

Secrets of Fire 3

The Tower of Babble

Product Tie-In: Fireborn Gamemaster's Guide

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A bright and shining tower has arisen in London, and the players are drawn to it like a moth to the fire. What secrets does this bastion of wealth and technology hold? They say that those who built it dabble in the occult . . . but do they use it, or does it use them?

The Tower of Babble is an introductory scion adventure for the Fireborn roleplaying game. This adventure premiered at Gen Con Indy 2005.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Jared Apollo and Xavier Lyon are publicly known as two of the United Kingdom's most successful entrepreneurs. Their company, Apollo & Lyon International, handle advertising, merchandising, and representation for several of Europe's hottest commodities and celebrities. They are young, ambitious, and eminently marketable, and their meteoric rise to fame and wealth have placed them at the tops of who's who lists on both sides of the Big Pond as well as in Southeast Asia.

Five years ago, Apollo & Lyon International launched its most ambitious subsidiary: Babble On Entertainment. Through Babble On, Jared and Xavier produce television shows and movies, coordinate advertising campaigns, and orchestrate transcontinental tours of the world's most popular and successful entertainers. Everything is controlled from gleaming Apollo & Lyon International tower. It has been dubbed the "Tower of Babble" by the tabloid press.

This adventure takes place in the Tower of Babble. Jared and Xavier have opened the tower to a VIP ball to showcase some of their new entertainment acts, as well as to create a media event to reveal what they call "the newest thing in entertainment." The players may work for Babble On, may be one of their clients, or might be a member of the media doing a story on them. Each has some relation to the company that fits their character concepts, and a reason for them to be in the tower (whether legally or not). Each character arrives at the Tower alone—they have not yet met the other PCs, their long-awaited broodmates, in this lifetime.

Preparation: Before the adventure, have each player write down a memory of some dramatic event that happened to their character. It should be something that no one else, or at least very few people, would know about.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Scene 1: Players enter the Tower of Babble On. Describe various strange aspects. Introduce Jared and Xavier (or acquaintance). Once all are inside, all will receive Memory Notes giving them a connection/memory with at least one of the other PCs.

Scene 2: Jared and Xavier give speech on the new media and the carrying of a dramatic message: everyone knows that magic exists. What they have discovered is how to use it in their communications equipment. It's all in the technology, of course, something that is unprecedented. In order to see how it works and how they do it, please come on this tour. You are separated into groups based on a number found on the individual invitations.

Scene 3: The PCs are separated into groups with

each other, (a few may have a choice whether or not to try and join a different group) and end up in an elevator taking them into the basement. They're accompanied by a female guide, Carrie, who works in the Marketing department and has only a rudimentary knowledge of how everything really works (but, it is possible that she "has it in her notes somewhere"). She is a perfect GM tool for keeping the players moving. The elevator opens up to a strange artifact that immediately gives the players a weird sort of vision. As they awake, the lights have gone out and everything is dark and creepy.

Scene 4: The electricity is out, so the PCs must either break open the elevator and crawl up the shaft or manipulate the electric lock on the door at the other end of the lab to take the stairwell up. Whichever route they use to escape the lab, Carrie leads them toward the closest exit, the underground car park, as per the "emergency evacuation drill." Going through the darkened corridors, the party is attacked by strange, zombie-like security guards with clubs.

Scene 5 (Quick End): If time is short, the PCs will be chased through the car park where they will see something large and scary at the exit that used to be the toll booth watchman . . . but is now big and scary and tentacled. They need to steal a car and bust out through the parking garage door.

Scene 5 (Longer End): If time allows, the PCs will run into Xavier who, surprise surprise, is himself a scion. Xavier will engage them in combat. Depending on time and player enthusiasm, the PCs can fight Xavier until: 1) he takes enough damage and flees/jumps away in a bound/teleports out of there or 2) if they are having success, PCs can take him down—but don't allow him to be caught; he will reveal to them no useful information.

SCENE 1

Read the following aloud.

As you approach the vaunted "Tower of Babble On," as the media has named one of London's more recent constructions, you can feel a sense of energy and purpose about the place. Its architecture borrows from many sources, both classic and modern, creating a synergy of old and new rarely seen in contemporary office buildings and skyscrapers. Several others appear to be heading toward the tower tonight; Jared and Xavier, the moguls of Babble On, have invited a strange mix of folks to their debut, whatever it is. You have your suspicions as to the not-quite-natural nature of their latest project. Both men, in addition to being successful businessmen, are known dabblers in the new wave of occult fervor that's sweeping London. Who could blame them? Only the most superstitious (an ironic situation, it's true) refuse to believe that something, whether it should be called magic or psychic energy or the coming of God, is going on.

Whatever your reasons for accepting this invitation (or forging your own), it seems you are not alone in your interest.

Players walk through the guarded gates, guarded doors, past dogs, etc. It's a pretty well buttoned-up place.

NPC:Mr. Butterkiss

The main guard is a very large, bald man with a most impressive handle-bar mustache. His jacket says, "Mr. Butterkiss" but he looks like someone who may have been teased about it once . . . and ONLY once.

Characters with forged invitations need to make an Air (Interaction) or Air (Trickery) check to get past him. Others may make Air (Knowledge: Street) checks to see if they know him from his bouncing days in South End.

Ultimately, let the players enter. Once inside the grand foyer, they are amongst an impressive crowd of reporters, socialites, and celebrities. Champaign and finger food are ushered in on trays by Adonis-like waiters, clad in waistcoats with tails. If the PCs have not yet been united as a brood, you may use the memories the players wrote earlier. Each time a PC is seen or met by any others, give those who meet him *that* PCs' memory. Tell the PCs experiencing the memory that, when they meet the character's eyes, the image flashes into their consciousness, leaving them slightly daze. The memories connect each PC with at least one other in some enigmatic way. Give them a chance to react/interact if they wish. Everyone is asked to come into the press room. Jared and Xavier step up to podium.

SCENE 2

As everyone gathers, the members of the press muscling to the front of the crowd with well-honed practice, Jared and Xavier step up to the podium. Jared is a tall man with dirty blond hair, a hawkish nose, and chestnut brown eyes. He wears a plain black tie with a well-cut suit, and looks fairly serious and stern. Xavier, by contrast, seems delighted and full of energy. He is of average height, with brown hair with beard and moustache (streaks of gray), light blue eyes. He has a ready smile, as he says:

"My friends, associates, and ladies and gentlemen of the press. For the past decade or so, we've all seen London change around us. The streets have become less safe from thugs and strange animals, we've had to question our religious faith as we've seen things that, frankly, are beyond belief . . . of course, on the other hand, we've had just endless material for new sitcoms. Who'd have thought that having a "wacky warlock next door" would be such a good ratings convention?"

There is polite laughter from the crowd, as they catch his reference to one of the currently running hit shows.

Jared then steps in front of the microphone, taking over the speech.

"While the rest of the entertainment industry has been squirming about trying to use these strange events as fodder, we at Babble On have been looking to the heart of the matter. We have discovered how to use these new energies, which some insist on calling 'magic,' <gives a sneer> in our broadcasting techniques. This, my friends, is the cutting edge of entertainment technology.

With that, he sweeps his hand to the large video screen behind him, which to this point has simply been playing an image of the two men giving the speech. As his hand moves in real life, however, the hand on the TV screen changes. It grows in length and bulk, claws extending where once a hand was. The rest of his body changes as well, hunching, crouching down to all fours. Large, bat-like wings erupt from the expensive Italian suit. The crowd reacts with what varies between the "oohs" and "ahhs" of being impressed and the staid silence of those who are over-exposed to CGI effects. Their confident calm decomposes rapidly into shock, however, when they see what you do: it's not just the screen that has changed.

Looming over the crowd, the serpentine form gives what passes for a smile, pulling back leathery lips to reveal razor-sharp teeth.

Allow the players to respond, but cut them off before they do anything violent. The various attendees begin to shuffle out of their seats in what looks like the prelude to a stampede, when the soothing voice of Xavier interrupts them.

"Please, my associates, my friends, do not be afraid. This is merely a demonstration. The television does not reflect reality, as is so often assumed. Rather, the television creates reality."

With a nonchalant flick of his hand, the executive points a remote control at the screen and turns it off. The screen goes dark, and it seems the entire room follows suit for a moment before everyone takes a few moments to blink, and everything is as it was.

Jared is human once more . . . though there's something about his sneer that remains disconcertingly inhuman, and it seems to be reserved specifically for you.

The now normal-looking Jared addresses the crowd:

"As you can see, altering reality for our viewers is a dramatic step forward in our industry. All of the sci-fi claims of a virtual reality future have failed to arrive, but we have brought it from a new and unique direction. The limitation, of course, is that the technology is still quite new. The cameras that created this effect are linked to quite powerful, yet quite sensitive, mystical objects in our secure vault below. Just as they manipulate reality via the screen that you saw, viewers of those objects can manipulate their reality.

At this time, we'd like to give you a chance to examine this object. Their fragile natures, however, require that only a handful of you may view them at one time. On your invitation you will find reference to a Group Number. Please, find the appropriate Babble On employee guide for your group number. After you've viewed the objects, we'll have a question-and-answer session back here.

SCENE 3

All the PCs' invitations, including any forged or stolen ones, are for Group Number 6. Their guide steps forward, an attractive young woman in a trim business suit who announces herself as Carrie, Marketing Services for Babble On. She looks quite eager and enthusiastically blah-blabs about some technological advances she only has a basic understanding of, and how it applies to the future of the entertainment industry. She loves working with the "seeds," as she call them. All she knows about the "seeds" are that they seem to have relations to ancient Sumerian culture, that they were found in the Middle East, and that they respond to thoughts in an interesting fashion, creating illusions of the viewers' thoughts. They can even produce those illusions through radio waves and television signals, if the proper equipment is attached to them. Carrie leads them into the elevator that takes them several floors underground. Read the following aloud.

As the elevator opens, you are ushered through several rooms into a lab that has obviously been "sanitized" for viewers. Empty desks and bays surround a curtained-off section of the room, wires and lighting leading into the area. Carrie leads you forward. The rest of the lab is ominously quiet, but you forget that as soon as you see the "seed." It is a large, brownish gray ovoid, about the size of an adult bear, resting securely among many padded supports. Inscribed on the side of the object are many strange glyphs and symbols that at first seem to squirm and move about of their own volition.

Characters may make Air (Knowledge: Mythology; Occult; History; Ancient Cultures) TH 3 tests for info on the seed. Success gives them enigmatic answers:

—You seem to recall a myth from the ancient Middle East about such things.

—The idea of it resonates in you vaguely.

—The glyphs and symbols look familiar, like others you've seen, but you can't quite read them.

Let the players respond. Regardless of their actions, read the following:

As you watch, a blinding light seers outward from the markings, filling your vision. For a moment, you

are dazzled and confused. The dirt around you is brown and gray, streaked with lines of mud and small piles of animal corpses. A rank wind howls across a barren plain covered in rough grass. You can't seem to remember what distracted you from your mission . . . a vague memory of a building, a woman in strange clothing . . . she was pink, fleshy, and weak . . . but then, the distracting memory rabbits away. There are more important things at hand. The egg, covered in runes and sigils, rests on its pedestal before you. Its magic and bindings are so strong that you cannot remove it instantly . . . it will require a ritual lasting several hours to claim it and take it back to your mistress.

You look about at your brood, and in an instant are aware that they, too, were momentarily distracted. As one, your reptilian heads turn from the circle in which you stood, facing one another, to the low mound of dirt before you. This is the entrance to a hell, the depth of which there is no plumbing, and you know that its minions will come forth to protect the egg.

You flap your huge wings in anticipation, tails lashing, breath smoldering . . . and then you hear the screams. Boiling forth from that pit before you, the screams of beasts that are less than men. You are ready to do battle. And then the egg seems to shatter before you, bathing you in searing light and burning into your mind and body.

And then you are back in the basement lab, staring at the seed and at each other. Carrie looks pleased, "Such a wonderful illusion . . . I just love bunnies!"

Let the players react and discuss their vision. Carrie will let them know that a "shared vision" is unheard of, and that usually the most dominant mind controls what the seed does. Even stranger, not only did she experience a serene moment in a TeleTubbie-like environment, she shared in nothing of the players' "illusion." None of the players had even an inkling of dragons or strange beast-men when they looked at the seed, nor did any of them feel like they were "in control during the vision."

Do not let the discussion go too far before telling them that the lights begin to flicker, then go out. Carrie is visibly disturbed and confused by the lights being out, and recommends that they get back to the press room.

Unfortunately, the power is out. The emergency lights DO NOT come on. The "seed" gives off an eerie, green, foxfire-type light. There are only two ways to get out of the lab: the stairwell or the elevator.

The emergency exit stairwell has an electronic lock. PCs can pick the electronic lock with an Air (Tech: Electronics or Tech: Mechanics) 4 test, and go through the door.

The elevator door, meanwhile, is jammed. PCs can pry open the door with a successful Fire (Athletics) 4 test, open and climb up the trap door at the top of the elevator with another successful Fire (Athletics) 2 test,



and open the elevator door to the next floor up with a third successful Fire (Athletics) 4 test.

Whichever avenue the players use, it will lead them to a network of corridors in the third-level sub-basement, where, Carrie tells them, there is an exit to the lowest car park level. When there's a power outage, that's the evacuation route they've been trained to take. They won't get there easily however. . .

SCENE 4

Read the following aloud.

As you step cautiously through the darkened halls, you can't help but feel like something is wrong. A building this size should have a backup generator, and someone should have come down to get you by now. Then your prayers are answered by the tapping of feet. You've come to a 4-way intersection, and from the hallway directly in front of you come two men, security guards by the looks of their uniforms. Carrie starts forward to talk to them and ask them what's going on, when she suddenly stops. You see it too . . . their eyes. In the dark, it's almost like their eyes are . . . glowing. As they come closer, their nightsticks in hand, you hear tapping from behind you as well. Four more guards, equally attired and armed, come out of adjacent doorways. You're surrounded . . . and as the guards silently raise their sticks, you realize that their intentions are definitely NOT friendly.

The security guards are possessed by an unnatural force, and attack mindlessly. They only get one action and one stance change each round (which will always be to attack, and will always be a stance change to Fire using the Melee skill), so you don't need to keep track of their dice pools.

Possessed Guards (1 for each player)

Race natural being; **AP** 0. **Aspects** Fire 5, Water 3, Air 1, Earth 3. **Init** 4; **Health** 3m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+. **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 3; **Stride** 20 ft.

Weapons: Fist (2) ~ 3/L; Kick (2) ~ 4/M; Club 5/M; **Sequences:** Flying Fists.

Skills: Athletics 3, Melee 4, Quickness 3, Stamina 2. **Knowledge:** Street 4, Senses 2, Stealth 4, Trickery 3, Will 2. **Edges:** Brawler, Strong, Survivor.

Traits: Mindless, tainted.

SCENE 5

After the players defeat the guards (whom, it becomes obvious during the fight, are mindless, zombie-like creatures), Carrie leads them in a panic to the car park. Depending on the time left, one of two endings may happen:

Quick End: The players hear pounding on the door behind them, and see large, ominous shadows approaching. The only way out is past a toll booth . . . but now there's a large, scary, tentacled creature in the way! It undulates and writhes and looks far too terrifying for the players to even think about actually hurting. The pounding gets louder, the bad guys are closing in . . . and the players see an unlocked car but no keys. Someone needs to make an Air (Tech: Mechanics) 6 check to hotwire that car. The PCs can barrel through that scary creature, or a locked and closed exit, and escape into the night.

Longer End: Intercepting them in the car park is a very angry looking Xavier. Read the following aloud.

Xavier stands in your way, seemingly taller than he was before, his once blue eyes now full of golden fury. He has sword in his right hand and a grim on his face.

"Well done. You passed the test. No mere wormy humans, you . . . from the way you responded to the seed, I know . . . you are scions. You bear the fire within you, as do I." For a moment, his grim look relaxes, and he appears almost paternal. "That is why it grieves me, my misguided scions, to have to kill you." With that, he raises his sword and charges.

He will begin his attack against the biggest, most dangerous-looking PC. Xavier is motivated by an old hatred, and attacks to kill. Use the attached character sheet for Xavier, using 2 stance changes, appropriate fighting style sequences, and karma spending as normal. Ultimately, Xavier will use his Teleport legacy to get away. He will likely take some damage and disappear before actually dying; just don't allow him to be captured and questioned. It should be a clean break with his death or disappearance, leaving the PCs with only more questions.

XAVIER, TAINTED SCION

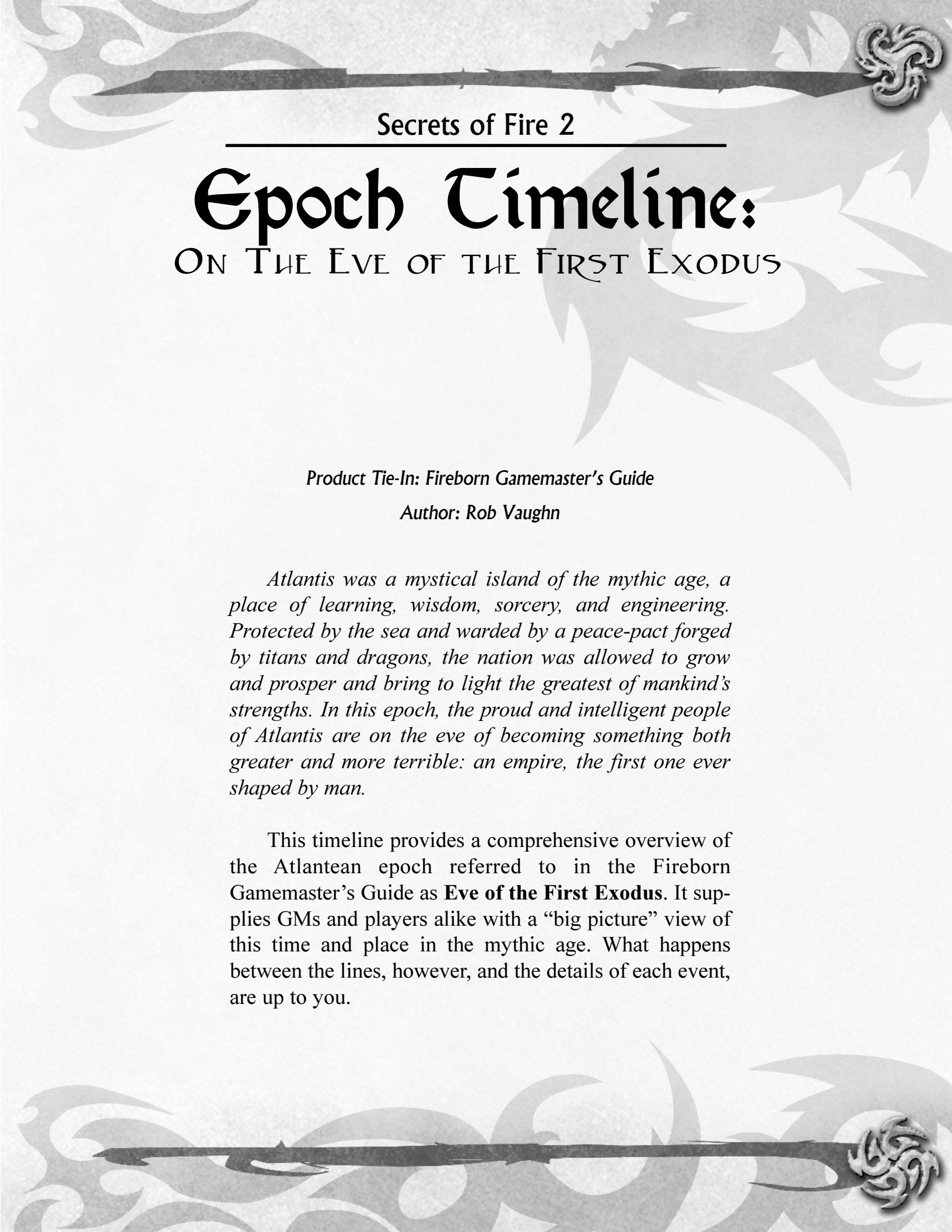
Race Supernatural being; **Sire** Jormungand; **APL** 3; **Init** 8; **Aspects** Fire 4(1), Water 3, Air 5(1), Earth 4(1); **Health** 6m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 3; **Taint** 25; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

Weapons: Claw (2) ~ 5/L, Kick (2) 5/M, bastard sword ~ 17/H; **Sequences** Eastern Small Style, Luring Blade, Kingsguard.

Skills: Athletics 5, Interaction 5, Melee 5, Quickness 5, Senses 5, Stamina 5, Stealth 5, Trickery 5, Will 5; **Edges:** Dervish 5, Forceful Will 4, Weapon Specialist 3 (+3 damage); **Powers:** Child of Fire 4, Crushing Will 5, Instinct 3; **Legacy:** Fire Wyrn

Possessions: Bastard sword, leather trenchcoat, and torc of the coward (enchanted item: when wearer suffers 6 wound dice or more, he is teleported to a predetermined place of sanctuary).





Secrets of Fire 2

Epoch Timeline:


ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST EXODUS

Product Tie-In: Fireborn Gamemaster's Guide

Author: Rob Vaughn

Atlantis was a mystical island of the mythic age, a place of learning, wisdom, sorcery, and engineering. Protected by the sea and warded by a peace-pact forged by titans and dragons, the nation was allowed to grow and prosper and bring to light the greatest of mankind's strengths. In this epoch, the proud and intelligent people of Atlantis are on the eve of becoming something both greater and more terrible: an empire, the first one ever shaped by man.

This timeline provides a comprehensive overview of the Atlantean epoch referred to in the Fireborn Gamemaster's Guide as **Eve of the First Exodus**. It supplies GMs and players alike with a "big picture" view of this time and place in the mythic age. What happens between the lines, however, and the details of each event, are up to you.



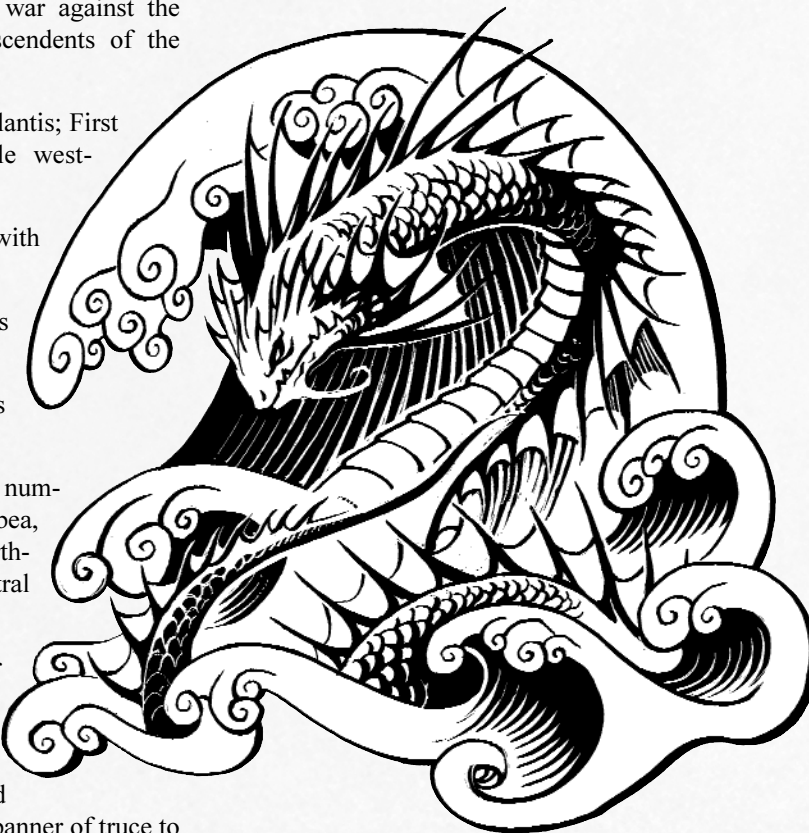
EPOCH TIMELINE: EVE OF THE FIRST EXODUS

With "IV" denoting the Time of the Fourth Sun

see what mankind has wrought

- Pre-IV The dragons and the giants begin a millennium-long war; the fae remain in hiding throughout most of it
- Pre-IV The dragons and giants reach an accord, retreating to the ends of the world and leaving the spaces between for the fae; the fae, disappointed with the shape of the world after the epic battles, and no longer as interested in journeying, claim the fertile forests of Erebea as their own, and call it Elysium, the blessed lands; they cease traveling when they reach the shores of the Inner Sea, leaving the rest of the world to the younger races, like mankind
- Pre-IV With the rise of mankind, many fae travel north into isolation with the giant-kin; Jotunheim is founded
- IV 999 On the eve of the second millennium, Queen Maeve declares war against the formorians, twisted descendents of the titans
- IV 1500 First communities on Atlantis; First Kurgan migrants trickle westward
- IV 2550 First Atlantean conflict with Erebean sea-raiders
- IV 2563 Capital city of Atlantis is begun
- IV 2612 Capital city of Atlantis completed
- IV 2800 Kurgans come in greater numbers from eastern Erebea, disperse throughout northern, southern, and central Erebea
- IV 3000 Intrigued by their encounters with the Kurgans, the titans emerge from their mountain homes and stride the lands under a banner of truce to

- IV 3111 Kurgan migrations funnel almost exclusively into central Erebea
- IV 3256 Visit of King Oberyceum of Arcadia
- IV 3333 Amused, the titans return to the north, though they leave many relics and mixed-blood offspring behind. Ysgard, the Kurgan temple-city venerating the titans, is founded.
- IV 3382 The First Exodus begins
- IV 3385 Atlantean-Kehebet trade intensifies
- IV 3450 Kehebet is de facto colony of Atlantis
- IV 3450-1400 Atlantean empire reaches the peak of exploration and colonization; Explorers report existence of a massive, lush continent to the far west





SLAKE

Era: Mythic or Modern

Race: Supernatural being

APL: 1

Aspects: Fire 5(1), Water 4(2), Air 5(1), Earth 3

Initiative: 9

Health: 3m; <5 / 5+ / 9+ / 13+ / 17+ / 21+ / 25+ / 29+

Size/Reach: 0 / 2 feet

Armor: 3 (shell armor)

Karma: 9

Stride: 20ft., swim 30 ft.

Weapons: Coral spear, 7/M

Edges: Aggressive (Melee), Deft 3, Rapid (Swim) 2, Seductive 4

Powers: Aquatic 3, Skin of Stone 1

Skills: Athletics 6, Interaction 3, Melee 4, Quickness 5, Stamina 5

DESCRIPTION

An all-female warrior race of the oceans, slakes are fierce combatants with an amazonian contempt for weaklings. They prefer tropical coasts, islands atolls and reefs, but can be found in small enclaves across the oceans and lakes of the mythic world. Slakes appear as statuesque, muscular women between six and seven feet tall, athletic and battle-honed. Their eyes are black or sea-green, their skins a rich brown, and their hair smells of salt and is woven with strands of seaweed. They dress in clothing and armor made from seashells and the sails of wrecked ships, decorating their predatory beauty with jewelry and weapons made from living coral.

Slakes live in small warbands under the surface, close-knit communities of warriors led by the most experienced amongst them who maintains her position as long as she leads her followers to victories against other underwater monsters, dangerous beasts such as sharks and giant squids, and humans. Unable to reproduce on their own, slakes raid ships and villages that come within their territories and kidnap men for this purpose.

Slakes prefer healthy and strong or graceful males as mates. While many humans would be willing victims if they knew they were meant to be breeding slaves for these beautiful creatures, the slakes do not offer their targets a choice. Rather, they net and grab the most attractive specimens and pull them under in the midst of battle. To ensure that they do not

drown, a slake attempts to kiss its prey within a few moments of kidnapping him; the kiss carries with it a parasite that attaches itself to the inside of the victim's throat, allowing him to extract oxygen from water and therefore to breathe while submerged. A potential host that wishes to resist the parasite's embedding in his throat may do so with a successful Water (Stamina) 5 test, though he must then face the difficulties of drowning.

After a male has been kept captive beneath the waves for several weeks, he is usually released along the nearest mainland coastline, none the worse for wear . . . or so he thinks. In fact, if a male has been released, it means that one of his matings with the slakes was successful . . . and *he* is the carrier of the child. After three months, the male begins to experience a nearly overwhelming desire to return to the ocean. This draw can be resisted with an Earth (Will) 2 test, which increases by +2 each week. If the male fails the check at any point, he must drop what he is doing and make his way back to the sea as quickly as possible. Once he gets to the sea, he must attempt to wade out into the waves, at which point the legacy of his time with the slakes is realized: the immature slake bursts forth from the parasite/egg sack in the host's throat, killing the host. The slake sends out a mystical call to its parent tribe, which comes to retrieve it and escort it home.

If the male host is restrained, resists the call of the sea, or for whatever reason does not reach the ocean within three months after the call first starts, the young slake bursts from his throat regardless, killing both the host and itself unless it can reach saltwater.

An Air (Medicine) test 10 allows the egg to be surgically removed without harm to the host, if the operation is performed within the first three months of the host's implantation. If the spell is cast on the host after he has felt the call to sea, however, it may already be too late; the egg is removed, but a poison is released into the host's system, forcing him to make a Water (Stamina) test as if he had been damaged with a Venomous attack with a TH of 5 + 1 per week after the call began. The host must continue to test to resist the poison each turn for a number of turns equal to the number of weeks since the call to sea began.

Alternatively, a Wholeness spell may be cast on the host at any point, destroying the egg without chance of poisoning the host, though he does suffer 5 wound dice which must be healed naturally.



SPEAKING THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH

One of the biggest questions for a GM of a FIREBORN campaign is not “How did the mythic age *really* end?” or “How deeply do the Dwellers’ tendrils of influence reach into British government?” but rather, “Should my campaign encourage the use of British accents?”

While some FIREBORN players will be blessed with a British upbringing, the majority of us are at a disadvantage when it comes to speaking like a Brit or, more precisely, like a Londoner. You should probably encourage your players to try out the accent, and if it feels too silly or they can’t wrap their brains around it, let them switch to whatever their normal manner of speaking might be. For your NPCs, it’s really a matter of how effectively you think you can pull off a good brogue. The biggest advantage you have is that, even if your accent is atrocious, most of the players probably won’t know what a “good” accent sounds like any more than you do.

Regardless of your attempts to master the accent, it always helps set the mood to try to use the proper lingo. That’s why we’ve included this sampling of British slang.

RHYMING SLANG

One of the unique aspects of British slang is referred to as rhyming slang. It is a fairly convoluted form of slang, and it makes meaning nearly impossible to trace back unless you happen to be “in the know.” Rhyming slang replaces one word with an (often random) two-word phrase or compound word that rhymes; the actual rhyming half of the phrase or compound word is then removed, leaving one with an apparently unrelated slang term standing in for the original word. A common example of this is the rhyming slang for ‘mate,’ which is ‘china plate.’ The ‘plate’ half is removed, leaving ‘china’ as the slang term that is used. So ‘china’ means ‘mate’ by way of ‘china plate.’

LEXICON OF BRITISH SLANG

aggro — short for aggravation or violence, e.g. “He was completely **pissed** and well up for some aggro.”

apples and pears — stairs, e.g., “the body bounced all the way down the apples and pears.”

arseholed — drunk, e.g. “Me an’ Dave got totally arseholed last night.”

backhander — a payment given, usually for dubious purposes or illegally.

banged up — to be put in prison, e.g. “Did you hear, Benny got banged up last week after that blag.”

bell — a telephone call, e.g. “give us a bell later.”

bird — woman/girl/girlfriend; also from the rhyming slang ‘birdlime,’ ‘time,’ referring to a prison sentence, e.g. “He’s doing ‘is bird in Belmarsh.”

blag — robbery.

bloke — general term for a man of unknown name, e.g. “Look at that bloke over there.”

bollocks — bullshit, impossible, a lie.

bong — an impossibly hopeless situation, a catastrophe; an acronym for “bollocks, no good”

bottle — courage, balls, e.g. “he lost his bottle,” “he bottled out,” “he’s got a lot of bottle.”

bread — money. From the rhyming slang ‘bread and honey.’

brew — a cup of tea or sometimes a pint of beer, e.g. “Do you fancy a brew?”

brilliant — good, well-done, amazing, not necessarily having to do with intelligence, e.g., “That film was brilliant!” in reference to an action blockbuster.

bugger — a form of abuse or an exclamation, e.g. “You little bugger!” Other forms are:

bugger-all — nothing at all, e.g. “I’ve got bugger-all money left.”

bugger-off — to tell someone to go away or to leave quickly.

cakehole — mouth, e.g. “Shut your cakehole!”

charlie — slang for cocaine.

chief — general respectful term used to address a man, particularly a superior.

china — rhyming slang, short for ‘china plate,’ ‘mate.’ Used to address someone who is at least slightly familiar and typically prefixed by “me old.” e.g. “Awright me old china!”

clobber — clothes, e.g. “I’ve gotta go shopping for some new clobber.”

cor! — an expression of surprise.

cor blimey! — a variation of ‘gaw blimey’.

damage — cost, e.g. “what’s the damage?”

diamond geezer — a good, solid, reliable person.

dodgy — something or someone seems off, or that shouldn’t be trusted.

earner — a source of income (not usually honest), sometimes prefixed with “a nice little.”

(the) firm — a gang of “dodgy geezers.”

fag — cigarette.

footie — abbreviated form of football (soccer).

gaff — a house, e.g. “I’ll meet you round my gaff in half an hour,” or place, e.g. “She was all over the gaff” (all over the place).

gander — to look at, e.g. “lets ‘ave a gander.”

gaw blimey! — a corruption of the expression of surprise ‘God blind me!’

geezer — a common term for a man. Used respectfully and for a person of unknown name, e.g. “some geezer” or to say that someone is a bit of a laddish

rogue, e.g. "he's a bit of a geezer." Also "dodgy geezer" can be used to describe a man of bad character.

git — mildly offensive word to refer to someone (a male) that is disliked.

go into one — to get annoyed or lose control, similar to "go off."

half inch — rhyming slang for 'pinch,' referring to stealing.

Hampstead — rhyming slang, short for 'Hampstead Heath,' 'teeth,' e.g. "Look at the Hampsteads on that bird!"

have some of that! — an exclamation used to express pleasure, usually after showing off at something, e.g. "After pinning a fleeing thug to a door with a well thrown knife, Dave the Diamond Geezer exclaimed, 'ave some of that!'"

Herbert — a foolish person or used as a mild form of abuse. Normally prefixed by "spotty," e.g. "Will ya look at that spotty Herbert!"

inside — in prison, e.g. "I've 'eard Will's inside again."

jar — pint of beer, e.g. "Fancy a few jars after work?"

John — used as a general term for a man whose name isn't known, e.g. "Awright John, watcha doin' 'ere?"

kip — a nap, or to take a nap.

knocking shop — a brothel.

laugh — a joke.

leave it out — a phrase meaning "stop doing that" or "stop saying that," often used in disbelief or as if to say "you must be joking," e.g. "Leave it out John! You're 'avin a laugh!"

loaf — rhyming slang, short for 'loaf of bread,' 'head,' e.g. "don't be stupid, use yer loaf!"

local — the local public house (pub or bar), e.g. "Yeah, I saw 'im down the local last night."

manor — territory, area, turf. Usually associated with the criminal underground, e.g. "If I see you round my manor again you're dead!"

mate — common form of address for both friends and strangers of unknown name, e.g. "Awright mate!" Also used when the person being spoken to is very much *not* a mate, e.g. "Oi mate, you looking at my bird!?"

merchant banker — rhyming slang for wanker.

nick — to steal; when preceded by 'the,' refers to a police station or or prison, e.g. "He's been banged-up in the nick . . . again!"

not cricket — an old English saying. If something is not cricket, it means that "decent" people probably wouldn't approve of it. Usually used by youth in a mocking manner.

nutter — someone crazy or, more commonly, violent or foolishly daring, e.g. "You'd have to be a right nutter to start a fight in that place."

oily — rhyming slang for 'oily rag,' 'fag' (cigarette).

on the game — to be a prostitute, e.g., "She's had to get on the game to pay the rent."

Pete Tong — rhyming slang for 'wrong,' e.g. "It's all gone Pete Tong!"

pissed — unlike the American version of the word (which means "annoyed"), this is the most common slang term for being drunk. Other variants are "pissed-up," "pissed as arseholes," "pissed as a fart," "pissed as a newt," etc.

pub — short for public house, meaning a bar.

(in) queer street — to be in trouble or in a difficult situation.

right — total, completely, adamantly, e.g. "He's a right bastard!"

Rosa (or Rose) Lee — a cup of tea, e.g. "cor blimey I could go for a cup of Rosa Lee."

(do a) runner — leave an area (often the scene of a crime) unexpectedly, e.g. "Where's that bastard gone? I bet he's done a runner!"

Scooby — rhyming slang for 'Scooby-Do,' 'clue,' e.g. "I 'avn't a Scooby, mate."

shafted — to be treated badly, to be in trouble, e.g. "We're right shafted if we don't get out of this tunnel!"

sheets — monetary notes.

shrapnel — coins.

solid — reliable, dependable, e.g. "You don't have to worry about Colin, he's a solid bloke."

sussed or sussed out — found out, discovered, e.g. "The coppers 'ave sussed us, John!" or worked out all right, came together, e.g. "It all sussed out in the end."

taking a piss out — to fool, to play a joke at someone's expense, e.g., "Mason thought his mates were taking a piss out on 'im when they told him something was chasing them."

taters — rhyming slang for 'potatoes in the mould,' 'cold,' e.g. "It's taters out here, I need a new coat."

tea leaf — rhyming slang for thief, e.g. "He's a right tea leaf, that one."

tits-up — all gone wrong, e.g. "Aw shit, it's all gone tits-up!"

up for it — to be willing to have a good time or try something daring, e.g. "Are you up for it?" Also for someone (usually a woman) to be sexually available, e.g. "I reckon she's up for it, Andrews! Go over an' talk to her."

wanker — an insult.

well 'ard or hard — someone or something that is very tough, e.g. "She's well 'ard, I've 'eard."

wind up — to tease, to irritate, e.g. "Are you winding me up?"



NEW EPOCH

TETHYS: HUNTERS OF THE FREEHOLD

BY GARY ASTLEFORD

Tethyn culture originated in what is now Spain. Had the people of this provincial and wooded land been more willing to cooperate with one another in the early days, Tethys might have rivaled Atlantis as a great nation of the mythic age. It was the first civilization of man to maintain a semi-feudal society, but more importantly, it developed without the influence of fae, dragons, titans, or any other of the older races whose existences or practices shaped the kingdoms of man. Their pride and racial unity allowed them to resist such inroads from other races, even subconscious ones, and so they clung to the cultural facets they had developed on their own. Some suggest that this independence led to the continuance of Tethyn language beyond the mythic age and into the modern, resulting in an island of linguistic independence in the Pyrenees of Europe.

However, this same pride forbade them from bowing to Atlantis during its expansionist period; instead they attempted to make war on this more magically and navally savvy power. And so their strong compounds were burnt and an entire generation of hunters was slain . . . as a result of this foolhardy war in which all Tethyns fought but few Tethyns cooperated, the culture was nearly wiped out. This was midway through the fourth millennium of the Fourth Sun of the mythic age, over 3,000 years since the culture began. In their disorganized and still-poor state, the hunters and subsistence farmers who were the Tethyns' descendants were easily enslaved or pushed out of their territory, like so many others, by the migrating Kurgans. At the mythic age's cataclysmic end, the only Tethyn descendants scraped a living in the poor soil of their old homelands'

forbidding mountain peaks or lived off of what they could fish and scavenge on the southern shores of the Inner Sea.

GEOGRAPHY

Tethys is a rugged land of heavily-forested hills, mountains, and valleys that are occasionally punctuated by long tracts of fog-shrouded moor. The first freeholds

were founded around 1,000th year of the Fourth Sun, centuries before civilization began on Atlantis; at their height, before Atlantis's navy was built and with the concept of "empire" still 1,000 years away, the freeholds extended from the Weeping Deep (the chasm at the westernmost joining of Erebea and Ofir, which would one day be the Strait of Gibraltar) in southwestern Erebia, north as far as what would become southern Avalon, and east into the Elysian Plain.

An offshoot of the Tethyn clans also settled on Illean, the island in the Inner Sea that lies just to the east of the southwestern spur of Erebea. Illean is less forested than the Tethyn mainland, with regions of gently rolling fen intermixed with grassland. Much of Tethys's arable ground is found upon this dismal

isle. Though the clans that call Illean their home will never want for bread, they are seen in an unflattering light by their mainland cousins, who refer to them disparagingly as "farmers." Crops grown in Illean are limited to wheat, barley, and several kinds of root vegetables, but they were not assisted by any beasts of burden, having domesticated none, nor by metal tools, having neither ore nor the knowledge of how to work it. This,



combined with the Tethyns occasionally demanding young men and women as prey for the *Gorynne Kazicka*, or “most dangerous hunt,” kept Illean mortality high and prevented them from developing as an agricultural society normally would.

The sea off the coast of western Tethys is called the Weeping Deep, for it is constantly covered with fog and rain. Storms occasionally blow across the Deep, soaking the mainland and casting a gloomy light upon the entire kingdom. The weather in western Tethys is often cloudy, and rain is a constant concern. As one travels northeastward into Erebea, the weather improves, growing warmer and less damp, eventually reaching the Elysian Plains. The plains are home to nothing more than rodents and slow, dull-witted ruminants, early predecessors of cattle; the Tethyns have on interest in such creatures whatsoever, as they are easy to sneak up on and kill, but impossible to hunt once in a stampeding mass (the Tethyns do not have horses; these will remain alien to Erebea until the Kurgans bring them). Additionally, the Tethyns have an extreme dislike and fear of the wooded land that stretches both north and east of the Elysian Plains, which is either the border of Elysium or the separate reaches of Avalon and Arcadia. Either way, of the Tethyn hunting parties that braved the plains, surviving the large aerial predators that preyed upon the ruminants and making the several-weeks trek to the forest at its far edge, only those who refused to enter the woods came back. All others simply disappeared in the green, never to return.

HISTORY

The history of the Tethyns is like that of countless hunter-gatherer societies throughout time: fluid, uncertain, and unrecorded. The unifying principles of the Tethyn hunt and its societal rules started from a seed of a few proud hunting villages, grew into a society of freeholds spanning hundreds of miles, and then simply hit a plateau . . . in essence, the culture grew to its borders, then became static, its populations rising and falling with the populations of the game creatures within hunting reach. The savage nature of the beasts in the Tethyn woodlands,

along with disease, starvation, accidents, and the ravages of weather, kept the Tethyns from overpopulating. But as for notable historical figures or important events? Every Tethyn hunter would claim that his greatest hunt is known throughout the land, and every freehold has its own ancestral heroes of which stories are told throughout the years, the tales growing in size, scope, and non-believability with each passing generation.

CULTURE & GOVERNANCE

Foremost among the driving forces of Tethyn culture is the hunt. Their traditional homeland is known for its mystical fecundity, which allows them to live on what would otherwise be an over-hunted population of game animals. Scores of competing lords, known as the

Eiztaria or “Masters of the Hunt” rival one another for dominance of hunting grounds and arable land, but such competition always takes the form of a hunt rather than a battle. While more aggressive peoples were decimating themselves with competitive warfare and raiding, the Tethyns’ form of inter-cultural competition led only to more food for the people as a whole. Perhaps the key practice of this tradition is that neither a hunter nor his family could partake of the food, furs, skins, or other products of an animal he had hunted; rather, such benefits must always be given to the next lowest hunter of the freehold’s hierarchy. This practice creates an interdependent web of favors, obligations, and honor bindings, and assures that those in the positions of highest power, the *Eiztaria*, are dependent

upon the gifts of their freeholders for the basic needs to survive.

All of the Tethyns that live within or near a freehold are called its freefolk. Each freehold is administered by a Master of the Hunt, who is elevated to that position by dint of the type and quantity of beasts he has successfully hunted. The Master of the Hunt is served in turn by a group of lieutenants, known simply as Freehunters. Each freehunter is given various responsibilities within





their freehold, ranging from the care of the its beasts to the manufacture of its weapons, tack, and armor. The freehold's falconer, known as the Master of the Sky, sees to the welfare of the freehunters' birds of prey, while the Master of Hounds is responsible for the care of the freehunters' hunting dogs. The maintenance and manufacture of weapons is overseen by the Master of Arms. To become a Master of the Hunt, an aspiring Tethyn must first master the jobs of each of the freehunters. This system allows for women to raise to as high a rank as they like, but no special consideration is provided for those who are on the verge of bearing children or those who wish to nurse and educate their children personally. Most female freehunters and Masters of the Hunt choose therefore not to bear children. Because the position of Master of the Hunt changes every few years, and since the position is not hereditary, there is little cultural drive to produce children to continue one's legacy. This is not to say that the biological drive to produce children is not extant, however; because of the common wounds and accidents that a hunter of beasts may suffer, as well as the inevitable aging of the most able-bodied hunters, children are reared in a communal style. They may look to those who are unable to hunt for mentorship, or may spend time with their true parents on easier hunts, or may latch onto a freehunter from another freehold who is visiting. In the end, it is a hunter's individual accomplishments that make his name into legend, not that of his parents' or his childrens'.

Nearly every task in the Tethyn paradigm is compared to a hunt of some sort. Courtship, success in business, and warfare are all analogous to hunting to the average Tethyn. Traps are never, as a matter of honor, used among the Tethyns, even if the hunter in question is somehow prevented from tracking and killing the great beasts. Any who trap for their meat are subject to scorn and are banished if they are found out. The old or lame of the Tethyns will instead wait in the brush for hours on end, patient and unmoving, in order to catch passing small game with a well-aimed stone throw or a quick grab of the hands. Obviously, therefore, most of the Tethyn diet consists of meat.

Vast tracts of dense forest, treacherous marsh, and rugged hills, replete with ample water from springs and rivers, surround each freehold. A freehold may claim anywhere from 10 miles around it to hundreds of miles as its hunting ground; if a new freehold crops up within those lands or an existing one attempts to extend its boundaries, a great hunt or *gyrigut* is called. Hundreds of gyrigut variations exist, each with differing durations, weapons allowed, number of hunters in a party (ranging from solo to hundreds of men), area that may be hunted, prey beasts, and countless other minutiae ranging from the songs that must be sung on the way back from the hunt to the types of images that may be carved in the bones of the taken animals; a hunter's adherence to and success in any and all of these details may be the deciding factor, or part of the deciding factor, as to who "wins" the hunt.

Freeholds are built from wood, stone, sod, and the bones and flesh of great beasts. These last are the most sacred of materials, and prepared through a part-alchemical, part-natural process that strengthens the bones to that of the sturdiest timbers while keeping them light. Those who hunted the beast from which the bones came are responsible for carving them into the appropriate imagery of the hunt or of Tethyn ancestor-heroes (who are universally shared by all throughout the culture). The skins are likewise prepared in a variety of manners, formed into everything from a sturdy and durable wall sheeting, to transparent skins that are placed in windows, to incredibly flexible yet resilient leather hunting armor. As a universal rule, the hunter must prepare his kill and all of its remains. It is these remains, both as trophies and as useful equipment, that speak to a hunter's prowess, and if he cannot point to the result of his hunts as proof of his boasting, he might as well not open his mouth.

Those Tethyns who are not fit to join in the hunts of the faster or larger beasts are relegated to raising children, maintaining the household, gathering tubers, berries, and other edible vegetation, or hunting small game. There is no shame if a hunter is unable to maintain his position due to age or injury; it is not what one *can* hunt down but rather what one *has hunted* in his tome or *could hunt* in the time left to him that matter. So long as an aging hunter can point to a pillar of bone that he left his mark upon, or to a window of clearskin that he stretched himself, he is cared for to the best of the freehold's ability. With their limited medical ability and meat-heavy diet, however (possibly thankfully), those old who fall ill or become unable to eat of the meat of the hunt tend not to last long.

Small treated bone monuments, carved to resemble animals and legendary beasts, are used to mark roads and pathways in the wilds of Tethys, many of which are little more than game trails widened over the centuries. Not only do these markers identify where a road or path begins and ends, they also signify which freehold claims the hunting rights over the surrounding wilderness. It is a great affront to any hunter to find a stranger hunting without permission on his ancestral lands. In Tethys, poaching game is a crime punishable by death. The farther one retreats from freehold, the less obvious the roads and pathways become. It is not difficult for strangers to become lost in the Tethyn wilderness, and even if they remain on the game trails the dangerous beasts with which Tethyn hunters make their names far prefer the cleared trails to the dense brush. Terrible creatures make their lairs in the deep dells and high hills between freeholds, and men looking for fame and fortune have ventured into the wilds, never to return.

STAY TUNED IN TWO WEEKS
FOR THE REST OF TETHYS:
HUNTERS OF THE FREEHOLD





NEW EPOCH

TETHYS II: HUNTERS OF THE FREEHOLD

BY GARY ASTLEFORD

THE PEOPLE

Tethyns are short in stature, but most are well-muscled and intimidating nonetheless. They are of dark of complexion, with hair color ranging from black to light brown, and eyes that range from blue to gray. The bodies of Tethyn males tend to be hairy, and they grow thick beards as a sign of virility and strength. Men braid their beards, while women and men alike grow their hair long and keep it braided, often slathering it in a gel of animal lard as an alternative to having to wash it.

Dress in Tethys depends on the occasion. When mustering for a hunt, Tethyns wear undyed leathers and cover themselves with dirt, mud, and foliage so that they blend in with their surroundings. High boots with soft leather soles allow them to move with uncanny stealth, even in the most overgrown forests. When in their strongholds and halls, they are prone to wearing bright colors. Clothing made from leather so thin as to be translucent, which is then dyed in bright hues, is a staple of Tethyn fashion.

Tethyns are a boisterous folk, as quick to laughter as they are to anger. They are insulted easily, especially by those that they consider weak, or who have not rightly earned their superiority. Any boast, perceived insult, or imagined wrongdoing is cause enough to initiate a hunt led by the two opposing parties. In a manner, young hunters are therefore subconsciously encouraged by their peers to be braggarts, boasters, ruffians and bullies; the more tension and argument between hunters, the more hunts there will be, and therefore the more food and supplies for the freehold.

This culture of intimidation and strong personalities carries over into Tethyns' dealings with outsiders; this, combined with an overwhelming suspicion for those who do not follow the way of the hunt, leads to often violent encounters with other cultures. The deeper into the Tethyn wilds one gets, the less friendly the native people seem to be. Freeholders take an almost sadistic pleasure in testing strangers for weakness, but they will do anything for a friend, foreign-born or not, once he has proven his quality.

COMMERCE

There is no official commerce or trade between freeholds, as each is expected to acquire all of its food and supplies through its hunts. However, just as gifts allow for the dissemination necessities within a freehold, so do they allow for the transport of items from one region of


Tethyn land to another. The major hunts always involve guest hunters from other freeholds, and any hunter thus invited is expected to bring a gift; the more exotic the gift, the more praised the hunter is during the ceremonies before the hunt. In this way the bones or skins of an animal might end up in a freehold hundreds of miles from its natural range.

FOREIGN LANDS

There is virtually no peaceful commerce or interaction between Tethyns and other cultures. First of all, any who approach Tethyn land without permission are suspected of poaching, the most vile of crimes in Tethys and punishable by death. Also, whereas in Tethyn culture the blustering and threats of a virile young hunter would simply lead to a hunt, when the same mannerisms are used with outsiders it tends to lead to the drawing of weapons. The Tethyn freeholds that border other cultures or are near major waterways or coasts, therefore, tend to constantly feud with their neighbors. Constant violence and war among men is not seen as healthy, however, so these peripheral freeholds are somewhat ostracized from Tethyn culture as a whole. If a Tethyn breaks a minor infraction, he is sent to one of the peripheral freeholds for a variable number of years, depending on his infraction. If he is unwilling to shed the blood of other men, he will likely die. If he is willing to shed the blood of other men, on the other hand, then he will be marked as a pariah upon his return to his old freehold. Most criminals therefore return to the border freeholds, there to live a life that, though violent and short, is at least one in which there can be honor among one's fellows. The only commerce that Tethys truly has to offer outsiders is that of blood for blood.

This tendency led in part to the Tethyns' downfall. With each new culture that assailed them, the Tethyn way of life was chipped away and their confidence in their way of life eroded. The first was, of course, the Atlanteans; while their First Exodus was a peaceful venture, the Tethyns perceived them as nothing more than poachers and outsiders who should be frightened off. What they couldn't imagine was that, after the first ship or two was burned and its inhabitants chased into the wilds to die, dozens more would come. With their sturdier steel weapons and armor, the longer range of their bows, and of course their powerful magic, the Atlanteans easily repaid the border freeholds for their violent welcome . . . and then, in an ultimate insult that the Tethyns would never realize, they passed them by.





TETHYS: HUNTERS OF THE FREEHOLD

Despite the Atlanteans' desire to expand their culture and influence and help others' grow and improve themselves, they simply could not stomach the Tethyns' violent, blustery nature. They found them to be savages, not just in habit and technology, but in mindset as well.

Their brief foray into Tethyn land had an impact, however. When the outlying coastal freeholds were destroyed, the desperate (and violent) hunters there fled inland, for the first time returning en masse instead of singly to the central freeholds. While they wouldn't imagine defying the Tethyn way or attempting violent takeovers of established freeholds, they nonetheless were able to create cells of comradery within the freeholds. Whereas before they were merely singly pariahs ostracized by the whole, now they were bands and clusters of disenfranchised men, looked down upon but also feared by the other freeholders. These bands of violent men were sometimes chased from freeholds, or left of their own accord to find places more accommodating to them, or at time even overwhelmed the local culture and absorbed it into their own violent way of life. With a few battles, the Atlantean exodus unknowingly destroyed in three decades what had existed for over 3,000 years.

The situation worsened with the coming of the Kurgans. By now the Tethyn culture had in many places been reduced to feuding clans. The land in many places went unhunted, and it became easier to take from others than to hunt for oneself. Women were forced into subservience in many freeholds, and those who could not fight had to steal. Whereas before the plains beasts had been unhunted because they were too easy prey, now they were seen simply as an easy source of food. When the Kurgans began to arrive, they found not a strong and well-entrenched society that they might otherwise have left alone, but a weak and feuding network of bands whose weapons and armor were inferior, and who had no horses on which to fight. The Kurgan newcomers easily destroyed them, taking their women and children and putting the men, who were deemed to violent and proud to absorb, to death.

By the end of the mythic age, the last remnants of Tethyn culture had receded to the barren mountain peaks of what would be the Pyrenees, as well as to the coastline where they survived via a subsistence fishing lifestyle. The largest groups of surviving Tethyns left their home entirely, migrating to northwestern Ofir and huddling in the shadow of Keheb on the shores of the Inner Sea.

MAGIC & TECHNOLOGY

Magic is feared in Tethys. By and large, the people of this land are a superstitious folk who avoid any connection to the occult. Few Tethyns show any aptitude towards magic, and those who do are shunned or otherwise encouraged not to make use of their talents. The only variety of magic that is routinely employed in Tethys is a kind of witchcraft that is referred to as Eogh.

The art of Eogh is often employed by ancient men and women who live as hermits, well removed from the rest of society lest they be lynched or harassed. In most circumstances, these Tethyn witches are left alone, unless their skills as healers, seers, and sages are required. Practitioners call on the spirits of the land for favors, which are paid for, one way or another, by whoever is requesting the service.

The arts of medicine, engineering, science, and agriculture that are routinely used in Tethys are primitive by the standards of Atlantis. The only true technological genius they demonstrate is in their creative and complete use of the animal products from their hunts.



NEW RULES BROOD BIDDING

BY DARRELL HARDY & ROB VAUGHN

Brood bidding is a dynamic character creation process that makes each new Fireborn campaign, or even one-shot adventure, unique. First, the Game Master develops several story hooks or extras, called brood fates, that he wishes to incorporate into his game. He can do this after reviewing the characters as they have developed thus far, or can create them blind. The GM could also run a brood bidding session after the characters are totally completed, but that would limit the players' ability to react to the personal impact their brood role would have on their character concept. We recommend running the brood bid phase after character backgrounds and sires are chosen but before bonus points are spent on skills and bonus ranks are used to purchase edges and fighting style ranks. This allows players to develop their basic character concepts, including their careers and attitudes, before the discovery, windfall, disaster, or surprise of their brood fate enters their characters' lives. Afterwards, they may tailor their characters to reflect the brood fate, or not, as they like, by upgrading and promoting skills, choosing fighting styles, and of course developing their dragon breeds and powers.

The GM should develop around twice as many brood fates as he has players in his campaign, to ensure that everyone has at least some choice that appeals to them. The brood fates should be things he can work into the first adventure (or not) without too much trouble, depending on the players' choices. He should not offer a brood fate that is immediately essential to his adventure storyline, however, as he will be in dire straits if no one chooses it. Applying a passed-over brood fate to an NPC is an option, but not an ideal one.

As the brood bidding begins, the GM should describe each brood fate with as much or as little detail as he wishes. Some GMs like to tempt their players by giving the name of the brood fate, and nothing more; others describe one aspect of the fate, such as which aspect of life it will influence; others prefer to make it a mystery or a riddle, describing a brood fate by assigning anything from a historical figure to a band to a season that reflects aspects of that trait. Regardless of the GM's style of describing the brood fates, each brood fate should receive the same level of description.

Once all of the players have at least a summary understanding of what each brood fate involves, they secretly rank them on a sheet of paper, from their favorite choice to their least favorite. Next to each fate, the player may offer between 0 and 5 karma as a bid for breaking ties; if two players select the same brood fate,

the one who bid the most karma receives it. Karma bid in this way does not "return" . . . the players are actually reducing their characters' total karma pool by the amount listed. Only karma bid on the brood fate a player gains is "spent," however; players who lose a tie do not lose the karma bid.

SOME BROOD FATE IDEAS INCLUDE:

Knowledge of your Draconic Heritage

You begin the campaign awake and aware of your draconic heritage. Perhaps you've had flashbacks since long before magic awakened, or your family or culture could be keepers of knowledge from the mythic age. Maybe you were captured by the government or a secret society and experimented upon until memory of your previous existences was unlocked. Regardless of the source of your As such you can easily become a de facto leader of your brood, someone that the other less aware characters look up to for your knowledge and experience.

In terms of game mechanics, you start the campaign at awakened level 1, even though your hoard, humanity, and heritage ranks are all 0. This means that one of your aspect scores will have a superhuman rank of 1, you will be able to manifest a cost 1 draconic trait and you will have a superhuman aspect score. However, you will have no ranks in powers other than Group Mind. once you align yourself with your brood, you return to a more "eventual" style of advancement, however; you need twice the number of humanity and heritage points to increase your humanity and heritage ranks to 2.

Knowledge of the Mythic Age

While you may not realize that you are yourself a dragon, you're no stranger to the truths underlying our modern reality. You know that the mythic age existed, you know that it was populated by strange creatures and that it was a time of magic, and you can put two and two together to realize that it's coming back in the modern day. As with the Knowledge of Draconic Heritage brood fate, you could have come by this knowledge through inheritance, diligence, or pure accident.

In terms of game mechanics, you are the brood's librarian, lorekeeper, or walking textbook. Any time a new creature is encountered, you're likely to know what kills it; any time you meet a strange new culture, you're likely to know how to get on its good side. You begin the campaign with an elite rank of 3 in Knowledge: Mythic



Age. You also gain the rank 2 independent edge Skill Expertise with the Knowledge: Mythic Age skill and rank 2 in the Network edge; your network is comprised of mortals who are similarly aware of the mythic age and can point you to more “exotic” contacts, like supernatural creatures.

Karmic Item

By hook or by crook, you begin the game with a karmic item . . . and not just *any* karmic item, but one that was part of your hoard during the mythic age.

In terms of game mechanics, the item is a rank 2 karmic item from your draconic hoard, meaning that (so long as you don’t drain it completely of its karma), your scion will be able to reach awakened rank 2 before he needs to start looking for a hoard item.

Enchanted Item

You begin the game with an enchanted item of a variable hoard cost (the GM could design several brood fates of different “values” or “styles” each with its own enchanted item). While it’s bound to be useful, odds are good that you’re not the only one who knows about the item . . . and they’re bound to come looking for it.

Totem creature

Somewhere in your previous existence, or perhaps even in the modern one, you became tied to the totemic spirit of a mundane creature. You relate to creatures of that type and look to images of that creature for guidance.

In terms of game mechanics, you begin the campaign with abilities identical to rank 1 in the Rapport power toward creatures of the same family as your totem. You may improve this power separately from the normal Rapport power during normal advancement. Additionally, the GM can offer you guidance at his discretion using animals of your totem’s species or images of such animals; for instance, someone with the raven totem might be warned away from an ambush by a croaking raven above a building he’s about to enter, or might be led toward a wounded brood-mate by a hovering raven.

Avatar of . . .

You are the living embodiment of an ideal, an aspect of nature, or even a long-forgotten god. This truth emerges slowly throughout your life, both in your actions and your thoughts.

In terms of game mechanics, the GM may allow you to re-roll one test per day per awakened rank. The test must be something completely in-tune with the ideal that you are the avatar of. If you are an avatar of Fire, for instance, it would be any Fire test. If you are an avatar of Athena, it might be a test involving knowledge or defense. If you are an avatar of truth, it might be a test to determine if someone is lying to you.

Of course, as a pseudo-deific being, you are bound to have other roles. Your organs, for instance, would fetch

an extravagant price as spell components on the mystic black market.

Ex-Government agent

You were a government agent with connections to the kind of information most folks think are conspiracy theories. Perhaps you were framed and betrayed by someone within your organization and had to leave; or you could’ve disobeyed an order you found repugnant; maybe you’re the only survivor of your group and haven’t yet checked back in with the powers that be for fear you’ll be “removed from the picture” to keep everything quiet.

In terms of game mechanics, you begin the game with up 9 street cost worth of weapons. You also have 5 ranks in Knowledge: Secret Government Initiatives (effectively rank 2 regarding governments other than your own). The downside to all this intel and hardware? You go by an assumed name, have fake I.D.s, and if you’re ever apprehended by authorities who manage to show your picture to the wrong people, you and everyone you associate with are likely to be quiet, efficiently, and irresistibly erased from existence.

BROOD BIDDING IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

When coming up with brood fates, consider your campaign’s archetype and themes, and make the fates match the campaign. If your campaign is about a top-secret team of university field researchers, your fates may tie into the university, academia, scholarship, funding, or the other personnel at the school. The fate “Old friends with the university president” might not be worth much in a club-hopping socialite campaign, but it’s very attractive to a university researcher who keeps getting into trouble.

Some fates are destined, and simply haven’t happened yet. You might want to adjust “You have a cool sword as a hoard item” to “You will someday soon have a cool sword.” Shifting fates to the future means they influence character creation less, and that you’ll have to somehow work them into the adventure, but they provide a point of anticipation for the players who win them. Instead just writing “I have a cool sword” on his character sheet, the player is now curious: is the sword hiding at the bottom of this encounter? Is it magical? Will it trigger flashbacks?

You can also use future fates for foreshadowing: “You will discover a past life—and an old enemy you thought was your friend.” Or perhaps, “You will suffer a terrible loss that leads to enlightenment and joy.” Keeping them vague leads again to player anticipation. They know something of what’s coming, but not the details, and that keeps them interested.



NEW RULES

LOST LEGACIES OF THE ELEMENT OF AIR

BY THOMAS KLEIN

SCION OF THE NORTH

You can breathe a cone of cold.

Prerequisites: Coldspawn

Aspect: Air

EFFECT

You may spend karma to breathe forth a cone of chilling cold, 60 ft. long and 15 ft. wide at its end point. Anything in its path suffers 5 cold damage and –1 fading physical and mental penalty. In addition to damage and the fading penalty, the breath may destroy mundane plants, weaken objects' tensile strength, freeze water, and cause other environmental effects at the GM's discretion. Karma may be spent to cause the following effects, as decided by the dragon:

Karma	Effect
1	Inflict an additional 5 cold damage
1	Extend or shrink the length of the cone by 30 ft. (to a minimum of 10 ft.)
1	Widen or shrink the diameter of the cone by 5 ft. (to a minimum of 5 ft.)
1	Inflict an additional –1 fading physical penalty and a –1 fading mental penalty

Targets may resist with Water (Stamina) tests. Each success lowers the damage by 5 *or* the fading penalties by 1.

WIND WYRM

Your breath is equivalent to that of gale-force winds.

Prerequisites: Heir of the Storm

Aspect: Air

EFFECT

You may spend karma to breathe a cone of powerful wind 60 ft. long and 15 ft. wide at its end point. Creatures within the cone are subject to a Toss attack and are subjected to a Toss attack with an effective number of presses following it equal to the Storm Wyrms' Air score. Tossed creatures take damage as per falling or, if striking an unyielding surface, as per falling rapid-

ly; even those who are not tossed suffer a –1 fading physical and mental penalty. Karma may be spent to cause the following effects, as decided by the dragon:

Karma	Effect
1	Extend or shrink the length of the cone by 30 ft. (to a minimum of 10 ft.)
1	Widen or shrink the diameter of the cone by 5 ft. (to a minimum of 5 ft.)
1	Inflict an additional –1 fading physical penalty and a –1 fading mental penalty
1	Add an additional effective press after the Toss attack.

Targets may resist the breath with Water (Athletics) tests. Each Water (Athletics) success cancels either an effective press or reduces the fading physical and mental penalties by 1.

ILLUSIONIST

You show what is not there. You are an artist and the world is your canvas. You can spin images that can fool about but the most observant.

Prerequisites: Shadow Spinner

Aspect: Air

EFFECT

At will: You may create an effect identical to the Catcher's Creation spell on yourself only. The Senses test TH to notice something amiss about your illusion is equal to 5 + your awakened level.

Spending karma: You gain the mental action Weave Illusion. Every illusion you create has a duration of concentration unless you pay karma to extend it. You can create illusions to cover yourself, others, or an area within a Trivial distance from you. These illusions follow the same rules as the Catcher's Creation spell, except that the illusion may be of creatures in addition to objects. The Senses test TH to notice something amiss about your stationary illusions (illusions of objects) is 5 + your awakened level. The Senses test TH to notice something amiss about your mobile illusions (including illusions that alter your appearance to make you appear to be another person or creature) is 1 + your





NEW RULES: LOST LEGACIES OF AIR

awakened level. Karma expenditure is as follows for use of this legacy:

Karma	Effect
1	Cover 1 size category worth of creatures or objects with an illusion of your choice. For each additional size category worth of creatures or objects you cover, the cost of this effect increases by 1.
1	Increase the Senses TH to notice something amiss about your illusion.
1	Cause the glamour to fool even those viewing the ephemeral, so long as their Ka score is no higher than 1. The requisite Ka score to automatically see through the glamour can be increased by 1; for each increase of 1 in the requisite Ka score, the cost of this effect doubles. Such creatures still have a chance to perceive that something is miss using a Senses test, just as a normal viewer would.
1	Extend the range at which you can maintain the illusion by one Karmic range increment. For each rank you increase your control range by, the cost of this effect doubles.
1	Extend an illusion's duration (either a static illusion or one programmed to run a certain scene) by 10 minutes beyond your concentration.



LOCK, STOCK, AND THREE SMOKING SOULS

BY MIKE MONTESA

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Ages ago, a brood of dragons failed to accomplish a task set to them by the fae. Duped by another fae, they unwittingly gave up a great treasure, the Soul Box. The members of the brood fell to petty infighting, dishonoring themselves, and eventually coming to blows. Each time they have re-incarnated, they come together. But as they re-connect with their previous lives, they remember their ages-old failure (and falling out), begin arguing, and again fail to complete their original task. Sometimes they even destroy each other.

The Soul Box has changed hands many times over the eons. The fae within the box can grant the person who possesses the Soul Box great power to influence other mortals, for good or ill, by making him or her a sort of nexus point for karma. The current owner is Damian Locke, a powerful member of the Gehenna Consortium. He keeps the box in his townhouse in Richmond upon Thames.

Now the great wheel has come around again, and the scions are reborn in the modern age. Once again, the brood comes together, to share their dreams and remember, and maybe this time, finish the job they started so long ago!

Lock, Stock, and Three Smoking Souls is an adventure for six starting scions, and can be played at conventions or to kick off a Fireborn campaign (see “Raw Recruits”, pg 19 of the *Fireborn Gamemaster’s Guide*).

The tone is meant to be somewhat tongue in cheek, but the adventure can easily be played as serious as you want it to be.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Scene 1: A Copy of A Copy—In which the scions discover they are sharing the same dream, and that they really need a group hug.

Scene 2: Not my Fault!—In which the scions experience a flashback, remember past failures, and make lousy excuses.

Scene 3: A Bird with a Beef—In which a snotty fae messenger tells the scions where to stick it.

Scene 4: Petty Crimes, Petty Criminals—In which the scions rob a house, remember uncomfortable truths, and discover the differences between guard dog breeds.

Scene 5: Who Let The Dogs Out?—In which the scions discover the difference between guard dogs and skinhead werewolves.

Scene 6: Compound Interest—In which the scions make delivery, tangle with the Brothers of Cernunnos, and discover that when you borrow from the karmic loan shark, you never really get out from under.

INTRODUCTION

This adventure assumes starting characters who are just beginning to “wake up” to their memories of their previous lives as dragons. Each is tormented by a vivid and disturbing dream whenever they fall asleep. The scions don’t know this yet, but they are all having the same dream, and furthermore, their dreams are “in synch,” seeming to always play in a continuous loop that picks up in different spots in the “tape” depending on when they sleep. This means that if two of the scions crash at midnight on Tuesday evening, they both enter the dream at the same spot in the story.

This dream is bad enough for these particular scions that they suffer from insomnia. So although they are exhausted and walk around in a fugue, they can’t keep their eyes closed for more than 30 minutes before the nightmare comes again, and they wake up. The most common images they can remember from the nightmare is found in Player Handout #0A. Give one copy to all but one player; the final player receives Player Handout #0B. Tell them to read it and keep it secret, then give it back to you.

The trick here is that one of the PCs, chosen by you after characters have been selected and given Player Handout #0B, is actually a ringer, a Brother of Cernunnos who happens to also be a seer (has some ability to sense and latch onto the group mind communications of others). He or she accompanies the other PCs and acts for all intents and purposes like a normal scion, but betrays them in the end.

SCENE 1: A COPY OF A COPY

Read or paraphrase the following aloud.

It started two months ago. Two months? Maybe. You’re not sure. Looking at the calendar just reminds



you how long it's been since you had a good night's sleep. You tried everything—exercise, herbal remedies, sleeping pills, maybe even narcotics, but that just seemed to make things worse, made the dreams more real.

It wasn't so bad at first; just weird dreams of ancient cities filled with strange people. Then it all turned. Every time you closed your eyes the nightmares came. No, the NIGHTMARE came, the same one again and again and again and . . .

Yeah, you tried everything. Almost. The community center you pass every night on the way home offers group counseling on Tuesday nights. Group therapy? Spill your guts in front of a bunch of strung out strangers (like yourself)? Well, it is free, after all. And who knows, it might work. Nothing else has.

But there is something else compelling you to go. A feeling that if you do this you just might find a solution to your problem. There is also a strong sense, almost a memory, that you have done this all before . . .

This scene is intended to give the players an opportunity to introduce their scions, do some role-playing and character building, and then provide the impetus for further events with a flashback that kicks off Scene 2.

The scene opens with the scions at the community center for their group therapy session. You can start with everyone already in the room, or have them waiting around in the lobby. The room to be used for counseling is usually used for arts and crafts for the elderly, and the place is stocked with balls of yarn, wood glue, colored paper, pinecones, ribbon, and boxes full of odds and ends. Oh, and glitter. The whole place smells a bit like mothballs.

The therapy session is led by James Hoggins, a local med-school intern. James wants to become a psychiatrist, and doing this kind of social work is part of his program. He only does it because he has to, and treats his "patients" like slow-witted little children. Although he really doesn't care about the people who come to his sessions, he puts up a good front. The giveaway is that he tends not to really listen to what anyone is saying, and just goes through the session checking off items he's supposed to cover on his list:

1. Get the subjects to introduce themselves. (James does this every time, even if everyone in the group is a repeat visitor.)
2. Get the subjects to describe their problem.
3. "Crying time" Get the subjects to cry and release their tension.
4. Feedback.
5. Group hug. (He's supposed to always finish the session on a positive note with a group hug.)

The introductions proceed without incident. Play James any way you like but try to show what a fake he is. There should be a sense of irony in the fact that the scions are quite serious about their problem, but James doesn't care.

When the first scion describes his problem, the oth-

ers quickly realize they've all had the same dream! Let the players talk about this all they want (in character). They may retell parts of it for each other. Some things might be remembered inaccurately (don't correct them) James "mmms" and "ahs" and scribbles on his notepad.

When they seem to be reaching some sort of crescendo, James steps in again. "All right, all right, everyone calm down," he says, seeming almost oblivious (or at least dismissive) of any of the scions insisting they've had the same dream. "Crying time, people. Crying time. Pair off. Pair off!" he says looking at his watch. "Give your partner a hug and just let those feelings go. It's okay to cry." Whether anyone actually cries or not doesn't matter (nor does James care). But as each scion embraces the other, each somehow knows they have met before.

James calls a halt to "crying time" and everyone sits down again. The scions look at each other and can feel the connection. It's like an electric charge, and it's building up.

James gives feedback on each person individually. This is usually in the form of "You need to embrace your own pain," or "There's a great new medication you should try. The side-effects are minimal," or "I think this has to do with your childhood. When's the last time you had a heart-to-heart with your father?" Feel free to make his comments as absurd or jargon-filled as you like.

Finally, with a glance at the clock, James announces the close of the session. "OK people, good work today. We've unloaded a lot together, so let's say goodbye with a group hug. Group hug, people. Come on." James motions for everyone to come together. As they do, the scions feel something building, something very powerful. The moment they all come together in physical contact they experience a flashback. At this point Scene 2 begins.

SCENE 2: NOT MY FAULT!

All of the scions in the brood coming together physically after such an intense outpouring of psychic energy provides a touchstone for a major flashback. It starts with the nightmare they know so well. Read or paraphrase the following aloud.

You throw up your hands to ward off the flames, but when you look again you are standing next to a river running through a forest. The colors are vivid but suffused. Two impossibly beautiful beings, faeries, in glowing white robes stand before them, one is male, one is female, but it is difficult to tell which is which. One holds a beautifully carved wooden box. A golden glow shines from within.

"We entrust the River Daughters, the emissaries from Avalon, to you," says the being, and gives the box to one of you.



The other fae continues. "They may travel only by moonlight, so begin your journey promptly at dusk and only with every member of your brood present. As the Daughters are bound to each other, so are you bound to your broodmates, and only those with such ties may bear the Daughters hence. Each night, when the moon is at its apex, allow them to partake of the waters of their home," he (she?) says holding up a flask of crystal clear water. A few sprites pick it up out of his (her?) hands and give it to one of you.

Now the first fae speaks again. "On the second night of your journey, allow them to refresh themselves in the waters of Neamsathan." You nod, quickly trying to remember where the lake, whose name means Mirror of Heaven, is located.

"You must bear the Daughters all the way to your destination and deliver them with your own hands. We know that they are safe in your care. Now, go with our blessing."

The scene then shifts through several events. Throughout the scenes, it is impossible for the scions to figure out which of them is which . . . in these dreamlike memories, they can't tell who is the active one and who is the "failure." Let them respond, play it out, come up with excuses, and hopefully laugh a bit about it. The ringer will pick up the same flashback as one of the others, but will only get vague impressions.

One of you strides up a mountainside, anger and impatience threatening to overwhelm you. It is long past time for your broodmate to have met you and the rest and begun your journey with the Soul Box. Eventually you reach the cave in which your broodmate makes his home. Something is amiss, however, as a horrendous snarl thunders out of the cave, buffeting your wings and almost knocking you out of the air! Your broodmate has delayed the mission, but from the sounds of it he had no choice in the matter. Summoning the might of magic and readying your weapons, you streak into the cave to save your kin.

Let two of the PCs choose to be the "participants" in this flashback. They should elucidate for the rest of the table what they think occurred, perhaps describing the ferocious battle with the beast that had taken one of them captive or the draining ritual to close the rift that was accidentally opened into another world.

Shift.

It is time to give the Daughters of the River the waters of their home. He who has been entrusted with the Soul Box looks up from building the campfire to find he who was entrusted with the crystal flask bearing their sacred waters. He starts up in shock as he realizes that his broodmate is not yet back from hunting . . . but he left hours ago! Tradition dictates that dragons passing through this land remain in their human forms out of respect for the nature gods . . . could he have been attacked or harmed while in that more vulnerable form?

He who was entrusted with the Soul Box grasps his healing herbs and a torch and ventures out into the savage woods. In a few minutes he has picked up his broodmate's scent and is on the trail. A few minutes after that he encounters the sight that he dreaded: his broodmate, lying face down on the ground, the soft pink flesh of his arm covered in blood.

Shift.

Two figures crouch above a dried-up pond, little more than a puddle, with something fallen in the middle. You circle above them in the darkness. Then you, the bodiless dream observer, descend, until you realize that the figures are dragons, immense reptilian creatures . . . and that means that the dried-up pond is actually a lake. Lying in the middle of the once pristine body of water is a corpse of some horrific winged beast, a vile creature of darkness with blood like tar. Blood that even now spills into the crystalline water, polluting it forever. As soon as you realize this, two of you also realize that these behemoth creatures are you, that you're all dragons, or were in a previous life. As the realization sets in, you both shake your reptilian heads in dismay.

After all players have experienced one of the flashbacks, it shifts a final time.

You stand before a large stone menhir near a river. It looks like mission accomplished. Then from the river, a beautiful fae emerges and says, "I am the Queen of the River. Present my Daughters unto me and fulfill your oath." You all look at each other, and realize that each of you is quite distinctly empty-handed. One of you sheepishly asks the River Queen if she has any sons. The majestic faerie allows a puzzled look to cross her face and says, "No. Why?"

The flashback ends.

SCENE 3: A BIRD WITH A BEEF

The flashback ends. The scions all stagger back, falling into or over their chairs. James Hoggins isn't quite sure what just happened, but it was pretty weird. He doesn't have much more to say except "Goodnight," and he leaves.

The scions can stay there and try to put it all together, or go somewhere else, a pub perhaps, to sort things out. Or maybe they want to go home and think things over. Let the players talk, in character, about what they think it all means. If they start blaming each other for what happened, that fits very nicely in with upcoming events!

Whatever they do, before they split up again, Eolande pays them a visit. Eolande is a fae messenger, one of the



Noble Sidhe. Eolande doesn't look all that noble however, dressed as she is like a cross between a goth and a punk rocker. If the scions decide to just go home after the meeting, she's in the lobby waiting for them. If they decide to head for a pub, she approaches them there (and they may catch a glimpse of her following them to their chosen watering hole).

Eolande is generally pretty snotty and obnoxious. She's quite beautiful underneath her makeup, but has a sharp, piercing, nasally voice, an affectation she picked up to annoy other more regal fae. She's even more uppity with the scions because she's done this many times before – met the reborn scions to fill them in on what they are supposed to do – and for her, the novelty wore off a long time ago.

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when they meet her.

The woman in front of you looks like she escaped from a Siouxsie and the Banshees fan club meeting—spiky black hair, dark makeup around her eyes, black bolero jacket, big lacy purple skirt, and clunky leather boots laced up to her knees. But in her eyes you see something timeless, and you instantly feel that she is far more than what she seems. She's even attractive, in an ethereal sort of way. Then she starts talking and you wish she hadn't.

"It's about time you lot sorted yourselves out!" she says. "Enjoy your group hug? I've been waiting for a long time!" (about 50 years in some cases she says, if asked, though she doesn't look a day over 19)

"Right, so are you ready?"

The PCs will probably respond: "Ready for what?"

To finish what you started you nob! For someone who's had SOOOO many bloody chances to get it right and bugged it up SOOOOO many bloody times, you'd think you'd feckin' remember!?"

Again, time to respond.

"Remember what? Remember what happened last time you sods tried to get this cosmic cock-up sorted out, that's what. Lemme spell it out for you. You all got killed. Well, not exactly. You did die though. And it was 'cause o' each other. Wasn't the first time, either. Last time 'round, you and you (she points at two of the PCs) were crooks, and you got all upset and started shooting. Any of you geezers got weapons on you? I hope not. Leastways don't go at it until I leave."

By this time the PCs are likely to want to interrupt, barrage her with questions, and so on. Use the following as talking points to respond to the PCs' questions.

PCs: I don't get it.

Eolande: Don't just look at me like you were born yesterday, because you weren't, and neither was I for

that matter. Right, now I've got an appointment and the sooner I get this over with the sooner I can leave you to your own fates.

PCs: What do we need to do?

Eolande: If it isn't plain as the nose on your face, you need to get the Soul Box back and deliver it, to the right people this time! Not to Bloody Baron High Unseelie Bastard, and no that isn't his real name.

PCs: Who's the Baron you're talking about?

Eolande: The bloke that ONE of you sells out to, every damn time!!! And know, I don't know who the ringer is. I bet even you saps don't know, till you turn on the others.

PCs: What's the Soul Box?

Eolande: Bah. If you can't remember I'm not goin' into it. Just get it and give it, got it?

PCs: Why should we get it for you?

Eolande: You gotta finish what you started. It's karma. You accepted a geas from the Arcadian Court but you cocked up. So, you have to keep going round and round 'til you finish it.

PCs: What the feck are you talking about!?!?!? This is nuts.

Eolande: <Blank stare; she's dealt with newly awakened mythic agers too often to have the patience for 'the big talk' anymore. She'll just let them cope with the absurd impossibility of it all on their own time>

PCs: Where's the Soul Box?

Eolande: The Soul Box is in the possession of a man named Damian Locke. Locke is mortal, rich, and some kind of occultist. He's hooked up with some people who have a lot of juice, supernatural juice, and he's headed for the top in his organization, the Gehenna Something-or-other. Those tits-up secret societies never last long enough to remember. Anyways, he's got it and you need to get it. Lives in a big feck-off town house in Richmond upon Thames. Here's the address. Very upscale.

PCs: What do we do once we get it?

Eolande: "Get the Soul Box and drop it into the Thames from the middle of the Tower Bridge when the moon is at its apogee. That means its highest point, you wanker. That's it. Then your karma is yours again. Hell, mine too, because once you do this, I'll never have to wait around to give you this message again!

PCs: We're not much for breaking and entering. Isn't there something else we can try?

Eolande: He's sure not gonna sell it or trade it! No, there's no other way to break the cycle. And you can't just say 'Sorry, I'd like to cancel the geas I accepted.' That's what a geas means. It's Irish for 'you're



screwed.' I don't care, but it's your karma that will be bugged up til the day you die. Right, here's Locke's address. Get to it!

Eolande is in no mood to answer any other questions about their past lives, their origins, details on Locke, or anything else. If pressed, she says, "It'll all come back to you eventually." With that she leaves. If the scions try to follow her she uses her alternate form power to lose herself in the crowd.

SCENE 4:

PETTY CRIMES AND PETTY CRIMINALS

Damian Locke, CEO of Locke International Trust, has a large house in the upscale Richmond upon Thames. Locke keeps the Soul Box in his safe in the room he uses as his office. However, despite being an accomplished sorcerer, he's never been able to remember things like computer passwords or combinations, and has the bad habit of writing them down. He keeps a little notebook in his desk (which is far easier to break into than the safe), with the combination for the safe written in it (among other things, like the password for an internet porn site—something to do with clowns and cross dressing—his Amazon.uk account, and a few other fairly innocuous site passwords). When the scions attempt to get into his house, Locke is not home. Locke doesn't appear in this adventure.

The house is located in a maze of quiet cobblestone streets, some too narrow to drive a car through. Locke's house, however, is right on the road, although it does have a garage entrance. Pulling a B&E job in this neighborhood is tricky, given the likelihood that one of the neighbors may spot them and call the police. The least exposed way in would be over the wall that runs along side the house down a narrow lane off the main road.

The house does have electronic security, though it is no more severe than any of the other houses in the area whose owners have nothing to protect (nothing supernatural anyway). The real protection is in the form of three magically enhanced dogs (see Appendix) that have the run of the house and the grounds outside.

Getting into Locke's house isn't easy, but it isn't anything a skilled burglar can't handle. Of course, the scions may be neither skilled nor burglars. There is no one in the house. The doors have high-tech keypad locks on them, and the windows all have sensors. There are motion detectors covering each room and outside area (the driveway and garden). Everything is integrated and setting off an alarm causes a siren to blare and the house lights to flash. The various challenges the PCs will face, as well as the results of the PCs' success or failure in the

face of each challenge, are listed below. You may present and describe them however you choose.

The house itself is very stylish, and looks like something from the pages of Architectural Digest. It is also a source of Taint, given that Locke has cast more than a few spells here (Taint Rating 1). If anyone goes down into the basement they find the room Locke uses, complete with a pentagram drawn in inlaid gold on the marble floor.

The scions will not encounter the dogs immediately, but they may see signs of them (a dog dish in the kitchen or a doggie toy, very well chewed, on the floor).

While going through the house, dealing with the security systems, the dogs, or just picking things up (and perhaps pocketing the silver, which could be a good idea), the scions experience a few more flashbacks. Space these flashbacks out a bit (they can happen anytime after meeting Eolande, but should all have taken place before the scions recover the Soul Box from Locke's safe). One scion triggers the flashback, but all experience it, so all the players should be party to the flashback narration. By the time the PCs are done with the scene, they should have experienced flashbacks #4A–#4C.

LOCKE'S SECURITY

Alarm System (Bypassing): The alarm system can be bypassed with an Earth (Senses) 6 test to notice a second-story window that has been left cracked partially open; an Air (Knowledge: Street) or Air (Tech: Electronics) 2 test will reveal that an open window is already an open circuit, so opening it wider to sneak in wouldn't activate the alarm. A Fire [Athletics] 3 test is required to climb up to it.

Alarm System (Deactivating): Only the alarm on the front or back door can be deactivated externally. This requires a Tech (Electronics) 4 test. If it fails (or if the PCs resort to just smashing the box, ripping or cutting out the wires and circuit boards, etc., the silent alarm draws a security response within 15 minutes.

Doors and Windows: It requires a Tech (Mechanics) 3 test to pick the locks on the front or back door. Otherwise the doorknob and lock and be broken off by battering it, or a window can be smashed in. Unless the sound from either activity is muffled, they draw a manservant in his nightshirt to investigate.

MANSERVANT

Stats: Natural being; APL 0; Init 5; Aspects Fire 1, Water 3, Air 4, Earth 2; Health 2m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+; Size/Reach 0 / 2 ft.; Armor 0; Karma 6; Stride 20 ft. (Moderate)

Weapons: Priceless vase 2/L, range 10ft.

Skills: Craft: Housekeeping 4, Interaction 4, Knowledge: Art 3, Knowledge: High Society 4, Quickness 3, Stealth 2, Trickery 4.

Edges: Circumspect 3, Stealthy 2, Survivor 1

Traits: Human



The manservant is quite good at his job, but also tends to be quite nosy. He has learned to remain unseen and unheard unless asked for, and gets his kicks peeping in at Locke's secret rituals and seeing or hearing things he's not supposed to. In this case, he hears the PCs entering and thinks that it might be Locke returning with some exotic (and gossip-worthy) new friend. Unfortunately for him, it is far from it.

In this case, he eases forward down the hall toward the PCs using his Stealth skill; if he spots them without being spotted, he slinks back to his room and calls the security agency. If he is spotted, he utters a shrill, feminine scream and runs. There is no one else in the household to hear him, but if he gets to a phone, the PCs will rapidly run out of time. If he is not caught within 3 turns he bars himself in, of all places, Locke's study (A total of 10 successes over successive rounds needed at a Fire [Athletics] test to break the door down or shove the bookcase he knocked in front of it out of the way). After being in the room for 2 turns, the manservant will have called Locke's security team. His terrified babbling, along with the motion sensors tripped by entering the study, give the agents cause to hurry, arriving in 5 minutes.

Motion Sensors: The PCs can wander the house with impunity until they find Locke's study on the third floor. When they enter that room, an Earth (Senses) 4 test allows the PCs to spot the telltale red L.E.D. lights to either side of the door. Any PC entering the room must accompany each single action (moving, opening the desk drawer, opening the safe, etc.) with an Air (Stealth) test opposed by the motion sensor's Earth (Senses) test (they roll 3 dice for this purpose). Like the door alarm system, deactivating the sensors requires a Tech (Electronics) 4 test. Failing the test or destroying the motion sensor by smashing it, ripping out the wires, etc., brings the security response in 10 minutes.

LOCKE'S STUDY

This room is filled with a combination of elegant decore and gaudy occult paraphernalia. The most noticeable furniture are a green leather sofa with ashtrays built into the armrests, an elephantine oak desk, and behind that a curving bookshelf filled with all manner of legal and arcane texts.

Finding the safe hidden in the bookshelf here is easy, requiring an Air (Senses) 1 test. Those who think to search the desk find the notebook with the safe combination, so long as they make an Air (Senses) 3 test. If the scions don't turn up the safe combination after searching the room (or if they don't bother searching), getting the safe open is going to be very difficult without a lot of effort and a lot of noise. In any case, once the safe is open, the scions behold the Soul Box: an elegantly wrought container that seems both solid and ethereal at the same time, comprised of many overlapping and intertwined strings of silvery metal that inexplicably transform into some kind of ancient, smoothly carved wood, and back to metal. A light emanates from the

box's center, despite the fact that it seems completely closed in.

GETTING OUT

If the PCs manage to get the study without setting off any alarms, having the security group called on them, or having to break open the safe, they only have to deal with the dogs. If they fail at any of the above, they will run into the security agents as soon as the dogs have been dealt with or escaped from.

SCENE 5: WHO LET THE DOGS OUT?

Three guard dogs (Thunder, Lightning, and Chips) have the run of the house and grounds. They have all been magically enhanced by Locke. Thunder and Lightning are bull mastiffs, and Chips is a corgi (though no less fierce). When they attack, they tend to attack the same target together, using pack tactics.

The three guard dogs shouldn't appear until after the scions have the Soul Box, but it's up to the GM when exactly to bring them in. How the scions deal with these foul tempered and evil looking beasts is up to them. While the scions are in the middle of a finger-pointing argument (perhaps after witnessing the last of the flashbacks or while acting cocky about having gotten the soul box), would be a perfect time for the dogs to show up.

THUNDER, LIGHTNING, AND CHIPS

Stats: Enhanced animal; APL 2; Init 6; Aspects Fire 5(1), Water 3, Air 3(3), Earth 5; Health 5m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+; Size/Reach -1 / 1 ft.; Armor 2; Karma 9; Stride 30 ft. (Moderate)

Weapons: Bite: 9M

Skills: Athletics 4, Interaction 4, Melee 4, Quickness 4, Senses 4, Stamina 4

Edges: Aggressive 1 (Melee), Defender 2, Skill Specialty (senses: tracking)

Powers: Heightened Senses (hearing 1, scent 4), Group Mind, Swift (Stride 2)

The dogs should stalk out of the darkness with perfect confidence, snarling and drool dripping, and pause long enough for the PCs to crap themselves, then leap in for the kill.

RENT-A-COPS

Stats: Natural being; APL 1/2; Init 7; Aspects Fire 3, Water 2, Air 2, Earth 3; Health 3m; <2 / 2+ / 4+ / 8+ / 12+ / 14+ / 16+ / 18+; Size/Reach 0 / 2 ft. or 1 / 5 ft.; Armor 10 (Kevlar Vest 10/4/3); Karma 3; Stride 20 ft. (Moderate)



Weapons: Fist (2): 3/L, Kick (2): 4/M, Baton 5/M, H&K USP Tactical Pistol: 26 ~ range 100 ft. ~ reload 2/4; Sequences: Entrapping Defense, Street Fighting

Skills: Athletics 3, Interaction 4, Knowledge: Street 2, Knowledge: London 3, Melee 4, Quickness 1, Ranged 1, Senses 4, Stealth 3, Travel 2

Edges: Brutal

Traits: Human

Likewise, congratulating themselves over evading or outfighting the dogs would be an excellent time for the security guards to train their flashlights on the PCs and yell "Freeze!" Luckily for the PCs the rent-a-cops are terrible shots (being too green to think to aim first) and have no stamina whatsoever, meaning they're likely to take weariness dice before they get 100 yards after the characters. In fact, kind GMs may wish to make them take a weariness test before they even encounter the PCs in the first place.

Development: If the scions set off any alarms on their way into the house, they still have time to try to grab the Soul Box (if they can find the safe and open it). The incoming security guards and police are intended to pressure the scions to move quickly and make their escape. But if the scions want to stick around and actually confront and fight these guys, they can (though the eventual arrival of police and the scions' subsequent arrest should put them off this idea).

If the scions abandon their B&E attempt, they can try again later, although they shouldn't wait too long to have another go at it. They may come up with other schemes to get at the Soul Box, so feel free to develop these ideas if you have the time.

SCENE 5A:

GOOD OL' DAYS

If you feel like you will have extra time, this is a good spot to have the PCs delve into their draconic side and get a chance to kick some butt (instead of vice-versa). You'll need to go into some level of explanation regarding running a dragon, using its abilities such as its various powers and its legacies, explaining flight, and so on.

The scene is simple: the PCs are attacked by a troop of trolls and their trained pyrehawk hunting birds (see next page). Their goal: to claim the Soul Box. There should be one troll + pyrehawk pair per PC. If the PCs resort to flight instead of ground combat, the Trolls have slings that pack the power of siege engines, and they're pretty good at jumping high into the air, too . . .

Though the ringer/Brother of Cernunnos PC technically was not part of these flashbacks, her ability to piggyback onto others' group mind links allows her to insert a draconic character in the flashback, giving the

other PCs a false memory of her participation in the battle. In other words, she gets to be in the fight scene, too.

TROLL

Era: Mythic

Race: Supernatural being

APL: 5

Aspects: Fire 6(5), Water 5(5), Air 1, Earth 3

Initiative: 7

Health: 7m; <8 / 8+ / 16+ / 24+ / 32+ / 40+ / 48+ / 56+

Size/Reach: 2 / 10 ft.

Armor: 8

Karma: 15

Stride: 30 ft. (Slow)

Weapons:

—Fist 6/L

—Warhammer 15/H

—Boulder Slinger 12 ~1,000 ft. – reload 2

Sequences: Overkill

Agg—F12(5)/W3(5)/A0/E0—Power + Power + Power + Power + Weapon Strike: Damage +45 *or* Paralyze

Neut—F6(5)/W5(5)/A1/E3—Dash + Jump +

Warhammer: Additional damage +5, bleed *or* Daze

Def—F0(5)/W11(5)/A1/E3—*Block* sequence

Skills: Melee 6, Athletics 6, Ranged 4, Senses 4, Stamina 4, Will 4, Quickness 3, Trickery 2

Edges: Action Junkie 2, Brutal 3, Follow-Through 3, Freight Train, Resilient 4

Powers: Ferocity 3, Heightened Senses (scent 1), Mythic Leap 5, Skin of Stone 3

Traits: Giant

PYREHAWK

Era: Mythic

Race: Supernatural being

APL: 5

Aspects: Fire 6(6), Water 4, Air 6, Earth 3

Initiative: 12

Health: 3m; <4 / 4+ / 8+ / 12+ / 16+ / 20+ / 24+ / 28+

Size/Reach: 2 / 10 ft.

Armor: 10

Taint: 0

Stride: Fly 60 ft. (Speedy, mnv 4).

Weapons:

—Talons: 8/L

—Beak: 14/M

—Wing Buffet: 10/H

Sequences: Archangel

Agg—F12(6)/W4/A0/E3—Dash [Fly] + Spin + Power + Talon: Dismember extremity

Neut—F6(6)/W4/A6/E3—Dash [Fly] + Talon + Dash [Fly]: Damage +15

Def—F0(6)/W10/A6/E3—*Dodge* sequence

Skills: Athletics 6, Melee 6, Quickness 6, Senses 6, Stamina 3, Stealth 3, Will 2

Edges: Aggressive 1 (Melee), Follow-Through 2

Powers: Child of Fire*, Group Mind 1, Instinct 1, Heightened Senses (sight 4)

Traits: Mindless, tainted, unliving



SCENE 6: COMPOUND INTEREST

Once they have the Soul Box, the only thing left to do is carry out Eolande's instructions: drop the Soul Box into the Thames from the middle of the Tower Bridge when the moon is at its apogee and drop it in. Easy, right?

Read or paraphrase the following aloud.

You head for the Tower Bridge, under a bright full moon. Something about what you are doing feels right, like tension that has built up over so long about to be released.

Once on the bridge, it is a short stroll out to the middle. No one passing by is paying any attention to you as you reach the center of the bridge. The moon is huge in the sky and seems to be watching you. You reach the center of the bridge and stop for a moment, breathing with a sense of relief at the end of more than just the night's activities. But you also feel something more . . . that this isn't just an end, but also a beginning.

Then you realize that one of you isn't sharing that same look at all. As realization dawns <betrayers' name> shrugs, smiles, and shows teeth that look far from human . . . but not quite like a dragon's, either. More like a wolf's. At the same time, you see two blokes in fatigues and cut-off T-shirts step out from the shadows, cricket bats in hand; at the same time, a battered beige van screeches around the corner and barrels along the bridge toward you!

These guys are newbie Brothers of Cernunnos. They found out about the PCs' dreams thanks to the ringer PC, a seer who lives in the flat beneath one of the PCs. They sent the ringer PC on the brood's trail, and he or she tracked them until it looked like a good time to take whatever they found. The Brothers have no particular info about the Soul Box or its uses, but they think it will impress their head honchos if they snag it.

The van attempts to ram the scions standing on the sidewalk; luckily for them, the Brother of Cernunnos in the driver's seat had a few shots of whiskey to build up his courage before going after the scions. He doesn't hit anyone head-on, but each scion must make a Water (Quickness) 2 test or be clipped as it careens, flips, and rolls past them, taking 10 damage. The remains of the van string out along the bridge over several hundred feet, allowing for cinematic use of using various pieces of the wreck as cover, terrain obstacles, weapons, etc. The Tower Bridge is also a drawbridge, and having the bridge start to rise at an inopportune moment, perhaps sending everyone rolling or scrambling for a handhold, is another option.

BROTHERS OF CERNUNNOS (2)

Stats: Supernatural being; APL 3; Init 8; Aspects Fire 5(3), Water 5(1), Air 2, Earth 3; Health 3m; <5 / 5+ / 10+ / 15+ / 20+ / 25+ / 30+ / 35+; Size/Reach 0 / 2 ft. or 1 / 5 ft.; Armor 4; Taint 9; Stride 30 ft. (Speedy) or 40 ft. (Speedy)

Weapons: Fist 3/L, Kick 4/M, Club 5/M; Sequences: Barroom Brawling, Ravager

Skills: Athletics 6, Interaction 1, Knowledge: Street 4, Knowledge: London 2, Knowledge: Occult 1, Melee 5, Quickness 5, Ranged 2, Stamina 6, Stealth 3, Trickery 1, Senses 5, Stealth 5, Travel 2

Edges: Aggressive 1 (melee), Brawler, Daunting 3, Rapid 2

Powers: Alternate Form (size 1 wolf), Ferocity 2, Instinct 3, heightened Senses (hearing 2, scent 3, sight 2), Metabolic Control 3

Legacy: Undying Worm

Traits: Tainted

Possessions: Cricket bats, rusty, beat up beige van (treat as Volkswagen Bus)

THE RINGER

The non-scion PC should join in the fight on the side of the Brothers, using his or her normal stats.

CONCLUSION:

After the goons and the traitor are defeated, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

Time to finish the job! You hold up the Soul Box. It is warm and you can sense the fae inside are happy to be home. With a smile you toss the box over the side of the bridge, and it's done. But something's wrong . . . shouldn't there be a splash?

As the PCs look over, they see the dark shape of a garbage barge emerging from underneath the bridge. They've dropped the Soul Box right on the back edge of the barge, which has already cleared the bridge. The box sits, quite clearly visible, on top of a mound of trash.

The adventure ends here, perhaps with the scions leaping over the side of the bridge, or perhaps with them watching the barge sail away down the Thames and cursing their lungs out. The karma wheel goes 'round and 'round . . .

Player Handout #0A

THE DREAM

“It’s YOUR FAULT,” says a disembodied voice. The surroundings are disorienting, like visual static. There is a sense of being in different times and different places. “YOU LIED!” says the voice again. There are shapes on the ground. Bodies. They have been shot, some of them stabbed, others look burned. Suddenly the blackened corpses sit upright, their eyes burning with fire, and you realize the source of the voice. “YOU CONDEMNED US!” they hiss as one, standing up before you. There is an image of an ornately carved box of pale wood and silvery metal. Suddenly, the savaged corpses surround you. You know they speak the truth. It is your fault. You did lie. You try to run but can’t. The corpses begin to burn, the flames searing your skin. You look into their eyes and you know them; they were your brothers and sisters. “YOU MUST PAY!” As they open their mouths, the burning, blackened flesh cracks and bleeds. Then you are engulfed in a wave of flame.

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Player Handout #0B

THE DREAM

When the strange things began to happen in London, you were terrified . . . but then you slowly became curious. Eager. You started doing things you normally wouldn’t have, getting into fights, having one-night stands. Eventually they found you, if due to nothing else because you were thrashing their gang members. The Brothers of Cernunnos. Fancy name for a simple thing: werewolves. And it turns out you’re one of ‘em.

If that wasn’t enough, some other latent powers (you think you got ‘em from your grandmother, who always claimed to be able to talk to angels) have come up. You can share peoples’ dreams, and you don’t know the bloke in the flat above yours, but his are doozies! And even weirder, he seems to share them with other people . . . you can sense them on the edges of the dream. Your pack leader told you to stake them out. He says he doesn’t know what they are, and they probaly don’t know either, but he gets the feeling they’re important. Your mission: to pretend to be one of them until further orders. Learn what you can about them, and if they end up having or finding some treasure, some important item that the pack can use to make an impression on the elder Brothers, so much the better.

Player Handout #4A

As you wait for one of your companions to get you into the fortress-like house, you stare off into the night sky. The stars look familiar, so familiar you could almost lose yourself in them. The way the trees close around you and reveal only a part of the night sky seems familiar, as well, and then your mind makes the connection: it looks just like a cave. A cave you were in, once . . .

And then you're back in that cave, and so is one of your companions, only he's . . . different. It's dark, and you can't quite make him out as he storms through the cave toward you, but he seems . . . large, and alien. More animal than human. You hear a deep, unearthly roar issue forth from farther back in the cave, a sound that makes your spine tingle with fear . . . and as your companion reaches you, you tense, waiting for whatever is issuing forth that horrible noise to strike.

Except the horrible noise is you. Snoring. Because you overslept. You delayed the departure of the ancient, all-important mission, not because you were captured by a horrible beast or because you were trapped by a magical ward, but because you overslept. You suddenly jump back to the present day, to reality, only to see your companions looking at you with a mixture of shock and disgust. You get the feeling that the embarrassing scene you just beheld was shared by everyone else.

.....

Player Handout #4B

As your groups moves stealthily through the house, your foot catches on the corner of a rug. You feel yourself falling, almost in slow motion, and your arms rocket out to the side to find something, anything, to catch yourself with. They find something solid, hard, and with a handle . . . and the priceless vase you grab follows you to the floor shattering beneath your weight and embedding its ceramic shards in your forearm. The pain and surprise stagger you . . .

And you remember another time, another place. Unused to taking human form, you stroll upon a rocky forest floor. You could have left the flask back at the campsite, but the fae creature entrusted it to you, and in your hands it would be safest. Smiling to yourself at the strange feeling of wind on fragile flesh, of legs that bend the wrong way and propel without wings, you pick up speed and begin to jock, joyfully springing from rock to root to patch of moss. One such leap is aborted, however, as you misjudge the shape of one of your strange new human foot, and it catches on a root. You feel yourself falling and , calmly extend your wings to catch yourself and soar up into the sky.

Err. Except you don't have wings in this form. The realization strikes you at about the same time that your body strikes the ground, and you feel the crystal flask in your hand shatter into dozens of slivers. As the strange red blood begins to flow from your hand and forearm, mixing with the pure waters the fey in their box will even now be thirsting for, you see one of your broodmates striding toward you through the forest. She stops and kneels down to tend to the blood, only to cry out in anger and shock when she sees the shattered crystal in your hand.

Which is pretty much the same sound made by the companion who had knelt to help you up from the carpet; and it's that sound that makes you realize: as ridiculous as your escapades in that previous life must have seemed to your earlier self, they felt even more embarrassing now that everyone in the group knew about them too.


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Player Handout #4C

While looking around the house, see a door at the end of a hallway, stately and imposing. A feeling in your gut tells you that, even if the Soul Box isn't in there, something *very* valuable is. You can feel it, as sure as you've felt anything in your life. You lead the rest of your companions forward, ignoring the other rooms, and warily push open the door . . .

Which opens into a broom closet precariously stacked with boxes, electronics, and antiques. With the release of pressure from the door, the amalgamation of objects comes crashing down upon you, making a good bit of noise and battering your in the process. A combination of disgust and defensiveness rises up in your gut, and you can sense disappointment and surprise in your companions. It's not a new feeling. All of you flash back to a time and place long ago. Upon the shores of the great Lake of the Mirror, you behold the moon in the lake's pristine surface. Then you see something on the lake's edge . . . a large stone door, built into the mountainside to look natural. Perhaps it hides magic, or treasure! Ignoring your companions' cautioning, you sink your claws into the stone, removing it. Peering into the cave revealed within, see nothing but darkness . . . and then the darkness *moves*. A strange beast boils out of the cave toward you, a living darkness with tentacles, wings, and countless eyes, all gazing with an alien hatred. The fight lasts only seconds, though it seems like an eternity. You are quickly being smothered, when your lashing draconic tail buries itself in the dark creature's form and finds something solid, a center, a heart. With a ferocious jerk and a mighty roar, you whip your tail outwards, battering your foe against the stone and feeling it go limp. A cry of triumph escapes your maw as your fling the foe away from you in disgust, heaving it over the trees and out into the valley. You stumble away from the opening and back to where your companions wait at the edge of the lake, that beautiful pristine mirror of light and water . . . which you realize, approaching your broodmates and their withering glare, is where the monster's body landed when you flung it away. The beast's oozing black shape rests almost exactly in the lake's center, it's tar-like blood spilling forth from its burst and battered corpse, spreading with inevitable tendrils through the once-beautiful lake.

As you look up from the mess you made opening the closet door, you realize it's not that dissimilar from the mess you made opening that door into the unknown, so long ago in the mythic age. You shrug, raise your eyebrows, and offer a look of apology that transcends race and time. The sighs of disgust from your companions are likewise timeless.



Secrets of Fire 2

Epoch Timeline:


THE FALL OF EMPIRES

Product Tie-In: Fireborn Gamemaster's Guide

Author: Rob Vaughn

Many great empires rose and fell throughout the Fourth Sun, but when Atlantis deteriorated it pulled nearly all of the civilized world into its death throes. Wherever power wanes, however, newcomers fill the vacuum, and the world of the mythic age was no different. Yet rebuild as they might, the civilizations that grew upon Atlantis's ashes could not avoid a despairing truth: that the fall of that great empire was a harbinger for the end of an entire age.

This timeline provides insights into the events referred to in the Fireborn Gamemaster's Guide as **The Reign of the Undying King** and the **Exile of the Summer Court**. It supplies GMs and players alike with a "big picture" view of this time and place in the mythic age. What happens between the lines, however, and the details of each event, are up to you.



EPOCH TIMELINE: FALL OF EMPIRE

The following years take place in the Fourth Sun of the Mythic Age

- | | | | |
|------|---|------|--|
| 4104 | Great push of the Kurgans splits Elysium into Arcadia and Avalon; Queen Maeve seals off Avalon from the outside world | 4855 | Tahenkhemmen begins construction of the Gold Road, inspiring greater trade with the nations of southern Ofir |
| 4207 | Atlantis begins to colonize Tethys | 4857 | Midob traders begin sabotaging construction of Gold Road to retain their monopoly on trade route |
| 4219 | Tethyns ravage Atlantean colony | 4860 | Accord reached between Midob and Keheb; Midobi given exclusive trading rights over all animal products |
| 4305 | Amazonian colony revolts | 4869 | Several Midobi clans take up piracy as an alternative to the controlled mercantile life |
| 4327 | Atlantean Senate is disbanded, military takes over | 4891 | Kurgans sack Atlantean colony of Trocea on the northeastern shores of the Inner Sea |
| 4472 | Massive conquest effort of the newfound western continent, No Istok, begins | 4900 | Fae of Arcadia begin their Exile to Avalon; Kurgans control nearly all of Erebea |
| 4550 | All religions except Hesirus and Selera outlawed in Atlantean colonies; Keheb revolts | 4908 | Atlantean senate regains control of Atlantis; Atlantis frees its remaining colonies |
| 4551 | First encounter between Atlantean fleets and Shen naval vessels ends in conflict | 4913 | Atlantis's new rulers pay Midobi pirates to act as guards of their merchant ships; Vansir split and head east and north in search of easier prey |
| 4553 | Nebekhet I becomes first king of Keheb | 4915 | The Vansir that ventured north settle in the mountains near Jotunheim, paying homage to the Kurgan/titan mixed-blood descendants living at the foot of the mountains. They dub their new gods "the Ironborn" |
| 4600 | Atlanteans firmly embroiled in war against No Istok, Tethys, Shen | 4919 | Ragged remnants of Vansir reach Xia; after being repelled by the Shen, they create a new aristocracy for themselves among an impressionable clan of the Hebbra |
| 4612 | Atlanteans smash Tethyn feudal society; nearly complete genocide | 4922 | Tahenkhemmen begins extension of Gold Road to Xia |
| 4643 | Splinter groups of Kurgans are absorbed by Erebean sea-raiders to become Vansir | 4928 | Whispers of demon-worship and corruption in No Istok priesthood |
| 4690 | Atlanteans establish priesthood in No Istok, begin "escorting" Istokans to Atlantis for "education" | 4931 | Gold Road begins to suffer attacks from nomadic bandits and exiled criminals, including many Hebbrians |
| 4780 | Summer Court calls for heroes to find it a new home | 4951 | Dragons are formally denounced by Atlantean priests of Hesirus as demons |
| 4814 | Immortalizing properties of khemsek discovered in Keheb | 4969 | Extension of Gold Road abandoned; Shen claims that the west has abandoned its gods, and cuts itself from further trade |
| 4837 | Atlantean campaign to retake Keheb begins; dragons revoke the ancient accord that protects the island of Atlantis | | |
| 4841 | Vansir raiders begin to assault Atlantis's shores; Tethys renew hostilities against Atlantean ships | | |
| 4843 | Kurgans sack Esrulim, Atlantean ally and port-town of southern Erebea | | |



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| <p>5004 Fae of Arcadia begin their Exile to Avalon; War of the Blessed Lands begins among Kurgan tribes who wish to claim ancestral fae territory</p> <p>5060 War of the Blessed Land ends; Phythia and Milesia are founded as part of the resulting treaty</p> <p>5121 The journey of King Oberyceum and Queen Tiana to Avalon begins; Arcadia is no more; A half-fae, half-human wizard that watches over Babylon, unable to watch his beloved city fall into ruin, destroys it in an attempt to trap it in time</p> <p>5209 Tales of tyrannical, murderous, and even insane dragons begin to surface, starting in the west and working their way eastward</p> <p>5224 King Oberyceum and Queen Tiana reach Avalon; Together, they and Queen Maeve work a mighty ritual to take Avalon over into the world of faerie</p> <p>5265 Istokan religion of the gray mirror replaces the worship of Hesirus on Atlantis</p> | <p>5300 The titans of Jotunheim are driven forth from their home in a mad fury, laying waste to everything that they see; the cause of their rage is unknown; the races of man unite to fight them; most records, kept by titan scribes throughout the ages, disappear</p> <p>5332 In the face of roving titan warbands and onslaughts from rogue dragons, Tahenkhemmen rescinds his outlawing of magic. An alliance between the Istokan mage-priests of Atlantis, the Maat and alchemists of Keheb, and the shamans of the Kurgans is formed; their goal is to summon magics that will destroy titan and dragon alike</p> <p>5335 The Ebony Kingdoms plead with the alliance of sorcerers to abandon their efforts; when their entreaties are ignored, they begin infiltrating the kingdoms of the north, causing sabotage and destruction where possible; most remaining records are destroyed</p> <p>? Mythic age ends in a cataclysm of fire and flood; cause is shrouded in the mysteries of time</p> |
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BETRAYER

BY AARON CHUSID & ROB VAUGHN

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The PCs have been gathered by chance, fate, or some benefactor, and have known each other as broodmates for as long as a year. A few weeks ago, however, their dreams took a strange twist. In place of the normal recollections regarding their draconic heritage and previous lives, each PC began experiencing darker dreams . . . nightmares of guilt, suffering, and betrayal. Betrayal of one's closest allies. Several days ago each player received a letter playing upon that fear.

Because each dream is read to each PC individually, the player's initial thought should be that he is the betrayer, and perhaps he may wish to mask that fact from his broodmates. In truth, every member of the brood betrayed a group . . . but that group was never the brood, and the betrayal was always performed on the brood's behalf.

A strange creature with mysterious motives, a resident of the dream city of Babylon, has entered the players' dreams and obscured them. It hopes to turn the brood against one another so that it may live in the dark and distrusting places amidst their brood mind; a fully-formed and well defended brood mind is too clear and open a construct for its purposes.

The true challenge of the adventure, therefore, will not be whether or not the PCs can overcome their foes in battle or outwit each other, but rather whether or not they can trust one another.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Introduction: Each PC is taken aside and a dream described. Unbeknownst to the PCs, each has a relatively similar dream. Then tell each about a letter he or she receives.

Scene 1: The party follows the instructions on the letter and each member finds himself in the special reference reading room of the Bishopgate Reference Library. Lies and truths are bandied about as each explains his purpose. Clues are followed, revealing a book that is a collection of dreamscapes collected by a utopian leader of the worker's movement of 19th century London. The book, of course, triggers a flashback.

Scene 2: In the Flashback, the PCs fight off an assault by strange creatures above a wondrous city of gold and gardens. At the center of the city is a huge statue of a golden serpent twined around a marble column . . . the same statue that was in each PC's dream.

Scene 3: Picking up right where the vision left off, a stranger, giving the name George Long, interrupts their meeting. He states that he knows that one of the group ended up with the mystic stone that topped the statue, and that he will buy it from him . . . lest the brood all fall prey to the poison that he just inflicted on them!

Scene 4: Investigation and flashbacks reveal the PCs' connection to Babylon, the book, and the truth behind the dreams.

Scene 5: Obligatory thug encounter gives the PCs a chance to vent their frustrations.

Scene 6: The party ventures into Babylon via their dreams and face their foe.





INTRODUCTION

Take each player aside and read a variation of the dream below. Switch up the details slightly, setting each sequence in a different historical era (Egyptian, early Medieval, Renaissance, ancient Eastern, pre-colonial South American, etc.). Do not provide any details as to the form the dreamer is in.

The dream started the same every time. You are sitting in a grotto in the (mountains, valley, desert, forest), seated in a circle comprised of the shapes of familiar forms. Your eyes seem to gloss over them, registering only a sense of camaraderie and brotherhood, before your attention is focused instead on the statue in your midst. It is of a serpent of gold wrapped around a column of marble, at its top a stone in the shape of a perfect sphere. Magic radiates from it like light from the sun. All of you appear to be happy, basking in its glow, until a shadow passes overhead blocking out the sun and casting the (columns, trees, rocks, canyon walls, mountainsides) around you into darkness. As the rest of your friends are distracted, you lean forward, letting the darkness envelop you, and before their unseeing eyes steal the sphere, replacing it with a fake that you hid within your garb. When the shadow has passed their gazes all return to the stone, and they smile, as if amused at their own doubt. They return to basking in the stone's glow, but it is noticeably faded. Something troubles each, you can see it in their eyes, as they shift their gazes from one to another. Finally, as if on cue, all of their gazes seem to shift slowly and hatefully toward you . . .

And then you wake, nauseous and retching, your hand clutched around your belly where your dream self had pressed the stone into your very flesh, hiding it so that you

could steal it from your comrades. Why, for whom, when, none of that is clear . . . all that is clear is that you betrayed them.

This dream has plagued you for nearly a week, and the dark betrayal it forebodes has made you hesitant to share it with your broodmates. However, its importance cannot be denied. Despite your best efforts at researching the statue and stone and at dealing with the nausea and headaches that seems to persist as the dreams intensify, you have made headway with neither. You had resolved to broach the topic to your comrades when you receive an unexpected letter. You can't remember opening it, much less receiving it in the post, but nonetheless you find yourself reading it one morning at your desk. When you search for the envelope it came in, you find none. It says:

"I know about your dreams, betrayer" it said, "and I know what they mean, both to you and your brood. To learn more, come to the Bishopgate Reference Library, special archive reading room. Come alone." It is signed "G.L."

The next time the PC attempts to find or read the letter, even if he just takes his eyes off it for a moment or puts it in a pocket for safekeeping, it is gone.

SCENE 1: SUSPICIONS

Some PCs may attempt to share information with their broodmates, or bring them along as backup. Let them play it out however they like. Some will be secretive and reveal nothing regarding their dream or letter, while others will probably compare notes. However it turns out, it gives the brood a chance to test out their sense of trust, their natural hierarchy of leadership, and the like.





Regardless of the means by which they get there or the plans they undertake, the next available time that the special archive reading room is open, later that afternoon, is when they will all arrive (it is not scheduled for open reading at any other time).

The hallway to the room is long and well-lit, so it would be difficult for any of the brood to spy on the others or “skip out” unseen once he realizes that the rest of the brood are there.

Just as you allowed the players to form their own intrigue and dig their own graves regarding sharing information previously, let them interactive for a time when they all arrive in the room. Of particular note is that a large tome is on display in the room’s central table, a 19th century book of paintings and illustrations gathered by an artist named Kristoff Winslett.

The Flashback: At some point during the characters’ interactions, the library’s ventilation system activates and pumps cool air into the reading room. The momentary disturbance causes the leaves of Winslett’s book to flutter, sliding until they reach perhaps the only truly inspiring work within: a golden cityscape lit by rainbows and a setting sun, its streets lined by hedges and its buildings buttressed by gardens and waterways. Grand plazas adorn the painting and a sense of mystery, age, and possibility permeate the place. At the piece’s center is a statue, one that must be hundreds of feet high

given the scale of the piece. It is a marble pillar 50 ft. in diameter and surrounded by a huge golden serpent, twining around and climbing up its length. At the pillar’s top is a sphere that sheds a strange, otherworldly glow. It lights, yet does not light, the city below. And it is into that cityscape, or rather above it, that each of the players finds themselves . . .

SCENE 2: BATTLE OVER BABYLON

Suddenly the walls melt away, and you find yourself soaring above a vast cityscape of gold and green. Directly beneath you is the statue, huge and powerful, the stone shining with glory. A quick glance around you shows your companions are all with you. You are united, and powerful. You will claim this stone for the brood. Then a powerful humming fills the air. The noise come from all around you, and rising up from the city you see shapes of gold and silver and red, shapes of darkness and shapes of light, none defined but all dangerous. A voice in your mind whispers harshly to you, “It is ours. It is the dream stone. You will die and dream no more!” You know, somehow, that the entire city is speaking to you. As one, the dream shapes scream and turn towards you. There is a wave of vertigo, and then they are upon you.



DREAMDEATHS



Aspects: Fire 6(6), Water 2, Air 6(6), Earth 2

Initiative: 12

Health:

1M, <1/2+/4+/6+/8+/10+/12+/14+

Size/Reach: 3/15 ft.

Armor: 0

Taint: 0

Stride: Fly 100 ft. (Speedy, manuv. 5)

Weapon: Dream Tendril 10/M

Sequences: None

Skills: Athletics 6, Melee 6, Quickness 6, Senses 6, Will 6

Edges: Aggressive 1 (Melee), Follow-through 2

Powers: Clarity 5, Envelop 5, Malleable 5, Undeterred (Intruders) 5



Begin combat. Each dragon is attacked by one dreamdeath on the first round, two more on the second, four more on the third, and so on, doubling each time. While easy to destroy, being made of the stuff of thoughts and dreams, these creatures can be quite damaging.

NEW POWER: ENVELOP

An enveloping creature, which usually also has either the Malleable power or Shapeshifter legacy, can extend part of its flesh or being around the creatures it strikes, slowly surrounding them in a film of flesh, ooze, energy, or other sort of substance that it exudes from its own body.

MECHANICS

When you inflict a wound after striking a foe, your target suffers a disadvantage (physical) penalty equal to the rank of the wound you inflicted plus your rank in this power (minor wounds are considered to be rank 0). Unlike most disadvantage penalties, these are not fading. Victims of the power can only remove the penalties by “shaking off” or breaking loose from the stuff that is enveloping them. This can be accomplished as a physical action with a Fire (Athletics) test; for each success, the disadvantage penalty lowers by 1. As with escaping from restraints, the disadvantage penalty applies to all physical tests, even those made to escape from the envelopment!

At rank 1, you may use this power against creatures of your size or smaller. For each additional rank you have in this power, you may use it on creatures one size category larger.

At the GM’s discretion, a variation of this power may cause mental disadvantage and need to be fought with Air (Grit) instead.

BATTLE’S END

The dreamdeaths are likely to overwhelm the dragons, eventually inflicting so many physical disadvantage penalties that they can-

not continue to fly or even move. When this happens, read the following aloud.

As each of you is born to the ground by the writhing lights and shadows that surround you, find your vision blurring. Soon whatever is surrounding you has begun to penetrate your flesh and, more importantly, your mind. The stone atop the huge column in the city begins to fill your mind, to become the center of your universe. You can feel your brood mates’ thoughts through your link, feel their pain, anger, and helplessness, and you know that they feel yours. The huge golden serpent on the column before you begins to unwind from its pillar, then slithers forward amongst you, looming overhead with ominous power. A voice speaks into your minds, and you know that it belongs to the stone atop the pillar. “So, you have done well to find me, but of course you cannot pass a test for which there is no answer. No, only a glimpse into your minds will manage that . . . which among you, I ask, shall be my guardian? Which will take the power that I offer, the light, the golden love, which will accept me as your master, and serve me forever? All are worthy, yet only one may receive the blessing . . . and he must thereafter destroy his friends. It is the only way. Oh, what is this? I smell . . .” and though it is the stone that speaks, the golden serpent above flicks its tongue in and out above one of you, testing the air, “I smell corruption. You shall be mine, and once I have made you mine, you shall bring your friends to me, so that they may be consumed.” As quick as a blink, the huge golden serpent strikes, driving its fangs into one of your skulls, pumping the mystic venom of its master’s light into your mind, remaking you as its creature, as a betrayer, as the one who would destroy the rest. Yet, as the memory fades, and you return to your frail human forms in the modern age, you cannot tell . . . with your minds linked, who among you was the betrayer? Which

received the venom's kiss? Each of you shared the agony of the strike as if it happened to him, and him alone.

SCENE 3: DUST IN THE WIND

You come back to yourself suddenly, realizing someone has spoken. Looking up you see the door is open, and a middle-aged gentleman in a grey suit is standing in it. Seeing your questioning stare, he repeats himself. "I said I'm sorry. Did I interrupt something here?"

The gentleman introduces himself as George Long, an American businessman here for a convention. He is of medium height with dark brown hair and bright green eyes. After some amount of smalltalk, George begins to sound more and more sinister, making references to things about the PCs that he should not know. He might bring up dragons, dreams, or even some of their past adventures. Once the PCs call him on his mysterious knowledge, his eyes will suddenly begin to glow a brilliant green, and he will calmly explain the following:

"The answers you seek are within yourselves, dreamer. I know only as much as a witness of your lives would know. I served the master that claimed one of you as his own, and once he had you, what need had he of me, such a minor servant as I was? You remember being taken, do you not? And of course you remember the betrayal . . . you had all come together to use the power of the stone, that vessel in which my master resided . . . and the betrayer among you took it."

He looks at each of you in turn. "Come now, you know who you are. Traitor. Judas. Turncoat. A special place in hell is reserved for you," he says, smiling, looking at all of you and none of you.

"Now, here is what shall occur. You who stole the stone, you who was the servant of my

master, will take that stone to the Tower of London, and you will bury it in the earth beneath the tower green. If you do not," he waves his hand through the air, and you notice that the room is filled with a thin dust, "you will die, slowly and excruciatingly, from the contact poison I released into this room while you were, umm, 'meditating'."

Then, as quickly as it came, the eerie light fades from George Long's eyes and he looks around, confused and somewhat scared. He breathes in the dust and immediately begins to cough.

The man truly is named George Long, and everything he told the players about himself is true. However, the creature speaking during the flavor text was not George Long at all. It was a creature called the Rusalki, a mythical being that escaped into the world of dreams at the end of the mythic age. It now survives by inhabiting the dreams of supernatural creatures and feeding off the mystic energy they create. It stumbled across the scions while skipping through the minds of London's dreamers, and found that the waking flashbacks of a reincarnated scion are among the tastiest of all sustenance.

However, the link created by the brood mind gives the scions a strong insight into each others' dreams, as well as an unusual ability to support each other during such dreams. The Rusalki, fearing that together they might discover and force her from their dreams, has made it her goal to keep them separated and distrusting of one another so that she can consume them one by one. Hence, her manipulation of their recent dreams to make it seem as if a member of the brood had, and possibly still would, betray the others.

George Long is a potential medium, a human with second sight, essentially, who hadn't yet recognized his powers because he had never before been to London. He is also, conveniently for the Rusalki, a narcoleptic. The

Rusalki sensed his arrival and makes use of his vulnerability to mystic control to force him into a waking sleep, at which point she can manipulate his body and use him as a puppet.

The unfortunate Mr. Long doesn't know anything at all about what is occurring, other than that he had a dream about the Bishopgate Library the night before and decided he'd like to visit it. He remembers beginning to chat with the PCs, but at some point during the conversation his memory lapses. He is somewhat embarrassed by this, assuming that he must have fallen asleep despite having taken his narcolepsy medication, and will be evasive when the PCs start questioning him, then defensive, and is likely to become scared if the PCs begin to seem threatening. He does his best to excuse himself as soon as possible, but can fairly easily be cajoled into giving out his hotel information (he lies at first, but if he truly fears for his life he gives the correct hotel and figures he can always just check out and report the incident to the police).

As for the "contact poison," it is nothing but a handful of dust. Nonetheless, the PCs will begin to suffer strange symptoms over the next few days that may make them believe they are in danger.

SCENE 4: SLEUTHS

Over the next several days the PCs will likely research Mr. Long, the stone about which they dreamed, the book from the library, the "poison" they believe they are suffering from, and so on. It makes for a more interesting experience if the PCs "split up" to perform this research, allowing one-on-one time with each player and then adding to the interaction once they all return together and report their findings. Of course, if the players don't trust each other because they think one of them is a betrayer, this also allows for hijinks as they attempt to keep tabs on one another.

THE POISON

The PCs are not actually poisoned, but the Rusalki is feeding off the energy in their dreams, denying them R.E.M. sleep and preventing true rest. Each day, all PCs must make Earth (Ka) tests with a TH of 5 + 1 per previous test. Any PC who fails loses one point from his maximum karma pool. When his maximum karma pool reaches zero, he enters a coma and, a week later, reawakens . . . as a completely normal human being. His draconic soul has been consumed, and never again will he regain any connections to the supernatural.

No matter what means the PCs use (whether scientific or mystical), not only can they not find a cure for the poison, they can't even convince anyone that they are, in fact, poisoned. You may play this up as being such a devious poison that none can discover it. Doctors may suggest that the PC seems tired and run down, and will go so far as to ask if they're sleeping well (the PCs do, to the best of their knowledge, sleep just fine). The only way a medical or mystical advisor will realize what is happening to the PCs if they seek help from a sleep or dream specialist specifically.

THE BOOK

The PCs may look to the book as a clue, given that it has an illustration of the artifact in question that they've been told to acquire (or have been told they already have).

Kristoff Winslett, the author, was an eccentric who lived from 1803 to 1854, an artist and ideologist who fancied himself a leader of the common folk and workers' rights movements. He was far too rich to have ever suffered as a worker himself, but his heart was in the right place. He wrote several high-flown works describing utopian societies and espousing equality for man. One of his later hobbies, and the source of the book, titled *Dreamscapes*, was creating paintings based on dreams



described by others. If the players page through the book they find several relatively unimpressive watercolor and oil prints of unreal landscapes.

Research into Winslett's life, into the book itself, or into his painting of Babylon may be accomplished with an Air (Research) test or, should the PCs have access to it, a Candle of Remembrance or similar item or power that allows them to look into the past. If using good old fashioned research, the following information can be gained, depending on the number of successes gained (each level of information should include the previous level of information, as well). If using magic, the amount of information gained is left to the GM's discretion.

TH Information Gained

- 1 Babylon is a mythical city that is said to have been the most perfect city in the world. Some interpretations of the myth say that it is so perfect, it may only exist in dreams.
- 3 Winslett died, ironically enough, by falling asleep in a chair while holding a lit candle. His flat in Soho (and the entire block) burned to the ground. A new building was built atop it in the late 1800s, which is currently on one of the many "Haunted London" walking tours.
- 5 The image of the snake winding around the pillar is an ancient one, and has given rise to the symbols of the caduceus (commonly seen on ambulances, the oroboros, and the serpent and the egg. The sphere at the top is less well known, however. The closest lead you can dig up is that it is related to the philosopher's stone, which was said to be able to grant all

of a man's dreams to him, whether it be wealth, power, or immortality.

- 7 Winslett wrote a memoir that, thanks in large part to his overly florid prose as well as to his almost complete lack of artistic talent, was only published with a print run of 100 copies. One copy survives in London.
- 9 Modern dream-seers (meaning those within the past 2,000 years) claim that Babylon not only existed in reality, it continues to exist in dreams. It is alternately a beautiful and dangerous place, though, and many once real mythical creatures are said to have fled into that city of dreams when the real world could no longer sustain them. Such creatures are often parasitic, feeding off the dreams of mortals.

THE MESSENGER

As mentioned previously, George Long is innocent. The Rusalki can possess him anytime it wishes, but prefers to remain in the background and let the PCs flail about. However, the fact that he has some psychic awareness means that he can be investigated using various mystical powers. A ritual might be performed that could temporarily add him to the PCs' brood mind, or he could be hypnotized, or a PC with the magical means might enter his dreams.

If the PCs choose this method, they should be able to discover that Long was possessed by a spirit of some kind. Depending on the success of their investigations, likely by using Air (Ka) tests, they may learn its nature (living in dreams), its name (the Rusalki), and its powers (to manipulate dreams).



THE AUTHOR

Following one of the book leads may bring the PCs to Winslett's old stomping grounds and, if they visit the place at night and use reasonable means of establishing contact (a seance, using magic or powers that allow one to see spirits, etc.), they may speak to his ghost. Alternatively, they may dig up his memoir using further research and a good expenditure of money (it is a rare antique, after all).

Winslett's ghost should be played as an irritating, high-flown idealist who wouldn't know reality if it ate him. He speaks very familiarly and comfortably to the player (choose one at random if several PCs are present). However, he will tell his questioner, between opining on all things social and philosophic, that OF COURSE he painted the Babylon piece after participating in a meditation exercise using that lovely golden sphere. Doesn't he [the PC] remember? He was THERE, after all, darling, and it was HIS sphere!

After revealing this, Winslett will lapse into other reminiscences and slowly fade from existence, answering no more questions.

Alternatively, the same information may be gained from reading Winslett's memoir, but instead of the ghost telling the PC that he was there and it was his sphere, the PC will instead have a flashback that places him, as an only partially awakened scion, in Winslett's loft, meditating with him, some flunkies, and the sphere.

THE SPHERE

The sphere itself cannot be found, no matter what stones the PCs look under. It seems to have disappeared from the face of the earth.

SCENE 5: BRUISERS

The next time the PCs gather together, after they trade information, they are set upon by a gang of thugs. There is one thug for each player, and they attack to injure and scare, rather than kill. They threaten the PCs as they attack, demanding "the gold ball." If they subdue the PCs, they continue to demand the "gold ball," saying that their boss (a minor gang leader with a hedge wizard advisor) knows they have it. Use this scene to continue building the distrust among the PCs, with the lead thug suggesting that one of them has the sphere but won't give it up, not even to save his friends from a horrible beating.

If the PCs defeat the thugs and question them, they find out only that their gang leader's wizard had a dream that pointed them to the PCs. If more than half of them are disabled or killed, the rest attempt to run away.

THUGS

Aspects: Fire 4, Water 3, Air 2, Earth 2

Initiative: 6

Health: 2M, <3/3+/6+/9+/12+/15+/18+/21+

Size/Reach: 0/2ft.

Armor: 0

Karma: 2

Stride: 20ft. (Moderate)

Weapon: Fist 3/L; Kick 4/M; Chain or Club 6/M

Sequences: Flying Fists, Barroom Brawling, Street Fighting

Agg – F8/W0/A1/E2 – L Fist + R Fist + Ready + L Fist; Damage +5

Neut – F4/W3/A2/E2 – Power + Fist; Disadvantage (physical) 3

Def – F1/W6/A2/E2 – Spin + Ready + Fist; Damage +5, disadvantage (mental) 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Melee 4, Quickness 3, Ranged 3, Senses 2, Stamina 3

Edges: Action Junkie 1, Aggressive 1 (Melee), Daunting 1

Wealth: 2



SCENE 6: DISCLOSURE

The PCs' various encounters and clues should lead them to realize that everything leads back to one thing: their dreams. They will continue to be befuddled and harranged by the Rusalki, possibly having other adventures all the while the Rusalki feeds off of them.

The answer to their problem is to enter their dreams in unison, rather than separately, to do battle against the Rusalki. This can be accomplished with an Air (Ka) 3 test, using the group mind power, as the brood enters a trance state together. The dream state is not a natural one, however. The PCs find themselves entering the dream of Babylon in their human, rather than draconic, forms. Also, rather than their normal aspects, all of the PCs' aspect scores are 1. However, they gain supernatural aspect scores in each aspect equal to their normal base aspect scores.

As they enter the dream, they find themselves walking down the golden streets of Babylon, heading towards the gigantic serpent monument. Each is holding the sphere (or at least, a sphere) in his hands. As each PC looks at his sphere, he remembers what happened when the serpent attempted to poison one of them and make him the sphere's servant: it failed. It attempted to wrest control of one of the brood member's minds, but the brood is one, and as such it was akin to separating one soul into many. It failed, and the combined power of the brood's mind made the sphere the servant, not the other way around. Recognizing the danger it represented, the brood hid the sphere away from mankind and the world in the only place they knew was safe: in their dreams.

Likewise, in all of the half-remembered dreams the PCs had at the beginning of the adventure, they clearly remember now that

they were in human form, and that those around them focusing on the sphere were not their broodmates, but rather power-seekers and wizards. These were various moments throughout the mythic age in which the sphere found its way into the world and the brood, disguising themselves as power-seekers, tricked the villains into revealing the sphere to them so they could take it back.

So why, then, did they feel such suspicion of one another in their dreams? How could they have been so certain that one of them was a betrayer? Because the Rusalki, the dream creature who possessed George Long, has been dwelling in their dreams and manipulating them, the better to sow dissension among the PCs.

All of this knowledge floods into the PCs with a rush, and it coincides with a trembling of the ground. Read the following.

From atop the pillar a woman of unearthly beauty and towering size steps forward, standing on the head of the serpent and commanding it to unwind from the pillar, lowering her with it.

She steps forward, clothed only in a shimmering green light that the PCs recognize as that given off by George Long when he was possessed. She looks less than pleased.

"Welcome to my home, fleshbags. Meat. Prey. I would have enjoyed suckling on your dreams for months to come, but you grow too bold for cattle. I will have to consume you one and all, now." With that, she raises her hands and sends forth waves of green fire, which consume the spheres you hold . . . and then begin to consume you.

As individuals, the PCs are no match for the Rusalki. Even with their supernatural aspect scores in Fire and Air, they still only have base scores of 1 in those aspects, and as such cannot perform more than a single physical or mental move each turn . . . meaning no simple or



advanced sequences, very slow casting, and so on. However, their supernatural aspect scores in Earth and Water will allow them to survive her attacks . . . for a while, anyway.

The answer is in the spheres. They are all part of the philosopher's stone that the PCs claimed so long ago, and they wish to be joined together as one. By bringing them together, the PCs may overcome their own limitations, as well. As the spheres touch, they join, and in so doing combine the essences of those who bear them.

Thus the PCs may overcome their individual limitations by attempting to combine their essences. After all, they defeated their foes in the past by being "as one," and the reason the Rusalki fears them is because of the potential of their combined power. You may provide hints regarding the possibility of this strategy by describing the dream state as being constantly in flux, with the characters' shapes and forms shifting, sometimes blending in with their surroundings and with each other. Likewise, the spheres will attempt to pull toward each other. If two PCs try to join two spheres together they likewise merge into one figure using a full-turn action. The being that results from the dream joining is as follows:

—Each base aspect score is the sum of all joined PCs' base aspects scores (in this case 2 for 2 PCs, 3 for 3 PCs, etc.).

—Each supernatural aspect score is the highest of the joined PCs' supernatural aspect scores.

—The size of the being is 0, +1 for each PC that has joined it (size 2 for 2 PCs, size 3 for 3 PCs, etc.).

—The being has access to any of the powers, legacies, edges, and skills that the PCs do.

Allow the control of the being to rotate from one player to another, deciding who is in charge by determining whose abilities or powers are being focused on that turn.

THE RUSALKI

Aspects: Fire 5(2), Water 4(4), Air 5(3), Earth 6(1)

APL: 6

Initiative: 10

Health: 7M; <4/4+/8+/12+/16+/20+/24+/28+

Size/Reach: 3 / 15 ft.

Armor: 8

Taint: 20

Stride: 50 ft. (Moderate)

Weapons: Emerald Fire: 12 (cannot be absorbed with armor) ~ Range infinite ~ Reload 0; Claw 6/L; Kick 8/M

Sequences: Eastern Medium Style

Agg – F11/W4/A0/E2 – Stride + Claw Strike + Spin + Kick Strike; Damage +15

Neut – F5/W4/A5/E3 – Roll + Ready + Kick Strike; Damage +20

Def – F5/W10/A0/E2 – Dodge + Ready + Kick Strike; Damage +10

Skills: Athletics 4, Interaction 6, Ka 5, Melee 5, Quickness 6, Ranged 4, Senses 3, Stamina 2, Stealth 6

Edges: Circumspect 2, Forceful Will (Voice, Gaze) 4, Resilient 1, Seductive 5, Survivor 3

Powers: Crushing Will 3, Clarity 3, Distant Mind 2, Rapport 5

CONCLUSION

The Rusalki defeated, the PCs are free to explore Babylon. Are its other denizens friendly? What effect has the sphere had on it throughout all of these centuries? Is the sphere still theirs to control, now that they've put it back together? What role will George Long play in their future adventures? Have all of the PCs' suspicions and fears been allayed, or do they still harbor doubts about one another? In the process of melding into a single being, could they even have discovered things about each other that instill yet more fears and doubts? Only time will tell . . .



BEYOND AR 5, PART I

BY ROB VAUGHN

Dragons are immortal, eternal, and infinite. Just because no scion in the modern age has yet progressed beyond awakened rank 5 does not mean that one cannot. This web enhancement presents optional rules for the means by which FIREBORN scion characters can advance beyond AR 5; to learn what powers this grants beyond normal advancement, check out Secrets of Fire 14!.

AWAKENING

Normally, attaining an awakened rank beyond 5 is impossible, simply because karmic items go no higher than rank 5; without a rank 6 karmic item in your scion's hoard, he should be unable to reach awakened rank 6. However, what the power of one dragon alone cannot accomplish, the power of a brood can. The only question is how it chooses to do so.

CONSUMING THE BROOD

The quickest and most dire way for a scion to advance beyond the natural limitations of his human form is to absorb pure power from one of his broodmates. This unfortunate possibility can combine with a dragons' lust for power to destroy a brood from the inside out.

MURDER

Canabalizing a broodmate's power requires first that the broodmate be killed by the canabilizer. The killing blow must be struck by a karmic item from the scion's mythic age hoard (i.e., an item that would qualify the scion for a hoard rank).

BINDING

An incredibly rare rank 5 spell, Eating the Brother, must then be performed. The range is touch, the duration instantaneous, and it must be performed in the presence of the murderer's hoard.

It also requires that the murdered broodmate's body be present, and must be performed within five days of the murder, minus one day per awakened rank of the victim. If the broodmate is AR 5, the spell must be performed within one hour.

The spell's effect is to bind the broodmate's spirit to the karmic item, keeping it from escaping and being reborn. The murdered broodmate's awakened rank is instead added to the item's karmic rank. So for instance, a rank 1 karmic item used to murder an AR 5 broodmate would become a rank 6 karmic item; once the item is added to the murderer's hoard, it allows the possessor to advance to AR 6. The spirit of the scion trapped within the item is not reborn, and can never reborn, until the karmic item itself is destroyed. If the karmic item is ever drained of all its karma (i.e., its temporary karma rank is ever reduced to 0), the scion's spirit is forever consumed.

CONSEQUENCES

Needless to say, this form of advancement is inherently evil. The murder of one's broodmate in this manner creates taint in a trivial range equal to the murdered broodmate's AR (if the area already has a taint rank of 5, the taint may "spill over" into the next range increment as normal for the creation of taint). There are tales of more experienced or powerful scions discovering this method, aiding their broodmates from afar without ever revealing themselves, and then eventually "harvesting" them, one at a time, as they become powerful enough to be of use to their evil brother.

PLACE OF POWER

A far slower and more limited manner of achieving an awakened rank beyond 5 is to tie oneself, and thereby tie one's power, to an area in which one is nurturing karma.



NURTURING

This can only be done in an area that already has a karma rating of 5, using an item of karmic rank 5, and can only be accomplished by a scion of AR 5 or higher. When the time has come to advance (i.e., when the scion has a heritage rank of 6 and a humanity rank of 6), he may nurture karma in himself, the area he has chosen, *and* a karma 5 item from his mythic age hoard, all at once. The most common location for such an act is in the dragon's lair, where the rest of his hoard is located.

The nurturing takes time as if raising an area from balanced to karma rank 1 (one week). It takes an expenditure of hours each day and karma each day, however, as if the scion were attempting to raise the area's karma rating from 5 to 6 (in other words, 6 hours of effort per day and 6 points of karma).

This process if followed as normal each time the scion wishes to advance to the next higher AR, although the time and effort required to do so advance by one each time (so, to reach AR 7, the scion must spend 7 hours + 7 karma per day, and must do so every day for one full month; to reach AR 8, the scion must spend 8 hours + 8 karma per day, and must do so every day for one full year, and so on).

CONSEQUENCES

Upon completion of the nurturing, the scion is considered to have attained a hoard rank of 6, allowing him to reach AR 6. However, this process irrevocably binds the item, the scion, and the location. The scion is only considered to have AR 6 while within the boundaries of the place of power and while the hoard item remains there. This means that he can only manifest draconic form as if he were AR 5 when outside of that place of power, or if the item is ever taken from that place of power. For all intents and purposes, the area remains at karmic rank 5 and the item remains at karmic rank 5.

EXTENDING

Should a scion wish to extend the range of the area in which he maintains his power, say from trivial to minor, he may do so. However, this requires that the area to be included in his place of power must all already be karmic rank 5. Further, for ever increased range of the place of power, the scion must nurture his place of power as if it were one karmic rank higher. So a scion who wished to create a place of power with minor boundaries in which he could advance to AR 6 would first need to find or create a place with karma 5 out to minor range, and then would have to nurture karma there for one month instead of one week. If he wished to advance to AR 7 in the same place of power, or to advance to AR 6 in an area out to moderate range, he would need to nurture karma there for one year.

As normal, any time taint is spawned in an area, it reduces the karma there; any area within a scion's place of power that is not at karma rank 5 immediately ceases to be a place of power for him.

Creating a place of power is the most common method of advancing beyond AR 5 in the modern age and in those rare times throughout history that magic has awakened enough to allow a scion to remember his previous lives. It neither forces a scion to prey upon his own brood nor forces him to rely on that brood for power, as the *Becoming One* method, below, requires. Yet it often forces a scion to become a recluse, fearful of letting his place of power or the item(s) that are essential to it be damaged or taken from him, and makes some quite powerful creatures hesitant to face any foe outside of their lairs.

BECOMING ONE

This method for attaining AR 6 and higher is less brutal than the *Consuming the Brood* option and less painstaking than the *Place of Power* option, but requires an amazing level of trust and dependence.



COMBINING THE HOARD

Instead of nurturing karmic power in a place and with an item, the brood instead nurtures their karmic energy within one another. The first step is the combination of all of the scions' hoards. Only scions who mingle their hoards and combine their places of power can join their ka in the manner required.

COMBINING KARMA

Second, each member of the brood must permanently invest karma into their brood mind (effectively lowering their maximum karma pool) equal to the AR desired. They'll probably get that karma back (see **Becoming**, Secrets of Fire 14), but you have to pay to play, so to speak. This investment takes place through constant, uninterrupted meditation, requiring one day for the combined desired ARs of the brood. For instance, a brood of four scions at AR 5 who wished to use this method to reach AR 6 would have to meditate for 6×4 days, or 24 days, and each scion would have to permanently sacrifice 6 karma, lowering their max karma pools by 6.

Once this is accomplished, the brood has created a pool of karma that, combined with the unification of their hoards, allows each scion to act as if he had an rank 6 hoard item, and therefore to attain AR 6. However, this power comes with limitations.

CONSEQUENCES

First of all, the scions must keep their hoards together. If any scion removes his hoard from the group's, their effective AR is reduced by 1.

Second, the scions become powerful when near one another, but are weakened when they are apart. Keep track of the greatest boundary rank between each member of the brood and the furthest other member of the brood, ignoring lesser boundary ranks in favor of higher ranks. When the total ranks worth of boundaries between brood members are equal to the brood's

normal AR, the effective AR of the entire brood is lowered by one; when the total is equal to twice the brood's normal AR, the effective AR of the entire brood is lowered by two; and so on.

So for instance, say you have a brood of four AR 7 scions. Then let's say that they all have missions around London, so they're at least separated by moderate (rank 3) boundaries, for a total of $4 \times 3 = 12$. That's greater than AR 7, so the brood's effective AR is lowered to 6. If they gather together in the house they share, they're all separated by trivial (rank 1) boundaries, for a total of $4 \times 1 = 4$. In that circumstance, they're all still effectively AR 7. If two of them suddenly need to take off to separate neighboring cities (rank 4) while the other two continue to patrol the streets and allies of London, the boundaries become $4 + 4 + 3 + 3 = 14$, or twice the brood's AR of 7. In that circumstance, each of the brood is effectively only AR 5. If one of the brood should die, the rest of the brood is considered to be cut off from him as if by a barrier equal in rank to his AR when he died (up to AR 10, even though there are normally no such barriers). This penalty persists until the broodmate is reincarnated, reintegrated into the brood, and reinitiated into the Becoming One process.

Sound nasty? It is! Broods who Become One are essentially binding their lives, their souls, their power, their very existences to one another. A scion of AR 6 or higher is extremely powerful, and the other two methods require that the scion either betray and destroy his closest allies, or that he bind his power to a single place, hampering his ability to affect the wider world. Broods of scions that are of AR 6 or higher are able to travel about freely and use their power at will, but they must pay for that power with the knowledge that they are eternally dependent on their brood, and that any enemies they make will always be watching for times that they are separate from one another, and therefore weaker. Even a simple barrier like a stream or a tree line can mean the difference between a powerful brood and a crippled one.





BEYOND AR 5, PART II

BY ROB VAUGHN

The last *Secret of Fire* revealed the methods that an individual dragon or a combined brood can use to achieve an awakened rank beyond AR 5. This time, we'll show you what these most powerful scions of the modern age can do with their new-found power.

NO LIMITS

The most obvious effects of advancing beyond AR 5 are the linear progression of a scion's legacy strength and in his maximum karma expenditure. For instance, the TH of his legacies increase, he can spend more karma per turn to activate legacies. A higher AR means higher humanity and heritage ranks, as well, so more karma can be spent in one day to increase an area's karma rating and in one turn to manifest draconic form (see *Fireborn Player's Handbook*, pg. 171).

However, while the limits dependent on a scion's AR increase, the number of superhuman aspect points and draconic form points do not increase. A scion reaching an awakened rank of 6 or higher still receives 5 of each whenever he achieves the new rank.

PURE FORM

More important than this "more of the same" increase in power, awakening to rank 6 allows scions to finally manifest their true selves: the draconic forms they possessed in the mythic age.

At AR 6, scions gain the ability to take on a size 0 version of their mythic age forms. Doing so has no draconic form point cost, but neither can they use karma to instantly manifest the form without using a physical or mental action (nor can they designate it as a preferred form). The TH to achieve this small draconic form is 12.

At each new AR beyond 6, the scion gains the ability to manifest a version of his mythic age form that is one size category larger. The TH to do so increases by +3 per size category the form is beyond 0. This means that only the most physically or mentally capable of scions are ever able to manifest their mythic age forms at full size. This "pure" form has the scion's aspects and superhuman aspects, skills, edges, powers, legacy, and karma pool. It has the mythic age form's armor, gait, flight capabilities, and all other traits except size.

