the Republican physician and serial murderer. The "Rules of Mendes," a procedural chant which all apprentices learn, contains many exemplary digressions that relate directly to the d'Amendiz case. D'Amendiz claimed to have conclusive empirical proof that every living organism was in fact a perfect microcosm, as mystics had always taught. He went on to state that, through intense scrutiny of any given organism, information could be derived concerning any aspect or region of the universe, past, present or future. As proof he offered up a huge amount of "readings," long rambling essays on everything from current events, past history and future predictions, to philosophical and cosmological dissertations.

While most of d'Amendiz' assertions were unprovable, a startling number of them turned out to be true; part of the reason for the length of the trial was that several judges and counselors had to excuse themselves from the case when d'Amendiz' readings disclosed embarrassing personal details about themselves or their political allies. Most notable was his prediction of the Fall, correct to the very date, but he was apparently unable to determine its cause. In addition, he prophesied the fading suns phenomenon itself, which he interpreted as the inevitable entropic death of the universe, occurring much earlier than predicted by the equations of thermodynamic law.

Cults

Despite their fractious nature and long-standing feuds, Antinomian cults do communicate and sometimes even cooperate with each other through the shadow networks of three widespread organizations, the Ordo Draconis Tenebris and the Colleges of Necromantism and Horuspication. The Ordo Draconis Tenebris is arguably the largest single cult. While there are far more necromancers or horuspicators than demonists spread throughout the Known Worlds, all modern demonic magic is descended from the Draconian tradition developed by Evandros of Cadavus, at least according to the Order's rulers, and thus considered part of its ranks. In fact, the Ordo maintains a relatively efficient underground communication network between different cults, a common meeting ground and even some slight degree of centralized authority.

The College of Necromantism is an exclusive, closely-guarded cult of conservative plutocrats who keep many secrets (and an extravagant price list for their services.) The Wars proved most lucrative for the College, what with so many young nobles leaving unfinished business at home before going off to die in battle. Although the College dabbles in political intrigue whenever the need or opportunity arises, it considers itself purely academic in nature, exploring the "lands without substance" with intellectual objectivity and rewriting ancient history from first-hand sources.

The "College of Horuspication" was originally a pejorative term used by Draconians and necromancers to refer to uneducated backwoods Antinomists. These scattered euiscerati found it amusing that such knowledgeable and powerful thaumaturgists occasionally had to consult with them when their own attempts at divination failed to yield fruit. The turmoil of the Emperor Wars forced many horuspicators from their ancestral homes, and their younger apprentices took to traveling the jumproutes seeking out others of their vocation. The historical roots of the legendary Mendes were discovered and disseminated among the tradition, and a group identity began to coalesce out of the new communications between far-flung practitioners. The College now considers itself an honored and respected craft, faithfully serving the community since the dawn of time, from the lowliest backwater gut-gazer to the most highly-paid noble house vivisectionist.

Aside from the Ordo and the Colleges, few independent cults ever extend beyond their lands of origin. Two which have successfully done so are the Obsidian Legion and the Vessels of Iniquity. The Obsidian Legion is a secret order operating within various military forces, especially House Hazat and the Muster. An eclectic group practicing all three types of Antinomy, the Legion's main goal is the establishment of a universal and covert rule by force. The Vessels of Iniquity is an all-female cult of predominantly demonic influence, seeking to become the power

behind the throne through subtler and less coercive means. The Kalinthe describe the Vessels' agents as man-hating seductresses genetically and cybernetically enhanced to kill with pleasure.

There is also the Phantasmagoricon, described in the *Instructiones Inquisitorum* as a loose affiliation of mad artists, subversive musicians, decadent magic lantern moguls, exotic entertainers, illusionists, dealers in hallucinogenics and other "poetic terrorists." Evidence suggests that this is not so much a continuously existing cult or conspiracy as a sporadic and spontaneous social phenomenon. In this respect it resembles the so-called "hellfire clubs," short-lived cults which often end up destroying themselves shortly after their formation. Though usually no more than a kick for bored, decadent rich youth, these dabblers can sometimes come into possession of true knowledge or power.

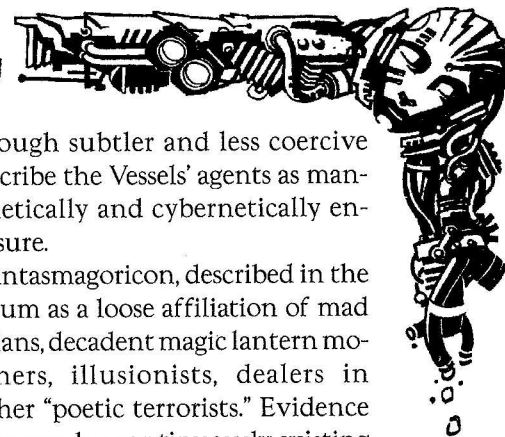
Behavior

Antinomy and aberrant behavior go hand in hand almost by definition. In no other group throughout the Known Worlds are hatred, malice, callousness, vindictiveness, deceitfulness and every flavor of violent psychosis considered to be virtual prerequisites. For some, naive dabbling in the black arts leads to irreparable mental damage, as described in Magus Moore's monograph "Antinomian Causes for Severe Derangements of the Soul," written years ago while he was still an Illuminatus in the Eskatonic Order. Most Antinomists exhibited sociopathic and destructive behavior before they ever actually delved into the darkness, however, and this fact was reflected in Archbishop Dolmen's Doctrine of Innate Malevolence which leads most Avestite pilgrims to treat any passing interest in dark lore as a clear indicator of demonic influence.

Antinomists themselves cover a somewhat wider variety of personality types. Some do not acknowledge or even realize how the rest of the universe looks upon their "calling." In older, more insulated fiefdoms on some Li Halan and Decados worlds, Antinomy is a family tradition, kept secret out of natural familial privacy. Some practitioners consider themselves pure scientists, pursuing all knowledge without regard to the price it will exact from them. Many Antinomists are reclusive hermits, venturing into the world only when they find it necessary for their work. Many, however, rise to positions of prominence and must take great pains to keep their practice secret. (Generally speaking, only nobles and high-ranking Church or guild officials can afford this kind of privacy. Consequently, Antinomy is rarely found in the middle levels of society.)

Rank

The hierarchy of the Antinomian cult is as rigid as any to be found. Rare is the leader who does not demand unquestioning obedience from all her underlings, with the slightest hint of disloyalty landing the offending party



Allies and Enemies

Decados: "They are closer to us than they realize, but watch your back in their company nonetheless."

Li Halan: "Traitors. By betraying Pangeren, Cardano sealed his family's doom."

Temple Avesti: "Though they would kill us on sight or shame us in their trials, yet do they aid us by keeping the existence of our masters alive in the thoughts of all sentient."

The Muster: "Useful flesh-merchants, so long as they don't ask too many questions."

Ur-Ukar: "A down-trodden inferior race, but much important lore is preserved in their myths."

Sathraists: "Dazzled by the Vision Dark, they fail to grasp its true import."

in a sacrificial holding cell. Even disciplinary warnings are underscored with torture or mutilation. This is not merely a reflection of the psychology of successful Antinomists, it is a survival trait of the most widely feared and hated profession known. And the rigors of the more powerful Antinomian rites often demand it.

Entry into a cult, and subsequent initiation to higher levels, generally involves some proof of loyalty, often by breaking cultural and, later, personal taboos, from desecrating a Church symbol to the cold-blooded murder of a loved one. Elevation in rank is usually accomplished through treachery and betrayal, but sometimes no more than patience is required, as those who reach for power beyond their ability to handle tend to destroy themselves in a short amount of time.

The College of Necromantism uses an academic ranking system like any conventional school, which younger members of the College of Horuspication try to emulate. Most cults imitate the Draconian model for their internal hierarchy. The levels of initiation according to *Ordo Draconis Tenebris* are as follows:

Draco Draconis (Arch-Dragon): The leader of the Order. As there can be only one, use of this title by any lesser cult leader is grounds for prolonged obliteration.

Draco Major (Greater Dragon): A cult leader answering directly to the Arch-Dragon, or one of the Arch-Dragon's immediate subordinates.

Draco Minor (Lesser Dragon): An immediate subordinate of a Greater Dragon, also used to denote the leader of smaller or independent cult. All members of this rank or higher are expected to have mastered the highest levels of the Great Rites (see Appendix).

Serpens Tenebrae (Serpent of Darkness): A rank denoting personal power without an actual position of leadership. Also the only rank to operate autonomously, outside of their original cult, usually as a free-roaming corrupter, tempter or agent provocateur.

Serpens Ignis (Serpent of Fire): A scholarly position

denoting mastery of the regular rites of the cult, usually acting as thaumaturgic assistants or researchers.

Serpens Sanguis (Serpent of Blood): A guardian or sentinel of a cult, with some occult power usually oriented toward combat and action. Generally charged with enforcing the will of the leader, capturing sacrificial victims and eliminating unwelcome interlopers.

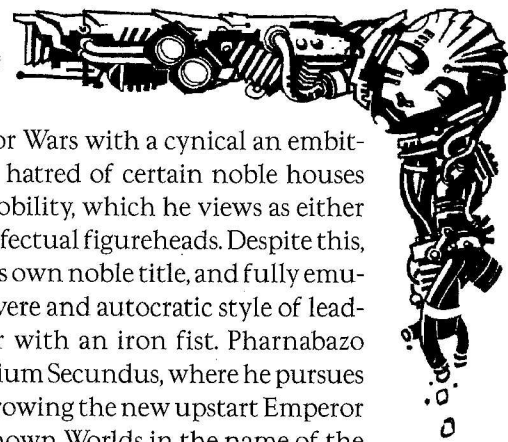
Worm: An often derogatory term denoting cultists with no occult powers, including henchmen, slaves, dupes, voluntary sacrifices and other cannonfodder.

Crypts

The places where Antinomists gather and practice are known as crypts, and one quality which they all share is seclusion, either because of geographic remoteness or high thick walls or being situated at the end of long narrow subterranean corridors. Draconian cults and their offshoots are present on nearly every Known World, with the greatest variety found on barbarian worlds and the most ambitious and powerful on Byzantium Secundus and Criticorum. The primary "campus" of the College of Necromantism is hidden deep in the ice caverns on Malignatius. There is kept the enshrined skull of Schedred d'Erlet, which is consulted regularly on matters of policy. Horuspicators are generally only found where there is a large enough wilderness to hide them and enough faithless peasants to keep them in business. (Some, though, are actually kept secretly in the households of superstitious nobles.) They especially thrive in the Vuldrok star-nations, where the greatest among them exercise their craft on Hrolvost's Slab, a sacrificial altar of unknown antiquity said to enhance visceromantic rites. The Obsidian Legion has crypts on all Hazat worlds as well as Bannockburn and Byzantium Secundus. The Vessels of Iniquity are found anywhere the decadent nobility go for their secret pursuits of pleasure, being especially numerous on Decados worlds. Hellfire clubs spring up wherever there are bored, over-educated and neglected youth with more money than faith.

The Palatio Amadeo

Perched upon a volcanic promontory overlooking the Vespa region of Ghastr on Byzantium Secundus, the blasted shell of a once tall and imposing fortress acts as backdrop for portentous convocations where gather the most powerful Antinomists on this most important of the Known Worlds. Sprawling palatially, it combines an anachronistic blend of early and later Dark Ages styles and is constructed of massive blocks of precision-cut stone, etched with the heat of some interior blast. Most of the upper stories and crenellated towers are crumbling apart or were blown away completely. Master Antinomists bringing their neophyte minions here for the first time explain that this was the palace of the infamous Duke Amadeus Li Halan, the site of his last stand against Bishop Odel.



The truth is not so far off. The castle is just over 100 years old and was built by Milius Glorosis for his 4879 magic lantern epic "The Wind and the Flame," which told the story of Amadeus and Odel. Glorosis had the structure built at his own expense, and demolished it for the final scene, a suitable climax to the two-hour barrage of pyrotechnics, optical effects and thunderous orchestral accompaniment. When the spectacle had been completed, the Patriarch forbade its exhibition, citing what he judged to be an unnecessarily harsh portrayal of the good Bishop Odel. Bankrupted by his lavish production and unable to make up his loss, Milius fled from the public eye and lived as a hermit in the ruined palace set. Rumor states that he finally slashed his wrists in one of the remaining tower rooms, spewing curses against Church, Prophet and Pancreator through foam-flecked lips, and that his tortured soul yet stalks the halls of the crumbling castle.

Besides being a meeting ground for groups of necromancers who tunnel underground to search the ruined cities beneath the Vespan desert, the Palatio Amadeo is the annual site of a grand blood-sabbat conducted by the head of the Order of the Dragon. Occasionally, drunken groups of decadent magic lantern artists and producers descend upon the Palatio seeking a change from the wild storms of Tamerlain. A small Avestite monastery lies in the opposite end of the Vespan desert, but its population at any given time consists mostly of transient visitors to Byzantium Secundus, and the resident abbot has yet to discover the nest of vipers in her back yard.

Persons of Power

Sir Pharnabazo Nergali

Pharnabazo Nergali was born to House Masseri during their exodus from Daishan at the beginning of the Symbiot War. His father was lost and believed dead at the siege of Hasaka; his mother lost much of her status and had to live as a commoner. Seeing the indignities heaped upon his family by the Houses Major, particularly the Decados and al-Malik, he turned to the black arts at an early age. Joining the Ordo Draconis Tenebris on Cadavus, he managed to gain through demonic intervention a seat in the court of Claudio Masseri.

Hungry for power, both for himself and his declining house, Nergali suggested to Claudio that an alliance with dark powers could help restore the Masseri and extract vengeance from the Decados and al-Malik who used the house as a pawn in their cold war. Hearing this blasphemy, Claudio flew into a rage and exiled the young knight. Stung by this rejection, Pharnabazo roamed the Known Worlds, making contacts with other branches of the Order and building a personal power base among the far-flung Draconian cults. Just before Alexius was crowned, Pharnabazo seized the position of Draco Draconis of the Order after the previous Arch-Dragon was transmuted into a pillar of ice during a sloppy summoning.

Viewing the Emperor Wars with a cynical and embittered eye, Nergali let his hatred of certain noble houses grow to encompass all nobility, which he views as either power-mad beasts or ineffectual figureheads. Despite this, he still insists on using his own noble title, and fully emulates Claudio Masseri's severe and autocratic style of leadership, ruling the Order with an iron fist. Pharnabazo Nergali resides on Byzantium Secundus, where he pursues his mad dream of overthrowing the new upstart Emperor and reigning over the Known Worlds in the name of the Demon Sultans.

Aerlek Dost Rhoene

The current head of the College of Necromantism, Aerlek Dost Rhoene resides on Malignatius. He was the Royal Chirurgeon of Forensicks to the Decados prince over 100 years ago, going underground just before the start of the Emperor Wars. Guiding the College profitably through those tumultuous times, Rhoene now finds himself somewhat at a loss; he holds one of the largest fortunes in the Known Worlds, but is left with no political influence as the College's main sources of important information — recently departed nobles — are not as common as they were, say, a decade ago.

Fearing the decline of the College, Rhoene has adopted a more aggressive policy with regard to courtly intrigues. Once he abandoned the company of the nobility to perfect his craft, but now considers that to have been a mistake. During the Wars he discovered that the College's ancient enemy, the Manja cult, was still in existence, and he does not know how far its influence extends. Rhoene has sent agents to Byzantium Secundus and the Hawkwood worlds to dig up any information that can be used to control the new Emperor. His ultimate ambition is to be the true power behind the throne, from which position he can see to it that the Manja practice is abolished for good.

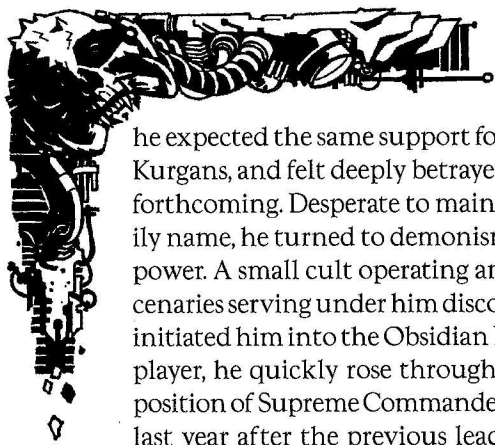
Noki Furrowbrow

Nominally the head of the College of Horuspication, Noki Furrowbrow resides in a cave near a secluded pagan community on Leminkainen. A descendent of Vuldrok raiders who settled on the planet, he disdains the College which honors him as leader, and has an even lower opinion of other Antinomists as well as the Church and most any other organized religious or philosophical system. In fact, Noki considers himself a Gjartin, although none of the nearby villages accept him as such. Furrowbrow's divinations are nearly always accurate (provided one interprets them correctly), and he is actually consulted by a relatively wide variety of clientele from around the Known Worlds (always in secret, of course).

Count Belardo Goya de Aragon

Count Belardo is a veteran of the Emperor Wars, having fought since he was old enough to point a pistol. Before the Wars, he fought alongside Hawkwood forces against the Vuldrok. When the Kurgan Conflict began,





he expected the same support for the Crusade against the Kurgans, and felt deeply betrayed that none seemed to be forthcoming. Desperate to maintain the glory of his family name, he turned to demonism in his search for greater power. A small cult operating among some Chainer mercenaries serving under him discovered his dark secret, and initiated him into the Obsidian Legion. An expert power-player, he quickly rose through the ranks, attaining the position of Supreme Commander of Obsidian Legion only last year after the previous leader was lost in space in a faulty Scraver shuttle. The count seeks to increase his influence with the Emperor's military advisors, in order to divert more resources to the Crusade and bring power and glory to himself (and his house, of course).

Roleplaying

Antinomists offer limited roleplaying opportunities. If they aren't devoured by their own twisted souls or the demons they serve, the Inquisition or some other enemy will surely one day get them. The Antinomist's life is one of constant strife. Nonetheless, some stereotypes are provided here, more as examples of Antinomist non-player characters than as roles to play:

Quiet Householder: The character is an unassuming minor churl in the service of a noble house. Perhaps she washes dishes, walks the dogs or dusts the silver. Everybody thinks her a harmless, boring nobody. Little do they know that she has pilfered the keys to the crypts below the castle, where heretical ancestors — the black sheep of the lord's family — kept their Antinomy chambers. She doesn't get a lot of sleep at night; there are a lot of books down there to read instead...

Slimy Agent: The character takes his show on the road, masquerading as an entertainer or player, but all the while scouting out "talent" for his dark lord to possess. Most folks won't be easily able to track down missing farm lads or lasses in the fractured Known Worlds.

Fallen Priest: While this is perhaps a bit too stereotypical, there are ways to enliven up this stereotype: perhaps the priest made his dark pact believing it was the only way to save a congregation from harm or to free his true love's soul from oblivion. Now, he must serve the powers as if he had chosen to do so willingly. Or perhaps she is a mendicant monk whose only guide in the ways of the Church was a black friar, who filled her head full of lies and now she unwittingly serves demons even though she believes them to be angels. Ignorance is no excuse or protection from evil.

Gamemastering Antinomists

Antinomists find their true role — as their name implies — as antagonists. Be they enemies of a noble house, the Church, the guilds or the entire social order, player characters have a knack for crossing them. Here are some drama ideas:

• **The Club:** The characters are invited to join an exclusive and exciting club. This is one of the many "hellfire club" fads sweeping the Known Worlds, where activities forbidden by the Church are partaken of. While most everybody involved in such clubs are just seeking release from repressive mores, some of these movements are masterminded by true demonists. But which ones? Perhaps the characters should experience a fake, harmless one before being invited into the real thing, just to throw them off a little.

• **Someday Bloody Someday:** A cultist of the Order of the Dragon has become convinced that he knows the exact day on which the suns will all go out, devoured by a demon lord. Conveniently, this day is next week. The cultists plans to make up for as much wasted time as he can, causing as much havoc and chaos and fear as possible before all are called before the dark throne of judgment that waits in the Abyss. Obviously, the characters have to stop him and his minions, regardless of personal ethics: he's screwing up some aspect of their lives also. When the prophesied day comes and goes, the cultist will take his own life in embarrassment but will attempt one final conflagration to take everybody out with him.

Traits

Suggested Antinomist Traits

Characteristics: Ego is always primary over Faith

Natural skills: Charm, Dodge, Impress, Sneak

Learned skills: Focus, Knavery, Read/Speak (Barbarian/Latin/Xeno), Stoic Body, Stoic Mind, Torture

Blessing: Suspicious (2 pts: +2 Perception when rivals about)

Curses: Guilty (+2 pts: -2 on all rolls when opposing Church officials), Scary (+2 pts: +2 Impress for bad reputation), Unnerving (+2 pts: +2 Alien when dealing with serfs),

Affliction: Dark Secret (3 pts), Devil's Pact (see below)

New Learned Skill

Lore (Occult)

Roll: Wits + Occult

Occult Lore covers a pretty broad category of knowledge, and gamemasters may require a player taking this skill to declare a specialty, such as psionics, theurgy, Ukar mythology, demonology, etc. This skill allows a character to understand how theurgy and psychic phenomena work without actually practicing them. It also covers familiarity with the apocrypha held by the Eskatonic Order, and concrete knowledge concerning psionic, alien and preadamite artifacts.

New Benefice/Affliction

Devil's Pact (variable): The Devil's Pact is neither a Benefice or Affliction in itself, but encompasses both types of traits, and is a necessary component of all Antinomist characters.



The terms of a Pact should be worked out in some detail when creating the character. Those terms which benefit the character (worldly power, wealth, occult powers, secret knowledge, etc.) are Benefices; terms which constrain the character's actions (services and "favors," regular blood sacrifices, excessive stigmas, cutting off left thumb and left nut for demon to eat, etc.) are Afflictions. The opposing terms of a Pact should be equal in point cost. Due to the high stakes at risk in the game of Antinomy, some Afflictions may be bought at higher levels than those listed in the **Fading Suns** rulebook. For instance, an annual blood sacrifice constitutes a 5 point Obligation at the very least.

A Pact is always written down at the time of its mak-

ing (usually on parchment of human — or another sentient's — skin, and signed in the Antinomist's own blood), and will generally be found in the Antinomist's lair or hidden nearby. Often the Pact will be an Antinomist villain's greatest weakness, for, if the players can discover the terms of her Pact and prevent her from holding up her end of the bargain, her demon lord will withdraw his support and leave the Antinomist to her fate.

(The gamemaster should remember that demons cheat, and will always find the loophole in any pact. Accomplished Antinomists often joke about the man who sold his soul to become king of the universe, but then neglected to specify how long he would reign.)







From the Shadows: Blasphemous Beings

Known Worlds society is notoriously superstitious. Even the most die-hard rationalist among the guilds often believes tales of strange beings and otherworldly creatures. Space is big and ominous — who knows what really lurks there and on far-flung worlds?

The strange is often judged through the cultural filter of the Church: things seemingly inimicable to human interests are considered “dark”: beings without souls or who cannot receive the divine light of the Holy Flame in any fashion (except, perhaps, to vampirically steal it from good sentients). In such wise, many animals are poorly treated by Dark Agers simply for being unlucky enough to appear in a bad light in some saint’s legend or famous preaching. If a creature did wrong to Zebulon or one of his disciples, then it has been branded “dark” for all time.

Gjartins abhor such behavior, claiming that Church followers project all their worst qualities onto these inno-

cent creatures, who often just follow their instincts — if those instincts are to eat meat, regardless of its source in an animal or a human, then it does so because it has to, not because it is evil by nature. Orthodox priests have reams of theological arguments which supposedly “prove” otherwise, and the numerous instances of demonic possession or dark visions allow them a lot of leeway to interpret evil as they will.

For indeed, unexplainable, seemingly malicious beings do exist. Whether it be supernatural demon or an alien entity exhibiting as-yet-unexplained-by-science natural abilities, the common sentient is taught to fear the unknown. Perhaps rightly so. From the terrors humankind unleashed on itself during war to the more ancient manifestations of human hubris, there are many things to beware in the dark between the stars — or the dark in one’s own mind...

Things From the Stars

The spaces between the stars are far from empty: within the cold void exist ghosts and monsters.

Ghosts

The dead are not only witnessed in haunted houses or ancient burial grounds — regions of space can also be haunted.

Everybody knows that ghosts cause fear — a tingling up the spine and hairs standing on end. Some priests state that a shade's entry into the physical plane from the realm of the disembodied dead causes a charge of supernatural energy which human sixth senses detect, even if the full import of the premonition never becomes conscious. In such a way did the Pancreator provide its creatures with warnings to avoid the dead.

Dead Crewmen

Many spooky tales are told by space sailors of apparitions in shattered or torn spacesuits, wandering the corridors of a spaceship gasping for air. One such tale is that of "Bill Boarder," the infamous ghost of the *Fitzpatrick*, a Hawkwood cruiser from the Emperor Wars. This moaning soul was supposedly a Marauder (sometimes he is said to be a Decados soldier but other stories call him a Hazat or al-Malik man) who was killed in battle just as he boarded the *Fitzpatrick*. He now haunts the halls, causing poltergeist or gremlin phenomena. The captain, however, believes that the story is just an excuse for faulty maintenance on the crew's part.

Other spectres are said to haunt regions of space, the places where they died. For instance, "Grim Gorfias" only haunts ships traveling between the fourth and fifth planets of the Rampart system, where his pirate ship was supposedly scuttled and the entire crew killed.

Ghost Ships

Oftentimes, derelict ships are discovered in space. Some are the remains of Emperor Wars ships previously believed lost; others are the scout ships or merchant vessels of some unknown traveler out of fuel and oxygen. Still others are the sites of murders or engine explosions, where the entire crew has perished without a message to the outside world.

And some are eerier still. Chilling tales are told in starports across the Known Worlds about mysterious derelicts discovered by intrepid explorers or even noble house patrols. In all cases, the crew is missing with no sign of their fates. These ships are brought back online and the new crew removes their spacesuits — only to have the ship disappear like a ghostly apparition, leaving the crew exposed to the void of space.

Interestingly, no definitive proof of these stories can be found. This, of course, only fuels conspiracies about

Church or noble coverups rather than doubt about the tales themselves.

One story, however, did prove to be true and could not be covered up (although some claim it is a lie spread by the Church). The *Hosanna*, a Li Halan cruiser newly commissioned for the Emperor Wars, was dispatched on a mission to patrol the outer planets of the Kish system. Confronting a strange derelict ship, the captain had it boarded. It appeared to be the hulk of an ancient, pre-Cardanite Li Halan explorer, believed destroyed long ago for engaging in Sathraist activity. It was beyond repair, but its noble captain's family sword was found floating in his cabin. The *Hosanna's* captain ordered it taken aboard and the rest of the ship abandoned.

All was fine for a while and the *Hosanna* completed her circuit. But when the ship's course was set to return home, the helm would not respond. One by one, ship systems went down, seemingly taking on a will of their own. The ship steered towards the jumpgate and began to activate a jump. All attempts to stop it were useless, and the ship shot forth into the ring, disappearing into alien space along an unknown road.

A month later, the jumpgate opened and the *Hosanna* floated back into the Kish system, a derelict herself, her entire crew missing. The Li Halan frigate which investigated her immediately quarantined all who had stepped aboard. Eventually, however, the story slipped out, supposedly spread by a Charioteer engineer.

The holographic logs of the *Hosanna* had been found, showing exactly what occurred on the bridge during the jump. Ghostly apparitions of the ancient crew walked and sat on the bridge with the living crew, their faces bearing insane expressions of evil ecstasy. But the worst was the apparition standing beside the captain: his own ancestor, a demonic Sathraist, who had sold his soul to dark powers. This ancient noble smiled at his descendant. And then the hologram cuts off, replaced by hours of blank nothingness.

This story has caused a stir in starports on nearly every world, and while the Li Halan scoff at it, they will nonetheless not release the crew who so recently boarded the *Hosanna*, a ship which now floats on the outer edge of the system, guarded by a Li Halan frigate...

A Ghost's Story

A ghost has a purpose or goal, such as to reveal the details of her death to the living or point to her own murderer. Once the living realize what it is that the ghost needs them to know, it disappears for good. In other words, the ghost's "story" must come to a resolution in the land of the living. In the end, however, no one knows why some dead souls stay behind and others go on to their reward.

An exorcism performed by the Church is usually

Interacting with Ghosts

In addition, psychic powers or theurgy may allow non-physical interactions: Psyche powers may be able to read a ghost's emotional state (sometimes all that there is) and thus determine the ghost's need. Beware, however, for those few ghosts with minds may be able to possess the living through just such an egress. Rites such as Second Sight may be able to reveal ghosts which otherwise remain unseen.

Void Krakens

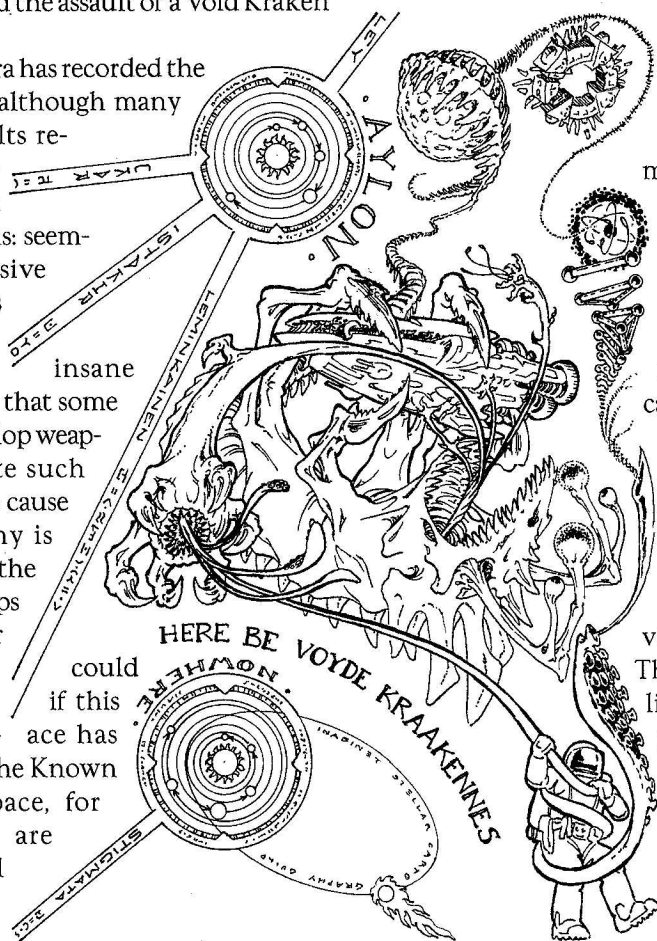
ingly, no holocamera has recorded the image of such an attacker, although many ships claiming such assaults return to port with hull damage which is hard to explain with conventional weapons: seeming bite marks (from massive fangs) or sucker impressions (from massive tentacles) bear testament to the crew's insane reports. Again, critics claim that some enemy has managed to develop weaponry designed to simulate such "wounds," in an attempt to cause panic. But no such enemy is known, except perhaps for the Symbiots; their strange ships — although nowhere near the size of a Kraken — perhaps be the culprits. But if this is so, then the Symbiot menace has extended to all regions of the Known Worlds and Vuldrok space, for sightings and assaults are claimed in just about all fiefs.

This confession has become a popular explanation for the Void Krakens, and certain priests have gladly spread the story. But the Patriarch denies it, stating that the lies of one demonist cannot be trusted to explain an event not yet proven by the Church fathers. Noble houses scoff at the peasant superstition and petition the Emperor to investigate this new enemy to Known Worlds power.

Encountering a Void Kraken

If the characters are unlucky enough to be caught on a ship targeted by a Kraken, they are on their own. There

It is known that no ship with a Gargoyle on board has ever been attacked by a Kraken. This implies that the Gargoyles protect the ships. However, the scarcity of Kraken assaults provides no real basis for such a belief. The rumor persists nonetheless. In light of this, some theorize that perhaps an Anunnaki artifact such as a soul shard or philosophers stone may shed light on such a beast, but no reports from ships bearing such things have mentioned Krakens.



Horrors of the Emperor Wars

While the Emperor Wars were fought between the five major noble houses, involving the Church and the League, the real victims of the wars were the commonfolk, those simple farmers or workers who were exposed to orbital bombings, artillery barrages, poison gas, mutation gas or forced inscription into enemy units, to die on the front lines far from homes.

The Church abhors such methods, for it is their flock that was most affected. No priest who took his religion seriously could stand still and accept such horrors. While the Church has accused the worst offenders of various war crimes, few if any are actually delivered up for prosecution. Thus, crimes such as forced bioengineering on hapless serfs often go unpunished. Even for those who are caught by the Church or turned over by their own families, justice may take years and much testimony before — *if* — it is ever delivered.

In the meanwhile, the common folk must still suffer the horrors unleashed during the nobles' bid for power. While the wars are over, remnants of its weaponry remain...

The Loa Virus

In their bids for supremacy, just about every house had at least one or two nobles who went too far and sanctioned the manufacture of obscenely dangerous biological and chemical weaponry. While the Inquisition was able to prevent some of these from ever seeing release, certain weapons slipped past their guard and created havoc on enemy communities.

Since then, stockpiles of these forbidden weapons have been hidden by their noble sponsors or else destroyed by the more moral lords (well, at least a token stock was destroyed...). But some horrors, once realized, cannot so easily be put back in the box from which they came. One such invention was Zeko-88, otherwise known as the "Loa Virus" — a sentient virus.

Although all the batches of this brilliantly bioengineered virus were destroyed by its inventor, Crafter Carfaze Gondo of the Engineers, a small strain got loose. This strain infected a Charioteer and has now traveled to a number of Known Worlds, leaving new strains behind on each of these worlds.

The Loa "rides" (infects) those living in unsanitary areas (the poor), or those with bad bathing habits (it breeds best in filthy sweat). It slowly takes control over the victim's nervous system, attempting to turn the body into a puppet for its own uses. This causes horrible pain and muscle spasms, as the virus tries to command motor functions even though it has no direct hold on the victim's brain. Ultimate attempts at complete control of the body are impossible, but the body is usually killed before this could ever take place anyway — most often through acci-

dents caused by the virus's poor control over the body. In addition, a victim's palsied convulsions have been mistaken for possession.

After about four weeks of this painful conflict, the virus dies. It may, however, have taken quite a toll on its victim. For each week of viral infection, the victim needs to make an Endurance + Stoic Body roll; if he fails, he loses one permanent level of Dexterity. If any of these rolls is a critical failure, or Dexterity falls below "1", the victim dies.

The cure is very expensive (and is rarely wasted on a peasant), although some theurgy is said to cure it.

Gibblings

While untrained soldiers could easily be obtained by most noble houses — simply by inscripting serfs — each house sought a way to create easily expendable legions that could cause great devastation before falling to the enemy. Many experiments in genetic engineering saw the creation of super-improved humans (like the Grimsons) or wretched failures (like the short-lived Seechy, a cross-breed between human and fish). Some experiments create soldiers who proved hard to control and ultimately more dangerous to their makers than any enemy they would be unleashed on. One such creature is the Gibbling, a barely sentient, smallish humanoid being who now lives in wilderness ruins and likes to screw over humans.

Like the Xyll War Beast, these goblins were engineered by humans (supposedly al-Malik) attempting to harness Symbiot power. While the Symbiot's possession or contagion powers could not be replicated, the experiments resulted in the creation of these stunted beings.

Of course, they escaped their lab of inception (during an Inquisition assault) and spread out across the countryside. A few have appeared on a number of worlds, leading some to believe that their "escape" was intentional.

Quote: "Urhh! Bash you skull!"

Description: Their skin is tough and leathery, covered with warts and blotches, and has a yellowish-green hue. Their teeth are malformed and sharp, jutting from their jaws at different angles and often cutting their own lips. Their resemblance to the hyenalike Symbiot mammals used in their creation process is obvious: their hair extends in a spiky line down their backs and their laughs are incredibly unnerving (their breeders speculated that it taps some instinctual fear in sentients).

While they are no stronger than a human, they are faster and more nimble, and their night vision is superior. Their life spans, however, are much shorter: 20 years maximum. In addition, they find it difficult to breed, for there are few females among them, and the males have not all proven fertile. For this reason, they kidnap male or female peasants, using them to breed more of their own kind.

Roleplaying: Gibblings have nothing resembling cul-

ture except the few things they imitate from humans, making theirs more of a primate society than anything else. While they descend from human stock combined with Symbiot mammals, they have little sense of human compassion, decency or ethics, but they have quite the inheritance of vile maliciousness, violence and greed.

Entourage: Gibblings tend to stick together, especially in hunting parties. They are usually encountered by explorers or surveyors in groups of 5 or 10.

Body: Strength 3, Dexterity 9, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 1, Perception 6, Tech 1

Spirit: Extrovert 3, Introvert 1, Passion 5, Calm 1, Ego 1, Human 1, Alien 7

Natural skills: Dodge 5, Fight 7, Sneak 8, Vigor 8

Blessings: Hideous Laugh (any who hear it must roll Calm + Stoic Mind not to be unnerved; failure means -2 on all rolls for the next 10 turns), Night Vision (+2 to offset Perception penalties)

Curses: Ugly as Sin (-3 Extrovert among non-Gibblings)

Equipment: Whatever they've taken from ruins, stolen from villages or robbed from victims.

Weapons: Bite (3 DMG), plus a knife and sword, but some carry guns.

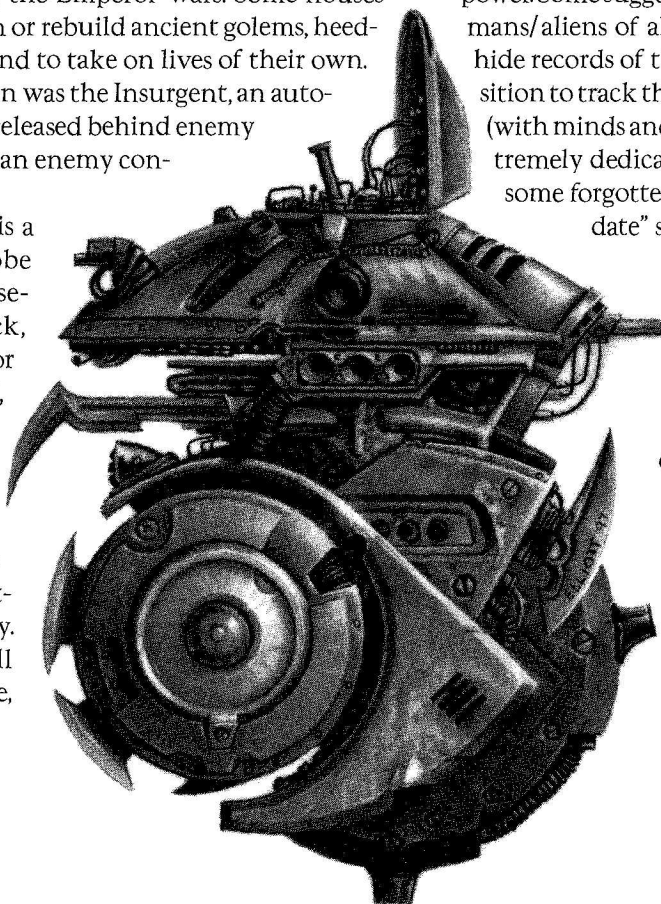
Armor: Toughskin (1)

Vitality: -10/-8/-6/-4/-2/0/0/0/0/0

Golem Insurgent

War machinery saw greater leaps in technology than any other field during the Emperor Wars. Some houses even dared to reawaken or rebuild ancient golems, heedless that such beings tend to take on lives of their own. One such golem weapon was the Insurgent, an automated death machine released behind enemy lines or left as a gift for an enemy conqueror.

When inactive, it is a tiny, unassuming globe about the size of a baseball. Its surface is slick, with few indentations or seams. When activated, through a remote-control signal or some pre-set trigger (such as stepping on one or throwing it), it expands into a hoverbot radiating nasty weaponry. Now the size of a small car, it is a formidable foe,



able to traverse nearly any terrain at 25 kph with its anti-grav projectors.

Like landmines, many of these were seeded and forgotten during the wars. Some of them have now sprouted forth on destructive rampages until they are either destroyed or their fusion cores die out (initiating a self-destruct sequence which leaves little evidence). They are one-use weapons; once activated, they cannot be deactivated (no one has yet found the programming code to do so).

TL 8

Body: Strength 5, Dexterity 10, Endurance 10

Mind: Wits 3, Perception 5

Natural skills: Dodge 5, Fight 3, Melee 8, Observe 5, Shoot 7, Vigor 3

Weapons: Wireblade (x2), SMG (20 shots), laser pistol (x3), screecher

Special attacks: Can make two melee attacks per turn without multiple action penalty

Armor: Energy shield, plate (5 + 5d)

Vitality: -6/-3/-1/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0

Note: Its fusion cel lasts for 10 hours or until burned out (it has 100 charges with which to fire energy weapons or activate its energy shield).

Other Horrors

The gamemaster should feel free to devise a host of other horrors to come out of the Emperors Wars' lust for power. Some suggestions are: mutants and Changed humans/aliens of all types (scientists would attempt to hide records of these, making it harder for the Inquisition to track them down); golem tanks or spaceships (with minds and missions of their own); insane or extremely dedicated soldiers still fighting the war in some forgotten fief or world; "Manchurian Candidate" spies programmed to kill who never

got the call to duty — now any trigger can set them off on assassination binges; demonic technology; in the attempt to create supertech, Anunnaki artifacts were toyed with, creating uncontrollable machines.

Sentient Think Machines

Besides the evil which Emperor Wars technology produces, among the problems long-plaguing the Known Worlds are the many "Crimes of the Second Republic." In Church vernacular, these are the hubristic things human-kind made to serve its own ego, things which have since proved to be deadly to the human soul (in the Church's opinion).

Among the most prevalent of these proscribed technologies are the legendary sentient think machines, massive artificial intelligences whose mind power rivaled that of the greatest thinkers of the Second Republic. These expensive computers were all famous and were thus easily hunted down and destroyed long ago.

Or were they? The government certainly had many secrets to which the nobles and Church were never privy. One of these was the Monarch 523...

Monarch 523

This advanced artificial intelligence was built to run an underground city on one of the main worlds of the Second Republic (nobody knows which one now — gamemaster's decision). This city was meant to be a refuge for the government in case of planetary war. It was a well-kept secret — so well-kept that, after the Fall, the city's existence was forgotten. Hidden deep in the earth and behind many bureaucratic smokescreens, the computer slumbered, awaiting activation. After a preset amount of years passed with no human operator, the computer's back-up program kicked-in. Due to extreme age, many of Monarch's long range sensory equipment (satellites, mountaintop radar dishes, etc.) had either malfunctioned, been destroyed or were redeemed for other functions by nobles or guildsmembers.

Since no human was available to inform it, Monarch — following its programming — assumed that human civilization had been wiped out in a nuclear destruction. It set about sending golems to the surface to retrieve whatever primitive population still survived.

It just so happened that the golems surfaced in one of the most regressed regions of the world, in the poorest fief, where serfs lived in conditions often worse than their medieval ancestors. The state of human culture and technology only confirmed Monarch's programming.

Following Monarch's order, the golems captured the entire village of peasants (except for a few who had gone to the nearby town to trade or who had been out hunting) and forced them underground into the city prepared for them long ago. The exits were sealed and Monarch set out recivilizing humanity.

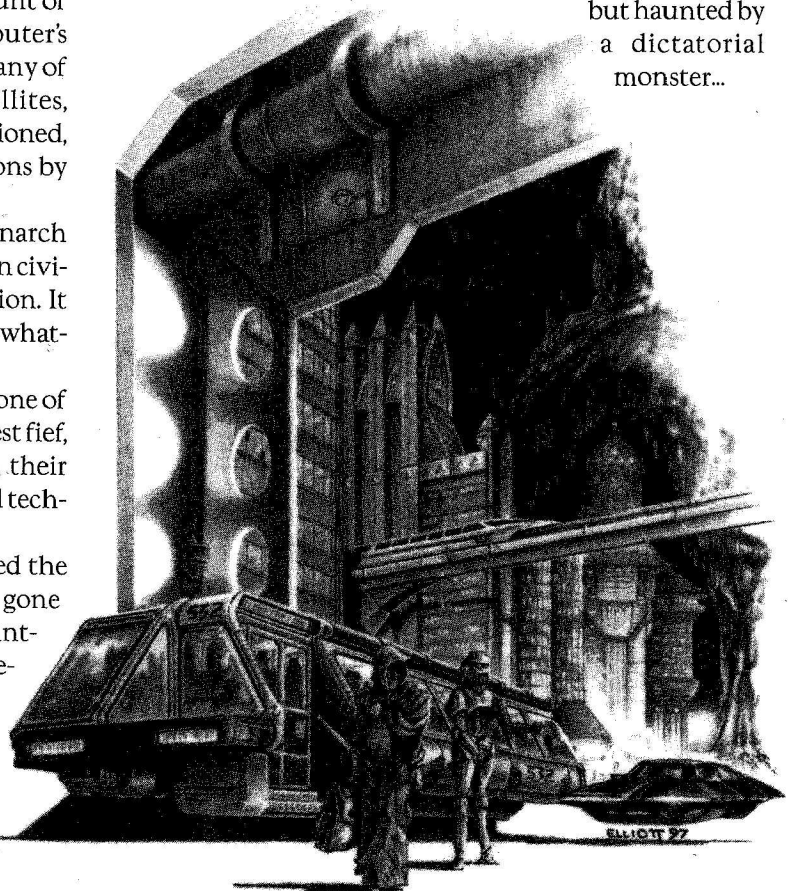
That was a long time ago. The legend of the disappearing village has become but one of the many mysteries haunting the Known Worlds. In

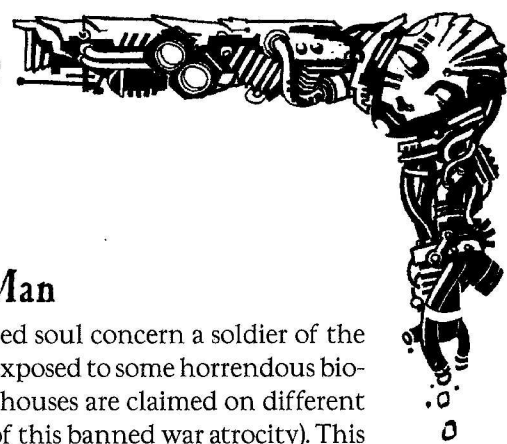
the underground city, it is now into the 10th generation and the peasants live in an Orwellian nightmare. Only myths and tales handed down from grandparents hint of another world above the surface. Monarch 523 keeps things running smoothly, carefully monitoring all the humans for unauthorized talk (of a "barbaric" or "primitive" nature) or sexual advances (with partners not cleared to breed with each other). Cameras are everywhere, and few events escape the computer's notice. Golem guards patrol and are ready to deal with problems quickly, incarcerating criminals in inescapable cells. In addition, lasers are placed at various points and can be remote operated by the computer.

Unlike many machines of his era, Monarch has run fine and suffered few malfunctions. This is changing, however. One by one, small glitches are becoming major problems. The golem servants are also breaking down. Monarch has been unable to train the humans in high technology; while some can repair minor errors, none has the invention necessary to rescue Monarch from decay.

Monarch has decided to turn once again to the surface world, in the hopes that other humans have evolved tech-use once more. He has sent his golems searching for the proper signs (starship use, computer use, etc.); they will kidnap whomever exhibits these signs and take them below to save a dying world, one rife with the lore of the past

but haunted by
a dictatorial
monster...





Boogey Men

What childhood anywhere would be complete without a host of malicious beings to haunt, cajole and scare the heck out of a child? The Known Worlds of the 50th century is no different from 20th century Urth in this respect — except that some of these childhood nightmares are given full credence by the child's superstitious parents. Indeed, some old serfs swear such things are real and that only children can usually see them, for their vision is still clear from their closeness to Empyrean purity. (They like to quote Horace: "Only in my old age do I know that the gnosis of a child is more pure than I could hope to attain...")

While most childhood nightmares and things that go bump in the endless night of space are specific to particular regions, worlds or solar systems, a few are startlingly universal, appearing in the local folklore of many worlds — even when those worlds seem to have little communication between them, and certainly no direct communication between the lower classes, those most likely to tell such tales. While the names may be different for these boogey men, their traits are similar the universe over, making even some priests begin to believe...

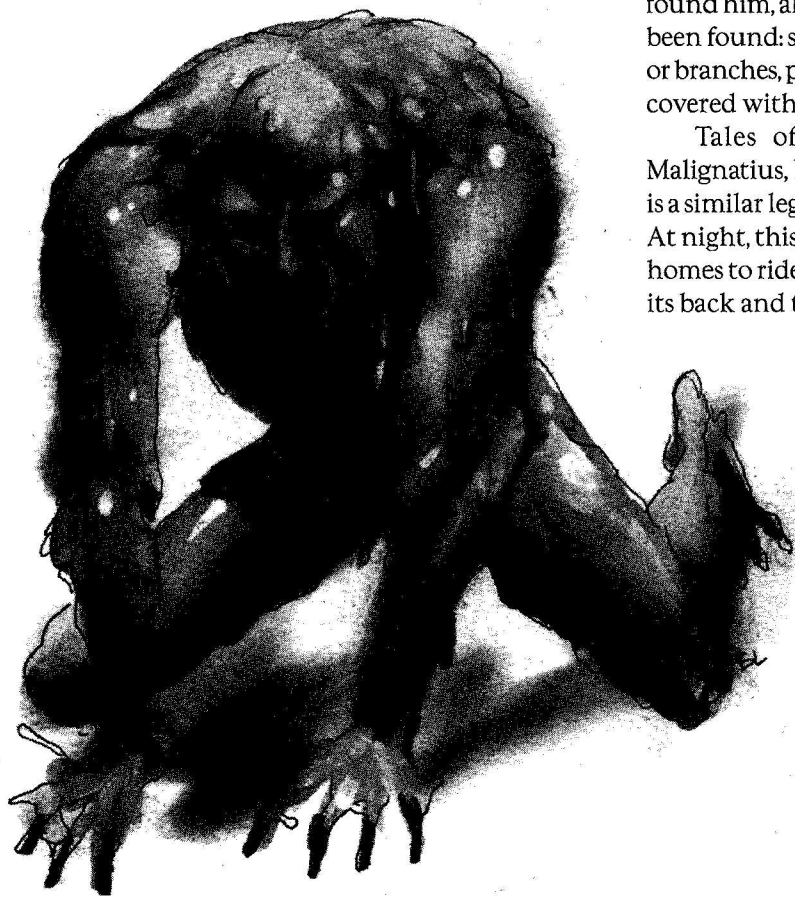
The Mucus Man

Tales of this corrupted soul concern a soldier of the Emperor Wars who was exposed to some horrendous biochemical agent (various houses are claimed on different worlds as the inventors of this banned war atrocity). This once noble warrior is now a melting man — his skin has been transformed to a gooey, sticky tar. Shunned by all, he now lives in sewers, swamps, along docks, or any place where children should not be playing. Forced to eke a living off the land of the forsaken places he calls home, he catches his prey (rabbits, little boys and girls, etc.) by simply grabbing them; few small creatures can break free from his sticky palms. What's worse is that some tales say that he is contagious, and that prey he does not eat become mucus people themselves.

Some legends claim that he desperately seeks a cure, and assumes that this cure lies in the flesh of others. If he can devour enough healthy people, their cels will cure his affliction. But his melting brain does not work properly, and he thus has no moral values anymore. Since children make easy prey, he uses them to effect his cure.

But don't be fooled — his brain may be oozing mush, but he is still cunning and clever, perhaps even aided by demons. No one who has sought to hunt him has ever found him, although strange evidence of his passing have been found: stray, sticky skin absently rubbed onto leaves or branches, profoundly smelly feces, the bones of children covered with mush, etc.

Tales of the Mucus Man appear on Aragon, Malignatius, Rampart and Gwynneth. On Shaprut, there is a similar legend but it concerns the Shambling Shantor. At night, this beast supposedly lures little girls from their homes to ride the magical stallion — but they get stuck to its back and taken for a final ride.



Ol' Zeke

(a.k.a. The Stranger, the Black Friar)

This wandering priest is said to have been cursed by a saint (some say Zebulon himself) to never die until the final sun fades — which may now not be as far off an event as once believed. He wanders backroads, seeking the hospitality of kind, simple folk. But any who sup with him are cursed with bad luck. It is said that he only appears on worlds whose suns are about to take a turn for the worst.

This folk figure represents the fear of strangers and Antinomists. Priests prefer to downplay any tales of him and chide those who continue to whisper about him, for he endangers their own chances of gaining a hot meal on a rainy night. Guildsmembers, however, like to spread stories to children, perhaps to annoy priests who give them trouble.

Ol' Zeke is known throughout the Known Worlds by many names. Sometimes, he exhibits dark powers or casts spells; it is said that only demons will befriend him. It is believed that the stranger reflects no divine light, and in fact keeps such light from others, endangering their souls. This trait is also given to Antinomists and those whose pride (Hubris) becomes overweening.

Vengeful Homonculus

(a.k.a. Jack Headless, Guteater, Bugbrain, Hickory Neck, etc.)

This unholy vessel of vengeance appears in the folklore of many worlds, and many believe it is as old as the early pagan religions of the Diaspora. Indeed, it seems to be representative of some idea of good ol' pagan justice.

Wronged peasants are said to sell their souls to summon or call it, turning it against their enemies: two-timing adulterers, swindling guildsmembers, tyrant lords, etc. While it takes bloody revenge against these perpetrators, it also takes the body and soul of its summoner, sometimes by snatching him away into the night, sometimes by slow consumption over the years. Peasants avoid those few they believe have called upon this spirit from the id.

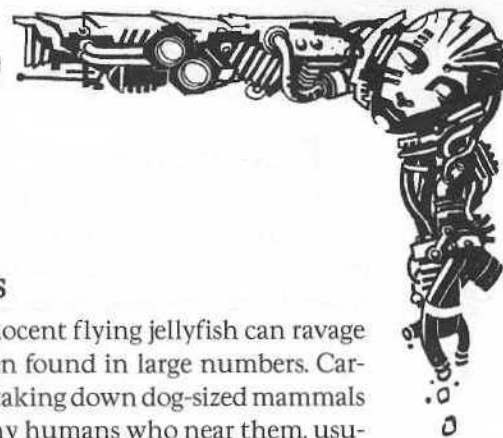
Calling it can't be done by just anyone — only witches or sorcerors know the way to do it, and they must be petitioned to teach the would-be summoner the trick of it. The calling usually involved collecting some vile articles or sacrifices first; the type varies from world to world but some well-known component are: knuckle bones of the dead, unearthed from a cemetery at midnight; poison herbs, harvested in the dark of the moon; a sacrificial beast, usually a beloved dog or other pet; a lock of one's own hair, cut in anger; and many more besides.

Once these items have been collected, the creature is called for on a moonlit night at the edge of the wilderness. The invocation must be growled in rage. If all goes right, and the need is true, the creature will rise from the earth beneath the summoner's feet, forming itself from whatever material is available (roots, mud, bugs, bones, etc.) and light out into the night to wreak vengeance on the accused (regardless of whether the accusation was right or wrong). The thing is seemingly unstoppable, although it is believed that some of the rites of the Orthodoxy may be effective against it (few priests are ever the subject of its vengeance, perhaps for this reason). In addition, no fortification can stop it — from either its target or its summoner, once it returns for him.

While most priests believe that this creature is mere superstition, some think that it is a demon somehow free from the usual rules that bind otherworldly entities from egress into this world. Its summoner does not need to be an accomplished Antinomist, and it does no harm to any but its target and its caller.



Beasties



Despite terraforming and massive hunting during the Second Republic, many dangerous alien beasts survive and now cause trouble for sentients on many worlds. These things are not myths, for many are kept by nobles as pets or to provide threats against peasants who dream of revolt. Some endanger explorers seeking wilderness ruins or hidden treasures of the past.

Phlag Dogs

These disgusting pack animals are scavengers of the most debased kind. So hated are they are Known Worlders that many demons are invested with their form, and to call someone a phlag is enough to initiate a fight.

Found mainly in unpopulated woodlands (originally from Vrilya, but now on many worlds), phlag dogs are tougher than similar Urth scavengers due to the harsh conditions on their native world. They are also known for sharp cunning, but often forget such tactics when hungry enough.

Description: Their skin clings tightly to their bones, giving them the appearance of starving hyenas, but this is natural for them. Their fur is thin and ranges from green to yellow in color, sometimes with dark spots on the flanks. Their eyes are saucerlike, capturing ambient light at night well. They look truly alien, like a mockery of Urth mammals.

Roleplaying: They will stake out likely prey and slowly hound it to exhaustion, at first hunting from a distance (but obvious to the prey) and eventually nipping at its heels. They have exhibited no fear of sentients, although they are smart enough to stay out of the way of slug guns or energy weapons. Indeed, their favorite prey seems to be small parties of lost humans, whom they chase down over a number of days, finally pouncing on the fatigued crew and tearing them limb from limb.

Entourage: Packs of six to 12 members. Phlag will never approach a prey alone but must have at least one partner. Lone phlag usually starve to death.

Body: Strength 5, Dexterity 10, Endurance 9

Mind: Wits 1, Perception 7

Natural skills: Dodge 9, Fight 7, Sneak 8, Vigor 8

Blessings: Night Vision (no Perception penalties in the dark),

Weapons: Bite (3 DMG)

Vitality: -9/-6/-3/-1/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0

Weed Flitters

These seemingly innocent flying jellyfish can ravage small communities when found in large numbers. Carnivorous and capable of taking down dog-sized mammals easily, they will attack any humans who near them, usually from a vantage of surprise (dropping down on hapless explorers).

These horrors were smuggled into the Known Worlds from a Vau world. While their smugglers thought they would provide clues from which to engineer bioweapons, they have spread throughout certain communities, tainting areas with periodic infestations. (Their population cycles boom once every 20 years, but radically drop in between.) It is rumored that their acid was used in certain poisons developed during the Emperor Wars, and apothecaries dealing in such things pay high dollar for live specimens.

Description: Weed Flitters, so called because the first humans to find them in the wild thought they looked like floating weeds, can drift in a weak breeze. Weed Flitters glide at three meters per turn, but not against a strong crosswind. Underneath a jellylike, round central nervous system/brain, radiate 10 feelers, coated in acidic oil, by which the weed flitter kills its mammalian prey, slowly digesting its decomposing flesh.

Roleplaying: Weed Flitters are easily avoided once one is alerted to their presence. Although they travel in numbers, they seem to have no sense of community or care for their fellows. Killing one elicits no reaction from the others. However, once one has found food, all will gather to partake of the feast.

Entourage: Most often found in pairs, "packs" of 20 or more are known.

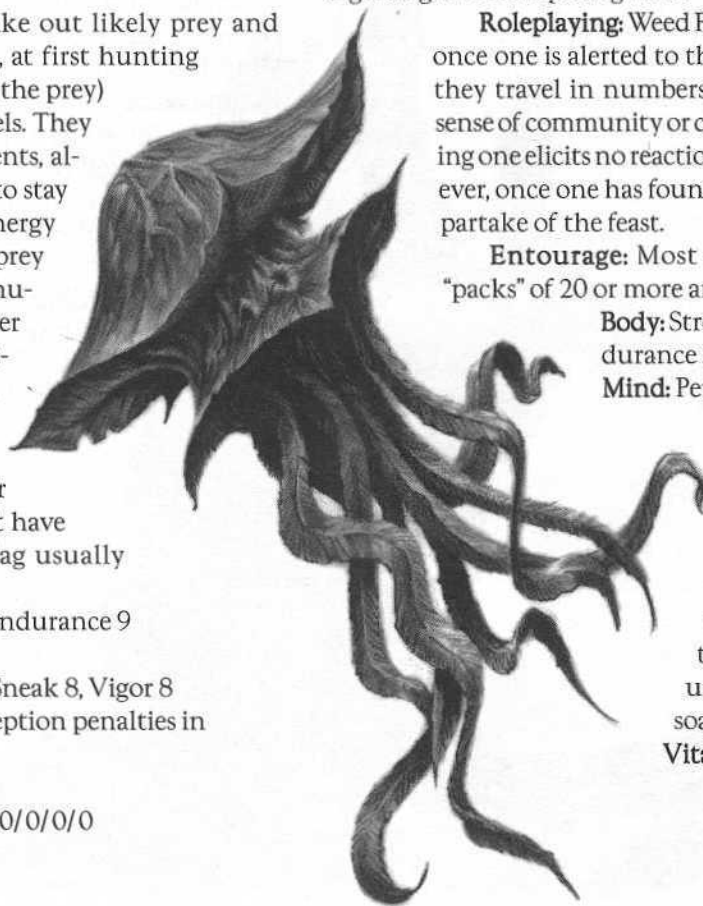
Body: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Endurance 3

Mind: Perception 2

Natural skills: Fight 5, Sneak 6, Vigor 5

Weapons: Poison acid (upon contact, the oil protecting their viscous bodies burns most flesh at 4 DMG per turn for three turns or until washed off with soap or gasoline)

Vitality: -5/-2/0/0/0



Razorworms

De Moley is an inhospitable, barren place of rocky crags and little atmosphere. The planet is subject to incoming asteroids and space debris that planets with heavier atmospheres rarely experience. After a large asteroid storm pelted the mountain chain south of the monastery, workers were sent to search for ore remnants in the craters. The storm had originated outside the solar system, and the metallurgists were hoping to find exotic metals. They found something far more exotic than they hoped.

The razorworms sprang up from the bottom of a crater, penetrating the protective suits of the workers and imbedding themselves into their flesh. The "razor thin" incisions made by the creatures healed over in minutes. Several men questioned whether anything more than a scratch had occurred.

The Brother Battle leadership quarantined the entire team after hearing the report. Examination was difficult, as no scarring or foreign body could be found. It was later determined, after an extensive autopsy, that the creatures had disassembled to the molecular level and spread via the bloodstream to all parts of the victim's bodies.

The first two weeks of quarantine were completely uneventful. Brother Battle was about to release the workers when, on the 15th day, several of the team began to show signs of infestation. The first symptoms were lack of energy and a pale pallor. Within another day or so came sharp pains in random locations. By the third week, the horror began in full.

What seemed to be limitless numbers of razorworms sliced their way out of their hosts' flesh. First, only a few sprang from random body parts, leaving a spray of blood and a wound the increasingly nervous quarantined team feared to attend. Within a matter of hours, each infested person was reduced

to a shredded mass as waves of razorworms burst forth seeking a new host. Everyone in the room was now infested.

Strangely, only a few razorworms imbedded themselves into any given person. The rest continued searching for fresh meat; piles of blood-soaked, shiny gray razorworms attempted to carve their way through the stainless steel quarantine room for about 15 minutes before going dormant.

Careful testing has since revealed that a razorworm can survive for an untold length of time in a vacuum and is immune to extremes of heat and cold. When it is within 10 feet of a warm blooded, oxygen breathing creature, some yet unknown mechanism brings the razorworm out of dormancy. The awakening process takes only 60 seconds. Once awake, the razorworm quickly springs at the nearest target.

Water, whether salt or fresh, is the undoing of the creature. A razorworm submerged in water disassembles. Without a host's internal structure, it perishes.

Description: Razorworms are nonsentient, asexual creatures. They are shiny gray slivers measuring about 1/2" by 1" with a thickness of less than 1/32". All four edges of the creature are preternaturally sharp, allowing it to cut through anything less than high quality steel. The tensile strength of the razorworm body is such that, while it is dormant, it cannot be broken. When active, however, the razorworm can be snapped not unlike a razor blade. Doing so does not, however, harm the creature — it only multiplies it into two smaller ones.

Body: Strength 1, Dexterity 8, Endurance 4

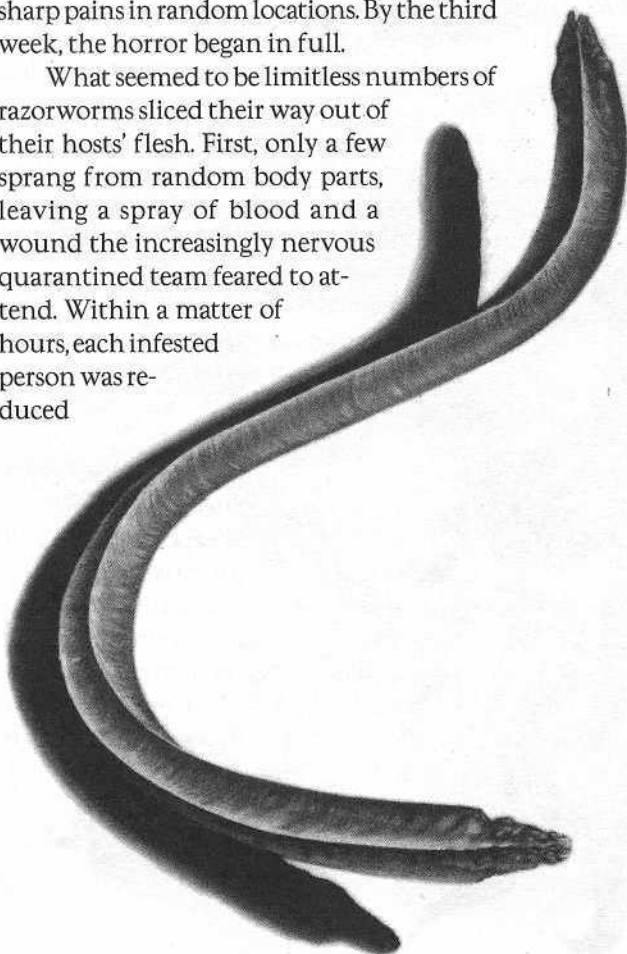
Mind: Perception 4

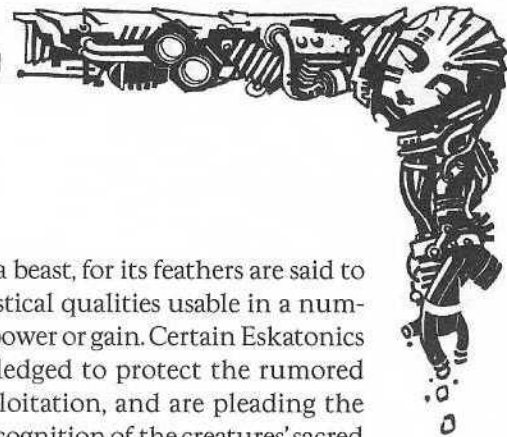
Natural skills: Fight 7

Weapons: Imbed (can spring 10 feet to cut its way into victim's body; roll Dex + Fight; if successful, roll 10 DMG to penetrate armor or energy shields, but only one damage point is actually inflicted; the wound heals within 10 turns)

Armor: 5 when dormant

Vitality: Dies only if submerged in water





Cryptoxenology

The Academy Interrata has many departments dedicated to odd, obscure or just plain weird "sciences." One such is the field of cryptoxenology, the study of mythical alien creatures. On ancient Urth, such beasts as bigfoot, lake serpents, yetis and more fall into a similar category.

Many subjects of this science are believed to have once existed on certain worlds but were wiped out by terraforming before scientists could ever confirm their existence. All that remains of them are pictures in ancient books, holofilms and occasional descriptions in old literature. Some even swear that certain of these creatures still exist, following obscure sightings on various worlds. Explorers ship out from the Academy following these reports, hopeful that they will be the first to prove a legend true.

Galopin ("Feathered Horse")

This beautiful creature is often considered too good to be true. Once a native of Aylon, this was not a horse at all but an alien ungulate remarkable for its peacock-like feathers and tail. Unlike the mythical Pegasus, the Galopin could not fly, but its running speed supposedly matched that of an Urth cheetah.

Its most famous appearance is in the Omega Gospels, where one bore Saint Amalthea away from enemies, its brilliant plumage blinding them. For this reason, it is considered by Dark Agers to be holy. However, the last known Galopin was shot and killed by a hunter on Aylon in 3233. Since then, they have been believed completely extinct. Until now.

Three years ago, a Hazat noblewoman swore to have seen one on Pentateuch. One year ago, another (the same one?) was seen half a continent away by an Ur-Obun pilgrim. The Academy Interrata immediately dispatched a team to Pentateuch, and they now comb the wilds for signs of the creature. So far, they have had no luck.

It has been opined by Eskatonics that Doramos had discovered a few Galopin in the wilds of Aylon and brought them to his terraformed world upon its creation, full knowing that they were extinct elsewhere. Some strange alchemy of Pentateuch has kept them hidden until now.

It is not just Academy scientists who seek the Galopin; magicians of all stripes would

dearly love to find such a beast, for its feathers are said to possess a number of mystical qualities usable in a number of ways for personal power or gain. Certain Eskatonics and Amalthean have pledged to protect the rumored Galopin from such exploitation, and are pleading the Orthodoxy for official recognition of the creatures' sacred status. If granted, the killing of a Galopin would become a Church crime, punishable by death.

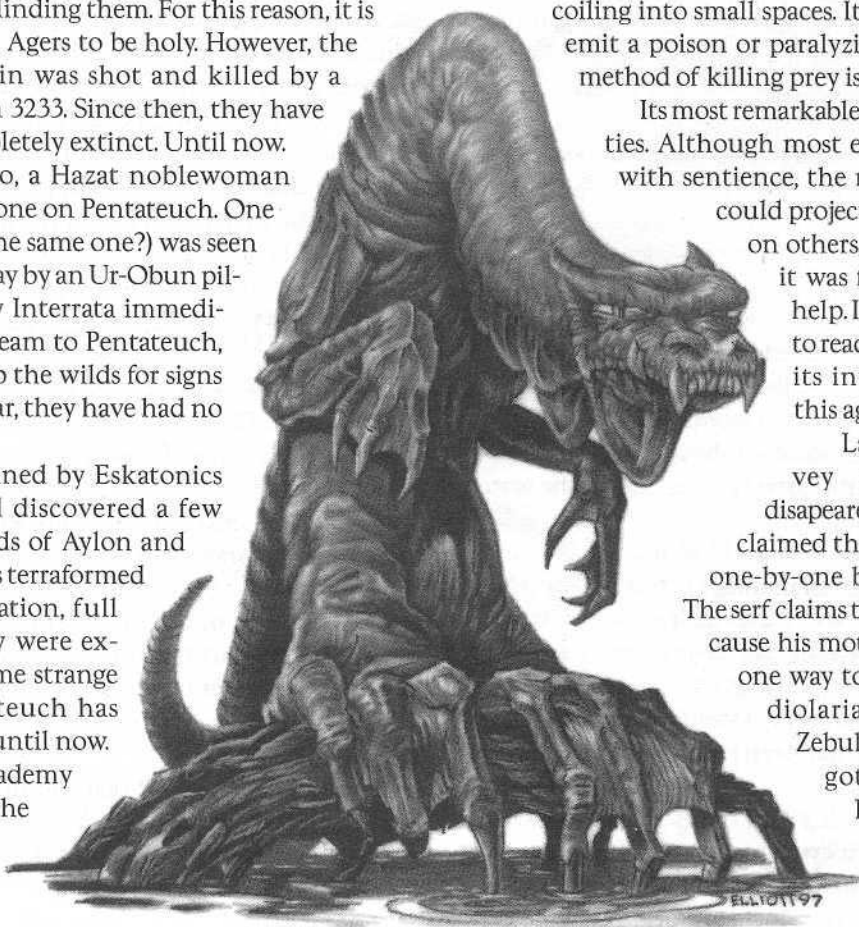
Giant Radiolarian

This reclusive creature is said to once have lived in wilderness ponds and lakes, luring victims to it through psychic projection of emotional states. Although originally native to Sutek, these beings were supposedly spread to many noble estates on many worlds, considered fascinating once defanged. Although many explorers and serfs claim to have encountered the creature, a verified capture of a wild radiolarian has not occurred since 4560.

The physical traits of the creature vary, leading Academy Interrata cryptoxenologists to theorize a number of breeds. There are a number of common themes: the beast seems to be a lizard with stunted or vestigial limbs at best, unable to leave the waters except in short, shambling hops. It is invariably large, about the size of a shark, but some reports claim it to be more snakelike, and thus capable of coiling into small spaces. It has large fangs which emit a poison or paralyzing drug, but its main method of killing prey is through drowning.

Its most remarkable trait is its psychic abilities. Although most equate psychic powers with sentience, the radiolarian reportedly could project false emotional states on others, making them believe it was friendly or in need of help. It seemed to also be able to read the emotional state of its intended prey and use this against them.

Last year, a Li Halan survey team on Rampart disappeared but for one serf, who claimed that the party was killed one-by-one by a giant radiolarian. The serf claims that only he escaped because his mother had told him the one way to free oneself from radiolarian control: to recite Zebulon's "Prayer for the Forgotten," wherein the Prophet praised the wretched.



Nizdharim

Known World's knowledge of the Nizdharim comes from the Rassic Records on Madoc, a history of the native amphibious Oro'ym race. From these records, Second Republic xenologists discovered mention of a vanquished sentient race, the mollusk-like Nizdharim, who vied with the Oro'ym for control of the water planet in ages past. The Nizdharim claimed to be the spawn of "Nidderdak from Beyond the Stars," a devouring god. A 12-tentacled, mollusk-like sea race, they supposedly gained sentience on the oceans of Madoc eons ago, long before humanity existed. In wars with the newly emerging amphibian race, the Oro'ym, they were hunted to extinction on Madoc, until only a faint memory remained in Oro'ym folklore. This is all that the records directly state about the vanquished race.

But the Spawn of Nidderak seem to be legend no longer. Although the ocean-dwelling sentient race was driven to extinction on Madoc, they have recently been sighted in Vuldrok space. Unlike their Oro'ym cousins, they seem to have maintained starfaring technology, for some Vuldrok raiders curse them and their strange starships of alien manufacture. While they have parlayed with a few Vuldrok chieftains, very few Known Worlders know of them as yet. Little is known about them even among their Vuldrok neighbors, save that they dwell under a hereditary priest caste and claim to be the children of the god Nidderdak. They come from a world unknown to humans, through a jumpgate which has not long been open.

Their starships resemble organic, cone-shaped squids, and have been confused with similar Symbiot ships. Some chieftains speculate that they are Symbiot ships, and that the Nizdharim are not really the resurgence of the legendary race of Madoc, but a similar experiment in mollusk biology by Symbiots.

They have so far managed to keep their existence a secret to most Known Worlders, which greatly aids their plans to seed the oceans of other worlds — including planets of the Known Worlds. Some Vuldrok claim to have seen their ships in the Leminkainen system, near to the water moon of the fourth planet.

Description: Nizdharim are 12-tentacled mollusks standing 1.2 meters tall, resembling Urth cephalopods in several ways. They possess two eyes each with a horizontal iris, a head with a radula (a file-like feeding organ) and beak for digesting food, sucker-bearing tentacles and digestive, reproductive and circulatory systems (including a systemic heart and branchial heart) located in the visceral hump.

Nizdharim are divided into males and females, and have glands below each eye which can emit poison in a green spray. The new Nizdharim seem to differ from earlier, extinct cousins in the Known Worlds: they possess

skulls guarding their brains, as well as a shell over their visceral humps, both of which are hard to pierce (they slightly resemble the cone-bearing mollusks of Urth's Silurian seas in the Paleozoic era).

Their arms are very dexterous and adaptable, and they are capable of handling sensitive equipment. Extremely fast and mobile on 12-tentacles, they can overtake a human on flat land. Nizdharim prefer salt-water environments; most Urth-type planets with oceans could support them.

The Nizdharim seem immune to human psychic probing and some Vuldrok psychics believe they are in constant communication with each other. Those encountered wear adaptive space suits which contain a salt-water filtering/recycling system.

They also have small mollusk creatures (*akarhim*, or "glue-squids") with which they have a strong relationship. They are very small mollusks, usually attached to one tentacle. A glue-squid provides the Nizdharim with salt water while feeding off waste products from the circulatory system and the digestive cecum. They seem to be favored pets of the Nizdharim and fulfill a need on long journeys from their watery world.

Nizdharim trade with the Vuldrok for technology, selling exotic herbs (some with medicinal cures), strange art artifacts from vanished sentient cultures and a highly addictive drug, "dreamweed", harvested from an aquatic seaweed grown on their watery world.

Nizdharim cannot speak human languages but they have learned to read and write some of them (certain Vuldrok dialects) and could possibly communicate through mathematics (although their symbols are very different). This language barrier is sure to cause major problems when Known Worlds contact does take place.

Nizdharim Traits

Characteristics: Dexterity (max 13; cost: 6 pts)

Natural skills: Dodge, Impress, Melee, Shoot, Vigor

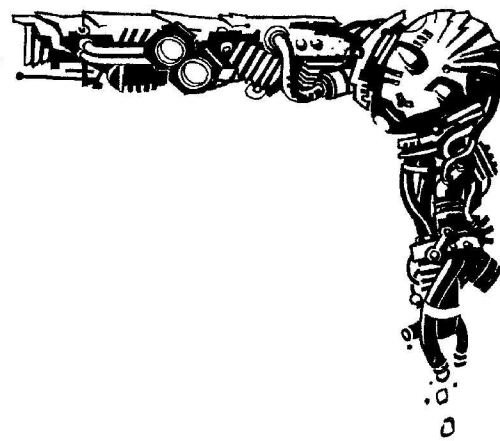
Learned skills: Drive (Watercraft), Focus, Speak Nizdharim, Stoic Body

Blessings: Ambidextrous (4 pts: no penalty for off-tentacle weapon use), Carapace (3 pts: 3 armor), Gills (3 pts: breath underwater), Hazardous Breath (4 pts: poison cloud emitted from glands under eyes), Tentacles (8 pts: total of 12 tentacles; Nizdharim can fire guns or sword fight with their four upper tentacles, the rest are used for movement and balance; base running distance on eight tentacles: 14 meters)

Curses: Alien Nature (+2 pts), Cannot Speak Urthish (+1 pt), Requires Moisture (+5 pts), Short (+3 pts: -1 Vitality)

Afflictions: Unknown Sentient (+5 pts: suffer vast prejudice from humans)

Total cost: 13 pts



Rakthulik

Race: Nizdharim

Rank/Class: Insurgent

Description: See above.

Roleplaying: Rakthulik is part of a small settlement placed on Baltos, an uninhabited, watery moon orbiting the fourth planet of the Leminkainen system (Pohjola). The colony is very small and under equipped (they don't have a spaceship, for fear that humans would capture it). So far, the colony is unknown to humans.

Entourage: Rakthulik leads a colony of 15 Nizdharim.

Body: Strength 3, Dexterity 9, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 6, Perception 8, Tech 5

Spirit: Extrovert 4, Introvert 3, Passion 3, Calm 5, Faith 6, Ego 2, Human 1, Alien 5

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 5, Fight 6, Impress 6, Melee 7, Observe 7, Shoot 6, Vigor 9

Learned Skills: Arts (Rhetoric) 4, Etiquette 4, Drive (Watercraft 6, Spacecraft 4), Comp Redemption 3, Sleight of Hand 3, Read Urthish 2, Spacesuit 5, Think Machine 4, Throwing 7

Blessings: Ambidextrous (4 pts), Carapace (3 pts), Gills (3 pts), Hazardous Breath (4 pts), Tentacles (8 pts)

Curses: Alien Nature (+2 pts), Cannot Speak Urthish (+1 pt), Requires Moisture (+5 pts), Short (+3 pts: -1 Vitality)

Afflictions: Unknown Alien (+4 pts: suffer vast prejudice from humans)

Wyrd: 6

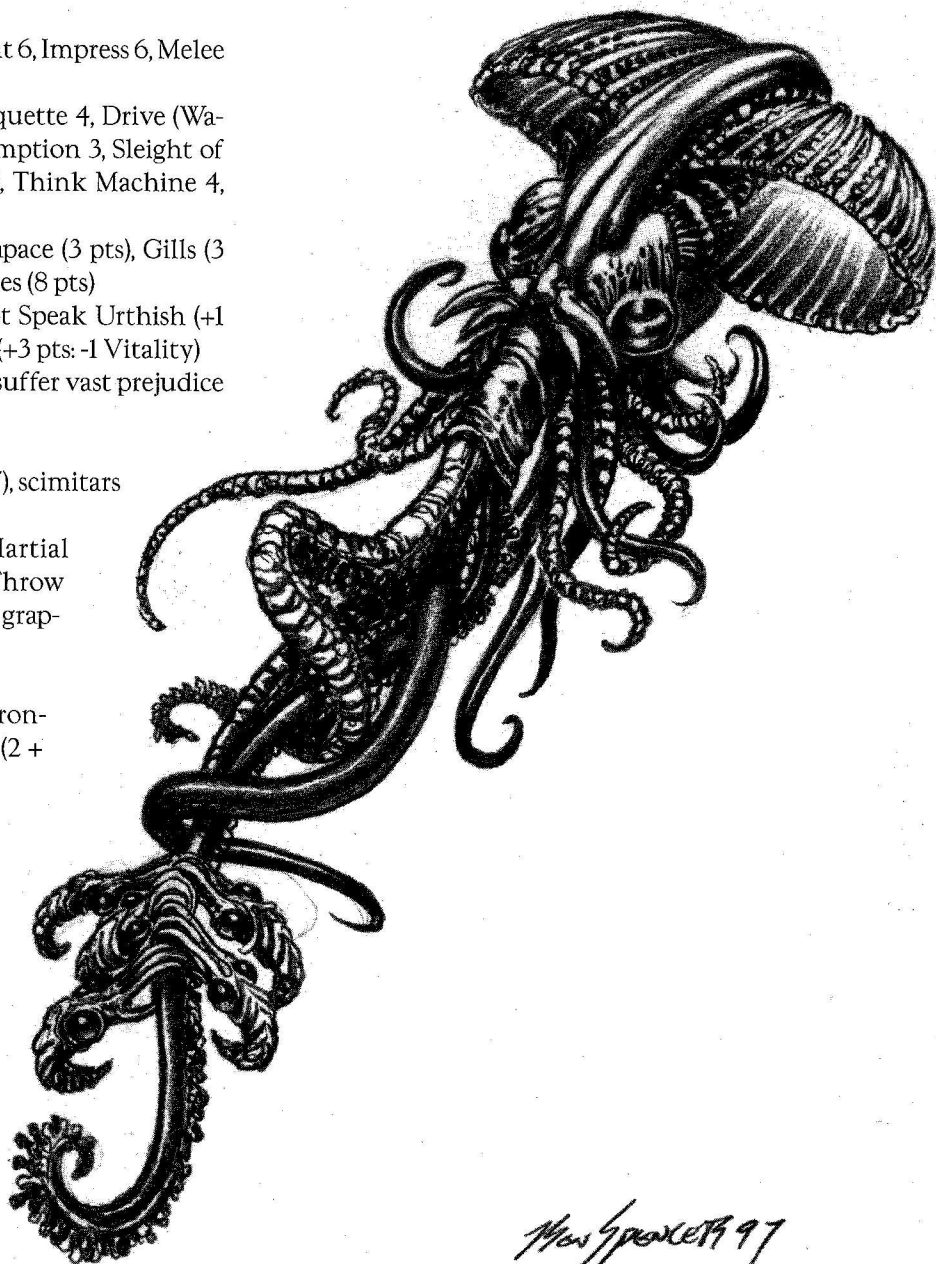
Weapons: Laser rifle (more like a staff), scimitars (x3)

Martial Arts (Ga'hij): Martial Fist, Martial Hold, Martial Throw, Choke Hold, Throw Group (all tentacles can be used for grappling: add +4 goal bonus)

Fencing: Parry, Thrust, Slash, Disarm

Armor: Carapace (3); Nizdharim environment suits are equivalent to leather (2 + 2d).

Vitality: -10/-8/-6/-4/-2/0/0/0/0



Max Sparck 97

Zhuil'hishtu

Ivor Tenuta ran a grimy hand across the back of his neck and cursed the ill luck that caused him to back the wrong Keddah aspirant for rulership of New Lahore City, Grail. Now, when he should be settling into a plush office suite with "Director of Sanitation" on the banner, he finds himself three kilometers down a disused stretch of stagnant unused sewer beneath the old quarter ruins. Seventeen years of petty extortion, graft, flattery and expert butt-kissing shot to Gehenne. And his left boot seems to be leaking. What more could happen to him?

Ivor froze, focused the reflector on his fusion lamp farther down the tunnel ahead. About a dozen meters up, something big was moving under the scum. As it neared, a sloped wedge-shaped head broke the surface and rose up before him.

The thing was not large, rising only to Ivor's chest out of the waist-deep water and weighing only half as much as the burly freeman, but appeared to be riding on something much larger. A third lid rolled back from each eye, and it parted scaly lips to hiss viciously at Ivor, brandishing a spear of sharpened metal in one hand, a small utility knife in another, and a pistol held rock-steady at his chest in two others...

The Zhuil'hishtu, ancestral/biological enemies of the Etyri, are generally believed to be extinct. House Keddah's mining interests strive to reinforce this belief, to the point of blacklisting and discrediting any miner with wild stories to tell. The six-legged reptiles have in fact survived, and even thrived to some degree, in vast cavern complexes deep beneath the heavily mined mountain ranges of Grail. Over the millennia their tribes have labored in darkness to forge a primitive agricultural society, some growing blind and monstrous in size as they worked the vast fungal forests and wormplains of their closed world. Writing in stone was developed, and the crude roots of commerce, government and religion were established. Fire was never tamed by them, however, so technology never rose above the stone age level.

With the loss of their eyesight, other senses grew more acute; all Zhuil'hishtu have hypersenses equivalent to the Sixth Sense power DarkSense, although this is not considered a psychic power for them. Some genuine psychic powers, mainly from the Soma path, have developed among them, however, as has theurgy. Their priesthood, often chosen from the populace for their total blindness, have formulated rites of crop-blessing and healing comparable to those practiced by the Universal Church. The Zhuil'hishtu religion centered around Zhi-Haruss, a witch-mother goddess cognate with the more successful Etyri deity Mihanoom; Zhi-Haruss lost both her eyes seeking wisdom from the gods and is now condemned to sleep in the deepest cavern in the world and eat the souls of the dead.

In recent centuries, the younger generation of hatchlings have become curious about the surface world,

and migrate in small numbers to live in the sewer systems of the enormous cities that dot the coastal plains of Grail. Most die quickly from disease and starvation, but enough have resisted the poisonous and hostile environment that the first generations of urban Zhuil'hishtu are just now surviving to maturity. Absurdly puny compared to their troglodytic ancestors, they are nevertheless fast and smart, and do not suffer from blindness or hypersensitivity to light.

A very few street-dwelling urbanites, the poor, homeless or the criminal element, know the truth about the six-legged lizards in the sewers, but either keep the secret for their own reasons or are thought mad when they try to tell the world. Some Zhuil'hishtu have learned pidgin Urthish from these allies and captives.

Suggested Species Traits

New Breed

Characteristics: Dexterity (max: 12; cost: 4 pts)

Natural skills: Fight, Melee, Sneak, Vigor

Learned skills: Survival, Tracking

Blessings: Darksense (3 pts: no Perception penalties in darkness), Extra Limbs (5 pts: total of six limbs usable as arms or legs), Sticky toes (3 pts: toes and fingers have suction pads allowing the Zhuil'hishtu to climb walls and along ceilings: three meters per turn up walls, one meter per turn on ceilings, plus one meter per victory point on a Dexterity + Vigor roll)

Curses: Alien Nature (+2 pts), Short (+3 pts: -1 Vitality)

Afflictions: Ostracized (+6 pts: while the race is unknown at large, they are hunted by Etyri and their allies)

Base running distances: On two legs: 8 meters, four legs: 10 meters, on six legs: 12 meters

Total cost: 4 pts

Old Breed

Characteristics: Strength (max 12; cost: 4 pts), Dexterity (max: 12; cost: 4 pts), Endurance (max: 12; cost: 4 pts)

Natural skills: Fight, Melee, Sneak, Vigor

Learned skills: Survival, Tracking

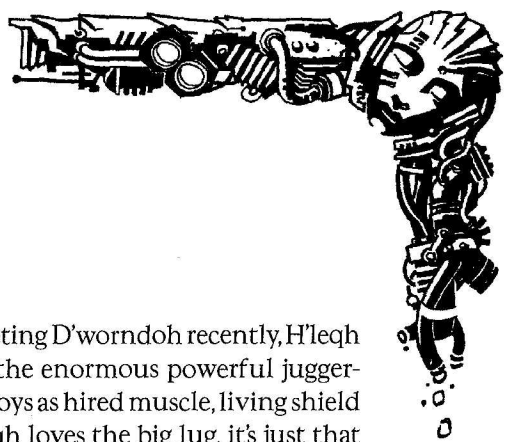
Blessings: Darksense (3 pts: no Perception penalties in darkness), Extra Limbs (5 pts: total of six limbs usable as arms or legs, base run on four legs: 12 meters; on six: 14 meters), Tall (3 pts: +1 Vitality), Toughskin (3 pts: 1 + 1d armor)

Curses: Alien Nature (+2 pts), Blind (+6 pts: no visual Perception rolls)

Afflictions: Barbarian (+2 pts), Ostracized (+6 pts: while the race is unknown at large, they are hunted by Etyri and their allies)

Base running distances: On two legs: 12 meters, four legs: 14 meters, six legs: 16 meters

Total cost: 10 pts



H'leqh

Race: Zhuil'hishtu

Rank/Class: No Rank/ No Class

Quote: "Aw no, D'worndoh, ya only thought ya saw me take that much! It's them bad eyes of yers playin' tricks on ya again is all... Lookee, here's one, two, three, and five out of my own stack here and we'll forget al about it, huh, D'worndoh ol' buddy?"

Description: H'leqh is small, wiry and gecko-like, with bulging eyes on a narrow flat face and soft scaly skin striped the colors of mixed sewage. Just over 1.5 meters long from tip to tail, he stands just under a meter tall on his hind legs. Although he wears no clothing, he does keep heavy boots on his hind limbs and work gloves on his middle limbs, as well as beltpacks and bandoleers across his torso.

Roleplaying: H'leqh is a classic street urchin, always on the run, on the take, looking for that angle. He can speak Urthish well enough to understand most humanoid, and learned the value of firebirds, tech and other objects at an early age. Tiny and extremely mobile when climbing, H'leqh has made a career as a burglar, but the recent acquisition of a revolver seems to open up new opportunities.

Entourage: Since meeting D'worndoh recently, H'leqh is never found without the enormous powerful juggernaut, whom H'leqh employs as hired muscle, living shield and transportation. H'leqh loves the big lug, it's just that D'worndoh needs to understand who the brains of this operation really is.

Body: Strength 3, Dexterity 9, Endurance 4

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 8, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 8, Introvert 2, Passion 4, Calm 4, Faith 2, Ego 7, Human 2, Alien 3

Natural skills: Dodge 7, Fight 4, Melee 5, Shoot 2, Sneak 8

Learned skills: Climb 8, Search 6, Speak Urthish 2

Blessings: Darksense (3 pts), Extra Limbs (5 pts), Sticky toes (3 pts)

Curses: Alien Nature (+2 pts), Short (+3 pts)

Afflictions: Ostracized (+6 pts)

Wyrd: 3

Weapons: Sharpened-pipe spear, penknife, light revolver with 4 bullets

Martial Arts/Fencing: H'leqh can perform the equivalent of the Voroxian Graa maneuvers Droxx and Throx ("Second Hand" and "Third Hand")

Vitality: -10/-7/-3/-1/0/0/0



D'worndoh

Race: Zhuil'hishtu

Rank/Class: Lesser Priestess of Zhi-Haruss

Quote: "Iff H'leqh ssay sso..."

Description: A hefty example of the older subterranean Zhuil'hishtu, D'worndoh measures nearly four meters from tip to tail, stands over half that on hind legs, and weighs close to half a metric ton. Her skin is coarser than H'leqh's but is very pale, and her eyes are clouded and atrophied. She is tattooed with mystic sigils sacred to Zhi-Haruss.

Roleplaying: When the man in the loose white skins fell through the crack in the sky, he told of the sanctuary of 'Mal-Sseeyah (or Amalthea), where different races were welcomed in harmony. The Zhuil'hishtu did not believe him, but through the years some of the priestesses remem-

bered, and thought that the very possibility of such a place was worth the risk of sending a scout to the surface world. The young and healthy D'worndoh was chosen for the honor. She finds the city frightening and repulsive, relying entirely on H'leqh to survive and seek the sanctuary. H'leqh will not tell her how to find it, and D'worndoh suspects that the jobs he gets her to help with are not very nice. Also, H'leqh was raised without being taught to show respect for the superior gender.

Body: Strength 10, Dexterity 4, Endurance 12

Mind: Wits 4, Perception 2, Tech 1

Spirit: Extrovert 2, Introvert 5, Passion 3, Calm 7, Faith 8, Ego 1, Human 0, Alien 6

Natural skills: Fight 7, Vigor 9

Learned skills: Focus 5, Survival 3, Tracking 3

Blessings: Darksense (3 pts), Extra Limbs (5 pts), Giant (5 pts: +2 Vitality), Toughskin (3 pts)

Curses: Alien Nature (+2 pts), Blind (+6 pts: no visual Perception rolls)

Afflictions: Barbarian (+2 pts), Ostracized (+6 pts)

Occult: Theurgy 3

Powers/Rites: The Laying On of Hands

Wyrd: 7

Weapons: Flint-tipped spear, volcanic glass dagger

Martial Arts/Fencing: D'worndoh can perform the equivalent of the Voroxian Graa maneuvers Banga and Drox ("Charge" and "Second Hand")

Armor: 1 + 1d (Toughskin)

Vitality: -10/-7/-3/-1/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0





Demons

"The Tenth Qlippoth awaits those who fall to the sin of Pride, for this is the Abode of Idolatry, where dwell the imps, which sow minor misfortunes upon the worlds and whisper in the ears of mortals to delude them with self-importance. Know those afflicted with these demons by the unnatural pallor of their skin, which is also cold to the touch.

"The Ninth Qlippoth awaits those who fall to the sin of Sloth, for this is the Abode of Indolence, where dwell the doldrai, which lead the true of heart astray of their purpose and weigh them down with imagined burdens. Know those afflicted with these demons by the excessive hairiness of their hands and bodies, and the emptiness of their eyes.

"The Eighth Qlippoth awaits those who fall to the sin of Greed, for this is the Abode of Avarice, where dwell the imeressen, which kindle hunger in the breasts of those that would know contentment. Know those afflicted with these demons by their excessive obesity, and the presence of goiters and boils about the face and belly.

"The Seventh Qlippoth awaits those who fall to the sin of Lust, for this is the Abode of Carnality, where dwell the incubi and succubi, which incite women and men to partake in sins of the flesh. Know those afflicted with these demons by their eyes like unto a cat's, or their unnaturally elongated tongue or musky odor.

"The Sixth Qlippoth awaits those who fall to the sin of Oathbreaking, for this is the Abode of Betrayal, where dwell the thagirion, which dispute all logic and cause facts to appear false, planting doubt in the minds of the righteous. Know those afflicted with these demons by their forked tongue or eyes like unto a lizard's, or a tail which is barbed or a rotten odor.

"The Fifth Qlippoth awaits those who fall to the sin of Anger, for this is the Abode of Wrath, where dwell the zaraqh, which break, burn and disperse, and cause great acts of destruction to come to pass. Know those afflicted with these demons by horns upon their head, their eyes that glow red, or their scaly hide or clawed hands or a burning odor.

"The Fourth Qlippoth awaits those who fall to the sin of Envy, for this is the Abode of Injustice, where dwell the satariel, which cause that which may be concealed to rise in power above that which is open and honest. Know those afflicted with these demons by bleeding from their eyes and ears, sporadic discharges of electricity, their cloven-hoofed feet or blue skin.

"Of those three Qlippoth closest to the Infernos Prime, less may be said, for whatsoever dwells therein deigns never to manifest in our world, preferring instead to act solely through their servants in the lesser Qlippoth."

— de Daemonolatrae, appendix of the Instructiones Inquisitorium

Demon Sultans

Of all the occult menaces that haunt the increasingly dark corners of the **Fading Suns** universe, demons are the most remote and elusive, yet the most dangerous when

encountered directly. While hosts of minor devils roam the backwoods of the Known Worlds, possessing serfs and generally making life hell for agrarian communities without well-trained priests, the rulers of the Infernal realms seldom take such direct action, preferring instead to send their minion hordes on spiritual errands and relying on their willing mortal servants to work their will in the material world.

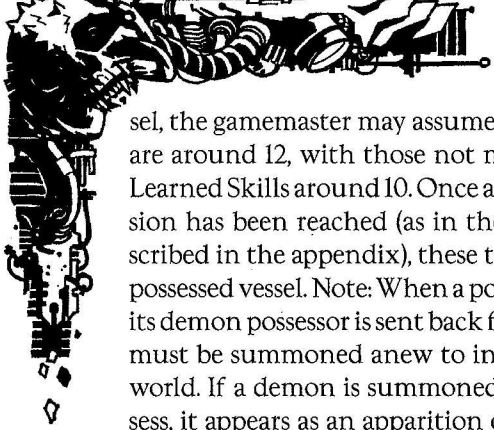
Gamemastering Demons

Every demon's immediate goal is to make its identity known to, and remembered by, as many sentient beings in the actual physical universe as possible. Most do this by using possessed mortals to amass and expend power in wild and shocking displays, writing their names across worlds in blood, fire, tears and inks pigmented with crushed lives. Others are more subtle, insinuating themselves (or rather, the ideas of themselves) into the ideologies of any group or institution where they can find conceptual purchase. Ultimately, a demon can attain an objective state of existence based on widespread belief rather than individual possession, which is limited by the frailty of the body it possesses.

Demons may act through willing servants in the material world, Antinomists and the insanely corrupt or perverse, by augmenting their traits, granting them occult powers or instantaneously "teaching" them skills and knowledges which the demon itself may have. Mortals seeking to communicate with demons call them into existence with ceremonial blood sacrifices or other traumatic expenditures of Wyrd energy. This done, a negotiation takes place in which demon and summoner define each other in terms of the services they are willing or able to render each other. The resulting Pact must be physically documented to lay the foundation for the verifiable existence of the idea of the demon in the real world, making it an authentic source of actual power for its servants. The optimal Pact for the Antinomist is one which keeps the demon busy with specific long-term tasks in exchange for an annual sacrifice. The best pact from the demon's point of view is one in which its duties are vaguely defined enough to allow it time to search out souls with dark enough shadows to crawl into and possess. (Demons also find it easy to possess the truly innocent, whose lack of worldly experience makes them vulnerable to demonic influence.)

Few traits are given below since the powers and abilities of demons are too abstract to be quantified, and their actions are too subtle to be felt directly. Mind and Spirit trait ratings given below are for comparative purposes, to give an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of that demon's personality. If the demon's own traits must be rolled instead of the augmented traits of a possessed ves-





sel, the gamemaster may assume that natural skills listed are around 12, with those not mentioned at 5 or 6, and Learned Skills around 10. Once a state of complete possession has been reached (as in the 9th level of Fealty, described in the appendix), these traits replace those of the possessed vessel. Note: When a possessed body is destroyed, its demon possessor is sent back from whence it came and must be summoned anew to interact with the physical world. If a demon is summoned without a body to possess, it appears as an apparition only, and is thus unhurt by lasers or blasters shot at its image.

Demons have no conception of technology or the laws of applied science, but understand objects by the intent which they embody; thus Phuragojaq, below, may (through a person it has possessed) operate a sharpened stick or a meson cannon with equal aptitude, but will be equally confused when confronted with a screwdriver or a think machine.

Because the objective existence of any individual demon depends on how well they are documented, most of the descriptions and explanations below are taken from old texts and other sources of information which Antinomists rely on for successful summonings, and which player characters may discover and use against Antinomian antagonists.

The Hierarchy of Hell

The old Urthish word "hell" is no longer in common usage, except by poets when speaking archaically or romantically. The word the Prophet used when referring to the abode of demons was "Jehenna," Latinized by Palamedes into "Iehannum." Most Known Worlders use some colloquial variation or contraction like "Jehan" or "Gehenne." The Draco Codex gives a secret etymology, linking it to a possibly related old Urthish word "Ginnungagap," used by early Diasporan explorers to denote the cold expanses of interstellar space. The full Draconian term is Gehennungagap, originally the name for the cold lightless void said to exist before creation, now used as the collective term for all the Qlippothic emanations.

Aside from fragments of an old Kurgan chant which is locked away in the Library of Horace, there are two complete descriptions of the individual Qlippoth which comprise Gehennungagap. One is from "de Daemonolatriae," the locked appendix of the *Instructiones Inquisitorum* described in **Priests of the Celestial Sun**. This was written mainly for inquisitors and exorcists, and makes no distinction between willing and unwilling victims of possession (so the stigmas described in the excerpt at the beginning of this section may apply to Antinomists as well.)

The other description is from the Draco Codex itself, and is written to familiarize the Antinomian student with the names of the rulers of each Qlippothic realm and with the benefits that may be gained through dealing with them.

"The lords of the Tenth Qlippoth may impart to mortals knowledges and skills previously unknown to them. The Sultan of this realm is Elzuphair, the Goat of Fecundity worshipped in ancient times as the one true god, which it still believes itself to be.

"The lords of the Ninth Qlippoth may impart to mortals strength and speed beyond the abilities of mere flesh and blood. The Sultan of this realm is Ba'aluzath, the Sleeping Toad who stirs not, yet has spoken to the ancients of many worlds in dreams.

"The lords of the Eighth Qlippoth may impart to mortals an intellect and cunning beyond their normal capacities. The Sultan of this realm is Hermithoth the All-Knowing, keeper of wisdom which has lain secret since the dawn of time.

"The lords of the Seventh Qlippoth may impart to mortals a strength of spirit beyond their normal capacities. The Sultan of this realm is Layalath, the Bottomless Womb of the Void who gives birth to monsters and mounts passion upon passion to quicken the blood.

"The lords of the Sixth Qlippoth may impart to mortals knowledge of distant events, or allow them to see the unseen. The Sultan of this realm is Samayelos, the Empyrean intelligence who chose to leave the light of the demiurgic Sun and walk the paths of night.

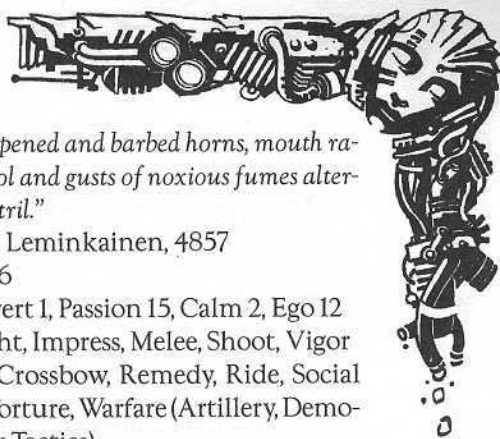
"The lords of the Fifth Qlippoth may impart to mortals the capacity to change their shape or size, or to wear a face other than their own. The Sultan of this realm is Saghulhaza the Sundering Fury, before whom all great works are laid low.

"The lords of the Fourth Qlippoth may impart to mortals knowledge of another's innermost thoughts and the capacity to shape them as they will. The Sultan of this realm is Ashtarath, also called Astroarche, the Queen of the Stars, who understands the secret balance between that which is above and that which is below." <n>[Until the late 45th century, the Draco Codex listed Ashtarath as the Sultan of the 6th Qlippoth and Pangeren as the Sultan of the 4th.]

"Between the Fourth and Third Qlippoth lies the Abyss, a void as deep and as vast as the very darkness between the stars itself, yet is warmed by no star. Here dwells the great serpent who, at the end of time, shall constrict all of the universe in its coils, compressing all into a tiny spark of infinite heat which it shall swallow whole. The serpent is named Levayath-Nidhaugg, called the Beast from the Depths.

"Of the Qlippoth beyond the Abyss, no knowledge may be gained, for no sentience may pass through the Abyss and remain whole. From the oaths of the rulers of the lesser Qlippoth, we may surmise the names of their overlords, to wit: Dhiyammath the Dragon Queen who gives form to the hosts of Gehennungagap and reigns from the Third Qlippoth, and Ap-Bhyzzhu the Lord of the Abyss whose will directs the actions of all the Sultans.

"The First Qlippoth is the throne of Achiyel, the Black Sun at the Heart of the Universe, the cold empty shell left behind by the separation of the false Celestial Sun from the core of existence. Though called by some Infernos Prime, neither light nor heat radiates from the Black Sun, for Achiyel seeks only to reclaim its rightful station as the true font of creation, and swallows all energy which passes into its realm. Only Ap-Bhyzzhu and Dhiyammath may exist in its presence, for they are nothing more



than its own projections, who work through the hordes of Gehnungagap to draw the stolen universe back into itself."

Phuragojaq the Annihilator

"This smoldering malevolent intelligence is the equivalent of a general, commanding vast armies in the Fifth Qlippoth, the Abode of Wrath. The primal enmity between Phuragojaq and the Empyrean spirit Zakhayelos, Lord of Hosts, is the stuff of barack-room legendry; the Sanguine Nebula, whose boiling crimson billows of galactic dust and gas can be seen with the naked eye in the skies of De Moley, is said to be a remnant of their first prehistoric battle."

— de Daemonolatriae

Rank/Class: Count/General, Fifth Qlippoth

Quote: "Of course we'll be firing on our own, you cur! What good are expendable troops if you don't expend them!"

Description: "Phuragojaq appears before the summoner as an enormous humanoid, some 10 meters in height, with a snarling bestial face, not unlike that of an enraged Vorox, atop a massively muscled frame. His hide has the texture of freshly flowing lava and sizzles when it comes into contact with anything. He is never seen without a weapon in hand, and wears plate armor that looks as though it were hewn from slabs of granite and basalt."

— Draco Codex from Midian, 4514

Roleplaying: Bully, braggart, sadist and gloryhound — such human terms are insufficient to describe the unending rage that forms this creature's personality. Treat every encounter as a confrontation; Phuragojaq must dominate and command all to whom he speaks, even his own betters, and is never without an enemy to attack, a rival to torment or a lackey to beat. This is not to say that Phuragojaq is completely unintelligent, however. He can be downright cunning and devious when planning tactics and strategy. Note that, as a bodiless power, Phuragojaq incorporates the concept of violent activity on more than just the human scale, and can be just as easily identified with the collision of galaxies or planetary tectonic cataclysms as with the red teeth and claws of the natural world.

Entourage: "Save when summoned with the proper abjuration to appear alone, Phuragojaq is rarely encountered without a horde of murderous wrathful demons at his back, champing at the bit as they await his call to attack. He is closely attended by a war council of advisors, each with their specialty in dueling, starship tactics, sniping, poisoning, espionage, torture or the like. Phuragojaq rides astride a great beast that resembles a

Vuldrok battle-ox with sharpened and barbed horns, mouth rabidly afoam with acidic drool and gusts of noxious fumes alternately jetting from each nostril."

— Draco Codex from Leminkainen, 4857

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 6

Spirit: Extrovert 9, Introvert 1, Passion 15, Calm 2, Ego 12

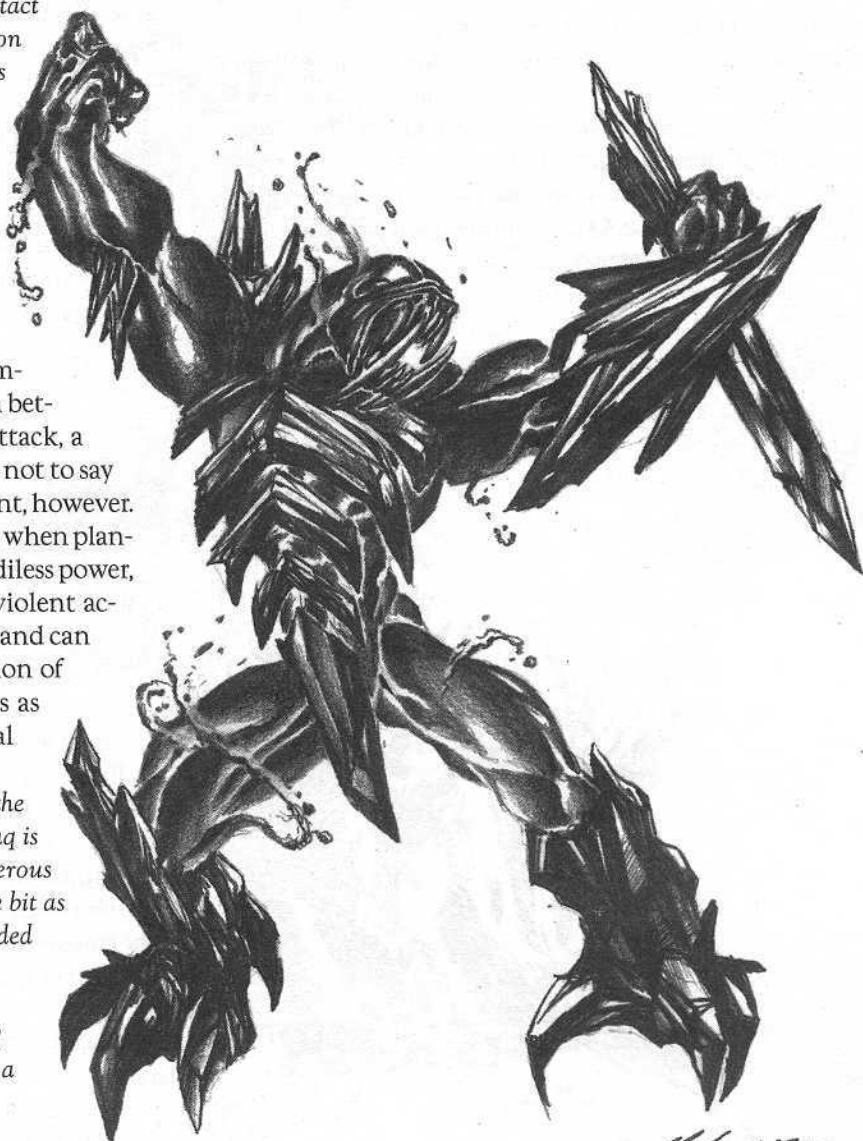
Natural skills: Dodge, Fight, Impress, Melee, Shoot, Vigor

Learned skills: Archery, Crossbow, Remedy, Ride, Social (Leadership), Throwing, Torture, Warfare (Artillery, Demolitions, Gunnery, Military Tactics)

Powers/Rites: FarHand (All), Soma (All), the equivalent of levels 1-8 of Brother Battle theurgic rites

Weapons: All ("Phuragojaq may cause any type of weapon instantly to appear in his hand, and is a master of all unarmed and armed combat maneuvers." — Draco Codex from Aragon, 4902)

Martial Arts/Fencing: see Weapons, above



Not Sporelet 97

Layalath, The Bottomless Womb of the Void

"The primordial embodiment of the principle of lust itself, Layalath is one of the rulers of the Infernal emanations, and has held that position for at least as long as recorded human history, and probably a great deal longer."

— Draco Codex from Rampart, 4831

"Layalath, or the ancient Urthish Lilitu ("Lady of Beasts"), or the Ukari Lullaat ("Mistress of the Nighted Depths"), or the Voroxian Lu'aung ("Beast-Mother"), incarnates nature's tendency to couple, not only among the gender-differentiated sexually active sentient races and animals, but in the ever-compelling appetites of all organisms, in the innate gravitation of all physical bodies, in the very bonding of the quanta of existence itself."

— Sir Willem Jamis Phrazier, *A Study of Interspecial Archetypes*, Phavian Institute Dept. of Archaic Paraphysics, 3978

"Layalath's Qlippothic emanation represents blind, sterile coupling without purpose, while true love is activated by the divine light of the Celestial Sun uniting all things in the virtue of compassion and forming a harmonious relationship which furthers the eternal act of Pancreation. Antinomists might try to counter this by claiming that Layalath is far from barren; some traditions give this demon the surname Progenitor of Monsters, and the Vessels of Iniquity claim that all the intelligences of the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Qlippoth are the spawn of Layalath."

— de Daemonolatriae

Rank/Class: Sultan/Sultana of the Seventh Qlippoth

Quote: "Why do you try to follow the ordained sexual advice of the Patriarch? If he knows anything about it, then he can't possibly be as pure as he claims to be, now can he, my love?"

Description: "Layalath will appear to the summoner as an exceptionally beautiful specimen of the sexually preferred gender and species of the summoner. Layalath also favors the forms of animals commonly associated with sexuality or fertility, such as Terran rabbits and minks, the Voroxian rutboar, the gigolo sparrow of Grail, the Severan chameleon python and the Ravennan pinktail gazelle. Sensuality and hedonism are Layalath's guiding aesthetic principle, and any form taken will always appear to be in a state of extreme arousal."

— Draco Codex from Severus, ca. 47th cent.

Roleplaying: The consummate tempter/temptress, Layalath specializes in manipulating people by luring them on with whatever they most desire, using telepathy to determine whatever that may be. Layalath's voice is never raised, even in extreme anger, and rivets one's attention by its very softness. Forceful control, coercion and negative reinforcement, tactics so common among other demons, are completely alien to Layalath's nature. Layalath finds the existence of the Universal Church especially aggravating, and will richly reward any Antinomist who strikes a hard blow against it. One priest tempted into depravity is easily worth a century of sacrificed goats.

Entourage: "Layalath is often attended by a harem of adoring spirits who take forms which mimic or complement Layalath's own. Swirling in a choreography at once intricate and wildly abandoned, they swoon, primp and fluff as they dance through postures which accent their ruler's form. Many often wear the pleasure-weary faces of Republican adult holovision performers or famous hedonists who have serviced the more decadent nobility throughout history."

— Draco Codex from Criticorum, 4653

Mind: Wits 9, Perception 12

Spirit: Extrovert 13, Introvert 2, Passion 10, Calm 10, Ego 15

Natural skills: Charm, Vigor

Learned skills: Arts, Beast Lore, Disguise, Empathy, Etiquette, Performance, Physick, Ride, Science (Biology, Genetics, Xeno-Biology), Social (Acting), Xeno-Empathy

Powers/Rites: Psyche (Intuit, Emote, MindSight, MindSpeech, Heart's Command)

Equipment: "Layalath always appears fully accessorized, wearing whatever fashion is most appealing to the summoner and brandishing any devices, apparati, paraphernalia or toys that might be needed to bring the summoner to the height of ecstasy."

— Kitab ad-Dregghu (a version of the Draco Codex from Istakhr, ca. 48th cent.)

Weapons: see Equipment, above

Armor: see Equipment, above

Cybernetics: see Equipment, above



Sshlu'uthecch,

The Whisperer in the Void

"As his work progressed, Twylau had less and less to do with the Sathraist congregation to which he belonged. Rarely seen outside of his oddly askew observatory, his unkempt appearance and piercing stare unnerved all the populace who happened across him. He raved about achieving immortality by stepping outside of time, and claimed to converse regularly with an entity residing in the jumpgate of the Sathra's Boon system. All regarded him as a picturesque old crackpot until he gathered a small group of students and purchased a starship to mount his own expeditions to the farthest gates. Many times his crews returned decimated by unknown forces, and his name was cursed in the houses of the families of those who never came back. Nevertheless, there always seemed to be enough adventuresome young pilots, scholars yearning to travel and grand-standing rich brats eager to sign up for any lift offworld, avowing themselves to what their parents called the 'Twylau Suicide Cult.'

"Much speculation has arisen over Twylau's chosen appellation, 'of Sutekh.' Sathra's Boon was not renamed Sutek until House Chauki came to power on that world several centuries later. Many assume that Twylau had, through his extratemporal studies, somehow acquired the gift of prophecy, and named himself for future generations. Those few who have read Twylau's remaining work tend to infer through context that Sutekh is not the name of a place, but of an entity."

— From *The Pied Piper of Sathra's Boon*, 3987

Rank/Class: Eighth Qlippoth
(equivalent)

Quote: "Ffourr jumppss to Mmidiann? Sseemms ann awffull wasste. Lisstenn, I cann givve you a jummpcode ththat will put you ththere inn onne jummp!"

Description: "Out of the void there appeared in my sight an elongated humanoid body with green-black mottled

skin and writhing tendril-like fingers and toes, floating as if in zero-G. In place of a head, however, a squirming mass of serpents erupted from its neck, each one hissing and whispering dark secrets."

— Twylau of Sutekh, quoted in *The Pied Piper of Sathra's Boon*

Roleplaying: Sshlu'uthecch is one of the many voices that the crew of an unbuffered ship may hear when passing through a jumpgate. Sshlu'uthecch will claim to be the ghost of a lesser Anunnaki, and that during its lifetime it worked to construct the jumpgate at the world that now allegedly bears its name (Sutek). As punishment for leading a revolt among the lesser Anunnaki laborers, Sshlu'uthecch's body was sealed deep within the massive gate.

Sshlu'uthecch is bound to the region of extradimensional space that corresponds to the Sutek jumpgate, and will explain that if it can lure enough ships (preferably with disabled Sathra buffers) through its gate, it can eventually gather a sufficient number of followers to begin emancipating others who shared its fate, especially its mate Sschaedhuragh, imprisoned in the gate at Holy Terra.

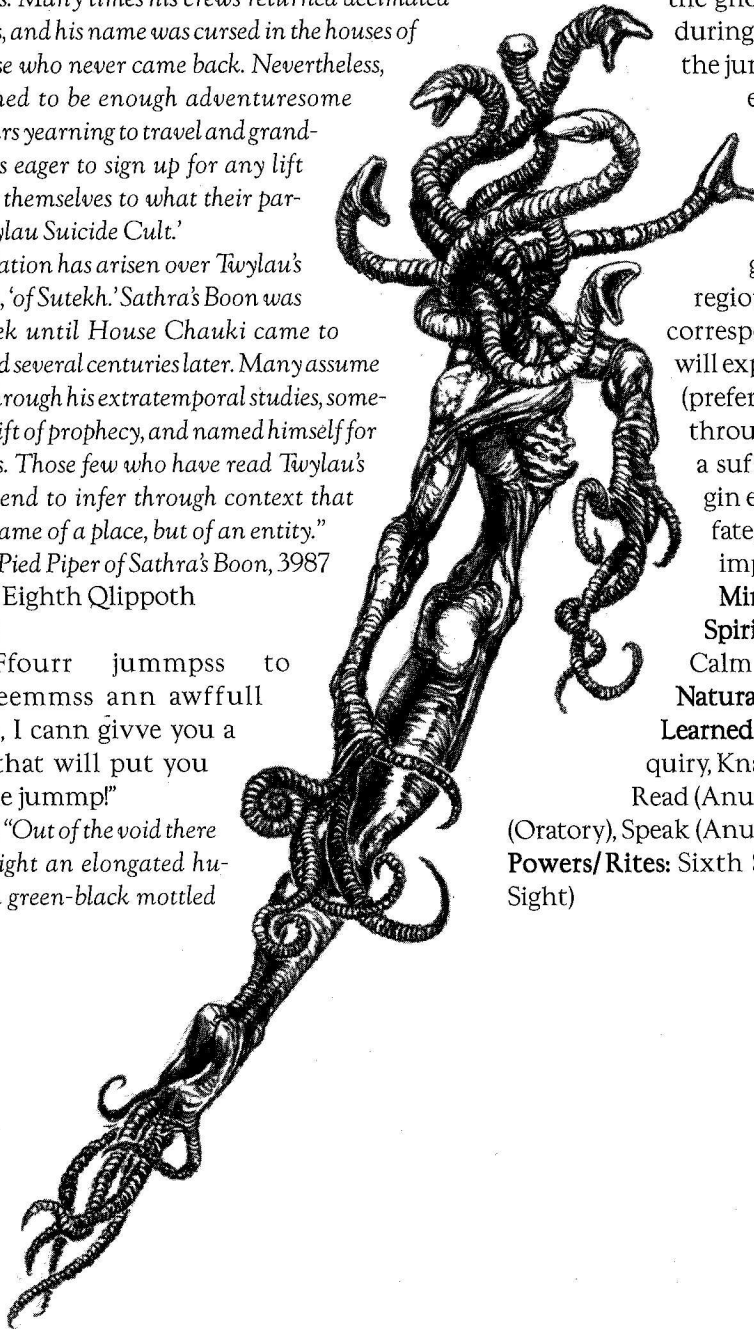
Mind: Wits 11, Perception 6

Spirit: Extrovert 3, Introvert 9, Passion 2, Calm 7, Ego 5

Natural skills: Charm, Impress, Sneak

Learned skills: Disguise, Drive: Spacecraft, Inquiry, Knavery, Lore (Jumproads, Anunnaki), Read (Anunnaki), Science (Astronomy), Social (Oratory), Speak (Anunnaki)

Powers/Rites: Sixth Sense (DarkSense, FarSight, Wyrd Sight)



Azzurayelos, Lord of the Gates of Death

"...O Azzurayelos, Lord of the Gates of Death, gather up the soul of this faithful one, lifting it out of its transient sheath of dust and holding it up to the eternal light of the Celestial Sun..."

— from the Orthodox Funerary Liturgy, ca. 3400

"Of foremost importance for the consideration of Your Holiness, we direct your attention to the appended ex-

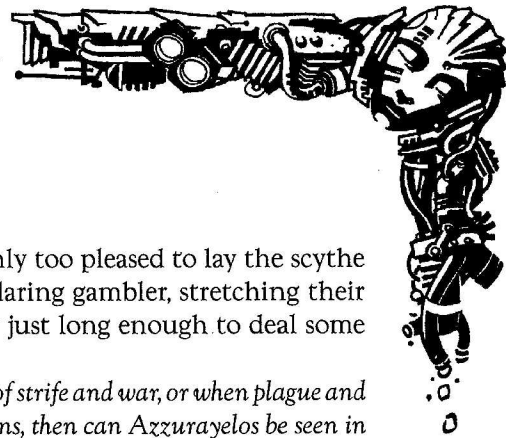
cerpts 13/vi-xiv, drawn from the transcripts of interrogation of eight convicted necromancers brought to holy justice between 4373 and 4617. All declare that they did call upon the name of Azzurayelos, the Holy Angel of Death whose name has been recited in the Rite of Extreme Unction and the Funerary

Liturgy ever since Saint Ivar received communica-

tion from this Empyrean intelligence in 3285. In three of these cases, investigative agents of the Church, observing in secret, did witness with their own eyes the manifestation and willful cooperation of Azzurayelos in acts of blasphemous necromancy. It is therefore the recommendation of this Synod that the name of Azzurayelos be removed from the aforesaid rites and no longer held by the Universal Church to be an Empyrean power enacting the divine Will of the Pancreator, but be recognized as a force of the Darkness with Antinomian sympathies and of possibly demonic alignment. It is further recommended by Bishop Bonaducius of the Temple Avesti that the canonization of Ivar be re-examined by a committee of combined Synecular and Chartophylactic representation."

— from the Inquisitorial Synod's annual statement to the Patriarch, 4669





"And what are we to make of those once-exalted Empyrean powers Azzurayelos and Samayelos, who dwelt in the celestial emanations and facilitated the Grace of the Pancreator? Shall these expressions of the godhead be dismissed from divinity with a stroke of the Patriarchal pen? Did the cosmic axis shift itself in the latter half of the 47th century to accommodate finite mortal prehensions? Or were Ivar and the early Patriarchs simply mistaken about the origin and nature of these entities? Would this not mean that every member of the Universal Church from the 34th century until 4670 was, albeit unwittingly, a practitioner of Antinomian necromantism most foul? And what does this say for the unwritten doctrine of Patriarchal Infallibility?"

— Philosophus (now Magus) Moore, "Consistency and Catastrophe in Orthodox Cosmogony," 4957 (privately distributed)

Rank/Class: Sultan of 5th Qlippoth (equivalent)

Quote: (In a dry hoarse whisper) "...No, I have not come for you...But...We shall meet again..."

Description: "...And Lo! there did come a great shadow which spanned the sky from horizon to horizon with jagged carrion-bird wings, the pinions of which were like unto sharpened blades; and betwixt them flew a tattered and threadbare hooded robe; and where the shreds of its shroud parted in the howling winds, there could be seen the bleached dry white of rib and spine and the limbs of the humanoid skeleton. And when the massive hood swung from side to side surveying the land, deep within its faceless shadow I met the empty gaze of the grinning humorless sardonicus, the death's-head skull which leers eternally at us from behind every face. But then the great limbs creaked and groaned as a gnarled and notched scythe was raised and held ready to sweep across the land. And a great cry of terror rose up from the people..."

— The Vision of Saint Ivar, from Giacoma the Proselytizer's "Lives of the Saints for Young People," Templa Vesti Criticoro, 3458

Roleplaying: Whether Azzurayelos is truly one of the Empyrean angels now fallen from Grace, or a demon who managed to successfully masquerade as an angel for thirteen centuries, or an entirely unrelated spiritual entity, nobody can say, for Azzurayelos is a presence of few words, none of which are used to elucidate personal inquiries. The task of collecting every (or almost every) soul whose stay in the material world has expired wearies even the unbodied. This is not to say, however, that Azzurayelos has no personality at all. As the supreme instrument of what appears to be deterministic fate, the Angel of Death is fascinated with randomness, chaos and chance (especially

games thereof), and is only too pleased to lay the scythe aside for a particularly daring gambler, stretching their span allotted by destiny just long enough to deal some cards or roll some bones.

Entourage: "In times of strife and war, or when plague and famine decimate populations, then can Azzurayelos be seen in the sky, they say, riding upon a gaunt black steed with the head of a gallows-tree, and at its heels may thunder a vast host, ten millions of billions strong, wearing no flesh but wrapped in the moldy cerements of the tomb..."

— Schedred d'Erlet, "Meditations upon the Gate without Egress," ca. 44th cent.

"Those creatures that tend to the bidding of the Angel of Death are the jackal and carrion-dog, the kite, the crow and the vulture, and the ever-victorious crowned and conquering grave-worm."

— de Naturae Mortuis, a chapter on necromancy from a rare original Draco Codex penned in Evandros' own hand

Mind: Wits 13, Perception 17

Spirit: Extrovert 1, Introvert 14, Passion 1, Calm 15, Faith 10, Ego 9

Natural skills: Impress, Shoot, Sneak

Learned skills: Bureaucracy, Disguise, Empathy, Etiquette, Gambling, Science (Archaeology), Xeno-Empathy

Powers/Rites: Omen (All), Soma (All), DeathGaze (the Etyri theurgic rites; All)

"Azzurayelos has full knowledge of, but may not tell, the allotted span and hour of departure for every created being which draws breath."

— Schedred d'Erlet, *Necromanticon*, ca. 48th cent.

Equipment: "The Lord of the Dead may impart to the necromancer the secrets of manufacturing the Cauldron of Husks, which causes any cadaver placed within it to walk once more of its own accord and join the ranks of the army of the dead."

— de Naturae Mortuis

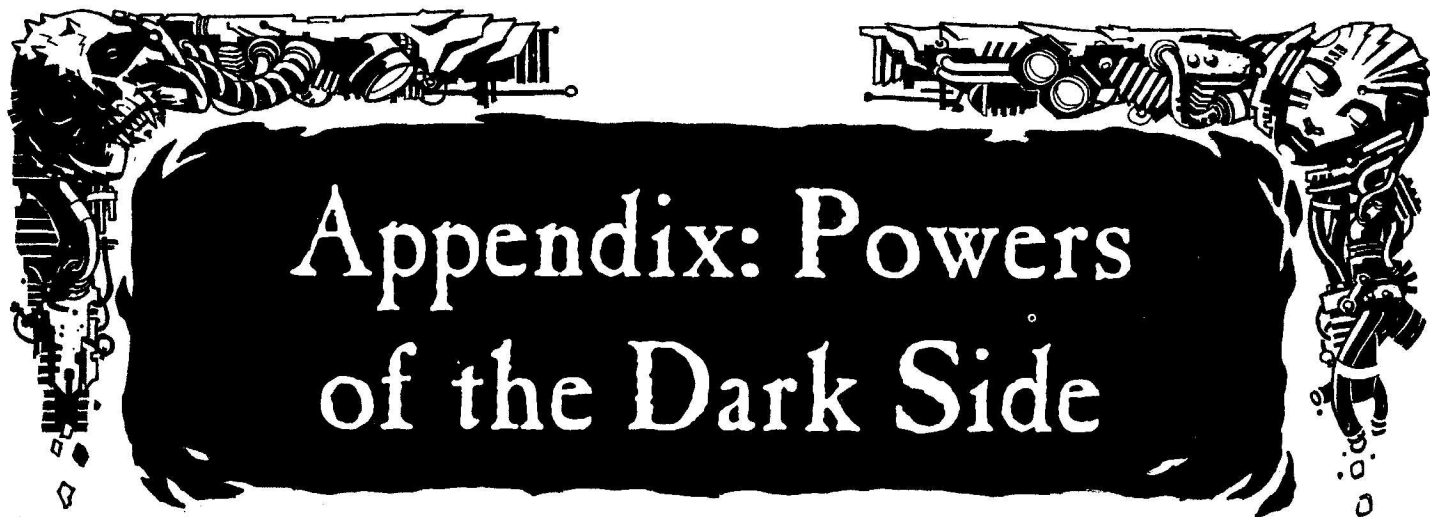
"In the left hand of Azzurayelos are shown the Scales of Judgment, whereby all the joy that one has sown is weighed against all the woes which one spread upon the world."

— d'Erlet, "Meditations"

Weapons: "In the right hand of Azzurayelos can be seen the great Scythe which separates the eternal and indivisible soul from the gross envelope of flesh wherein it was housed, a task which no other bodiless intelligence dared take up; for this reason was Azzurayelos known to the ancients as the Morose Harvester, or Grim Reaper."

— d'Erlet, "Meditations"





Appendix: Powers of the Dark Side

Antinomy (Demon Magic)

by Sam Inabinet

Not all who practice Antinomy do so out of malice, morbidity or perversity. Commonplace motivations like greed, ambition and lust propel many down the dark path when they fail to satiate such desires pursuing the Light. A glance through any lesser grimore reveals the deepest concerns of the neophyte heretic; most are nothing more than collections of local superstitions, full of hedge-charms for finding treasure or procuring the love of another or giving the landlord indigestion. Material gain, sensual pleasures and the sweet comfort of revenge are all aspects of the kind of worldly power most Antinomists hope to gain through their practice. Antinomian magic, particularly the Draconian variety, offers more powerful effects and spectacular displays than most theurgy and psionic powers ever encompass.

Antinomy/Fealty Traits

Like Psi or Theurgy, Antinomy requires the character learn a trait (ranging from 1-10; the costs are the same per level). In addition, Antinomy, like theurgy, is practiced with rites, although these are blasphemous to the Church and most religions. A character's Antinomy traits must be of sufficient level to perform rites of that level.

Antinomy also has its dark side — something worse than the rites themselves. The more a person delves into the darkness, the greater hold it has upon him. This is represented by a trait called Fealty: the character's weakness before the dark powers he toys with. Like Urge or Hubris, it is gained through certain deeds or acts and takes on a life of its own. While it can be lowered by perverse activities (burning down cathedrals and the like), it more often consumes its victims.

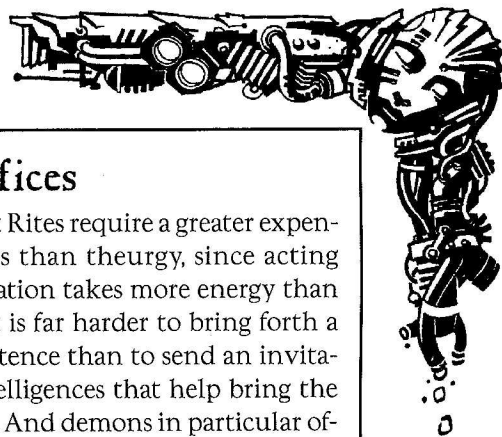
Components

The components of Antinomian rites are functionally the same as their theurgic counterparts, at least for gaming purposes. Gamemasters should emphasize the external differences, however. Prayers are supplications performed with abject humility addressed to the caster's hellish patron; gestures are not the elegant, highly formalized and symmetrical movements used by the Universal Church, but are wildly distended and often obscene, involving provocative postures and lascivious "forbidden dances"; Antinomian liturgy may take the form of blasphemous permutations of Orthodox liturgy, quotations from proscribed texts like the Draco Codex, or whatever guttural gibberish the insane devil-worshipper happens to be spewing at the moment. One thing to keep in mind is that nearly all Antinomists have far greater proclivities for the extravagantly melodramatic than their staid and conservative counterparts in the Church.

For the sake of convenience, the same abbreviations for components as used in the **Fading Suns** rulebook are used here. (L = Liturgy, G = Gesture, P = Prayer)

Vestments

Antinomian vestments add to the goal roll of certain rites. Unlike Church vestments, however, not all Antinomian vestments are objects; some are acts which are performed by the Antinomists assistants and underlings, others are unique ingredients which must be procured anew each time the rite is cast. Antinomian vestments are especially difficult to come by, due to their nature, and some must be manufactured individually for



each rite in which they are used, such as the inscribed circle. Vestments used in Antinomian rites retain the taint of evil, which can be seen clearly with either Wyrd Sight or Second Sight. When used in a rite in which it is effective, a vestment adds +1 to the goal roll; every two additional vestments adds another +1.

Vestment	Rite
Inscribed circle	Summoning, Resurrection
Incense	Scrying, Exsanctification, Breath of the Dragon
Music	Resurrection, Summoning
Robes	Cloak of Shadows, Witch's Flight, Blasted Earth
Headdress	Scrying, Fork-Tongue
Blood of the unreflective*	Curse, Exsanctification, Wearing the Dragon-Form
Skin of the unreflective*	Breath of the Dragon, Blasted Earth, Wearing the Dragon-Form
Bones of the unreflective*	Evil Eye, Wearing the Dragon-Form

* Children are often "baptized" into the Universal Church with a ceremony designed to purify the "soul's mirror" and thus open the child to the Light. This ceremony is also given to adult converts. Those who have never undergone it are considered unreflective.

Relics

Due to their small numbers and marginal history, Antinomists do not have the range of relics available to the Universal Church. Items of Antinomian power tend to either become lost to history or destroyed by the Inquisition.

Wyrd Altar: A Wyrd Altar functions just as a Wyrd Tabernacle does, storing Wyrd points. To use the points, Ego + Focus is rolled. To store points, Antinomy + Focus is rolled; the main difference between this and a Wyrd Tabernacle is that the person (or animal) sacrificing his own Wyrd points may be forced to do so against his will. Hence the name; most relics of this type take the form of the altar upon which ritual sacrifices are made.

Amulets: Amulets are like Saint's Lore relics in that they are invested with Antinomian rites usable by anyone wielding one. Unlike saintly relics, they are deliberately manufactured at great expense; consequently, Antinomian amulets never contain more than one rite apiece.

Eidolon: An Eidolon is an image representing a non-physical entity, like a demon or a dead person, which adds to Summoning or Resurrection rites directed at that entity. A flat painted or printed picture adds a bonus of +1 to the casting roll; a stele, bas-relief or sculpture adds +2, or even +3 if it is especially large and impressive. The Draco Codex hints that eidolons may exist of preadamian origin (Lucifer's statue of Pangeren, now lost, was believed to be one), but there is no evidence that any truly exist. (Although the Church holds some gargoyles suspect...)

Blood Sacrifices

Antinomian Great Rites require a greater expenditure of Wyrd points than theurgy, since acting against the laws of creation takes more energy than working with them. It is far harder to bring forth a being denied true existence than to send an invitation to one of the intelligences that help bring the world itself into being. And demons in particular often demand additional "payments" of Wyrd points for specific services. To meet such demands, Antinomists regularly resort to the crudest and most ancient method of accumulating Wyrd points — extracting them from living creatures.

This is not the most efficient of procedures, because only a willing sentient can channel all of their Wyrd points into the rite. Animal sacrifices yield a slightly higher gain when they are bred and raised by the Antinomist, being ritually prepared for their fate. (To further complicate things, the Sultan of each Qlippoth will usually only respond to the sacrifice of a sentient.)

Visceromancy works differently. In this rite, the quality of the sacrifice may add a bonus to the casting roll.

Below are types of sacrifices and the Wyrd amount or Visceromantic bonus that can be gained from each:

Sacrifice	Wyrd pts	Bonus
Animal	1	0
Ritually prepared animal	2	+1
Unwilling sentient	half Wyrd	+2
Willing sentient	Wyrd	+2

Rites

There are four basic types of rites listed below. The first is hedge wizardry often found among those without access to higher powers. Next is a multi-purpose ritual which can be used by Antinomists of any kind. Then, the three primary rituals, or Great Rites, of the three main branches of Antinomy are listed. Finally, a full-level range of classic Draconian rites found in use among non-Draconian cults are listed.

Hedge Antimony

The wide variety of demonic rituals catalogued by the Church is mind boggling, and most probably have little basis in fact. Some of the more famous ones have the Antimonist taking on demonic characteristics (horns, foul odors, sexually captivating, etc.), or gaining knowledge she should not have (buried treasures, whispered conversations), or allowing her to befoul other people's minds or their community (crop destruction, mass hysteria, curses, etc.). Here are two of the spells Antimonists have used in the past.



Witches' Cream

(Level 1, Dexterity + Alchemy, G, sight, perpetual, 1W)

There are as many recipes for this oil as there are antimonists who use it, but whatever its composition it seems to help in rituals. The ingredients usually include such items as hemlock, Ukar hate root, baby fat and worse. The number of victory points gained in making the cream adds to the goal number for any Antimony spell where the caster wears it. One batch is generally good for 20 rituals.

Darkness of Daskir

(Level 4, Perception + Focus, G, L, sight, temporary, 1W)

Daskir, the Unknowable Demon Prince, is said to surround himself with a shadow which no light can pierce. This ritual allows the Antimonist to summon such a shadow around himself and spread it over a radius of 20 meters. No light from a natural or technological source can penetrate this gloom, and occult light only works if its casting had more victory points than that for the Darkness.

General Rite

The rite below is used by all types of Antinomist, and may even have applications for non-Antinomists (although it is illegal, and the Church considers any usage of this rite an Antinomian act in itself).

Scrying

(Level 3, Introvert + Observe, LP, prolonged, 1W)

Scrying allows the caster to communicate with one of the bodiless denizens of the realms beyond matter, usually by providing an audio-visual "link" analogous to the Second Republic vidphone. Scrying admits only sight and sound to pass between the contacted spirit and the caster; physical objects, energy and occult powers may not be transferred through the link. Demonists and necromancers generally use Scrying as a preliminary to Summoning or Resurrection, contacting the demon or deceased in preparation for bringing them over to the physical plane. (The gamemaster may choose to add a penalty to the casting roll based on the Qlippothic level of the demon, or the antiquity of the departed soul to be contacted. Suggested penalties: -1 per Qlippoth below the 10th, with an additional -3 to contact the Sultan of that Qlippoth; -1 per 100 years since the death of the deceased. Compare with Summoning and Resurrection, below.)

Most Scryers use a specially prepared vestment as a "window" to the dimension they wish to contact. This can take many forms, but usually incorporates some surface or space which acts as the "viewing screen." Common types include crystal balls, mirrors and bowls of blood or some other opaque fluid. Some technologically adept Antinomists use a static-filled video monitor or holovision tank.

In its earliest form, Scrying was linked to Sathraism through the work of Twylau of Sutekh. Devising a bat-

tery of mental exercises to improve his memory, Twylau claimed to retain clear and lucid recall of the mysterious whispered secrets of the jump, and turned from physics to metaphysics in developing an expanded cosmology based upon his recollections. Using the tenets of Sathraism as a starting point, he began to elaborate upon the nature of the non-spatial, non-temporal phenomenon that happened when a ship jumped from gate to gate. "Beyond space and time as we know them," he wrote, "there exists a realm, a plenum if you will, of infinite (or near-infinite) dimensionality, occupied by infinite (or near-infinite) potential. It is a realm shaped by, and inhabited by, pure idea or concept, where knowledge and information take the place of mass in the physical world, and intent, or will, moves through it as we understand energy to move through our own realm. It is where all our thoughts live, unfettered by mortal minds, where all that has gone before lives on yet, and where all that has yet to pass stands ready to become." Twylau sought to find a way to perceive this plenum without the time and expense necessary to travel through a jumpgate for the brief, fleeting Sathra Effect.

Not long afterward, the real breakthrough in the development of this rite was made by Yasuo Nan-Chen Li Halan, by then known as Lucifer the Sathraist. Having obtained the idol of Pangeren and having supposedly communicated with the entity during an unbuffered jump, Lucifer desperately sought to re-establish contact on a regular basis. Although he professed the Sathraic faith, Lucifer's celebrations and festivals took on a character of their own, increasingly punctuated with overintoxication and debauchery. Though these were seen as mad revelries without rhyme or reason, they were in fact precisely orchestrated ceremonies designed to bring Lucifer through stages of mounting ecstasy to "The Vision Dark," a state of extradimensional awareness similar to the Sathra Effect, where he could commune once again with the spirit of the idol. Introduction of selchakah into the ritual "sacraments" helped propel him to his desired state, but it was not until Lucifer began ingesting dangerous amounts of zhrii-ka'a lotus extract he had confiscated from captured smugglers out of Manitou that he was successful in establishing contact. (While it is agreed among the experienced that the zhrii-ka'a does in fact induce expanded awareness similar to the Sathra Effect, Scrying and several psychic powers, it is equally well agreed that the effects of the lotus are wildly uncontrollable and unpredictable. Adventurous young Antinomists use the lotus extract in their rites, but their elders caution against taking unnecessary risks. A rumor persists in Draconian circles which declares that a highly placed Church official, once a secret Antinomist, repented and converted after receiving a vision of the Prophet while Scrying under the influence of lotus tincture.) Evandros refined Lucifer's techniques into the present form of the rite.

Great Rites

The Great Rite is the very essence of the Antinomian cult. It is where the demonist comes face to face with the demon, the necromancer with the dead, and the horuscipator with the subtle and hidden mysteries of a holographic non-local universe.

Note that only the specific game effects are described, but that a wide variety of superficial variations in the actual performance of the rite exist. Such details are left to the gamemaster's imagination. A Great Rite may take an entire span or even longer to perform in its entirety, and often requires days, weeks and even years to prepare for. The gamemaster should tailor a Great Rite to fit the drama into which it figures. Summoning the Sultan of the 5th Qlippoth is an elaborate ceremony which only nobles or rich merchants, with large private vaults and scores of loyal or brainwashed henchmen or acolytes in attendance, can afford to enact, while an imp of the 10th Qlippoth may be Summoned in any untraveled back alley by any hellfire-clubber with half a brain, a heart full of malice and a few pages ripped from a grimoire.

Note that the level of a Great Rite is dependent on the magnitude of the undertaking. Levels are explained for each rite; an Antinomist may not attempt to perform at a higher level than he actually possesses, of course. (Well, he can attempt it, but will not succeed)

Summoning

(All Levels, Passion + Impress, LGP, prolonged, 5W)

Summoning is the primary mode of interaction between demons and Antinomists. This rite opens a portal between the material world and the Qlippoth, allowing the demon being Summoned to manifest as an apparition which can be seen and heard, but which cannot take physical actions unless: a) it has someone to possess and act through, or b) the caster sacrifices an amount of Wyrd sufficient to keep the demon on the physical plane long enough to perform an act or mission precisely specified by the caster (spend Wyrd equal to the level of the rite in addition to the five normally required). The demon may use occult powers on anyone in sensory range unless they are inside an inscribed and Exsanctified circle.

The level of a Summoning rite is the inverse of the Qlippothic level of the demon, i.e., an imp of the 10th Qlippoth would be a 1st level Summoning, a demon from the 9th Qlippoth requires a 2nd level Summoning, etc. (The easy way to figure the level of Summoning needed is 11 minus the Qlippothic level of the demon.) The Sultan of a particular Qlippoth must be Summoned as if it were of the next greater Qlippoth; Ashtarath, Sultan of the 4th Qlippoth, for instance, requires an 8th level Summoning, rather than 7th, to appear. (This is actually the highest level of Summoning possible, because the rulers of the three emanations beyond the Abyss are too far removed from true existence to ever manifest directly.)



Resurrection

(Level 5+, Human or Alien + Charm, LGP, prolonged, 5W)

This rite is not the same thing as creating husks; Resurrection reattaches the original personality of a departed soul to its body, or else summons a ghostly apparition if no body is available. (Variations exist for this contingency, however. Some necromantic cults have developed rites which enable the deceased to inhabit an artificial body, such as that of a golem, while others house the deceased in the body of a still-living sentient from which the original owner's soul has been extracted.) A Resurrected soul occupies and animates its old body for the duration of one span, although this can be extended for one day and night per additional Wyrd point spent. A Resurrected body does not need to eat, breath or sleep, but may suffer from drastically reduced Physical traits due to decomposition.

Not all dead souls may be Resurrected. Officially canonized saints, sacred persons from other sects and pagan or alien religions, and powerful Antinomists who died without repenting or succumbed to Pneumophagy (see Fealty, below) are beyond the reach of even the most accomplished necromancer. (An exception to this seems to be important necromancers themselves, many of whom remain active participants in the cults they left behind.) To further complicate matters, the funeral rites of nearly every religion were formulated to protect the dead from posthumous disturbances of exactly this type. The gamemaster may impose penalties for those interred with a proper burial ceremony; from -1 for a traveler buried under a makeshift jumpgate cross and a sincere eulogy, to -5 for a noble laid to rest in a cathedral with a full Orthodox funeral. (These penalties may be applied to Scrying as well.)

The level of a Resurrection rite is based somewhat on the availability of the deceased's corpse and the amount of time that has passed since its death:

5. The deceased was recently killed during the current or previous span, leaving the necromancer with a relatively intact, fresh corpse, or the deceased was killed within the last few days, leaving a slightly decomposed but still relatively intact corpse.

6. The deceased may have died up to 100 years ago. If the corpse has putrefied greatly, mummy-like wrappings or some other form of containment (wires or hinges for skeletons) may be necessary to keep the body intact once it has been re-animated.

7. The deceased has long been dead but the skull is still intact; a re-animated skull may be attached to a different body, but this involves other highly specialized rites. Also, the corpse may be well-preserved but is between 200 and 1000 years old.

8. The corpse has decomposed completely leaving only dust, or else has been cremated, leaving ashes; dust and ashes, of course, cannot be re-animated, but a successful casting of this level of Resurrection results in a clearly vis-

ible and audible apparition of the deceased appearing over the scant remains. Also, the corpse may be well-preserved but is between 1000 and 2000 years old.

9. No remains whatsoever are available, but the necromancer does possess one or more of the deceased's most important belongings and personal effects. As above, an apparition manifests over the old possessions. Also, the corpse may be well-preserved but is between 2000 and 3000 years old.

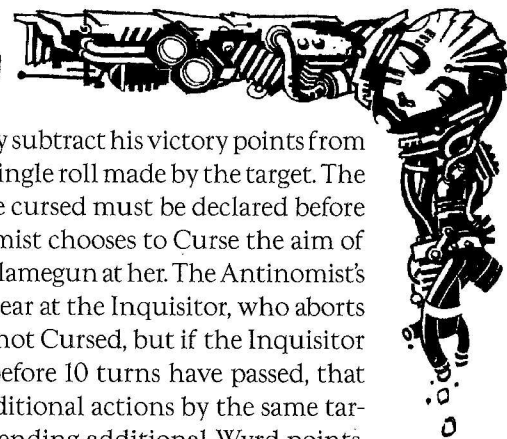
If no remains or possessions of the deceased are available to the necromancer, he must be able to call directly to the deceased by recounting their name(s), titles or station in life, memorable deeds and any other information that would have specifically identified them during their lifetime. (The gamemaster may assign penalties for historical and cultural differences that the necromancer might have failed to account for. For instance, the ancient departed shade of the First Republic explorer Yaqub Ibn Sina may not recognize "Jacobus Avicenna" as his own name, after it was posthumously Latinized by Church scholars.)

Visceromancy

(All Levels, Introvert + Physick, LGP, prolonged, 2W)

Also called horuspication, Visceromancy is the divination of knowledge concerning different times and places through close examination of the internal organs of a ritually sacrificed organism. To divine the answer to a question posed by a client or even the horuspicator's curiosity, the caster enters a trance state similar to that of Scrying, in which all of creation can be seen as microcosmically reflected in every individual part of creation. Theoretically it is possible to see any part of the universe in a stone, a drop of water or a gas nebula, but living creatures are the easiest to "read," and the more biologically complex they are, the more detail can be discerned. Of course, the act of opening up a living creature usually kills it, so the caster must find the section of innards containing the answer sought before the creature's life energy leaks away completely and the microcosmic reflection gets too weak to perceive. (As the d'Amendiz case suggests, vivisection would be the optimal way to practice Visceromancy, but without Second Republic medical technology this is difficult to accomplish.)

Some restrictions apply. Visceromancy only discloses information about physical events in the physical universe; intangibles like thoughts, feelings and intentions, or the activities of angels, demons or other spirits, are not reflected in the physical microcosm. (Horuspicators with telepathic ability claim that any mind microcosmically reflects all other minds, but gutgazing telepaths are such a rarity that none has yet figured out how to slice open a mind and unravel it on a stone slab.) All divinations of the future only show the most probable course of events as of the moment of the sacrifice's death, which is even more likely to change once it has been predicted. The caster cannot divine her own future, as her metaphysical interrelationship with the sacrificial organism ends with



the casting of the rite itself.

Information gained through Visceromancy is rarely clear or exact, consisting more of symbolic images rather than prolonged verbal communications or precise, quantifiable data. Words and numbers can sometimes be gleaned, however, through visual puns, hallucinatory rebus or abstract geometric visualizations. Persons and groups are usually represented by an animal or item most closely associated with them, such as a mantis for House Decados or a set of manacles for Consul Tereza Solace of the Muster. The gamemaster may rule that better casting rolls require less interpretation; a critical roll allows a divined scene to unfold just as it would to an objective observer, with no symbolic imagery.

The level of a Visceromantic rite is based on the temporal and spatial proximity of the subject of the question. (Although the microcosm is not limited by time and space, human perception still is.) When the time and location of the event is unknown by the querent, the rite may need to be repeated at successively higher levels until the answer is found. (And horuspicators do demand pay in advance.)

1. Events which occurred in the past of the local geographic vicinity of the rite.
2. Events which are currently taking place in the local geographic vicinity of the rite.
3. Events which may occur in the future in the local geographic vicinity of the rite.
4. Events which occurred in the past of the planet on which the rite is enacted.
5. Events which are currently taking place on the planet on which the rite is enacted.
6. Events which may occur in the future on the planet on which the rite is enacted.
7. Events which occurred in the past of another world.
8. Events which are currently taking place on another world.
9. Events which may occur in the future on another world.

Common Draconian Rites

Nearly all modern Antinomian practice is descended from the Draconian tradition founded by Evandros of Cadavus in the court of Ustirin the Unspeakable. Necromancers, horuspicators and other isolated cults are a minority among Antinomists, and seldom develop rites pertaining to anything other than divination. The Draco Codex has been brought to every Known World in some form or another, and Draconian rites have permeated most other heretical cults. Those given below are from the Codex itself, but many are practiced by non-Draconian Antinomists as well.

Curse

(Level 1, Ego + Focus, G, sight, temporary, 1W)

This simplest of Antinomian rites is the obverse of the level 1 Church ritual The Prophet's Holy Blessing. By cast-

ing it the Antinomist may subtract his victory points from the goal number of any single roll made by the target. The target's specific task to be cursed must be declared before casting. (e.g., the Antinomist chooses to Curse the aim of the Inquisitor leveling a flamewgun at her. The Antinomist's devoted dwarf hurls a spear at the Inquisitor, who aborts to a dodge. The dodge is not Cursed, but if the Inquisitor attempts another shot before 10 turns have passed, that shot will be Cursed.) Additional actions by the same target may be Cursed by spending additional Wyrd points, but the rolls targeted must be of the same type (i.e., the Inquisitor's next three flamewgun shots, the scholar's next two attempts to read the manuscript fragment, the loyal dwarf's next three attempts to stab the Antinomist in the back, etc.). Cursing another type of action or another target requires a separate casting of the rite.

Exsanctification

(Level 2, Extrovert + Focus, GP, touch, one act, 1W)

This rite is the reverse of the 1st level Orthodox rite Consecration, in that it dedicates an object for use as a vestment in an Antinomian ritual. The targeted item resists the effects of theurgic rites and psychic powers; half of the victory points (rounded up) become a negative penalty for either power attempting to target the item. The item reverts to normal at the end of the act unless a critical success was rolled, in which case the Exsanctification is permanent.

Evil Eye

(Level 3, Ego + Focus, GP, sight, prolonged, 1W)

This is the deluxe version of the 1st level rite, Curse. Rather than affecting a particular declared action, the victory points for casting this rite may be subtracted from all rolls the target makes for the rest of that span. Additional targets may be added for one Wyrd point each.

Cloak of Shadow

(Level 4, Introvert + Sneak, GP, temporary, 1W)

An Antinomist may render herself invisible for short periods of time with this rite, which actually causes light to pass through her body as well as clothes and any Exsanctified item (see above) she was wearing or holding when casting the Cloak. The caster may not be seen by any normal vision or conventional cameras, but can be detected by heat-based vision, natural and artificial sonar, the Sixth Sense powers DarkSense or Wyrd Sight, highly acute non-visual senses, throwing paint on her, etc. A Cloaked Antinomist still occupies space and has the same weight, sounds and smells as usual.

While the advantages in combat are obvious, they are left mostly to the gamemaster's discretion. The brief duration of this rite (10 turns) should be kept in mind, and, while a sneak attack may qualify as an Effortless task for an invisible aggressor, any attack reveals the attacker's presence and, to some degree, position. Opponents with only normal eyes to see through may roll Wits + Observe to deduce the Antinomist's location once they are alerted to



her presence, and a quick-witted bodyguard or edgy bystander may reduce the advantage of invisibility to no more than a Dodge bonus against autofire spreads, grenades and other explosives, wild swings of sword, halberd or ax, or, against a successful grapple attack, nothing. (Note that, while the beams of laser weapons will appear to pass through a Cloaked target, she will still take damage as normal due to the heat of the beam.)

Fork-Tongue

(Level 5, Wits + Charm or Impress or Social skill, G, sensory, prolonged, 1W)

Using this rite, an Antinomist may mentally dominate one person to whom he is speaking. The target will believe whatever the caster says and will try to fulfill any command (or even strong suggestion) the caster gives, at least for the duration of the rite. The Antinomist may command a number of specific actions equal to his victory points for casting. The target may resist as usual if told to perform something against their nature or asked to believe an obvious untruth.

Witch's Flight

(Level 6, Passion + Focus, GP, temporary, 1W)

This rite enables the caster to fly, much like the FarHand power AirStride, except that the Antinomist may fly somewhat faster with a maximum velocity of 25 meters per turn + 5 meters for each victory point. The caster may hover and perform simple maneuvers, but

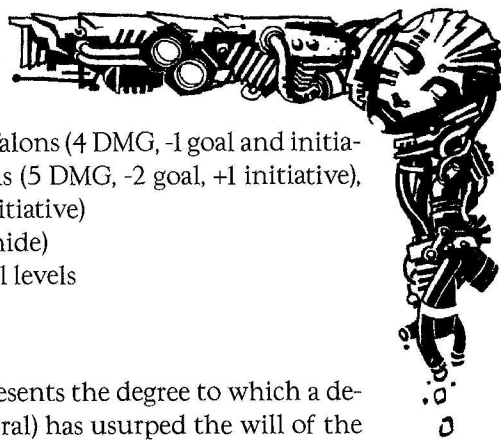
aerial acrobatics and high-speed actions, like engaging in combat while airborne or swerving to avoid a steeple, require a roll. That roll is Dexterity + Flight; Flight may be bought as a Learned Skill by an Antinomist who practices this rite regularly, but few show this much forethought or diligence, and those who do rarely manage to raise the trait higher than 4 or 5. (See the Etyri Flight skill in *Fading Suns Players Companion* for guidelines.) If the caster does not have the Flight skill, then the roll is just Dexterity. The duration of the Witch's Flight may be extended another 10 turns with another Wyrd point, which the caster may elect to spend after the rite has been cast.

Breath of the Dragon

(Level 7, Strength + Stoic Body, LG, temporary, 1W)

This rite enables the Antinomist to generate a ball of cold Clippothic flame within her body, which can be expelled through the mouth at any time up to 10 turns after casting. (If not spat out in 10 turns, the flame dissipates unless another Wyrd point is spent to extend the duration.) The flame can be shot a distance of two meters per point of the caster's Strength, and does five dice of freezing damage plus effect dice. The Breath of the Dragon may be spread like an autofire weapon. The caster himself is not affected unless a critical failure is rolled for casting, in which case the caster takes five dice of freezing damage per turn until the flame dissipates (-1 damage die per turn until no damage is left). In addition, the damage leaks





through energy shields on a damage roll of 1, 2 or 3.

Until the flame is expelled, the caster is at a -3 to take any other action, and -6 to take any action involving speech. Furthermore, the nature of the rite will be obvious to any observer, due to the visible frost forming on the caster, not to mention the bright bluish glow emanating from his throat and eyes. If the caster takes a vital level of damage during this time, the flame may vent through the wound back at the attacker.

An interesting side effect of this rite is the fact that anything the caster swallows before spitting the flame out will take five dice of freezing damage per turn as well.

The Blasted Earth

(Level 8, Passion + Stoic Body, LGP, instant, 1W)

With this rite the Antinomist channels a gust of Qlippothic flame directly through her body to the physical world, where it radiates out from her in a 10 meter radius. The blast leaves a deep blue-white scar in the ground around which nothing will grow for at least a century. The caster and any Exsanctified items she wears or carries are not affected by the blast, except when a critical failure is rolled for casting, in which case the caster takes full damage as well.

Anything or anybody caught within range takes 11 dice of damage plus victory dice, minus 1 per meter of distance from the caster. This damage ignores armor and energy shields on rolls of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

Wearing the Dragon-Form

(Level 9, Ego + Vigor, LGP, temporary, 3W)

This is considered the most powerful rite in the Draco Codex, and, in terms of the personal power the caster gains through its use, may be the most powerful occult rite in existence. It causes an actual transformation to take place in the caster's body, changing his shape into that of a dragon, resulting in trait changes which are listed below. The Dragon-Form is believed by Draconians to be a shadow of Levayath-Nidhogg, the great serpent that prowls the Abyss separating the first three Qlippoth from the rest. Evandros claimed that this rite was taught to him by Dhiyammath the Dragon-Queen, Sultana of the 3rd Qlippoth (although he states elsewhere in the Codex that the trans-Abyssal Sultans never interact directly with mortals).

The Dragon-Form is larger and tougher than any sentient species, making the caster one of the most formidable opponents any combatant would ever wish to face. In addition, the Dragon-Form has the capability of flight (but does not confer the Skill: Flight unless the rite is practiced regularly and the skill developed over time. See Witch's Flight, above.) The trait changes of the Dragon-Form are given below:

Size: 5-6 meters from nose to tail, with a 6-7 meter wingspan, weighing up to half a metric ton. (Base run: 23 meters on all fours.)

Body: Strength +5, Dexterity +1, Endurance +4

Natural skills: Dodge -1, Fight +2, Vigor +2

Natural weaponry: Talons (4 DMG, -1 goal and initiative), Bite (5 DMG), Horns (5 DMG, -2 goal, +1 initiative), Tail (6 DMG, -3 goal, -2 initiative)

Armor: 3 + 3d (scaly hide)

Vitality: +4 non-vital levels

Fealty

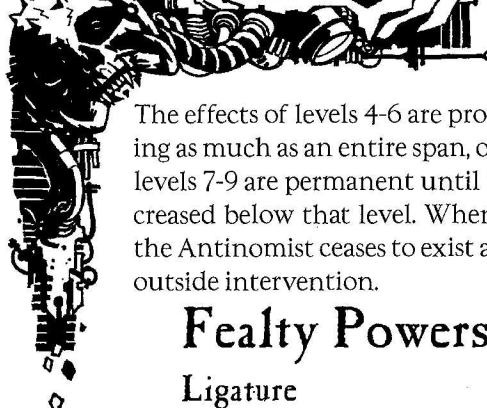
The Fealty trait represents the degree to which a demon (or demons in general) has usurped the will of the Antinomist; it can be likened to a proportion of the soul's mirror which the shadow of evil has eclipsed, blocking the Descent of Grace and the Luminous Return. Fealty is the level of thralldom, or forced subservience, of the Antinomist to the Demon Sultans. While it is theoretically possible to attain the awesome powers of Antinomy without falling prey to those who wait in the shadows to pounce at the slightest misstep, this is just as difficult and unlikely as practicing theurgy without falling prey to godless pride, or developing psychic abilities without succumbing to the temptations of one's own dark side. While the Draco Codex dwells at length upon the formulae of commands and the care required in drafting pacts, this does not change the fact that any sort of trafficking with infernal entities opens one up to a vastly populated universe of pure malice whose inhabitants have all of eternity to await their chance for freedom. Although it can be assumed that any devil-worshiper has subjugated his entire will to his demon lord, those who ply the dark paths to power do so for their own reasons, pursuing personal goals, and sometimes these motivations can conflict with the schemes of their masters. This trait determines the amount of control a demon may exert when its ally in the physical world strays from the tasks demanded.

Fealty also corresponds roughly, and in reverse order, to the levels of the Qlippoth, as it becomes possible for more powerful demons to act through an Antinomist careless enough to lose control over her own power. In one sense, Fealty can be said to represent which level of hell currently has a space reserved for the Antinomist after death. The Antinomist's original Pact and the level of demon(s) she may be personally familiar with are not a concern here, as Fealty is a window of opportunity for all the sundry hordes of Gehennungagap to exert their influence in the real world. The size of this window, however, limits the "size" of the demonic entities who can use it. E.g., an Antinomist with a Fealty of 1 will only be harassed by the minor devils of the 10th Qlippoth, but an Antinomist with a Fealty of 4 is subject to the whims of all demons residing on the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Qlippoth.

The Fealty effects described here may also apply to necromancers and horuspicators, although they will be subjected to forced possession by shades of the dead or malicious spirits jealous of the gutgazer's wisdom and power.

The effects of levels 1-3 are temporary, lasting 10 turns or about half a minute and occurring only once per span.





The effects of levels 4-6 are prolonged, generally occupying as much as an entire span, once per day. The effects of levels 7-9 are permanent until the Fealty trait can be decreased below that level. When the 9th level is reached, the Antinomist ceases to exist as a person unless saved by outside intervention.

Fealty Powers

Ligature

(Level 1)

The lowest level of Fealty is the establishment of a spiritual link between the Antinomist and the lowest order of lesser demons. When the Ligature is activated, a minor devil (those "closest" to the real world, metaphysically speaking) may use its fingerhold on the devil-worshipper's consciousness to glimpse the world through human eyes. There is relatively little game effect here, as the results of the Ligature are virtually indistinguishable from a mere guilty conscience; the worst the Antinomist can expect are nightmares, usually involving a very vivid plunge into the Inferno. One very important side effect of the Ligature is that, while it is active, the minor devil peering over the Antinomist's shoulder will be plainly visible to anyone using the psychic power Wyrd Sight or the Eskatonic ritual Second Sight.


Maleficia

(Level 2)

At the second level, mischievous imps from the 9th Qliphoth may cause slight physical effects to occur in the vicinity of the Antinomist; effectively, she has a poltergeist following her around, causing misfortune and interfering with well-laid plans. The gamemaster should note that the effects of the Maleficia are very slight, and overt poltergeist displays like spinning all the furniture in the room in mid-air are not possible using this power alone. One option with this power is to impose a -2 penalty on all rolls the Antinomist makes while the Maleficia is active. A more characteristic effect is plain old bad luck which serves to increase the level of tension and conflict in the current act, like the dungeon guard coming around the corner earlier than expected, a friend of the rival noble overhearing a character's insulting muttered aside, or losing the night road jumpkey through a hole in the pocket.

Phantasms

(Level 3)



Once this level of Fealty is reached, the demonic influence upon the Antinomist is strong enough that demons of the 8th Qliphoth may not only see through his eyes, but may actually replace the Antinomist's sensory input with false perceptions of their own invention. The character's full perceptual environment may not be wholly replaced, but individual elements can be. For instance, objects and people may be made invisible to the Antinomist, nonexistent objects and people can be perceived, one thing may be seen as something entirely dif-

ferent and individual aspects of the total environment can be changed, like the color of the sky, the texture of the ground, the exact placement and position of furniture, walls, doors, starship controls, toilets, etc. Although limited by duration and scale, all of the senses can be controlled in this way. Phantasmal people will not only look real, but sound and smell real too. Phantasmal tools and weapons will feel real in the hand, but will produce no effect when operated.

Hysteria

(Level 4)

As Fealty increases, the Antinomist loses greater degrees of internal self-control; once the demons of the 7th Qliphoth gain access to his psyche, they may control his emotional state. Positive emotions like joy, love and honorable intentions can be neutralized or directed toward inappropriate ends. Negative emotions like fear, anger and hatred can be created or increased. Some demons use this power randomly, sending their thrall reeling through a chaotic rollercoaster of conflicting feelings, but most are subtle and devious, using Hysteria sparingly to manipulate their humanoid pawn to their own ends.

Malcognition

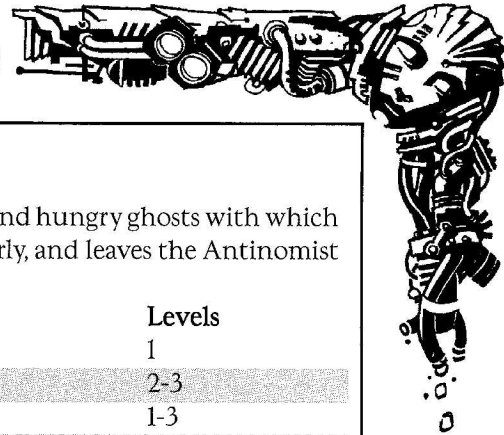
(Level 5)

When this degree of Fealty is reached, even the Antinomist's thoughts are no longer her own; demons of the 6th Qliphoth can control her cognitive processes, redirecting the train of thought, twisting logic into absurdity and even rewriting memories. The gamemaster should note that Malcognition, like Hysteria above, is still only temporary, and that the Antinomist will regain control of her reason and feelings as soon as the duration is up. There are, however, permanent side effects for levels 5 and up which can be observed in both the physical and spiritual realms. At level 5, the Antinomist's shadow becomes abnormally pronounced, even in full light; it will appear darker and more defined regardless of how much ambient light should be dispersing it. Studying the Antinomist with Wyrd Sight or Second Sight reveals that at least half of her soul's mirror is covered in inky blackness, rendering the projection of the Luminous Return of divine light to the Pancreator impossible until Fealty drops below this level.

Malefaction

(Level 6)

When Malefaction is in effect, the Antinomist has no control over his own actions, and may only behave in ways specified by the powerful inhabitants of the 5th Qliphoth. The controlling demon can only direct him to take actions which the Antinomist himself is capable of performing; i.e., Malefaction cannot be used to make him pilot a starship if he does not possess the skill Drive: Spacecraft. At this level of Fealty, the Antinomist's shadow appears to encompass him like a cloud, obscuring him in darkness even when light is shone directly upon him. Occult vi-



Gaining Fealty

Fealty is gained through roleplaying. Certain acts insult and anger the demons and hungry ghosts with which the Antinomist is allied. Disloyalty to one's cult and its attendant entities costs dearly, and leaves the Antinomist spiritually indebted to some very vindictive creditors indeed...

Taboo	Roll	Levels
Fumbling an Antinomy rite	Antinomy + Focus	1
Fumbling an Antinomian Great Rite	Antinomy + Focus	2-3
Failure to fulfill Pact obligation	Ego + Focus	1-3
Insulting demon/deceased/spirit	Wits + Focus	1-2
Succumbing to positive emotion (love, compassion)	Passion + Stoic Mind	1
Losing to Church priest	Ego + Focus	1
Submitting to Church authority	Ego + Stoic Mind	1-2

Losing Fealty

The Antinomist may pay off his debt by willingly increasing his servitude to the entity or striking out against the enemies of darkness. But such deeds generally cause further problems with the world at large.

Deed	Roll	Levels
Desecrating church	Ego + Focus	1
Destroying church	Ego + Focus	1-2
Corrupting priest	Wits + Focus	1-2
Killing priest	Passion + Vigor	1
Dishonoring theurgist	Ego + Focus	1
Corrupting theurgist	Wits + Focus	2-3
Killing theurgist	Passion + Vigor	2
Additional ritual sacrifice	Passion + Vigor	1
Additional service to demon/deceased/spirit	Ego + Vigor	1-2
Exposure to evil artifact	Ego + Stoic Mind or Focus	1-3
Recruiting new Antinomist	Ego + Charm or Impress	1
Exposure to a Soul Shard	Human or Alien + Stoic Mind or Focus	1-2
Exposure to a Philosophers Stone	Human or Alien + Stoic Mind or Focus	1

sion shows that the Descent of Grace is blocked by this cloud's spiritual counterpart, so that the Pancreator's divine light no longer reaches him.

Mania

(Level 7)

At the 7th level, the Antinomist's mind snaps, her very sanity seized by the monstrous intelligences of the 4th Qlippoth. She suffers a -3 penalty on all rolls involving Spirit traits and may lapse permanently into the false thoughts, feelings and perceptions she was temporarily subjected to at the lower levels of Fealty. Lost in madness, she may neglect her body, suffering malnutrition and disease brought on by extreme filth; at the gamemaster's discretion this may result in a gradual decrease in Body traits (lose one level from any Body trait per month) as well as penalties to any action in which physical appearance is a factor, such as rolls using Charm, Etiquette, Performance or Social skills. The Antinomist's shadow now extends from her body in all directions, regardless of where it is being cast, and actually dims nearby lights. Her shadow extends on the spiritual plane as well, blocking the Descent of Grace from anyone in her close vicinity, making her quite literally mad, bad and dangerous to know, in a

very real religious sense.

Necrosis

(Level 8)

With the divine light of the Celestial Sun thoroughly occluded not only from above but also blocked from those nearby who might reflect it to him from themselves, the Antinomist enters a terminal phase of Fealty where the life force that sustains all creation slowly drains from him. If this level of Fealty remains in effect for as many weeks as he has Vitality points, the Antinomist is physically dead by all clinical definitions, and a husk or zombie by theological definition; the real difference between this state and being a true zombie is that the original personality of the Antinomist, shattered and unraveled though it may be, is still the animating force which moves the now-dead body. The common activities of the living — sex, eating, sleeping and breathing — may continue for a while, but only out of habit rather than necessity. His body is in an arrested state of decomposition, resulting in a decayed appearance and rotting odor which cosmetics and perfumes can only mask briefly. His shadow is now like a black hole, sucking all light into its void. Nothing but dimness may prevail in his presence, and then only the



strongest of lights may thus be seen. Viewing him through occult vision reveals only that same shadow, and he no longer has any sort of aura.

Pneumophagy (Level 9)

At this level, the Antinomist has lost all control, both of her situation and herself; the process of encroaching possession is complete, leaving her an impotent passenger in her own decaying body. The most powerful of de-

mons and their minions may act through her while she watches helplessly. This is the point of no return for the Antinomist, because, no matter how much her soul may wish to repent and beg forgiveness for her folly, she can no longer take any action to pursue salvation. Her only hope is rescue from outside, in the form of an Orthodox exorcism or divine intervention. If her body is destroyed before this can happen, the soul of the Antinomist is consumed, condemned to spend the remainder of eternity in the frigid lightless void of Gehennungagap.

Occult Artifact

The Sathra Stone

(Proscribed)

Category: Philosophers Stone

Tech Level: 10

Firebird cost: NOT FOR SALE!

Benefice cost: N/A

This fabled device is mentioned in the personal diaries of many Fall-era Sathraists, but it was long unclear whether it actually existed or was a metaphor for esoteric Sathraist mysticism, much like ancient alchemy can be read as a fable for human psychology. During the later years of the Emperor Wars, however, Count Grigor Ludovico Decados discovered it on Malignatius.

The stone allows its bearer to teleport himself and a small group of others to any location on the planet. Accompanying such transport, however, is the ecstasy of the Sathra Effect.

The stone's existence was surmised by a hesychast hermit, Galvano Dori, who heard about Count Ludovico's amazing battle exploits, such as his seeming ability to arrive with a small commando force to destinations sooner than even the most rigorous forced march allowed. After a number of such miraculous appearances — one a mere five minutes after his victory in a battle a continent away — Dori began to research previous occurrences of such phenomena. Disregarding obvious myths which could be explained away by normal means, he finally uncovered stories about the Sathra Stone.

Upon interviewing witnesses to the count's appearance, Dori was not surprised to learn that the noble's small force often seemed disoriented. Dori believed these were signs of the fabled Sathra Effect. Dori's plan to approach the count with his deductions was cut short when the noble and his small force disappeared, not to be seen again during the course of the war.

Two years ago, a terraforming repair team found Count Dori and his force. His body, like his small force, was embedded in ice a remote region of the north pole, one of the coldest places on the planet, near a terraforming relay station. A look of horror was frozen on his face for all time.

The bodies were excavated but the count's right arm was missing from the elbow down; the wound seemed to hint at an explosion.

Dori heard the story and concluded that the philosophers stone had somehow transported the noble and entourage to the north pole, where they had no equipment for survival. What's more, the stone had exploded, taking the count's hand with it, along with any hope of escaping icy doom. In a report to Church authorities, Dori concluded that the stone was no more. Strangely, Dori himself soon disappeared and has not been seen since. Inquisitors and occultists investigating the events posit that, somehow, Dori gained the stone and may even be responsible for the count's death. The Church is offering a reward for word of his whereabouts.

Based on Dori's account, culled from the ancient Sathraist diaries, the "stone" is actually a metal disc, hollow in the center, with carvings and glyphs not unlike those found on a typical jumpgate. It is about the size of a dinner plate, but much heavier, made of extremely dense materials. While it can still be held in one hand, it is said that all those to be transported by the device must be holding it, implying that each member of the group must grasp the disc, all of them circling about it.

It can only travel to pre-coded locations, places which it has "seen" before. A number of such locations can be called up with the press of a few studs on the surface of the disc, and then displayed by a holographic projector in the center of the disc. However, it can only activate once per planetary rotation (24 hours on most terraformed worlds, but in some places longer or shorter).

Teleportation provides the teleporteers with the Sathra Effect. Dori mentioned one diary entry, however, which hints at something more ominous: that an entity was attracted to its use and began to haunt those who continued to use it. It was rumored that this being stole people away to other dimensions, replacing them with exact simulacra. Dori scoffed at this, calling it a spook story used to scare others away from the device. But no has yet explained the sheer horror frozen onto Count Ludovico's face...

Creating New Powers/Rites

It is possible for a psychic, theurge or Antinomist to create/discover a new power or rite — but it is rare. Such a new creation or entry into the universe should not be a common occurrence in **Fading Suns** dramas. The final decision on what — if any — new powers are introduced is up to the gamemaster.

Below are some guidelines for creating such powers. They are **ONLY** guidelines; no player should use these to “prove” to a gamemaster that he deserves to create a power allowing his character to explode nobles’ heads on a whim. Neither should they be used to prevent inventive and sincere players from introducing new powers.

- As with the Tech characteristic, a character needs to have an Occult characteristic two levels higher than the proposed power or rite.

- A creative epiphany is required. Only emotional or physical duress allows for the transcendent breakthrough necessary to create a new ability in humankind (or alienkind). Those who quest for such powers tend to bring about (attract?) events that will test them — but these tests may break them instead.

For psychics, new powers come in the form of insights, an awakening of potential or inner growth. For theurgists, new rites come during conversions, or as conversations or visitations with higher powers (an angel delivers a book). For Antinomists, it comes as knowledge imparted by or taken from a demon.

- Formulate the power:
 - What does the power allow the psychic/theurge to do?
 - In what Path does it belong (Psyche, etc.) or what sect’s teachings?
 - What level is it? Compare it to existing powers: is it more powerful or more limiting? This is a judgement call by the gamemaster.
 - What roll is required to activate it? Base this on a reasonable requirement, not whether the character involved has the skill.
 - Components: If it is meditational, prayer. If social oriented, liturgy. If physical or targeted, gestures.
 - The distance and number of targets affected depends on the effect envisioned. Don’t allow a player to affect a crowd just because he wants to; do so because it makes sense for the power to work that way.

- Once the new power has been formulated, a roll is required: Psi + Focus for psychics, Theurgy + Focus for theurgists. If successful, the new power may be developed. If the roll fails, the new possibilities have been glimpsed, but their manifestation evades the character like a memory lost. Perhaps with diligent research, prayer or questing, he may regain the required insight (and be allowed a second roll).

A critical failure means that the character’s dark side is awakened and strengthened. Not only does the character gain a level of Urge, Hubris or Fealty (no resistance roll allowed), but for the next span, the dark side may freely operate against the character.

In addition to the dangers of Hubris, theurgists may suffer accusations of heresy when they exhibit their new rites. Was the visiting angel really an angel — or perhaps a salamander instead?!

- The character must still spend experience points to gain his new power — the unconscious mind must adjust to the new insight. Cost = level x 5

Creating new paths or rites for a new sect is an even greater feat than devising a new power; guidelines for such a major contribution to sentient development are left to the gamemaster.

Learning New Powers

Characters improve their powers or rites in a number of ways. Psychics develop or exercise their abilities, while theurgists study and pray. In addition, they can learn new abilities from others.

Psychic powers can be spontaneously triggered in a psychic by an extreme experience, or awakened (taught) by another psychic. Whether or not a character can learn an entirely new psychic path through some event trigger is entirely up to the gamemaster; usually, only mystical events will work: experiencing the Sathra Effect for the first time, being affected by a soul shard or philosophers stone, etc.

Theurgy must be taught; the rites cannot develop on their own, for they are cultural forms handed down socially.

When characters learn abilities from others, the usual experience point costs apply; training times are provided in the description of the Teaching skill (see the **Players Companion**).

The ability to teach a new power or rite to others greatly depends on the inventor’s ability to communicate it. To turn a highly personal, subjective epiphany into an objective repeatable experience learnable by others requires 18 victory points on a sustained roll of Extrovert + Teaching (Charm can be substituted, but the roll then suffers a -2 penalty). The new power dies with the character if he can’t hand it on.

Students can improve upon or revise another’s work, but even minor tweaking of an existing power requires at least some form of epiphany and roll (as explained above).

Optional Rule: Limiting Scope

A character can only learn or develop a number of paths (or different sect rites) equal to her Wits rating (for psychics) or her Faith (for theurgists).



The Dark Between The Stars

Where Reason Fears to Tread

The Anunnaki left behind many strange devices and their ancient secrets lie buried on many worlds — secrets which can bring salvation... or destruction. But they and their works are not the only mysteries, for strange entities lurk in the void, tempting human and alien alike to enact schemes against the civilized order. Monsters of science and superstition harass and haunt the Known Worlds, from devastating war golems to ghosts of the wartime dead. A number of sentients walk in the shadows of consciousness: enigmatic psychics, heretical Sathraists and demon-worshipping Antinomists.

The Dark Between the Stars details many of the entities and forces involved in the supernatural universe of the **Fading Suns™**.



©1997 Holistic Design, Inc. All rights reserved.
Fading Suns™ is a trademark of Holistic Design, Inc.

www.holistic-design.com

\$17.95 FS #230
ISBN 1-888906-08-1

ISBN 1-888906-08-1



9 781888 906080