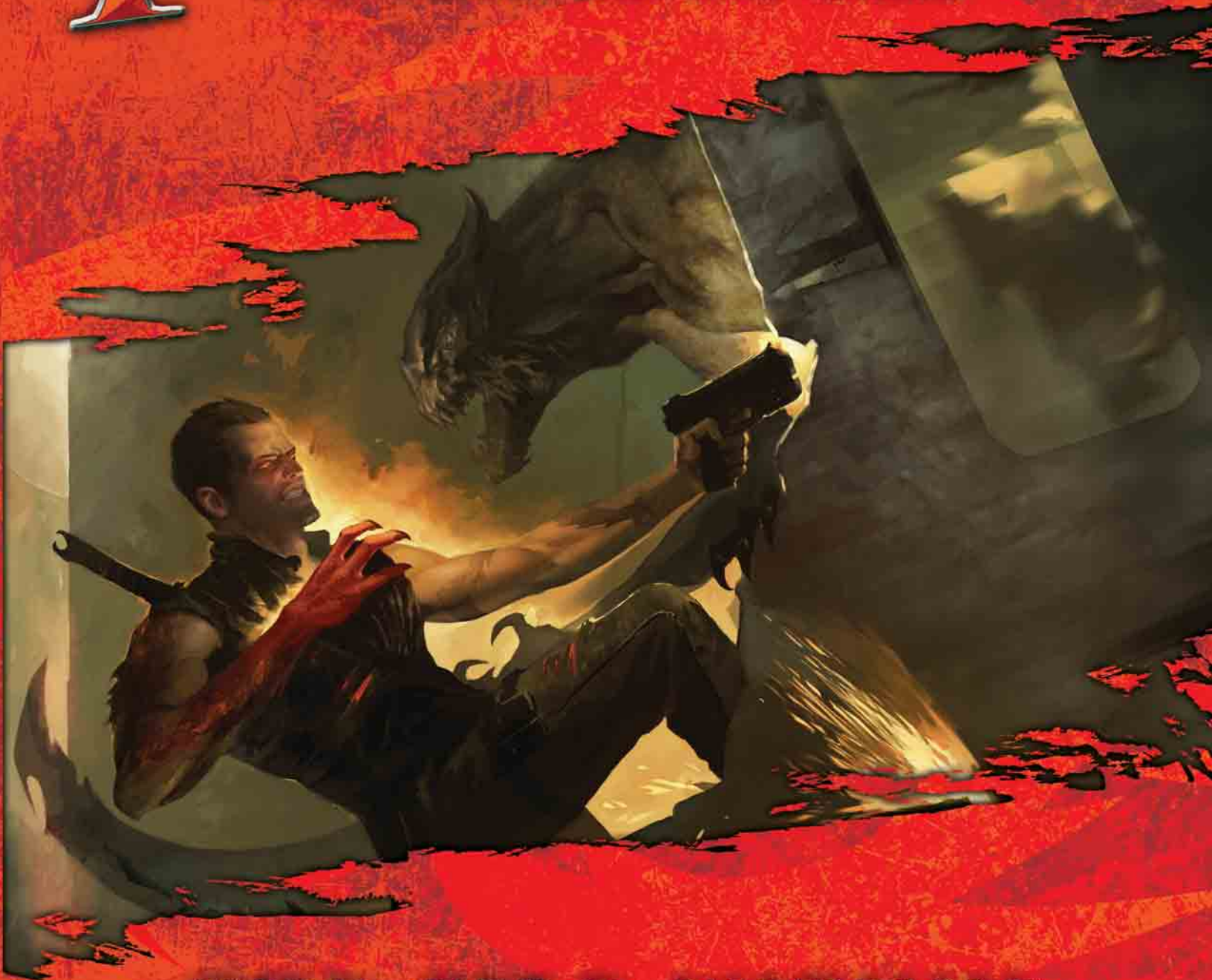


# FIREBORN™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



## THE FIRE WITHIN™

An Introductory FIREBORN Adventure

# FIREBORN™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first official adventure for FIREBORN. FIREBORN is quite unlike many other roleplaying game systems, and as such this first adventure is different from the norm. We attempted to show you, for instance, several different examples of ways to use flashbacks: narrative, action, and exposition are all useful and dynamic styles that flashbacks can use. As you unravel this tale, you may find it complex and far-reaching for a first adventure, but would you expect any less from a game whose plotlines span thousands of years? In the lives of the scions, dragons reborn in the modern age, even a daily errand can be the catalyst for an earth-shattering remembrance, and even a memory of a peaceful day and a pleasant conversation in the mythic age can have life-altering impact in the modern age. Above all, flashbacks and the dual-era play style are tools that allow you, the GM, to weave a story that ties past and present, dragon and human, into an exciting narrative tapestry.

Likewise, since each FIREBORN campaign is intrinsically tied to the themes and flavor chosen by you, the GM, we tried to give you options to bend the adventure in the directions you wish. Within these pages your players will find opportunities for action or intrigue, and your campaign world will be able to unfold as epic or gritty, introspective or energetic, brooding or heroic.

Finally, the single most important aspect of any FIREBORN game is the brood: the players themselves and the bonds between their characters. These are not unlikely protagonists thrown together by circumstances, mercenaries in it for the money, or naive heroes engaging on a crusade for the sake of adventure itself. They are bound throughout millenia and lifetimes, no matter what shape they have been born into or into what time they have awakened. While each scion is a separate being, they are also all linked to one another, and the brood is an entity unto itself. No matter the obstacles, even in the face of death, the brood remains united, and that is a strength that no other beings in the world of FIREBORN can claim.

We hope that this adventure accomplishes all the tasks set out above; if, in your opinion, it does not, please alter whatever aspects you feel are necessary. This book is intended to be the seed on which the first generation of FIREBORN campaigns are based, and it has been entrusted into your hands. Enjoy.

## BACKGROUND

In the days of the great wars between dragons and titans, in the years of the mythic age before mankind's emergence, many creatures both powerful and dark walked the earth. One such creature was called Ophois,



or the Opener of Ways. He claimed to be a god of death and war, and was powerful indeed, but was more a scavenger than a warrior. He hung on the peripheries of the battles of the great creatures of the age, waiting for the mighty warriors to spend themselves on each others' blades and claws. When the smoke cleared and the dead lay fallen in the field, Ophois came forward. Some say he had the visage of a great wolf, others the form of dark tendrils of oily mist, and some that he burrowed beneath the bodies of the slain. He lapped at the blood of the fallen warriors, for in that liquid was the passion of the slain. However, the blood was a means to an end: the consumption of the souls of those who shed it. He grew in power from dining on such rich fare, and it came to be that no other sustenance could please him.

The titans looked on Ophois as a foul beast; their heroes deserved to be burned in pyres so that their spirits could be sent back to the elements, not to be lapped up by some sort of soul-feeding jackal. To the dragons, Ophois was more than foul. He was a predator of the worst kind. Dragons could endure death; they were immortal creatures, with bodies born of the elements and with spirits kindled by karma, and though they



## INTRODUCTION

might die in battle, they would return. Not so when their spirits were consumed by this hunter of the slain, to be digested and resigned to a fearful oblivion. They therefore hated the Opener of Ways as birds hate the rodent that breaks into the nest and feeds on the young. When the dragons and titans reached their accord, vengeance upon Ophois was one of the first things agreed upon. And that vengeance was swift . . . but, ultimately, too merciful.

While Ophois could consume souls utterly, neither the titans nor the dragons had that capability. As the Fourth Sun dawned and the civilizations of man began to lay their foundations, Ophois's essence returned to the world. He was denied the ability to take physical form, but he had learned to exist in the fears and nightmares of soldiers on the eve of battle. Eventually he learned to make slaves of those whose minds he trapped, and to possess their bodies. He worked his way from man to beast and finally, insidiously, into the mind of a dragon. Lost in despair, his brood tainted and mad, the dragon called Lycurgin had been near death . . . until Ophois promised him salvation for his broodmates. He offered the power to free them from their taint and spare the mortals they would assuredly kill in their madness, in return for letting Ophois share his body. Lycurgin accepted Ophois's offer, and gave him his body. In return, Ophois fulfilled his part of the bargain and released Lycurgin's broodmates from their tainted

shells. But Ophois had neither honor nor mercy. Rather than letting the dragons be reborn to live free of taint once more, he consumed their spirits, destroying them utterly. And Lycurgin, trapped behind the one-way mirror of his mind, could only utter silent, impotent screams of rage, watching as his soulmates were lost.

As the span of time known as the Fourth Sun progressed, Ophois relished his new body, using Lycurgin's powers to foment war and sow violence in the hearts of impressionable men. And each time, regardless of the winner, he was there at the end of the battle to drink the souls of those slain on the field of battle. As the tribes of men expanded into full cultures and even empires, however, guided by the wisdom of dragons in disguise or fae worshipped as gods, war in the mythic age became rarer and rarer. The bright island of Atlantis stretched out its reach in the form of peaceful colonization, spreading its way of life and its technology; battles were far and few between. Ophois learned to dine on the scraps of small civil wars and the occasional border war, and these only involving mortals, when in the past he had dined on the souls of dragons and titans. Even in the north, where the Fomorian and the fae were constantly at war, Ophois found himself going hungry; the Fomorian's souls were so twisted by taint that Ophois could gain no nourishment from them, and the spirits of the fae were like a thin mist: as soon as the body of the fae fell into unlife, their souls vanished into the dreams and dappled sunlight from which they had come.

In the middle of the fourth millenium of the Fourth Sun, the weakened and desperate Ophois finally felt the stirrings of war. The First Exodus of the Atlantean people had spread peace and prosperity, but it had also sown some anger and discontent. Though on the whole a peaceful process, some of the Atlanteans' new subjects did not appreciate being part of their empire. When the rebellions began, the warriors of Atlantis used them as an excuse to seize control of the senate and institute a martial regime. Ophois slowly and carefully began to plant seeds of doubt and distrust among the parties to which he was privvy; by IV 3620, one of his major plans had come to fruition. Unfortunately for him, a brood of dragons did not see eye to eye with his plans . . .

## OVERVIEW

Act One begins by throwing the characters full-force into the action: they begin in the mythic age, about to oversee negotiations between two powerful factions that are bent on war. The flashback is almost entirely role-playing-oriented . . . the PCs never assume dragon form, so this is a chance for them to focus entirely on their mythic age characters' personalities. It also introduces players to the idea of the mythic age right off the bat, thrusting them into the dream-like scene with almost no introduction. This may confuse and disarm the players; so much the better, then, because that's exactly how their modern age characters likely feel, as well!



The PCs can gather some information or do some scouting before the negotiations, and then attempt several methods of negotiation to get both sides to back down. They may never realize it, but the situation came to a head as it did because of Ophois's manipulations. Averting the battle not only saves many lives, it also dooms Ophois to the promise of starvation. But that will come into play later; for now, the players know only that they have succeeded, and all participants in the negotiation give thanks under the light of the full moon.

When next the PCs open their eyes, they see that same full moon, but it is a different time and a different place. They awake in human form as their modern age selves, emerging from one of several flashbacks, dreams, and waking visions that have been plaguing them for months. As the moon sets and the sun rises, they realize that something must be done, and follow the tugging of the voices in their heads. Following these instincts leads these characters to an unexpected meeting with one another. They have only a few moments to compare notes and begin to process the strange shared visions they have experienced before they are attacked, seemingly out of nowhere, by a gang of murderous lunatics and one well-hidden sniper.

As the players defeat their enemies, those unfortunate souls burst into flame. The sniper escapes, their enemies' bodies are impossible to identify, and the PCs are left with no explanation. After dealing with the police (or consciously avoiding such dealings by running away), the PCs may choose to investigate the attack or may go on with their lives. If they ignore the attack, more and more lunatics assault them until they realize that they cannot turn their backs on whoever or whatever is trying to kill them.

Act Two deals with the PCs' investigations using various talents and connections. Their search will eventually lead them to the holder of the gun from Act One; it turns out that that the shooter, a man named Mark Garren, is a scion. While at this point the PCs may not know what they themselves are, they quickly learn that Mark is something more than human. They chase him down, only to see him manifest aspects of his draconic self. This incident pulls them into another flashback. In this one, they are in full draconic form, and may realize for the first time that they are more than human. In the flashback they fight the three-headed dragon, Lycurgin, on the shores of the Western Sea. Upon defeating him, they realize that Mark is Lycurgin reborn, and that in both ages he is an unwilling slave to a creature named Ophois, the Opener of Ways. It was Ophois who tried to arrange the war that the PCs averted, and it was Ophois that they defeated when they slew Lycurgin. Now, in the modern age, the spirit of Ophois has awakened once more, and he wants vengeance on the reborn PCs.

Back in the modern age, the PCs are contacted by one or more power groups that may be able to help them trace the name to Ophois's current location: the spot of Lycurgin's death in the mythic age, now a town south of Cambridge called Haverhill. They journey there to put

the beast to rest, only to find yet another faction involved in the fight: a tribe of fae. A battle between the fae and the scions is quickly averted when the PCs recognize the leader of the fae from their negotiations in the mythic age. It turns out that the fae are there to stop Ophois, as well. During this discussion, the PCs finally get a clear picture as to who and what they truly are: they are dragons. They also learn that, so long as Ophois is in spirit form, he cannot be defeated. In order to be destroyed, his spirit must be pulled into this world in physical form.

In Act Three, armed with new knowledge and new determination, the PCs set forth toward the lair of Ophois, an asylum for the mentally ill called the Open Way House. They make their way past mentally controlled doctors, nurses, and inmates, and eventually reach the basement, the spot of Lycurgin's death and Ophois's defeat. One of the PCs engages in a solo flashback to remember the ritual needed to draw Ophois into the physical world, while the rest fight off Ophois's terrifying nightmares. In so doing, they not only conquer their own fears, they also recognize the value of their brood's unity. The ritual is completed and the PCs prepare themselves to battle Ophois . . . but he does not appear.

The PCs realize that Ophois came through into this world, not where they were, but in the vicinity of the most powerful nearby karmic item: the Sacred Elm of the fae. The PCs rush back to the fae to find their allies all but decimated, Ophois's monstrous form looming above them. They also find that every time they wound Ophois, one of their own is wounded as well. After a brutal battle, the Opener of Ways is destroyed and the scions are finally free from his vengeance. Now all they have to face is a strange and uncertain future . . . as the Fireborn.

## GM ICONS

Throughout this adventure you will find several icons. These are meant to be GM aids so you can quickly find what you need. They are defined below.

### ACTION SCENE:



Included in the header of a scene, this icon denotes that the section of the adventure should be run as an action scene, with APs awarded appropriately.

### NARRATIVE SCENE:



Included in the header of a scene, this icon denotes that the section of the adventure should be run as a narrative scene, with APs awarded appropriately.

### GM TIPS:



Included in sidebars, this denotes that the sidebar contains advice for new and experienced FIREBORN GMs alike.





# ACT ONE:

# CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

The first act of *The Fire Within* begins in media res, “in the middle of things.” The players find themselves, with no previous knowledge of the mythic age or of each other, in a flashback. They are in central Avalon, some forty miles north of Ludd’s Dun, and not too far south of present-day Cambridge. Near the shores of the Western Sea, two armies are drawn up in resolution, and the players have come in a final attempt to avert the war that is about to erupt between an Atlantean expedition force and a border-town of Elysium. The dragons must try to reason with the assembled forces to prevent battle and bloodshed, which would have consequences more dire than they fully know.

After this flashback, in the modern day, the scions assemble. In fact, if the players are new to FIREBORN, they meet for the very first time, seemingly by fate. As the scions discuss their shared flashback of the previous night, the rooftop café on which they’ve gathered falls under attack by a gang of eclectic, deranged thugs. There are no other diners, and as the attack progresses it becomes obvious that the attackers’ ultimate goal is to see all of the scions dead. The scions must either overcome their foes or escape the attack. In either case, their chief priority is simple: to avoid death.

Once the PCs have evaded or overcome their assailants, they have time to regroup and try to determine what happened. Because their foes have the unfortunate tendency to burst into flame when they are knocked unconscious, killed, or even simply prevented from achieving their goals, uncovering their identities and motives proves challenging, to say the least.

This is the opening battle of a vicious war by Ophois, now awakened along with magic, to achieve vengeance against his ancient foes, the brood. Over the past several years, he has wormed his way into the nightmares of the inmates of the asylum built over the spot of his death. He has even gained some power over the staff of the asylum, clouding their minds so that they do not see what he does not want them to see. As the Strange Times proceeded, Ophois was content to build up his power base, though he had no purpose for them yet. He waited.

Another creature awoke with the Strange Times, a man named Mark Garren. In the mythic age, he was known as the dragon Lycurgin, and he was once a slave to Ophois. In the modern age, he became a librarian, drawn for reasons he didn’t understand to stories of others’ lives. In fact, he was searching for something. While a dragon’s soul is reborn pure and free from taint with each new life, it is that dragon’s connection to his soulmates, the brood, that allows him to remain that way.

Without his brood, Lycurgin was born into this age crippled and alone. He had always felt a hole, a barrenness to his internal landscape that he did not know how to fill. Then he took a trip up to Cambridge to do some research, and as he passed by the small town of Haverhill, he felt that emptiness filled. Ophois had found him again, and the relationship of master to slave was made once more.

Years later, the PCs have finally awoken as scions. Ophois sensed them almost immediately, as his hatred for those who defeated him gave him an uncanny sense of their presences. He immediately sent his minions, the hapless inmates from the asylum, ranging through the countryside to London. On the morning of the first day of the adventure, they will have arrived to attack the PCs. Ophois also forces Mark to act in the attack, though his fear and the intensity with which he fights Ophois's control keeps him from being a very large threat.

## PREPARATION

Act One of the adventure is intertwined with character creation, and is designed to give your players a feeling of depth regarding both the modern and mythic ages.

Though the adventure starts in the mythic age, the players only need to have completed their modern scion characters in order to play—their mythic age dragon characters appear in the flashback, but their exact game statistics don't come into play. Note that, during the flashback, while the *players* might know that they are dragons in human form, the *players' characters* do not—they see themselves as powerful and capable humans, not dragons. This solves the problem of the PCs adopting draconic form and laying waste to the countryside.

If you and/or your players are new to FIREBORN, the best way to run character creation is to gather all the players together and help them make their characters simultaneously. Each player needs to create a scion, so each player should first choose a concept for his character, as detailed in the *Player's Handbook*. You may allow the players to begin the game with connections between one another already; perhaps two scions are cousins or work in the same building or for the same company. The connections do not have to be major—maybe one scion works at the local convenience store where another routinely buys her morning coffee—but it can be interesting for the scions to be aware of each other before they realize that they are broodmates.

After selecting a core concept, each player must then purchase aspects, choose a background appropriate to his concept, choose a sire, determine his dependent traits, and make a few finishing touches, as detailed in the *Player's Handbook*. After an hour or so, your players should have a collection of modern day scions and be ready to play.

When the players finish character creation and you approve all characters, briefly describe the mythic age. Tell the players that part of FIREBORN takes place in an ancient version of Earth during which magic is real, humans exist alongside a wide variety of fantastic crea-

tures, and dragons are the most powerful creatures in the world. Embellish the description as much as you like from the background in the *Player's Handbook* and *Gamemaster's Handbook*, or keep it clouded in mystery. In fact, you could even begin the campaign with the players not knowing that their characters are reincarnated dragons!

From what information the players have about the mythic age, have each of them consider what sort of personality he'd like his mythic age character to have. Each player should write down three words or phrases that describe his mythic age character. As long as at least one of the three descriptors is physical (strong, ugly, or lithe, for example) and at least one of the three is mental or psychological (intellectual, garrulous, or morally flexible, perhaps) any descriptors at all can be chosen. These three words or phrases will be the players' roleplaying hooks for the flashback portion of Act One. Players should not, however, choose or describe specific abilities like breeds, powers, or legacies at this time. Players who seem hung up on ascribing abilities like these to their characters can be assured that there will be opportunities to gain such powers in the future.

## SCENE 1: THE BRINK OF WAR



Several decades before the flashback, a group of Atlantean pioneers and fortune-seekers on the leading edge of the First Exodus reached a traveled across the land bridge separating the Inner Sea of Erebea from the vast reaches of the mostly unknown Western Sea. When they reached the shore of that ocean, the expedition split; those that longed for the mountains and rivers of their island home turned back, and told their fellow Atlanteans of what they had seen. The Senate immediately saw that, were they to truly gift the world with their civilization, they had to breach the land separating the two seas and open a route for their fleets of ships. Some of the Atlanteans' first colonization efforts, then, were to educate and organize the hunter-gatherer folk from that part of Erebea. In thanks for this great gift of civilization and technology, the Erebeans agreed to begin work on a canal for their seafaring benefactors. The canal would be many years in the making, and its path would cut through the lands of the Tethyns, planting the seed that would eventually blossom into the Tethyn rebellion . . . but such things were still in the distant future.

As for those who remained on the shores of the Western Sea, they marveled at this new world that was theirs to explore. They built a rough collection of rafts and ships and traveled north, always staying within sight



## ACT ONE: CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

of land and stopping frequently to explore. They soon reached the edge of the then-vast forests of Elysium, fabled home of the fae; in respect for those beautiful and strange beings, the explorers did not penetrate deep into the woodlands, but continued journeying north in search of an opening the forest's forbidding edge.

After months of roaming, they found a spot whose untamed beauty and natural resources captured their hearts. They offered generous gifts to their fae neighbors, and in return those usually shy creatures came forth to lead the travelers to an ideal spot upon which to build their community: a peaceful area on the south shore of a placid bay fed by a clear-flowing, easily navigable river. Forest bordered the location to the east, grassland to the north, and rich, arable land to the south. The fae creatures' beauty and mystical qualities impressed the humans, and the fae found the explorers exciting and new. The two cultures found common ground and together established the village of Wytaul: a small collection of huts and faerie mounds that played home to both fae and humans. In time, the fae presence in Wytaul waned, but the two cultures remained on friendly terms.

Now, nearly a century later, Wytaul is a frontier town on Elysium's western border and is the site of massing armies. Atlantis's First Exodus is at its height, and a group of Atlantean ships have made use of the now-finished canal's that the explorers' predecessors began. After establishing a port-town at the canal's westernmost point, the fleet sailed north in search of its long unheard-from expeditionary force. The admiral of the fleet discovered Wytaul, thanked the pioneers and their descendants for their hard work, and declared that he had been sent by Atlantis to help them establish the peaceful town as the empire-to-be's new foothold in the region. Neither the natives of Wytaul nor the fae agreed with this stance; the townsfolk had long ceased thinking of themselves as Atlanteans, and the fae were in no mood to relinquish their sacred places or their friends to foreign invaders.

The two sides made some attempts to solve their problems diplomatically but talks rapidly deteriorated. This failure was due in a large part to the manipulations of a cunning and well-disguised dragon: Lycurgin.

A dark creature called Ophois had possessed Lycurgin long ago, and he now lives to promote violence and misery. Disguised as a Kehebet mercenary, Lycurgin is the true cause of the impending battle. He whispered in the ears of those military commanders and explorers of that century-old expeditionary force, of how rumors had flowed to him through divinations and word-of-mouth of a piteous human village that was enchanted by the insidious fae and yearned to be free. He told the Atlantean wizards that the fae scoffed at humans' magical abilities and that these fae possessed many artifacts that could increase a wizard's magical potency. To the Atlantean priests he whispered rumors that the fae worshipped false gods—dark spirits cloaking themselves in rumors of divinity, offending the true gods of Atlantis. The Atlanteans were united in their

desire to find this village, cast out the fae, and renew its connection with the home island.

Before the landing force ever left Atlantis, Lycurgin had been among their foes, as well. The Trmmli were a seafaring people who had once dominated the Inner Sea, raiding and taking what they wished; the growing power of the Atlantean navy would eventually push them out of the Inner Sea. Some eventually rebuilt their vessels and fleets on the Western Sea, only to have the Atlanteans complete their canal and harass them there, as well. Disguised as a dissatisfied Atlantean, Lycurgin went to one such captain and told her of an Atlantean fleet heading north toward Elysium. This captain saw a chance for revenge against her oppressors, an Atlantean force so far from its home. She ordered her ships to follow the Atlanteans throughout their voyage, waiting for a time to strike. Now that she has learned of the impending battle at Wytaul (Lycurgin's doing, again), the Trmmli lurk nearby, ready to ambush their ancestral enemies' ships while the Atlanteans are distracted.

Lycurgin also went north and found a titan called Donar, a wandering giant who was renowned among his kind for being one of the few who refused to honor the ancient accord of peace between titans and dragons. Lycurgin gained much pleasure in disguising himself as a troll and drinking with Donar late into the evening, urging him on in his stream of hateful epithets against the serpentine race. By the time the approaching Atlantean force landed, Lycurgin had convinced the titan that dragons were disguised within its ranks, and that a hunter who bested such dishonorable beasts would be declared a mighty warrior indeed. Donar strode south to join the forces of Wytaul against the Atlanteans.

Now, Lycurgin's plans near fruition. The Atlanteans and Wytaulians despise each other for a number of reasons, some half-real and some entirely fabricated, and are ready to spill blood over Wytaul's status. Lycurgin rejoices and prowls nearby to ensure that his designs are fulfilled. Only one problem interrupts his careful planning. There are indeed disguised dragons here: the PCs. Whether through their own divinations, tip-offs from insightful spirits, or because they have been tracking Lycurgin's movements, the brood was here when the Atlantean force landed. The PCs have convinced the opposing leaders to make one last attempt at a peaceful resolution. The commanders agreed, but will only meet until dawn: at that time, the armies clash.

## THE BROOD

The players begin the scene, and probably end it, not knowing why they got involved. Such an important consideration as their dragons' allegiances in the mythic age should not be addressed at this early stage, and since the opening scene is truly nothing but a dream, this knowledge is not essential. All the players need to know is that their characters desperately want to keep the two groups from fighting and that keeping the peace is in their best interests.



## THE ATLANTEANS

The Atlantean landing force consists mainly of disciplined legions assembled from the homeland, though it also boasts Kehebet and Erebean irregulars gathered from the tributaries of Atlantis. The Atlantean army also includes a politically important complement of priests, calling themselves the Will of the Lady (referring to Selera, Atlantean goddess of the moon), as well as a contingent of wizards called Talons.

**Peterax, Atlantean Admiral:** Peterax is a strong, imposing admiral of the Atlantean navy, a shrewd veteran of many military actions. He wears full armor but moves lightly and gracefully within it. His face and arms bear dozens of scars, and he speaks gruffly; truly, he was born to be a soldier. He has no time for niceties, has only reluctantly come to this negotiation, and is most interested in returning to his camp to plan his battle strategy.

Many of Peterax's campaigns have been against the Trmmli; he comes from a merchant mother and a shipwright father, and so hates the pirates for the death they deal and the interruption to trade they represent.

**Anagorais, Talon:** Anagorais is both a powerful wizard and an Atlantean soldier of moderate rank. She is a tall, arrogant woman who wears regal robes (ostentatious by Atlantean standards) and bears a powerful enchanted spear as both a symbol of her rank and as a deadly weapon. Her primary motive is challenge; she

has come to do battle because she relishes proving that those with the power of magic can best those who rely solely on martial prowess. The Talons under her leadership share her aggressive stance, but their attitude is unusual among Atlantean practitioners of magic. Most Atlantean wizards become humble as they advance in the art, learning humility as they realize how insignificant they are in the grand weave of reality. Not so with Anagorais and her war-mages.

**Caul, Voice of the Will of the Lady:** Caul is a quiet man, the expedition's ranking representative of the Will of the Lady. The Will of the Lady is an order of priests that devotes itself to Selera, Atlantean goddess of the moon, and is particularly focused on her maternal aspect as represented by her draconic children. Like the other Atlantean leaders, Lycurgin has contacted and misled Caul. The tainted dragon has told him that the annexation of the town of Wytaul is an important and lofty goal, and is the will of Selera.

**Lycurgin:** A Many-Headed Drake, Lycurgin has been possessed by a dark spirit and become an unwilling pawn in the fiend's agenda of blood and destruction. He has taken the form of a dark-skinned, burly Kehebet man named Ma'hak. In this guise, he has hired on as a mercenary in Atlantis's landing force and lurks near the site of the negotiations, looking for an opportunity to disrupt the peace talks. In order for Ophois, the being possessing him, to gain sustenance, the feuding factions



## ACT ONE: CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

### RUNNING THE NPCs

If you're a new GM, you may be intimidated by the idea of running so many NPCs at once, especially since those presented here have so many disparate goals and outlooks. One useful way to help the players (and yourself!) keep everyone straight is to associate one particular mannerism with each NPC, and to always use that mannerism when acting for him or speaking in his voice. You might adopt a gruff voice for Peterax, for example, or speak with particularly precise diction as Anagorais. You may be surprised at how helpful this can be in keeping everyone straight. Not only that, it makes the scene more fun for everyone. When the players talk about the game later, they're more likely to remember and enjoy the "pirate woman with that gruff accent" than just another NPC that speaks with your voice.



must attack one another. Therefore, he will not go so far as to take on draconic form and shed blood with his own fangs, but rather will use verbal assaults to goad one side or the other into making rash statements or taking threatening action.

In his natural form, Lycurgin is scaled in rich scarlet, with black and golden spikes running down his back. His three heads bicker and snap at each other, gibbering and raving about death and pain, even though he only has one mind. This phenomenon is a symptom of the terrible taint-madness that Ophois has inflicted upon him.

### DEFENDERS OF WYTAUL

**Ytrigain of the North:** Ytrigain, a Daea fae of the Winter Court, is a veteran of the wars against the Fomorians. He is almost 10 ft. tall, and his muscles are clearly more powerful than any mortal's. Some whisper that titan blood runs in his veins and, in a way, the Fomorians are his half-brothers, which would explain why he despises them with such vehemence. His tall, ivory-skinned frame is decorated with thread-thin scars that make him look angular and fierce. He is quiet but firm and intense; as far as he is concerned, his valor is proven. He is suspicious of all outsiders and takes more ownership of the mortals near Elysium, especially those residing in Wytaul, than most fae. Despite his rumored heritage, he distrusts titans and finds them brooding and destructive. His friend, Peggon, convinced him that they would need Donar's help because the Atlantean host includes dragons.

**Peggon of Wytaul:** Peggon is a 30-year-old, brown-haired man of Atlantean descent. He is the mortal leader of Wytaul's humans and is intelligent and charismatic.

For the past several years he has been attempting to raise Wytaul's, and consequently his own, status among the fae, and does not appreciate Atlantis's attempt to wrest control of his people away from him. Peggon, and through him all of Wytaul, reveres a goddess called Gilleth—a moon deity probably inspired by his grandfather's Atlantean roots.

When things are not going his way, Peggon often calls for a break in the discussions so he can confer with Ytrigain. This is nothing more than a delaying tactic to disrupt his opponents' negotiating momentum.

**Donar, Titan Warrior:** Donar is a stoic, 40-ft.-tall titan who stands menacingly among the fae's front ranks. Though most titans do not typically involve themselves in the affairs of lesser races and have long since let their grudge with dragons fade, Donar is one of a few holdovers who still believes that killing a dragon is the only true test of a titan's valor. Donar travels among the smaller races in the hopes of flushing out draconic foes; in this instance, he was informed that a brood of dragons had joined the Atlanteans and plans to spring from hiding when the battle is joined. Thus, he joined the opposing side in hopes of encouraging them to come forth. If not for the opportunity to battle a dragon, Donar would be happy to walk away from the conflict. He remains silent through the negotiations.

**Scourge, Trmmli Captain:** The imposing Scourge is one of the most dangerous pirates of the Western Sea. Scourge has a deep hatred of Atlanteans, sparked by an envy of their seeming ability to command the ocean's currents. While the Trmmli are renowned as vicious maritime raiders, Scourge instead sees herself as a freedom fighter, resisting the Atlantean dominance of the trading routes of the Inner Sea.

## NEGOTIATIONS

Once the players have gathered and everyone is ready to begin, read or paraphrase the following text aloud.

*It is night. The full moon shines bright in a night sky devoid of stars. The moon is blood-red, and you can only pray that its color is not an omen of things to come.*

*You have an urgent mission on the edge of the Western Sea. There, two armies stand on the brink of battle. Some say they fight for land, others for vengeance, or perhaps for some other cause. Unless you can stop them, they will clash, and many will die. You have only until sunrise. Then, even wise words or proof of outside manipulation may be insufficient to stem the bloody tide on this beach.*

*You stand beneath a hastily erected pavilion several hundred yards from the shore on which the Atlanteans have beached their fleet. It was no trivial undertaking to summon both sides' captains of war together on the eve of battle, but you have done it. The two groups stand opposite one another, glaring with naked ani-*

*mosity. Seaward are the Atlanteans, commanded by General Peterax, the strong and stern Atlantean admiral. Landward are the fae and their assembled allies. On the Atlantean side are also representatives of the Talons (a group of aggressively militaristic wizards) and the Will of the Lady (a sect of priests dedicated to Selera, the Atlantean moon goddess). On the fae side are the mortal villagers of Wytaul (once Atlantean colonists, now wishing independence from that island), a band of scowling Trmmli (Inner Sea pirates and long-time enemies of the Atlantean fleets), and a single stoic titan, 40 feet tall, standing with sword ready and eyes alert, seeming to search the enemy lines for something specific.*

*The leaders of each group look to you for an explanation of this assembly. Peterax speaks: "Why have you called us here?"*

*Getting them here was the easy part. Now all you have to do is convince these sworn enemies not to slaughter each other. The moon tracks across the sky.*

## GETTING STARTED

After you set the scene and describe the NPCs, tell the players that they need to solve this issue with words rather than violence. Since this is a flashback, they remember very strongly that peace is their ultimate goal, and that attacking one side or the other would accomplish worse than nothing. One thing the PCs did have before coming to the table, however, was an hour of preparation. During this hour, each player can accomplish one goal. The sky is the limit in terms of scope and power; remember, the PCs are the mightiest creatures of the mythic age, even if they are currently in human form. The players may spy on any of the major players from either group, may scout out the general troops of either camp, may seek information regarding the area of battle, try to determine the combatants' motivations, or do anything else they can think of. Each PC may only accomplish a single task during this preparation time, but she will succeed quite thoroughly at that task. The result of that success is information. Each PC can learn one item of information from the following list by attempting appropriate tasks. Take aside each player and give her the learned information individually.

**Anagorais:** Anagorais leads a small group of Atlantean wizards in Peterax's army. She is vain and haughty. Ma'hak, a Kehebet mercenary in her

camp, gave Anagorais some valuable information: the fae deride humans' use of magic and possess powerful relics that increase their bearers' magical puissance. Anagorais wants to prove herself a better spell-weaver than the fae and wants to obtain their artifacts.

**The Atlanteans:** The soldiers of the Atlantean landing party seek to expand Atlantis's dominance across the surrounding lands, and as such they see Wytaul as resource: it is an established area of Atlantean control in an untamed land rich in natural resources and mysticism. The Atlanteans have no particular quarrel with the fae, but they see them as an obstacle to overcome. Their commander, General Peterax, with advice from his counselors, decided on the fleet's course and landing site.

**Caul:** Caul is the Atlantean expedition's high priest, and worships Selera the moon goddess. Ma'hak, a knowledgeable Kehebet mercenary, let him know that the fae worship false, demonic gods and suggested that controlling Wytaul is a lofty goal and a blessed undertaking. Caul agrees because he desires to do something truly worthy in his lifetime—lately he has been feeling the pangs of a crisis of faith.

**Donar:** Hailing from wintry Jotunheim to the north, Donar is a titan. Titans and dragons are historical enemies, but their conflict has faded in the past millennia. Donar is one of the few titans who still believes that





## REIGNING IN DRAGONS

The players may ask you what else they know about the situation: Who are the major power players in the area? What will happen in the future in this spot? What is their precise geographic location? What is the wider area like?



Although there is no reason not to relate things you think the dragons would know based on the background material, you should avoid allowing the players' concerns to expand too far beyond the challenge before them. The truce negotiation is the focal point of the flashback. While mythic age dragons undeniably have incredible knowledge, most of that knowledge does not inform the flashback, and therefore is beside the point. In short, try to make it clear that you are not keeping the players in the dark because their characters do not know what is going on, but because the situation is a little bit like a dream, and that a narrow scope is the nature of flashbacks in FIREBORN.



slaying a dragon is the only way to truly prove one's prowess as a warrior, and has joined the Wytraul alliance in order to combat a dragon. A hard-drinking troll told him that the Atlantean force included disguised dragons, and the only reason Donar is here is to fight them. Indeed, Donar sees the Atlanteans as the dragons' minions; the humans themselves are almost beneath his contempt. Donar is eager to slay his enemies and return to the north, where he has a dispute with a rival titan clan; he wants to wear a dragon's skin over his shoulders when he returns to deal with those other titans.

**The Fae:** The fae are on good terms with Wytraul, and find its humans fascinating and invigorating. They used to take a greater role in Wytraul's culture, but in the past several decades their influence has ebbed. Many fae in this land battle the Fomorians: deformed and evil giants to the north.

**Geography:** Wytraul is situated on the western border of Elysium. Elysium is the kingdom of the fae and is perilous for humans to traverse. The land surrounding Wytraul is rich in natural resources, but Atlantis is far to the southeast and not easily accessible. A deep and fast-flowing river lets out into the bay in which the Atlanteans have beached; farther up that river is a hidden flotilla of Trmmli raiding boats. Were these to be launched in a sudden raid, the Atlantean ships could be easily destroyed from the sea.

**Ma'hak:** Something seems strange about the Kehebet mercenary, but none of the PCs can determine what it is. He has more power than he lets on, that is for sure, but his disguise is impeccable.

**Peggon:** The leader of Wytraul's humans and their de facto high priest, Peggon does not consider himself an Atlantean. He cares deeply about his people, is friendly with the fae, and believes that the two cultures provide each other with mutual support, education, and entertainment. Peggon leads his people in the worship of Gilleth, a moon goddess similar to Atlantis's Selera. Someone—he does not remember who—whispered to him that dragons hid within the Atlanteans' forces, and he saw it as a stroke of good fortune that Donar happened to appear and request to join them a few days ago.

**Peterax:** A grim and humorless military man, General Peterax takes his job seriously and is devoted to his nation. He hates the Trmmli, having clashed with them in the past. He is a shrewd tactician but plans to leave only a skeleton force to defend his ships while he battles Wytraul's defenders. He believes that his army is the stronger one, and that the defenders have slim chance against him, despite Donar's presence. He is grateful to Ma'hak, a Kehebet mercenary, who told him of Wytraul's existence. He is unaware that the Trmmli have hidden forces that are ready to ambush his ships.

**Scourge:** Captain of the Trmmli, Scourge hates Atlanteans and looks for every opportunity to destroy their ships and slay their people. She thinks herself a superior combatant to the soft Atlantean military leaders and would like to prove herself against Peterax or Anagorais on the battleground. Scourge is also a canny veteran, and knows that her small force does not stand a chance against the Atlantean fleet alone; that is why she hopes to ambush them during the battle.

**The Trmmli:** The Atlanteans see the Trmmli as murderous pirates who prey on their merchant ships and outposts, while the Trmmli see themselves as freedom fighters combating Atlantis's powerful hold over maritime trade in the Inner Sea. This group of Trmmli despises Atlanteans immensely. Some of them walk openly with the defenders of Wytraul, but PCs that scout among the Trmmli will overhear that the bulk of their forces hide in a nearby river and hope to ambush the Atlanteans' poorly defended ships when the fighting begins.

Trmmli folktales tell of a monster that invaded their home island long ago, forcing them to take to the sea. Scourge's Trmmli crew places particular faith in this legend and hopes to some day gather enough strength to return and slay the beast.

**Wytraul:** Atlantean pioneers and native fae founded Wytraul about 40 years ago. The two factions met on good terms and remain friendly; they mingle with each other freely, though in the past 20 years the fae's influence in Wytraul has diminished. Wytraul's people lead pleasant and peaceful lives and do not consider themselves Atlanteans. They resent Peterax's violent stance and have no wish to be reabsorbed into their former culture. Wytraul's mortals worship a moon goddess, Gilleth, very similar to the Atlantean moon goddess Selera. Wytraul's leader, Peggon, is also the town's de facto high priest.

**Ytrigain:** This fae lord is protective of Wytraul because he is one of its founding fathers. He likes the

townsfolk, and his people are on good terms with them. Ytrigain spends most of his time in the north leading attacks against Fomorians (twisted and malicious giant-kin). Because of his history with these creatures, Ytrigain does not trust titans, and only Peggon's arguments convince him to allow Donar to remain in their camp.

Once the PCs have all accomplished their tasks, they will probably want to talk among themselves, and they may have some questions for you. You can tell them that they seem to have uncanny abilities of perception available to them; if they want to discern anything about the folks standing at the pavilion, they need simply ask the right questions, and may be able to gain information similar to the results listed above. Doing so should be difficult, but possible.

In the end, any single player can gain up to two pieces of information: one from previous scouting, and one from observing the individuals at the pavilion. Whether the players put those answers together or not is up to them and their problem-solving skills.

If the players ignore the fact that their characters do not yet realize that they are dragons and insist on attempting to turn into their draconic forms, play the ultimate trump card: this is a flashback, a memory, and though the players do not remember (and can therefore determine) the specific words their characters spoke or the specific actions they took, one thing is certain: they did not take on draconic form at this meeting.

## RUNNING THE NEGOTIATION

Once they are familiar with the situation, any relevant information they have gained, and all of the NPCs, the players must begin negotiations. They are free to try any strategies they like. They can meet with each side or even each individual separately or try to sway everyone at once with sweeping rhetoric. They can employ any arguments they want, and they can try to cajole, bully, or persuade any or all of the parties.

As they do, you must play the roles of the various captains of war, remembering that they all have different goals and animosities. Obviously, you should have their backgrounds and outlooks firmly in your mind. To help you figure out whether the players are succeeding, a point-based system for resolving the negotiation is detailed below. Each time the characters manage to change one of the NPCs' attitudes in a certain way, add a corresponding number of points to their total. When they accumulate 40 points, the players have sown enough doubt in some members or fostered enough confidence in others that—at the very least—the armies will not join combat at first light. See "Success" on page 15 for more information.

Do not make it obvious that there is a point system operating behind the scenes. It exists only to help you keep track of everyone's changing perspectives; the players should focus on the roleplaying challenge.

Some of the point-gaining criteria require you to make judgment calls. Only you can decide at what point Donar has been convinced that there are not really any dragons in the Atlantean force, for example. Rather than relying on dice, let the players' cleverness, the strength of their arguments, and the quality of their roleplaying dictate the success or failure of any given argument. Also, remember that even when you privately decide that an NPC has been convinced of something, you do not necessarily need to tell the players that the individual has definitely been swayed.

## TRACKING POINTS

The table below lists various criteria for gaining points, broken down by the NPCs to whom they apply. Each criterion is supported with a rationale, in parentheses, to help you understand exactly how it is helpful. Some have additional notes. Finally, each criterion has a point value, which is related to both the relative weight of that particular argument or revelation as well as the overall influence the NPC in question has on the situation.

This point system should serve you in keeping track of the negotiation. If it gets in the way, or if certain criteria or point values are not working for your situation or the tactics the players choose, feel free to adjust any element accordingly.

### PETERAX

#### *Pts. Criterion*

- 15 The PCs unveil proof that the armies have been brought to the brink of war through the trickery of an outside source. (No one likes to be manipulated.)
- 10 The forces of Wytaul agree to a truce first. (Peterax believes that his army is stronger and that it is his opponent's place to back away first.) This value applies based on what Peterax believes about his enemy. That is to say, whether the Wytaulians actually agreed first or not, if Peterax believes they did, the points apply. (At least until Peterax finds out someone lied to him.)
- 1 Peterax hears the Wytaulians disparage the Trmmli. (Peterax hates the Trmmli.)
- 5 Peterax becomes aware of the Trmmli skiffs lying in ambush. (While brave and proud, Peterax is not stupid; he realizes that a group of well-manned skiffs could seriously disable much of his fleet before it got out to sea, trapping his forces in a hostile land.)

### PEGGON

#### *Pts. Criterion*

- 5 An announcement from the Atlantean leaders that Wytaul is officially not beholden to Atlantis. (Neither Peggon nor his people consider them-



## ACT ONE: CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

selves part of Atlantis and are frustrated that the Atlanteans do not respect their beliefs.)

- 10 Peggon becomes aware that the Atlanteans worship Selera, a moon goddess not unlike his own. (Peggon is devout and is more willing to set aside differences if he finds common theosophical ground with the Atlanteans.)

### YTRIGAIN

#### *Pts. Criterion*

- 5 Donar leaves the host, perhaps because he learned he had no dragons to fight, for instance. (Ytrigain does not trust Donar.)
- 6 Peterax agrees to grant Ytrigain a contingent of troops to help him battle the Fomorians. (Ytrigain needs all the help he can get against the corrupt giants.)

### ANAGORAIS

#### *Pts. Criterion*

- 3 The PCs flatter Anagorais. (She is arrogant and vain.)
- 3 Anagorais comes to believe that the fae are not in possession of magic artifacts. (Lycurgin told Anagorais that the fae hoard powerful relics, and the wizard covets them.)
- 5 Donar or Scourge agree to duel Anagorais.

### CAUL

#### *Pts. Criterion*

- 1 The PCs lavishly praise Caul's service to his deity. (Caul craves validation.)
- 5 Caul learns that the religious leanings of the Wytaulians (especially Peggon) are based on a moon goddess. (Caul immediately sees this as a reason to cease all hostilities, instead hoping to use religion to bring the Wytaulians back into the fold.)
- 3 Caul learns that the fae battle Fomorians: misshapen, evil creatures. (After hearing a description of the Fomorians, Caul believes that they are demons, and he supports those who fight such evil.)

### SCOURGE

#### *Pts. Criterion*

- 5 Peterax agrees to a truce first. (Once Peterax demonstrates his cowardice, Scourge's lust for battle fades.) Like the similar condition for Peterax, this value applies based on what Scourge believes about Peterax.
- 3,3 Either of Scourge's allied factions stands down. (Scourge knows she cannot fight the Atlanteans

alone, and an eroding force makes her nervous.) This criterion can be met twice, once for Donar and once for either Ytrigain or Peggon.

- 4 Peterax or Anagorais agree to duel Scourge in single combat. (Scourge hates Atlanteans and relishes the thought of slaying an Atlantean officer.)
- 5 Any faction's formal announcement that they will accompany the Trmmli to their island homeland and help them hunt down and destroy the legendary sea monster that forced them to abandon their old shipping lanes. (The Trmmli hate the monster that supposedly ousted them from their homeland and want the honor of slaying it.) If the players agree to this mission, the monster hunt has obvious flashback potential later in your campaign.

### DONAR

#### *Pts. Criterion*

- 3 Peterax is publicly obsequious, admitting that Donar would have bested his forces. (Donar thinks of the Atlanteans as the dragons' minions, and he enjoys hearing them humble themselves.)
- 5 Donar becomes convinced that no dragons lurk within the Atlantean army. (Donar came specifically to fight dragons.) If Donar is convinced that no dragons hide within the Atlanteans' ranks, he leaves the battlefield.
- 5 The PCs formally announce that, sometime within the next year, they will journey north to Jotunheim and help Donar settle a dispute that he has with a neighboring clan of titans. (Donar hoped to return with dead dragon trophies to intimidate the other titans.) Such an announcement obviously has future flashback potential. Remember that Donar hates dragons, and if the PCs reveal their draconic selves in such a flashback, Donar is likely to attack them.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

While keeping track of the various arguments made and points earned is important, it's only one piece of narrating this scene for your players. You also need to remember that this is the introduction, not simply a scene that stands by itself. It shouldn't be too long, but neither should it leave the PCs feeling like they didn't get a chance to get into character. Also, the negotiations are a good chance to introduce narrative combat to your players, to work on pacing, and to practice the use of symbols and visual themes to connect flashbacks with the modern age.

## KEEPING THINGS MOVING

You have a great many options to keep things hopping if the players seem to be running low on ideas about how to proceed. Each of the NPCs has an obvious

agenda; you need only examine their criteria to see what they are. Donar might bellow out that what he'd really like to do is kill a dragon, for example, or Scourge might challenge Peterax to personal combat in a moment of anger. One of the generals might pull a character aside and inform him that he would be willing to stand down if one of the opposing leaders could be convinced to do so first, and so on.

On the other hand, if the players are making too much progress too quickly, remember that many of the NPCs truly despise one another. An inopportune insult or threat could easily derail the proceedings and require the players to shift into damage control mode before they can continue making positive progress.

## NARRATING DUELS

A few of the effects in the criteria above involve NPCs dueling, and the PCs might even, being adventuresome types, somehow get themselves involved in similar predicaments. If this occurs, remember: this is a narrative flashback, not an action flashback. Anything that happens in this scene in terms of dynamic action or painful outcomes is entirely up to your discretion. If Scourge and Trmmli agree to a swordfight at dawn on the beach, it's a great opportunity for you, as the GM, to practice your storytelling skills.

Have fun: describe such duels in cinematic terms as if they were scenes from a martial arts or fantasy action movie. In the end, it's up to you who wins or loses (unless one of the PCs is involved, in which case the PC should probably best his opponent). Maybe the duel ends with first blood, or maybe it ends in death. Perhaps the duelists remain bitter foes, or perhaps the duel allows them to learn to respect one another. Also, keep in mind that describing a duel in as dramatic and exciting a manner as possible sets a good example for your players down the road. When they get into action scenes and begin describing their characters' actions, they'll likely take a cue from the approach you used to describe the duels in the mythic age.

## THE PRESS OF DAWN

Throughout this flashback, use time pressure to give the negotiations a sense of urgency. Remind the players that when dawn comes, battle will erupt if a permanent solution has not been reached. You may even choose to give the players a concrete real-world time limit—30 minutes, say—to negotiate before morning comes.

Use the moon's march across the sky as your descriptive focal point for time's relentless passage. Since the moon is the flashback's touchstone, the players' sense of its presence will make what has happened seem more real and important when the modern age portion of the adventure begins.

## INEVITABLE SUCCESS

For the rest of *The Fire Within* to make any sense, the PCs must ultimately be successful in their negotiation, and the battle must be avoided. If the players fall short of the point total they need to bring about a truce, you may have to invent some last-minute pretense upon which a peace can be hung, such as an unforeseen reconciliation between two enemies or something as mundane as the petty bribery of a holdout party. In the end, the battle must be avoided, because an evil being called Ophois possesses Lycurgin, and the successful peace talks deprive Ophois of his sustenance and force Lycurgin out of hiding.

In your career as a GM, you will encounter situations where the players' success is all but necessary for the adventure to continue as planned. In such situations, the worst thing to do is let the players know that their success is inevitable. Doing so would destroy the scene's dramatic tension. Sometimes you can keep them from believing success is inevitable by presenting incremental failures that are tough but not disastrous. Their failures have obvious consequences and they will continue to struggle under the belief that things can come crashing down at any minute.

## SUCCESS

Once the players accumulate 40 points toward resolution, it becomes clear that critical mass for a truce has been reached. The presentation of the final argument that pushes the PCs over into success is a good time for a break or, if the flashback was the capstone of the character creation meeting, a good cliffhanger at which to end the session. Either way, a good way to promote the dramatic potential here is to have each side withdraw to confer and consider the arguments presented, then return with a final decision.

After the break or when the next session begins, read the following text aloud.

*After a long night of heated and sometimes desperate discussion and negotiation, it appears that your arguments have finally prevailed over the hatred, ignorance, and machinations that have brought these two armies to the brink of battle. You have finally convinced enough of the captains gathered here to turn back from this war. Although you harbor no illusions that you've made enemies into brothers this night, you have successfully accomplished what many feared was impossible.*



## ACT ONE: CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

*You feel a rush of success in your body and a cool breeze across your face. The moon hangs low on the horizon in the dark, starless sky . . .*

### SCENE 2: REUNION



Once the mythic age standoff has been resolved, proceed directly into the following narrative scene.

*The same full moon shines in the early 21st century over modern London. That celestial body is largely unchanged despite the many alterations to the face of the world over which it hangs. The mysterious group of people that prevented the shedding of blood under that moon seems to exist in this time and place as well . . . or at least, they exist in your memories, as real as the cold sweat on your skin, or the ragged breaths that emerge from your lungs, or the blood that rushes through your veins.*

*You've either just awakened from the most vivid dream you can remember, or come back into the moment after a dramatic vision—the most compelling daydream you can imagine—overtaken your mind.*

*Over the past weeks and months, dreams and visions like these have been coming more and more*

*frequently. You're not the only one to have them; since the Strange Times began, everyone's been complaining of waking dreams as intense as any drug trip, or nightmares dark enough to send the hardest man crying to his mum.*

Once you finish setting the scene, have each player describe the situation in which he finds himself after the flashback—in his bed, on a street corner, in an emergency meeting of the board of directors, or wherever. Have the player include a description of the character as well, including the state of mind in which the vivid flashback put him. Normally things like states of mind wouldn't be known to other players . . . but since the PCs are all members of the same brood and share (albeit unconsciously, at this point) one another's thoughts, a little insight into each others' mindsets is perfectly appropriate.

*The next day is Saturday. Your usual morning routine is eclipsed by thoughts of your dreams and visions of the night before. As you begin your day, you feel a sense of restlessness. You hear voices intruding upon your thoughts, yet when you look around, you see no one who could have spoken. The more you try to press them out of your thoughts, the louder they get. You hear names—names of people that mean more to you than family, friends, or lovers, yet you can't remember ever having heard them before.*

Let the players respond, describing how they deal with the situation. Regardless of what they try, nothing seems to help. The voices get louder and louder, and the players begin to be assaulted by more and more waking visions. Some experience vertigo from a feeling of flight, while others feel as if they are drowning in dark waters, and yet others suffer agony as if their bodies are on fire. Nothing seems to help—except movement. When they travel one direction, the pain and the visions worsen; when they head in another, they decrease. Inevitably, all of the characters must move in the direction that lessens the pain and confusion.

*After a walk, a drive, a bus ride, or perhaps a journey by train or Tube, you find yourself on Norwood High Street in South London. The voices and memories subsided the closer you got to this neighborhood, and almost cease completely when you turn off the street and pass through a wrought-iron archway at the corner of an aging brick building. You smell baking bread; the brick building seems to be a restaurant or bakery. You see a sign—"Abu Zaad"—and an arrow that points up a flight of exterior stairs, a re-purposed fire escape perhaps, that leads to the building's roof.*

*Arriving at the top of the stairs you see that Abu Zaad is a rooftop café. Small trees and climbing vines in colored pots create a sanctuary in the midst of this ethnic neighborhood in South London. Tables and chairs are scattered about. A young girl in a green*



*apron looks bored as she mans a cart in the corner that is laden with baked goods, fruit, and juices. The cold winds of autumn have crept into the city, and few Londoners have dared to brave the rooftop's chill this early in the morning. Just you and a few others.*

At this point, you should individualize the characters' meeting based on what you know of their backgrounds. A moment from each scion's past flashes into the minds of the others, and if the players have chosen their dragons' names yet, those names sound off like gunshots as they make eye contact for the first time.

After you set the scene, have each player describe his scion—what he looks like and what he is doing—to the other players. If the PCs are a new group that have never adventured together before, make it clear to the players that there is an undeniable connection between them, and that fate must have somehow conspired to bring them all together. In short, get them talking. In addition to all feeling the same familiarity and attraction to one another, they quickly discover that they have all been sharing the same dreams for the past few weeks—something that probably freaks some of them out when they realize it.

Other than the café employee (to whom no one feels particularly drawn), no one else is present. Some of the PCs may know each other based on connections they developed in the course of character creation. If so, great. Perhaps they arrived together, or, on the other hand, perhaps they are surprised to see people they know in a part of town they do not usually frequent.

If the scions are part of an established brood with a history together, of course, they need no excuse to be together and to interact. In that event, you should try to work Abu Zaad into previous adventures, so it is an established location where the characters have been before. (In this event, you will have to alter the boxed text above; it does not make much sense for an established brood.)

Whether they have a history or not, and whether or not they have ever seen Abu Zaad before, the PCs will almost certainly want to discuss the flashback that they all experienced the night before. But just as their conversation gets going . . .

*What's been happening to you has finally begun to sink in, to some of you at least. The girl by the cart has sullenly taken the orders of those of you who want food or beverages, and she picks up an empty basket to head downstairs to refill her cart. You hear her steps ring on the staircase, and then you hear quick steps coming up to meet hers. There's a cry, a thud, and suddenly there's a man in a blue poncho standing at the top of the stairs. He'd be almost comical-looking, if not for a jagged, bloodstained survival knife in his left hand and the splash of red on his poncho. His eyes are wide and bloodshot. From the sounds of it, he's not alone: more footsteps pound up the stairs.*

*You leap to your feet, and at that moment, you hear something that sounds like a cough from the parking*

## AMBUSH

Note that here the adventure deliberately circumvents the normal procedure for surprise for dramatic purposes. It may often be obvious who surprises whom during a scene; in such cases, especially when it is appropriate for the session's narrative flow, feel free to make that call without resorting to a round of dice rolling.

In this case, although the players might technically have been allowed to make Earth (Senses) tests to detect the ambush before the attackers launched it, we are also giving them the benefit of the doubt that the sniper's initial shot missed. If you prefer to go by the book, however, you are more than welcome to start things off with an Ambush test. See "Ambush" on page 131 of the *Player's Handbook* and adjust the description above based on the results of the tests.

*garage across the alleyway. You hear a bullet ricochet off metal, and the centerpiece of your table explodes into a cloud of glass shards. Blind luck just saved one of your lives, but as the man with the knife charges, you realize you'd better stop relying on luck.*

## SCENE 3: AMBUSH

### ABU ZAAD

The Abu Zaad is a small bakery and Middle Eastern eatery, with a rooftop café above the two-story bakery. Most of the tiled rooftop is full of tables and chairs for patrons, with a small, decorative cart in the northwest corner where the café's sole employee (the baker's daughter) vends foodstuffs. To the west an ugly, windowless, six-story building abuts the bakery's exterior wall, rising four stories above the café. For decoration, potted vines climb the first 10 feet or so of the ugly concrete wall. Attractive (and functional) waist-high wrought-iron railings guard the two-story fall on the other three sides of the roof.

Small ficus trees grow in pots around the roof, as do smaller potted plants. A character taking cover behind one of the trees gains +1 bonus die to defense tests against the sniper. The wrought-iron chairs are sturdy but no good for cover. The tables, iron with cracked-tile tops, are too unwieldy to use as weapons, but can be



## ACT ONE: CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

### OPPOSED TESTS

If you are new to FIREBORN, the act of the scions trying to spot the hidden sniper may be your first opposed test. This sidebar explains how to properly adjudicate this situation.

Normally, a sneaking character makes an Air (Stealth) test and a character attempting to spot him makes an Air (Senses) test (if he is actively looking for him) or Earth (Senses) tests (if he is not). After both characters make their tests, they compare successes: if the sneaking character scores equal or more successes, he remains undetected, while if the spotting character scores more successes, he spots the stealthy character.

However, some circumstances make spotting a hiding character more difficult, such as shadows or thick vines. In these cases, the spotting character must first spend some of his successes, as determined by the environmental condition's threshold, overcoming this obstacle. After spending these successes, he compares his remaining successes to those of the hiding character.

For example, the sniper in this adventure makes an Earth (Stealth) test and scores 2 successes. A scion attempting to spot the sniper makes an Air (Senses) test and scores 6 successes. Normally this is enough to detect the sniper, but, due to the vines and the fact that the sniper is using an animated pistol, the scion must spend 5 of his successes before comparing his remaining successes with the sniper's. That leaves him with 1 success vs. the sniper's 2 successes; the sniper remains hidden.

See Opposed Tests, pg. 35, and Stealth, pg. 45, in the *Player's Handbook* for more details.



tipped over to provide reasonable cover from gunfire (+2 bonus dice on defense tests against the sniper).

Customer access is afforded by the wrought-iron staircase bolted to the outside of the building in the alley to the east, once a fire escape. An elevator in the southwest corner once served all floors of the building, including the rooftop, but it has not worked for years.

### THE BUILDING

The building is a two-story brick affair, closed to the public, providing baked goods and Middle Eastern foods to a variety of restaurants throughout the city, including the café upstairs. The bottom floor is used for food preparation, with a wide variety of food stations, cutting surfaces, storage bins, and ovens. A collection of wheeled carts is used to move hot pans around the room. The upper floor is used mainly for storage as well as

housing a pair of small offices. An interior stairway connects the two floors, and the building also has a door from the second floor onto the fire escape, though it is barred from the inside. There is also, of course, the elevator, but as mentioned, it does not work.

There are four windows in the upper floor, which have been painted over but still open. Getting off the roof onto the window ledge without falling has a Climb terrain threshold of 3, and forcing open the window requires a Ready move.

### LOADING AREA

Behind the building to the north is a small parking lot and loading area shared by the bakery and a five-story sweatshop in which underpaid seamstresses labor, producing uniforms for the government. Both the eatery and sweatshop have large, garage-style doors that open onto the loading area.

A pair of rolling dumpsters squats against the bakery's wall. One of the two has one of its lids open, and a character could hurl himself over the café railing and aim for what appears to be the soft garbage inside—mostly scraps of material from the clothes manufactured in the sweatshop. The jump requires a character to cover 1 foot vertically (to vault the railing) and 4 feet horizontally, which for size 0 creatures like humans means 4 successes on a Jump test without a running start or 3 successes on a Jump test with a running start. If she succeeds, the character is considered to have fallen 10 feet (taking a maximum of 5 damage) instead of the 20 feet she would normally fall from the rooftop to the street (taking a maximum of 10 damage). For more information on falling, see page 153 of the *Player's Handbook*.

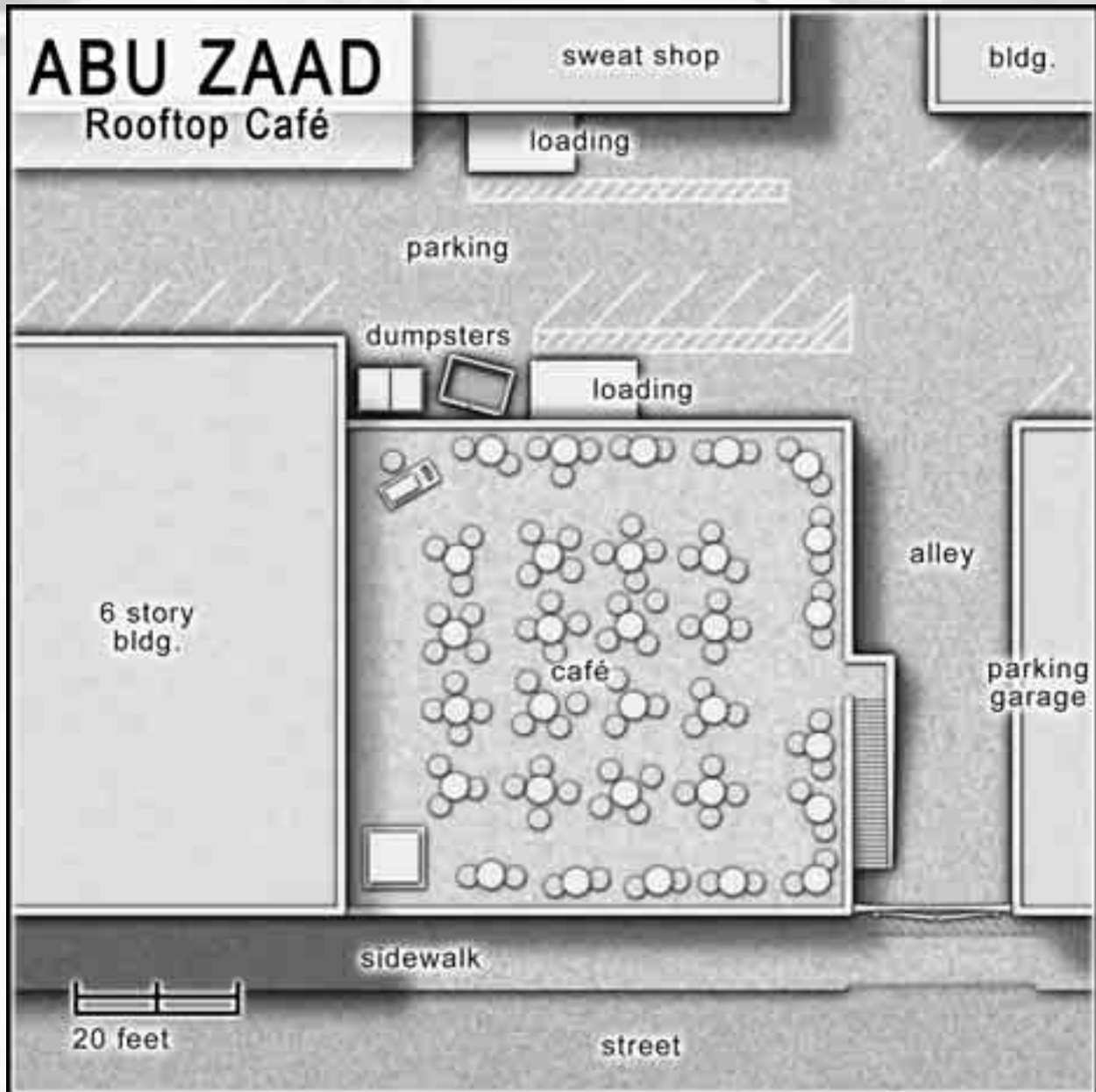
### TALL CONCRETE OFFICE BUILDING

Abutting the eatery to the west is a six-story concrete building with no windows on its eastern side. There are windows on its southward side, however, and a character who climbed out on a ledge (Balance TH 3) could open a window and get inside with a Ready move, revealing a nondescript, rather grungy office in a building full of the same. Failure to meet the Balance TH requires a reactive Water (Athletics) test 3, or the character falls 20 feet to the sidewalk.

### SWEATSHOP BUILDING

This five-story building, though made of concrete like the building to the west of the café, has plenty of windows. Unfortunately, all of them are on the other side of the loading area, well outside the distance most characters can jump.

This building—which is full of immigrant sweatshop workers sewing uniforms for the police, military, and other government institutions—does have a loading dock in back, whose garage door is closed. There is a pedes-



trian door next to it. This is usually propped open, though if anyone in the building sees that there's a deadly fight going on outside he promptly closes and bolts the door.

## PARKING GARAGE

The parking garage located to the east of the eatery is a three-story building whose western face (the one facing the rooftop) is covered, top to bottom, with thick vines that make it difficult to determine that the sniper is firing from the second floor (he is not an experienced assassin, otherwise he would fire from the higher ground of the top floor). A character attempting to spot the source of the gunfire must succeed at an Air (Senses) test opposed by the sniper's Air (Stealth) test. Since the

sniper is in fact nowhere near his gun (which he is animating using magic) and the vines cover the second story of the garage completely, this can be quite difficult. The environmental conditions cause a TH of 5 for Senses tests: the spotting character must spend 5 successes before comparing his successes with the sniper's. (You may wish to grant a scion an automatic success or two if he states specifically that he is watching for a gun barrel poking out from between the leaves or something similar.) See the **Opposed Tests** sidebar for more details.

Also note that since the sniper is trying to use the Stealth skill with an animated object, he can only use half of his appropriate base aspect score and half of his Stealth ranks (in other words, the pistol effectively has a



## ACT ONE: CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE



base Earth score of 2 and a Stealth score of 1).

At the mouth of the alley that separates the eatery from the parking structure is a heavy iron archway. As it must accommodate delivery trucks and the like, the arch is actually at a level nearly even with the rooftop café. The archway has a Balance TH of 5, so a character could cross it to reach the level where the sniper is concealed. Otherwise, it is 12 feet across the alley to the parking garage ledge, including 2 feet of vertical clearance to get over the railing: TH 10 without a running jump, or TH 7 with a running jump.

Each level of the parking garage is about half-full of cars, mostly older models in this part of town.

## COMBATANTS

The characters are under attack from a horde of escapees from an insane asylum. There are two attackers for each scion present. The power that controls them instructed them to scrounge for clothes in dumpsters, steal them from street people, and the like, so they have no identifying attire. Their statistics and varied appearances follow. (Simply discount the descriptions at the end of the list if there are fewer than six scions in the party, or invent more if there are more than six.)

## ESCAPED INMATES

The attackers all possess identical statistics, save for the first attacker, who wields a survival knife (damage 6/L) in his left hand. He is an ex-soldier from the Gulf

War who managed to hide his trusty military-issue knife on the asylum grounds before he was committed. The darkness possessing him urged him to unearth it before coming to Abu Zaad. The veteran relished using the knife in the war, so it has become a karmic item. (In his combat sequences, replace his club strikes with knife strikes.)

### POSSESSED ASYLUM INMATE

**Era** Modern; **Race** Natural being; **APL** 1/2; **Init** 7; **Aspects** Fire 4, Water 3, Air 3, Earth 2; **Health** 3m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 2; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

#### Combat

**Club** 6/M, **Fist** 3/L, **Kick** 4/M; **Sequences** Ferocious Insanity (see below)

**Agg** F7 / W3 / A1 / E1—Dash + Power + Club: Dmg +5  
**Neut** F4 / W3 / A3 / E2—Power + Club + Press +  
Press: Disadvantage (physical) 2

**Def** F3 / W5 / A2 / E2—Power + Club: Dmg +5, push 1

#### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 2, Melee 3, Quickness 2, Ranged 1, Senses 3, Stamina 1, Stealth 2, Travel 2, Will 1; **Edges** Brutal, Resilient 1; **Powers** Ferocity 1

### SAMPLE APPEARANCES

A mustached Caucasian man in his 40s wearing a blue poncho; a black woman in her 30s wearing a yellow t-shirt and jogging shorts; a college-aged, Caucasian female in torn jeans and a pullover sweatshirt; a heavy-set Hispanic man in a black garbage bag, with holes punched out for his head and arms; a sixty-something man of mixed ethnicity, filthy and smelly, wearing nothing but a large gray coat; a 12-year-old Asian boy with a bowl cut, wearing a white t-shirt hanging to his knees and no pants; a Caucasian man in his 30s, shirtless, wearing a stained pair of khakis; a male, Nordic punk rocker, wearing dirty jeans and a “Kiss The Cook” apron, with tattoos aplenty and green hair; a black woman in her 20s, with ornate braids, wearing a lumpy muumuu; an orthodox Jewish man in his 30s, with a beard and side-curls, wearing glasses, gym shorts, and a red Adidas windbreaker; an elderly Caucasian woman in sweatpants and a flowered shirt; an Indian man of indeterminate age in a white tank top and pajama pants.

The inmates fight with vicious, animalistic fervor. They throw themselves at their enemies with no fear for themselves and are hell-bent on beating the PCs to death, but they display few tactics and do not work well with each other. Indeed, something seems wrong about them, and you may wish to read or paraphrase the following when the combat begins.

*The disparate individuals fling themselves across the rooftop, practically frothing at their mouths, carrying baseball bats and broken tree branches and two-*

## METHODS TO MADNESS

The escaped lunatics fight with ravenous hatred. Ferocious Insanity is a new fighting style used by crazies and mind-controlled mooks who care nothing for themselves and are untrained in proper combat. Other characters, even PCs, can use this style if you wish to allow it; the club strikes can be replaced with strikes from any Medium weapon, punches can be replaced with any light weapon strikes, and kicks can be replaced with hindclaw attacks.

### FEROCIOUS INSANITY (2)

Sequence	Moves	PR	Payoffs
Big Smack	Power + Club	2	Damage +5, push 1
Pound and Smash	Club + Fist + Press	1	Damage +5
Swinging Charge	Dash + Power + Club	4	Damage +5
Bone Bludgeon	Power + Club + Press + Press	2	Disadvantage (physical) 2
Lay About	Club (I) + Ready + Ready + Club (II)	1	Damage +10
Run and Batter	Dash + Club + Spin + Kick	1	Damage +15
Stick and Nail	Power + Power + Power + Club	5	Daze
Skull Crack	Stride + Spin + Power + Club	6	Stun

*by-fours. They move toward you with vicious purpose, but their eyes, wide and frightened, betray something deeper. Indeed, their eyes roll and glance about, and the people look pale and unwilling, as if their minds do not understand what their bodies are doing and they are terrified of it. Nevertheless, their bare feet slap against the tiles, leaving fading, sweaty footprints as they rush at you.*

Ophois's influence forces these individuals into combat against their will. Nevertheless, they fight ferociously, though not intelligently, and try their best to kill the PCs. They show no mercy and do not respond to vocal entreaties. The inmates cannot speak, and only utter grunts, screams, and other non-lingual sounds as they fight. If an inmate dies, falls unconscious, or is apprehended, a burst of white flame, edged in angry black, chars his skin and incinerates his clothes, turning him into a blacked husk. Characters touching the combusting inmate take 10 burn damage (a Water [Quickness] test lessens the damage by 2 per success).

### THE SNIPER

Mark Garren, a slightly more sane and conscious servant of Ophois, controls an animated pistol with a silencer that fires at the scions. He hides behind a stairwell, well-hidden from view and with quick and easy access to the ground. Ophois possesses Mark and controls his actions to a degree, but the young man's mind rebels at what his body does. Combined with his natural cowardice, the sight of any of the PCs moving toward his hiding place is enough to break Ophois's hold, allowing Mark to flee.

The PCs will not encounter Mark at this time, only his antique Luger P-08 (damage 22 ~ range 100 ft. ~ reload 3/6 ~ ammo 9). The pistol has effective scores of F 2 / W 2 / A 3 / E 3, Ranged 1, and Stealth 1; the pistol uses Aim as a mental action and fires once every two turns as a physical action (needing an additional turn to recock itself after each shot).

### TRAPPED IN A NIGHTMARE

After the battle, much as they would like to, the characters cannot seem to wake up from the nightmare into which they have stumbled. The assassins' bodies all burst into flame as they fall or are captured, and the daughter of the café owner has been brutally gutted, leaving no witnesses. In the battle's aftermath, quiet, heavy and strange, fills the rooftop.

*You breathe hard from your exertions, glancing around at the devastation. Surely someone must have heard or saw what transpired. Yet the surrounding neighborhood is eerily silent, and over your panting and heartbeats the quiet seems sinister and unearthly. You hear cars humming several streets away, but the roads surrounding Abu Zaad host neither vehicles nor pedestrians. It is as if the people living here abandoned the place, quickly and silently. Sweat trickles slowly down your neck.*





# ACT TWO:

## THE HUNT

Still reeling in the wake of the battle against the asylum escapees, the PCs will be looking to find some meaning behind the attack. It is immediately obvious that the madmen had one purpose in mind; the death of each and every one of the scions. While their own delusions and madness might have driven some of them to murder, why would they all attack the PCs, people they had never before encountered? And why all at once?

Act Two covers the PCs' investigation of the recent attack at the café, and possibly the police's investigation of *them*. After using what contacts they can and putting two and two together, the PCs will eventually find Mark Garren, another scion. That encounter will lead to the brood's first action flashback, a fight with Mark's tainted and possessed draconic self in the mythic age.

The completion of that battle, and the freeing of Mark's mind from Ophois's sway, will bring both answers and questions. It will be made clear that a dragon, tainted and possessed by a demon, sparked the conflict between fae and Atlanteans in the opening narrative flashback of the adventure. Also learned will be that creature's name and title: Ophois, the Opener of Ways.

From there, it would seem to be that more investigation is in order. Before the PCs can get far, however, the clues come searching for *them*. Depending on the GM's wishes, one or more power groups of modern London approach the brood with offers of information in exchange for varying levels of service. The PCs may accept one, some, all, or none of these offers, as they see fit; while their choices in the short run will simply determine how much of their own resources they must expend to find their foe, in the long run those decisions may have far greater consequences.

Eventually, on their own or with assistance, the PCs will find a tie between recent events and an insane asylum just south of Cambridge called the Open Way Home. Upon making their way there, they will be ambushed by a strange but mostly harmless group of assailants: a group of Seelie fae, revenants of the mythic age. The fae believe the PCs to be servants of Ophois; once the two parties' identities are made clear, the fae welcome the PCs into their grove.

The fae are only too happy to fill in whatever gaps the PCs may be missing in the story, explaining not only the details of their circumstances but also clarifying the scions' natures as the reincarnated forms of ancient dragons from a mythic age. The exposition is interrupted by an assault from the fae's counterparts, the spirits of the Unseelie fae, sent by Ophois to destroy them. The attack only drives the point home: something must be done about Ophois, and soon.

# SCENE 1: BURNING QUESTIONS



*All of the attackers lie dead at your feet. Even those that fled or were merely subdued have spontaneously combusted, leaving behind nothing but blackened corpses. A foul, sooty smoke hangs heavy in the air, and the stench of charred flesh and hair is overwhelming. Some of the bodies still crackle as the searing heat cooks them from within. Perhaps even more disturbing is the small detail that you notice: all of them have had their teeth torn from their mouths. Who are these people, and why did they sacrifice everything to attack you?*

In the aftermath of the attack, the PCs will be left standing at the center of a horrifying scene; the poor souls that attacked them will have spontaneously combusted after they were knocked out or made any attempt to flee. The one stroke of luck is that there appear to be very few bystanders in the area. With no physical evidence to prove who their assailants were, the scions will be left with very little to go on. Before they can begin to investigate the situation, however, the PCs must decide whether or not to go to the authorities.

## POLICE INVOLVEMENT

Whether or not the police become involved is up to the players' actions during and after the attack. If any bodies are thrown off the edge of the building, if the fight migrates off the rooftop café into the streets or other buildings, or if gunshots are fired (not including the assassin's silenced pistol), the police will arrive within 10 minutes of the precipitating event.

Alternatively, of course, civic-minded and lawful PCs may opt to contact the police immediately.

Regardless of who or what tipped the police off, if they find the PCs at the scene they will question them thoroughly and with intense suspicion. Any PCs carrying weapons or acting aggressively will be arrested and escorted to the station before being subjected to even more intense questioning. Whether seen as part of the problem or as innocent victims, the police have no evidence that the PCs did anything but defend themselves, and so must eventually release them. The official story they will go with, regardless of the PCs' stories, is that a gang of cultists went mad, either through dabbling in drugs or magic or both, and the PCs were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The fact that all of the attackers

are charcoal is attributed either to dark magic or to the attackers lighting themselves on fire as part of a ritual. Because the bodies cannot be identified, and the mentally controlled staff at the Open Way asylum never reported the escape of any inmates, the investigators never make the connection that these folk were mentally ill or that they had escaped from an institution.

## FLIGHT

If the PCs choose to simply flee and either come back later to look for clues, or perhaps try to forget the whole thing happened, they can "get away with it." If no one calls the police or moves the girl's body, the café and bakery owner comes back at around noon and finds the body on the stairwell. Grief drives him nearly mad, as she was his only remaining family. The poor man takes the body into the eatery, locks the door behind him, and simply sits inside for weeks on end, staring at his daughter.

The attack was not in a residential area, and the only witnesses to any aspects of the attack were either confused enough, scared enough, or distracted enough that that they can't or won't identify the scions. It will be some time before friends or business associates report



## KARMIC FINDS



The only noticeable pieces of gear not destroyed by flames were two weapons: Mark's pistol and the first lunatic's survival knife, drenched in the blood of the café waitress and any other PCs he managed to slash.

The gun is a dead-end as far as clues go; its serial number has been scratched off and its age means that it could have been stolen from any number of personal collections since the Second World War. The knife, on the other hand, is the PCs' first encounter with a karmic item. It is a rank 2 item, and as such cannot be used more than once throughout this adventure without being depleted permanently. Allow each PC an Earth (Ka) 3 test to notice the significance of the knife. Any time the knife's karmic powers might be useful during the adventure (to harm ephemeral creatures, heal wounds, resist taint, etc.), allow the PCs an Earth (Ka) 4 test to realize that the karmic power of the knife could be useful in that manner. Alternatively, any PC may make an Air (Knowledge: Occult) 6 test to determine all of the known powers of these so-called "totem" or "power" objects, and the ways in which those powers may be activated.





## DEALING WITH COPS

Running the authorities can be problematic: you don't want to completely disregard realism, giving the PCs impunity to act however they want without fear of dealing with the police or government. On the other hand, you don't want them to be paralyzed due to a fear of being apprehended by law-enforcement personnel or, worse, going to them for help whenever danger threatens. The real issue is combining realism and action while still forcing the PCs to take a starring role. Ideally, police can act as a resource for you and your players, either as a source of exposition, to urge them toward certain actions, or as a plot hook. Just make sure that legal details do not stifle your game.

In this case, the key focus is to keep the adventure moving. It has just begun, and should not be bogged down in legalese and processing. Therefore, unless the PCs do something really stupid, they do not wind up in prison or forced to flee the law. If the PCs contact the cops, run the questioning scenes in as much detail as you like. Detectives arrive and question the PCs. They seem frightened and skeptical, and despite listening closely, are determined to invent their own story about the attack. In the end they tell the PCs, "We'll let you go this time, but you better stay out of trouble. We see you involved again in ritual or gang activity, we'll book you, no questions asked. Understand?" This statement is meant to discourage the characters from going to the cops in the future, as they are now highly suspect in the law enforcement world. Hopefully, this will force the players to solve their problems themselves without resorting to the law.

any suspicions or concerns they have to the City Police, by which point this adventure should be well over. It is only a matter of time, however, before guilt-wracked witnesses or fingerprints put the scions at the scene . . . but that is a tale to be told in another adventure.

## INACTION

If the PCs do nothing but stand around, the events will eventually resolve themselves. As mentioned above, the café owner returns around noon, and goes mad with grief upon seeing his daughter's body. He directs that anger at the PCs, the volume of which should attract bystanders, do-gooders, and nosy neighbors (many of whom finally worked up the courage to come see what was going on, now that the first fight is

over). One of these observers will contact the police, who arrive within minutes. The situation then proceeds as described under **Police Involvement**.

## DIGGING THROUGH THE ASHES

The way the next scene plays out is largely up to the PCs. Let them roleplay their responses to the alarming events that seem to have swallowed their lives; some players may have their characters react with violence, withdrawal, or even denial. Regardless of the stance they choose, force the PCs to eventually return to one another. Either they discover that they aren't safe alone, or the rest of the brood has skills they need, or even that they keep running into one another by accident. Fate is trying to tell them something, and the message should be clear: *you belong together*.

Eventually, whether due to further attacks by inmates or horrific nightmares, the PCs will be driven to act. The first step to solving their problems is to investigate the scene of the attack. Several outlets for clues are presented below.

## AFTERMATH AT ABU ZAAD

If the PCs return to the café and the police have been contacted, the atmosphere there is one of a recent train wreck. Bodies are in the process of being bagged up, civilian bystanders are gawking at the emergency vehicles, and workers in nearby buildings are being questioned. If the PCs left without already encountering the police, they may get roped into the questioning. Some of the bystanders may look intently at the PCs and make moves as if to identify them as being in the neighborhood at the time, but none actually come out and say it. If the PCs still do not go to the police at this point, they will have firmly committed themselves to dealing with the situation themselves.

The PCs can gain information from police or bystanders via a variety of methods, both above-board and underhanded. Individuals near the café who have information are listed below.

## UNIFORMED COP

*Making Contact:* At the scene; Air (Interaction) 2 or Air (Trickery) 2 to start talking.

*Description:* A gruff, broad-shouldered young cop in uniform, keeping bystanders back from the police tape. He starts off as stern and unyielding, but can be easily swayed to open up if he is complimented on the crispness of his uniform, his performance as a guard, etc. After all, he's just a rookie looking for some approval.

*Story:* *The cop relaxes his official stance somewhat, putting on an air of someone who faces this sort of thing all the time. "Gang-related attack. Looks like some folks were eatin' breakfast on the roof when the*

*freaks came up on 'em. Could be magic, could be drugs. Nothin' to worry about now, though. The assailants is taken care of, nice 'n' proper." He smiles grimly, "they won't be botherin' another soul."*

If the questioner uses supposed fear or concern for the victims, the officer will describe what he knows: that no one other than the assailants was harmed, that the victims ran off, etc.

### MARIA THOMPSON (BYSTANDER)

*Making Contact:* At the scene; easily persuaded to talk, no roll necessary.

*Description:* An exhausted, middle-aged woman standing near the loading area that the café shares with the sweatshop. She is wearing a dirty apron and bandana and puffs nervously on a slim cigarette. Her brown hair hangs over her shoulders in a greasy unkempt mess, and her eyes dart about nervously above her forced attempt at a good-natured smile.

*Story:* *The woman stammers as she speaks, struggling to find words as the smell of burnt human flesh wafts across the street from the café. "I don't know, I was just taking a break from the shop and I see this long line of . . . mean blokes, I mean loony! They go charging up the stairwell. Then the shouting . . . and then the fire and smoke. I locked the door and took all my girls, and we hid in the boiler room 'till it was over."*

### GAVIN BROMSFELD (BYSTANDER)

*Making Contact:* Sitting on the corner of the street; will only talk for liquor (a 0-cost purchase at the liquor store down the way) or as a result of intimidation (an Air [Interaction] 3 test).

*Description:* An old geezer sitting in his rusted out wheelchair. He's covered in filthy, soiled blankets, and a black garbage bag hangs on the back of his wheelchair, overflowing with knick-knacks and trash. He smells

absolutely horrendous, has likely missed the last several days' worth of baths, and is obviously drunk. He gives the PCs a warm smile if they move to speak with him, revealing several missing teeth; if the PCs don't acquiesce to his initial request for liquor, the smile quickly fades.

*Story:* *"Did the coppers suss it out, then? I didn't see much, m'self," he says in a hoarse whisper, "me eyes're bloody bad you know. 'n at wind sure did pick up 'fore they come, those nutter hooligans runnin' by. Back in my day, crazies like that were kept locked up, fer the good o' the common bloke. Bloody 'ell!"*

### MAHIR AMAN (BYSTANDER)

*Making Contact:* The PCs find a box of biscuits several blocks away from the Abu Zaad café, apparently dropped in a hurry and knocked about. Closer inspection shows that there is blood on the box. The words "Mahir's Catering," along with an address, are clearly written upon the box. If the PCs go to that address they find a small business matching the name on the box. Mahir himself is

there, and quite bored; happy to have the company, he is eager to talk.

*Description:* The caterer's is a small one-story affair with Arabic writing along the face of the front window. English underscores the foreign language, proclaiming that Mahir's catering has "The best cultural foods in town, presented with aplomb." Mahir is a Pakistani man in his early forties with a thick head of gray hair and a bristling beard. He wears an apron that was white at one time, now soiled from years of use. He speaks in a strong accent, and his demeanor is pleasant and boisterous.

*Story:* *"Yes, I am on my way back from the Abu Zaad café and bakery, this place is very good, excellent pastries. I get from there a box of biscuits, every morning, and baklavah. Best in town. Then this man, this big English man with this dark hair, he runs right past me, knocking the biscuits. But not the baklavah! I stop to pick up the biscuits, and I see they are ruined, this*



## ACT TWO: THE HUNT

*man got blood all over them! So I look up to see, is this man all right? And I am mad, too, of course, because, you know, the biscuits! Well, and so the man has turned to point at me, and he has these marks in his palms, they are bloody, very bloody. And he makes a sign at me, like this, you know?" The old man gestures emphatically with one hand, his pointer finger and pinky finger raised in a symbol of the evil eye. "And then he says to me, and his voice is very dark, very hollow, like a drum. 'Do not tempt the wrath of Lycurgin, foolish man!' This is what he says, I swear. But, at least I have the baklavah." Mahir shakes his head, chuckling at the strange habits of youth.*

### PARKING LOT ATTENDANT

*Making Contact:* Sitting in the lot attendant booth at the entrance to the parking complex. Easily persuaded to talk, no roll necessary. He will relay what he knows once the PCs ask about any strange people in the area.

*Description:* Mr. Tom Harper is the lot attendant in the parking complex across the street. Mr. Harper is a man in his middle years; his graying blond hair thins dramatically atop his head and he wears a thick bushy mustache perfectly trimmed over his lip. Tom speaks slow and ponderously, as though he is evaluating every word that comes to mind.

*Story:* "Strange geezers? Well, yeah, I saw this bloke walk up about 'alf past nine this mornin'. A tall 'un, with real black hair and a thick brow," he pauses for a moment, "You know the uni-brow thing? Anyway, he comes walkin' right past 'ere. It was his eyes that caught me; gave me shivers. The gent had a real square jaw, and he was built strong; broad shouldered, thick neck, the whole works. I wouldn't piss around with 'im if I saw 'im in a dark alley. Or a lit alley. Anyway, he saunters past the booth, no car or nothin', an' I figure 'e musta parked in 'ere last night. But no cars come down. Anyhow, 'bout a 'alf an hour later he goes runnin' by me, I mean tearin' like the devil 'isself was after 'im. I strolled up there when I had me break, ta make sure 'e didn't bust a car up or nothin', but everything looked fine ta me."

Scions may attempt an Air (Craft: Drawing) test to sketch a portrait based on Mr. Harper's description. Make a note of the threshold met with the test; it will come into play later.

### ASKING AROUND

The level of information the PCs can dig up by asking around depends on whether or not the police were alerted.

### LADIES OUT ON THE TOWN (BYSTANDERS)

*Making Contact:* Two women in their early twenties are out binging at the local bar, talking loudly about the "nutter going all aggro on poor Keyla!" An Air (Interaction) 2 test (or 4, if there was a police investigation) will get the ladies to explain that one of their friends, Sasha, and her small daughter, Keyla, were assaulted earlier that day.

*Description:* The two women, Sarah and Ivy, have obviously been having a good time at the local pub. They lean heavily on each other and have very wide smiles. Both are dressed in tight-fitting clothes and wear gaudy jewelry. They interrupt each other constantly as they tell their story.

*Story:* "Well, we weren't there, exactly, but we heard about it! This bloke, arseholed or nutter I dunno, he ran 'em right over! Our friend Sasha, that is, and her daughter. Sasha says she yelled at 'im to bugger off, and he just looked at 'er, and she says there was blood runnin' all down 'is chin! Then 'e just did a runner."

If the police investigated the attack at Abu Zaad, the two women will be somewhat wary of strangers. It requires a convincing lie (that perhaps the PCs are members of the Guardian Angels, or the police) to get them to tell the PCs where Sasha and her daughter live; even then, it probably only works because they're drunk. If there was no police investigation of the attack, the women will be fairly loose with information, and if they do not give the PCs Sasha's address, they will probably let slip her last name, allowing the PCs to track her



down. If there are any males with a base aspect score in Fire of 5 or 6 and a wealth of 3 or higher, one of the women will flirt shamelessly with him, giving the PCs all the information they need if he promises to take her out for drinks later.

## SASHA AND KEYLA WOOD (VICTIMS)

*Making Contact:* Sasha and Keyla can only be encountered through the information gained in the above encounter.

*Description:* Sasha and Keyla live in a run-down apartment complex in Brixton. The PCs arrive on the doorstep of a graffiti-covered apartment building. Kids run around in the streets and parents watch from disheveled porches, variously yelling at the children and demanding that they be careful. There is a constant smell of rotten rubbish and the structures all around appear as though they could collapse at any moment. The squeal of a baby crying can be heard nearby and a domestic argument echoes from inside of the apartment. An intercom rests on the wall near the door; if the PCs use it, they will hear a voice on the other end that is distorted by static, but is likely that of a young woman. The PCs will need to make an Air (Interaction) 4 test to get her to even answer the door; if the police investigated the attack at Abu Zaad, the TH increases to 8.

*Description:* An attractive, blue-eyed woman in her early twenties answers the door, looking rather cross. She coos calming words to her daughter, who is hidden behind the door. As the PCs speak with her, she leans down and picks her crying child up into her arms the way a mother bear would guard her cub.

*Story:* “We were on our way to the market, and this bloke tore straight through the lot of us! He had a real aggro look in his eyes. Complete nutter, y’know. I told him to bugger off, and he turned and just stared, and the blood. All down ‘is chin. I’m not sure, but I think his Hampsteads were all yanked out or rotted away or something! Bastard scared Keyla half to death.”

An Earth (Interaction) 3 test will reveal that the child is clearly not upset anymore, as she looks up at the PCs with sparkling blue diamond eyes and an innocent beaming smile. Before the PCs can speak to the girl, the young mother closes the door gently and leaves them alone on the doorstep.

Keyla actually wasn’t frightened at all; that’s simply her mother attributing her own fear to her daughter to make herself feel better. In fact, the child found the experience all very interesting . . . it reminded her of the dreams she’s been having lately about flying, and strange people, and being a magical creature like one of those monsters in the cartoons on the telly. In fact, the child is a scion. She does not play any further role in this adventure, but may be a seed for future adventures; an Earth (Ka) 4 test will convey that the child has a power for good and nobility growing within her.

## CHRIS SHIELDS (VICTIM)

*Making Contact:* Chris is a college student from Texas, backpacking through Europe on the cheap. He has made it his mission to hit every pub and club in the city in his three weeks in London. Chris has already earned himself several pints by recounting his tale of fighting off a brutal mugging by a psychopath; any PCs who regularly frequent their local pubs will overhear the story second-, third-, or fourth-hand. The PCs can follow the information trail to eventually find him at his residence in a hostel a few blocks west of Trafalgar Square. Chris likes complaining, so he is happy to tell the PCs about what happened over breakfast or a beer (or both).

*Description:* Several dozen students smile and nod at the PCs as they enter the hostel, eager to meet locals. Chris is sleeping in late if the PCs get there in the morning, or just heading out to the pubs if they get there late. He is a tall, dark-haired guy in his early twenties. There is a swelling, purplish bruise on his right temple. His accent is obviously American, and the PCs can guess he is probably from a southern state.

*Story:* “Yeah, it was crazy! I just finished my espresso at the bistro, you know the one on High Street? This waitress there is hot. Hey, you live here, do you know her? Name’s Heather. No? Anyway, I finished my espresso, and this guy jumped me. He was completely out of his mind. A total goddamn lunatic. You guys should keep these people locked up, ya know? In Texas you’d get the chair for running around like that. Eyes all bloodshot, face pale. Blood on his chin. All he had on was this long shirt, like a nightgown or something. So I’m backing away, figure he’s some kind of protestor or something, you know, hates Americans, thinks we’re evil. But then this dick picks up a two-by-four and swings at me! I blocked it pretty good but it still clocked me on the head. I got all dizzy and must’ve blacked out. I came to and realized I was down to my boxers! I mean, I knew you people were hot for American jeans, but come on!”

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE (EVENT)

*Making Contact:* Later that evening, an Earth (Senses) 4 test will allow the PCs to notice postings on public kiosks for a neighborhood watch meeting. If the police investigated the attack at the Abu Zaad, the TH for the test is only a 2, as the notices are literally plastered everywhere. Hand-written and photocopied, they include a headline that states “protect your family from the crazies!” If the PCs attend the meeting, they will find that it is being run by the Guardian Angels, a civilian vigilante group.

*Description:* A few dozen working-class adults, most of them parents, sit in uncomfortable folding chairs in the basement of a church. At the front of the crowd are several burly young men and serious-looking young women, all wearing black cargo pants and red baseball





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caps with a black symbol of a sword sprouting angelic wings.

*Story:* This is a brainstorming meeting organized by a modern, local incarnation of the Guardian Angels, a vigilante organization that came and went in New York City several decades ago. No one at the meeting was personally attacked, but a few folks heard rumors that some “nutters” were seen running around the neighborhood, and the Angels decided to use this as an opportunity to get their message out and recruit more members. While the PCs cannot gain any useful information here, the Angels may be useful as contacts in later adventures.

## THE LOCAL PAPER

If the PCs want to research the news feeds to see if they can find any clues, they need to make an Air (Research) 3 test. If they succeed, give them a photocopy of the newspaper clipping below.

## THE TELLY

If the PCs do not directly look for news reports, you may instead use these snippets throughout the modern age scenes in Act One and Two to provide a sense of flavor.

### Five signs your spouse is a vampire



See VAMP, Page 4

### London Taxi possessed by ghost

By R.E. Bourelle

Two more sightings of the haunted London Taxi have been reported between Charing Cross and Hyde Park Corner.

“I mostly see him on the night shift,” said Cindy Fritz, a new stand clerk at the Charing Cross Tube station. “I almost got in the first time he stopped for me, until I realized I could see right through him. I decided to wait for another cab.”

The driver is reported as being a well-dressed elderly man with a head of wild white hair, spectacles, and a bowtie. He is reported as being translucent upon closer

See GHOST TAXI, Page 3

## Incident Aggression

By A.J. Dobberpuhl

Local authorities have reported a string of strange robberies throughout the city over the last three nights. Victims report that the aggressors appear frightened and desperate. With each case, the criminal steals only his victims’ shirt and trousers and then disappears into the night. When there is resistance, the attackers have resorted to violence. There have been a total of four muggings since Wednesday.

Sources speculate that the instances are linked to the rise in undeniably supernatural incidents throughout the city. Londoners are frightened and bewildered by what many call the “Strange Times,” and reaction have been varied. Gang violence is at an all-time high in the city’s South Side, and demonstrations in North London are on the increase; the population is crying for the government to enforce some order upon the chaos.

Dr. Kenneth Brighton, a psychologist at Oxford University, explains that the recent crimes are entirely unrelated to any supernatural activities.

“The robberies are obviously class related,” Dr. Brighton explained in an interview on Friday, “it is a sickening display of degradation. As a way of stripping the ‘haves’ down to the level of the ‘have-nots,’ the attackers strip the victims of their clothes. The victims are then forced to find their way home, into their elite communities, utterly humiliated. Until the government steps in and promotes bridging pro-



This photo was taken by a bank security camera shortly after one of the muggings. Could this be one of the perpetrators?

grams, our city will continue to suffer embarrassment at the hand of these cultural terrorists.” There are others that believe quite the opposite. Iain Malcolm, a respected paranormal expert at the SPR, gave a strong speech at Trafalgar Square late last night to a crowd of over five hundred.

“We need to understand the new world in which we live,” Malcolm said to an eerily silent multitude, “London is facing its greatest challenge to date; the creatures of our nightmares are now very real, new diseases are creeping through our best med-

ical defenses, and now the people of our city are giving in to the fear and paranoia that is being perpetuated in the media. Londoners need to come together and educate themselves about the changes we can no longer sweep under the carpet.”

In the meantime, authorities have yet to form a real connection between any of the crimes. Officials advise complete cooperation with the suspect if you are attacked. Police are looking for any information regarding these events and request that those with reports call in to their local stations.



## TELEVISION REPORTS:

“... a dramatic rise in violent crimes in the London area. Sources report that over the past several days numerous people have been beaten and their clothes stolen, leaving them bruised and half- naked. While local officials are looking into the matter, there has been little progress in the investigation . . .”

“... police officials are baffled by the alarming rise in car theft as if overnight. Over five cars went missing in the dead of night, mostly from local farmsteads north of London . . .”

“... are you calling me a liar? It was bloody Hannibal Lecter in the flesh! Me and me mates saw ‘im creepin’ through the bushes over there, and when we called out, the bloody fool took off running, naked as the day he was born!”

## DIGGING UP DETAILS

### POLICE CONTACTS

There is the chance that someone within the group will be a police officer on the London force. This will certainly add an interesting element to the investigation procedure. Having an officer in the party will help alleviate suspicion (although it will not remove it entirely), but it will also open up avenues not normally available to most other players. For starters, if a PC can produce his badge, all of the NPCs listed under Aftermath and Asking Around are immediately co-operative, but what they say remains the same.

Also, the scion will be able to access police databases and run criminal record checks. Despite this great advantage, it will prove fruitless until he speaks with witnesses to gain some sort of starting point.

Being a police officer certainly makes access to information much easier; it is finding the clues that produce results that is the hard part. As the GM, allow a police officer PC to feel that his chosen profession is coming into play. Roleplay the various NPCs to reflect that they are speaking to a member of law enforcement, be it divulging information grudgingly or with complete admiration and respect.

Also, keep in mind that the PC may want to take a look at the bodies from the crime scene with a forensic mindset. If the PC inquires about viewing the bodies after they have been transported away, he will be given vague answers that merely inform him of the bodies being taken out of their jurisdiction (in fact, they have been acquired by LN-7).

### PORTRAIT SKETCH

It's possible that the PCs could end up with a sketch of Mark Garren, either from the description by the parking garage attendant or by Mahir from Mahir's Catering. Either way, they will need access to a police database to

do a photo comparison. If one of the PCs has the police background or has the edge Network (police) 3 or more, this can be done legally, and takes about four hours before a result comes up. Otherwise, the PCs will have to break in the hard way; hacking the police network requires an Air (Tech: Electronics) 6 test. The hack and subsequent search take two days, minus six hours for each success above the TH. Add six hours for every point the sketch test was below 4, or subtract six hours for every point the sketch was above 4.

By a stroke of luck, the search turns up a rather surprising result: The description and sketch match a young man, Mark Gerren, with a recent criminal record. He has been fined and sentenced to community service for theft of blood from a medical clinic. He was considered misguided and deranged, so he was let off easy. The police profile lists his current address as being a low-rent flat on Holloway Road, near Barbican station in Islington.

### FINDING LYCURGIN

If the PCs do not get a sketch of Mark, the name Mahir gave them can give them a clue: Lycurgin.

An Air (Research) 1 test will give the PCs the basic information that Lycurgin was a figure in Greek myth who was driven mad by the gods. Anything higher will also uncover page after page of posts on various magic, occult, and past-life sites by someone with an ID of “Lycurgin.” The poster seems to gravitate to forums that involve dreams as gateways to other lives as well as to sites that focus on blood magic. His profile on one of the sites includes a picture of him: a broad-shouldered, dark-haired man with a square jaw and uni-brow.

The PCs can track down “Lycurgin's” real name, and therefore address, with an Air (Tech: Electronics) 4 test; alternatively, the PCs can e-mail Mark directly, perhaps posing as fellow occultists seeking his companionship or advice. Mark is very unstable, at this point; an Air (Trickery) 3 test will convince him to meet the PCs; he gives them his address, as he almost never leaves his flat unless he has to.

## SCENE 1A: UPPING THE ANTE



If the scions simply decide to leave well enough alone, holing up somewhere or simply going on with their lives as though nothing happened, more of the asylum inmates who escaped will attack.

The point of an additional attack is twofold. First, it convinces the characters (if they had any doubts) that the situation will not go away by itself. Second, it can



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keep things interesting if any of the players are getting bored with the investigation, or if their scion characters are not particularly adept at intellectual pursuits.

### ENCOUNTER #1:

If one of the scions owns a vehicle, let the action take place on his drive home from work. Set the scene in a relatively quiet neighborhood where traffic is very light. When the PC stops at a light or sign, two or three patients attack. One of them shatters the windshield with a makeshift club.

### ENCOUNTER #2:

Two patients smash through a PC's front door when he is relaxing and watching the telly. This is a great scene in which to use improvised weapons like lamps, chairs, and beer bottles.

### ENCOUNTER #3:

The last encounter should put the PC in a very awkward position or possibly even endanger a loved one. Examples could include a date at the theatre or in the park or a social event where the PC's career is at stake.

## SCENE 2: ON THE RUN



Lycurgin, or as he is commonly known in the modern age, Mark Garren, holds the key to the scions' attackers: the name of the demon that commands them. Mark understands that he is a servant to Ophois, but is quite oblivious as to why. Like the scions, he has undergone flashbacks; unlike them, however, he has no brood to alleviate the fear or pain that these images bring. He sacrificed his connection to his brood in the ancient mythic age when he gave himself to Ophois. Now, Ophois himself acts as Mark's only broodmate.

While Ophois cares nothing for Mark's sanity or happiness, he does desire him to be as powerful as possible. The demon has therefore done what he can to accelerate Mark's awakening. The man who was once a simple librarian is now capable of superhuman feats. Mark has only left his apartment on a few occasions since returning from the asylum. He hopes that in time Ophois's voice in his head will disappear, and he can return to a normal life.

### MARK GARREN

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

#### Combat

**Fist** 3/L, **Foreclaws** 9/L, **Kick** 5/M; **Sequences** Eastern Small Style

**Agg** F6 / W3 / A3 / E4—Dash + L Foreclaw + R Foreclaw: Dmg +15

**Neut** F3 / W3 / A5 / E5—Crouch + Foreclaw: Dmg +15

**Def** F1 / W7 / A3 / E1—Dodge + Ready + Kick: Dmg +10

#### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 3, Casting 3, Interaction 4, Ka 2, Knowledge: Modern Cultures 3, Knowledge: Science 4, Knowledge: Street 3, Knowledge: Survival 4, Melee 3, Quickness 4, Research 4, Senses 4, Stealth 4, Travel 5; **Edges** Casting 3, Mentor 3, Paranoid, Skill Specialty (Senses: keen hearing), Survivor 3; **Spells** Rank 1—Cat's Eyes, Clarion Call; Rank 2—Slow the Lving (B); Rank 3—Animate (A); **Powers** Clarity 3, Earthstride 3, Gaze of the Predator 2, Group Mind 1, Heightened Senses (hearing) 2, Instinct 3; **Draconic Traits** armor 1, body (beast), foreclaws; **Traits** tainted; **Legacies** Quickened Body, Quickened Mind\*

\* Because Mark is possessed by Ophois, he effectively gains the Quickened Mind legacy.

Mark lives on the third floor of an apartment complex of low-rent flats. The neighborhood is bad, but Mark's building is worse. When the PCs approach his apartment, Mark's heightened sense of hearing tips him off that they are not what they seem; perhaps he hears them talking amongst themselves, or trying to sneak up on his flat, or even the clank of weapons and the cocking of guns. As they get to his door, Mark wrenches open the window and escapes through his window, using his Wallcrawler power to get to the alley below. The PCs should hear the rushed exit, and will have enough time to bust into the apartment and notice that the window is open. Looking down, they see the following.

*At first you don't see any movement on the street below. That's when you realize that your target is not on the street, but on the wall of the building. Clinging to the wall like an insect with all four limbs, a broad-shouldered, dark-haired man is face down and scurrying his way eerily down the brick wall toward the street.*

The chase is on.

The PCs have several options for catching up with Mark. The most expedient (and most dangerous) is to leap from the window after him. A fall from this height causes 12 damage; this is lessened by 1 for each success on a Water (Athletics) test, or by 2 for each success if the scion thinks to look for and land in the open dumpster in the alley.

Alternatively, the PCs may attempt to climb down the wall (TH 6) using the rain gutter or a makeshift rope using Mark's curtains and bedsheets (TH 4). Finally, the PCs may simply use the stairs; Fire (Athletics) 2 tests let them hustle down the stairs, while Fire (Quickness) 4 tests let them leap down a landing at a time.

If PCs jump out the window, they will start the chase scene 100 ft. behind Mark. If they rappel with a makeshift rope or leap down the stairs, they will be 150 ft. behind him. If they climb down the rain gutter or hustle down the stairs, they will start the chase scene 200 ft. away from their target.

## THE CHASE

Mark is mentally unstable, confused, and thinks the PCs must be out to kill him. He is fleeing for his life. The apartment is filled with nothing but shredded books and accumulated trash; the PCs will have to chase him down to get the information they need. He heads off down the streets and alleyways of London.

## ON THE STREET

Each turn, the PCs and Mark pass through streets, down alleyways, and over obstacles with varying terrain thresholds. Several terrains and obstacles have been presented for your use, below; feel free to link them together in whatever way seems most dramatic. Each character may string together a sequence of all Athletics or all Quickness moves (maximum number of moves each turn equal to base Fire score) to overcome those obstacles. Each Athletics move is assumed to be a combination of Climbs, Jumps, Sidesteps, and Strides, allowing the character to travel 20 ft.; each Quickness

move is assumed to be a combination of Dashes, Rolls, and Spins, allowing the character to travel 40 ft. Do not bother rolling initiative; as a chase scene, everyone participating should act simultaneously. When a PC ends a turn within 20 ft. of Mark, he uses his Earthstride ability to sink through the street, at which point you should proceed to **In The Tube**, below.

### TERRAIN

### THRESHOLDS

Empty street	Athletics 1 or Quickness 1
Rubbish-strewn alley	Athletics 2 or Quickness 4
Crowd of pedestrians	Athletics 6 or Quickness 3
Chain-link fence	Athletics 2 or Quickness 4
Pile of trash	Athletics 2 or Quickness 8
Crossing Traffic	Athletics 6 or Quickness 4
Derelict Building	Athletics 4 or Quickness 8

## IN THE TUBE

When a PC gets close to Mark, read the following aloud.

*The fleeing man must hear the pounding of your feet and the panting of your breath as you draw closer. He turns to look at you, eyes burning with an even mix of fear and hatred. As he sneers over his shoulder, you realize that he seems to be shrinking . . . no, not shrinking, but sinking. As you scramble after him, Mark descends through the street itself, disappearing entirely.*



Mark literally disappears into the ground using the Earthstride power. PCs may make Earth (Senses) 3 tests to hear the telltale rumble of a Tube train underneath them, or may make Earth (Travel) 3 tests to remember that there is a Tube station nearby. In order to keep all of the PCs in the action, the scions that are farthest behind in the chase should be the closest to the Tube station.

When the scions give



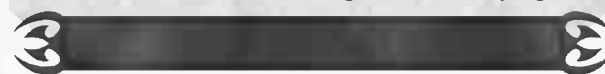
## RUMBLE IN THE TUBE

As written, the adventure assumes that Mark Garren, terrified and confused, will collapse at the end of the chase. After the dramatic chase scene, the players are likely to be yearning for a fight, which is why you immediately pull them into a flashback. While perhaps expecting a knock-down dragout rumble in the Tube, they instead get a mythic brawl between powerful dragons!

However, you may wish to reward your players with an extra fight scene in the modern age, giving them the chance to face off against Mark as another scion. You may feel free to do this, giving Mark a violent instead of peaceful reaction to the scion who catches up with him. However, keep in mind that whoever catches up with Mark is likely to be facing him alone for at least several turns. Also, as an awakened scion, Mark has legacies. These, combined with his greater powers and his ability to manifest draconic traits, make him an extremely dangerous opponent.

If you do decide to run this combat and it goes unfavorably for the PC (or for Mark, who still needs to pass on valuable information before any trigger-happy PCs kill him), the cliffhanger style of scene switching can come to your rescue. If a scion sustains a mortal wound in a fight with Mark, that could be the touchstone for the flashback in which the brood as a whole gets a chance to “hit back.” Likewise, if Mark sustains a mortal wound, the dramatic power of his imminent death could set off the flashback to the last time these same beings, the brood, caused his death.

If a scion being wounded is the catalyst for the flashback, Mark will realize what he has done after the flashback, and in remorse will make the ultimate sacrifice: he casts the Clarion Call spell, taking the PC’s wounds upon himself. If Mark’s being wounded is the catalyst for the flashback, he manages to utter the information about Ophois before dying.



chase and run down the stairs into the Tube station, they will see crowds of people screaming and pointing at the ceiling. Read the following aloud.

*As you leg it down the stairs leading into the station, you hear a cacophony of screams and shouting. When you near the bottom, you see a line of parted people all staring towards a fleeing man. Several folks are still pointing at the ceiling, and one man yells to no one in particular, “He fell right through the bloody ceiling!”*

*You can hear a train coming around the bend and slowing to a stop at the platform. Mark looks back only once, a look of panic on his face as he bolts towards the nearing train. The doors open and the fleeing man slips between the doors.*

The PCs have a few options for navigating through the crowd to get to the train before it pulls away: Fire (Athletics) or Fire (Quickness) tests allow them to push or dart their way through the throng of excited people, Air (Interaction) or Air (Trickery) tests will convince or cow the people enough that they’ll part for the scions, and an Air (Travel) test will allow the PC to remember a shortcut behind the newsstand to the end of the platform. Any of the above tests will get the PCs there in time, but how close they are to Mark when they board depends on their success: 6 or more successes get the PCs on-board one car behind Mark; 4 or 5 successes get the PCs on-board two cars behind Mark; and 3 or fewer successes means that the doors are closed and the train is pulling away, so the PCs need to make an additional Fire (Athletics) test 4 to jump on the back and hang on. By the time they get in, they’ll be four cars behind Mark.

Read the following aloud as the PCs chase Mark through the train.

*Mark shoves several bystanders to the ground as he tears through the congested crowds aboard the train. As you follow behind him, you feel the weight of the overcrowded train crush down on you, slowing your progress dramatically. People curse and scream at you as the hot pursuit continues.*

Mark is trapped aboard the train and has nowhere to go. The PCs will catch up with him before the train stops unless a scion does something stupid (like attempting to disperse the congestion by firing a gun). Such an action only makes things worse as people scream and move away from the shot with all possible speed, yanking on the emergency brake. In the confusion, Mark will escape. Otherwise, the PCs will catch up with Mark after a few minutes of pushing and dodging through the cars’ occupants.

## GIVING THE DEVIL HIS DUE

Unbeknownst to the PCs, Mark is more than just an antagonist in this adventure; he is also their salvation and, in the short run, a touchstone. When the PCs catch up to him, read the following aloud.

*Panting heavily, you slide open the doors separating the Tube cars and see your prey. He is hunched over in the center of the Tube car, breathing heavily like you. As you move towards him, the last of the car’s occupants rush past you with terrified eyes. “I wouldn’t touch him, man, he’s a leper or something,” a hipster murmurs to you on the way past. Seeing the look in your eyes, he quickly moves on.*



*When you move closer, you see that the runner appears to have sunk in on himself, as if his exertions have drained him. He turns to you, his hatred replaced by a beseeching need. You see eyes that are no longer human, but instead have become a reptilian yellow with a narrow vertical slit in place of a round pupil. He is clutching his arms to his chest, and at the end of them are no longer hands of pale flesh, but instead hardened, curved claws, huge and knotted with scale and muscle. Rather than seeing them as the potential weapons they are, he appears only to register them as a strange deformity. He holds them forth to you, sobbing, and says “What am I?”*

## SCENE 3: AWAKEN



As soon as Mark asks the terrified question, the answer to which the scions subconsciously know all too well, the PCs enter a flashback in which they take on the forms of their draconic selves for the first time. Read the following aloud.

*As you look at the hideous claws emerging from the man’s sleeves, a new memory awakens inside you. The claws belong not to a human, but to a dragon. He is not crouched before you, but rearing above you. Rather than fear, his eyes show rage and hate. And finally, instead of a human face above those claws, you see the head . . . no, heads . . . of a dragon.*

The brood is locked in mortal combat with Lycurgin; it is the day following the achievement of the peace accord at Wytaul, and while the fae and Atlanteans have parted in peace, there is one creature that will not let the day end without bloodshed: Lycurgin and the demon that possesses him will starve without being able to feast on the souls of those killed in battle. After the talks, Lycurgin approached Peterax in his Kehebet form and attempted one last time to get him to attack. When Peterax refused, Lycurgin became enraged and began to transform. The brood was being celebrated by the Atlanteans in their nearby tent as thanks for their intercession. Hearing the barely coherent but obviously murderous scream from Peterax’s tent, they transformed to their natural forms and rushed to do battle. Lycurgin rips Peterax’s body in two, then sees the brood approaching. Eager to engage in battle as a way of pacifying the gnawing hunger within, he launches himself at the PCs.



## ACT TWO: THE HUNT

### SAUTHAGON

**Era** Mythic; **Race** Supernatural being; **Breed** Many-Headed Drake; **APL** 8; **Init** 10; **Aspects** Fire 4(3), Water 5(4), Air 6(5), Earth 4(3); **Health** 7m; <5 / 5+ / 10+ / 15+ / 20+ / 25+ / 30+ / 35+; **Size/Reach** 4 / 20 ft.; **Armor** 7; **Taint** 40; **Stride** 60 ft. (Moderate)/75 ft. (Fast) on all fours; Fly 75 ft. (Fast, mnv 1)

#### Combat

**Bites** (3) 12/M (ignores armor), 12/M (gripping), 15/M; **Claws** (4) 9/L; **Sequences** Crushing Mass, Entrapping Defense, Ravager, Street Fighting

#### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 6, Casting 4, Interaction 6, Knowledge: Ancient Cultures 4, Knowledge: Occult 4, Knowledge: Science 3, Knowledge: Survival 4, Medicine 6, Melee 6, Quickness 6, Ranged 6, Senses 6, Stealth 6, Trickery 6, Will 6; **Spells** Rank 2—Aegis; Rank 3—Counter Weave of the Third Order; Rank 5—Coruscating Sphere; **Edges** Casting 4, Daunting 1, Forceful Will (gaze) 2, Resilient 3, Survivor 5; **Powers** Alternate Form 2 (forms: burly Kehebi man; troll), Clarity 4, Crushing Will 1, Earthstride 3, Gaze of the Predator 4, Group Mind 1, Heightened Senses (hearing) 1, Instinct 5; **Draconic Traits** three heads (with horned, vicious, and gripping skull traits), **Traits** tainted; **Legacies** Quickened Body, Quickened Mind\*

\* Because Lycurgin is possessed by Ophois, he effectively gains the Quickened Mind legacy.

If Lycurgin is destroyed, read the following aloud. If the PCs lose, alter the text appropriately.

*Suddenly the great dragon roars in pain, blood raining to the ground like a downpour wrought of nightmares. He crashes to the ground, sending dirt and debris in every direction. The ebon skin of your enemy shrivels and cracks as though sapped of all moisture, and a foul stench of rotten meat hangs heavy in the air. Slowly, the ash and stench of the battle are blown away on the wind, and gentle rays of golden light from the sun glitter off of the sheen of your dragon scales. You look into the now dull eyes of your enemy...*

*And realize that the man in the subway, kneeling before you, has those same eyes. He is the dragon, Lycurgin, reborn in human form. As to what that makes you, you cannot be sure. Mark stares wide eyed at you; perhaps he shared the vision too. A single tear of blood trickles down his cheek as he croaks out a few strained words.*

*"I did what I could. I tried to shut him out. He's too strong, though. Ophois. The Opener of Ways. He will take me. He has always taken me."*

### LEARNING TO FLY

This is the first scene in which the PCs are able to fully use their dragon abilities. This scene should be full of great descriptions that emphasize the sheer power their ancient bodies possessed. Lycurgin/Ophois will fight until he is killed, no questions asked. The demon-possessed dragon is easily a match for any one of the PCs, but should not be able to stand against their combined might for long.

However, there is a chance that your players will be the victims of poor dice-rolling or will make tactical mistakes; after all, using the vast array of a dragon's powers can be daunting. If it looks like the PCs are losing, you may use one of the following options.

- One of the PCs gives into the fear and confusion of the flashback, and wrenches the rest of the PCs out of it before Lycurgin can land a killing blow.
- One of the PCs suffers extreme doubt in the modern age, and that colors events in the flashback. When that PC realizes this via an Earth (Ka) 5 test, he can come to grips with it. All wounds sustained by PCs are healed and all karma returns. This should give them the upper hand against Lycurgin.
- Despite Lycurgin being about to win, he is still starving; any killing blows are significantly weakened, so that such characters are dropped to down instead of dead.

No sooner does Mark utter these words than Ophois realizes that he has been betrayed. The demon drives the fury of his power into Mark's mind, and the man dies of a massive brain hemorrhage. However, the PCs caught the name Ophois before the demon could act; all they have to do now is figure out what to do with it.

## SCENE 4: CHOICES



The vision and their apprehension of Mark leaves the PCs with the question of how to connect their visions and the name with the madmen that seem intent on murdering them. While the various clues throughout the earlier scenes may lead them to understand that the source of

their troubles is nearby, they will have no idea where to even begin looking. There are a few ways the PCs can find out the significance of the name Ophois, as many of the power players of the modern age seek the scions out for their own reasons. This scene allows you as the GM to introduce as many factions as you desire; each offers its own unique options for future campaign development.

## THE GEHENNA CONSORTIUM

Recently, during one of the divinatory rituals that the Consortium regularly performs, the names of the scions floated into Marcus Sagarius's awareness. He does not know what they are, but believes them to be power players who deserve watching. As such, he has ordered that they be approached and primed for recruitment. The brood is to be pampered with whatever they need: money, power, or information. A few days after the attack at the Abu Zaad cafe, agents from the Consortium will approach the scions when they are all together in a pub or some other suitable place of social gathering, preferably someplace quiet and tucked away. To begin the scene, read the following text aloud.

*A pair of burly men dressed in black suits enters the room in the middle of your conversation. Their eyes roam about the room, calculating, inspecting, and their hawk-like stares seem to take in every detail of their surroundings. One of the men nods to your table and walks forward; his face is serious, as though a smile might actually kill him. As he reaches you, he says "I represent a man who has requested a meeting with the lot of you. He waits outside and he kindly asks that you give him a few moments of your time."*

The PCs are more than likely going to be suspicious of the men in black offering assistance for no apparent reason. Play on the tension of the scene and describe the messengers as entirely emotionless, their demeanor unsettling and disarming. If the PCs become violent, the men will retreat as quickly as possible; the Consortium will then contact them via telephone, instead, making the same offer that Mr. Harrisfeld offers below.

Mr. Harrisfeld, a high-ranking member of the Gehenna Consortium's "board of directors," waits outside in a limousine. If the PCs agree to meet with him, Mr. Harrisfeld will enter the public establishment and speak with the PCs there, though he will insist on a quiet booth.

### GEHENNA CONSORTIUM MOOK

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

## PERSISTANCE

The Gehenna Consortium is very objective-based; if a door is closed, they break down the wall beside it. Should the PCs decide to decline their offers, the Consortium will find another way. Remember, the Consortium has every reason to spend their resources on finding out who these individuals are. If they prove to have innate magical talent, it would certainly bolster their already impressive power base. A few ways in which the Gehenna Consortium may decide to coerce the PCs to an agreement are listed below.

The Consortium can easily access and ruin a PC's credit rating and bank account by erasing all of his records. The targeted PC's available wealth is reduced 0. He soon thereafter receives an encrypted e-mail stating that he should cooperate, or his account will remain as-is. Gehenna would much rather have the PCs join willingly, but they are not above using blackmail as a bargaining chip.

The Gehenna Consortium also understands the value of positive reinforcement. One or more of the PCs may suddenly find that their financial records have been altered for the better, their available wealth having been increased by one.

It's important that you make it clear that the Gehenna Consortium is very determined to reach an agreement, despite never truly revealing who they are. The PCs can continue to decline their help as long as they want, but they will keep coming.

### Combat

**Glock** 22 22 ~ range 100 ft. ~ reload 1/3, **Fist** 3/L, **Kick** 4/M; **Sequences** Street Fighting, Underhanded

**Agg** F8 / W3 / A0 / E0—Power + Power + Fist: Daze  
**Neut** F4 / W3 / A2 / E2—L Fist + R Fist + Ready + L  
Fist: Disadvantage (physical) 1

**Def** F1 / W6 / A2 / E2—Spin + Ready + Fist: Dmg +5, disadvantage (mental) 2

### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 3, Knowledge: London 2, Knowledge: Street 2, Melee 4, Quickness 3, Ranged 3, Senses 1, Stamina 3; **Edges** Aggressive 1 (Ranged), Daunting 2

### MARTIN HARRISFELD, GEHENNA CONSORTIUM SPOKESMAN

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



## ACT TWO: THE HUNT

### TAIL 'EM!

It might happen that the PCs decide they want to follow the agents after the encounter. The Gehenna Consortium should remain mysterious, so you need to keep the PCs from trailing them back to, for instance, their headquarters; at the same time, this is a good chance to lighten the mood of the game if it is becoming too “dark conspiracy” for your tastes. A number of suggestions to make following the agents memorable are listed below.

— Mr. Harrisfeld goes straight home to find his wife on the front porch looking none too happy. The PCs witness the woman berating her husband, demanding to know where he was for the last few hours during their kid’s birthday party.

— One of the agents goes to a laundromat and spends a few hours washing his underwear.

— One of the agents fills his car with petrol while smoking a cigarette.

— One of the agents, who happens to be more obese than the average man in black, goes to a donut shop and buys a dozen donuts, then heads to an Overeater’s Anonymous meeting.

This should add a human element to some otherwise imposing characters, and will lighten the mood of the game, if even for awhile. Keep in mind that the agents will definitely watch for a tail, and you should allow them a chance to notice the PCs using the Senses skill.

#### Combat

**Colt Python Elite** 24 ~ range 150 ft. ~ reload 1/6, **Fist** 3/L, **Kick** 4/M; **Sequences** None

#### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 2, Interaction 4, Knowledge: London 4, Knowledge: Occult 1, Knowledge: Finances 4, Melee 2, Quickness 3, Ranged 3, Senses 2, Trickery 3, Will 2; **Edges** Allies 3, Mentor 1, Network: Occult 1, Network: Business World 2

### WE ACCEPT YOUR OFFER

The PCs may welcome any help at all to figure out how to connect the attacks to their own strange resurfacing memories. If the PCs accept a conversation with Martin, read the following.

*The messengers escort a man through the front doors of the pub, introducing him as Mr. Harrisfeld. He wears a perfectly pressed black suit with a match-*

*ing tie that hangs over a gleaming white button-down shirt. He offers a bright, pleasant smile as he extends his hand.*

*“My name is Martin Harrisfeld, and I represent an organization interested in your plight,” he says as he snaps open a briefcase. “I am here to present a proposal to assist you in any way possible.” Martin pauses for a moment and looks each of you in straight in the eyes. He reaches into his briefcase and produces a single manila folder. “If you are interested, this folder contains a set of instructions that you can use to contact us. We have access to information or money, should you be in need. In return, we ask only that you remain open to suggestions we may have, or perhaps to working for us in the future. My employer has the resources you need and he is most anxious to hear from you. Good day.”*

With that, Martin motions to the other black-suited men with him and they all take their leave. The manila folder sits on top of the table waiting to be opened. Martin will be vague and evasive if the PCs ask any questions; he has been instructed to deliver the folder, and little more.

As soon as one of the PCs opens the folder, hand them a single piece of paper that says the following:

*Dial 966 on your phone; when you hear a click, dial the same number again. Someone will pick up the phone and say “inside.” Respond by saying “never.” Then state your needs. At the same time the next day, you will receive a phone call with the relevant information or instructions on how to appropriate your request.*

### USING THE CONSORTIUM

Should the PCs follow the instructions given and ask for information on Ophois and the Opener of Ways, they will receive a phone call the following day. It will include the details presented at the end of this scene.

### EMBLAE

Emblae is a wise fae who lives in a secret place beneath the Tower Hill Tube station. Emblae has learned much in his brief experience with the bustling city. Every day since he awakened has been spent on the streets, learning the new ways of the world. Emblae’s knowledge reaches much deeper than new customs and cultures, however. Over the past several months, the crafty fae has made contacts in some of the city’s secret societies, including the Gehenna Consortium, LN-7, and the Freemasons. This accomplishment is no stroke of luck; though he does not remember it, Emblae was once a skilled informant and spy under Queen Maeve of Avalon. Emblae was present at many of the most important delegations and meetings of the mythic age, and

more often than not his influence swayed the hand of fate. His power lay in his ability to deceive others into believing he didn't really exist, and because of this Emblae is entirely unknown in the books of myth and history.

Emblae has also been watching the scions in their recent adventures, collecting and weighing the facts as they come in. He is quite certain that this group is somehow connected to the mythic age in a way similar to he. For all his impressive knowledge, however, he knows very little about himself. He therefore sees the PCs as kin, and wishes to help them. If they can discover more about themselves, perhaps they can discover more about him, as well.

Emblae is not direct in his approach, instead testing their ability to use their minds to find him. When one of the scions is away from his home, Emblae sneaks into the residence and leaves a single clue upon the scion's pillow: a rat tail wrapped in a moldy fungus. Emblae has planted a magic beacon inside of the foul item, one that any scion may detect with an Earth (Ka) 5 test. Those that succeed can feel a distinct pull whenever they grasp the rat tail, leading them through the city until they reach the ancient fae.

#### EMBLAE

**Era** Modern; **Race** Supernatural being; **APL** 4; **Init** 8; **Aspects** Fire 3, Water 4, Air 5(3), Earth 5(2); **Health** 5m; <4 / 4+ / 8+ / 12+ / 16+ / 20+ / 24+ / 28+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 25; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

#### Combat

**Fist** 3/L, **Kick** 4/M, **Quarterstaff** 5/L; **Sequences** Eastern Small Style, Entrapping Defense

**Agg** F5 / W4 / A4(2) / E4(2)—Jump + Quarterstaff: Dmg +15

**Neut** F3 / W4 / A5(3) / E5(2)—Crouch + Quarterstaff: Dmg +15

**Def** F1 / W8 / A3(3) / E5(2)—Crouch + Ready + Power + Fist:Knockout

#### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 2, Casting 5, Interaction 5, Ka 4, Knowledge: Ancient Cultures 6, Knowledge: Geography 1, Knowledge: London 3, Knowledge: Modern Cultures 2, Knowledge: Occult 5, Knowledge: Religion 3, Knowledge: Street 2, Medicine 4, Melee 2, Quickness 4, Senses 4, Stealth 6, Trickery 4, Will 4; **Spells** Rank 1—Beguile (B), Sidestep (A); Rank 2—Second Sight, Scrye (A, B); Rank 3—Falsehood (B), Wholeness; Rank 4—Counter Weave of the Fourth Order, History (G); **Edges** Adaptive, Allies 3, Casting 5, Confident, Forceful Will (voice) 4, Network: Criminal 3, Network: Local Government 2, Network: Local Media 2, Network: Occult 3, Sage (tainted crea-

tures), Trivia, Weapon Use (Elite: Quarterstaff);

**Powers** Alternate Form 3 (forms: a middle-aged Caucasian man, a twenty-something African woman, a pigeon), Heightened Senses (sight) 2, Rapport 4, Unseen 5; **Traits** fae; **Legacy** Shapeshifter

When the PCs find Emblae, he will be resting in the structural support beneath London Bridge, testing out his theory that perhaps he is an ancient troll. In order to play the part, he has used his Shapeshifter legacy to become a green, warty, thick-skinned humanoid. This shape totally hides his natural form: that of a slight, orange-skinned, elfin humanoid with four arms and feet that are as dexterous as his hands. Read the following aloud.

*The pull of the strange and disturbing token left on your pillow has drawn you to the underbelly of that so often pictured tourist attraction, the London Bridge. Looking up into the girders above, you spy what can only be described as a lounging . . . troll.*

While mostly amnesiac, Emblae has a wealth of dreamed and half-remembered information about Avalon. If the PCs question Emblae about the name Ophois, he immediately gives them the information listed at the end of this scene, though he may do so in a roundabout and cryptic way, as if narrating a dream he once had. He asks for nothing more in return, simply suggesting that the PCs have fun and letting them know that he'd love to check in on them from time to time. With that, he will brachiate away under London Bridge, swinging from girder to girder until he disappears from view.

## LN-7

If London authorities become involved with the investigation, LN-7 will eventually learn of the interesting disturbance at the Abu Zaad Café. Philip Miskin, current director of LN-7, dispatches a group of his top agents to the scene shortly after the reports come to his desk. When LN-7 agents arrive on the scene posing as secret service police, the investigation is handed over to them. Philip sends Amanda Sillias, one of his best Thelema and a talented scientist, to oversee the investigation with a handful of forensic and crime scene experts. All of the charred remains end up in LN-7 labs and are put under high priority research to determine the cause of their sudden combustion.

Philip secretly worries that the Weeping Death has somehow mutated out of control. Until the cause of these deaths is determined, the director will continue the autopsies on the bodies that sit in the lab. The only clue Philip has is through traces of magic caught by the Thelema.

There is, however, one thing Philip has yet to do, and that is question the people who were involved in the



## ACT TWO: THE HUNT

scuffle at the café. To this point, agents have been watching the PCs from a distance, taking notes on their activities. (Feel free to have the PCs make Senses tests throughout the adventure to notice them.)

On the other hand, if the police are not yet aware of the attack at the café, LN-7 will have started paying attention to the PCs after the incident in the Underground (they have begun monitoring the cameras in the Tube stations, and the image of Mark sinking through the street into the station obviously caught their attention).

LN-7 will approach the PCs at some point in Scene 4 in a location that is inconspicuous enough to hold a private conversation. The agents present their badges, then ask the PCs about their connections to the events at the café and on the train. The informal nature of the questioning should suggest to the PCs that they aren't under any compulsion to talk, should they not wish to. The agents are savvy enough to realize that the PCs are telling the truth if they state that they don't know why they were attacked, and also that they did not kill Mark. The agents will be very interested in hearing anything the PCs have to say about their shared visions, as well. Any questions the scions ask, meanwhile, will be met with disinterest and the off-hand suggestion that they might use the library of the SPR (Society for Psychical Research). Once they are satisfied and realize that the PCs were attacked for reasons still unknown to them, the agents are satisfied; they thank the PCs for their time and leave abruptly.

### JAMES ABRAMS, LN-7 AGENT

**Era** Modern; **Race** Natural being; **APL** 1; **Init** 7; **Aspects** Fire 3, Water 4, Air 4, Earth 3; **Health** 3m; <4 / 4+ / 8+ / 12+ / 16+ / 20+ / 24+ / 28+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 3; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

#### Combat

**H&K USP Tactical** 24 ~ range 100 ft. ~ reload 2/4, **Fist** 3/L, **Kick** 4/M, **Survival Knife** 6/L; **Sequences** Eastern Small Style

**Agg** F5 / W4 / A3 / E2—Dash + Knife + Fist: Dmg +10  
**Neut** F3 / W4 / A4 / E3—Crouch + Knife: Dmg +15  
**Def** F1 / W7 / A3 / E3—Dodge + Ready + Kick: Dmg +10

#### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 4, Interaction 4, Knowledge: London 3, Knowledge: Occult 3, Knowledge: Science 4, Knowledge: Street 3, Melee 4, Quickness 2, Ranged 2, Senses 5, Will 3; **Edges** Allies 3, Mentor 1, Network: Occult 1, Network: Street 2, Sage (forensics)

### MELISSA BAILEY, LN-7 AGENT

**Era** Modern; **Race** Natural being; **APL** 1; **Init** 7; **Aspects** Fire 4, Water 4, Air 3, Earth 3; **Health** 3m; <4

/ 4+ / 8+ / 12+ / 16+ / 20+ / 24+ / 28+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 3; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

#### Combat

**Colt Anaconda .44 (2)** 24 ~ range 100 ft. ~ reload 1/6, **Fist** 3/L, **Kick** 4/M; **Sequences** Gun Fu

**Agg** F8 / W4 / A1 / E1—L Fire Pistol (I) + R Fire Pistol (I) + Ready + R Pistol Strike (II): Push 1

**Neut** F4 / W4 / A3 / E3—L Fire Pistol (I) + R Fire Pistol (II) + Ready + L Fire Pistol (III): Dmg +5

**Def** F2 / W8 / A2 / E3—Roll + Ready + Fire Pistol: Dmg +10

#### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 4, Interaction 2, Knowledge: London 2, Knowledge: Occult 1, Melee 3, Quickness 4, Ranged 4, Senses 2, Will 2; **Edges** Aggressive (Ranged) 2, Allies 3, Mentor 1, Network: Occult 1, Network: Street 1

In fact, the agents were ordered to tip the PCs off to the library's existence. If the PCs follow through and used the library to research Ophois, the agents will use magic, forensics, and high-tech observation equipment to uncover what the PCs were researching.

The agents report back to Philip any information they have gathered and at this point LN-7 ceases to be involved with the adventure. (See pg. 84 of the *Gamemaster's Handbook* for more information on this organization.)

## LN-7 DOWN THE ROAD

LN-7 have no real reason to become involved with the PCs once they discover that the events surrounding them are completely unrelated to the Weeping Death. There is a good chance that this organization will hear about the events at the Open Way, however, which could lead to them knocking on the PCs' doors in the future.

## THE SPR LIBRARY

Gaining access to the SPR's library of occult and paranormal information for one week has a Cost of 4. The library is well-guarded at all hours of the day or night, so any attempt to enter other than paying one's way is likely to get a PC shot. Books and reference material may not be removed, downloaded, or photocopied; any information desired must be copied by hand. Read the following text aloud.

*After being thoroughly searched and walking through several scanning and detection machines, you are finally ushered into the cellar of the SPR building. You are escorted down a long hallway with sterile steel walls, floor, and ceiling. A loud groaning behind you signals that the doorway through which you came is now locked off by a massive vault door.*

*Eventually, you are led into a massive metallic chamber. It has row upon row of bookcases, with thousands upon thousands of tomes both ancient and new calling the shelves home. You can see at least six Kevlar-armored guards equipped with wicked-looking assault rifles patrolling the interior of the room, as well as two researchers who are currently flipping through books at one of the tables scattered throughout the library.*

An Air (Research) 5 test will result in the PCs finding the information presented under Answers, as well as hints regarding anything else in the realm of the supernatural that they are interested in. No group, not even the SPR, has complete or accurate records of the mythic age, but everything from ley lines to theories on karma and taint to studies of reincarnation can be found here. At your discretion, certain spells may be learned here as well.

## ANSWERS

Regardless of the method used or deals made to gain the answers, the PCs will eventually be able to discover the following information regarding Ophois and the Opener of Ways.

- Ophois was the name given to an early, primitive Egyptian god of war and death. His body was said to be similar to that of a man's, while his head was that of a wolf.
- In the late 1800s, during one of the surges of popular occultism in the United Kingdom, it became fashionable for proponents of reincarnation and past lives to claim to be famous individuals in history. One trend in particular, however, was for individuals from around the empire to claim to be from a group called the "Harriers of Ophois," a death cult and group of war mongers from ancient Egypt. Studies found no records of such a group, and also unearthed the fact that none of these self-proclaimed descendants of the cult had known one another.
- Around 1908, these same individuals traveled from throughout the world to Haverhill, a small community outside Cambridge. They attempted to set up a commune there, but were ousted by the British government after cries of witchcraft and devil worship were put forth by superstitious locals and by property owners who feared that their investments' values might be lessened. The cult members committed mass suicide rather than be dragged off their land, claiming that they would "live forever in

the new home of Ophois." The land they had owned was claimed by the British government and, lacking any formal status, was left to return to its original woodland state.

- During the subsequent decades, the woodlands around Haverhill became a popular spot for neo-pagan gatherings and camps. Those who were found there and occasionally fined for vagrancy reported that the "veil between the worlds was weak there" or that "a dark voice of the soil spoke to them." Some claimed that a specific tree was sacred and housed the hearts of the "little people," and illegally built a villa-style house around it, the tree at the center of its open interior courtyard.
- In the 1940s, the British government began to fund a series of "safe homes" for the aimless, depressed, and often violent young men who returned home from the Second World War. The land once claimed by the cult of Ophois was an ideal location for one such estate. The building's supervisor dubbed it, supposedly after thinking of the name in a dream, the Open Way.
- As the decades passed after the war, veterans at the Open Way either returned to their normal lives or deteriorated. Rather than ship those patients off to other institutions, it was decided to change the institution to suit them. The Open Way became a government-funded asylum for the mentally ill, specializing in those with violent tendencies.
- In the past several years, residents near the Open Way have complained of nightmares and strange waking visions. Interestingly, seven of the last eight inmates to be committed there are from within 10 miles of the institution itself.

These details should connect enough of the dots that the PCs will head for the Open Way asylum in Haverhill.





## SCENE 5: PARADISE LOST



Once the PCs find out that the location of this being is within an asylum outside of Cambridge, or the asylum is where their attackers came from, they will want to investigate as soon as possible. The asylum is roughly 40 miles out from London center.

As this is the first opportunity for them to move beyond the boundaries of the city in this adventure, the PCs may be surprised to find their new supernatural abilities fading. Consult page 24 of the *Gamemaster's Handbook*, Sidebar 1–1, for the effects of travel outside of London. If the players ask why their abilities are being affected, allow them to make Air (Knowledge: Occult) 6 or Air (or Ka) 4 tests to determine why.

By the time the PCs reach the site of the fae ambush, they will have gotten near enough to the Open Way, a nexus of ley lines, that their powers are restored.

Read the following text aloud when the players begin their trip to the asylum.

*With a destination at hand and an uncertain future looming, you spend at least some of your journey in thought. What is your link with this place. What is it that drives people mad, and why should they seek your death? Even if you do sort all this out, what is it that ties you to your companions, each as confused as yourself? Can these visions you've shared be real? Were you once something other than human, something ancient and powerful? Are you still that thing?*

*Once you escape the clutter and chaos of London, the scene outside the car windows becomes peaceful and serene. The rolling green hills of England are covered in beautiful summer flowers, and the sun shines furiously in an effort to warm the cool breeze that billows over the land. After a short trip, the odometer reads 40 miles and you see signs for Haverhill pointing down a narrow, ill-used road. The way descends down into a darkly wooded vale. Before long, the peace and brightness of the open countryside is replaced by an enclosing canopy of trees, crowding in on the road and blocking out light. As you drive around a corner at the bottom of a hill, a figure suddenly steps out into the road. He is less than 100 ft. from your vehicle, and makes no effort to move.*

## THE AMBUSH

The wood grows so thick along the road that, unless they are willing to run the man over, the PCs will have to stop. If they simply gun it and attempt to drive through him, the enigmatic being will leap nimbly upon the hood of the PCs' automobile, staring at them earnestly. The spot of the road on which he was standing is also the site of a thorn trap, which blows the tires on the car. Either way, the car stops; the attack begins as soon as it does.

The fae attack from bushes that grow alongside the road; at first, the PCs should be unable to differentiate the fae from the foliage in which they hide. The attack is accompanied by a loud, almost mocking series of whistles, hoots, and high-pitched cries. Aside from their leader Kunangos, there are three earth woses, dozens of pixies, and Gruzz.

The fae ambush the scions because they sense the taint of Ophois clinging to them after their encounter with Mark, and think they must be servants of the demon.

### KUNANGOS

**Era** Modern; **Race** Supernatural being; **APL** 3; **Init** 9; **Aspects** Fire 4, Water 4, Air 5(2), Earth 5(1); **Health** 5m; <4 / 4+ / 8+ / 12+ / 16+ / 20+ / 24+ / 28+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 2; **Karma** 25; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

### Combat

**Fist** 6/L, **Short Sword** 8/L; **Sequences** Knife Fighter, Luring Blade

**Agg** F8 / W4 / A3(2) / E3(1)—Power + L Fist + Power + R Fist: Dmg +20

**Neut** F4 / W4 / A5(2) / E5(1)—L Fist + R Fist: Dmg +5

**Def** F2 / W8 / A3(2) / E5(1)—Block + Ready + L Fist + R Fist: Dmg +5

### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 4, Casting 5, Ka 4, Interaction 5, Knowledge: Ancient Cultures 4, Knowledge: Occult 3, Medicine 4, Melee 4, Quickness 4, Ranged 2, Senses 5, Stamina 3, Stealth 4, Will 5; **Edges** Casting 5, Karmic Restraint 3; **Spells** Rank 1—Beguile; Rank 2—Ray of Power (Magefist)(B); Rank 3—Wholeness; **Powers** Alternate Form 2 (forms: a wizened old man, an elm tree), Clarity 1, Mythic Leap 1, Rapport 3, Unseen 2; **Traits** Fae

Kunangos is a green-skinned elf. He has long limbs with three thick fingers on each hand and two thick toes on his splayed feet. He dresses in soiled rags that have a vague semblance to robes of office. He was a playful fae in the mythic age, loving to dance and climb trees. Since his return to the mortal world, though, this once-curious and joyful creature seems to have forgotten what it means to play. He leads his kin with all of the earnestness and seriousness he can muster, using his vague memories of Ytrigain as a model. He alone of the fae of Haverhill remembers that they left their kin in the Winter Court behind when they escaped into the earth, and he bears that guilt for all his people so that they won't have to.

### EARTH WOSE

**Era** Mythic; **Race** Supernatural being; **APL** 0; **Init** 4; **Aspects** Fire 2, Water 4, Air 2, Earth 5(2); **Health** 10m; <4 / 4+ / 8+ / 12+ / 16+ / 20+ / 24+ / 28+; **Size/Reach** -1 / 1 ft.; **Armor** 1; **Karma** 25; **Stride** 10 ft. (Moderate)

### Combat

**Club** 5/M, **Spear** 7/M ~ range 30 ft.; **Sequences** No fighting styles

**Agg** F4 / W4 / A2 / E3(2)—Power + Club: Normal damage

**Neut** F2 / W4 / A2 / E5(2)—Club + Press: Normal damage

**Def** F1 / W6 / A1 / E5(2)—Block sequence

### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 3, Melee 2, Quickness 2, Ranged 1,

## LEGACY OF THE FAE

The scions are driving right into an ambush, set not by Ophois but by those desperate to stop him. The fae of Wytaul live here still, or at least the fae once of the Summer Court do. Unlike most Seelie, who betrayed their kin of the Winter Court in the escape to Tir na n-Og near the end of the mythic age, the fae of the Summer Court that lived near Wytaul refused to leave their martial cousins to defend their borders. They chose instead to stay and fight.

As valiant as they were, the fae of the Summer Court were little help in battle. Seeing that his position would be overrun by the onslaught of Milesians, Ytrigain of the Winter Court ordered them to hide themselves in the earth, to bind themselves to the land in the hopes that they could one day reawaken, whole in body and spirit if not in memory. Meanwhile, like the rest of their fellows, Ytrigain and his troops were left to die in the mortal world or, at best, find their own way to places less idyllic and accommodating than Tir na n-Og.

When magic began to return, the Seelie fae in the earth near Wytaul, now Haverhill, found their way back to the mortal world. But their guardians, the fae of the Winter Court, were no more.

The fae of Wytaul know little of the outside world, and in fact are frightened of the humans that surround their wood. They know that the asylum on the hill and the people in it are bad, and that the woods are good. They also know that there were once brave fae warriors, who were good, who protected them from humans, who were bad. And they know that once there was a dragon, who was bad, who tried to start a war . . . and there were other dragons, who were good, who stopped him.

**Senses** 4, **Stamina** 4, **Stealth** 2, **Will** 3; **Edges** Resilient 5; **Powers** Earthstride 2; **Traits** fae

The earth woses are solid, stocky, humanoid creatures that seem as much dirt and rock as they do flesh and bone. They are diminutive, reaching perhaps the height of a small child, and bear heavy sticks as weapons.

### GRUZZ

**Era** Modern; **Race** Supernatural being; **APL** 1; **Init** 5; **Aspects** Fire 5(1), Water 5, Air 1, Earth 1; **Health** 6m; <6 / 6+ / 11+ / 16+ / 21+ / 26+ / 31+ / 36+; **Size/Reach** 1 / 5 ft.; **Armor** 5; **Karma** 5; **Stride** 25 ft. (Fast)



## ACT TWO: THE HUNT

### Combat

**Slam (2)** 7/L; **Sequences** Flying Fists

**Agg** F9(1) / W3 / A0 / E0—L Slam + Spin + R Slam + Ready + L Slam: Dmg +5

**Neut** F5(1) / W5 / A1 / E1—L Slam + Press + R Slam: Dmg +5

**Def** F0(1) / W10 / A1 / E1—*Block* sequence

### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 5, Melee 5, Quickness 1, Senses 3, Stamina 4, Will 1; **Edges** Aggressive (melee) 2, Follow-Through 2, Resilient 5; **Powers** Ferocity 2, Skin of Stone 1; **Traits** camouflage, fae

None can say what shape the creature known as Gruzz once held; perhaps he was more intelligent and communicative in the mythic age. When he awoke in the modern age, however, he seemed to have little to say. This brown, gnarled, fur-covered humanoid stands around 10 ft. tall and has branches and leaves seeming to sprout from his joints. When standing still, he looks like a moss-covered boulder or tree stump; when in motion, his countenance is more that of a raging bear. Gruzz is little more than an animal, but follows Kunangos's instructions unhesitatingly.

### PIXIE

**Era** Mythic; **Race** Supernatural being; **APL** 0; **Init** 5; **Aspects** Fire 3, Water 3, Air 2(1), Earth 1; **Health** 1m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+; **Size/Reach** -3 / 0 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 5; **Stride** 10 ft. (Moderate); Fly 25 ft. (Fast, mnv 3)

### Combat

**Blowgun** 1/M ~ range 10 ft.; **Sequences** None

**Agg** F9 / W0 / A0(1) / E0—Fire Blowgun

**Neut** F3 / W3 / A2(1) / E1—Fire Blowgun

**Def** F0 / W6 / A2(1) / E1—*Dodge* sequence

### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 3, Casting 2, Melee 1, Quickness 3, Ranged 4, Senses 4, Stamina 1, Stealth 4, Will 3; **Edges** Casting 2, Stealthy; **Spells** Rank 1—Grasp, Shadow; **Powers** Shadow Spinner 1, Unseen 3; **Traits** fae

Mostly harmless due to their size, these 1-foot-tall fae resemble pre-adolescent girls with butterfly wings and feathery antennae.

Aside from Gruzz, the assailants are fairly harmless, and the PCs should be able to beat them back easily. While they could slaughter many of the pixies and likely some of the earth woses, it should be apparent that these woodland creatures are not warriors, and that mercy is called for. The battle will rage on until one of the PCs attacks Kunangos. As soon as an attack successfully hits the fae leader, read the following aloud.:

*Your blade seems to pierce more than cloth and flesh . . . it drives through time itself. You experience the shock of being jolted out of your present body and into another. You are standing on the shores of Elysium, speaking with Ytrigain, the leader of the fae of Wytaul. The waves still lap at the blood of Lycurgin, your fallen foe. Looking out shyly from behind Ytrigain's armored form is a smaller fae, green-skinned and elfin. His long limbs make him seem awkward, and his thick fingers and toes give him a sense of adolescent awkwardness. "Ah, yes, Kunangos," Ytrigain says with a rare smile, "did you have something to say to these good folk?" The being clambers up Ytrigain's sturdy form, finally coming to a rest while perching on one of his broad shoulders. One by one, he beckons each of you forward and presses his three-fingered hand to your foreheads in some sort of blessing.*

*"We the folk of the wood thank you for averting this battle," Kunangos says in a lilting, child-like voice, "your valor and wisdom will be remembered through the ages."*

*As quickly as it all started, the flashback ends and you now stand face to face with a very real piece of your past.*

## SCENE 6: THE SACRED GLEN



Kunangos shares the flashback with the PCs, and realizes who they are. In fact, the flashback helps him realize a piece of himself, as well. He will order the fae to cease their assaults, and immediately prostrates himself, even if wounded, before the PC who attacked him. He apologizes profusely, saying that he thought they served the Opener of Ways.

Once the attack has ceased, Kunangos begins to weep, both for his own impetuosity and for any fae who have fallen. He remains prostrate until he is forgiven. Allow the PCs to speak with Kunangos briefly, tying up loose ends in regards to the battle.

As soon as the players begin to ask questions about Ophois, the Opener of Ways, or the events surrounding the asylum, Kunangos will rise and ask the scions to follow him. Once they agree, and the fae have taken care of their wounded or dead, Kunangos will lead the group to the Sacred Glen. Read the following text aloud.

*Kunangos leads you through the woods for several miles. His gait alternates between a stern and martial march and a childlike scamper, as if he can't quite decide what manner of personality he has. In his pres-*

ence, and surrounded by the playfully flitting forms of pixies and the stolid earth woses arising from the earthen paths around you, the wood seems far less dark and ominous. The fae eventually lead you to a glen, in the center of which is a lovingly crafted building of dead wood, bark, and mud daub. Despite its ramshackle components, the abode seems both sturdy and graceful, allowing in light but keeping out wind and cold. It is several dozen feet on a side, and creates a ring around an open courtyard.

In the center of that courtyard, its branches stretching majestically above the villa's roof, is an ancient elm tree. Even from outside you can sense its power. A musky scent surrounds you as you are escorted through the main archway into the courtyard within, and you are reminded of freshly mowed grass, incense, and the smell of a child's hair after a day spent in the summer sun. You can swear you hear the chirping of a chorus of crickets, though the season for them is long past. At the base of the elm is a circle of seats crafted from tree stumps and situated around a table formed of intertwining branches and heavy leaves.

Despite the arousal of your other senses, however, all is forgotten when you see the object resting upon that table. The world around you falls away to be replaced by a complete sense of oneness with the treasure, the piece of your past you never realized you were missing. You can smell, feel, hear, and know it, even from 50 feet away. The marble amulet is small, no more than fist-sized, but you can feel the weight of it even from here. The marble waves sweeping from its base speak to you of the sea that once lapped at this ground, and the proud creature launching from their midst seems almost water itself, its wings arcing from the crest of the wave with a surge of power, its proud head curving downward to the land as if in obeisance to the earth itself, all the while penetrating that beneath it with a protective gaze.

*It is a dragon, and it was once yours.*

Kunangos smiles at the PCs' reaction to the amulet, which is a rank 2 karmic item. Moreso, it is a karmic item that the PCs once shared as part of their hoard. At this point, you should decide which scion should be involved in a solo flashback to the mythic age that will occur in Act Three. Ideally, you should choose the scion whose draconic self in the mythic age has the most skill in magic. Alternately, you might choose the scion most geared toward magic and rituals in the modern age. Either way, try to choose a character whose player is comfortable with his draconic self and who is excited about developing that aspect of his character further. Whomever you choose, that is who Kunangos will give the amulet to for safekeeping.

The PCs are likely to be full of questions; the fae leader smiles as he beckons for you to come inside and motions for them to sit. Listed below are questions the PCs might ask and the relevant answers.

**Why did you attack us?**

*We smelled the taint of the Opener of Ways upon you, and thought you to be his servants, like the mad ones he sent out.*

**What do you mean, "taint"?**

*Do you know the thing you call upon when in most dire need? That has many names. Fate, fortune, karma? The opposite of that, it has but one name. Taint. It clings to all that is twisted and unclean, and such things thrive off it. The Opener of Ways loves taint, and covers his servants in it.*

**What are the effects of taint?**

*It separates us from the world, from karma, from life. It makes the light harder to draw upon when we are in need, and for us <he gestures to himself and his fellow fae in the courtyard>, it warps us, changes us, darkens us, inside and out. For you . . . I do not know.*

**Who or what is Ophois?**

*A spirit. A disembodied being of pure hate from the time before. Most of us have forgotten that time. It is a dream to us. Or this is a dream to us, and that was the waking time. I do not know. I remember more than most, but even so I am often confused.*

*Ophois may have had bodily form, once, long ago, before even the mythic age. He fed off of those who died in battle. This is why he poisoned the minds of both factions near our home, back when you intervened. He wished for a mighty battle so that he could eat. When you averted the battle of the peoples of the wood and the peoples of the island, the Opener of Ways was left to dine only upon his failure.*

*At that time he was no a spirit. He had taken a body . . . and that body could look human. But he was not human. Like you, he was more. He was a child of the fury. He was an elemental creature. He was one of you <with that, he points to the amulet of the dragon>.*

**What's up with the amulet?**

*You gave it to us, saying that if ever the beast rose again, we could use it to vanquish him. The knowledge of how, though . . . that is lost with Ytrigain and his warriors. We took it with us into the earth, so that it would be safe for you should you ever return. It is yours, finally . . . you may take it with you to defeat Ophois.*

**What are we?**

*You do not know? You are born of the earth and air, the water and fire. You are ancient, and yet you are young. The visions you have had? The shapes you have taken in them? They are real. They are your past, and your true selves.*

**No, really, what are we?**

*You are dragons.*



Huh?

*In times past, before the fall of magic and the second rise of man, there was an age. It lives now in the dreams and tales that mortals call myth. We lived in that time, and when it came to an end, when taint filled the sky and ravaged the earth, when the Fomorians came and the horsemen came, the age ended, and we slept. And so did you. But we slept in the earth, and you slept in the dreams of man. And when we woke, we awoke as we are now. And when you woke, you awoke in the forms of those who dreamed of you.*

So why does Ophois want to kill us?

*He possessed one of your kind in the mythic age, do you not remember? And in that guise attempted to foment war between the people of the island and the people of the wood. When he failed, he sought blood in the form of the three-headed beast. In that way, too, did you best him. Now, he simply seeks revenge.*

How did Ophois end up here?

*Ophois rides the blood. He causes the blood to boil in the breast of man, and it is that spilled blood that he drinks. When you destroyed the body he possessed, that of the three-headed beast, he rode the blood into the dirt, into the place that the beast fell. That place is now the human house called the Open Way. He sends bad dreams and dark creatures out from that place. The people that he sent to hurt you only did it because they were trapped in the bad dream.*

What kind of power does Ophois have?

*He can control the minds and darken the thoughts of those who live within his realm. I do not know what he has done in the times that we slept, but I know he controls the minds of the folk in the house of the Open Way. There are the dreaming ones there, the ones kept locked in their rooms and wearing tight shirts. The ones that see the dream world? And there are the mean ones, in the white coats, with the small pebbles they put in the dreaming ones' mouths and the tiny blades they put in their skin. Ophois controls them all. The mean ones, he tells them what to see. They do not see when the dreaming ones escape. They only see what he wants them to.*

How do we destroy him?

*So long as Ophois is in this place, he cannot be harmed. He must be brought into the world fully, given body so that he can be destroyed. This can be done with a ritual . . . it is a ritual that you know well. Or, I dreamed that you do.*

When the PCs protest, stating they know no such ritual, Kunangos will explain that they knew it, once, in the mythic age. In order to remember it, they will have to journey back to that time, in memory at least, to when they learned it. He is about to explain how that can be

accomplished when a scream of dire fear erupts from outside the villa. Kunangos will leap to his feet and race outside. Assuming the PCs follow him, read the following aloud.

*Kunangos stops at the entrance to the villa, looking in dismay at the woodlands. At first you perceive nothing, but then dark, translucent shapes separate themselves from the trees, as if emerging from a long imprisonment. You make out vague outlines as they come closer, passing through brush and stones as if they were not there, their eyes burning with hate. Something about them is familiar . . . and then you recognize Ytrigain, and with him scores of other fae of the Winter Court, defenders of Wytaul in the mythic age. These are but shadows of those immortal beings, though, twisted versions of their once luminous spirits. Kunangos cries out in anguish, "The Opener of Ways . . . he has brought our brethren from their prison in the realm of Annwn, to punish us!" Tendrils of hair float atop of their heads, and their lithe bodies swirl with wisps of black smoke. The creatures make no sound as they set upon you.*

## SCENE 7: BRETHREN



While the Unseelie fae are merely another type of fae, and not all antagonistic, they are far more likely to be dangerous to mortals. This group of them has been ripped from another realm to serve Ophois, and as such take the forms of ephemeral spirits. There is one Unseelie spirit for every scion present, and there should seem to be many more engaging the Seelie fae throughout the woods. The spirits manifest visually so they can see their targets, but make use of their shadow shards to damage the PCs, never manifesting their physical forms. This scene should show that while the PCs are very strong at physical combat, they have much to learn about fighting creatures that are ephemeral. The only way to damage the spirits is to use magic or karmic items; see the **Fighting Phantoms** sidebar for more information.

### UNSEELIE SPIRIT

**Era** Modern; **Race** Supernatural being; **APL** 2; **Init** 6; **Aspects** Fire 2(1), Water 2, Air 4(2), Earth 2; **Health** 2m; <2 / 2+ / 4+ / 6+ / 8+ / 10+ / 12+ / 14+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Taint** 6; **Stride** Fly 30 ft. (Speedy, mnv 6)

### Combat

**Shadow Shards; Sequences** None

## FIGHTING PHANTOMS

The ephemeral trait and the Manifest power are described in greater detail in pages 201–204 of the *Gamemaster's Handbook*. Essentially, the ephemeral trait means that the creature's natural state is to exist outside of this world. The only way it can interact with this world is to use the Manifest power, which allows it to use its senses of sight, hearing, or touch in interaction with this world. When an ephemeral creature's sense is manifested, that same sense can be affected by creatures of this world. So for instance, if an ephemeral creature manifests hearing, it can hear the sounds of our world but it can also be heard. If it wishes to see, it must first be seen. And if it wishes to touch (for instance, to attack with anything other than powers or spells), it opens itself up to damage from physical force.

Alternatively, creatures with karmic items can activate them in order to do damage to ephemeral creatures that they attack, regardless of whether or not their sense of touch is manifested. Doing so is a mental action that temporarily lowers the item's karma rank by one. In the case of the brood in *The Fire Within*, they have two such items: the survival knife from Act One and the amulet given to them by Kunangos. Both are rank 2 karmic items, and as such can be activated only twice in this adventure before being depleted. The knife is originally a weapon, and so can be used without penalty; anyone using the amulet as a weapon against ephemeral creatures, however, suffers a –2 penalty, as it is not intended to be used as a weapon.

### Abilities

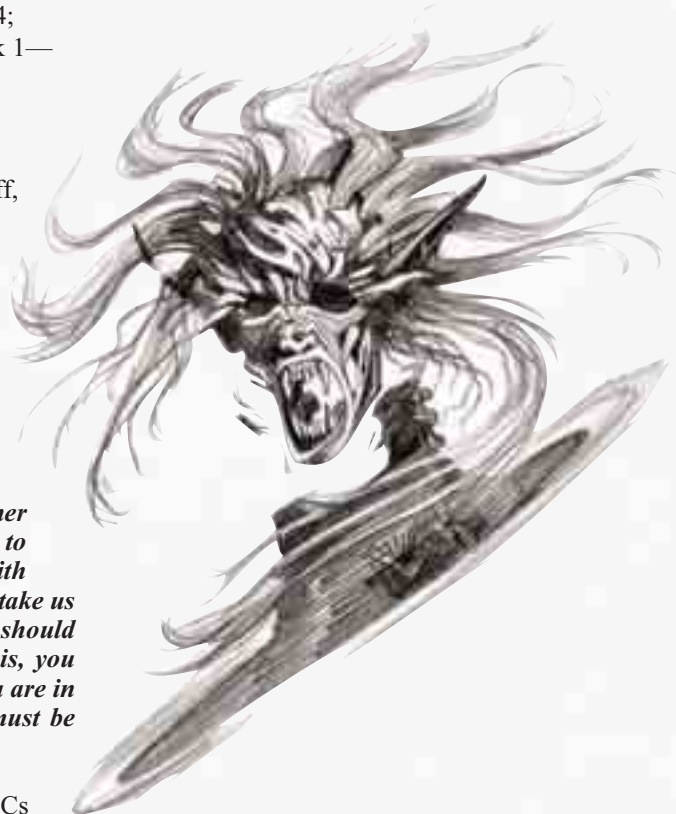
**Skills** Athletics 3, Casting 2, Interaction 3, Ka 3, Melee 3, Quickness 3, Senses 5, Stealth 5, Will 4; **Edges** Casting 2, Karmic Release 3; **Spells** Rank 1— Buzzkill, Grip, Shadow; **Powers** Coldspawn 3, Manifest 1 (sight), Shadow Spinner 3; **Traits** ephemeral, fae, tainted, unliving

Once the creatures are destroyed or warded off, Kunangos will emphasize that time is running out and that Ophois is growing stronger, as evidenced by the attack. Read the following text aloud.

*Kunangos points with an outstretched arm to a hill in the distance, farther up the road. His eyes seem far away as he speaks in a quiet voice.*

*"The beast grows stronger. You must go to the darkened place and destroy him. The Opener is as connected to your past as each of you is to each other. As much as my people want to go with you, we cannot; the darkness of the taint would take us as it did Lycurgin. You are stronger and you should fear nothing; each time you have faced Ophois, you have conquered him. Use the amulet. When you are in his place of power, you will remember what must be done."*

The scions' journey is near completion. The PCs should have all the information and weaponry they need to have at least a chance against their ancient enemy Ophois. Act Three encompasses the final showdown to which Act One and Two have been building.







# ACT THREE:

## ANCIENT BONDS

Act One opened with the dragons' successful intervention to prevent a pointless battle between the armies of fae and men. It then drove the scions together, using dreams and fire to break down the walls of memory formed over countless lifetimes. The brood's reunion came to an abrupt and bloody end as inmates attacked them, seemingly without motive or mercy. Unfortunately, their assailants were consumed in flame as they fell, leaving the confused heroes with few clues to go on.

In Act Two, the newly reunited brood made various attempts to investigate the source of their new danger. They discovered that an old enemy, Lycurgin, had been reincarnated in human form and had sought their deaths. It turned out that Lycurgin had been a servant of Ophois, the Opener of Ways, a mysterious entity of darkness.

After some wheeling and dealing with the powers that be, the brood discovered that Ophois was likely tied to a place very near London: The Open Way, an asylum for the mentally ill. They traveled there to face their foe, only to encounter an unexpected group of allies: a tribe of fae the PCs helped in the mythic age.

After gleaned more information about themselves and the mythic age from the fae tribe's leader, the brood defended the fae once more in a battle against dark shades summoned forth from Ophois. They were then urged by the fae to venture forth into Ophois's stronghold, there to bind him and destroy him.

## OVERVIEW

In Act Three the scions, armed with new knowledge of themselves and their powers, descend into the heart of Ophois's power: the Open Way. They must win passage to an ancient place of power in the building's basement; there they must enact a rite, learned of old, while some of their number resist the attacks of their own fears.

Unfortunately, the ritual will not work as expected. After making the requisite sacrifice of blood, nothing happens. At least, nothing happens near the scions themselves. Instead, Ophois enters this world through the most powerful nearby karmic item: the Sacred Elm.

As the fae fight for their lives, another horrible truth emerges. Every wound inflicted on Ophois's physical form inflicts damage on the scion who performed the ritual to bring him into this world. In binding the dark creature to this world, it did so

through the means of the ritualist's own flesh. Any member of the brood may assume responsibility for the anchoring, allowing them to spread out the pain.

Once the scions realize where their foe truly is, they must rush to the fae in order to keep them from being decimated. The longer they take, the fewer allies they will have to help them at adventure's end. Eventually, they come face-to-face with Ophois. Defeating him while simultaneously taking damage from their own attacks should prove challenging.

If the scions survive, they face the even greater challenge of making meaning in a world turned upside down. How will they cope with being, not just more than human, but the reawakened spirits of the most powerful creatures to ever walk the earth? What future challenges await them in a world filled with mortals who want to use them and reawakening horrors seeking to steal their nascent powers?

## SCENE 1: HEART OF CHAOS



The scions can rapidly travel from the Glade of the Sacred Elm to the grounds of the Open Way. The scene opens with them arriving near the gated estate.

*With the awakening of memories from days long past, both pleasant and painful, you supposedly hold the keys to victory in your hands. Or so the fae tell you. Now you just need to penetrate a private asylum, enact a long-forgotten ritual in a subterranean shrine, and escape without attracting the police.*

*Achieving that last may prove more difficult than an action movie would make it seem. At one time, the asylum was probably isolated from civilization. Now suburbs lie within shouting distance of its doors, filled with nervous citizens with ready access to phones.*

*Beyond the ivy-covered wall looms the shadowy bulk of the asylum's main building. A few lights shine from its windows, bleak reminders that even should you slip past the wall, you must still avoid those unfortunate souls forced to remain within.*

By this time in the adventure the scions will have established, to one degree or another, their signature style. Some broods will charge forward, ignoring mundane dangers in their quest to defend the world from supernatural evil. Others will take a more subtle approach, wielding diplomacy and stealth as their weapons of choice. This disparity makes it difficult to establish a single route of entry into the asylum.

Instead of forcing the players down one resolution path, this portion of the adventure assumes that the players will find ways to overcome, in order, the following challenges before advancing to the next scene: the wall, the outer perimeter, and the asylum main building. These may be action or narrative scenes, depending on how the PCs approach them. While breaking into the asylum, the PCs may face the following individuals.

### DAVY

Davy uses the same stats as other inmates but is near death; he can only sustain one minor wound before dying.

### DOCTOR

**Era** Modern; **Race** Natural being; **APL** 0; **Init** 6; **Aspects** Fire 2, Water 2, Air 4, Earth 3; **Health** 3m; <2 / 2+ / 4+ / 6+ / 8+ / 10+ / 12+ / 14+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft; **Armor** —; **Karma** 3; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

### Combat

**Fist** (2) 3/L; **Kick** (2) 4/M; **Sequences** None

### Abilities

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Interaction 3, Knowledge: Science 4, Senses 4, Medical 4, Will 2; **Edges** Aspect Affinity (Air) 2







## CHALLENGE I: THE WALL

When the scions examine the wall surrounding the asylum, read the following text aloud.

*A 10-foot-tall wall of weathered, ivy-covered stone encircles the former estate. Two large gates of twisted black iron allow entrance onto the greenswards. To the north and west the wall seals off the asylum from a public park on the outskirts of town. The south and east sides of the estate face the one-lane roads linking the asylum with the rest of the world.*

### NURSE

**Era** Modern; **Race** Natural being; **APL** 0; **Init** 6; **Aspects** Fire 4, Water 2, Air 2, Earth 2; **Health** 2m; <2 / 2+ / 4+ / 6+ / 8+ / 10+ / 12+ / 14+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 2; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate);

#### Combat

**Fist (2)** 3/L; **Kick (2)** 4/M; **Sequences** None

#### Abilities

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Interaction 2, Medical 2, Melee 2, Senses 2; **Edges** Brutal 1

### POSSESSED INMATE

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

#### Combat

**Fist (2)** 3/L, **Kick (2)** 5/M; **Sequences** Ferocious Insanity (see pg. 21)

**Agg** F6 / W3 / A2 / E1—Dash + Power + Club: Dmg +5

**Neut** F4 / W3 / A3 / E2—Power + Club + Press + Press: Disadvantage (physical) 2

**Def** F3 / W5 / A2 / E2—Power + Club: Dmg +5, push 1

#### Abilities

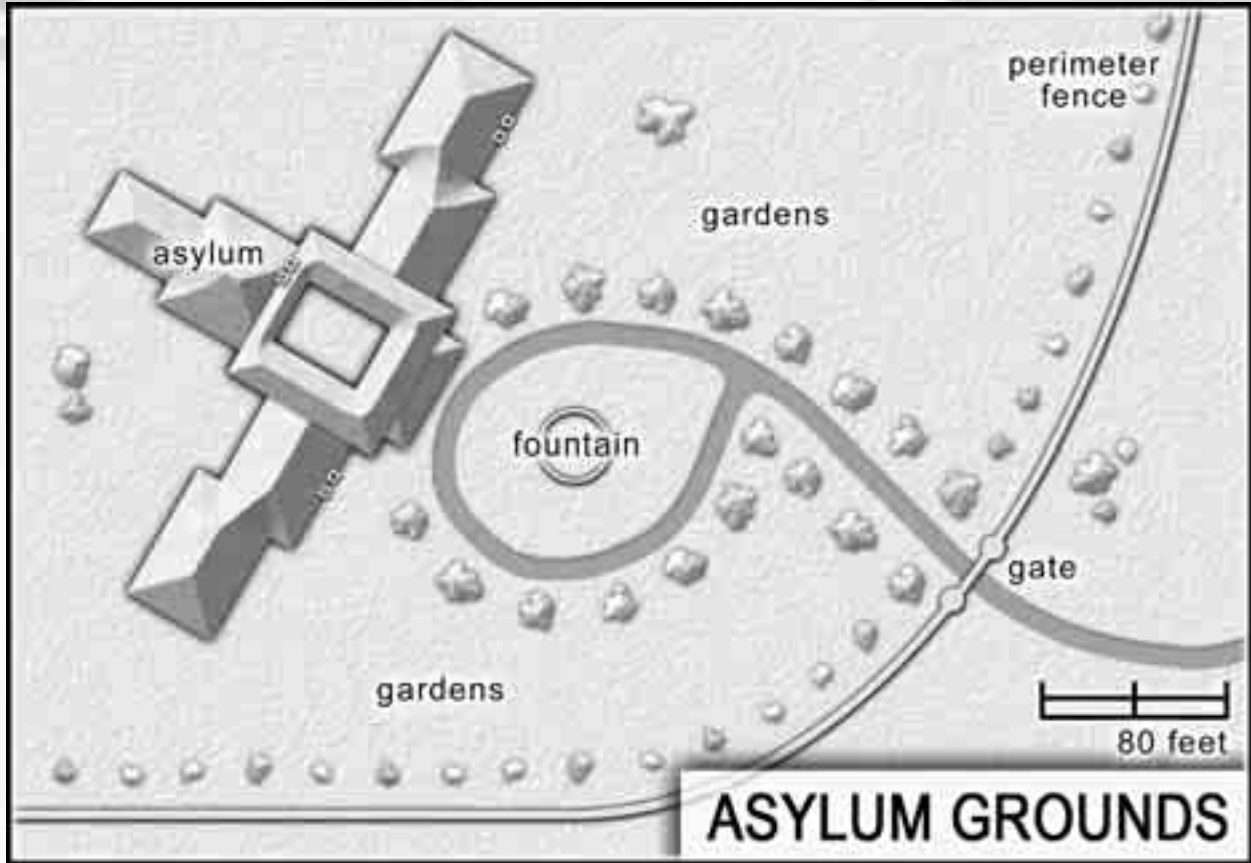
**Skills** Athletics 2, Melee 2, Quickness 2, Ranged 1, Senses 3, Stamina 1, Stealth 2, Travel 2, Will 1; **Edges** Brutal 1, Resilient 1; **Power** Ferocity 1

More detailed examinations will reveal some or all of the following information, depending on how well the scions do on their Air (Senses) test:

#### Threshold Information

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | There are no guards at the gates .  |
| 2 | The gates have speaker boxes hidden in the ivy; climbing the wall is fairly easy: Fire (Athletics) 2.   |
| 3 | There are no lights on in the northern (rear) side of the building.   |
| 4 | Cables for video cameras, which point in towards the main building, poke over the top of the wall   |
| 5 | Occasionally, the breeze brings the smell of rotted flesh over the wall.  |
| 6 | Every 10 minutes or so something large shuffles, quickly and quietly, past the point where the PCs observe the wall. The wall and the shadows obscure it from view. |

Unbeknownst to the PCs, the smell and sound mentioned above come from an almost dead lunatic (Davy) driven by Ophois to walk a circuit around the asylum. His ruined flesh hosts maggots and flies; his mind has long-since fled to a much safer place. This wreck can do nothing to harm the scions, but acts as the demon's eyes and ears in the mortal world. Armed with this information, the scions may attempt to formulate a coherent plan of action. Odds are good this plan will fall into one



of the following categories: deception, physical assault, stealth, or distraction.

## DECEPTION

This option assumes that the scions decide to interact with the asylum personnel in an attempt to gain entrance. The scions may speak to the nurse on duty though the speaker boxes attached to the two gates. They may make either Air (Interaction) or Air (Trickery) tests to convince him to open the gates for them. Adjust the TH based on the outrageousness of the PCs' story; a claim to have broken down or to be here to visit an inmate is far more likely to work than, for instance, claiming to be government health officials on a surprise inspection. The nurse has Earth 2, Interaction 2.

Should the scions fail in their effort to persuade the nurse, he will not call the local police. The asylum receives plenty of harassment (at least one incident a week) from snookered kids out for a lark, and he assumes that the PCs are doing just that.

## PHYSICAL ASSAULT

Though it seems like overkill, some players may drive through the gate, smash down the wall, or otherwise blast their way into the asylum. A vehicle with a chassis of 4 or higher can plow through either of the

gates; characters can also tear the gate off its hinges by making a combined Fire (Athletics) 20 test. Characters may also use explosives, magic, or other methods within their means.

A physical assault will get the scions onto the ground very quickly. It also attracts a lot of attention. The local police will come to investigate within 10 minutes. The nurses and doctors in the asylum will immediately do what they can to lock the facility down. More importantly, Ophois will sense the scions' presence. For every minute they dither after making their opening gambit, the demon will enrage one inmate. This inmate will await the scions in the basement, attacking them when they attempt to head down the stairs (Challenge Three).

## STEALTH

This option assumes that the PCs opt for silence and unseen movement rather than conflict or trickery. The scions must make Fire (Athletics) 2 tests to get over the wall; doing so quietly and without being spotted by an occasional passing car also requires an Air (Stealth) 2 test. They can reduce the threshold of this test to 1 if they try to climb the west or north walls.

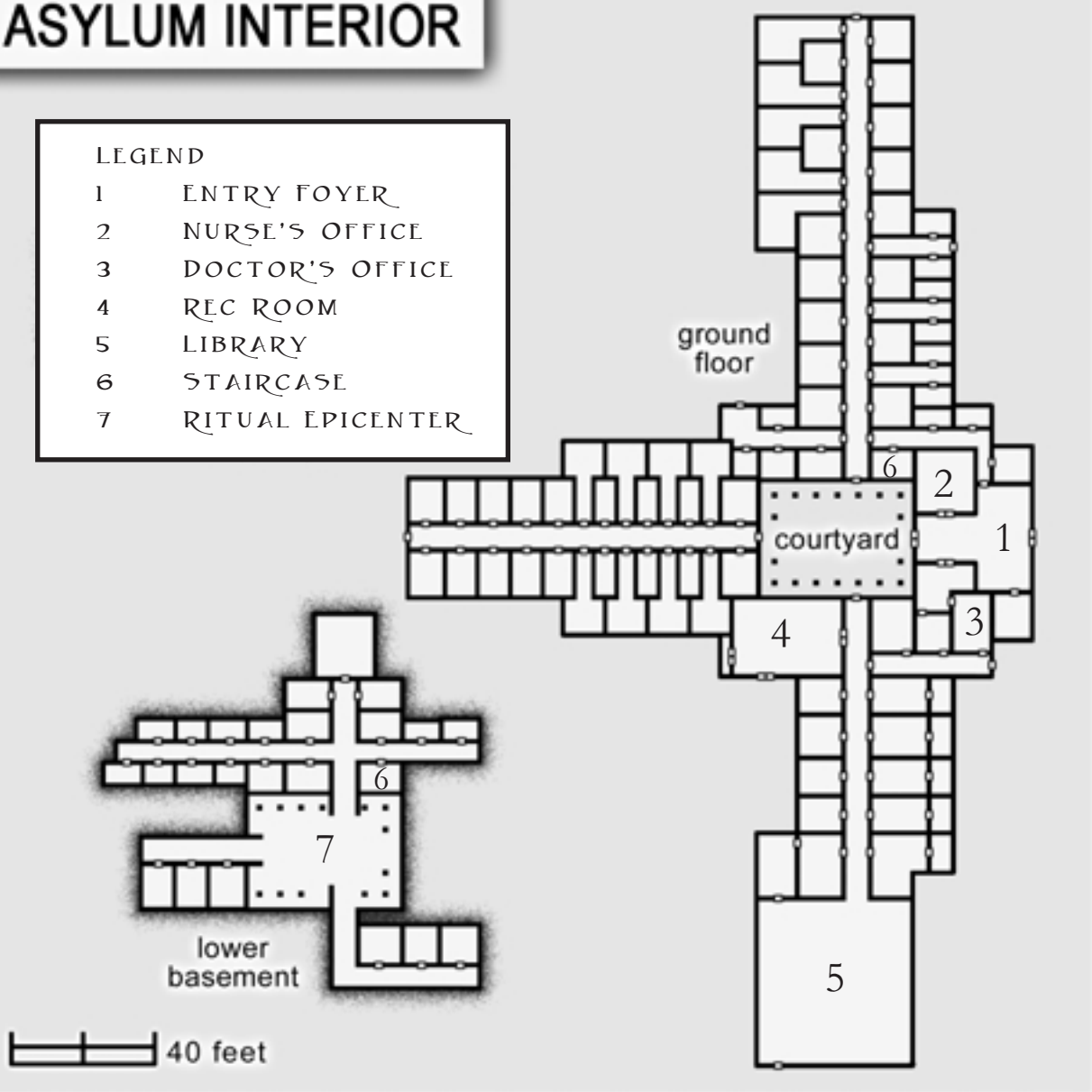
A stealthy escapade's primary threat lies in accidentally alerting one or more people to the scions' presence. If the scions are spotted from the road, the driver will stop, lean out their windows, and shout for them to "get



## ASYLUM INTERIOR

### LEGEND

- 1 ENTRY FOYER
- 2 NURSE'S OFFICE
- 3 DOCTOR'S OFFICE
- 4 REC ROOM
- 5 LIBRARY
- 6 STAIRCASE
- 7 RITUAL EPICENTER



away from there, and leave the poor nutters alone.” If the scions fail their Stealth tests going over the west or north walls, they are spotted by a doddering old lady with a large, easily-provoked dog. She will begin to “give them a talking to,” her reprimands punctuated by the dog’s deep barking. If the scions fail to quiet the old woman and the dog within five minutes, Ophois becomes aware of their presence and begins inciting inmates as described above.

### DISTRACTION

This option assumes the scions implement two or more of their other options: one as a distraction and one as their “primary” effort. So long as the distraction

involves only one scion, Ophois will not incite any additional inmates.

## CHALLENGE 2: THE OUTER PERIMETER

When the scions win past the wall, read the following text aloud.

*The trees scattered across the asylum’s greensward cut the moonlight into crazy patterns with their outstretched branches. Low beds filled with the withered remnants of flowers segregate the sward into five distinct sections. Shadows cling to the main building’s*

*three stories. Light glimmers from first one window then another as someone walks through the halls. A single flickering lamp casts dim yellow light on the almost deserted car park. It is perhaps 200 yards to the main building.*

## DECEPTION

If the nurse allows the scions through the gate, they must make a Water (Stealth) test to avoid notice by the lurking figure within. See the Stealth section below for more information on his abilities.

In this case the nurse will meet the scions at the front door. He will provide them with whatever assistance he can, up to and including calling a doctor to help if one of the scions seems deranged or otherwise dangerous. A second Trickery or Interaction test is in order at this point, the TH either increased or lowered depending on the PCs' appearances and demeanor.

## PHYSICAL ASSAULT

Once the scions pass the wall, they can make a clear dash for the main building. Assuming they can still move after whatever action they took to bring down the wall, nothing will oppose them.

As the scions cross the sward, the nurse on call will sound an alarm. The doctor and nurse will rush to the exterior doors, hoping to bar them against the terrorists, strange beasts, cultists, or whatever else they imagine is breaking into the building. Meanwhile, the unbound inmates will press their faces against the windows. One or two will shout down at the characters in a babble of languages; Earth (Ka) 4 or Earth (Knowledge: Mythic Age) 2 tests will identify the languages as being from the mythic age, calling down everything from vile curses to requests for aid to demands that the PCs "accept them into their divine brood."

## STEALTH

Once the scions clear the wall, they will have to carefully pick their way across the greensward. Their efforts focus on avoiding detection by three separate entities.

## DAVY

Davy is the aforementioned maggot-ridden inmate. When Ophois became aware of the scions' awakening, he set this old man out into the gardens, then obscured everyone's memory of his presence. Davy has not slept or eaten in two weeks and will not survive much longer. However, he still has Earth 2 and Senses 2.

## DOCTOR ON NIGHT ROUNDS

The doctor stuck with night rounds makes a steady circuit around the building. He stops every 10 minutes or so to stare moodily out into the greensward and curse

his fate. If the scions take more than 10 minutes to cross the greensward (it should take them five minutes to cross the grounds, even moving quietly, so long as they don't stop to interact with Davy), he might spot them. His distraction causes any Senses test THs to increase by 4.

If the nurse calls him, the doctor will happily break off his rounds to do something not involving madmen yelling in their sleep.

## INWARD FACING CAMERAS

The perimeter cameras attached to the walls allow the nurse to monitor the grounds. He looks at the cameras once every five minutes or so. If the scions dawdle on their way though the sward he might spot them, but only if they fail Air (Stealth) 2 tests.

## DISTRACTION

If one or more of the scions draw attention to themselves, the rest of the brood can slip though the outer perimeter without challenge or chance of discovery.

## CHALLENGE 3: THE ASYLUM MAIN BUILDING

Once the scions penetrate the first two layers of security, they must deal with entering and traveling through the building itself. Read the following text aloud.

*This once beautiful three-story structure, built to resemble the old manor houses dotting the nearby countryside, has fallen on hard times. Fancy facades and stonework show heavy weathering. The iron bars on the windows seem mossy with rust. Several ground floor doors lead into the building. The largest, a double door under a small awning, opens into a lighted vestibule.*

Once the scions make their way into the building, they discover many long corridors floored with alternating white and green Formica tiles. Every ten feet or so a narrow, heavy metal door allows authorized entrance to small cells in which dwell those inmates with families wealthy enough to afford private hospitalization.

The first floor contains mostly administrative offices. The second and third floors house the inmates. The PCs' primary concern, however, lies with finding one of the three stairwells leading down into the basement. They can rely on their Ka to draw them to the proper location (Air [Ka] 5).





### DECEPTION

While deceiving the nurse at the gate and the door certainly allows the scions to enter the asylum with a minimum of fuss, they then have to figure out what to do with the doctor and additional nurse who rush to help them. The doctor and nurses will assist the scions with any legitimate medical emergency . . . if they believe there is one.

### PHYSICAL ASSAULT

Once the scions break through the gate, the nurse locks the front doors and places a call to the local police. The doctor will make sure all of the other doors are also secured, then retreat to the basement. There he will meet an untimely end at the hands of escaped, possessed inmates.

Breaking down one of the security doors requires a Fire (Athletics) 10 test. The front door, being far more ornamental than functional, is less stout (TH 4).

Neither the doctor nor the nurse will fight unless forced to do so. If pressed into combat, they flee at the first opportunity.

### STEALTH

If the scions choose to make a stealthy approach and make their way across the sword unseen, they must still

find a way into the building. Cracking one of the doors requires an Air (Tech: Mechanics) test 3. A successful test allows the character to jimmy one of the security doors on the ground floor.

Once inside, a stealthy group will have to avoid the doctor and the nurse. Since the nurse stays at his duty station in the lobby and the doctor keeps walking his rounds on the second/third floors, this mostly amounts to not being overly noisy and not rousing any of the patients.

### DISTRACTION

If one or more scions distract the doctor and nurses, the others receive relatively free run of the building.

## SCENE 2: SHADOWS OF THE PAST



Once the characters make their way to the basement, read the following text aloud.

*The smell of musty laundry and old mildew weighs down the stagnant air. Fluorescent bulbs cast harsh white light over countless tables and bins. Tall piles of clothes, broken furniture, and unused beds with thick leather straps clutter the corridors. Something feels wrong, here . . . not just a look or smell or temperature, but rather an all-pervading sense of the unnatural. Your mouth is dry, you begin to feel nauseous, and yet . . . there's something cloying and sickly sweet. It's almost tempting, something you'd like more of, a taste on your tongue you can't quite place.*

This is the PCs' first experience with taint. The basement has a taint rating of 1, with all of the accompanying penalties and complications (see pages 41–46 of the *Gamemaster's Handbook*).

This basement serves as the laundry and general storage for the asylum above. Medical supplies and other materials deemed valuable or dangerous enough to secure are behind locked doors. The scions' true goal (the spot upon which Lycurgin died, and through which Ophois invested himself with the land) rests somewhere in the maze of boxes and long forgotten laundry. They can find the exact spot with Air (Ka) 5 tests. Each such test requires one minute of concentration, during which one additional inmate, if Ophois has been warned of their presence, will be roused to assault them. Also, it is during this search that any previously roused inmates, currently lurking in the shadows of the basement, will attack. At least two inmates should be here, regardless of the PCs' actions, just to keep them on their toes. When they are defeated, they burst into flames, just like the inmates from Act One. Because they are closer to Ophois's center of power, however, the flames reach up in small pillars and continue to burn.

When the scions find the correct spot, read the following text aloud.

*As your eyes drift across a section of the floor, a mix of recognition and fear shoots through your mind. Nothing in particular marks it as different from the rest of the cement floor, but memory as powerful as a spike in your brain superimposes an image of a fallen dragon, of blood pooling on the earth, and of taint seeping out from it in long, inky tendrils. For a moment you see your own claws digging a trench in which to bury Lycurgin. Then it's gone.*

*As you look among yourselves helplessly, unsure of what to do next, you realize that one of you has begun speaking in a strange voice. <Insert the name of the character chosen to undertake the solo flashback> has taken off the marble amulet and appears to be staring at it, muttering ancient words from a forgotten language . . .*

## HARNESSING THE PAST

Read this text aloud to the scion with the marble amulet from Act Two.

## 3 WHY MORE INMATES? 3

The inmates in the basement are not intended to provide a dangerous challenge to the PCs. They may have already suffered quite a pounding from the Seelie and Unseelie fae, and will face a tough fight almost immediately after conducting the ritual. Instead, use the inmates as a means of misdirection: they are there to get the player's blood pounding and make them feel nearly invincible, not to mention give the more martial of the brood something to do while the mystics search out the right spot. The melee with the inmates also sets the stage for the somewhat more complex battle during the ritual, and whets their appetite for the final combat.

## 3 3

<To scion with the amulet>: *As the shadows dance around the small pillars of fire that are all that remain of the inmates, you realize that your broodmates, and even the basement around you, seem to waver as if through a heat mirage. You feel your hands moving, following patterns you both know and do not know, gestures and methods from a time before recorded history. Then reality ripples before you, and you realize that you are seeing this, the basement, the brood, everything, not through a heat mirage, but through the surface of a pool of water. The future is but a reflection of the present. The mythic age is now. Staring back at you in the pool's reflection is your face. The face of a dragon.*

This scene can be run in one of two ways: the GM can run the flashback with the single player before the next session or after the previous session, when the rest of the players are absent, or the GM can shift between the flashback and modern age scenes on a turn-by-turn basis. This second option requires some careful juggling on the GM's part to maintain the pace and involvement of all of the players, but can create a very dramatic scene. The GM shifts back and forth between modern and mythic time as he deems appropriate. Most likely, all of the scions act through one or more turns in the modern world (i.e., facing their nightmares), then the scene returns to the flashback player. The flashback player then interacts with the primordial spirit until he hits another sticking point then action reverts to the modern age.

This scene plays out in three separate steps, each providing a logical break point if the GM wishes to interweave this scene with the modern age. Each step includes suggestions for how to break it into the flow of action in the nightmares.



## THE SUMMONING

When the flashback begins, read the following text aloud.

*The final words of invocation spill past your scaled lips. For a moment nothing happens. Silence, delicate as crystal, settles over the land. Even the waterfall hesitates, arrested water casting rainbow shadows on the pool below.*

*From deep within the waterfall, a faint blue light flowers into life. In a moment it grows bright, then fades. The silence shatters as the waterfall resumes its flow, and the pool's surface surges up in a spray of foam. Amidst its shards you hear laughter bubbling up from an inhuman throat. The spirit you sought emerges from the waterfall, standing on the pool itself, light shining through and within her.*

*This creature, if your divinations have been correct, holds the key to destroying a hated foe. She can teach you a spell, or ritual, that forces spirits in the ephemeral world to become manifest, even those who would otherwise never appear on this earth. Now all you have to do is convince her to share it with you.*

Once the dragon calls up the primordial, she will speak to him for as long as he remains courteous. If he becomes hostile or attempts to harm her, she slips back down into the water at her feet. Should he decide to unleash his fury on the environment, she will remain within the waterfall, secure in the knowledge that no matter how much damage he does, nature will continue. The dragon has neither the power nor the authority to demand this knowledge of her; he must convince her to share it willingly.

## PLAYING THE PRIMORDIAL

A primordial spirit, unlike a dragon or a man, does not possess a name. Its personality is a reflection of both its environment and the actions of those who call it up. Even its awareness is of an order entirely different than that of dragons. It can only perceive objects and events directly connected with it, though it may see the entirety of the universe in that single thing.

If the dragon insists on learning her name, she will refer to herself as “the Lady.” Physically, the Lady looks like a young woman formed from glass. Her hair sweeps around her of its own accord, blending back into her skin at odd moments. Her hands and feet also seem only half-formed, occasionally slipping back into and becoming the water around her.

She will mirror the dragon’s attitudes, responding to hostility with hostility and courtesy with courtesy. Her voice and appearance shift with her mood: light tones and a beautiful face when responding to courtesy, a harsh, deep-throated roar emanating from a haggard face when faced with treachery or anger.

After exchanging pleasantries (or threats) the primordial will listen to the dragon's request for a spell to force spirits into physical form.

**Break point:** If running this scene simultaneously with the modern-day fight, break at this point to run a turn or two of nightmares; return to the waterfall once the players realize that normal tactics will not work in these nightmares.

## THE QUESTION

Read the following text aloud.

*When asked for the ritual, the Lady merely holds out a hand and ask a single, one-word question: "Why?"*

If the dragon asks for further clarification, she will simply repeat the question. She says nothing further until an answer is given.

Of course, this kind of open-ended question has many interpretations. Why should she teach him the spell? Why should the dragon care one way or the other about destroying a malevolent spirit? Why should he have this power, rather than some other? Why should she trust him not to use the spell on her, thereby forcing her to become his slave or allowing him to harm her?

In this case, the Lady's goal is not so much to get a coherent answer as to gain insight into the dragon's mind. How he responds, and what he thinks she means with the word "why," expands the primordial's awareness of the world outside of her own borders. His answers allow her to see, even if only momentarily, something beyond the primal forces of water, earth, and air.

In a practical sense, this scene also allows the player to more closely examine his dragon's personality and motivations. How does he react to a strange creature barely capable of communicating with him? Why is he doing this, anyway? How does he act when his brood is not present? Why does he care one way or the other about some tainted spirit that must be destroyed?

**Break point:** If the player in the flashback appears stymied or spends a good amount of time trying get the primordial to expand upon her question, switch back to the modern age for more desperate fighting in the nightmares. Switch back after several turns.

## THE PRICE

Once the dragon answers her question, no matter how he answers it, read the following text aloud.

*The Lady smiles and nods. Her next question, accompanied by a taking gesture with her hand, is "Sacrifice?"*

She wants to know what the dragon is willing to give her in exchange for the knowledge.

The answer to this question is intentionally open-ended. Let the player think on it for some time; if running the scene concurrently with the nightmares in the modern age, switch back and forth until the player comes up with an answer he is comfortable with (this should add tension for the players in the modern age, as they are fighting for their lives against invincible foes, and all depends on this one player's cleverness . . . or so they think).

Some reasonable sacrifices include an oath to protect the primordial's waterfall, an agreement to serve her for one year out of every 100, a gift of a powerful karmic item at the beginning of each new lifetime (including the player's new life as a scion), a story of the wider world shared with the primordial upon each full moon, or anything else the player can imagine. Obviously non-valuable or material sacrifices, like a pile of gold or a dragon's scale, are rejected with a shake of the primordial's head; obviously overwhelming sacrifices, like the dragon's own life, one of his limbs, or giving up part of his life essence (voluntarily lowering one of his aspect scores, for instance) may be accepted, at the GM's discretion, but should have commensurate rewards beyond simply learning the ritual. Being able to call upon the primordial for favors in future flashbacks, "divine intervention" when the player is in a bad spot, or even a water primordial servitor in the mythic and modern ages would be appropriate. If you do not wish to grant the player such a boon, the primordial simply shakes her head and stops the dragon from making the overwhelming sacrifice.

**Break point:** As above, if the player in the flashback appears stymied or spends a good amount of time trying formulate his response, switch back to the modern age for more desperate fighting in the nightmares. This time, switch back either when one of the PCs seems to be in a lot of trouble or when one of the PCs seems to be about to make a breakthrough.

## THE BOND

Once the dragon answers this second question acceptably, read the following text aloud.

*The Lady smiles, nods, and simply says "wait." Then she settles back into her pool. You wait for minutes, then hours . . . she does not return.*

She lets the dragon wait for some time, letting him think that perhaps she has left, testing his patience. These two creatures are, after all, immortals. It is difficult for the dragon in the flashback to determine how much time has passed . . . at least weeks, or months, possibly even years. Regardless, if he waits, she will eventually resurface holding a silvered blade. Careful inspection will reveal the blade to be made of water, not silver, but that revelation does not alter her actions or their effects.

Read the following text aloud.



## ACT THREE: ANCIENT BONDS

*The Lady gestures from you to the pool of which she is part; at the beginning and end of that arc, her hand disappears into your scaled flesh where she touches your shoulder, then into the water from which she takes her form as she touches the pool's surface. She is gesturing for you to enter her pool, to join with her.*

*When you do, she asks another one-word question: "Forever?"*

If he does not answer immediately, she presses, repeating the question with more force each time.

In her simple, direct way, the Lady wants to know if the dragon understands the cost of knowledge. Everything comes with a price. If the dragon answers "yes" or something equivalent, she will smile enigmatically and stab the dragon in the heart with her watery blade. The dragon's claws move to his chest to protect the "wound," but find only water that douses the claws. The dragon has been imbued with the knowledge of the ritual, but this also makes him beholden to the primordial for all time. That which affects her, affects the dragon. This is a powerful plot hook that is entirely up to the GM to use for the future. You may decide where the waterfall is, what may have occurred to it in the modern age, and what effects the waterfall's condition will have on the scion.

In return for this obligation, the dragon and scion automatically learn the Bound by Blood spell and ritual without having to spend APs or picks; additionally, neither the dragon nor the scion need ever fear overkill successes when using the Bound by Blood spell or ritual. Part of their connection with the waterfall is that excess, potentially damaging magical energy is harmlessly channeled away on the current of karma.

If the dragon hems and haws, or answers with a direct no, she will look incredibly, overwhelmingly sad and lonely, enough to make any human's heart break. To a dragon, however, emotion is a different thing entirely; let the player decide how he responds to this. Regardless, she holds forth the watery blade, and when the dragon accepts it in his claws, it disperses into liquid, soaking his hands. The dragon gains temporary knowledge of the ritual, enough for the scion to complete it in the modern age.

**Break point:** Switch this scene back and forth with the final part of the battle against the nightmares. Ideally, the dragon receives the dagger at the same time the other players work out either how to use mental actions to suppress their otherwise invulnerable foes, or how to enter each others' nightmares and assist against them.

### THE RITE

As the rest of the brood has been facing their own nightmares, the player engaged in the flashback has been slowly, unconsciously performing the ritual that he learned in the mythic age. Read the following text aloud to the flashback player.

*As you awaken from the dream, you are haunted by the unearthly beauty of the woman in the falls, the Lady. She will be with you, one way or another, for the rest of your life, of your many lifetimes. In fact, you realize suddenly, she always has. You still feel the dripping, pure water on your claws . . . no, hands, now . . . from the watery blade. You feel those hands gesturing, creating arcane symbols in the air, and hear yourself chanting. When you look down at those hands, though, you see not clear and life-giving water covering them, but dark and life-taking blood. Both of your palms have large gashes where they clenched a sharp ridge on the marble amulet you wear, and as you look to the floor you realize that you have surrounded yourself and your allies in a circle of your own blood.*

*All around you, your broodmates are awakening from their own visions, free from the nightmares of Ophois.*

### PROTECTING THE PRESENT

This section of the adventure describes what is occurring in the modern age while the flashback above takes place. While combat mechanics are presented, this is intended to be a roleplaying-heavy encounter.

*Ancient words in a language you've never heard before, but still somehow know, rip themselves from your companion's throat. The blood-red flames left by the fallen inmates begins to pulse in time with his voice. As the cadence rises, so to do the flames, until they lick the roof above. Then the shadows cast by the leaping flames take on shape and weight. One moment, you are in the chamber with your brood, standing in a circle around your chanting companion. The next moment, you are in another place, and while you feel irrevocably alone, you have the horrible feeling that there's something behind you . . .*

As Ophois realizes what the PCs intend, he grabs hold of those that he can reach (those not involved in the flashback) and traps their minds in a nightmare. Each PC may find himself in a different setting, depending on those fears. Some may be alone, others in crowds of people; some are in the darkness, others in broad daylight. Take the time to develop an intense and moving description of each PC's nightmare, using what you know about the characters to personalize them. Regardless of the setting, however, each PC begins the nightmare separate from his brood; there may be nightmare versions of the other characters present, but they are not truly there.

The PCs' nightmares can be whatever you as GM deem is appropriate, but should as a default include, on the first round, a foe that rolls one die on all tests or an environmental effect that requires a TH 1 test each turn to avoid damage. Both foes and effects do 1 "damage" with each strike. PCs may attempt to resist either sort of nightmare as normal, probably using their physical

skills or magic; nothing they try seems to work, however. Each turn the PC spends in the nightmare, the number of dice the foe rolls, the TH for the environmental effect, and the damage dealt each increase by one. The damage is not real; instead of affecting the PC's body, it affects his mind, relentlessly assaulting the PC's psyche. If the PC sustains enough damage to die, he becomes a slave to the will of Ophois.

No matter how hard the PC tries, he is unable to avoid damage from the foe or escape the environmental effect. Nor can he damage the foe or change the environment. That is, until he realizes that he is in the realm of the mind. Once Ophois traps a mortal in the nightmare of his mind, there is no escape. No matter how long and hard the victim fights, he will eventually be overwhelmed by the fear within himself. There are only two things that can save the scions: their courage and their Group Mind.

In order to fight back against his nightmare, the scion must attack it and defend against it with a mental action: Suppress Fear. The scion may choose the skill governing Suppress Fear from among any of his mental skills, so long as he can explain in-character how he uses the skill to defy his fears. If he faces an environmental effect, he must use Suppress Fear to overcome its TH; if he faces a foe, he must Suppress Fear to attack it and defend against it. Characters should not need to know this exact term in order to use it; rather, the concept of using one's mind or bolstering one's courage is what counts. If the character successfully evades the environmental effect three times in a row, or successfully "hits" his nightmare foe three times in a row, he will have defeated his nightmare . . . for the time being. It is reborn the next turn, however, reset to 1 TH, 1 die on tests, and 1 damage, but increasing each turn as before.

When a scion successfully stumbles onto the idea of using the Suppress Fear action, however, he has given himself a fighting chance. The nightmare continues to grow in strength, however, and will eventually overwhelm him. In order to truly escape, the PCs must realize that, thanks to their brood, they are not truly alone. When a PC either overcomes his nightmare with Suppress Fear or thinks of trying to contact one of his broodmates (perhaps to communicate the idea of using Suppress Fear), read the following aloud.

*As you stand true against the nightmare around you, the shadows covering your eyes fall away. You see the basement, and the rest of your brood, each trapped in their own horrid vision. And you realize, as your nightmares billow back, caught in the wind of your courage, that you are not alone. You need never be alone again. You reach through the nightmare to your broodmates' minds, and share the weapon that you've discovered, and realize that you can give them more than knowledge . . .*





## ACT THREE: ANCIENT BONDS

At this point, the PC that thought to try to contact his broodmates may come to the aid of any one other PC, stepping into his nightmare. Whenever two scions in conjunction evade a nightmare environmental effect or defeat a foe, that nightmare is permanently defeated. The successful PCs can then go to the aid of another PC, and so on until all the nightmares are defeated, at which point all of the PCs are free. In this manner, the brood's unity will have overcome Ophois's most dangerous weapon. The victory of the modern age PCs should coincide with the success of the PC in the mythic age flashback. When both the modern scions and the scion in the flashback have completed their journeys and returned to the here and now, read the following text aloud.

<Insert the name of the scion who went into the flashback> *stands in the center of your circle, now holding before him the marble amulet. His free hand reaches out and wraps around the amulet's sharp edge. Then, with a swift motion that coincides with a grunted exhalation of breath and the last syllable of the ritual's chant, he rips the amulet from his grasp. A thick red waterfall of blood pours eagerly from his palm to the ground below, and as it hits the floor seems to spread over an invisible, mystic weave of runes and binding lines, momentarily highlighting them against the earth in a blinding scarlet light. You see lines of power stretching off in several directions, and for a few moments you can see things, people and events and places, that are continents away or even existing in another time altogether. And then, all returns to normal. It is dark, and quiet.*

*And yet Ophois is nowhere to be found.*

### SCENE 3: BOUND BY BLOOD



After completing the ritual described above, the scions expect their enemy to appear before them. Unfortunately, reason and magic do not always go hand in hand. Read the following passage aloud:

*As the scarlet light of dragon blood fades from the floor, the flickering flames of the inmates' self-fed pyres go out. In the sudden darkness, you hear nothing but the sound of your brood's breathing . . .*

Regardless of what the scions choose to do at this point Ophois does not appear among them. Instead, after a few minutes, tell the ritual caster that he has sustained a minor wound, and read the following text aloud.

<Insert the name of the ritual caster>'s *flesh suddenly blossoms with dozens of blood spots, as if swarmed by a hail of tiny darts. For an instant you <to the ritual caster> can feel Ophois's pain as somewhere, someone hurls a volley of thorny javelins at his side. The next moment, the sensation fades, leaving only the blood behind.*

The reason that Ophois does not appear among the PCs is because, while the ritual forces the being to come forth into the mortal world, the being can only make that transition via the most powerful nearby karmic item . . . in this case, the Sacred Elm of the fae. The creatures of the wood are struggling valiantly, but will ultimately fall.

The reason Ophois's pain is transferred is that, in order to be bound in physical form to this world, the demon must be anchored in flesh and, as always, blood. Therefore, a being of flesh and blood must act as the "anchor" holding Ophois in the material world. For every two minor wounds Ophois suffers, the anchor suffers one minor wound. For every die wound Ophois suffers, the anchor suffers two minor wounds. The anchor may resist the pain flooding through the karmic link with an Earth (Stamina) test 5, thereby negating the minor wound. For each wound die Ophois sustains after the casting of the ritual, however, the TH for this test increases by 1. As normal, if the anchor would suffer minor wounds after he has exceeded his minor wound limit, he suffers dice wounds instead. If the anchor dies, the nearest scion in his brood then becomes the anchor.

The anchor can trace Ophois's location by making an Air (Ka) 5 test. Any of the brood can also take the role of anchor from his broodmate and take it on himself by making an Air (Ka) 4 test.

If the scions do not have a member with strong Ka they may try to either use logic to work out the situation or an Air (Knowledge: Occult) 5 test. If the players still don't discover what is going on, remind them of the similarity between the effects suffered by the anchor character and the weapons wielded by their fae allies. If the PCs still dawdle, the anchor suffers a new minor wound every minute until the PCs reach the Sacred Glen.

### GETTING OUT OF THE ASYLUM

The level of difficulty the PCs face escaping from the asylum depends on how they entered it. They can sneak out, try to trick the doctor and nurse into looking the other way, or simply flee the scene with all due haste. Whatever method they settle should resolve quickly: every moment they dawdle means death, or worse, for their fae allies.

# SCENE 4: A DISH SERVED COLD



Using whatever means are available to them, the scions return to the Sacred Glen. When they arrive, read the following text aloud.

*Shadows and merciful darkness cloak the place of light you left behind. You can see little flickers of eldritch flame still dancing across the ground, remnants of magic hastily gathered and even more rapidly deployed. The air around you feels sticky with some kind of mist. It smells wretched yet sickeningly sweet, like fruit that has begun to molder in the chest cavity of a corpse. The body of fae lie scattered around the clearing. Then you spy the creature that destroyed them. It lopes forward out of the darkness, a towering black figure that looks vaguely man-shaped, though 20 feet tall. As it steps into the light of the eldritch flames, you see that its body seems to be composed of a collection of human and animal corpses in various stages of decomposition, mashed and pressed together into a humanoid form. Its nearly skeletal head appears to be that of a plague-ridden wolf, boils and pustules dripping from its flesh. As its soulless gaze sweeps over you, you feel an answering power well up from deep within. This is the foe that has plagued you throughout the ages. It drops a bloody, motionless body from its gigantic clawed hand: Kunangos. Then, with a cackling cough, it speaks. "Well, the brood has finally left the nest, has it? Thank you ever so for the invitation to your world. I do believe," it says, leering at you, "that I'll stay."*

Neither Ophois nor the scions wield the power they once did. While bound to this world, Ophois has almost no power to affect others' minds, being almost completely a creature of rage and physical ferocity. The battle with the demon, fought among the broken bodies of the dying fae, should be savage and brutal. If the scions work together, wearing down his karma pool and assisting one another, they should do reasonably well. If they fight as individuals, he will decimate them and then finish them off one by one.

Remember that each time Ophois suffers damage, the scion acting as an anchor suffers damage as well.

## OPHOIS (IN CORPOREAL FORM)

Era Modern; **Race** Supernatural being; **APL** 4; **Init** 9; **Aspects** Fire 6 (2), Water 5 (2), Air 3 (2), Earth 4 (2); **Health** 6m, <8 / 8+ / 13+ / 18+ / 23+ / 28+ / 33+ /

38+; **Size/Reach** 2 / 10 ft.; **Armor** 5; **Taint** 12; **Stride** 40 ft. (Fast)

### Combat

**Scepter** 10/H; **Claw** 5/L; **Kick** 7/M; **Sequences** Overkill, Ravager (replace Bite with Scepter)

### Abilities

**Skills** Athletics 4, Ka 4, Knowledge: Occult 6, Melee 6, Quickness 2, Stamina 4, Will 4; **Edges** Dervish 3, Mythic Leap 2, Rapid 3, Resilient 2; **Powers** Skin of Stone 3

### Description

Ophois is normally an insubstantial spirit that drinks the blood and souls of those slain in battle. He was one of many supernatural creatures of the mythic age that found power and purpose in strange niches; unfortunately for him, his purpose crossed those of dragons and titans alike. He once wandered the world in many guises, possessing whatever bodies were handy and inspiring battles to feed his lust. By the time the brood faced him in Lycurgin's body, he had substantially weakened; when the dragons finally brought him down, he vowed eternal revenge, swearing to kill them again and again until the end of time.

When forced into physical form, this spirit takes on the visage of a wolf-headed giant standing around 20 feet tall. While man-shaped in outline, that form seems to be composed of an amalgamation of human and animal corpses pressed together, all in various stages of rot. He wields a hooked scepter in one hand. His long, awkwardly jointed legs can deliver tremendously powerful kicks.

The ritual that bound Ophois keeps him from fleeing the brood. Though he does not at first understand why, he is bound to the PCs until the last of them die. His only hope is to utterly annihilate them.

**Note:** The stat block above shows Ophois in a substantially weakened form; the abilities listed above do not even come close to Ophois's true abilities in his prime. Even the battle against Lycurgin in the mythic age displayed few of Ophois's abilities; by the time the brood battles him in that form, his power had waned substantially. If Ophois is faced earlier in the mythic age, he should be a difficult opponent for a full-powered brood of dragons. In fact, just such a battle could be the cause of Ophois's weakened state later in the mythic age when he is possessing Lycurgin.

## VICTORY

When the scions finally defeat Ophois, read the following text aloud.

*The dark, twisted figure falls to its warped knees. It raises its hands toward the heavens, as if asking for supplication from the distant stars. Then, in the space of a single breath, it vanishes, a candle flame before the gale of a dragon's breath.*





# ÉPILOGUE

Once the spirit falls, the remaining fae will come out of hiding. Fully half their number lay broken and dying. Those not killed will need years to fully recover their strength. Despite that, they hail the dragons as their allies and friends. Individual GMs should decide whether they want Kunangos and Gruzz to have survived the attack, depending on the themes and flavor of their campaign. Kunangos is useful as comic relief and as a symbol of innocence, so his death would cast a dark pall upon the campaign. Gruzz is useful as a bruiser, and should therefore be kept around to help parties without a powerful melee character; he also has the potential for some mystery in that he may have been a very different creature in the mythic age.

For the immediate future, the fae will heal or hide the brood as best they can. Other parties interested in the scions, such as the police or the organizations from Act Two, may attempt to track them down. The PCs' "normal lives" may become an issue; are there friends and family they should check in with? Jobs they have to report back to? It's up to you, and the characters, just how much on hold they can put the future until they have healed and regrouped.

## WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Later, the scions must face the consequences of choices made during the adventure. Their actions, both positive and negative, will have repercussions far beyond their immediate understanding. If this was their first adventure together, they will need to become accustomed to their new lives, both as dragons and potentially as fugitives from the law. If they have already come to grips with their draconic natures and the fact that they've lived past lives, they must still deal with the repercussions of alliances, compromises, and promises . . . both those made in the modern age and those made before the dawn of history.

The various factions with which the scions have interacted may respond in a variety of ways. Listed below are several options for their behavior depending on the PCs' actions and the style of your campaign.

## FAE

The fae of Haverhill are present at the site of the battle with Ophois, and therefore are the most immediate faction the PCs must deal with. Because of their similar interactions in the mythic age, the brood and fae are bound in a reciprocal relationship of trust and need.

The fae's location near Cambridge presents the scions with some problems. Because London is the focus of karma's return, that city is the site of the major play-

ers of this age, and the place where the scions are both most needed and most powerful. If the characters' primary allies live 50 miles away, they are unlikely to be of immediate assistance in times of peril.

At the same time, the fae's distance from the conflict's epicenter also acts as a buffer from the maelstrom. The Sacred Glen is an ideal resting place for the scions if things become too chaotic or dangerous in London. Depending on the PCs' actions during the adventure, the fae may be willing to offer them shelter regardless of the circumstances. So long as the scions do not take advantage of their friendship or attract too much attention to their refuge, they should always have a place to find both rest.

As for Emblae, the PCs will, time and again, need assistance in sorting through the memories bombarding them from the ancient past. Though the fae cannot match the dragons' powers, he does possess clearer memories of the mythic age. This puts him in a perfect position to assist the scions as they deal with situations and foes that originated in the mythic age but have followed them through history to appear in the modern world.

## POSSIBLE PLOT SEEDS

Possible plots tied to the fae include:

- A rival group of fae attempts to take over the Sacred Glen. The fae may have been mythic age allies of the brood, or perhaps they are exiles from London; in either case, they need to find somewhere with karmic energy, or they will fade away once more.
- Emblae sends a messenger to the scions, warning of an impending doom about to come upon them. It seems the brood once made a pact with a great demon, agreeing to meet it in combat once every thousand years. If they lose the contest, the demon consumes their souls. If they win, the demon gives the brood one of its powerful enchanted items, then returns to its slumber to await its next opportunity.
- A cache of cursed Atlantean items drives the scholars in a minor museum mad. The scholars believe themselves to be the Atlantean expeditionary force from the confrontation at Wytaul, and march on the fae of Haverhill equipped with powerful Atlantean armor and weapons. The scions must find a way to stop the curse-ridden scholars without killing them. If the bearer of the arms is killed, an even more dangerous curse erupts from the arms he bears, perhaps infecting the killer.

## GEHENNA CONSORTIUM

The divinatory entity that revealed the scions' identities to the Gehenna Consortium seemed nearly overwhelmed by their potential power, reacting with an intensity that Marcus Sagarius had never seen in the creature before. Eager to claim these potential power players as his own, and seeking to speak a language they would understand, the normally suave and smooth businessman overplayed his hand.

Marcus instructed his followers to use a combination of barely veiled threats and seemingly invaluable assistance to bind the brood. However, the brood probably reacted poorly to this approach. In times past they wielded almost god-like power; heavy-handed manipulation should rankle them.

More importantly, the scions' interaction with the Consortium has also betrayed the existence of that group to LN-7. If the scions continue to cooperate with the Consortium, LN-7 will use them as unknowing moles, gaining more and more information about this group of corrupt businessmen every time the scions use them as patrons. Once the Consortium realizes what has happened, they will move to close the leak . . . with prejudice.

Until the Consortium turns, though, the scions will find them to be highly attentive patrons. They have expansive wealth, tremendous political resources, and an utterly amoral approach to using both to further their own ends. If scions provide the Consortium with mystical muscle, their contacts will help them live a life to which only the most jaded could become accustomed. Wealth, power, and attentive lovers will all be at the scions' disposal, so long as the brood asks no questions and does as they are told.

If the scions did not initially accept the Consortium's offer for help, or eventually turn on their amoral patrons, the businessmen will take material and mystical steps to deal with the problem. Scions with strong connections to the business world will find their once bright prospects blighted by rumors and failed deals. Mortgages will come under foreclosure and credit ratings suffer irreparable damage. If the PCs are not concerned with material wealth, the Consortium is just as happy to summon tainted servitors that are more able to speak a language the scions will understand: that of violence.

Ironically, the more pressure the Consortium applies against the scions, the more it tips its hand to its enemies. LN-7, the government, and other interested parties will finally take steps to close down or at least hamstring the Consortium. These steps will probably not help the scions overly much, as they are likely to have suffered extensively at the Consortium's hands by this point, but they may still take satisfaction in watching their enemy's downfall or in assisting with it.





### POSSIBLE PLOT SEEDS

Possible plots tied to the Gehenna Consortium include:

- The Consortium offers to take the scions on as security consultants. Their duties range from providing protection during rituals to rooting out “evil influences on the British Commonwealth,” including a group of magicians who secretly control the government.
- One of the Consortium members takes the scions on as a special project. His instructions: shape them into loyal members of the organization, or if that fails, kill them. He plies them with all of the temptations he can think of, interspersing seduction with simple moral challenges. Each time the scions choose to do what is most expedient for the Consortium rather than what would be morally right, he rewards them with further pleasures.

### LN-7

The stance taken by the spooks at LN-7 depends entirely on how the scions handled themselves during the adventure. The less anti-social or psychopathic the scions seem, the less likely it becomes that the agency will assess them as a serious threat to public safety.

This threat assessment process takes some time. As an agency that is experienced in subterfuge and covert operations, LN-7 does nothing rashly. Several story arcs down the road, if LN-7 has tracked down the scions and linked them to further supernatural events, they will file the brood into one of three categories: friendly, neutral, or containment required.

#### FRIENDLY ASSESSMENT

---

If the scions avoided causing harm to innocents, took responsibility for their own actions, and acted within the letter of the law as much as humanly possible, LN-7 assigns them friendly status. This does not mean that LN-7’s director comes out and personally thanks the scions for their assistance; rather, it means that, for now at least, the spooks think that the brood as a whole represents a positive rather than negative force for the public good.

Once it gives the scions friendly status, LN-7 assigns a permanent operative to the brood. This individual uses all of the tools available to modern intelligence agencies (including phone-tapping and observation) to monitor their activities, and is likely a skilled Thelema adept as well. So long as the scions continue to behave in a pos-

itive manner (not dealing with dark forces, causing damage with magic, or engaging in unwarranted violence or murder), the operative will simply report on their activities. If they get in over their heads, or stumble onto something they simply cannot handle, the operative can seek authorization for an intervention. This intervention will only rarely take the form of armed assistance. Instead, LN-7 is likely to feed the brood information and occasional resources, but only does so when they can guarantee that it will not be traced back to them.

#### NEUTRAL ASSESSMENT

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If the scions demonstrate disregard for due process, unintentionally harm innocents through careless action, or violate the law in a cavalier fashion, LN-7 assigns them a neutral assessment. This category indicates that the agency remains uncertain about the brood’s intentions. Since the brood itself may not know what it wants to do next, this assessment may be even more accurate than the spooks know.

Once it gives the scions a neutral assessment, LN-7 assigns both an operative and a monitor. The operative, as described above, violates the scions’ privacy in a variety of non-intrusive ways. The monitor acts as a liaison with the home office and local police force. If he detects any suspicious activity, he may upgrade their threat assessment to “containment required” or request another threat assessment.

#### CONTAINMENT REQUIRED ASSESSMENT

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If the scions demonstrate that they cannot or will not control their powers, have no respect for law or life, or demonstrate dangerous anti-social or psychopathic behavior, LN-7 assigns them the “containment required” designation. Legally, they become suspected terrorists. LN-7 will also review its files of supernatural crimes, seeking to link the brood with murders, assaults, and threats to the public safety.

This assessment represents a worst-case scenario for the scions. Despite their newfound power, they cannot match an organized, trained group of soldiers backed by battle-hardened magicians. LN-7 will monitor their location and activities while they put the pieces in place, then spring a precision ambush designed to capture the scions alive.

Once captured, the scions will be subjected to a wide variety of tests before being incarcerated in an unnamed facility where they have no rights and even fewer opportunities for escape. This period of incarceration will end abruptly with an offer of freedom, conditional on the scions performing a service for LN-7 and their acceptance of continual monitoring.



## POSSIBLE PLOT SEEDS

Possible plots tied to LN-7 include:

- One of the brood, probably the leader, is struck down by a sniper shot. As the brood tries to work out what happened, they receive an anonymous letter containing plane tickets and a key to an airport locker in Paris. Within the locker they find pictures of the sniper, pictures of the brood, and an address.
- Two of the brood members find an ogham wheel drawn on the floor in front of their flats. Within days, both come down with terrible illnesses, one after another. The more the scions try to break the curse, the worse things seem to become. Eventually they receive an anonymous package including information about a group of modern druids who wish to bind nature spirits, which they think the scions are, to their service.
- If they have been captured, the scions are forced to become a top-secret mercenary response unit for LN-7. Over time, they may find themselves enjoying working for the common good and taking on the roles of pseudo-superheroes. Just as they get comfortable, however, any number of things could happen: their commanding officers ask them to do something entirely against their moral stances; the members of LN-7 become corrupt, defensive, or increasingly violent as more and more of their agents are hurt or killed by supernatural threats, and the scions are labeled as “one of them” by their peers in the organization; or another power group in the corrupt government, possibly the Freemasons, takes control of or destroys LN-7, forcing the scions to become fugitives or traitors.

## POLICE DEPARTMENT

If the scions are tied to the café massacre and shooting, the chief of police of that borough will have to make a decision about the scions and their involvement. He will base this assessment on the scions’ demeanor, how much they assisted or attempted to evade the police in their investigation, and on his own feelings about the sudden resurgence of magic.

Unlike LN-7, the borough chief only concerns himself with the scions’ activities in his scope of control. He has no reason to suspect that they were involved in any reported incidents in Haverhill, for instance. If the scions behaved in a manner leading to either a friendly or neutral threat assessment by LN-7 (described above), the chief will send out informal word for the local officers to “leave off” the brood. This lets officers turn a blind eye to anything out of the ordinary so long as the scions do nothing overtly illegal. It will not, however, prevent the police from coming down on them hard if the scions step over the line.

In either of these cases, the scions have an opportunity to establish themselves as allies of law enforcement in times of trouble. If the scions consistently step in to assist the police when dealing with supernatural threats they can, and will, develop a relatively positive relationship. The police will protect them from outside interference while the scions protect them from things that go bump in the night.

A “containment required” assessment brings LN-7 into the picture. The local officers will keep a close eye on the scions while various special operations units move into position. They will strike from ambush when the scions are at their weakest.

## POSSIBLE PLOT SEEDS

Possible plots tied to the police include:

- A supernatural predator of some sort moves into the scions’ home borough. After it kills a policeman, the local force sends a plain-clothes detective to speak with the scions’ leader. They need help, and are more or less willing to make a deal to get it.
- When a magical surge spikes in London, it sparks riots and chaos. It also causes frightened Londoners to band together into mobs bent on killing anything not human. The scions, unfortunately, fall into this category, and the mob leaders are magicians with the ability to identify them as such. Though the PCs could easily kill dozens of humans, doing so obviously has unwanted moral, legal, and social consequences. Just as things are looking grim, the local constables divert the crowd, then help spirit the scions from hiding place to hiding place, repaying them for their indirect help in keeping order.
- An off-duty cop approaches the scions with an offer of information. It seems another “group of blokes with strange



powers” is moving into the area. Right now they are using their powers to intimidate the local gangs, but it is only a matter of time before they set up more lucrative operations. If the scions will look into the matter, the police will turn a blind eye toward any indiscretions that might occur during their investigation.

## NEW SPELL

The scion that experiences the Harnessing the Past flashback may learn the Bound by Blood spell and its ritual version.

### BOUND BY BLOOD (RANK 2)

**Alternate Names:** Anchor, Enflesh, Clothe the Wind

**Area of Effect:** One ephemeral being

**Range:** Up to 50 feet.

**Duration:** A number of minutes equal to the caster’s base Earth score

**Reaction:** No

**Effect:** When the caster invokes Bound by Blood, he weaves magic around the spirit of an ephemeral creature, drawing it into this world. As long as the spell persists, the creature remains manifested to one sense of the caster’s choice. Unwilling creatures may resist with an Earth (Ka) test 4. On the creature’s turn, if it has the Manifest power and has the ability to manifest the chosen sense, it can attempt to return to the ephemeral realm; to do so, it must beat the caster of this spell on an Air (Ka) test opposed by the caster’s Earth (Ka).

In order to complete the spell, the caster must inflict one minor wound on himself for each target he wishes to affect. The magician thereafter becomes the creature’s anchor; for every wound die the creature suffers, the anchor also suffers a minor wound. The anchor can resist the pain of an incoming shared wound with an Earth (Stamina) test with a TH of 5 (+1 for each wound die the creature has suffered since the spell’s casting began), thereby negating the minor wound.

### EXPANDED LORE

#### Casting Options:

- a. 1 (Unlimited): Increase the duration by one minute
- b. 2 (8): Increase the TH to resist by 1
- c. 2 (4): Force the spirit to manifest one additional sense.
- d. 3 (Unlimited): Affect one additional target (who must also be an ephemeral being).

**Ritual Version:** As the spell, but the anchor may be any participant in the ritual, and the duration is permanent; the creature can only be released to the ephemeral world via the anchor’s death. Even a successful counter-ritual will not free the spirit, once it is bound by blood. The ritual may target any ephemeral being within karmic range, detected or not, so long as the magician performs the ritual at the place of the spirit’s greatest power (or in the case of a once-living creature, the spot of its death). The spirit’s body forms near the strongest karmic item within a 50-mile radius, and all three senses must manifest.

The ritual provides more options for the anchor than the normal spell does. First of all, since the anchor and the spirit are now irrevocably bound, the anchor can sense the spirit’s direction and approximate distance anywhere within karmic range by making an Air (Ka) test with a TH of 10 minus the spirit’s APL. Additionally, if the anchor is part of a Group Mind, anyone within that Group Mind and within karmic range can take on the anchor role from him with a successful Air (Ka) test with a TH equal to the spirit’s APL. Finally, if the anchor dies, the anchor role is automatically and immediately transferred to the nearest member of his Group Mind within karmic range; in this manner, so long as a member of the Group Mind continues to exist, the spirit may remain bound throughout eternity. (1 hour / karma equal to twice the spirit’s APL / one-half pint of the anchor’s blood)

## NEW MENTAL ACTION

### SUPPRESS FEAR

**Description:** You use mental discipline to confront and diffuse your fears. Any creature drawing substance from these fears immediately weakens. Furthermore, if a creature inflicts a fear effect on the scion this action can negate it.

**Governing Skill:** The first time you use the Suppress Fear action you select one mental skill as the action’s governing skill. You should select a skill your scion finds both comforting and sustaining. Each time after the first you use this action you must use the skill you initially selected.

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