

# KEYS TO THE SUPERNAL TAROT

the World of Darkness

MAGE  
THE AWAKENING





# KEYS TO THE SUPERNAL TAROT™



*By Matthew McFarland*



# PROLOGUE: THE FOOL

"I can read your future in these cards, y'know."

I can read my own future in these cards. I'm fucked. I've got a pair of deuces and jack-shit else, and I know the dude across from me has at least a flush.

"Oh, yeah?" I'm making conversation while I look for the exits.

"Sure."

"These are just playing cards, Wilke," says the Black guy. He says it like he's making an excuse for me. I didn't catch his name before. Started with a J, I think.

"They're cards," says Wilke. "That's all I need." He nods to our erstwhile waitress. "Tina, how about another?"

Tina was sitting at the next table reading a dog-eared paperback. She nods, stands up and stretches, and walks across the empty room to the bar. We're the only ones in here. The jukebox is long silent, the TV's off because the game is over, and the smell of cigarettes is fading from the air. The cars outside are few and far between, and they just make little warning whispers on the wet roads when they do cruise by.

I'm at least four miles from anyplace safe. My car's in the lot, but I think I'm blocked in. Taxis don't come down here unless called, and the nearest bus stop is four blocks up. I'm so very fucked.

Wilke raises me five. I'm already on credit, here, but I have to see him and stay in. I decide to raise him, hoping to God that he'll take pity on me. If he folds, I'm back where I started when this game began, and I could walk out of here relatively safely.

Wilke does me the credit of looking at his cards again. "Jerry, you in?"

Jerry — that's his name — tosses his cards on the table. "Nah. This is getting too tense for me." He walks to the bar and refills his soda from the fountain. Jerry mentioned earlier that he's been sober for 19 years. Tina brings Wilke his beer and glares at Jerry for messing with her bar, but Jerry doesn't notice.

"You really want to raise me, Steve?"

Steve isn't my real name. My real name is Abraham, but I hate that name and I don't use it even in normal company. This is decidedly not normal. I got invited to this game because I needed a way out of the deep shit I'm

in, and a buddy of mine told me that this game could get me out... or deeper in. And so here I am.

"Yeah." I try to sound convincing.

"Okay. Call." He tosses a few more toothpicks into the center of the table. We don't have any poker chips to represent our currency.

"Shit." I toss in my cards. He drops his. I was right. He's got five hearts, and I've got a handful of crap.

Jerry looks over my shoulder. "Hell, I should've stayed in." The other two guys chuckle. I feel like bolting.

Wilke sees my face. "Oh, will you relax, Steve? Jesus, it's not like we're going to make you pay *now*."

"That's not comforting, really." My voice cracks. I'm scared.

Wilke starts shuffling the cards. I hope he doesn't think I'm going to play again. "I said before that I could see your future in the cards. You want to see what I mean?"

"I guess." I'm going to need to call my girlfriend and tell her... something. The truth is no good. Tell her I'm going back to my ex? That'd hurt her less.

Wilke stops shuffling and points at me. "What are you thinking? Right now?"

I start. "Um. I was thinking about my girlfriend—"

He pulls a card out of the deck and snaps it around so I can see it. Jack of hearts. "Perfect. That's you."

Something dawns on me. "Don't you need a Tarot deck for this?"

"Tair-oh," he says, wincing. "Not 'tarr-ot.'"

"Okay." I glance at Jerry, who sips his soda and smiles. "But don't you?"

"Cards is cards," says Jerry. He sits down next to me. "Look here. Playing cards comes from Tarot cards. Got your hearts, your clubs, your spades and your diamonds. Well, that's just like cups, staves, swords and coins. Got your kings and queens and jacks—"

"No pages, though," mutters Tina, from behind us.

"Right, right, none of them. And none of the big important guys, either, but it don't matter. Cards is cards."

What the hell is going on?

Tina walks over and sits with us. I notice that the book she's reading is in German. She turns her chair backwards



and leans on it, legs open, jeans hugging her thighs. She's wearing black Converse, I notice, and her shoelaces have weird letters drawn on them.

Wilke sets the jack of hearts on the table. "That's you," he says. He puts a card across it. It's the two of diamonds. "That's what's wrong with you. You're trying to keep balance here," he nods to the toothpicks, "but you keep fucking it up."

"That's not exactly hard to figure out," I say. I've had my cards read before. Swords kept coming up, I remember that much.

"Right." He pulls another card and places it in front of me, underneath the "me" card. Eight of hearts. "You walked away from a happy relationship. Probably a marriage, I'm guessing, because you talk like a married man."

"Yeah, he does," says Tina. I shoot her a look. How does a married man talk, anyway?

Wilke puts another card — eight of spades — next to my card. "Someone snowed you good. Probably the silly asshole told you to come here. Let me guess — said you could make your debt go away if you came and played cards here?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah. You *could* I guess, in the same way that I *could* theoretically pick up a gun, toss these cards up in the air, fire once and put a hole through the ace of spades." Jerry clears his throat and Wilke gives him a weird look. What am I missing? "Okay, bad example. But you see my point. Only way you were winning tonight was by sheer chance, and sheer chance isn't anything to gamble on." He swigs his beer. "Moving on to the future." He places a card on the other side of mine. Seven of clubs. "You've got a fight coming. Soon. Maybe tonight. And..." He puts down the queen of spades above my card. "You'd have help. Huh." He glances at Tina, who shrugs.

"Anyway, there's that. That's your past and immediate future. We all know what's happening here — you gambled away something that's very dear to you, tried to win it back here on bad advice, and wound up in over your head even more. Let's move on."

Jerry puts a hand on Wilke's shoulder. "What are you doing this for, man? We can't help him."

I think about running, but Tina's eyes stop me. Something tells me she could outrun me, or that she wouldn't have to.

"I know," Wilke's saying, "but he deserves to know a little." He pulls four cards and sets them on the table in a column. Nine of spades, ace of spades, seven of hearts, and five of spades. Lots of spades.

"Lots of swords," Wilke comments, and I get what Jerry was saying earlier. Spades are swords. I still don't know what he meant by "big important guys," though.

"Okay, let's see,"

Wilke continues. "You've got the nine of spades showing fear." He pauses. "Weird."





"What?" I know what I'm afraid of, but I don't think there's a card for it. Turns out I'm wrong.

"Well, the nine of spades — swords — is about the long dark night of the soul. It's about what happens when you lose something precious. I'd have thought the *ten* was more your thing. You know, being stabbed and left for dead. This is more like you're afraid of—"

"Someone's going to miss him," says Tina.

"Yeah." Wilke finishes the bottle and sets it on the floor. I've noticed he hates empties next to him. It's actually one of his tells — he finishes his beer quickly when he's got a good hand—but that didn't do me much good. "Okay, ace of spades. Bet that goes back to the queen. Someone's going to help you fight, and it's someone you don't know well. But that—"

"Shut up," says Jerry. They both look at Tina, and I feel, for about the thousandth time tonight, that I'm dreaming.

"Right, whatever. Seven of cups."

"Hearts."

"Hush up. You want a choice. You don't mind so much if you're screwed, you'd just rather it'd be at your hand." Wilke looks at me dead in the eye. "I respect that."

"Thanks, but that's not going to get my toothpicks back."

"S'pose not." He shifts in his seat. "And then we've got the five of swords."

"Spades."

"Goddamn it, Jerry." He rolls his eyes. "It's a card about defeat and betrayal."

"I'm already both," I mutter. "I... should maybe just..."

"There's nothing for you to do," says Jerry. "You gave up what you gave up. I said before that you didn't have to pay up now, but if you want to, you can." He nods to the toothpicks.

"What do I do?"

Wilke stands up. "Well, we'll keep this as painless as possible. How about we get you a drink? Something a little stronger? You have to be awake for this, but nothing says you can't be drunk. Tina? Do the honors?"

"No," says Tina. She's still sitting.

Wilke leans down to her. "Look, hon, I don't think—"

"Don't call me that," she says, never taking her eyes off me. "I want to play him."

Jerry mutters something and slaps a hand to his forehead. Wilke laughs nervously. "Uh, Tina, he hasn't got anything left to play *with*. He lost everything in the other deal, and he lost everything *else* to me. And I'm not spotting him."

"I will," says Tina. "I'll spot him for what he walked in here with. After that he's on his own."

Jerry, who's been walking toward the bar mumbling, whips around. "Now, hold on. You can't spot him and then lose to him. You know that's against the rules. You try that, and then—"

"I know. I have to play the game fairly." She narrows her eyes at Wilke. "That's more than you did."

"I didn't cheat."

"You didn't play fair, either. You played him. He deserves a fair shot. Something where he could win on more than sheer chance." Tina sits across from me. "Deal the cards, Wilke. Jerry, you in?"

Jerry shakes his head, but he doesn't take his eyes off Wilke. I get the feeling like something here is really off. Wilke deals five cards to me and five to Tina, but doesn't deal himself in. Tina takes 10 toothpicks off the table, gives five to me, and puts five in front of her like they're made of gold.

"You know that this could end badly for you, right, Tina?" Wilke's voice is low, almost a growl.

"I know how it could end," she says.

I look down at my hand. I've got the five, six, seven and eight of spades...and the jack of hearts. Fuck. I've got almost no chance, but I have to try for it.

Tina doesn't take any cards. I take one.

It's a joker.

Now, I've got a decent poker face, but I'm sure Tina sees what just happened. There's no possible way I avoided a tell, there. But I'm shitting myself, over here — this is a straight flush, and I didn't even know there was a joker in this deck.

I need 10 toothpicks to walk out of here clean. I need three to break even. We open with one. I raise her, first two, then two more. She stays in. We lay our cards down.

She's got a pair of aces and a pair of threes. I win.

She slides the toothpicks over to me. I pick them up and cradle them. I know that's ludicrous — it's what they represent that's valuable — but I can't help it.

Wilke glares at Tina. "Of course, you're in the hole now."

"I know," she mutters.

I could walk out right now. But then...what was that card I'm supposed to be hoping for? The seven of hearts — it's about choice? I reach for the other cards and shuffle. "You in this hand, Wilke?"

"You out of your goddamn *mind*, boy?" Jerry says. "Just get up, take what's yours and—"

"Yeah, I'm in," says Wilke. "Deal."

"You in, Jerry?"

"Hell, no," he says. He looks at the bar longingly, and then sits down and grips his soda glass fiercely. Tina doesn't say a word.

I deal the cards, and slide five toothpicks over to Tina. I'm now even. If I lose even one of these things, I'm back in the hole. Actually, I'm already in the hole, because I was when I walked in here. I glance at the clock. They're looking for me, I'm sure of it, and if I don't find them and cover my debt, they'll be looking for me even harder. They'll go to my ex-wife, my kid, my girlfriend, my mother... they



already said they weren't picky about *who* paid the debt, as long as it was me paying somehow.

I look down at my cards. No problem with the tells this time. Two jacks, an ace and some low crap. Wilke's got a good poker face going, and I haven't seen Tina play so I don't know her tells yet. We all ante up, and Wilke takes one card. Tina takes three. I take two.

There's the joker again...along with a jack. I've got four of a kind.

We go around the table. I bet two, Wilke sees me and raises two. Tina throws in her four and calls. I call. No sense raising this beyond what Tina can see. Cards down, I win. I'm now at 13, enough to cover my debt and then some.

But what would I do with it, anyway?

Tina deals. This time I have crap, and there's no sense staying in. But I make the show of it. I ask for one card. And I get back the joker.

With the joker, I can make a pair of aces, and that's about it. Wilke opens, and bets one. Tina calls him. I see his one and raise him one. That puts me at 10 even.

I finger the joker. I don't know if I've been doing that the last couple of hands, but I want Wilke to know I have it.

It works. Wilke folds. Tina sees me, and I fold. Tina wins. She's at five, right back where she started. I'm at 10. I'm free.

I stand up. Both my knees crack, and Wilke winces. "I'd like to cash in my toothpicks now, please."

Wilke smiles. "Guess you found your queen of swords."

"Spades," I mutter.

"Don't push your goddamn luck." Wilke gets up and collects the toothpicks, and walks to the phone. He dials a number, and I hear the *click* when the other party answers. The room gets 10 degrees colder, and my glasses fog up. Wilke says something in that weird language that he and my creditors speak, and then hangs up. "You're free and clear, Steve," he says. "Unless you want another game."

I laugh. "A good gambler knows when to walk away," I say. "I'm not a good gambler, but I'm not a total moron, either." Wilke nods, and then walks to the back room.

"He's got to go balance the books," says Jerry. "He's got to make sure all the totals match. Bet it takes him all night, but he'll do it."

I shuffle my feet a little. I want to talk to Tina alone, but I don't want to piss anybody off. "Hey, Jerry. Would it have hurt?"

Jerry smirks. "Yes. Longest hour of your life. And then, just coldness. I've seen young guys like you, they—"

"Enough," says Tina. "Jerry, give us a minute, alright?"

"Yes'm." He joins Wilke behind the "EMPLOYEES ONLY" door, and I find myself looking down at her sneakers.

"Did you... you know, with the joker?"

"No," she says. "I told you, I can't cheat. I spotted you five so you could have a shot, and then I just played you fair. I admit I could have played more aggressively, but other than that—"

"Thanks," I say. I feel like kissing her, but judging from her expression, that would be the wrong choice.

"Thank you," she replies. "You could have cleaned me out, much as that joker likes you."

"But it's just a card," I say.

Tina shakes her head. "Didn't you hear Wilke and Jerry? A deck of playing cards is a deck of Tarot cards. A deck of Tarot cards is a manual for a person's life. A person's life is the reflection of the soul. Symbolism isn't a mask, it's a layer of makeup. It's lighting. It disguises the truth, but it doesn't change it." She takes my hand and leads me outside.

The night air is cool, and the weather's clearing. It's just mist, now, not rain. It feels good on my face, and the pavement smells clean, fresh-washed. I think about the walk home and how

much to tell my girlfriend, and then I remember the last card in my reading.

"Did you betray them with what you did?"

"Huh?"

"The last card was betrayal and defeat. Did you betray them?"

Tina shakes her head. "No, Steve. That was *your* reading."

"So I was defeated or betrayed? Or I will be?"

She looks behind her, checking for Wilke, and then hands me something. "Wilke switched the cards on you," she says. "This is the real one, the last card in your reading, the one that ties it all together."

I don't have to look. The card likes me, after all. "So what's that mean?"

Tina doesn't answer. She kisses me on the cheek and walks back into the bar.

I put the joker in my pocket, turn east, and start walking toward the rising sun.

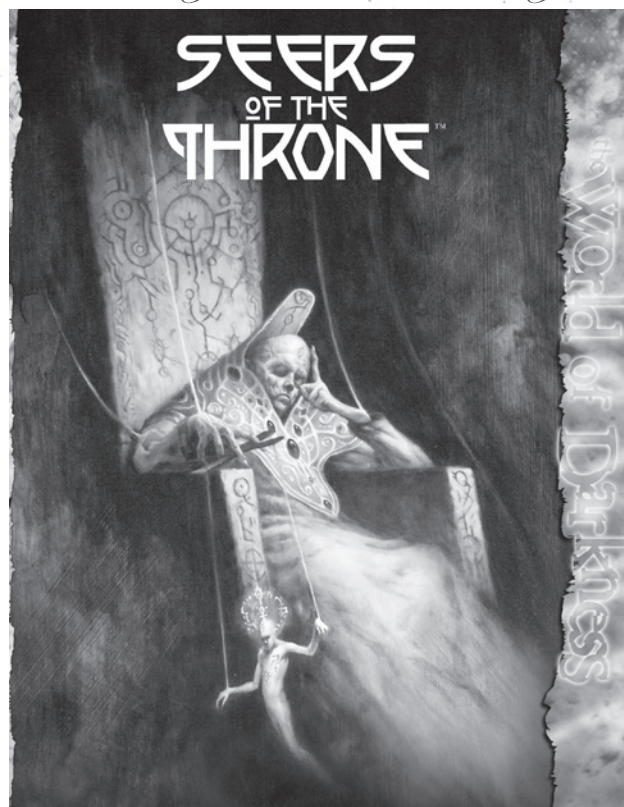




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# KEYS TO THE SUPERNAL TAROT™

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# INTRODUCTION

*Most of the leading modern interpreters of the Tarot have redesigned the cards to fit their own explanations of them, a process called 'rectifying' the pack if you agree with it, and 'obfuscating' it if you do not.*

— Richard Cavendish, *The Tarot*

The Tarot is a world of imagery, useful for inspiration and reflection as well as a tool for divinatory purposes. The cards can present new ways to look at old problems, and a skilled reader can tell a subject (or "querent") something that he already knew, but did not want to face. In the World of Darkness, the Tarot can serve as a mask for actual magic, but it can be much more than that. It can be a journey from Awakening to true enlightenment, and it provides a philosophical underpinning for a mage's career — for his entire life, in fact.

**Keys to the Supernal Tarot** is a primer on that journey. This Introduction presents a very brief history of the Tarot, as well as instructions on a common method of performing a Tarot reading. It also explains the Tarot journey, and presents a system for using the Tarot in Awakened magic (cartomancy).

The bulk of this book describes the 22 cards of the Major Arcana. For each card, we present a description of the common elements of the artwork, the divinatory meaning and the station in the Tarot journey that the card occupies. These sections also include a brief discussion of that card's symbolic representation within the world of **Mage: The Awakening**. The Death card, for instance, refers to the Moros Path, while the Sun card refers to the Free Council. A Storyteller wishing to use the Tarot as a strong thematic element in a chronicle might choose to make use of these representations, perhaps introducing them into the chronicle in the order that they appear in the deck, or in the order that they appear in a spontaneous reading. More information on Tarot readings appears in this Introduction.

Each card's write-up also includes something for players and Storytellers inspired by that trump — a Legacy, an Artifact, a character, or even a cabal. For the most part, these items don't directly reference the Tarot, but are derived from the symbolic meanings of the cards. For each of them, we also present the meaning of the card when reversed, and how to alter the inspirational item to bring it in line with that altered meaning.

The Appendix to this book discusses the 56 cards of the Minor Arcana and their meanings, and provides a brief story hook for each one.

## *History of the Tarot*

Despite occasional claims that the Tarot originated in Egypt, with the Cathars or in any of a dozen other exotic locations, the first known deck of Tarot cards originated in northern Italy in about 1470 AD. The cards were lavishly painted and embellished, and were used not for divinatory purposes, but for gaming. The first decks included the 56 cards that would come to be called the "minor arcana," and archetypal and allegorical cards based on such concepts as Death, Love, and the Cardinal Virtues were added later.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the game spread across Europe, and was used in a parlor game that involved making up poetry and descriptions of other players — verses called *tarocchi appropriati* — using the imagery suggested by the cards. This was probably the first time the cards had been used in any kind of descriptive or revelatory fashion, even though it predates true divination using the Tarot.

While playing cards (which probably granted the Tarot its four suits, rather than the other way around as is sometimes stated) had been used in divination since the mid-15th century, Tarot remained a game of the upper classes until roughly 1781. Its use in divination truly began with Etteilla and Court de Gébelin, who looked at the deck and saw (through the lens of the interest in ancient Egypt then so popular) a "universal key," a way to interpret the Tarot as being of Egyptian origin. Court de Gébelin also theorized that the Tarot had been conceived by Egyptian priests, who disguised their knowledge in the symbolism of a game to avoid it being stamped out by Christianity, before it was brought to Europe by the gypsies. This theory ignores the actual history of the Tarot, of course, but it lent a mysterious and occult air to the cards, and further correspondences between the Tarot and other ancient symbols and practices (Kabbalah, Hebrew lettering, and so on) continued to be drawn.

The next major occurrence in the Tarot's history was in 1909, when occult author and member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn Arthur Edward Waite designed his own Tarot deck. It was illustrated by fellow Golden Dawn member Pamela Colman Smith, and published by a company called Rider (hence its common name, the "Rider-Waite"



deck). The Rider-Waite deck, full of layers of imagery and symbolism, some Christian, some Hermetic, is probably the most recognizable and popular one to this day. Waite himself eventually rejected the notion that the Tarot had any correspondence to Hebrew lettering, and postulated sarcastically that someday someone would try to link it to the Cathar Heresy (which, indeed, came to pass).

Since then, hundreds of different Tarot decks have been produced. Some hew closely to Waite's design, some try to approach the "original" Tarot (but don't always seem to understand what that means). Many specialty Tarot decks are available, with imagery ranging from representations of popular fiction, to role-playing games, to erotica, to science fiction or modern technology.

## *In the World of Darkness*

In our world, the Tarot grew out of playing cards, not vice versa (in fact, although the Joker in a standard playing deck is often equated with the Fool, the Joker was added to the standard deck in the mid-19th century with no regard to the Tarot whatsoever). The development of the Tarot as a fortune-telling device was the product of fascination with ancient cultures, not some deeper mystical truth. Tarot reading, like other forms of divination, "works" only to the extent that an empathetic and intuitive person might make some correct assumptions about a querent and give him some good advice. An unethical fortune-teller, of course, can use the same "cold reading" techniques that mediums and fraudulent psychics have used for centuries to make a quick buck.

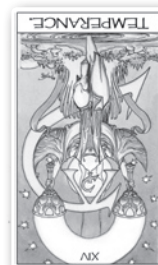
But in the World of Darkness, of course, it's entirely thematic for the Tarot to have originated in an ancient civilization, be it Egypt or even Atlantis. It makes perfect sense for the fortune-telling properties to have been "dumbed down" into a game, but for all of that, to retain their power and mystique (the opening fiction of this book, in fact, is based on that notion). As such, the rest of this book treats many of the myths about the Tarot as though they were true. **Keys to the Supernal Tarot** is not set in our world, but in a world in which magic and divination are real phenomena. History, as such, is different on many points.

## *Reading the Tarot: Celtic Cross*

Many different spreads of Tarot cards exist, but we've chosen one to include here. This method is generally known as the Celtic Cross. It has several variations, and the one chosen for this book isn't the "best" or even necessarily the most common, it's just one that is simple enough to use in a chronicle.

The Celtic Cross involves one significator card, representing the subject of the reading (the querent). This card is usually one of the face cards (a Page, Knight, Queen or King) depending on the age and temperament of the querent. It's not impossible, however, for one of the Major Arcana to be used for this purpose, especially if such a card "jumps out" during the shuffling of the deck. The significator card is placed in front of the querent, face up, and oriented so that it appears right side up from the querent's perspective.

The rest of the reading involves 10 cards, drawn from the top of the deck. The querent shuffles the deck, thinking all the while about the matter that the reading is to concern. It's possible, too, for the querent to simply let his mind



wander while shuffling; this is said to give a reading on the querent's general condition. If a card comes off the top of the deck upside down from the perspective of the querent, it is read as "reversed."



The first card is placed on top of the significator, "covering" it. This card represents the querent's present state with regards to the question at hand.





The second card is placed perpendicular to the first one, forming a cross. This card, always read as if in its right side up position, “crosses” the querent, showing the forces in opposition to his interests. Note that this doesn’t mean forces working against him, per se; if the topic of the reading is an unpleasant situation at home, the crossing card might be someone trying to help the querent out of that situation.

The third card is placed above the cross, closest to the reader. This card “crowns” the querent, showing what the future holds for him on this topic.

The fourth card is placed under the cross, closest to the querent. This card, “beneath” the querent, shows the events that have happened to the querent in the past.

The fifth card is placed to the left of the cross from the querent’s position. This card, “behind” the querent, shows the recent past, the forces that have just finished bringing their influences to bear on the subject.

The sixth card, placed to the right of the cross as the querent sees it, is “before” him. This card shows the forces and events that are about to come into play.

The next four cards are laid out in a vertical line to the right of the cross, as the querent sees it. Starting from the bottom (that is, closest to the querent), these cards indicate the querent’s fears and anxieties regarding the issue, the querent’s environment and the attitudes of the other people, and the querent’s hopes and goals on the question. The 10th card, known as the “capstone,” indicates the final result of the reading, what the querent must do, not do, or observe to change his fortunes. It’s possible, following the reading, to obtain a more in-depth reading by using this card as the significator in a new spread.

## *The Tarot in the Chronicle*

A **Mage** troupe can get a great deal of use out of a Tarot deck in a chronicle, even without involving the Tarot journey or cartomancy. The deck can be used as a prop in-game, or as a way to plan events of the chronicle. Below are some suggestions on how to do this.

## *In-Character Readings*

The Tarot is a useful tool to a Storyteller in any World of Darkness game, for precisely the same reasons it’s useful as a divination tool. The symbolism on the cards, combined with the open-ended nature of a role-playing game, means that any reading can be retroactively interpreted to fit any set of events. As such, it’s possible for a Storyteller to perform a reading either for a character or for the entire cabal while playing the role of a diviner using the Tarot. Use the method above or some other spread of cards (many of which are readily available on the Internet), and write down the

results so that you can work symbolism appropriate to the cards into the chronicle as necessary.

## *The Tarot Journey*

The “journey through the Tarot” is the notion that the 22 cards of the Major Arcana form a pathway through life. Beginning with the Fool, the traveler moves from ignorance to knowledge to enlightenment, learning through pleasure and suffering along the way. For a mage, this journey begins with the Awakening and ends with ascension, potentially a return to the Supernal Realms. But it needn’t be anything so grandiose. The character might simply discover exactly where he belongs and his true role in the Fallen World.

A character studying cartomancy (see below) might endeavor to identify exactly where he is in this journey, but the journey might just as easily be something only observable to the player. When the chronicle begins, the character is the Fool. The Storyteller and the player then decide when the character progresses on to a new lesson and a new trump. A change in trump might be a good way for the player to claim the Learning Curve experience point described on p. 217 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. Depending on the circumstances, it might also be a way to claim Arcana Experience.

Not all characters make it all the way to Key XXI (The World), however. It’s possible for a character to remain stuck at a particular place. Aldous, owner of the Bleak Demesne (see p. 72), for instance, is obviously stuck at Key IX (The Hermit). Other characters in this book can be assumed to be “locked” at the appropriate stage of the journey. As such, part of dealing with those characters might be to help them along to the next stage.

The Tarot journey is symbolic, and that means that moving from one stage to the next is a highly subjective matter. The Storyteller or the player can make the decision that a character has moved along, and there’s no ceremony or flash of light that goes with it (although there might well be a burst of inspiration or insight). A character that recognizes the journey, though, probably does make the distinction in a public way, especially if he belongs to a cabal of cartomancers. One character might get a new tattoo with a symbol appropriate to the current station. Another might always carry one Tarot card, corresponding to her present stage on the journey.

The journey through the Tarot, therefore, can be a narrative tool or a facet of the **Mage** setting as you choose.

## *Character/Story Creation*

If you have a Tarot deck, you can use it to help players make characters, or to create a story or chapter if you get stuck.



## Character Creation

Sometimes, coming up with a character is as simple as hearing a song that inspires you, or looking at a combination of Path and order that seems interesting. Sometimes, though, players get stuck. **Mage** is a big game, and it's easy to get lost in all of the possibilities. The best way to start if you're having trouble coming up with a character is to ask the Storyteller what the chronicle is going to be about and what kinds of characters would be appropriate. But failing that (or if the Storyteller decides the chronicle is going to be character-centered, meaning he is waiting on the players to determine what the chronicle is about), you can use the Tarot to get a start on your character's identity and history.

Shuffle the deck and deal out five cards in a row. You can choose to read them all right side up, or use the reversed meanings if any of the cards come in upside down.

The first (leftmost) card is the Sleeper card. This card indicates what things were like for the character pre-Awakening, and should hopefully help you determine what kind of circumstances the character was in when he had his visit to the Supernal Realms.

The second card is the Awakening card. This should inform the character's Path, as well as his experience of the Awakening.

The third card is the character's World of Darkness card. This card indicates what the character's first exposure to other supernatural beings was like. Although it's positioned after the Awakening card, nothing says that this experience didn't take place when the character was still a Sleeper. This card can also inform the character's choice of order, as can the next one.

The fourth card is the character's Virtue. While it might indicate the character's Virtue trait outright (Temperance or Justice, for instance) the real use of this card is the character's strong point. This might be a high rating in an Attribute, or a particular Merit, or the character's order.

Finally, the fifth card is the Vice. While it can indicate, and should at least point to, the character's Vice trait, it should show the character's weaknesses and failings. It might indicate a dark secret, or the character's Bane (if you take the Destiny Merit).

**Example:** Matt is making a character for Fred's upcoming **Mage** game, and doesn't have a strong idea about what sort of mage he'd like to play. He turns to the Tarot for some help. The cards are as follows: The Chariot (Reversed), The Moon, Five of Pentacles, Five of Cups, Knight of Wands (Reversed).

The Sleeper card is one of the Major Arcana. The Chariot Reversed, as explained on p. 67, means cowardice or losing one's nerve in the middle of an attempt. Matt decides that his character was an actor who got a big break — he was granted an audition with a renowned New York stage director. But on the day of the audition, he choked, flubbing his lines and running offstage.

The Awakening card is the Moon (p. 127). Matt decides that following the failed audition, his character sank into a deep depression and started abusing hallucinogenic drugs. He started seeing horrible visions whenever he touched people, and these nightmares plagued him day and night. One night, he went out onto the roof of his building with the intention of jumping off, but instead, he saw how peaceful the city was and stayed there until morning. When he woke up, his head was clear, and he was a mage on the Mastigos Path (the Moon is traditionally associated with the Thyrsus Path, yes, but Matt likes the notion of an actor Warlock. He does make a note to take some dots in Spirit, though).

The World of Darkness card is the Five of Pentacles (p. 157). The actor's first run-in with the supernatural actually happened before his Awakening, he just doesn't know it. On the day of his audition, one of the other mages in the city accidentally summoned up a spirit of fear and then lost control of it. The spirit "rode" Matt's character, plaguing him with doubt and anxiety, until he couldn't bear the strain. Matt talks this idea over with one of the other players, and she agrees that her character was the one who called up the spirit, creating a potential for conflict between them later in the chronicle.

The Virtue card is the Five of Cups, which is a somewhat difficult interpretation, given that the card usually indicates disappointment or rejected kindness (p. 156). Matt decides that after the audition, his friends turned their backs on the character, figuring that he'd lost his nerve and, in the process, offended someone important. The actor's slide into drug use didn't make things any easier. Post-Awakening, though, he's risen above his bad fortune and become self-reliant. Matt decides that the actor's Virtue is Fortitude, and that he will give the character a high rating in Resolve to reflect his inner strength.

Finally, the Vice card: a highly appropriate Knight of Cups Reversed (p. 156). The actor might have learned self-reliance, but he's also learned that other folks aren't to be trusted and he never quite got over his reliance on drugs as an escape tactic. Matt takes the Addiction Flaw for the character (p. 218 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), and sets the character's Vice as Sloth (he does drugs to escape, not because he's physically addicted).

From all this, Matt has a good sense of how this character is going to behave in the game, and how to assign his dots. He's also created a point of contact with another mage, even if it's something they're likely to fight over someday. The cards don't suggest an order to him, so Matt decides to wait and see what other orders are represented in the troupe's characters and let that help guide his decision.

## Story Creation

Storytellers get writer's block sometimes, especially in long-running chronicles. And then, sometimes folks show up and want to play **Mage**, and it's handy to be able to come up with a one-shot game. The Tarot can help with that, in much the same way as creating a character. Lay out five cards, just as described above. The cards have the following significance:



The first card is the Theme of the story. This card should influence the way Storyteller characters behave, the way the story unfolds, and any recurring motifs.

The second card is the Mood of the story. This card should inform atmospheric details and, should you use it, what music you play during the story.

The third card is the Antagonist card. As the name suggests, this card should indicate who is working against the characters. If the card doesn't easily correspond to someone in your chronicle, you'll need to make someone up or pull a character from one of the **Mage** books (this one has quite a few to choose from!).

The fourth card is the Allies card. This card can indicate literal allies, other characters who are willing to come to the cabal's aid, but it can just as easily indicate advantages that they have. These advantages don't have to be bestowed upon them for the story. They can be traits or resources that will come in especially useful.

Finally, the fifth card is the Wild card. This card is the "twist," that element of surprise or strangeness so important to World of Darkness stories. If you feel the first four cards enable you to run the story, don't bother with the Wild, but it's always worth considering how this extra element might change things.

**Example:** Five people wind up at Matt's house on a Saturday with nothing to do, and someone mentions that she'd like to try **Mage: The Awakening**. Matt hands around character sheets, guides folks through character creation, and then puts a quick story together using the Tarot. He shuffles the deck and deals out the following cards: The Page of Swords, the World (Reversed), the Four of Swords, the Star and the Five of Swords. Lots of swords — Matt notes that this story is going to have plenty of violent conflict. That should be fine, as his players all enjoy a good scrap.

The Theme card is the Page of Swords (p. 155). Face cards usually indicate people, but since this is in the Theme position, Matt decides the basic motif of the story is conflict due to immaturity. The fight in the story isn't any deeper than a teenager slamming a door during a fight with his parents, but it's got the potential to be painful just the same. Matt notes that the characters will see people arguing often, and that incidental characters will be curt and unpleasant to them.

The Mood card is the World Reversed (p. 150). This card indicates destruction and natural (or man-made) disaster. This fits nicely with the Theme card, actually. The strife in question is over petty concerns, but it's still real enough to cause real damage. Matt decides that there's some kind of warfare going on. Maybe it's a gang war, maybe it's a battle between police and organized crime. He wants to keep the bulk of the conflict confined to Sleepers, though, because then it can be more overt.

The Antagonist card is the Four of Swords. Matt considers using the story hook listed on p. 154 for this card, but then he decides he'd rather begin the story in media res, with the characters licking their wounds after a particularly nasty experience. He further decides that the disaster in question should

combine aspects of man-made and natural disaster. Matt sets the game in California, on the heels of a large earthquake. It's shut down power to the city. Emergency services are busy and overworked, the roads are damaged so getting more supplies into the city has been slow going. In addition, riots and looting have started up. Matt tells the players that their characters had a Sanctum, but it's been almost completely destroyed by the quake (that way they don't have to put Merit dots into it for a one-shot). The card itself refers to the quake and the looters, and possibly the police — getting out of the situation will be the main conflict of the story.

The Allies card is the Star, which is highly appropriate. The advantage that the characters have is something guiding them. Matt looks at p. 119 of this book and sees the Illumined Path Legacy, and decides the sample character there, Lucius, would be a perfect ally in this story. But Lucius is out of his element, cut off from his money and his high society. He can be the character's light in the darkness, but they have to find him and rescue him first, perhaps from a band of looters who want to hold him for ransom. (Matt also notes that, with Lucius' weird backstory, he could run another story with these characters in which they go looking for those "descendants of Lucifer," if the players are interested.)

Finally, the Wild card is the Five of Swords (p. 154). This indicates failure because of bad sportsmanship. Matt decides a powerful figure in the Consilium is actively working to hinder emergency services getting to the poorest areas of the city, specifically because Lucius is there. He's going for a cut of the ransom money, but that's not his highest priority. He wants revenge on Lucius because Lucius made him look like an idiot at a caucus some months back (this rather petty reason for seeking vengeance refers back to the Theme card). Matt decides to run the first scene as a flashback to that caucus, and then jump forward to the characters picking their way out of the wreckage, injured and apparently without help in the darkened city.

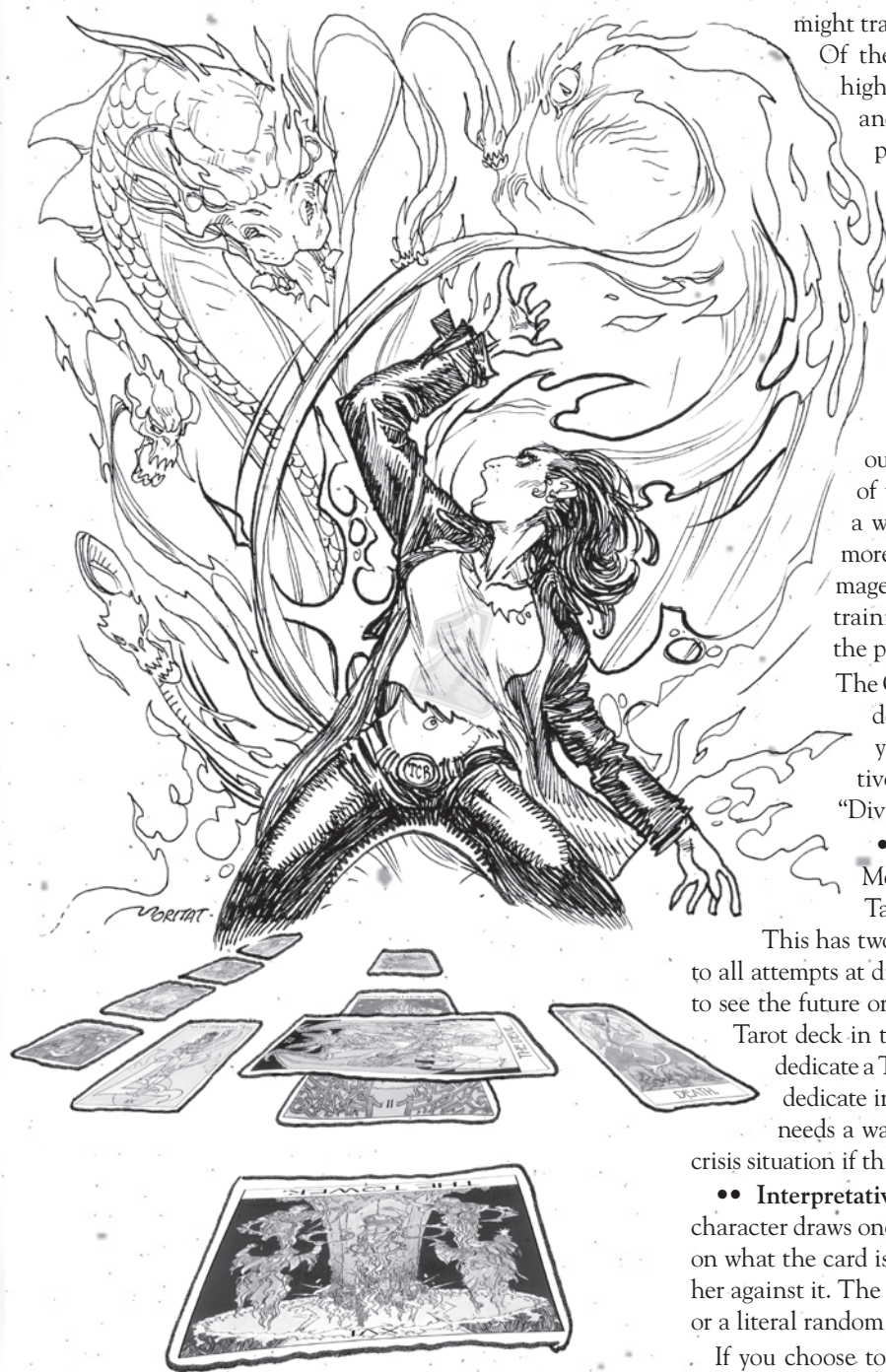
## Cartomancy

"Cartomancy" is just a fancy word for using cards for divination. In **Mage** terms, though, any mage that uses cards (Tarot or otherwise) as a focus for his magic is a cartomancer. This section provides a look at the practice of cartomancy in the context of **Mage** and provides some systems for playing a cartomancer character.

## The Awakened Cartomancer

A cartomancer doesn't possess skills or magic that are much different from other Awakened mages. What is different is how the mage uses the power he has. Cartomancers all engage in divination, even if they lack the expertise in Fate or Time magic to cast spells that allow knowledge of the future. In addition, they use a random draw to assist them in other magical tasks. This does not require a special deck, but it does require that the mage make a study of the





Tarot and can interpret a card in the space of a few seconds (the Cartomancer Merit is described below). Once the mage has mastered this art, a draw from the Tarot can enable him to cast magic with greater confidence, and lessen the risk of Paradox.

All five of the orders include cartomancers, but they are more likely to be apostates or adherents of the Tarot pre-Awakening than to have been trained in the cards by an order. None of the Pentacle orders regularly trains its members in cartomancy, nor do the Seers of the Throne. An individual mage who practices cartomancy, however,

might train a pupil in using the cards for magic. Of the five orders, the Mysterium has the highest number of cartomancers in its ranks, and the Path most likely to take up the practice is unquestionably the Acanthus. Again, though, any mage can become a cartomancer.

### *New Merit: Cartomancer* (● to ●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Awakened, Occult Specialty — Tarot, Wits ●●●

**Effects:** A cartomancer is never without a Tarot deck. In the myriad possibilities of the Tarot lies true magical power and a way to make Awakened magic fit a bit more seamlessly into the Fallen World. A mage can become a cartomancer without training by another mage, but must still fulfill the prerequisites.

The Cartomancer Merit is progressive. Each dot is a prerequisite for the next dot. So your character cannot have the "Interpretive Draw" ability unless she first has the "Divinatory Eye" ability.

- **Divinatory Eye:** This level of the Merit represents basic familiarity with the Tarot with respect to Awakened magic.

This has two effects. First, the character gains a +2 to all attempts at divination, including spells that attempt to see the future or uses of the Dream Merit, if she uses a Tarot deck in the attempt. Second, the character can dedicate a Tarot deck as a magical tool. She can also dedicate individual cards as Arcana tools, but she needs a way to find a particular card quickly in a crisis situation if this is to help.

- **Interpretative Draw:** Before casting a spell, the character draws one card from her Tarot deck. Depending on what the card is, it can help her cast the spell or warn her against it. The system for this can either be a dice roll or a literal random draw from a Tarot deck.

If you choose to use a random draw from a deck, the Storyteller and the player must interpret the card in relation to the spell being cast and the situation at hand. If the card indicates that the casting is favorable, apply the bonus as described below under "Success." If the card is something extremely favorable, the Storyteller may deem it an exceptional success. But by the same token, if the draw indicates something truly disastrous, the character suffers a failure or a dramatic failure.

The dice pool, should you choose to use that system, is Wits + Occult. Drawing and interpreting the card is an instant action, meaning that the character casts the spell on the following turn.



### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The spell is the wrong choice for the situation. If the mage chooses to cast it, the player rolls a chance dice. A dramatic failure on this roll is treated as a Havoc Paradox, whether or not the spell was vulgar in aspect.

**Failure:** The spell isn't the best choice, but it might work. Apply a -2 to the character's casting attempt if she chooses to go through with it.

**Success:** The spell is a good choice given the situation. Apply a +2 to the character's attempt. If the character has the High Speech Merit and chooses to spend the next turn chanting, this bonus stacks with the High Speech bonus for a total of +4.

**Exceptional Success:** The spell is exactly appropriate for the circumstance. The player receives a 9-again bonus on the casting roll.

••• **Instinctive Draw:** The character can now use the Interpretative Draw ability as a *reflexive* action, meaning that she can draw, interpret, and cast in the same turn. Alternately, the character can draw, interpret, and then chant in High Speech, thus gaining the High Speech Merit along with the bonus from this Merit (if any) on the following turn. Although the mage does not have to cast the spell if the draw isn't favorable, she can only make one draw per spell, even if the draw is a reflexive action.

### Example of Interpretative Draw

The situation: a cartomancer character is investigating a murder scene and runs afoul of a vampire. She isn't powerful enough to create true sunlight, but decides to make a burst of bright light to scare the undead thing away. She draws a card from the deck strapped to her hip. Below are examples of four cards and how they might be interpreted:

**The Sun:** This card is an obvious endorsement of the spell, and the Storyteller decides it is worth an exceptional success. The mage's player adds two dice to the casting attempt and applies the 9-again bonus.

**The Page of Cups:** This card is associated with water, and is indicative of someone quiet, indecisive, gentle and yielding — not exactly the approach the mage is taking. The Storyteller counts this as a failure. If the mage casts the spell anyway, the player applies a -2.

**The Seven of Pentacles:** This card indicates a risk with no short-term gain, or being swindled. The Storyteller decides this means the spell will fail to have the desired effect, and counts this as a dramatic failure. If the mage goes ahead with the spell, the player will roll a chance dice and risk a Paradox.

**The Page of Wands:** The suit of Wands is associated with fire, and the Page indicates quick wits and energy. While not directly associated with the Sun, the Storyteller still feels this is an indication that the spell should work, and counts it as a success. The player applies a +2 to the spell roll, should the mage choose to continue.

The player can and should lend her interpretation to this process, but the Storyteller has the final say. Note that, in any case, the mage does *not* commit to casting the spell by making the draw.



# KEY 0 — THE FOOL

The first step on the long journey. The first kiss from a new lover. The first mistake, the first great triumph. The first footfalls into the office of a new career, or the first fumbling steps of a child. The Fool is the card of beginnings.

The symbolism of the card makes the dangers of beginnings plain. The Fool is about to step off a precipice, and perhaps fall to his doom. Some decks include a white dog, perhaps barking to warn the Fool. Most of the time, the Fool isn't looking where he is going — if he does that, he'll miss what's happening around him! It's easy to see why mages versed in the Tarot often equate the Fool to the Acanthus Path. Tricksters are wide-eyed at the possibilities of the world because they can see them so much more easily than other mages. But the truth is that any mage, upon returning from the Supernal Realms, newly Awakened, is the Fool on the start of the grand adventure. The Fool is therefore often associated with the Time Arcanum in general, rather than the Acanthus Path, in some circles — since the Fool occupies the position of “zero,” it can appear alongside any other Key without changing it (1 + 0 is still 1).

But even more generally, the Fool can be seen as a metaphor for the Awakened condition. The Fool is the divine madman, the person whose perspective is so different from those around him that he is nearly unable to function in the world. That he is powerful is irrelevant. If he is to be able to communicate and therefore interact, he must find a way to reconcile the way he sees the world with the way that others see it.

## Artifact — *The First Tarot*

The history of the Tarot deck, as far as Sleeper study is concerned, is discussed in the Introduction. In the World of Darkness, however, the Tarot, like so many

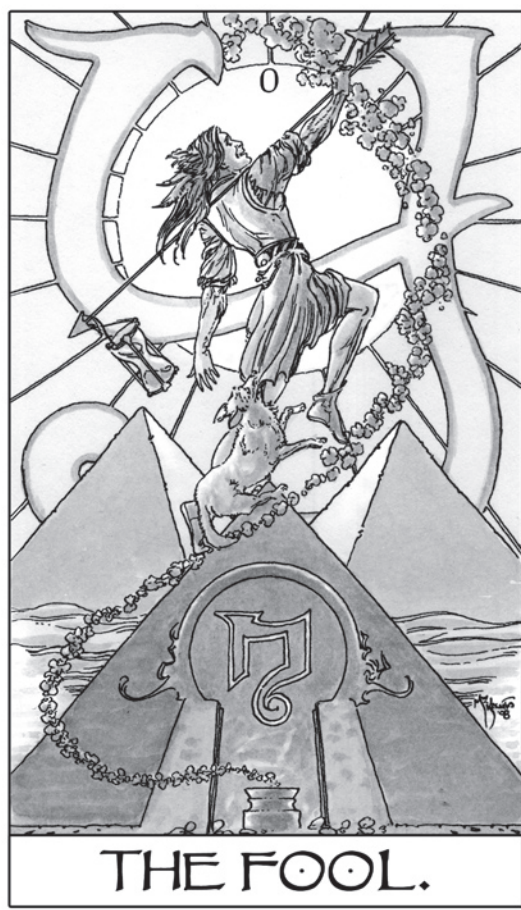
other occult trappings, resonates with the Supernal Realms. In the case of the Tarot, some mages know of a deck of cards that originated in the Supernal Realms. The deck has been assembled over a long period of years by mages across the world. Awakened scholars refer to the deck as the First Tarot.

The First Tarot supposedly predates mundane Tarot by many years. Records indicate that at least two of the cards were discovered in the Awakened City (the Tower and the Hierophant), though these records obviously cannot be confirmed. Awakened cartomancers covet the First Tarot above all else, and even mages with no particular interest in the Tarot trade stories about the deck.

## *Rumors*

- The First Tarot always gives an accurate and useful reading on any topic, but only if the person doing the reading is able to maintain complete focus while laying out the cards. If anything distracts the reader, the message can be diluted with whatever is in the reader's mind at the time.

- The deck is incomplete; besides the 10 missing cards, Keys to the Major Arcana exist beyond Key XXI (The World). They just have not been found because mages aren't looking for them.





- Every Atlantean temple contains a small slot into which a card from the First Tarot can be inserted. If a visitor inserts the correct card, all of the temple's defenses become inert and the temple's guardians obey the mage's commands. Of course, inserting the *wrong* card probably spells certain death.

- Any of the cards in the First Tarot can act as a dedicated magical tool to any mage.

- Seers of the Throne cannot see a mage carrying a card from the First Tarot. Even if the mage casts a spell or attacks the Seer, the Oracles mask the card-carrying mage from the Exarchs' pawn.

- The Tarot contains cards from Supernal Realms beyond the five that contain Watchtowers. Presently, only two cards from other Realms are present in the deck (rumors vary as to which one, but usually the World is mentioned), but the 10 missing cards are among them.

## *History*

The first verifiable record of the First Tarot comes from the isle of Cyprus. In the 15th century, a Mysterium cabal discovered a chest in the waters just off the eastern coast of the island. They retrieved the chest (using magic, of course — the chest was in water far too deep for them to have recovered it through mundane means), and inside discovered four cards: the Hermit, the Magician, the Moon, and the Fool. One of the mages happened to be a cartomancer, and recognized the cards from legends he'd heard of the Tarot of Atlantis. Studying these cards, though, he realized they were Artifacts, though he couldn't identify from which of the Realms they came.

Back in Greece, the cabal sent out missives to other Mysterium cabals, searching for other leads. Over the next few years, they received responses back. Several other cards had been discovered, some in temples, some in the hoards of ancient mages, some in the libraries of the Church. Of course, the owners of these cards weren't about to send these treasures overland to mages they didn't know, and so the cabals were reduced to descriptions of the cards and experiments they had performed with them. Word also eventually reached the European mages that several cards that seemed to be part of the First Tarot had been discovered in China, but these reports were not verified for many years. The prevailing opinion was that the true nature and power of the deck would not be known until it was entirely assembled, but the mages of the time weren't optimistic about that ever happening.

## *The Theft of the First Tarot*

By the middle of the 17th century, most of the Major Arcana had been accounted for. Some of the owners of the cards had met and merged their collections, and all of the known cards had been liberated from Sleepers (including, with some difficulty, those that the Church held). Travel and communications were improving, and it seemed likely that within a few years a meeting might be possible to assemble data on the deck. But then, within a fortnight, all of the cards disappeared from their owners.

The identity of the thief has never been uncovered, but modern scholars agree that more than one culprit was involved and that these thieves were assuredly not mages. They were able to enter and exit locked rooms, steal the cards away from powerful spiritual and mundane guardians, and deliver them to a mage in London within hours (even the cards stolen from China). The identity of the mage that arranged the theft, however, is a matter of record with the London Consilium. This mage, an Acanthus calling herself Flight, begged for the death sentence at her trial. She said she had defaulted on a deal with a hideous power, one beyond the reach of Man and God. The trial was never concluded, however — the Great Fire of 1666 interrupted it. Flight was presumed to have died in the fire, though for months afterwards, the mages at the trial reported seeing her image in mirrors, screaming pain, bleeding from thousands of wounds from lashes.

The Tarot itself was recovered from Flight's home, wrapped in what appeared to be thread spun from pure iron. The First Tarot was only 10 cards from being complete. Flight, apparently, had promised it to some otherworldly power, but whatever that power was, it has never since attempted to claim the deck.

## *The Deck in the New World*

The First Tarot remained in London for more than two centuries after the Great Fire. During that time, mages could petition the London Consilium for permission to use it in divination, but the process was so long and involved, and required so many interviews and magical examinations, that most supplicants found it more expedient to use other methods. Cartomancers, however, often made it a point to at least see the deck, even if they didn't actually use it.

At the turn of the 19th century, though, a powerful and well-respected mage performed a reading (behind closed doors) and predicted that war was coming to



England, and that the Tarot needed to be moved as soon as possible. The fact that this mage's son was pulling up stakes for America the next week, some cynical Awakened felt, might have influenced this reading a bit, but the mage who did the reading insisted the war would be devastating, and that the Tarot must not be lost. And, yes, his son would be perfect to take it to New York and keep it safe. World War I broke out more than a decade later, but based on the mage's flavorful descriptions, it was more likely he was referring to the bombings of London in World War II, assuming he wasn't just making the whole thing up.

Whatever the case, the Tarot moved to the United States. Its courier died in a street brawl a few months later, and the Mysterium collected the deck shortly thereafter. Presently, it is ostensibly available to any order mage who wishes to use it, but no one is ever left alone with it and all readings are recorded. The deck is still incomplete (the missing cards are listed below).

## *The Magic of the First Tarot*

The cards of the First Tarot aren't uniform. The backs of the cards sport a variety of patterns. Some look Celtic in design, others Chinese, and some bear art that looks distinctly Native American. The design of the cards often represents the culture of the area in which it was found (this is one reason why the rumor about the Tower and the Hierophant being from Atlantis persist, because they are the only cards with Atlantean runes on them). The art, likewise, boasts a wide variety of styles and mediums. Even the cards themselves aren't all made of the same material. Some are wood, some are thick paper or vellum, and some appear to be made from beaten metal. The more recently discovered cards (including the Page of Cups and the Seven of Wands) seem to be made from cardstock and printed using modern techniques.

To magical scrutiny, the cards are obviously Artifacts. Even a single success on an Intelligence + Occult roll following successful use of Supernal Vision or Analyze Enchanted Item reveals that much. But the resonance of the cards themselves is more complex. Scrutinizing an individual card reveals resonance appropriate to that card's meaning, in very general terms. So scrutinizing the Moon reveals a nightmarish or frightening resonance, while scrutinizing the Lovers reveals a resonance of purity and love.

But when two or more cards are scrutinized together, the resonances merge. Keeping with the example above, studying the Moon and the Lovers

together might show a resonance blending fear and love, perhaps a feeling of love at first sight or the fear of never finding love. It might also present as a fear that a loved one is in danger. Adding more cards just complicates things further, and scrutinizing the entire deck, incomplete though it is, is impossible. Mages have attempted to find the purest resonance of the deck by studying it for hours, using as many versions of Mage Sight as they know, but they still haven't been able to look past all of the potential combinations to find the highest truth.

Of course, some mages posit that this is because there is no highest truth. The Tarot, like the world itself, is too complex to be known through magic. It must be experienced.

The deck presently contains 68 cards. To make a complete Tarot deck, the following cards would be necessary:

The Hanged Man

Death

Knight of Swords

Two of Swords

Ace of Wands

Ten of Cups

Page of Wands

Queen of Pentacles

King of Pentacles

Knight of Pentacles

The missing cards and their significance are points of discussion among cartomancers. The fact that of the four "face" cards in the suit of Pentacles, only the Page has been found leads some mages to believe that the Pentacle orders are lost, needing strong leadership to find their way again. Some mages feel that since the Hanged Man is among the missing cards, the Awakened community needs to learn patience and humility through suffering. Others feel that this is already happening, and only when mages accept the world as it is and yield, rather than trying to change the world, can Death (another missing card) finally arrive and herald a new beginning.

The fact that the deck is incomplete has never stopped mages from using it to perform readings. Some mages add in the missing cards from mundane decks, but they never come up in divinatory attempts.

The First Tarot's game traits are listed below.

*First Tarot — Artifact* ●●●●●●●●

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

**Mana Capacity:** Unknown, at least 15



The First Tarot can be used in any kind of divinatory spread. When used under the proper circumstances, it allows the mage to see the future as described for the “Prophecy” spell (p. 264 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The Potency of this spell is always 5, no matter what the player rolls to activate the deck, and the usual penalty for mages with the Destiny Merit does not apply.

The “proper circumstances,” however, are difficult. First, the mage must be completely free of magic when he uses the deck. He must use no Mage Sight or armor spells, no spells to increase his Mental Attributes or make him more aware of connections. He must read the cards without any filters from the Supernal Realms.

Second, the mage must be free of distraction. The character must meditate before using the deck (see Meditation, p. 51 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), and must keep his mind clear while laying out the cards. This requires a roll of Resolve + Composure. The Meditative Mind Merit applies its effect to this roll.

If either of these rules is broken during the reading, the Artifact’s mystical effects immediately stop. The character keeps whatever insight he already received, but any other guesses he makes will have no backing from the Supernal Realms.

One further complication is that the deck is incomplete. The player must roll Gnosis + 3 to activate the deck, as usual, but the missing cards mean that the player also subtracts *ten* dice from the roll (this is because 10 cards are missing; as more cards are found, this penalty will lessen). Adding cards from other decks doesn’t mitigate the penalty (and, as mentioned above, these extra cards don’t appear in the readings anyway). A dramatic failure on this activation roll has no special effect, nor does a failure — the reading simply proceeds like a normal Tarot reading, with the seeker interpreting the cards as best he can. An exceptional success, should one somehow occur, grants the seeker a dot of the Dream Merit in addition to a successful reading.

### *The First Tarot in the Chronicle*

The First Tarot is a good element to use as a “first contact” with cartomancy. Doubtless the mages have heard of the Tarot, and probably even know some of the trumps, but they probably dismiss it as Sleeper superstition. After all, any Disciple of Time can look into the future. But the First Tarot provides a look into the history of the Awakened and a tie between Sleeper occultism and real, Supernal power. A Tarot chronicle — or an individual mage’s journey — could very easily begin with a mention or rumor of the First Tarot.

### *The Fool Reversed*

Indecision. Apathy. Inertia. The grand journey does not begin, for the Fool cannot muster the initiative to leave his home. Arrested development — the boy is old enough to be a man, but will not take up his rightful place.

The Fool Reversed can also mean destiny perverted. The Fool made his decisions, but made the wrong ones, and probably took others down into the Abyss with him. Or, the path is a lie, there is no destiny, and what waits for the Fool at the end of his journey is just what awaits us all — death.

### *The First Tarot as a Hoax*

The First Tarot isn’t an Artifact. It’s an imbued item, one created by a mage with a fantastic degree of skill (actually, probably created by a cabal of such mages). It’s become one of the most elaborate hoaxes in the history of the world, one that only a few people know about. The resonance is real, and the deck does indeed hold Mana, but it has no other powers beyond those of a normal Tarot deck — that is to say, none of its own. But, over time, the Awakened have built up such reverence for the deck that revealing it to be a hoax now would be akin to crying loudly that the emperor is naked — is there a Fool brave or innocent enough to do that?



# KEY 1 — THE MAGICIAN

The mage stands before his table with his tools laid out before an observer. He holds a wand in his hand, and a mystical symbol blazes above his head, displaying his power. He is will and intelligence personified, forged and directed — in many ways, the perfect analog for the Awakened condition.

Of course, the Magician is known in many decks as the Juggler. Consider for a moment the implications of this — the Juggler is impressive because of his skill, but at the end of the day, his skills are the result of long years of practice and determination. Awakening, therefore, if this card represents it, is something that must be earned, rather than granted. Anyone can Awaken, but the notion that Awakening is a state that needs to be maintained, rather than one that one obtained, is permanent, is intrinsic to the Magician. The Juggler can also be a charlatan, someone who uses his skills in a way that is not necessarily harmful or purely selfish (which is better represented by the Devil), but is still misrepresenting himself. This is a point that the Awakened don't always understand. Certainly an Awakened mage, no matter his intentions, isn't a charlatan, because anyone who has forged a connection to the Supernal Realms *can* legitimately use magic. But a mage of the Adamantine Arrow, for instance, who lures other mages into his order with promises of magical kung fu without explaining the order's focus on service, is just as much a charlatan as any late-night TV "psychic."

A mage at this stage of the journey through the Tarot has braved the cliffs and the blazing sun as the Fool, and has now established enough of an identity to move forward. Unfortunately, this also means he has established

enough of an identity to be dangerous, to himself and to others. Willworkers at this stage are prone to hubris, but not of the insidious, deadly sort that leads more experienced mages to ignore life-threatening evidence and take on foolish challenges. This hubris leads them to use magic for mundane, simple tasks, to rely on magical senses over their normal ones, and to generally work as

though they are immortal. This kind of attitude is one that wise mentors try to drill out of their students before it gets them killed. Not coincidentally, a mage can find those mentors as the next three stops on his journey — the High Priestess, the Empress and the Emperor.



THE MAGICIAN.

*Character —  
Dr. Martin  
Jason Schultz,  
Charlatan  
Alchemist*

A key precept in science is to alter theories to fit facts, not try to shoehorn facts into one's theories. A true scientist must be willing to scrap his previous notions if the data doesn't support them, or at the very least, pour effort into figuring out *why* the data's

coming out the way it is. When a scientist clings to his theories in the face of discrediting data, he is branded a zealot and generally dismissed from the scientific community (which doesn't prevent him from publishing in less-than-credible journals or, sadly, from teaching). But every now and then, a zealot gets lucky.

Dr. Martin Jason Schultz is one such scientist. He clung to his theory in defiance of all data, reason and evidence, and was rewarded with a way to make money hand over fist. And it's probably going to get someone — likely him — killed soon.



Schultz entered academia at a state university with an under-funded, barely noticed physical sciences department. He completed his Master's degree by the skin of his teeth (one of his professors was a family friend, and managed to massage a few of his grades), and then, to the department's dismay, stayed on to work on his doctorate. His "theory," such as it was, dealt with the notion that sources of energy gathered at sites of great significance. To "prove" this research, he used theories of geomancy, feng shui, psychometry and other practices for which modern science has little use. His classmates and professors thought he was crazy, or perhaps just stupid. But the mages of the area were taking notice.

Schultz, after all, was something of a maverick — he was using magical explanations in a scientific forum. Perhaps he could find a way to test and reveal ley lines and Halls, and that might pave the way for revealing Awakening magic to the world. Of course, not every order was equally enthused by this prospect. The Guardians of the Veil discussed silencing him, while the Silver Ladder wondered if they shouldn't just recruit him now, since he was obviously bound for Awakening. Only the Free Council brought up an overlooked but important point: Schultz was a lousy scientist. He was ignoring or outright fabricating data, going on hunches and belief rather than observation, and biasing his results by priming his assistants. These faults were obvious to anyone who read his studies (a professor teaching Research and Design in another department was, in fact, using his studies as examples of how *not* to do research), and bad science wasn't going to convince anyone.

When the time finally came for Schultz to present his findings, he was, predictably, laughed out of the room. Enraged, he took his studies to another university and speedily acquired a doctorate in Parapsychology, and then returned to his alma mater and demanded tenure. The vote of the professors came back unanimously against him, and he sued, claiming religious discrimination. The university administrators, terrified of a lawsuit, capitulated, but foisted him off on the university's languishing psychology department. Within a few years, Schultz had become the program director, using his usual tactics of bullying and threatened lawsuits to move more serious candidates out of the way, and detractors out of the department.

All the while, the Consilium watched him, but now the other orders were beginning to see the Free Council's point. The Silver Ladder, embarrassed to admit they had ever considered recruiting him,

washed their hands of the man and openly gave the Guardians permission to deal with him as they saw fit. The Guardians decided that he might make a good Labyrinth, but otherwise he was no threat to the Awakened.

This opinion changed when Schultz discovered the rooftop Hallow.

### *Alchemy on High*

Schultz had heard stories of a "haunted room" in a local tenement. He tried to coerce his grad assistants into checking it out, but the tenement was in a quite dangerous section of the city, and none of them were willing to risk their necks for Schultz' insane theories (one actually quit the program over it). Schultz himself went to the building, during the day and with a pistol in his coat, and started knocking on doors to conduct interviews.

He might have been a poor scientist, but Schultz made a superb first impression. People were willing to talk to him, and as he spoke with the tenants, he learned that the disturbances were monthly and they came from upstairs. He walked out onto the roof and made a careful search, and found a strange fungus growing on the side of a chimney. He scraped some off and took it with him for analysis, and paid a few of the tenants off to call him when the disturbances started again.

Analysis of the fungus showed that it wasn't anything abnormal, apart from growing a little thicker and faster than a typical example of its species. The tenants called him every night, and whenever he rushed out, he discovered nothing — until the tenth night, when he discovered that a colony of rats had taken up residence in the walls and their footsteps were echoing through the vent system, causing the strange sounds that tenants were hearing. This, to any normal researcher, would have sewn up the matter, but Schultz wasn't about to let go of his theories in the face of facts. He kept collecting the fungus and experimenting with it. One night, in sheer desperation, he sliced his hand with a scalpel and bled into a petri dish of the fungus. He watched in amazement as the fungus absorbed the blood and took on a reddish tint.

Days later, Schultz had discovered a bizarre process: after soaking the fungus in any liquid with a high concentration of sugar (it didn't have to be blood), and then exposing it to a high-temperature flame (a cooking blowtorch worked best), he created a deep red substance about the consistency of peanut brittle.



Consuming that substance didn't seem to produce any ill effects in lab rats, so Schultz tried it himself, and realized that it heightened his awareness — even allowed him to see ghosts, or so he thought. Elated, he made as much of this “Third Eye Candy” as he could, and traveled to all of the supposed sites of power he'd identified in the city, including the rooftop. He was astonished to find that many of them actually *glowed* while he was under the influence of the candy, and that these sites all had substances, like the fungus, that he could collect and use to create more candy. Creating candy out of different substances produced slightly different effects, but in all cases, the slight “glow” over certain objects or people was present.

Schultz immediately quit his job at the university (the rest of the department threw a party) and began production and distribution. He kept the sales to New Age shops, occult bookstores, and online venues to avoid immediate notice, and put as many disclaimers on the labels as would fit. It's probably just a matter of time before the FDA or the DEA gets involved, but the substance isn't addictive, nor is it harmful in itself. It does, however, allow Sleepers a limited form of Mage Sight (see below), and so Schultz is probably finally going to meet some real mages.

**Quote:** *Look, I can't make any official claims. All I can say is, it's a profound experience, and you're really cheating yourself if you don't try it.*

**Description:** Martin Schultz is in his early 40s, and looks every bit the eccentric professor. He wears colorful shirts, strange talismans around his neck, and carries a crystal pendulum and a makeshift Ouija board everywhere he goes. He wears his hair tied into a ponytail, but most of the hair on the top of his head is long gone. His manner is knowledgeable and sagely, though any truly erudite person finds him the worst kind of yokel in about 10 minutes of conversation.

**Storytelling Hints:** Perhaps the most pathetic thing about Schultz is that he has no idea that his success is completely due to luck. He truly believes that he is not only a brilliant scientist, a maverick who has been repressed by society from every side, but that he *deserves* what he has discovered and more. Narcissistic, arrogant and myopic, Schultz amazes the Guardians of the Veil because he's managed to stay alive this long.

Current thinking on the Guardians' part, incidentally, is that Schultz is either going to get himself killed stealing from the wrong Hallow or that the Guardians are going to need to kill him before his “Third Eye Candy” gets any more widespread. The Free Council, however, is interested in his process, because he

managed to discover something significant (quite by accident). The Council, therefore, lobbies for him to be allowed to live a bit longer. Characters from either order might be called in to watch, sanction or protect him, and that doesn't take into account that other factions of the Consilium (or the World of Darkness in general) might want something from him.

Although he's not a mage, Schultz is very much at the Magician stage in the Tarot journey. He is using knowledge that he earned, but not using it well or responsibly, and his misrepresentation of himself makes him a charlatan. A mage who is also at this early stage on the journey might be tempted to help Schultz make money off the Third Eye Candy or take the business from him, or seeing Schultz might be the wake-up call he needs to seek some direction (and thus progress to the High Priestess).

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Psychology) 2, Computer 1, Crafts (Making Candy) 2, Investigation 2, Occult (New Age) 2, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1

**Social Skills:** Expression 2, Intimidation (Bluster) 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Allies (Tenants) 4, Contacts (Academia), Resources 2, Toxin Resistance

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 5 (narcissism)

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 4

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 8

### *Third Eye Candy*

The “candy” that Schultz created is, of course, made from Tass. Adding in a sugar serum makes it edible and palatable, and the heat caramelizes the sugar and hardens the stuff. The result — edible Unseen Senses.

Anyone who eats the candy receives a modified form of Unseen Sense for approximately one hour. During this time, the character can see such things as Twilight entities (including ghosts and some spirits), Hallows, mages, vampires, werewolves, active spells and enchanted items. Not every piece of candy allows the character to see the same kinds of things, however. Candy made from Tass with a death-like resonance



allows the character to see ghosts and Death spells (and probably vampires and other undead creatures), while candy made from Tass collected at a robust Hallow might allow the subject to see Life spells and werewolves. Appropriate beings glow to those who have eaten the candy. The color of the glow is inconsistent, and seems to be a function of the surrounding area (a werewolf in a forest might sport a green glow, for instance). Those who have taken the candy, though, report that they wouldn't mistake the glow for anything else.

The candy has another affect, one of which Schultz is unaware. Anyone who eats the candy must roll Stamina + Resolve – 3. The Toxin Resistance Merit bestows its bonus on this roll (which is why Schultz hasn't noticed). If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the Storyteller should note this. Once a character accrues a number of failures equal to his Stamina, he starts to suffer perception-based problems. Examples include: synesthesia (the character sees sounds and hears smells, for instance), visual and auditory hallucinations, nightmares and sudden bouts of vertigo. These effects occur roughly two hours after the candy effect wears off, and every few hours until the character takes another "hit" of the candy. They wear off entirely in one month if the character abstains from taking the candy during that time.

Finally, long-term use of the candy alters the character's body chemistry. If the character uses the candy once a day for a full month, his bodily tissues start to change to Tass. The character stands out to Mage Sight (especially Supernal Vision), and if an unscrupulous mage uses the character as a blood sacrifice (see p. 78 of **Mage: The Awakening**), the character yields twice as much Mana as usual. The character's blood, if it can be preserved, can be used as Tass. If the character continues to take the candy over a prolonged period of time (perhaps one month per Health dot, one piece of candy per day), his entire body changes to Tass. What effect this might have is up to the Storyteller. The character might become a living Hallow, allowing any mage in his area the benefit from casting spells at a Hallow (one "free" point of Mana, etc.). He might immediately Awaken. At the least, his blood or flesh could be used to create more candy.

## *The Magician Reversed*

The reversed Magician ignores his skill, or puts his will to evil or selfish use (calling to mind the Devil once again). He turns away from his true calling, pursuing goals that are frivolous or that he simply does not have the talent at which to excel.

Alternately, the reversed Magician might be someone of genuine skill that others regard as a spellcaster or miracle worker. His skills are natural and the result of his dedication and hard work, but others see them as divinely inspired. Depending on the Magician in question, he might find that insulting.

## *Dr. Schultz as a Genuine Scientist*

This version of Dr. Schultz made the same discovery, probably also by luck, but did so with the backing of his university after many long years of scientific research in the areas of parapsychology and paranormal research. In this version, the Guardians of the Veil have kept very close watch on him, and the Free Council have probably actively prevented the Guardians from killing him or altering his memory on a number of occasions.

Schultz isn't selling his candy, but is still testing it on animals (primates, rather than rats) slowly and steadily. He's working up to human trials, which means that the characters might enter the story as test volunteers. Note, of course, that they won't be told anything about what they are testing to avoid subject bias. Note, too, that not only will Schultz be watching them, but so too will the Guardians and probably the Free Council. This story might be a superb prelude to a **Mage** chronicle, especially if some or all of the characters Awaken.

If you are using this version of Shultz, make the following changes to his traits:

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Psychology) 3, Computer 2, Occult 3, Science (Chemistry) 3

**Social Skills:** Expression 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize (Academia) 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Contacts (Academia, Pharmaceuticals, Government), Resources 3, Status (University) 2, Retainers (Grad Assistants) 5, Toxin Resistance



# KEY II — THE HIGH PRIESTESS

The High Priestess sits on her throne and waits. She is resting potential, the power of intuition and the collective unconscious. She is spirituality without the religious dogma of the Hierophant, and she is authority without the chest-pounding masculinity of the Emperor. Her power doesn't stem from her femininity, as the Empress' does, but from her knowledge, from her introspection and her patience. In some decks, she is called the Female Pope, perhaps a reference to the legendary Pope Joan, but perhaps a simple reminder that a spiritual leader's authority doesn't come from gender, station in life or any other earthly attribute, but from her or his connection to the higher power.

For mages, especially mages of the Pentacle, this is an important point to keep in mind. Magic comes from the Supernal, and no matter how many Awakened a family claims, no matter how long the pedigree of one's cabal or Consilium (or *order*, the Free Council reminds them), mastery over the Arcana requires connecting to the Supernal Realms. The temporal, physical concerns, ultimately, are meaningless.

Another common interpretation of the High Priestess among the Awakened, of course, is the Guardians

of the Veil. The High Priestess is the mistress of her own Labyrinth, mysterious and inscrutable, doling out knowledge that can enlighten or mislead. She does not give up her secrets easily or lightly, and her ceremonial headdress and garb acts as a kind of mask, making sure that it is her station that witnesses see, not the woman (or mage) beneath. Subtlety, for both the order and the High Priestess, are the best defense against persistent inquiry. A dedicated investigator will eventually penetrate the High Priestess' mystery...unless he redirects him to something else, turning him back into a perpetual Magician, or pushing him forward into the arms of the more receptive Empress.

Although the High Priestess is an early stop on the journey through the Tarot, it is a hint of things to come. A mage sees the lesson of the High Priestess immediately post-Awakening, because she is capable of some of the same feats of magic as her more experienced comrades simply because she *has* Awakened. Whether she internalizes or retains that lesson is something else again, but she will see it repeated again in her journey,

in the Star, the Tower and the World.



THE HIGH PRIESTESS.

## LEGACY — MIMIR'S VOICE

I'm glad you asked.

The odd Legacy known as Mimir's Voice has a strange set of inspirations for their philosophies. They look to figures both historical and mythological as their

teachers: Mimir, whose severed head advised Odin; William Rankine, the Scottish physicist who coined the term "potential energy;" and Lao Tzu, the Chinese



Taoist philosopher. The Advisors, as they are often known, concern themselves with gathering knowledge, with learning everything they can, but with acting in accordance with their instincts and intuition. Often, that means not acting, because hesitation is a sign that not enough is yet known.

Members of the Legacy are unfailingly polite, sometimes to the point of passivity. They operate under a strict code of non-aggression (not necessarily non-violence, however), and the vows of the Legacy preclude turning aside someone that asks for their help. The vows also preclude lying, however, and this places the Legacy at risk should a Sleeper ever ask a question with a potentially damaging answer. When asked about this, an Advisor admits that the best solution is simply to avoid being faced with those kinds of questions. The Voice must be prepared to face consequences from either the mortal law or the *Lex Magica*, if keeping her vows means violating those laws.

Above all, Mimir's Voice strives to help others — mage and Sleeper alike — learn. But teaching isn't a matter of explanation and lecture, not if one wants the lesson to sink in. Ask any teacher; the only lesson a student really learns is the one that he *wants* to learn, and so education is less about presenting fact and more about instilling a desire to become knowledgeable and an understanding of *how* to learn. The Legacy, therefore, amasses knowledge and waits to be asked for it. The Advisor is potential energy, and that energy is knowledge, magic, and even moral guidance.

## History

Mimir's Voice is a relatively new Legacy — appropriate, given its eclectic selection of philosophical inspirations. The first member of the Legacy was a Warlock of the Mysterium named Elle. Elle was offered the position of Censor in her city's Consilium, and accepted, but was surprised at how much effort the mages of the city seemed to put into making sure that she kept certain facts from their rivals. After a year in the position, she announced her policy — she would never deny information to anyone who asked, but she would not offer information under any circumstances. She remained in sight (and effectively became second-in-command to the Hierarch, though she would never have referred to herself as such), but largely remained silent. Asking her for advice was a good way to draw attention to oneself, because then other mages became interested in what the querent wanted to know... and Elle refused to keep secrets. The

atmosphere of transparency created in the Consilium was beneficial, for a while, but Elle died mysteriously after three years in her position. During that time, she had passed along her new Legacy. She never named it, but her pupil, a young man named Gjallarhorn (after the drinking horn that Odin used to drink from Mimir's well), viewed the Legacy as the perfect advisors, and chose the name according to his own sensibilities. Unfortunately, he lacked his mentor's patience and her unwavering commitment to honesty, and before long he was keeping secrets for some people and providing private information on others. The Consilium suffered a collapse from the infighting, during which many of the older mages left the area, and has only now begun to recover (Gjallarhorn now acts as Hierarch for the area).

Mimir's Voice spreads slowly, and enjoys its largest membership within the Mysterium. It is not strictly an order Legacy, however, and some Consilii (mostly surrounding the one that bore witness to the rise and fall of Elle and Gjallarhorn) are home to a quiet, polite and extremely approachable Advisor.

## Induction

Joining Mimir's Voice isn't easy, but it is faster than many other Legacies. The Voice doesn't ask for long periods of apprenticeship or extensive testing periods. It does, however, ask that members of the Legacy be morally sound, almost impeccable. A mage attempting to join the Voice must submit to a long interview with many ethical quandaries, as well as magical probing to determine whether the answers she gives are indicative of her true feelings. The interview process is meant to gauge what the mage's intuition is telling her, and whether those intuitive urges are compatible with the Legacy. A mage whose first thought when faced with a potentially violent situation is to contribute to the violence probably should look elsewhere, but a mage whose first impulse is to defuse the situation is perhaps a better match. Interestingly, a mage who responds with fear to violence is often given preferential treatment, because such a mage is responding in a perfectly appropriate manner. The second part of the question, though, is what *action* the mage takes.

No action at all is often an appropriate response. The Legacy often recounts the story of the man who is thrown from a horse, breaking his arm and receiving sympathy from a neighbor... only to discover that because of his injury, he cannot be conscripted into battle where he will surely die. The mages of Mimir's Voice don't



advocate standing idly by while people suffer, but they do ask their members to recognize that suffering has a place, too. What is acceptable suffering, and when is action — magic — required? Those questions don't have correct answers, and a mentor in Mimir's Voice strives to help her pupil consider the question and act with confidence, rather than act rashly.

The prospective Advisor is admonished to consider her motives in whatever action she takes. Anger, hatred, jealousy and other such emotions are easy to label as "bad," but the truth is that they are intuitive, just as compassion, love and mercy can be. Indeed, it's not impossible for an action to be motivated by both envy *and* compassion, by both justice *and* anger. And if an action is just, but still motivated by anger, is that action then wrong? Mimir's Voice believes that action motivated by emotion ("good" or "bad") isn't necessarily wrong, but might be diluted. Instead, they advise learning one's own patterns, learning what kind of "energy" one is storing up, and being self-aware enough to recognize one's typical reactions.

Once the interview is over, the Advisor makes a decision. That decision might be to induct the new mage, to refuse her request, or to delay the answer to gather further information. The Advisor might invite the prospect to join her cabal for a short time, or to apprentice with her so that she can observe the character. She might also ask for permission to use Space magic to look in on the mage from time to time, just to see what she does in different situations.

If the mage is accepted into the Legacy, she is expected to learn and swear to the Code. This oath isn't magically enforced, because backing it up with a spell would imply that the Code isn't worth following by itself (and might also back a mage into a corner where the letter of the law is concerned — the letter is much less important than the spirit). The Code isn't brief and it isn't simple, but if the mentoring mage has chosen a pupil well, the Code is intuitive.

Once the mage swears the Code, the mentor shows her how to reshape her soul for the Legacy. Advisors often state that the sensation of becoming a member of Mimir's Voice is soothing, as though external sound and sensation suddenly dampens or moves far away. They feel energized, but not restless — ready for action, should action become necessary.

**Parent Path:** Mastigos

**Nickname:** Advisors

**Orders:** As mentioned, the Mysterium boasts the greatest number of Advisors, but this has more to do

with the founder of the Legacy being a mystagogue than the Legacy's beliefs fitting neatly into the order. The members of the order share stories of the quiet, somewhat strange mages of the Voice, and occasionally someone hears of it and decides it would be a good fit. The Free Council also has a few Advisors among its members, as the Legacy's modern origins and interest in energy, to say nothing of its altruistic and egalitarian views, make it attractive to the youngest order.

The Adamantine Arrow appreciates the Legacy's desire to help and serve others, but sees it as a bit too pacifistic, in general. That said, the Taoist elements of the Legacy's philosophy appeal to some of the gentler members of the order, and it's not impossible to find an Advisor in the Arrow.

The Guardians of the Veil has nothing against the Advisors in principle, but the openness of its members and their refusal to lie concern the order. Being willing to help anyone who asks is laudable, yes, but if in helping a person the mage reveals the Mysteries to a Sleeper or inadvertently furthers the machinations of the Seers...well, the Guardians aren't comfortable with that kind of blind, rather pie-eyed generosity. The Advisors, of course, feel that says much about the Guardians and the way they train their members.

The Silver Ladder, like the Guardians, doesn't object to the Advisors, but usually the Ladder would rather see others in an advisory role. That said, at least one member of the Vox Draconis, upon joining the Legacy and adopting its philosophies, found that the pressures of leadership were much reduced when he wasn't trying to push the Consilium; but rather responding to its needs.

**Appearance:** Members of the Legacy dress and behave as their intuition drives them, but the Advisors are not lazy, and so they are typically well-groomed and clean. That doesn't mean that they are neat or formal, however. One member of the Legacy might dress in poet's shirts and wear his hair long, while another dresses conservatively and sits quietly, unnoticed, until someone asks for her. Most Advisors attempt to remain nondescript, but find that the simplest method of doing this is to act natural; a mage that looks like she belongs where she is doesn't raise eyebrows.

**Background:** A member of Mimir's Voice can come from anywhere, but characters with highly traumatized pasts don't tend to fit in well. A mage is required to have a certain degree of peace with herself, as is a great deal of maturity and humility, before she can be a successful Advisor. As such, mages who revel in their power, mages that casually use magic and mages that



## The Code of Mimir's Voice

The Code isn't a list of rules and laws, but is a philosophical work composed of parables, examples and maxims. Following is an excerpt:

*Rudeness has no place. If a Voice cannot think of a way to contribute to a conversation, if a Voice cannot conceive of something to say that can teach — and remember that to teach, we must make the pupil want the lesson — then the Voice must be silent....*

*Aggression is dangerous. If your intuition says to attack, consider why? Who benefits from your injury? If you die, what will you leave behind? If you kill, what then? What have you removed from the world? If you choose non-aggression, protecting where protection is needed but abstaining from violent action otherwise, you are better assured of remaining unblemished....*

*In casting spells, remember that your intuition guides the magic as much as your will. Witness the mage whose Nimbus flares to life and scours the ground around him with fire or ice or acid or harsh words or hatred. What is that mage's intuition? Is it an extension of the hate in his heart? What is in your heart, and what does your magic reveal about you? If you act in harmony with your intuition, if you train your intuition to guide you well, you can ease the world in its myriad transitions, rather than change it with a jarring, aggressive push....*

*If someone comes to you and asks for your help, grant it. Do not waste time determining if this person deserves your help. You might be able to make that determination by looking into the person's mind or soul, yes, but by doing so, you are cheapening their request for your aid. Asking for help is a monumental act of trust, and you should always honor that. If, in helping this person, it comes to your attention that the person is a criminal or a monster, you must act as your intuition guides you. If your intuition tells you not to help someone who asks, though, consider why. Is the person lying about why he needs the help? If so, help him anyway, and your example will show him that not everyone sees the world as he does. Is the person trying to harm you or find a way to rob you? If so, help him anyway, and keep your wits about you, always ready to escape or protect yourself, for you, as a mage, are able to protect yourself and another victim might not be. Is the person asking you for help solely because he knows you will grant it without question? Help him, and rejoice, for you are living the Code.*

Mages living by the Code often have high Wisdom ratings, usually 7 or more. Of course, not every Advisor lives *strictly* by the Code, and some feel that paying attention to intuition means knowing when to ignore the Code. This attitude is not at all in line with Elle's philosophies, but Elle is gone, and so her words are subject to interpretation.

are driving, aggressive forces in their orders, cabals or Consilii usually don't bother.

Teachers, sensei and other educators make superb Advisors, provided they are in the business for the right reasons. Someone who became a teacher to get summers off might as well not bother. One of the main goals of the Legacy is to help others learn, and this goal requires that the mage be able to look beyond her own needs.

**Organization:** The Legacy doesn't have the numbers for formal organization, though mentor and pupil normally keep in touch, and therefore it's not uncommon for a mage to have met his mentor's mentor. Since the Legacy is so open, though, and since almost every member has some proficiency with Space magic (being

a Mastigos Legacy), finding a given member is usually just a matter of knowing a name and casting a spell.

Within a Consilium, an Advisor is likely to take an assistive role, perhaps acting as Herald or, within the Mysterium, as Censor or assistant to the Censor. Advisors might rise in Consilium Status without trying to, as other mages come to them for advice or help. Advisors also often wind up knowing things that the other people wish they did not, and since they don't keep secrets, the Voice ends up on the wrong end of assassination attempts more frequently than they'd like. Fortunately, their Attainments help to keep them alive and help others learn (see below).

**Suggested Oblations:** Meditation, Socratic question and answer, teaching a class, becoming a student, per-



forming volunteer work, people watching, performing yoga or Tai Chi.

**Concepts:** Sensei, safe-house owner, teacher, administrative assistant, second-in-command, librarian, bookkeeper, physicist, secret weapon, combat medic.

## Attainments

The Attainments of Mimir's Voice are based on the concept of potential energy, the notion that substances or objects have within them the capacity for power. Magic, then, is the potential energy stored within a mage that can be released as "kinetic energy" — a spell — at a moment's notice.

The Attainments of the Legacy are also protective in nature. This is both because of the Legacy's proclivity for helping others, and because the Advisors often wind up learning secrets about others and having to protect themselves against those who would rather keep those secrets quiet.

### 1st: *Blind Spot*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Forces 2 (primary), Mind 2, Stealth 2

One of the hallmarks of Mimir's Voice is that they aren't noticeable unless someone is looking for them. While this Attainment doesn't provide true invisibility, it does make light and sound "slide off" the mage. Viewers tend to look past the Advisor, rather than at her, or be easily distracted by nearby sounds.

In game terms, this spell combines several low-level Forces effects with the Mind spell "Incognito Presence." The character can activate this Attainment whenever she wishes; the player simply rolls Composure + Stealth + Forces (instant action). The Attainment remains active for one scene, but can be reactivated as necessary. While Blind Spot is active, the player receives the 8-again bonus on all Stealth rolls, and any ties in contested rolls made for the character to go unnoticed go to the character, rather than the observer.

Even if the mage isn't exactly hiding, people don't notice her easily. Casual viewers look past her, and as long as she doesn't move suddenly or attack anyone (which ends the Attainment's effects), viewers who observe any actions on her part that involve sleight of hand or subtle movements suffer a penalty equal to the mage's Gnosis rating.

**Example:** Joan, an Advisor, is present at a store robbery. Unwilling to incapacitate the thieves (she doesn't know why they're stealing, after all) but feeling it necessary to protect the other bystanders, she slips to the back of the

store and opens the emergency exit to let the others escape. Joan activates this Attainment, and the Storyteller has her player roll *Dexterity + Stealth* to get to the door without being seen. The Storyteller rolls *Wits + Composure - 7* (the mage's Gnosis) for the robber to see what she is doing, and the robber's successes must exceed the mage's for him to catch her.

### 2nd: *Wasted Potential*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Forces 3

The mage can shunt harmful energy away from a target, be it herself or someone under her protection. The attacker might use kinetic energy (bullets, clubs, fists, and blades), fire or even electricity. In any case, the Advisor can turn the energy back, forcing it to expend itself.

The mage can use this Attainment in response to one attack per turn, provided that she has not already used her action for that turn. Her placement in the initiative roster doesn't matter. If the attacker acts on initiative 14 and the mage's action does not come until initiative 7, the Advisor can still attempt to turn aside the attack.

The attacker assembles his dice pool as usual, including any modifiers for the target's Defense or armor. The mage's player spends one point of Mana and rolls *Dexterity + Science + Forces*. Every success reduces the attacker's dice pool by one. The attacker cannot choose not to attack, regardless of how many successes the mage receives. If the attack is reduced to a chance dice, though, a dramatic failure does not harm the attacker, as the attack no longer has any energy at all (the dramatic failure is treated as a normal failure).

**Example:** Joan managed to get most of the shoppers out of the store without being noticed, but as she prepares to leave as well, one of the escaping shoppers yells to a passing cop. One of the thieves notices this and panics, firing wildly out of the store's windows with an automatic weapon. Joan uses *Wasted Potential* on the attack, turning aside the energy of the bullets. The Storyteller assembles the robber's dice pool: 2 (*Dexterity*) + 2 (*Firearms*) + 2 (the damage modifier for a small SMG) + 3 (for firing on full auto) = 9 dice. The glass in the window shaves off another dice (8 dice), and the shooter is firing at three targets (5 dice). Joan's player rolls *Dexterity + Science + Forces* and comes up with five successes. The shooter's dice pool is reduced to zero dice — a chance dice. If the Storyteller had spent a Willpower point for the shooter, he'd still have three dice to roll, but it's too late for that now. The robber pulls the trigger in desperation, but the



bullets fall to the floor a few inches from the barrel.

#### **Optional Arcanum: Mind 3**

An Advisor who is also a Disciple of Mind develops incredible capacity for storing and applying knowledge. The character gains the benefit of the Eidetic Memory Merit, and in addition can connect facts and extrapolate data in new and unorthodox ways. In game terms, the player can spend a point of Mana to gain 9-again on any Mental Skill roll. The character can also, when presented with a problem or an enigma, help others to figure it out. This requires the player to roll Manipulation + Expression + Mind and spend a point of Mana. If this roll succeeds, the character helps the person posing the problem to look at the matter in a new light (bestowing the 9-again bonus to one Mental Skill roll relating to the problem).

Regardless of the target of the Attainment, some familiarity with the subject matter is necessary to enjoy the effects. The character taking the action that requires the Mental Skill roll, whether the Advisor or another target, must have at least one dot in the necessary Skill to gain the 9-again bonus.

### *3rd: Released Potential*

#### **Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Forces 4

Everything contains potential energy. This energy might be chemical, elastic or gravitational, or, to hear the Advisors tell it, magic or knowledge. But everything has energy just waiting for the right force to act upon it and release it. For the truly elite among Mimir's Voice, that force is the third Attainment.

Combining aspects of the Forces spells "Control Velocity" and "Transform Energy," the character can release the potential energy of a given target. The target can be almost any object or being, provided the target's Size doesn't exceed the mage's Gnosis and that the target isn't presently moving. The mage can target small pieces of mostly homogenous matter, such as a Size 4 chunk of earth under an opponent's feet, but cannot target an enemy's arm or head. The player spends a point of Mana and rolls Dexterity + Science + Forces. This spell can be used in the following manners:

- The mage can halve an object's Speed once for every success, as described for "Control Velocity" on p. 172 of **Mage: The Awakening**.
- She can move the object a number of yards equal to the number of successes rolled.
- She can inflict damage on the object (one per success, armor and Defense do not apply, though armor

spells do). Damage can be either lethal or bashing, or aggravated if the mage wishes to spend another point of Mana.

- She can set an object ablaze by converting potential energy directly to fire. This inflicts fire damage as describe on p. 180 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Other effects might be possible at the Storyteller's discretion, but every use of this Attainment requires a Mana point and a separate roll.

#### **Optional Arcanum: Mind 4**

The Advisor can't implant the desire to learn (rather, she can, but doing so would violate the Code of the Legacy), but she can certainly improve a person's ability to do so. This Attainment is similar to the Mind spell "Augment Other Minds." When someone approaches the mage for help, she can touch that person gently and boost any one of his Mental or Social Attributes by a number of dots equal to her Mind Arcanum rating. This requires the expenditure of one Mana point. These changes last for the scene, during which time the Advisor works with the person to figure out whatever problems are vexing him. Use of this spell might well be justification for using experience points to increase Mental or Social Attributes or Skills.

## *Sample Character*

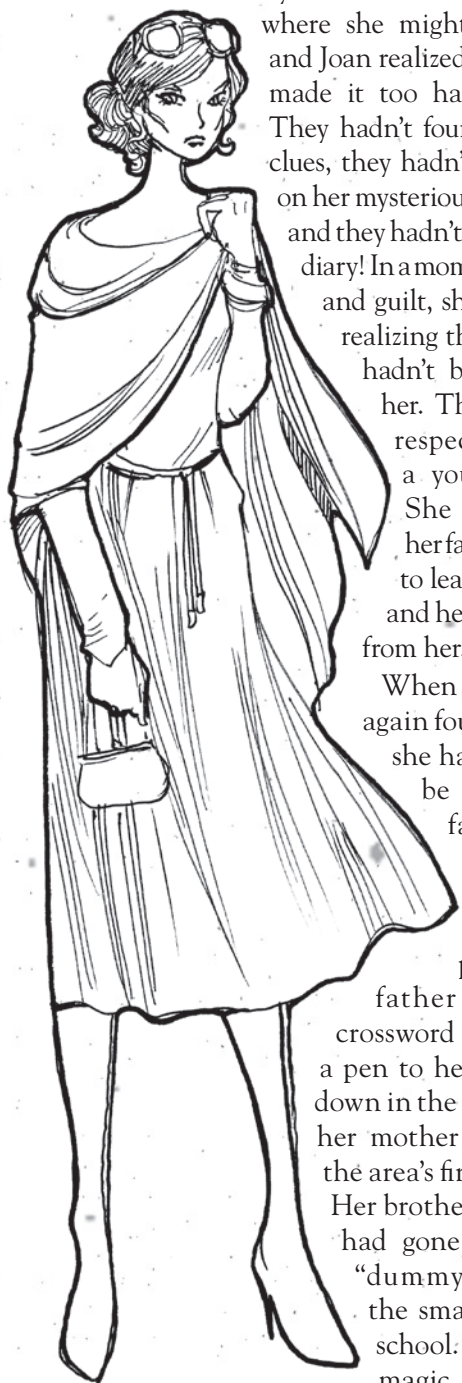
### *Joan; The Open Secret Weapon*

**Quote:** *Why do you look so surprised? You should have seen this coming a mile away.*

**Background:** Joan doesn't belong to a cabal, and she only barely belongs to an order. She's taken on pupils (she learned the Legacy directly from Elle, and secretly regrets not taking more of an interest in her other pupil, Gjallarhorn), she's taught and created rites, and she's become a repository for the political and mystical information for her cabal. The Hierarchy of her Consilium, to say nothing of the Sentinels, have occasionally hinted to hostile forces that if they ever make trouble for the mages of the city, Joan will be the one protecting the locals. And Joan, obligingly, agrees — she *will* protect the city. Of course, she won't do that with a rain of fire or anything so dramatic, and probably won't destroy the enemy the way that the Hierarchy implies, but no one ever asks her to clarify.

Joan was born to a farming family in the Midwestern United States. Frighteningly intelligent, she ran away from home at the tender age of 14, expecting her family to come and find her. They looked, but





they were never able to figure out where she might have gone, and Joan realized that she had made it too hard for them. They hadn't found her clever clues, they hadn't followed up on her mysterious phone calls, and they hadn't even read her diary! In a moment of despair and guilt, she Awakened, realizing that her family hadn't been ignoring her. They had been respecting her as a young woman. She returned to her family, resolved to learn from them and help them learn from her.

When she left home again four years later, she had learned to be a competent farmer, electrician, auto mechanic and carpenter. Her father was doing crossword puzzles with a pen to help him wind down in the evening, and her mother had formed the area's first book club. Her brothers and sisters had gone from being "dummy hicks" to the smartest kids in school: There was no magic involved —

Joan just listened to her family and helped them to love learning.

Joan joined the Mysterium in college, amazed that a society of the Awakened existed. But when they tried to preach to her, she realized that this society wasn't as interesting as it should be. She was despairing of the whole thing, ready to shun Consilii and be a solitary, when she met Elle. The two mages became firm friends, and Joan wound up contributing to the collection of philosophy that would eventually become the Code.

Joan was out of the city when Elle was murdered. She considered trying to find her friend's killer, but decided that it wouldn't bring Elle back, nor would it bring Joan any peace. Besides, Elle had been a capable mage, and so anyone that could lay her low was obviously dangerous — why invite that sort of trouble? Joan's intuition told her that she needed to move on, and so she did.

**Description:** Joan is in her mid-30s. Her hair is brown, but lightened by many years in the sun. Her skin never quite lost its farm-girl tan, and she remains in good physical shape. She normally wears soft dresses and ties her hair back, and hides her eyes behind large glasses.

Joan's Nimbus is the scent of ozone, a slight electric feeling on the skin of observers, and the sensation of pushing through water. Those who spend time around her find that if they "push" against this feeling, it leaves them tired, but if they relax into it, they come away from it feeling refreshed.

**Storytelling Hints:** If Joan has a regret, it's that she didn't avenge Elle's death. She doesn't second-guess herself often, but on that point, she wonders if fear wasn't driving her actions more than intuition. She knows that she could still resolve the matter, but now, years later, she is so entrenched in her own city's politics that returning to her old hometown — especially under Gjallarhorn's rule — would be problematic. She might attempt to help another mage, or even a cabal, resolve this issue, acting to help them from afar using her command of Space magic, especially if such a mage were studying to become an Advisor.

Another possible story hook for Joan is in her capacity as "secret" weapon. When the day finally arrives that the Consilium comes under attack, the Hierarchy of her city expects her to smite the attackers. What will he do when she simply prevents violence, turning attackers back but refusing to harm them? Will the Hierarchy seek other defenses, and turn Joan out?

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Old farmer's almanac.

**Real Name:** Joan Smith

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Mysterium

**Legacy:** Mimir's Voice

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Literature) 4, Crafts (Auto Repair) 4, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 3, Politics (Awakened) 2, Science 4



**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Stealth 4, Survival 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken (Horses) 2, Empathy 3, Persuasion 1, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Encyclopedic Knowledge, Sanctum (Size 3, Security 3), Status (Consilium) 3, Status (Order) 1

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 8

**Virtue:** Temperance

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 8

**Gnosis:** 7

**Arcana:** Forces 5, Mind 3, Prime 2, Space 5

**Notes:** *Forces*—Tune In (•), Eyes of the Matrix (••), Autonomous Servant (•••), Burst of Speed (••••), Change Weather (••••), Complete Invisibility (•••••); *Mind*—Aura Perception (•), Memory Hole (••), Mental Shield (••), Mental Wall (•••); *Prime*—Inscribe Grimoire (•); *Space*—Scrying (••), Ward (••), Multispatial Perception (•••), Co-Location (••••), Safe-Keeping (••••), Hide Space (•••••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — Blind Spot; 2<sup>nd</sup> — Wasted Potential; 3<sup>rd</sup> — Released Potential

**Mana/per turn:** 20/7

**Armor:** 5 ("Untouchable," Space ••)

**Magic Shield:** 2 (Prime ••)

## *The High Priestess Reversed*

Intuition gives way to impulsivity. Spirituality is ignored in favor of dogma. Patience is abandoned, and the mage's journey halts for the mage to pursue petty, or at least earthly, concerns.

## *Mimir's Voice as a Left-Handed Legacy*

Mimir's Voice remains the same in appearance, but is rotten from the inside out. Gjallarhorn didn't

just replace Elle as the representative of the Legacy, he completely perverted everything she worked for, recognizing that a Legacy of apparently altruistic simps would make for superb stalking horses. Upon ascending to the second Attainment, the Advisors are told the truth — honesty means that no one lies to you. Kindness means people find you above reproach. Not actively seeking power means others hand it to you without meaning to.

Young members of the Legacy aren't told these things, but they are magically "tagged" with standing Mind spells allowing more powerful Advisors to read or control their thoughts — "potential energy" indeed! The Voice whispers in the ears of kings, advising them to do whatever is most beneficial for the Advisor. Of course, an Advisor thinks in the long term, so as to avoid giving any advice that too obviously benefits himself. By the time a Hierarch realizes that perhaps his trusted vizier isn't so trustworthy, that vizier has already married his daughter, taken control of his Hallow, and, if the Advisor is truly skilled, wrapped his fingers around the Hierarch's neck.

The only mechanical difference between the Legacy as presented and the left-handed version involves the optional Arcana. At the second Attainment, a mage with Space 3 can automatically look in on up to three other Voices, younger members who have not yet been told the Legacy's true purpose. This effect is similar to the Space 3 "Multispatial Perception" spell (p. 237 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but it only works on the specific other Voices. Because these lesser Voices have been magically "tagged," however, the more powerful Voice can cast Mind spells through the Multispatial Perception effect without alerting them.

At the third Attainment, a Voice with Mind 4 can *reduce* the Mental or Social Attributes of a target with a target and a few confusing words. Powerful "Advisors" use this effect to convince leaders of dangerous courses of action, as well as to throw off suspicion.



# KEY III — THE EMPRESS

The Empress is an expression of the female form made divine. She is Ishtar, Astarte, Demeter and Isis. In some decks, she is also linked to the Virgin Mary, but whatever name is given to the Empress, she is the Maiden matured — the Mother. She is often pictured pregnant, sometimes holding a child. She is a symbol of fertility and plenty. More abstractly, she is a symbol of wisdom, but her wisdom stems from a combination of intuition and natural insight and the experience of years. The Fool's youth and the High Priestess' knowledge combine in the Empress.

To the Awakened, the Empress card resonates with the Thyrus Path and, more specifically, the Life Arcanum. The Empress is a symbol of all growing things, of fertility and fecundity, and of life born anew. As such, she symbolizes the Life Arcanum, arguably imperfectly. The Life Arcanum can heal and cause new growth, but as any Thyrus knows, Life can also be used to control, warp and even kill organisms. Some Awakened cartomancers look at the destructive side

of Life as being represented by the Empress Reversed. (Her meaning in traditional cartomancy is somewhat different; see below.)

For a mage on her journey through the Tarot, the

Empress can be seen as either a stage on this journey or an advisory figure. Someone who Awakens later in life, perhaps when she has a family of her own, must take the lessons that Sleeping life has taught her and apply them to her new outlook as one of the Wise. Mages that disregard the life experience of the Fallen World are, frankly, fools — the Fallen World is where all mages must live. If the Empress is an advisory figure, she needn't be a mage herself. Some mages, after surviving that first precarious Fool's leap, consorting with the charlatan Magician and receiving the blessing and wise counsel of the High Priestess, need the more earthy (and honestly, more *fun*) advice of the Empress. And indulging in the sensuality of the Empress is indeed advisable — after her, the journey grows harsh. The strict Emperor and the humorless Hierophant loom over the horizon.



THE EMPRESS.

## LEGACY — THE ROSES OF EDEN

*If it ever existed, it fell apart a long time ago. Let it go. I'll help you.*

Almost every civilization has a "time before" story. Before life was the way it was, there was a paradise, a land of ease and comfort, of beauty and pleasure. And then, usually due to some failing on the part of

mankind, it all fell apart, and people were forced to hunt, mate, hurt and die. The fact that this myth is so widespread leads the Awakened to surmise that there must be some truth to it — indeed, they tie these



uber-myths to their own story of the Fall of Atlantis. The Celestial Ladder shattered and the Awakened City was lost forever. The Orders of the Pentacle (rather, four of them) claim to be all that remains of this "time before."

The Roses of Eden don't dispute this. They just think it's pathetic.

The Roses of Eden are mages that denounce the Pentacle, and the Atlantean paradigm in general. It isn't that they claim Atlantis never existed — certainly the temples and Artifacts, to say nothing of phenomena such as ananke, indicate that *some* civilization of mages predated known history. What the Roses object to is basing the current, modern-day society of the Awakened on a society about which so few concrete facts are known. After all, mages are aware that the Seers of the Throne take their orders (or at least inspiration) from ancient, ascended masters — why, then, do the Pentacle mages insist on doing the same thing? Oracles or Exarchs, it doesn't matter. Both are inscrutable, both are unknowable, and both are not of the Fallen World. Better, surely, to create a new society, one truly born of the modern era.

The Legacy's members are aware that their philosophies aren't popular, and so most of them try to meet other mages' concerns as reasonably and gently as possible. This is especially true of the Noddists, who once claimed membership in one of the orders but left after the labyrinthine politics and rampant nepotism disillusioned them. Yes, the orders have safeguarded important secrets through the centuries — rites, magical practices, *mudras*, mystic items and locations — and those should all be preserved. But isn't it time to cast off the rivalries of the past?

Some Noddists, however, are openly hostile to the orders. They might be able to work with order mages, or even to join their cabals, but they refuse to take membership. Some even refuse to claim membership in a Consilium, but most Roses admit that it just isn't practical to try to make a life as a mage without the protection and support of other mages.

Perhaps most controversial of all, some Roses cultivate contact with sorcerers whose power doesn't come from the Supernal Realms at all. Not all magic is Awakened in nature, and while most mages seem to feel that any magic that doesn't directly stem from an Awakening is an inferior or even stolen version of their own power, the Roses of Eden view all magic as having a place in their ideal society. The Fallen World is a dangerous place, and having allies that don't suffer Paradox or engender Disbelief can only benefit the

Awakened, even if their powers aren't as versatile.

The Roses of Eden haven't made a great deal of progress toward establishing their society yet, largely because they have thousands of years of Atlantean tradition to break through. In some Consilii (notably those with a heavy Free Council presence), the Roses have succeeded in doing away with some of the tradition offices. Instead of a Hierarchy, a visiting cabal might find a Committee, or even a President, elected for a short time by the mages of the city. Rumor has it that one city's mages even collectively renounced their order membership and pledged themselves to the Roses of Eden. This city (the exact location varies depending on who is telling the tale and why) lost all of its mages over the next six weeks, and now no Consilium at all remains. The more militant Roses of Eden have their theories about what really happened, but the moderate members of the Legacy doubt the veracity of the story.

## History

The story goes that in Eden, before the fall from grace, roses did not have thorns. After Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, God laid a curse on Adam that (among other things) plants would have thorns and thistles. Roses, then, developed the sharp thorns that would go on to become metaphors for life in general and for the sorrow that seems to follow happiness.

This story resonated with an Acanthus mage named Abigail Mitchum who had recently joined the Silver Ladder. During her Awakening to Arcadia, she had seen the possibility of the Wise to earn the title, to delve into mysteries of the past and look to the heart of history's greatest triumphs and mistakes. The potential to teach, to save and to succor was *there*, in the Awakened soul of every mage. The Silver Ladder, she was told when she emerged, breathless, from her Awakening, was the society of kings, the shining beacon of...

This sort of talk continued until she'd pledged herself to the order. But then, slowly but surely, she learned that others didn't share her idealism. Abigail was a veteran of bureaucracy, both from civil service jobs and academia, and she recognized what she was seeing. The Wise, the Awakened, the all-powerful *théarchs*, weren't looking beyond their own interests. They saw status within the orders as a goal in itself. Frustrated, she made friends with members of the other orders, and discovered that it was the same everywhere. Even in the Free Council, which didn't suffer from the same



kind of pettiness, mages still saw clout within their own society as a goal.

Abigail thought that was absurd. Yes, people have a tendency to seek accolades, and they could still do good things while gaining status. But mage society was artificial, constructed around and in the cracks of Sleeper society as some desperate homage to a time that no living mage could verify, much less remember. Abigail held the Awakened to a higher standard than that, and dramatically left the Silver Ladder. "It's not enough for her to be a mage," one of her former colleagues muttered as she left. "She wants to be a superhero."

Abigail dropped out of sight and ventured across the world, meeting with order leaders, new cabals, solitary mages and those rare few who exist outside the Atlantean societal structure. She learned that there were other ways of doing magic. Power over the world could come from many sources, not all of them benign. A man's burning obsession could create life. A witch's potions could make someone fall in love. A wolf-skin, properly prepared, could allow a man to change into a beast. What Abigail took away from these meetings, aside from a great deal of arcane knowledge, was that either magic infused the Fallen World to a much greater degree than mages understood, or that they just weren't willing to admit it. And again, Abigail found that unacceptable.

She returned to her original Consilium five years to the day after she left. She approached the seat of the Hierarchy and threw a thornless rose at his feet, and then turned to face the assembled Awakened. "I am the Rose of Eden," she said, "and I have shed my thorns. Anyone who wants to do so is welcome to find me."

A few of the mages in attendance did, in fact, come to see her, but only those on the Path of Thistle have so far joined the Legacy itself. Over the ensuing years, the Roses of Eden have spread out over the world, sometimes working closely with Consilium mages, sometimes shunning them and keeping company with other solitaires and non-Awakened sorcerers.

## *Induction*

Once a prospect has found a potential tutor, she must present her case. Why should she be allowed to join the Legacy? Wanting to keep membership in any of the four Atlantean orders (or "pseudo-Atlantean" orders, as some Roses call them) is grounds for immediate dismissal. Individual Noddists can choose

to admit Free Council mages to their ranks, but not all are willing to do so. Only Acanthus mages are permitted to become Roses of Eden.

The prospect is subjected to lengthy questioning, and all answers are vetted against both mundane and magical investigation. The Roses like to know who they are dealing with. It isn't that they are afraid of infiltration (they tend to be transparent about their agendas and initiatives), just that they don't want people grubbing for power within the Legacy. The prospect also needs to present an accounting of what she has done with her life. Has she held down jobs or raised a family, or has she led a life of hedonism and sloth? The Legacy doesn't disapprove of pleasure, but the Roses can't abide idleness from mages. Recently Awakened mages, especially those who have careers and families and are still coping with the transition from Sleeping life to Awakened life, are never turned away, even if they can't actually join the Legacy (due to not being Acanthus or not being magically powerful enough). Such people are given support and mentoring, always with an eye toward building the ideal Awakened society — one in which mages help each other to explore the secrets of the world and protect those who cannot safely look upon those secrets, rather than squirreling them away and sniggering about it.

The Roses of Eden don't go in for showy initiation requirements. They see such trials as exactly the sort of thing that mages should be able to rise above. After all, a mage with even the barest knowledge of the Mind or Fate Arcana should know a lie when she hears one. An Apprentice of Time can get a sense as to whether a given prospect will or will not make a good member of the Legacy. Why not put these talents to use, and save the time that would otherwise be wasted in contests of strength, skill or political savvy — talents that can just as easily be bestowed by magic? The gifts of Awakened are nothing without the moral fiber to make good use of them, and if there is a spell to make someone into a reasonable and honest person, the Roses haven't discovered it yet.

Once a mage is accepted into the Legacy, she is expected to keep regular contact with her mentor for a period of not less than sixth months. During that time, she is also expected to act in some meaningful way, either to help other mages reinvent their society, help Sleepers combat the evils of *their* society, or find mages and other magic users outside the Atlantean power structure and enlist their help, or at least their knowledge. All of these can be dangerous jobs, and the Roses of Eden make no bones about it — they



do not enjoy the same support that other mages do. "But," Abigail always says when this is pointed out to her, "give the Roses time to bloom."

**Parent Path:** Acanthus (this Legacy might become available to any Free Council mage, or indeed any mage, in time, but presently all members are Tricksters)

**Nickname:** Noddists

**Orders:** Obviously, the Roses of Eden aren't popular with any of the four orders that claim to derive from Atlantis. The Free Council is often favorably disposed toward the Legacy (and officially, it's the only order to which the Noddists are allowed to belong), but not always. In some areas, Free Council mages are either loyal to the Pentacle or marginalized to the point that they have little concept of their order's identity. The Roses of Eden looks upon the former with scorn, but on the latter with hope — *those* mages are ripe for recruitment to the cause.

**Appearance:** A slight majority of the Roses of Eden is female, but this isn't a matter of policy so much as a reflection that many Consilii still favor men. Beyond that, Noddists tend to be healthy and athletic, a side effect of their practice of the Life Arcanum.

**Background:** The Roses of Eden, as a Legacy, accept only Acanthus mages who do not claim membership in the Guardians of the Veil, the Mysterium, the Adamantine Arrow or the Silver Ladder. Beyond that, they don't put restrictions on who may join as a matter of policy, but each individual Noddist is left to her own devices on whom to take on a pupil, and not all Noddists have the same priorities. One might look at the Legacy as a way to forcibly bring down the established Consilium structure, and recruit a mage with experience in urban warfare. Another might take a more tolerant approach and try to bring the system down by exposing it — a reporter, then, might make for a good pupil.

As a faction or an ideological movement, the Roses of Eden don't discriminate. Sleepwalkers, non-Awakened sorcerers and even order mages (though they aren't usually made to feel very welcome) can expect to be heard when the Roses gather.

**Organization:** The Roses of Eden maintain a loose chain of command, stretching back to Abigail Mitchum, but higher-ups in the Legacy aren't used as threats or bargaining chips, as this sort of behavior is exactly what the Legacy hates. As with many Legacies, pupils and mentors stay in contact after they have parted ways, and in this manner the Noddists keep each other appraised of current events. The Roses in

a given region will sometimes meet to discuss current activities and policy, as well as to give warnings about mages that should not be trusted or that have left the Legacy to join or rejoin an order.

**Suggested Oblations:** Writing or reading philosophy, volunteering or doing charity work, gardening, reading non-Atlantean occult work, educating Sleepers (not necessarily about magic).

**Concepts:** Wounded ex-Arrow, Ex-Guardian on the run, bitter ex-théarch, amnesiac ex-mystagogue, rabble rouser, scholar of alternate mysticism, gardener, priest, vigilante, late Awakener with kids.

## Attainments

Abigail Mitchum was (and remains) a gardening enthusiast, not to mention a bit fixated on the metaphor of Eden-as-Atlantis. The Attainments of the Roses of Eden represented her combinations of these notions, and of the idea that a society, like a delicate flower, takes time, energy and love to grow and shape.

### 1st: *Blossom's Whispers*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Life 2 (primary), Crafts 2 or Crafts 1 with a Specialty in Gardening, Survival 1

Make no mistake — being a Rose of Eden places a mage in danger. Some Consilii regard the Legacy as nothing less than a terrorist organization, and it's not unknown for assassins to target the Noddists, especially the ones that seem to make some headway (ironically, the loud, hyper-critical Roses are the easiest to ignore, and seldom get selected for termination). In any event, after the third attempt by the Guardians of the Veil to silence her, Abigail developed a spell allowing her to sense minute changes in plant life around her. This enabled her to sense assassins coming before they could drive in the knife, and, surprisingly, even warned her of magical attacks. The plant kingdom, it seems, responds to shifts in the flow of Mana in ways that animals (humans included) can't fathom.

In game terms, this Attainment is always active and mimics the effects of both "Pulse of the Living World" and "Analyze Life" (p. 181 and 180 of **Mage: The Awakening**, respectively). The character thus always has an active Mage Sight, and can, with a reflexive Intelligence + Science or Animal Ken roll, know the age, sex and species of a living thing. This also has the handy effect of detecting when something is *not* alive, which is useful for sniffing out undead creatures, something Abigail used to great effect when looking for vampiric sorcerers.



In addition, the mage is constantly tuned in to the minute shifts in the patterns of life around her. In game terms, this adds two dice to any reaction to surprise roll (see p. 46 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). If the character has the Danger Sense Merit (p. 108 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), both of these bonuses apply.

### *2nd: Tree of Life*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Life 3

Right or wrong, people respond better to those who appear healthy, strong and attractive. Abigail noted early in her campaign that if she looked well-rested and hale, her audiences, be they mage, Sleeper or stranger beings still, received her politely and with more respect. This Attainment allows a Noddist to appear perpetually healthy, with the bonus of allowing her to heal damage to her body more quickly into the bargain, by combining her knowledge of plant life with her ability to heal herself.

The mage can reflexively heal all bashing damage once per scene, no matter how much she has taken or whether or not she has any more severe wounds. In addition, she can spend one point of Mana to downgrade any lethal damage on her Health chart to bashing damage. Finally, if she suffers enough lethal damage to starting bleeding to death (see p. 173 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), she automatically spends a point of Mana and stabilizes herself. She is still unconscious, but is in no danger of dying unless she takes more damage.

To use any of these powers, however, the character must either be in direct sunlight or be able to touch bare earth. The earth must be able to sustain plant life. Even a houseplant is enough, but if the character is in a city alleyway at night, she might have trouble using this Attainment.

**Optional Arcanum:** Prime 3

A Rose of Eden who is also a Disciple of Prime can grow a true tree of life. The tree needs to be of a variety that bears fruit, and it must be grown without magical assistance (that is, the character must tend and water it normally). The mage must plant the tree herself, though a sapling works just as well as a seed. When the tree bears fruit, the fruits carry within them the power to heal. Anyone who eats the fruit of the tree is immediately healed of damage equal to the mage's Gnosis, in either bashing or lethal damage. If the mage has Life 4, the fruits can heal aggravated damage as well.

Although the mage cannot use Life magic to speed the growth of the tree, she can use any mundane method she wishes to speed up its growth. Abigail Mitchum was known to tend an apple tree using this Attainment, but she also grew tomato plants in her basement using hydroponics. The tomatoes worked just as well for healing as the apples.

The mage must infuse the tree or plant with one point of Mana per day to allow the plant to soak up the necessary magic. Water infused with Tass is acceptable, and some Roses have even been known to infuse plant food tablets with Mana to feed their magical trees. If a plant goes more than three days without a point of Mana, it loses the ability to function as a Tree of Life until infused with a full month's worth of Mana.

### *3rd: Tree of Knowledge*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Life 4

"Awakening is the act of eating of the Tree of Knowledge," Abigail Mitchum liked to say. "We listened to the Serpent, no matter what form he wore at the time, and we took a big bite. That's not the Fall. The Fall was assuming that eating that fruit meant we knew something that other folks didn't, and *could never know*." Abigail felt, especially after her travels, that the Fall of Atlantis was relevant only insofar as it provided a good model of what not to do. Arrogance, elitism and pride were the enemies, and sectarianism and divisiveness were what strengthened those things. The Tree of Knowledge, she came to feel, was not dangerous because it revealed, but dangerous because knowledge itself was dangerous. Knowledge could paralyze or divide just as easily as it could teach or heal. And Abigail, never one for inaction, decided she would show people the unity that knowledge could provide. This Attainment was the result.

Those mages who have experienced the Tree of Knowledge Attainment describe the feeling as extremely unsettling. The Attainment requires that all participants touch, skin to skin (holding hands is the usual method, though more intimate versions have been known to occur). The mage then uses the Attainment to make slight alterations in the Pattern of all of the participants, changing animal matter to plant matter on a cellular level. The result is an increased awareness of one another's state of being and an ability to understand one another, which lasts for the duration of the scene. The participants all feel a sudden dulling of sensation from sound and sight, but experience a kind of synesthesia — they feel light rather than seeing it. Also, perception of difference



between people fades, not to visual perception, but to cognitive association. That is, participants notice details like race, size, age and so on, but do not attach much meaning to them.

In game terms, the player rolls Presence + Empathy + Life. Any character that wishes to resist can roll Resolve + Gnosis, contesting the mage's roll. If the mage succeeds, all participants gain an immediate sense of the physical health of everyone involved, similar to the Life spell "Healer's Trance." In addition, the characters become passive and incapable of violence against one another for the duration of the scene, though they are capable of defending themselves against outside threats (any combat rolls made by participants during this scene suffer a -1 modifier, though). Finally, participants become linked on a deep and primal level for a short time. Reactions to surprise are made collectively — as long as one player succeeds, none of the others are surprised. Also, the participants can disperse injury among them, potentially ignoring it altogether. Two participants can absorb a point of bashing damage, five can absorb a point of lethal damage, and eight can absorb a point of aggravated damage.

**Example:** A Rose of Eden uses Tree of Knowledge to link a cabal of mages and their Sleepwalker servants — seven people in total (five mages, including the Noddist, and two Sleepwalkers). As they are growing accustomed to their new awareness, a trio of Seers of the Throne attacks the cabal. One Seer takes a baseball bat to one of the mages and inflicts three levels of bashing damage. Every two people linked by the Tree of Knowledge absorb one point of bashing damage, however, so none of the damage gets through (all seven of the participants wince a bit, but no injury occurs). Another Seer stabs a Sleepwalker for four points of lethal damage. Since it takes five participants to absorb a point of lethal damage, only one point is absorbed. The participants distribute the other three; three characters each suffer one point of lethal damage. Finally, the last Sleeper casts a destructive spell that inflicts two points of aggravated damage to the Noddist. Since only seven people are linked by the Tree, this damage cannot be absorbed, but it can be distributed so that the mage doesn't have to suffer both (or any) damage.

#### **Optional Arcanum: Prime 4**

If the mage also possesses Prime 4, two additional effects occur when she links a group with the Tree of Knowledge. First, the participants all enjoy the benefits of "Supernal Vision" for the scene, even if they are Sleepers. Second, all participants become resistant to outside magic. Any spell that targets one member of the group suffers a modifier as though trying to target

all of them. This modifier is applied whether or not the mage would actually be capable of affecting all of the participants.

**Example:** Continuing with the above example, one of the Seers tries using the Death spell "Enervation" on the Rose of Eden. The Seer only has Death 4, and so is not capable of casting the spell at sensory range (and thus cannot affect all seven targets at once). Nevertheless, the roll suffers a -6 penalty as though the mage were trying to work in Target factors to affect the whole group (and this is in addition to any magical armor that the Noddist character might have!).

## *Sample Character*

### *Violet*

**Quote:** You didn't see me, OK?

**Background:** Jenny Adams was the homecoming queen, easily the most popular girl in school. She worked hard not to let it go to her head, because she hadn't *always* been the pretty girl. She'd been the homely girl with the buckteeth, and didn't much care for the teasing when it happened to her. So when her face smoothed out and her body became curved and nubile and her eyes took on an endearing sparkle, she didn't lord it over her classmates. Her looks stayed with her into college and beyond, and although she got scholarships and good jobs in the corporate world, she never quite shook the feeling that she was only getting ahead in life because of her appearance.

And then Jenny Awakened, and she realized that there was more to it than that. She was getting ahead in life because she was *meant* to, because she had a presence in the fate of the world that gave her a certain privilege. Determined not to misuse it, she joined the Silver Ladder, in hopes of helping other mages figure out their places in the tapestry of the universe. There was ample support in the records of her Consilium to support this particular metaphor, in fact — prophecies handed down from centuries past, recorded by Mysterium scribes, guarded by Guardian spies, protected from enemies by Arrow warriors.

And then one evening, at a Consilium-wide forum for Acanthus mages, Jenny heard a Free Council mage get raked over the metaphorical coals for suggesting that the whole thing might be a sham. Calvinist nonsense, he said. The Awakened chose their *own* place in the tapestry, which was a lousy metaphor anyway, because the "tapestry" was in constant flux. Look at a coral reef, or any other ecosystem — there was the world, shown



in microcosm, the minute mimicking the whole. Even Sleepers — especially Sleepers — had a part.

And Jenny, who always had a fondness for calling it as she saw it, agreed. She dug into the records, and found that there was no verification for the prophecies. None of them had actually come true in a way that truly confirmed them, and, she was forced to admit, the establishment had a vested interest in keeping these sacred texts revered rather than examined. Indeed, as she examined them, her status in the order dropped, until a month later new recruits were getting preferential treatment from the masters.

Disgusted, Jenny resigned from the Silver Ladder. She found the Free Councilor who had spoken up and offered to join his cabal. He did her one better, and helped her to become a Rose of Eden.

**Description:** Jenny is as beautiful as she ever was, but she hides it a little more now. She lets her hair hang in her face, wears clothes that don't show off her figure, and doesn't smile much. An observer would have to take the time to converse with her, to engage with her, to see the lovely woman beneath. Jenny is in her early 30s, blond and blue-eyed, and has a soft, heart-shaped face. She isn't tall, but is curvaceous and fit, and seems at ease no matter where she is.

Jenny's Nimbus is the subtle scent of flowers, coupled with a slight euphoric feeling — the sensation that everything is going to work out in the end. When she uses her magic in a harmful fashion, which is rare, the Nimbus carries an unpleasant "aftertaste," a feeling of lingering unease.

**Storytelling Hints:** Jenny has retreated from the limelight almost entirely. She still wants to make a difference in magical society, but now feels that the best way to do that is to rebuild it — which of course means breaking it first. She's not a naturally bitter or destructive person, though, so she keeps looking for a way to do that without hurting anyone. Her mentor knows, and has tried to explain, that making omelets means breaking eggs, but Jenny isn't quite ready to face that yet. She is more maiden than mother, in many ways, so she is on the cusp of entering the Empress stage of her journey. A cabal that gives her focus and a constructive way to achieve these goals could push her into this stage, where she will truly shine.

Jenny took the name Violet to remind herself to be less outgoing. Most of the time it works, but sometimes she forgets herself (especially among friends), and takes control of the conversation. Violet is a leader who is afraid, at present, to lead, because doing so would mean taking someone else's place. Old habits die hard.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Plastic makeup mirror, etched with the Fate rune.

**Real Name:** Jenny Adams

**Path:** Acanthus

**Order:** Free Council

**Legacy:** Roses of Eden

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Computer 2, Crafts (Gardening) 1, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Stealth 1

**Social Skills:** Empathy 3, Expression 2, Persuasion (Kind) 3, Socialize (Corporate) 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Contacts (Big Business, Legal), Destiny ("Frost kills the blossom") 4, High Speech, Resources 3, Striking Looks 4

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 7

**Virtue:** Hope

**Vice:** Greed

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 3

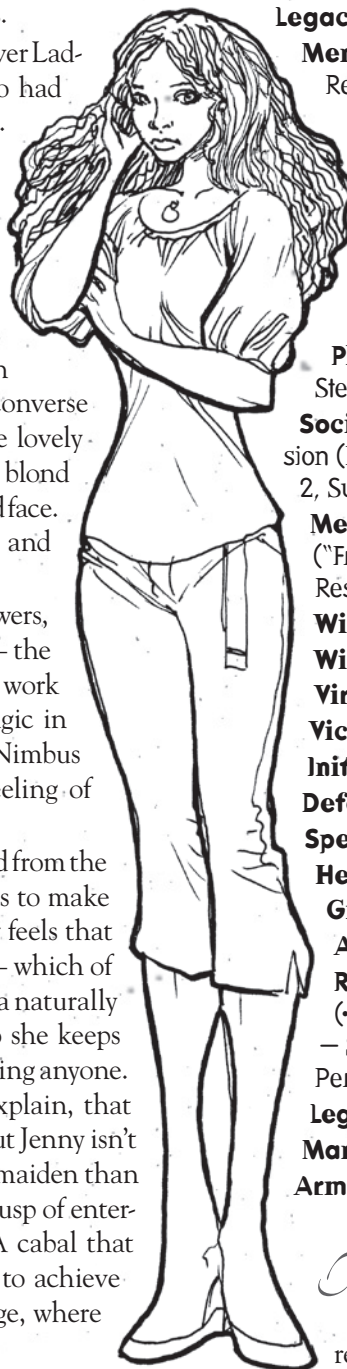
**Arcana:** Fate 3, Life 3, Prime 1, Time 2

**Rites:** *Fate* — Reading the Outmost Eddies (•), Shifting the Odds (••), Lucky Coin (•••); *Life* — Self-Healing (••), Purify Bodies (••); *Time* — Perfect Timing (•), Flip of the Coin (••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — Blossom's Whispers

**Mana/per turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 3 ("Fortune's Protection," Time ••)



## *The Empress Reversed*

The Empress reversed is a symbol of barrenness, both of body and of soul. A blasted



patch of ground produces no fruit. A soul devoid of the fertile spark of life produces nothing new. The patience and wisdom of the Empress stops short, becoming short-sightedness and contrariness. Gentle words become sharp retorts, and sweet fruit becomes painful thorns.

### *The Roses of Eden as a Left-Handed Legacy*

Using the Roses of Eden as a left-handed Legacy is simply a matter of adding a deranged sense of urgency to their philosophy. Paradise is fallen. The Awakened have been cast down, and the remaining shreds of the Atlantean society simply need to be ground up and discarded like the trash they are. Add to this a kind of brutal naturalistic bent, and it's easy to see the Roses as the creeping vines (with thorns, of course) that grow over disused property.

The first Attainment of the Legacy remains unchanged. The primary function of the Tree of Life

Attainment likewise remains the same, but the optional Arcanum becomes Fate 3, with the following power:

The mage curses a piece of food, usually fruit or some other plant. It's even possible to curse a tree or other fruit-bearing plant and affect every morsel of food on it, though this curse only lasts for a scene, while cursing an individual piece of food lasts until the food is eaten or rots. Laying the curse requires a roll of Manipulation + Occult + Fate. When someone consumes the cursed item, he is plagued with ill fortune. Over the course of the next week, the Storyteller can designate some of the target's rolls to be chance rolls, no matter what the usual dice pools. These rolls must be Mental action in nature; combat rolls are exempt, but rolls such as Research, Perception and Reaction to Surprise are eligible. The number of chance rolls is equal to the Noddist's Fate Arcanum.

The third Attainment remains as written, including the optional Arcanum. The experience becomes much more painful and invasive, and participants might find moss growing under their fingernails after it is over.



# KEY IV — THE EMPEROR

The Emperor sits on his throne, sternly regarding those who stand before him. He is a domineering, paternal figure, bearded and wizened — the Magician made into an experienced and venerable man. He is the consort of the Empress (and as such, she could be seen as the more mature version of the High Priestess) and contains the male spark of creation, the seed from which new life can grow. Not coincidentally, he is often pictured with a scepter. The Emperor can also call to mind the image of God as maker and arranger of the cosmos, the overseer and ruler of all that is. The card, therefore, can represent a need to listen to higher authority (be that authority spiritual or mundane), and to heed the advice of those more knowledgeable. It can also indicate dominance from such an authority, however.

While the Empress teaches the value of relying on experience and intuition, the Emperor teaches discipline, responsibility and, when necessary, harsh justice. His lessons are still driven by practicality (a dogmatic lesson is coming soon, though, in the personage of the Hierophant), and he understands the workings of the world. The Emperor is associated with both earth and fire, government and war.

The focus on government, of course, calls to mind the Silver Ladder when the Awakened consider the Tarot. The *Vox Draconis* often takes the Emperor as its card, hoping to convey its knowledge and energy, but also, of course, its authority. The Silver Ladder's desires to unite the Awakened require a central leadership figure (even if it isn't actually a single man), and the

Emperor is an easily recognizable figure of this concept.

More generally, the Emperor often represents the influence of any of the orders, or at least a mentor. A mage at this stage in the journey through the Tarot needs some firm guidance. Up until now, he has received much of his training in general terms — moralistic advice, metaphor, and basic information designed to help him gently come to terms with what he is. Now, it is time for the Emperor, in whatever form, to show him the hard truth about the World of Darkness. Yes, you can conjure fire, but fire spreads. Yes, you can read minds, but you might not like what you see. Yes, you are a mage, but you are still mortal. From these practical points, the mage moves on to the theological maxims of the Hierophant. The Emperor, gruff though he may be, is perhaps the last refuge of safety for a young mage. From here on out,

nothing is certain or simple.



## LEGACY — THE CELESTIAL MASTERS

*All matter is energy, and all energy, matter. And we are both, my friend.*

When first man gazed up into the Heavens and saw the stars, what did he think? Those twinkling dots of light represented something far away, unattainable, something that became the object of longing and symbolic of the most fervent wishes. As knowledge

of astronomy progressed, the stargazer learned that the light he saw was from celestial bodies long dead, reaching Earth long after the start that generated it burned out. Does this, then, mean that wishes, too, are only realized by sacrificing the zeal and wonder



that spurred them? The modern world is not without hope, but today's discovery kills yesterday's myth, and some find this depressing.

But progress, fortunately, provides new wonder. Matter and energy are never destroyed, and that means everything that now exists was once in a different form. Put another way, the dead stars break down and become other elements — even, eventually, living matter. We are all made of stars.

This is hope for the future, the knowledge that each and every human being may one day rejoin the cosmos as something luminous and beautiful. Will the matter/energy that was once “us” serve to inspire some future species on some distant world? Is that, then, reason enough to keep wishing on stars?

The Celestial Masters began in the Age of Exploration as a Legacy devoted to mapping the Heavens. As the years progressed, however, they realized that the adage “as above, so below” was true in many ways. All of the energy of the stars could be found here on Earth, and gradually, the Legacy's focus changed to an understanding of how this transition happens.

## History

The Celestial Masters began in Portugal as a cabal of mages in service to Infante Henrique of Portugal, Duke of Viseu, also called Henry the Navigator. While the records of the Silver Ladder do not indicate whether the prince was, himself, Awakened, they do state that he had at least a passing knowledge of “Supernal truth.” Henry was fascinated with discovery and travel, and not above wishing to profit from both, so he assembled a coalition of explorers, mapmakers and navigators at a villa on the Sagres peninsula at the southern tip of Portugal.

Initially, only one mage — Duarte Rafael Cipriano, a Theurgist who took the Shadow Name Vespasian after the Roman Emperor — was involved in this consortium. Vespasian was not himself a navigator or mapmaker, nor was he particularly interested in discovering new countries; however, he was very interested in Prince Henry and what financial and temporal opportunities he might create, and so he ingratiated himself to the Navigator and became part of his endeavors.

The story that Vespasian would later tell to his order was this: one night in early summer, 1420, he and Prince Henry walked on the beach together, both very drunk. They looked up at the sky, and Henry said to the mage, “If I live a century and see all the lands

of the world, I shall still die an ignorant child, for I shall never map the stars.” Vespasian's heart went out to the prince, for as a Sleeper, he could not know the power and awe of seeing the Aether, but wondered if mapping the stars might be possible through magic. Vespasian explained to his contemporaries that he intended to form a cabal that would secretly work alongside the prince, helping him to achieve his goals of discovery and, at the same time, use his connections to mapmakers and explorers to find a way to map the Heavens.

Modern mages look upon this story as extremely unlikely. From all accounts, Vespasian was a disagreeable fellow, and Prince Henry never once mentioned “Duarte Rafael Cipriano” in his correspondence with anyone else. While it's true that Vespasian spent a great deal of time around the prince, for him to share an intimate moment and a poetic lament with someone who was, for all intents and purposes, a glorified accountant is improbable, alcohol notwithstanding. More likely, Vespasian noticed which way the wind was blowing for Prince Henry — in late May of 1420, the prince was named governor of the Order of Christ (heir to the Templars in Portugal) and thus gained access to a great deal of wealth. Vespasian, having knowledge to the prince's monetary doings, would have known that this appointment was coming, and decided to get the Silver Ladder's backing in staying close to the prince.

Whatever the truth, Vespasian accomplished his goal. Six other mages joined his nascent cabal.

## The Celestial Cartographers

These seven mages (the six Vespasian recruited plus Vespasian himself) formed a cabal called the *Cartógrafos Celestiais* — “the Celestial Cartographers.” Vespasian tried to establish himself as leader of the cabal, but soon found himself overshadowed by a younger and more idealistic mage called Daedalus. Daedalus, a Moros, never openly questioned Vespasian's motives, but did keep the cabal focused on its goal of discovery and ascent to the stars. Vespasian realized that he would be better off providing monetary support than trying to be a philosophical center for the cabal, and faded into the background. He died from natural causes, circa 1450, but the cabal flourished. Many of the voyages planned and sponsored by Prince Henry included either a member of the cabal or one of the *proximi* in service to it, and Daedalus, a Master of Space as well as Matter, always saw to it that the cabal member returned, even from a disastrous voyage.



Prince Henry died in 1460, and Daedalus vowed to carry on the Navigator's dream of mapping the stars. He formed a new Legacy, which he threw open to any member of the Silver Ladder (and later tutored at least one Moros of the Mysterium). This Legacy, which took the name "Celestial Navigators" after Prince Henry, focused on exploration and mapping of new and strange lands. Some members of the Legacy accompanied ships to new countries (one, in fact, sailed on the *Santa Maria* with Christopher Columbus, but abandoned him after returning from his first voyage, calling him "a pig, a buffoon, and an opportunist — he doesn't see people, he sees piles of gold"). Some entered the Shadow and attempted cartography and cataloging of the spirit worlds, with varying degrees of success. Some attempted to use descriptions of fables such as Prester John's kingdom or the Fountain of Youth to open scrying windows or portals, but if any of these attempts succeeded, there are no records. The Legacy spread, and when Daedalus died, he did so knowing that he had inspired the hopes and dreams of many of the Awakened.

### *Made of Stars*

The Celestial Navigator Legacy remained a fairly important one in Europe (and, if rumors are to be believed, in China as well) up until the early 17th century. As exploration changed from over sea to over land, the Legacy became less common. The Silver Ladder kept records, of course, and there were still Celestial Navigators to be found, especially in southern Portugal, but it wasn't until the formation of the Free Council that the Legacy experienced a revival.

In 1899, when the Free Council emerged as an order, the Silver Ladder was not initially enthusiastic. But one member of the Vox Draconis who supported the nascent order was a physicist named Dr. John Cressner. Gauge, as he was known to his fellow mages, believed the Free Council was a natural progression, an ideological evolution of sorts, responding both to needs within the Awakened community and changes to the Fallen World. Gauge, wishing to formally welcome the Free Council to the Awakened community of his home city (New York), found the records detailing the Celestial Navigators Legacy and presented them to the Free Council. He made a special point of mentioning that Prince Henry the Navigator's dream of mapping the stars had not yet been realized, but perhaps that was unimportant — the dream itself was what had led to the Legacy. Gauge, himself an Obrimos, never joined a Legacy at all, but his gesture didn't go unno-

ticed. Mages in the Free Council looked over the old writings and learned rites and history that helped in their dealings with the Ladder. Mages of the Ladder, meanwhile, studied the notes and decided that the Celestial Navigators' philosophy might be worthy of study again, especially in light of Gauge's speech about conversion and progression.

Some years later, a cabal of mages from the Free Council and the Silver Ladder approached Gauge and asked him to collaborate on a series of magical experiments performed in conjunction with the theories of quantum mechanics. Gauge, himself an expert in the field of harmonics, agreed, and the cabal made some fascinating discoveries. Matter, they realized, was energy, and while it had long been known that a skilled mage could change energy to solid matter and back, the cabal became convinced that with the right apparatus, this conversion was possible in the Fallen World as well. In 1926, the cabal renamed itself the "Photonic Navigators," taking the term "photon" from the work of American chemist Gilbert Lewis. Their intent was to learn to convert living matter to energy and thus travel to places unreachable even by mages.

Some of these mages, adapting the teachings of the Celestial Navigators Legacy, created a variant — the Celestial Masters. Since then, the Legacy has recruited from the Silver Ladder, the Free Council, and accepts Necromancers from other orders as well. They continue to work toward better understanding of energy conversion, hoping to one day be able to reproduce their magical feats without using magic. They recognize, though, that this goal might be impossible. This, to the Stargazers, isn't important. The important thing is that their goal continues to inspire them, and allows them to do great things along the way.

### *Induction*

The Celestial Masters Legacy is one of the more accessible, given that two orders and a Path teach it. Joining requires finding a Celestial Master and making an entreaty. A background in physics isn't strictly necessary, but applicants are required to have reached the rank of Apprentice in both Matter and Forces, and to demonstrate skill in conversion in both Arcanum.

The applicant is then required to study with his mentor, learning at least two of the following rites (all page numbers refer to **Mage: The Awakening**): Alter Conductivity (p. 194), Influence Light (p. 162), Invisible Object (p. 166) or Transmute Water (p. 197).



The mage also studies physics, alchemy and philosophy during this training period.

The mentor may terminate training at any time if he feels the pupil isn't cut out for the Legacy. At the end of the training time, the mentor makes a decision as to whether the pupil is a good match. If he feels the mage will be a good addition to the Legacy, the two of them go on a trip to Sagres, visit the grave of Prince Henry, and discuss the philosophy of reaching for the stars. That evening, the mage reshapes his soul and formally becomes a Celestial Master.

**Parent Path:** Moros/Silver Ladder or Free Council

**Nickname:** Stargazers

**Orders:** The Free Council and the Silver Ladder, of course, both welcome members of the Legacy. In areas in which these two orders are adversarial to each other, though, Stargazers are either unknown or belong to only one of the orders.

Of the other three orders, the Mysterium is the most likely to train Celestial Masters. A bit of the explorer lies in the hearts of all Stargazers, and the Mysterium, of course, provides a welcome home for such people.

The Adamantine Arrow and the Guardians of the Veil don't have anything against the Celestial Masters, per se, but the Legacy has never found a niche within these orders. Occasionally, a Moros Arrow or Guardian joins the Stargazers, but this tends to be out of interests that exist independently of the mage's loyalties to his order.

**Appearance:** Many Celestial Masters have some background in the physical sciences, and so are at home in academic settings. As such, they might choose professional garb, or dress for work in a lab, or prefer casual and comfortable clothes.

**Background:** Celestial Masters tend to come from scientific fields such as physics, chemistry, quantum theory and astronomy. Others might approach the Legacy's goals from a purely magical standpoint, or as alchemists or theosophists. A rare few are pure philosophers and poets, viewing transformation of matter and energy as a metaphor for transformation of soul and mind.

**Organization:** The Legacy hosts a meeting in Portugal every three years, and it's not uncommon for mentors to stretch their pupil's training periods out to make their pilgrimage to Prince Henry's grave coincide with this meeting. During this time, the Stargazers share rotes and magical discoveries, discuss the progress of Sleeper science and how they might best use or guide it, and network with each other.

Between meetings, a Stargazer is expected to keep regular contact with his mentor, but there are no consequences (other than perhaps not advancing in the Legacy) if he does not.

**Suggested Oblations:** Complicated mathematical equations, cartography, stargazing, sea travel, scientific research, energy conversion (setting up a machine that converts kinetic energy to electrical energy, for instance).

**Concepts:** Scientist, sailor, environmentalist, arrogant alchemist, historian, metallurgist, cartographer, international financier, philanthropist, former astronaut.

## *Attainments*

Initially, the Legacy's attainments used Space as the primary Arcanum. It was only after the shift in philosophy (see above) that Forces became the focus and Space became something of an afterthought. Today, the Celestial Masters are some of the most magically accomplished Willworkers, simply because learning their Attainments takes a great deal of skill.

**Note:** Either the Forces or the Matter Arcanum can be primary for this Legacy, depending on the mage's Path. If the mage is a Moros, Forces is the primary Arcanum. If not, the player can choose when the character joins the Legacy.

### *1st: Celestial Telescope*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Forces 2, Matter 2, Space 1, Science 2

This Attainment, largely unchanged since the days of the Celestial Navigators, allows the mage to see great distances and to look through solid objects. He simply wills light to interact with the world a bit differently, facilitating long-range perception or making objects transparent (to him).

This spell has two main effects. The first is an increase in the character's visual range, allowing him to see a number of miles equal to (Gnosis x 3). Activating this Attainment requires the player to roll Wits + Composure + Science. The character can terminate the spell at any time, but while the spell is activated, the player suffers a -4 modifier to any sight-based Perception rolls to notice something in the character's immediate area (hearing and scent are unaffected, of course, and the mage might use a Space spell to warn her if anyone approaches). While the Attainment doesn't mitigate darkness by itself, the Stargazer can cast the Forces spell "Nightsight" and see for miles in the dark.



The second effect is similar to the Matter 2 spell "Steel Windows." The character can look through any solid object he wishes. This requires the player to roll Wits + Science + Matter. Unlike the Steel Windows spell, the mage is the only one who can see through the object.

## 2nd: *Everything is Stardust*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Matter 3, Forces 3

The Stargazer gains insight into the nature of matter and energy, and its fundamental form as the stuff of the universe, no matter what state it is currently in. The mage can touch a wall and make it disappear in a flash of light, or mute the report from a gun by making the sound dissipate into a splash of water. He *cannot*, however, transmute energy into energy or matter into matter, change energy into air (or vice versa), or transmute kinetic energy or radiation. The only types of energy he can use with this Attainment are light, heat, sound, electricity and fire, and the only types of matter he can involve are solids and liquids. All transmutations are permanent, and the mage cannot shape matter using this Attainment. For instance, he might change light into stone, causing the room to darken momentarily and small chunks of stone to fall to the ground, but he couldn't take the light in the room and turn it into a statue (not with this Attainment alone, at least, though spells might make this possible).

The conversion from energy to matter is problematic, because gauging how "much" light or sound might transform into a gallon of water or a pound of stone is difficult. Likewise, how loud is a sound made from a normal-sized door? The table below can be used as a rule of thumb.

This Attainment cannot be used to affect an object with a Size rating greater than 5, but the character can break apart a larger object over time. The mage should be wary, of course, of destroying objects that support others (load-bearing walls and the like), or of trying to transmute a chemical fire into sand in an enclosed space.

When transmuting, the player states the type of matter/energy he wishes the energy/matter to become. If the object's Durability is less than the corresponding intensity of the energy on the chart above, the energy becomes an amount of matter equal to the intensity in Size. If the Durability is equal to or greater than the intensity listed for the energy, the object is Size 1 (equal) or Size 0 (greater).

Using this Attainment requires the player to spend a point of Mana and roll Intelligence + Science + Matter (to change energy into matter) or Forces (to change matter into energy). The mage must touch the matter or be able to perceive the energy to affect it (which of course means that as long as the mage can see at all, he can theoretically change the light into some kind of matter).

**Example:** Scout is backing up his Adamantine Arrow cabal-mate and uses this Attainment to silence the report from his friends' gun. He figures he'll change the sound into water (Durability 0). The Storyteller notes that a gunshot is rated at 4 on the chart above, meaning that turning a gunshot into water results in a body of water with a Size rating of 4. Fortunately, the water splashes harmlessly onto the ground; the mages shoes are a bit wet, but this doesn't present a problem.

Later, Scout and his friend are running for their lives (seems their enemies tracked them by the wet footprints they left), and they come to a gate with a chain and a padlock. Scout uses this Attainment on the padlock. He decides to change it into light. The padlock has Durability 3, so the flash of light it becomes is about equivalent to a car headlight. The two mages slip through the gate and hurry away, hoping their pursuers didn't see the light.

**Optional Arcanum:** Space 3

The Celestial Navigators used specially-trained birds to aid in mapmaking. The mage forged a strong sympathetic connection to the bird, and then released it and used that connection for scrying. The Celestial Masters make use of a similar tactic, but employ their impressive matter/energy conversion skills to create astounding three-dimensional models of their surroundings.

Object's Durability/Size*	Light	Sound	Heat**	Electricity	Fire
1	Flashlight	Casual talk	Room temp. (72°)	Car battery	Lighter
2	75-watt lamp	Scream	Body temp. (98.6°)	Wall socket	Torch
3	Car headlight	Electric guitar	Kills bacteria (160°)	Security fence	Bonfire
4	Floodlight	Gunshot	Boiling point (212°)	Junction box	Inferno
5	Stadium lights	Industrial	Books burn (451°)	Main line	Conflagration

\* Whichever is higher

\*\* Fahrenheit



This Attainment requires a flat space and a good source of energy (light, sound, energy or fire will all suffice, but the simplest method is probably to use this Attainment during the day and use sunlight). The mage must have a sympathetic connection to a nearby object. He enters a trance, meditating upon the object and all of the energy and matter in between himself and it. As he mediates, the energy source becomes a solid, 3-D model of the terrain between the mage and the targeted object. The model only records stationary objects, so people and moving cars aren't recorded, but the level of detail is otherwise superb (street signs are visible, swimming pools are actually full of water, and so on). The scale of the model is roughly 60:1, so a five-foot object is about an inch high on the model.

This Attainment requires a point of Mana and an extended action. The roll is Resolve + Science + Space. Each roll requires 30 minutes of concentration, and the target number of successes is one for every 100 yards between the mage and the object.

### *3rd: Light Long Dead*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Matter 4, Forces 4

This Attainment is much the same as Everything is Stardust, except that many of the restrictions are removed. The character can affect kinetic energy and gases, and transform energy into energy and matter into matter. This means that the character can cause bullets to drop harmlessly to the ground by changing their kinetic energy into light, or cause enemies to sink into the floor by changing wooden planks into mud. The range on this Attainment is sensory (which, combined with the Celestial Telescope Attainment, makes the few Celestial Masters of this rank fearsome indeed), and the amount of gas that can be shaped is determined by the chart below:

Object's Size/Durability	Defined Volume
1	5 cubic yards
2	10 cu. yards
3	20 cu. yards
4	40 cu. yards
5	80 cu. yards

The system for this Attainment is the same as for the previous one.

**Optional Arcanum:** Space 4

The Celestial Masters still wish to map the stars, and with this Attainment, it might someday be possible. The character can instantly teleport himself within line of sight as an instant action, or, if the player spends a point of Mana, a reflexive action. Since the mage

can see for miles and walls are no obstacle to his vision, "line of sight" allows for a great deal of flexibility. This Attainment cannot be used through a scrying window, however (though nothing prevents the mage from simply casting the "Teleportation" spell).

## *Sample Character*

### *Scout*

**Quote:** *I think it's this way. No, of course I'm not sure!*

**Background:** Growing up, Adam Snow always felt he'd been born in the wrong century. He read about the great explorers of the 17th century and wished he could have joined them. Oh, he understood that they took slaves and destroyed civilizations and all, but what it must have been like to see the Rockies with no preconceived notion of what they looked like! To behold the Amazon River, or the temples of Central America, as a stranger, a traveler! Adam wouldn't have done it for glory or money, he told himself, but the thrill of seeing something for the first time, something no other member of his culture — or better still, no other human being — had ever seen.

As he got older, Snow discovered caving. It was possible, if unlikely, to see virgin tunnels, caverns that no one had ever seen. He had a knack for reading maps and orienting himself even underground, and he wound up naming several cave systems and tunnels that other expeditions had missed. One day as he traveled deep underground, he heard his companions call for help. They had missed a turn and slid down a long tunnel into a pit. Snow doubled back and saw their light, and as he lowered his rope he wished they could just climb up the beam of the flashlight.

He helped them up, and he heard voices, wails and shrieks. These voices told him he was by no means the first to find these caves. Hundreds had died in them, indigenous people driven here by White explorers, just like them. They demanded the blood of his friends in recompense, but Snow refused. Shining his flashlight at the vicious ghosts, he demanded they fall back. As his friends reached the top, he carved his initials into the rock and vowed not to return or to mark the pit on any map. "Whoever died here," he said, "this is your place now." He walked out of that cave Awakened.

Adam joined the Silver Ladder and took up a position as Herald for his Consilium. He only served in that position for a year, though, because he found it so repetitive. During that time, Adam — or "Scout," as



he was now called — struck up a friendship with an Adamantine Arrow mage named Ballista. Ballista told him if he wanted to be a true explorer in the Fallen World, his best chance for seeing new sights was to be a Sentinel. As the first line of defense against supernatural threats, the Sentinels were often coming into contact with creatures that no living mage had ever seen.

Scout had never considered this before, but it seemed to make sense (and it was a sight more interesting than being a glorified postman, anyway). He honed his combat skills and joined Ballista's cabal. Not a week

later, the cabal ran afoul of a creature from the Abyss that could animate stone statues. The Sentinels fought it off, but it took assistance from a visiting Celestial Master to finish it.

Scout took some time away from his cabal to study with this mage, fascinated by the depth of knowledge and the sense of history she offered him. He ventured to Portugal for the tri-annual meeting, and returned to his cabal a Stargazer. He isn't sure how much longer he'll stay in his position — he's starting to feel the itch

for adventure again — but he's reluctant to leave his friend Ballista behind. He wonders what kind of work might be available for "explorers for hire" in the mage community.

**Description:** Scout recently turned 30, and is starting to develop wrinkles around his eyes. He keeps his brown hair buzzed and wears a thin beard. His hands are callused and strong, and he walks with a slight limp due to a fractured ankle he suffered on a rock-climbing trip. Scout typically dresses in blue jeans and sweatshirts, and has never worn a tie in his life.

Scout's Nimbus manifests as the howling of unquiet shades. He finds this extremely embarrassing, but he hasn't found a way to change it. He rarely casts vulgar spells because of his Nimbus.

**Storytelling Hints:** Unlike some of the more scientifically minded members of his Legacy, Scout is a true explorer. He'd rather be out in the woods, dirty and hungry, if it means learning something or seeing something new. He also plays against the Moros stereotype somewhat. Although he can see ghosts, he prefers not to. Ghosts frighten and depress him, partly because they remind him of the toll the early explorers took on the native people of the lands they invaded.

At times, Scout wonders about the role that mages play in supernatural exploration. Are they, like the seafarers of old, bringing new diseases and problems to the places they visit? Are the supernatural beings they discover going to suffer for it? And if that's the case, why is the urge to explore so strong?

In a chronicle dedicated to the Tarot journey, Scout probably isn't the Emperor that the characters would expect. But in his element, leading a cabal through a cave system (that might lead to or be part of an Atlantean temple), he quickly becomes a vivacious, energetic and learned authority figure.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Rock hammer.

**Real Name:** Adam Snow

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Silver Ladder

**Legacy:** Celestial Masters

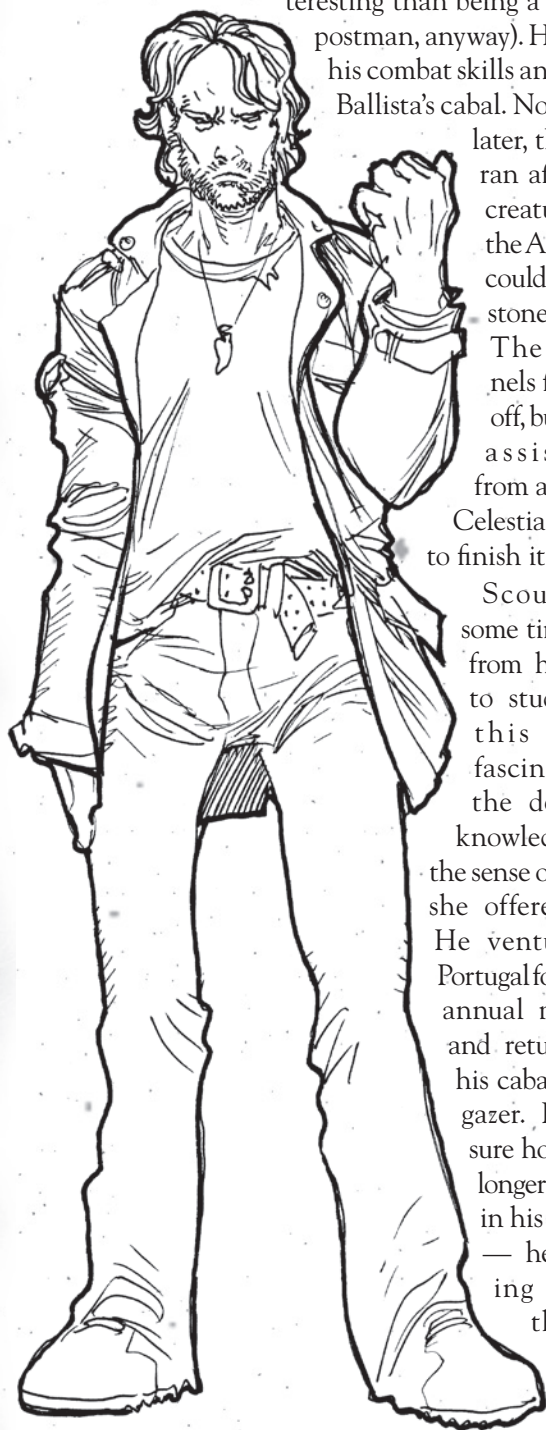
**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Crafts 3, Medicine (Field Dressing) 1, Occult 2, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival (Knots) 3, Weaponry 2





**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 3, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Persuasion (Rugged Charm) 2, Streetwise 1

**Merits:** Direction Sense, Iron Stomach, Occultation 2, Striking Looks 2, Strong Back, Strong Lungs

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 7

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Lust

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 5

**Arcana:** Death 2, Forces 3, Matter 3, Space 2

**Notes:** *Death*—Speak with the Dead (•); *Forces*—Night-sight (•), Receiver (•), Personal Invisibility (••); *Matter*—Find the Hidden Hoard (•), Shape Liquid (••), Jury-Rig (••); *Space*—Spatial Map (•), Conceal Sympathy (••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup>—Celestial Telescope, 2<sup>nd</sup>—Everything is Stardust

**Mana/per turn:** 14/5

**Armor:** 3 ("Unseen Aegis," Matter ••)

## *The Emperor Reversed*

The Emperor is naked, but he will never admit it, and he might well execute the child who points it out. Drunk with power, the Emperor no longer dispenses worthy advice, but lives only to serve his own lust for control and glory. The Emperor reversed is domineering, brutal and petulant.

Alternately, the Emperor might mean well, but mean well feebly. Perhaps a strong advisor or consort

is dominating him, or perhaps he is unsure of himself. In either case, he cannot be the leader and paternal figure he should be.

## *The Celestial Masters as a Left-Handed Legacy*

In this case, Vespasian kept control of the Legacy and managed to keep its focus on the monetary and temporal aspects of discovery. The Legacy developed along the same lines as described, but the goal has always been on profits for the Legacy, rather than for all of mankind. The Celestial Navigators were revived not by a physicist, but by another financier, hoping to cash in on the Free Council.

The Celestial Masters, then, aren't so much "left-handed" as "greedy." Their foremost goal is to gain in resources, and to mages (especially mages accomplished at matter transmutation), resources don't always mean money. The Celestial Masters — nicknamed "the Guild" by other mages — search for secrets and new allies that can give them tactical advantage and bargaining power on a world stage.

But to what end? They still want to map the stars, of course. They'll need detailed maps to conquer whatever life lies out there in the blackness of space, colonize new worlds, and bend the universe to their sway. Yes, it seems impossible now... but people once thought that if you sailed too far, you fell off the edge of the world. The Celestial Masters know better than to trust conventional wisdom.

Mechanically, the Celestial Masters don't change if used as a Left-Handed Legacy.

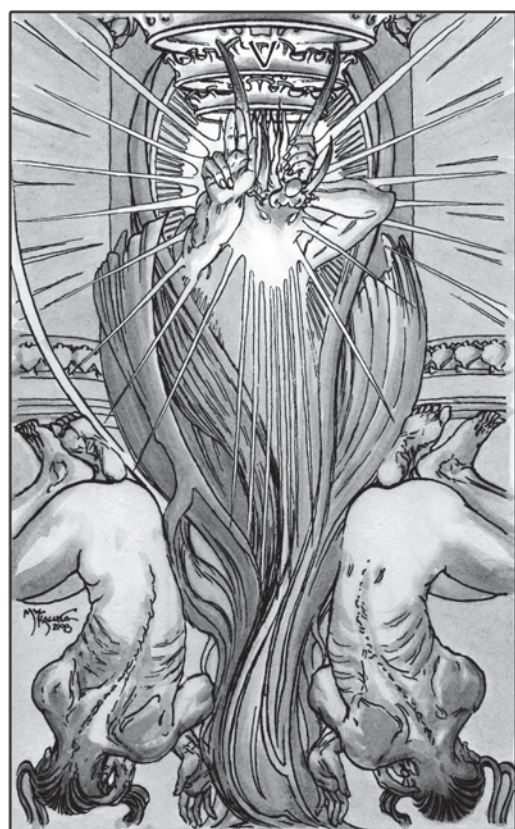


# KEY V — THE HIEROPHANT

The Hierophant, known as the Pope in some decks, represents spiritual authority and dogma. He sits upon a throne, as does the Emperor, and carries a scepter or other symbol of his holy office. The Hierophant's authority, however, comes from above, and the teachings he hands down are not based on lucid observation of the world around him, but upon visions, mysteries and readings of ancient holy texts. The card itself can represent the need to return to or observe orthodoxy or the danger of relying on it too much, depending on its position within a spread.

For the mage and the journey through the Tarot, the Hierophant comes after the learning experiences of Keys II, III and IV. The Hierophant isn't necessarily a negative card, but its primary function is to educate the mage in what other Awakened believe. This "orthodoxy" might be the Atlantean system of belief, including the Fall of the Celestial Ladder and the formation of the orders, or the teachings of the Throne and the need for subservience to the Exarchs. Some mages might even fall in with Banishers, and learn a much more unpleasant — but just as regimented — belief system. The important point here is that not only does magic require morality, but that morality very often has a set of established rules and values attached to it. And like Sleeper religions, many of these values don't have much validity outside their respective beliefs. That is, while the orders might have a great deal to teach, some of the traditions are outmoded and perhaps unnecessary in the modern world. Even so, many mages treat them as though they are inviolable.

The Hierophant does not ask that mages critically examine his teachings (though he doesn't necessarily forbid it, depending on what he represents). He only holds up the holy writ and intones his sacred passages, expecting others to follow.



THE HIEROPHANT.

Some interpretations of the Hierophant among the Awakened are narrower, referring specifically to the Seers of the Throne and the Exarchs. From what the Pentacle mages know of the Seers, they are living representations of how dogma as a guiding principle can be toxic, as they teach that a given set of rules is absolute. Any mage, though, should know that the rules of reality itself are variable depending on which "reality" one is currently in (that is, the Fallen World or the Supernal Realms, or even the physical world as opposed to the Shadow). A system that espouses absolutism is thus flawed, and that is how the Pentacle generally perceives the Throne. Interestingly, though, cartomancers among the Seers welcome this association, and it's not uncommon to see Seer cabals use Hierophant symbolism in their heraldry.

Solitaires and those few cabals that come together without interference from the Pentacle orders, of course, don't meet the Hierophant. This has its advantages and disadvantages. The Hierophant isn't there to impart a system of beliefs, and that means the mages aren't blind to other possibilities — they never had an authority figure tell them "this is how things are, and this is what you should believe." On the other hand, sometimes that kind of structure can be comforting, especially as what a mage "knows" is constantly questioned by the very nature of magical exploration.



## *Cabal — The Votaries of the Throne*

Seers of the Throne are usually zealous, no matter what their specific code of beliefs encompasses. The Votaries of the Throne, however, regard themselves as “orthodox Seers,” refusing to dress their faith up with anything other than the purest observance to the Exarchs. They proselytize to other Seers, and even to mages of the Pentacle, when they can manage it, but those who will not be converted are the worst form of refuse to them. The Votaries seldom kill, however. A mage that won’t see the truth is, in essence, a Sleeper — and Sleepers are useful.

### *Philosophy and Beliefs*

The Votaries do not believe the Exarchs are omnipotent. If They were, They would simply remake the Fallen World in Their image, and all would be right and good. The Exarchs are *as* gods to those in the Fallen World, but they are not, in fact, gods. The Votaries feel that belief systems that demand worship due to the omnipotence of the deity are flawed — why would an all-powerful god *need* worship? No, the Votaries pledge their undying loyalty because they know in their hearts that the Exarchs are the best thing for the Fallen World.

By the same token, the Votaries do not believe in predestination. They find any philosophy in which the end is foretold to be fatalistic in the extreme. The Votaries believe that, with the Seers working toward the proper ends, the Exarchs *can* prevail over the Oracles and their pawns, but it’s not a foregone conclusion. This injects both hope and a bit of desperation into the cabal’s dealings. They won’t fight to the death unless there is no other alternative. Instead, they enter conflicts knowing that their masters want them to live, and so take precautions to make sure their enemies die first (if death, in fact, is the goal).

### *Orthodoxy*

The Votaries do not see messages from the Exarchs everywhere, the way some Seers do. They feel that the Exarchs do not wish to deceive them, and thus aren’t going to waste time implanting the cracks in the sidewalk with hidden, heavily coded messages when other options exist. To wit, the Votaries *only* take their cues from their dreams and from visions achieved using the Vestments (see below). Once they

have a goal from the Exarchs, they work to achieve it within any parameters set in place by the vision or dream. If no specific parameters seem to be in place, they use whatever methods are most expedient and efficient. Anything not explicitly forbidden, they feel, is permitted. This, to the Votaries, is the height of Seer Orthodoxy. The Throne is not subservient to the laws of mankind, nor even of human decency. The Votaries recognize that murder and mind control rob their victims of life and free will, and that doing this makes them monsters. But they also know that failing to take necessary action in service to the Exarchs might set the Exarchs’ plans back, and that would allow the Votaries’ accomplices to damage all of creation. The Votaries, obviously, can’t have that, even if their souls are put at risk.

Finally, the Votaries feel the Awakened are the chosen people, quite literally. Every Awakening is the result of deliberate intervention by either the Exarchs or the Oracles, but there is no way to know which. Furthermore, it doesn’t matter. The Votaries don’t care who Awakened a mage, they care about what he does with his power now that he is Awakened. Likewise, until a person Awakens, he is not a true person to the Votaries. He is nothing but a tool, to be used, abused, manipulated or even killed as necessary to further the goals of the Exarchs.

### *History of the Cabal*

The cabal’s formation was nothing short of miraculous. The original three of them represented three opposing Awakened factions: Gentleman was already a Seer, a member of a pylon working to improve the Throne’s corporate dealings in the city; Prism was a Guardian of the Veil, a solitary agent with multiple identities; And Buzzard was a Tremere Lich, waiting until the dust had cleared to drink his fill of the souls of the dying. The three of them met up one night, quite by accident, and engaged in a battle in the middle of a crowd of Sleepers. Gentleman used his command of Mind to nudge Sleepers toward the other two, while Prism shifted her image from place to place by manipulating light, trying to reach her enemies. Buzzard had aid from the unquiet dead, of course. As the three mages circled each other, they all saw a blast of light, and suddenly all of the Sleepers were transfixed, staring helplessly at the sky. They were the only three that could move.

They looked at the sky, and saw something move in the light. “You,” it said, “I choose to Awaken anew. Too long you have slept, playing at children’s games,



blinded by the Lie. But I shall lead you to the Vestments of the Throne, and I shall lead you to two more, to whom I shall also show the truth. And you shall keep my ways.”

With that, the light faded, and the three mages, enemies to the core, sat down together and discussed what they had seen. Despite their differences, they couldn't ignore what had happened. They left their respective factions and boarded a plane to flee the state. As their plane neared its destination, however, the engines failed and it crashed into a forest. The mages were the only three to survive.

As they wandered from the wreckage, they found a wooden crate, long buried but now unearthed by the impact. Opening it, they found a circlet, a pair of gloves, a belt, a stole and a robe. Analysis showed that these items were, in fact, Artifacts, and the mages decided they were the Vestments to which the voice had referred. They took the items and moved into the nearest city, awaiting their next members. They weren't long in waiting.

While setting up their sanctum, Buzzard was shot in the back. He fell, calling up spells to defend himself, when his assailant appeared — a man holding a pair of pistols. Buzzard looked at him and saw a light appear around the man, and gasped the word, “lantern.”

The man stopped, and lowered his guns. He had long thought of himself as a “lantern,” of sorts — could this unclean creature possibly recognize that? The rest of the cabal assembled, and agreed to allow this new mage to see the Vestments. Lantern did so, and put them on in the proper order. This, the Seers realized, was their new member. Within a few weeks, the four mages all received the same dream, in which the original three bowed down before a glowing, golden lantern. Their newest member, once a Banisher, had been named their leader. Under Lantern's leadership, they began using their skills to fortify their sanctum, building a base from which to conduct their operations. None of them knew, yet, what those operations would entail, but that wasn't important, Lantern reminded them. Their masters would tell them when it was time to take action. For now, they needed to concentrate on their own security and on finding their fifth member.

Their fifth member, as it happened, came to them, in part because of their security. A recently Awakened Acanthus working for an alarm company was in the habit of robbing the company's customers, using her knowledge of the security systems to beat them quickly. She never took much, and never bothered stealing from people who didn't keep cash or easily

fenced goods around. She broke into the sanctum one morning, and was surprised by the reception she received — three men and a woman all facing her down, all armed, and all Awakened.

The Acanthus, whom the others called “Mole” after learning her situation, agreed to join them, despite never having seen a vision. Part of this willingness, of course, was because she was quite aware that these people could kill her and no one would ever know. But another part of it is that Mole wants to believe as they do, wants to experience a dream or a vision, and wants her terrifying Awakening to make some sense. Thus far, nothing she has seen has convinced her, and the Votaries' methods are unsettling. But they are adamant that she is their fifth, and since she never had contact with other mages, she has nowhere to turn for help, even if she wanted to leave.

### *Tactics and Activities.*

Now that the cabal was assembled, work could begin on the Exarchs' goals. The Votaries receive visions infrequently, instructing them in what the Exarchs want done and how they want it done. Sometimes, the goal is the assassination of a mage in another city. Sometimes, the goal is more altruistic — one vision even required that the Votaries save the lives of a group of Sleepers trapped in a burning building. Sometimes, the goal is purely temporal: take control of a corporation and sell it off; help a young thief establish himself; or bring a serial killer to justice. Very rarely do the Exarchs' goals involve supernatural beings other than mages, although the Votaries have occasionally run afoul of these creatures while pursuing other goals.

The Votaries employ whatever tactics they feel they must to accomplish their ends, though their tendency is toward using pawns. One of the Vestments, after all, is a Profane Urim, and Gentleman is a Master of Mind, meaning that Sleeper pawns are in great supply. But beyond that, Lantern is adamant that any activity they undertake be untraceable, and so they meticulously scour the scenes of their crimes for physical and, especially, supernatural evidence. Prism removes evidence of magic, Mole blocks the area from Time magic, Buzzard destroys or subjugates any ghosts, and Lantern makes sure that spirits say what he wants them to say. Gentleman, of course, destroys sympathetic connections. Above all else, Lantern insists that a rational explanation be in place for whatever the Votaries do. In the past, he has set other Banishers up to take the fall after killing mages, and the cabal has been known to make contact with other Seer cabals and send them



after their targets. As long as the will of the Exarchs is served, the methods don't matter.

What this means for the Storyteller is that an investigating cabal of mages needs to work much harder than usual to find these Seers. They cover their tracks exceedingly well, and their sanctum is heavily fortified and warded (see below). Unlike other Seers, though, the Votaries don't tend to use the same cat-paws for very long or more than once, meaning that trails that might otherwise lead to them stop with secondary pawns. The Votaries can make for superb long-term adversaries, since they can be involved with several stories before the characters even suspect their involvement.

### *The Vestments of the Throne*

The Vestments are Artifacts that give the Votaries a variety of powers. Whether they work for non-Seers — or, indeed, anyone other than the Votaries — has never been established. Their powers are all contingent, but they seem to be activated by thought rather than gestures or words.

#### *The Gloves* (●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 11

The gloves are royal blue, and thin enough to allow sensation to the wearer. If an observer looks at them closely, she can see gold fibers around the knuckles and fingertips. The wearer can see sympathetic connections by touching an object, and can grasp the threads and pull them away (as the “Correspondence” and “Destroy Threads” spells, p. 232 and 237 of **Mage: The Awakening**, respectively).

#### *The Circlet — Profane Urim* (●●●●●●●●●)

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 13

The circlet is a silver headband, apparently made of beaten metal. The inside of the circlet is inscribed with glyphs, which aren't recognizable to mages as runes in High Speech (at least, Prism hasn't been able to decipher them). The circlet is a Profane Urim, and using the same system as described on p. 309 of **Mage: The Awakening**. It has an additional power, however. It can mask the wearer's presence from observers, in the same manner as the “Incognito Presence” (p. 208 of **Mage**).

#### *The Stole* (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

**Mana Capacity:** 12

The stole is a length of black fabric. Unlike the other Vestments, it isn't marked with any glyphs or runes, and to all mundane scrutiny it seems to be nothing more than a black cotton scarf. Even magical examination is difficult — any mage using the Analyze Enchanted Item spell on the stole suffers a -4 penalty to attempts to scrutinize it. The wearer of the stole can mask his aura, as the “Transform Aura” spell (p. 223 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The wearer can only transform his aura to that of a Sleeper, however. In addition, the wearer enjoys the benefits of the “Unseen Spy” spell (also p. 223 of **Mage**).

The stole has one additional power. The wearer can imbue items with any magic he is capable of casting, as described for the “Imbue Item” spell on p. 225 of **Mage**.

#### *The Belt* (●●●●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 0, Structure 3

**Mana Capacity:** 12

The belt is made of black leather, and does not have a clasp. Instead, the wearer must tie it around his waist (the belt is slightly thinner at the front to facilitate this). The belt is stamped with glyphs. Unlike the circlet, the glyphs on the belt are recognizable — they represent the Arcana of Matter and Life. The wearer of the belt leaves behind no physical traces. No fingerprints remain on surfaces he touches, and any peripheral evidence of his passing — footprints, bent branches, even dropped shell casings — either evaporate or correct themselves.

#### *The Robe* (●●●●●)

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 11

The robe is a deep red garment with voluminous sleeves, and black trim around the edges and cuffs. The material feels heavy to the touch, but the wearer finds it surprisingly light (at least, if that wearer is a Votary — no one else has worn it). While wearing the robe, the mage enjoys the benefit of the “Shield of Chronos” spell (p. 261 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Anyone using Time magic to find the wearer must exceed the Potency determined by the wearer's activation roll.



## *The Votaries' Sanctum*

The Votaries purchased a building that was once used as the headquarters of a small newspaper. They constructed a wall bisecting the first floor. The back half of the building contains the mages' living quarters, but the only way to access this area is to walk through the wall. A certain section of the wall is imbued. With the appropriate code word, the section shifts into Twilight, allowing passage between the living area and the main area of the sanctum.

The main area of the sanctum is a large room, which the mages use to store and work on vehicles, weapons and other projects.

The upstairs contains the cabal's Library and Hallow. The Library consists of books, scrolls and even CD-ROMs, some of which the Votaries contributed from their own collections, some of which have been taken from victims. The Hallow, which only became active after the cabal bought the property, is centered in an old printing press. Ink drips from the rollers, and any paper that the ink marks becomes Tass.

Traits for all five of the Votaries are provided below. Note that some of them have Willpower ratings that are lower than the totals indicated by their Resolve + Composure ratings. This is because they have paid Willpower dots to relinquish control of imbued spells casting using the stole (see above).

### *Gentleman*

**Quote:** *Violence is ugly, boring and lowbrow. Sadly, it also seems inevitable.*

**Background:** Gentleman was born into money, and rebelled against it from the start. He was happy to spend his parents' fortune, but had no interest in playing the role they wanted from him. He didn't want to be a doctor, or a businessman. He wanted to be something that would really piss them off — but nothing he tried worked. When he wanted to start a rock band, they offered to fix him up with a producer. When he tried his hand at art, they offered him a showing at a gallery they owned. He was never able to articulate why he hated them and their way of life so much... until he Awakened, and the Seers of the Throne showed him that his parents' world was a lie.

From that point, Gentleman played the role of the society man to the hilt, because doing so in service to his pylon allowed him to scoff at his parents' world while still enjoying the benefits. The Throne taught him to fence, to control the minds of lesser mortals (read: everyone) and, when necessary, to kill. Gentle-

man went out of his way to find killing necessary, and surely would have killed Prism and Buzzard had the Exarchs not made their will known to him.

**Description:** Gentleman is in his late 30s, and wears a stylish beard with his \$300 haircut. His clothes are tailor-made, his shoes are custom designed to allow him to run without losing traction (but still look good), and he carries a specially designed sword-cane. Gentleman's eyes are blue and cold, and he smiles a bored but polite smile.

Gentleman's Nimbus makes anyone in his vicinity feel small, weak and insignificant. Gentleman and his compatriots seem to tower over other people, looking down on their lessors with disdain.

**Storytelling Hints:** Gentleman is bitter that he isn't in charge of the cabal. He, after all, is the only one of them with the good sense to start out following the Exarchs. Gentleman is, however, completely devoted to the Votaries' cause, and so he keeps his feelings about Lantern ("lucky bastard") and Buzzard ("monster") under wraps. The Exarchs must know what they are doing.

Slowly but surely, though, he is coming to feel that the Exarchs are just like his parents — stupid, remote and full of themselves. He desperately wants this not to be so, and so he searches and prays for a vision that will give him some true meaning, and, perhaps, a bit of validation.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Sword cane.

**Real Name:** Geoffrey Adam Billings IV

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

**Legacy:** None

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

**Mental Skills:** Academics 3, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics (High Society) 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Strikes) 3, Drive 2, Firearms (Shotgun) 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Fencing) 4

**Social Skills:** Intimidation 3, Persuasion 1, Socialize (High Society) 4, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Dream 2, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Finesse (sword), QuickDraw (sword), Hallow (shared) 3, Library (shared; Mind Control, Ghosts, Guardians of the Veil), Resources 4, Sanctum (shared; Size 3, Security 5), Status (Seers of the Throne) 3, Status (High Society) 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 2

**Virtue:** Fortitude



**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 10 (with Fast Reflexes)

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 12

**Health:** 8

**Gnosis:** 3

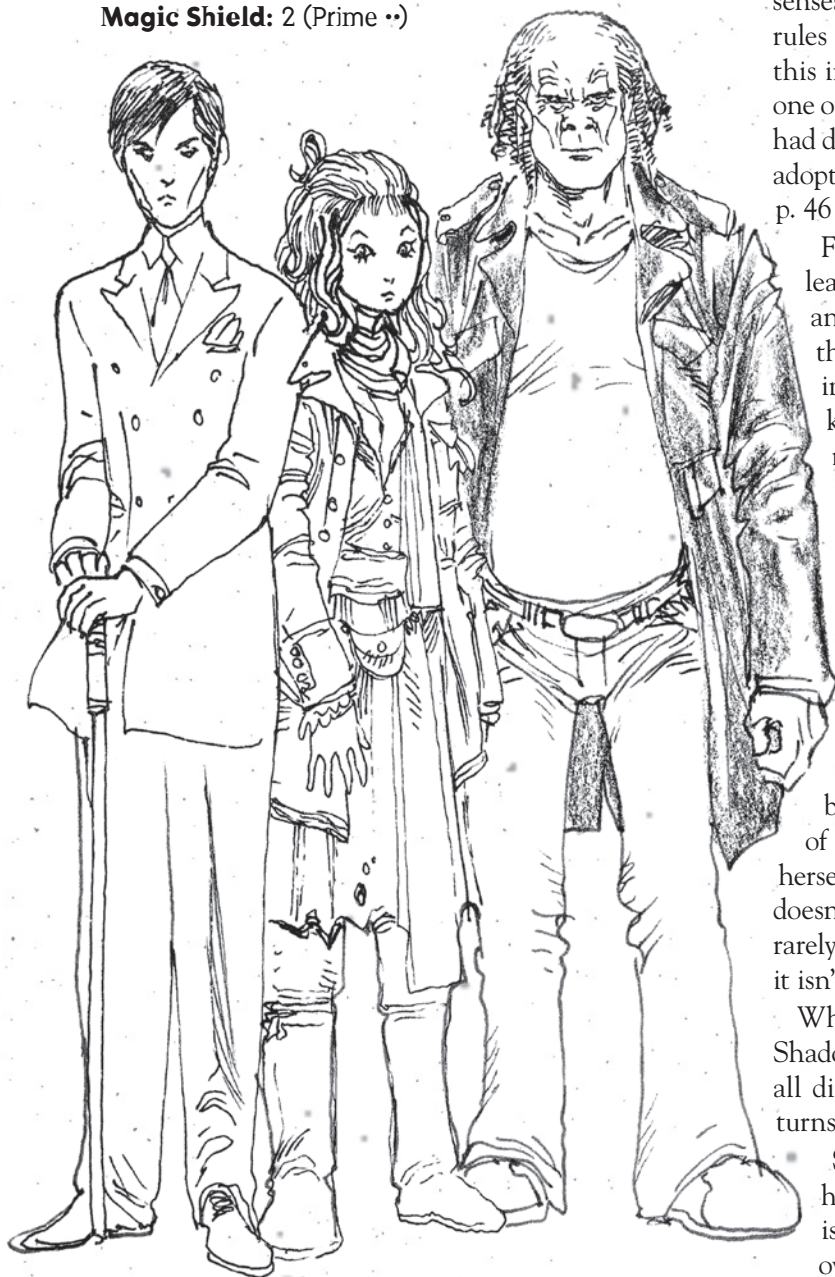
**Arcana:** Mind 5, Prime 2, Space 3

**Notes:** *Mind* — Aura Perception (•), Alter Aura (••), Incognito Presence (••), Mental Shield (••), Imposter (•••), Breach the Vault of Memory (••••), Network (•••••); *Prime* — Unseen Spy (••); *Space* — Scrying (••), Ward (••), Ban (••), Ranged Blow (••)

**Mana/per turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 5 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

**Magic Shield:** 2 (Prime ••)



*Prism*

**Quote:** *It's better. It really is.*

**Background:** Prism was having a crisis of faith long before the Exarchs revealed themselves to her. Awakened very young (15), the Guardians of the Veil trained her to be a "bolt from God" — a mage trained in summoning lightning as soon as a storm blew up in the area of a target. She was a Master of Forces by the time she graduated high school, but the Guardians put heavy controls on her behavior with Mind magic to keep her from succumbing to normal teenager temptation to do foolish things. Unfortunately, the controls placed on her were from different mages with different senses of morality, and she found herself with too many rules to follow without going mad. She sublimated this into a knack for creating personas, and became one of the Guardians' most accomplished agents. She had dozens of different identities, and her goal was to adopt each of the 49 Masques of the Guardians (see p. 46 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

Four nights before her conversion, though, she learned about the controls placed on her behavior and confronted her mentor about it. Deciding that the order didn't have time for one of its most important and versatile agents to be having this kind of breakdown, he magically removed those memories, planning to help her cope with the issue after the current crisis (which involved Buzzard, as it happened) was concluded. But then Prism saw the light, as it were, and vanished entirely. Her mentor was summarily punished, and as far as the Guardians of that city are concerned, Prism never existed.

**Description:** When she isn't wearing a disguise, which is seldom, Prism is a plain-looking woman of about 21. Her natural hair color is light brown, and her eyes are actually green, but neither of these traits is usually evident. Prism disguises herself using makeup, clothing and subterfuge. She doesn't bother with magic, reasoning that mages so rarely bother looking with their mundane eyes that it isn't worth the effort.

When Prism's Nimbus flares, the source of her Shadow Name becomes obvious. Light scatters in all directions, objects change color, but she herself turns jet black.

**Storytelling Hints:** Prism, for her part, is finally happy. In subservience to a higher power, her mind is her own. She is given freedom to make up her own rules, even if she is still following orders. She



has found a cabal that respects her for her talents, rather than constantly mucking about in her mind. For her, being a Votary is the best thing that could have happened.

Prism maintains a deep-seated hatred for the Guardians of the Veil, but she also knows how the order works and so doesn't go taking revenge on them thoughtlessly. She sometimes uses her Masques to impersonate a Guardian, and since the order maintains such a high degree of secrecy (and since her old masters never disavowed her formally), she is a danger to the *Visus Draconis* as a whole.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Gold ring

**Real Name:** Kayla Berg

**Path:** Obrimos

**Order:** Seers of the Throne (formerly Guardians of the Veil)

**Legacy:** Subtle Ones

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 5, Composure 5

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Computer 3, Crafts 1, Investigation (Profiling) 3, Occult 2, Politics 2, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 5

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Expression (Impersonation) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 3, Streetwise (Hiding Places) 3, Subterfuge (Disguise) 4

**Merits:** Dream 3, Eidetic Memory, Hallow (shared) 3, Library (shared; Mind Control, Ghosts, Guardians of the Veil), Resources 2, Sanctum (shared; Size 3, Security 5), Status (Seers of the Throne) 3, Status (Guardians of the Veil) 1

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 4

**Virtue:** Temperance

**Vice:** Lust

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Fate 1, Forces 5, Mind 2, Prime 3

**Notes:** *Forces* — Tune In (•), Control Sound (••), Transmission (•••), Light Mastery (••••), Personal Invisibility (••••), Thunderbolt (•••••), Flight (•••••); *Mind* — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Alter Aura (••), Mental Shield (••); *Prime* — Dispel Magic (•), Transform Aura (••), Phantasm (•••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — The Subtle Dance

**Mana/per turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 5 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)

**Magic Shield:** 3 (Prime ••)

*Buzzard*

**Quote:** *Left-Handed? Hah. I'm ambidextrous now.*

**Background:** Buzzard is a rarity, a mage who chose the half-life of a Tremere Lich while still young. But Buzzard had his reasons. He knew he was sick. He was ill beyond any capacity of magic or medicine. Buzzard was a killer, a cannibal and a necrophiliac. Drawn to the dead with a fascination that he could never explain, he decided to seek out the Embalmed as a way to give some legitimacy to these cravings. At least, as a lich, no one would begrudge him his predilections.

He was right, of course, and enjoyed several years of soul-theft before he saw another path. The light of the Exarchs burned the evil out of him, he says, and he lives to serve the will of his saviors. Of course, he still has to consume souls to survive, and too much time has passed since his induction into the Legacy to consider reattaching his original soul. But perhaps the Exarchs *needed* a lich on their side. Buzzard prefers this view of things since, again, it grants him a pass on his activities.

Buzzard was once a member of the Adamantine Arrow, but of the members of his original cabal, only one remains alive and he is hopelessly insane, incarcerated by his own Consilium for the good of all until he can be cured. He sometimes cries about "the buzzard" and expresses terror that it might be coming for him, but since Buzzard only adopted that Shadow Name after killing his cabal, the mage's captors don't realize who he's talking about.

**Description:** Buzzard is about 40. He is tall and muscular, with grizzled, weather-beaten skin and a toothy, unpleasant grin. He favors black, leather especially, and carries two silver orbs about the size of golf balls that he occasionally imbues with Death spells using the stole.

Buzzard's Nimbus makes him look like a walking skeleton. The flesh seems to shrivel on his bones, and his teeth, always prominent, turn his face into a leering skull.

**Storytelling Hints:** Buzzard has always been at the mercy of his whims, and he became a lich so that he would have an excuse. His acceptance by the Exarchs just gives more weight to that excuse, allowing Buzzard to continue on, never claiming responsibility for his depravity. Of course, as a young lich, he has to steal souls only infrequently, but if he survives long enough



he might find that even the Throne rejects him. This notion terrifies him, but whenever he thinks about it too long, he always returns to the same conclusion: the Exarchs accepted him as he is.

Although Buzzard no longer gets the urge to eat or have sex with corpses, he still likes to kill. He follows Lantern's directives (namely, don't kill unless it's necessary), but when it is necessary, he's always the one with the best plans for murder. The death doesn't have to be elaborate. It's not the method, it's the moment that life ends that excites Buzzard.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Word of power, etched onto his own teeth

**Real Name:** Henry Wright

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Seers of the Throne (formerly Adamantine Arrow)

**Legacy:** Tremere Lich

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Funeral Rites) 3, Computer 1, Crafts (Car Repair) 3, Medicine 2, Occult (Undead) 3, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry 2

**Social Skills:** Intimidation (Creepy) 3, Streetwise (Body Dumps) 2

**Merits:** Dream 1, Hallow (shared) 3, Iron Stamina 3, Iron Stomach, Library (shared; Mind Control, Ghosts, Guardians of the Veil), Sanctum (shared; Size 3, Security 5), Status (Seers of the Throne) 3

**Willpower:** 4

**Wisdom:** 1

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Lust

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 9

**Gnosis:** 4

**Arcana:** Death 5, Life 2, Matter 3, Spirit 1

**Notes:** *Death*—Speak with the Dead (•), Ghost Summons (••), Destroy Object (•••), Quicken Corpse (•••), Twilight Shift (••••), Quell the Spark (••••); *Life*—Healer's Trance (•), Body Control (••); *Matter*—Alter Conductivity (•), Shape Liquid (••), Repair Object (••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup>—Hideous Stipend

**Mana/per turn:** 13/4

**Armor:** 5 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••)

## Lantern

**Quote:** *Let me show you.*

**Background:** Mark Croyt Awakened miles from anything. He was at sea, working on a crab fishing boat, and when he ventured to the Primal Wild, he saw a part of it that most Thyrsus never see. He saw the vast ocean, the huge sea serpents slaving for warm blood, and somewhere near the bottom of the ocean, the Watchtower of the Stone Book. He wanted nothing to do with it, but a whirlpool rose around him, sucked him down, and forced him to the bottom of the tower. When he returned to his body, he was safe in his bunk, but Awakened to the spiritual abyss of the ocean. As the voyage continued, he had horrific dreams, and they only worsened as he reached land. Afraid to venture inland and face the creatures he had foreseen, but even more afraid to return to sea, he returned to his hometown. There, he saw the county sheriff, the head librarian, the medical examiner and the mayor's aide in a different light. They were the creatures he'd seen, withering under his light as a silver lantern.

He killed them all and left his town, repulsed by what he had become and fearful of what the future held. When he reached a new city, he discovered another group of creatures setting up shop. He attacked one, but then he recognized elements from his dreams. The man without a soul—the building that had once stood for truth but not kept truth hidden—the enemies made friends in a flash of light. This was his destiny. When they made him leader, he used his natural intellect and common sense to plan their missions, starting with building a solid home. Lantern is still afraid of his dreams and his destiny, but at least now, when he sinks into the ocean he won't be alone.

**Description:** Lantern is muscular and steady, the result of several years of hard labor on a boat. He shaves his head, but wears a full beard to keep his face warm. He has a warm smile and an infectious laugh, but he very rarely has occasion to use either. He usually wears overalls or carpenter pants, and since he spends his days working in the cabal's shop, he's usually stained with grease.

Lantern's Nimbus, predictably, frames him in bright, white light. Powerful magic warps the light, as though the viewer were seeing him through deep water.

**Storytelling Hints:** Unlike the other members of the cabal, he loves Sleepers, and feels genuine regret when he must kill them. He is more beholden to his loyalty to the Exarchs and his fear of his own destiny



than to any moral or humanistic concern, however, and so this regret is generally reduced to reading the Sleeper's obituary and shaking his head sadly. Lantern still thinks of other mages as targets, and so when the cabal involves the Awakened in their schemes, he sometimes goes out of his way to make the plans against them violent.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Folding knife with a pearl handle

**Real Name:** Mark Croyt

**Path:** Thyrsus

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

**Legacy:** None

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Crafts 4, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Spirits) 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Swimming) 4, Brawl (Grappling) 3, Firearms (Pistols) 3, Stealth 2, Survival (Sea) 3, Weaponry 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 1

**Merits:** Dream 5, Gunslinger, Hollow (shared) 3, Iron Stamina 3, Library (shared; Mind Control, Ghosts, Guardians of the Veil), Sanctum (shared; Size 3, Security 5), Status (Seers of the Throne) 1, Strong Lungs

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 3

**Virtue:** Charity

**Vice:** Sloth

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 12

**Health:** 8

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Fate 2, Life 3, Spirit 4

**Rotes:** *Life* — Healing Heart (••); *Spirit* — Coaxing the Spirits (•)

**Mana/per turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 4 ("Ephemeral Shield," Spirit ••)

*Mole*

**Quote:** *Best tool for beating security? Persistence.*

**Background:** Mole likes to tell people she comes from a long line of safecrackers, cat burglars and professional thieves. She likes to say she was one of the world's finest thieves before she was Awakened, and that she's robbed royalty, billionaires and two sitting Presidents. Mole is, of course, a compulsive liar.

Trudy Salinger got the job with a security agency because she was good with computers and a decent electrician (which, in fairness, was a skill she learned from her father). She realized that most people installed the security systems, but never bothered learning how to use them. Many people, though, did fill out the forms that enumerated their valuables, and while Trudy didn't technically have access to those forms, that access was just one sweaty evening with the boss away. She made a habit of sneaking into houses and stealing valuables that folks wouldn't miss quickly — she rarely stole cash hoards, but family heirlooms locked in safes were prime targets.

She was on her way to a target house when she Awakened. She looked back, and saw terrifying creatures chasing her. Some of them appeared to





be hunters, riding on beasts that vaguely resembled horses. Others jumped from streetlight to streetlight, howling hideously. She reached the house and entered the code, and they vanished... but the code was incorrect, and she wound up fleeing again, this time from the police.

Trudy went back to work the next day horrified that the monsters would appear again, but with no idea how to make sense of what she'd seen. She abstained from robbery for a short time, but then chose a new target almost randomly. What she found there was valuable — she found the possibility of having her Awakening make some sense. Thus far, it hasn't, but she remains hopeful.

**Description:** Mole is in her early 20s. She is of mixed heritage (her mother was Black, her father was White), and she has smooth, light brown skin and braided black hair. She maintains her job at the security agency, and thus dresses professionally most of the time.

Her rarely seen Nimbus induces a feeling of being chased. Exits seem far away, the shadows writhe with half-seen monsters.

**Storytelling Hints:** Mole is lost, and is looking to the Exarchs for direction. Her faith is, in a way, more pure than that of her cabal-mates, because she hasn't seen the Exarchs yet, and she never has prophetic dreams. She is the most vulnerable to "conversion" by other mages, and Gentleman is aware of this. He has asked Lantern on numerous occasions to allow him to mentally condition her to be loyal, but Lantern refuses. Mole, he says, will learn in time.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** None

**Real Name:** Trudy Salinger

**Path:** Acanthus

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

**Legacy:** None

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Computer (Security) 4, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Climbing) 2, Drive 1, Larceny (Lockpicking, Security Systems) 4, Stealth 3

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken (Dogs) 2, Expression 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise (Fence) 2, Subterfuge (Bare-faced Lies) 3

**Merits:** Destiny ("Dreamless Sleep") 3, Hallow (shared) 3, Library (shared; Mind Control, Ghosts, Guardians of the Veil), Resources 1, Sanctum (shared; Size 3, Security 5), Status (Seers of the Throne) 1

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 5

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Greed

**Initiative:** 7

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 2

**Arcana:** Fate 2, Matter 2, Time 3

**Rotes:** None

**Mana/per turn:** 11/2

**Armor:** 3 ("Temporal Dodge," Time ⇄)

## *The Hierophant Reversed*

Orthodoxy and dogma used for temporal or greedy ends, rather than to further the beliefs and morality of the system in question. The Hierophant reversed is a hypocrite, a charlatan, a faith-healer palming a bloody sponge.

Alternately, the reversed Hierophant might be a *lack* of established beliefs and rituals. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it does mean that the morality system in question is vulnerable to some opportunist sweeping-in, presenting a codified system, and taking control.

## *The Votaries of the Throne as Hypocrites*

The Votaries have banded together as a cabal not because they saw the vision, but for their own selfish reasons: Gentleman is trying to make a name for himself as a Seer, starting his own pylon (without permission from his former superiors); Prism is under orders from the Guardians, but her memory has been wiped, making her a kind of sleeper agent; Lantern is just making this up as he goes along, using the others to kill mages until he can kill them all; And Buzzard just wants these mages' souls, possibly to consume, possibly to ransom.

Mole, however, is perhaps the only one with a genuine motive. She is still trying to see the Exarchs, except here she can't see them because they aren't making themselves visible.

No changes to the characters are necessary from a game systems perspective. Without the vision, the Votaries probably don't have access to the Vestments, but that's down to Storyteller discretion. The Vestments might have been the impetus for the cabal — maybe instead of the vision, Buzzard, Prism and Gentleman discovered the Vestments during their battle.



# KEY VI — THE LOVERS

A man and a woman stand naked, holding hands, unashamed as the sun streams down on them. They are pure and innocent, and that purity stems from their love for one another. Their love is new and fresh, unsullied by lies, jealousy or the creeping comfort of time. Some decks place these lovers in the Garden of Eden, with the obvious implication that this depiction of Adam and Eve takes place before the unfortunate incident with the Serpent. Other decks don't hew to a Judeo-Christian motif, and simply present the lovers as they are — simple, naked, and happy.

The Lovers card can signify romantic love, but it can just as easily mean purity, innocence and naivety. The lovers in the picture aren't (necessarily) naked for any carnal purpose. It could be argued that they are naked because they don't know any better. This kind of inexperience is heartwarming, perhaps, but it can also be dangerous. Leaving aside any discussion of whether or not Eve was in the right to take the Serpent's offer, a canny individual must be able to weigh a situation against experience. Innocence and ignorance aren't bad traits, but the Lovers aren't innocent to the world in general. They are made innocent because of their feelings for one another. Love changes everything, and when everything changes, one's perspective is once again fresh and new.

The card can also refer to origins — love in the card is beginning. The Garden of Eden, once again, is a symbol with obvious implications here. Love at this stage hasn't had a chance to become diluted or cooled over time. It is still in the heady, "honeymoon" phase,

which is exciting, but also isn't terribly realistic. Cynics say love is the pleasant interval between meeting someone attractive and really getting to know them.

The Awakened often associate this card with Sleepers, or more commonly, Sleepwalkers. A Sleepwalker is one breathless step away from Awakening, and even if she never actually takes that step, she is closer

to the hidden world of magic than most Sleepers will ever be. Although Sleepwalkers are often servants and retainers to the Wise, the truth is that a good number of mages take Sleepwalker lovers and spouses. The reason for this is simple: a Sleepwalker can understand a mage, can see him for what he is, and represents hope. After all, she might never Awaken, but she might just as easily Awaken tonight.

On the mage's journey through the Tarot, it might seem that much of the ground covered by the Lovers is already the province of the Fool, and this is true. But note the position of the Lovers — after the mage has been advised by mentors both kindly and strict, after he has touted his wares as the Magician and been lectured and scolded by the Hierophant, he is finally released into the world and sees it with new eyes. The "lover," here, might refer to a

literal paramour, the mage's cabal, order or a favored mentor — someone or something that the mage looks upon with more reverence than she probably deserves. The good news is that while trials and tribulations are indeed in the offing, the mage will (or should) learn from this love, flying to new heights on the Chariot and tempering his passion with experience and Strength.



THE LOVERS.



## Characters — Troy Bell & Kirsten Quarles

Kirsten Quarles is terrified. She is only 17, and nearly eight months pregnant. Her family is dead, as are many of her close friends, and she despairs of contacting anyone she trusts for help, lest the same fate befall them. Although she is Awakened, she only casts spells in life-or-death situations, afraid of how the strain of magic might affect her unborn daughter. And quite apart from any of the terrifying and occult realities of her situation, she is also about to become a teenaged mother, and homeless at that.

But Kirsten is not alone. Her lover, Troy Bell, stands by her side every moment of the day. Troy already has blood on his hands from defending his love, and he is quite willing to kill again if the need should arise. And it might well, for the baby in Kirsten's womb could shake the foundations of Awakened society. Kirsten Quarles' daughter whispers to her mother in dreams, and from these whispers, Kirsten knows this child carries a great destiny. Unfortunately, more than one group of mages know this as well. Some of them want to control the child. Some want to place Kirsten under protection (which, to her, means "house arrest"). And some aren't ready for this child's destiny to be fulfilled. Sadly, that means killing mother and child, but sometimes sacrifices are necessary for harmony to persist.

## Conception

Kirsten Quarles had a comfortable life in the suburbs of Cleveland until she started high school. Her parents divorced and her father left the country, all but disowning Kirsten and her younger brother. Her mother did the best she could, but the Quarles family lost their house and moved into the city, and Kirsten, used to upscale schools and affluent neighbors, found herself surrounded by people who had never enjoyed the privileges she had. She kept to herself during her freshman year, never quite finding a clique, but at the beginning of her second year of high school she joined the drama club. And there she met Troy Bell.

Troy had lived in the city his whole life, though he moved many times, shuffled between his parents, his aunts and uncles, and even foster care. Through it

all, Troy remained good-natured and kind, and when he reached high school he told his mother he was going to go to college so he could buy her a house so that she wouldn't have to move again. He wasn't sure, though, how he would pay for college — Troy was smart, but the public education he'd received hadn't prepared him to receive scholarships, and he'd never been much of an athlete. He joined drama club because he knew he'd need extracurricular activities to put on college applications, and it seemed more interesting than most of the other options. During his freshman year, he discovered that he had something of a knack for acting, and he could memorize lines in a heartbeat. He came back to school the next year hoping to play a lead role. He never expected to find the love of his life.

Troy and Kirsten sometimes wonder if their relationship would have survived if they had both been cast in the play. As it was, Troy was cast in a lead role, but Kirsten didn't make the cut and was invited to work on the crew. The two teens saw each other often, but weren't always together, and over the course of the production, they fell in love. The night the final curtain fell, Troy bribed the school janitor to loan him a key, and he and Kirsten made love together on the stage.

As they lay there together, wrapped in Troy's blanket, Kirsten felt something happen inside her. Something woke up, and pressed into her mind, asking for reassurance, asking for love. It was frightened. And Kirsten accepted it, responding with thought and feeling that was unmistakably hers. She Awakened to the Watchtower of the Iron Gauntlet at the instant that her baby was conceived... and her child was conceived already Awakened.

Kirsten didn't tell Troy right away that she was pregnant. How could she know, after all? But a few months later, she confirmed it, and told her lover. She was half expecting him to bolt, or to act like one of the other boys at the school and brag about the girl he'd knocked up. Instead, Troy took her hands and told her he'd do what she wanted him to do. If that meant dropping out of school and finding work, he would. Kirsten, desperately wishing that the two of them could just be *somewhere else*, inadvertently teleported them back to the stage where they'd first consummated their love. Disbelief covered their actions as far as the students who were actually in the auditorium at the time, but Troy remembered. He was not Awakened, but neither was he truly Asleep. Love, it seems, opened his eyes.



The lovers decided they would wait until spring break to tell their parents. By that point, Kirsten would be about four months along, and hopefully her mother would see that Troy was treating her well (she hadn't been thrilled about her daughter dating so young, after all). But they never got that chance. A Banisher intervened and changed their lives.

### *The Hunt Begins*

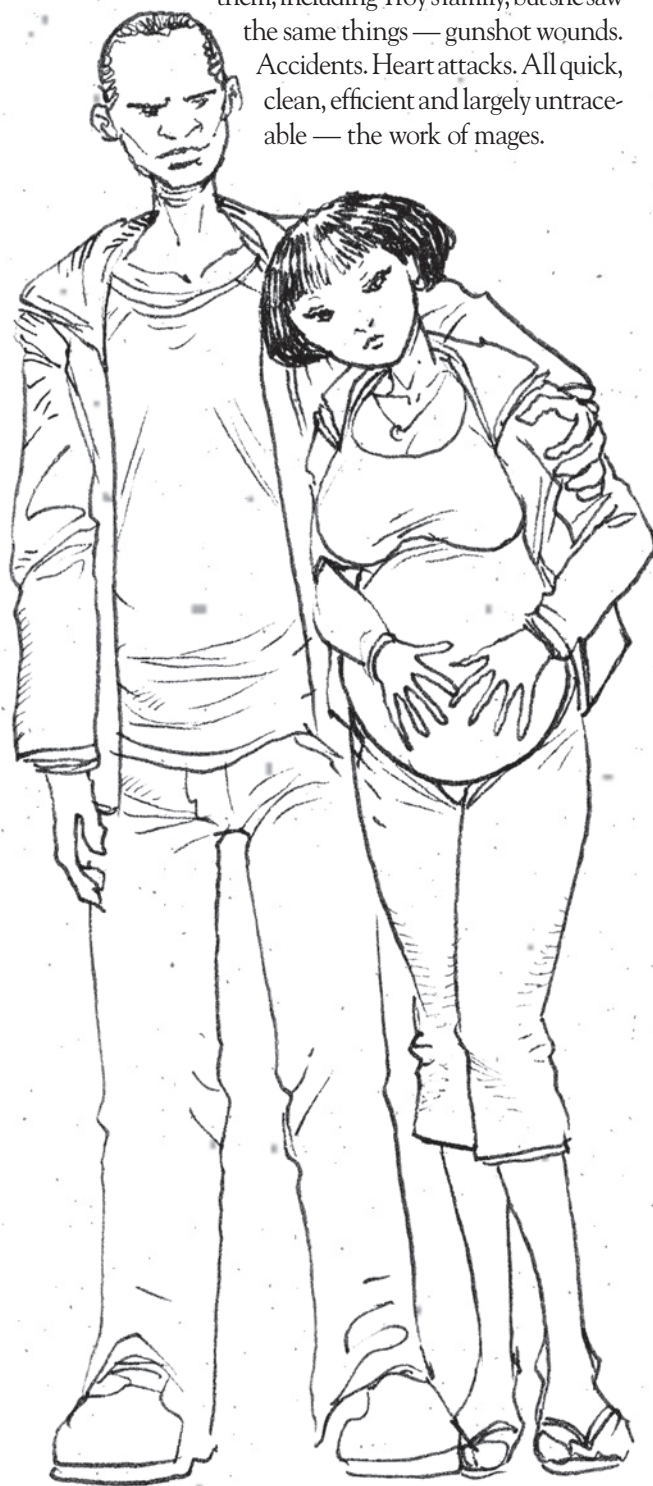
His name was Micah Rheims, and he had been hunting the streets of Cleveland for some time. He did not remember much about his life pre-Awakening, only that his time in Arcadia had shown him that mankind must not, under any circumstances, anger the creatures that lived there. Mages, he felt, tempted the fate of all humanity with every breath they took, and so he stalked and killed them when he could. Micah chiefly preyed on young, recently-Awakened mages, and had no knowledge of the Consilium structure. When he found Kirsten Quarles, he was expecting an easy kill. He drew his gun, aimed... and suddenly found a length of wire around his throat. Troy Bell had seen him, and Kirsten had magically masked her lover's approach. Micah Rheims fell dead... but now the lovers were killers.

They fled the city and wound up in Erie, Pennsylvania, where the local Consilium was waiting for them. At first, the mages were helpful and accommodating. They did not threaten to send Kirsten home to her family, though they did offer to smooth things over so that she didn't worry (this, unfortunately, proved to be unnecessary). The mages examined Kirsten both medically and magically, listened to her stories about the dreams in which her child spoke with her, and watched, fascinated, as she cast spells far beyond the ability of such a nascent mage. In a closed session, the Awakened came to a conclusion — this child was going to fulfill some great prophecy. As such, Kirsten needed to be protected and kept out of sight until the girl was born.

Troy, listening at the door, realized they intended to keep his lover under lock and key for months, and then most likely remove her child from her. He had been hearing this "we know best" tone from authority figures all his life, and refused to let it happen this time. He woke Kirsten and the two of them fled, Kirsten pausing long enough to sever all of the sympathetic connections the two of them had to the place.

### *Murders*

Kirsten and Troy fled west, back to Cleveland, but as they approached the city Kirsten broke down into sobs. Her mother and brother, she said, were dead. So were her cousins and even her father, shot to death in his Greek villa. Frantically, she scryed for other people that might help them, including Troy's family, but she saw the same things — gunshot wounds. Accidents. Heart attacks. All quick, clean, efficient and largely untraceable — the work of mages.





Troy and Kirsten had no way to know it, but one of the mages in Erie was a deep-cover mole for the Seers of the Throne. He wasn't clear on what was so special about Kirsten's child (not having been invited to the closed-door meeting that decided her fate), but he did know that Consilii all over the Midwest had been altered about the girl. He reported to his masters, and they decided to give the lovers the fewest options possible.

The lovers fled, of course. They stayed out of cities for a while, but realized that having Sleepers around was actually helpful to them. They stayed ahead of their pursuers largely through luck, but also due to Kirsten's unfailingly accurate Mage Sight and Troy's razor-keen memory. The Seers and cabals from all five orders pursue them, and at times their hunters have met up with each other, with deadly results, allowing Kirsten and Troy time to escape. But Kirsten's time nears, and when the baby arrives, both she and Troy desperately hope they can find a place to stop running and raise their daughter, no matter what the future holds for her.

## *The Grand Destiny*

We haven't detailed the child's grand destiny here. Instead, we're leaving that for you (though we do provide some ideas below). There are several reasons for this. First, **Mage: The Awakening** isn't a game about a looming apocalypse. Secret conspiracies and doomsday prophecies are, of course, part and parcel to the World of Darkness, but no one such story captures the hearts and minds of Awakened everywhere. Thus, you need to decide what, in your chronicle, would be jaw-dropping and terrifying (or inspiring) to your troupe's characters.

Second, not every troupe enjoys the Atlantis backstory, and so tying the grand destiny to that element of the **Mage** setting only works if it's something your troupe would find interesting. If you've decided that mages work on the cabal level first and foremost and only care about orders secondarily, having the child be prophesized to reveal the darkest secrets of the Guardians of the Veil or open a lost Mysterium temple might not be a compelling hook.

Finally, the destiny of the child is meant to be a MacGuffin. In film, a MacGuffin is a material object that drives the plot, but serves little importance to the story in and of itself (the unknown contents of the briefcase in *Pulp Fiction*, for instance, or the letters of transit in *Casablanca*). The child's destiny is what gives the couple a reason to run, to hide and,

when necessary, to kill. It is what impels the "villains" in a story involving the lovers to hunt them down and kill their families. But even if the child has an earthshaking destiny, it isn't likely that she'll fulfill it during the space of the chronicle unless you take a few years of downtime, so it might not be necessary to enumerate it.

Then again, some troupes get bent out of shape if the Storyteller doesn't have all the answers (and, less flippantly, if the characters are going to risk their necks to find this girl, it might be nice for them to have a solid idea why it's worth it). As such, below are three examples of destinies that Kirsten Quarles' daughter might have. Whatever you decide as Storyteller, however, consider the role that Kirsten and Troy can play in the Tarot journey. A mage reaching the Lovers stage in his own journey might see these characters as inspirational. They do what they do for love, and it is perhaps only by purity of intention that they get away with the things they do. On the other hand, what if something were to introduce doubt into this relationship? What if Troy became attracted to another mage (perhaps one of the cabal), or Kirsten began to resent him for the deaths of her family members? Working past this doubt might be possible, but reclaiming the original purity of the Lovers probably isn't. That's the point, though — discovery and growth require letting go of naïve ideas. The next step in the Tarot progression is the Chariot, and perhaps helping Kirsten and Troy reach this stage would, in turn, propel the mage along on his own journey.

## *Disproving Atlantis*

The child knows the location of the Celestial Ladder — the *unbroken* Celestial Ladder. It was never used. It was fashioned in the late 12th century by members of the four "Atlantean" orders, but it did not serve its intended purpose: to reach the Supernal Realms. The Ladder was hidden, and its designers claimed that the attempt had been made once before, in a grand "Awakened City," but failed.

In this story, the Consilium structure is built upon a lie, as are four of the five Pentacle orders. This revelation would surely cause innumerable schisms in Consilii across the world, and probably within the Seers of the Throne, too. Both order and Throne mages would be trying to prevent this from happening, though you might consider giving the lovers (and the players' characters, if they are trying to protect the child) an ally who belongs to the Roses of Eden Legacy (see p. 31).



## *The Awakened Messiah*

"Everything is bad and corrupt now, but someday a great leader will come along and save us." This sentiment, or some close variation of it, is common to many belief systems, and the Awakened aren't immune. There are messianic cults in all of the orders, and it wouldn't be difficult for one such cult to get the notion — correctly or not — that Kirsten Quarles is carrying their savior in her womb. Of course, such cults often have enemies, which means the cult chases the lovers to "protect" them (though they might well see Troy as expendable, especially since he isn't Awakened) and the enemies chase the lovers to kill or control them to damage the cult. The question then is, who killed the lovers' families? Either side, or both, could have been responsible.

## *The Last Mage*

No new Awakenings have occurred since the lovers' child was conceived, and in some cases, recent Awakenings seem to reverse themselves. And then, the Consilium in Erie learned the truth — the Watchtowers are full. Awakening using the Watchtowers as anchors is no longer possible. The only hope is to learn to Awaken others as the child (and perhaps Kirsten herself) was — in the womb, before Quiescence has a chance to set in.

In this scenario (loosely inspired, as you may have guessed, by the 2006 film *Children of Men*), mages are going extinct. Without new Awakenings — or, to grant more immediacy, with Awakenings fading — magic from the Supernal will fade from the world inside a generation or two, especially if this revelation leads to an upswing in Banisher activity. Kirsten Quarles' child may hold the secret to prolonging or activating Awakening, but what kind of invasive magic would be required to discover it?

## *Mechanics and Miracles*

Kirsten Quarles is a mage, and that in itself isn't so remarkable. But her child Awakened at the moment of *conception*, meaning that an Awakened consciousness was present in a merger of two cells. This is scientifically impossible, since a new embryo doesn't have a nervous system and is therefore incapable of thought, much less magic... but there it is.

Kirsten's unborn fetus is now capable of feeling and even magic, but it can't direct its power. Kirsten, therefore, can draw upon her still-developing daugh-

ter's Gnosis when using her own powers, which is why Kirsten seems so much more powerful than she actually is. In game terms, Kirsten adds two dice to all magic that she uses, and adds three dice to any attempt to sense the supernatural (see p. 110 of **Mage: The Awakening**). She can also hold more Mana than she would otherwise be able to (this is noted in her traits below).

When the child is born, Kirsten may lose these benefits — or her daughter might gain the ability to access her mother's Gnosis, as long as they are touching. Kirsten's child is an anomaly, and might be a freak accident or the beginning of some new type of mage. To Kirsten, it doesn't much matter. She only wants to be able to raise her daughter with her lover and live peacefully. Sadly, that isn't likely to ever happen.

## *Troy Bell*

**Quote:** *Stay away from her.*

**Description:** Troy has put on a considerable amount of lean muscle since beginning life as a fugitive. Nearly 17, he is tall, slim and wiry, with a thoughtful face and dark brown skin. He carries the gun he took from Micah Rheims and a length of piano wire, and wears jeans, running shoes and a heavy sweatshirt. He takes care to keep himself as clean and well-groomed as he can, so as to avoid looking like a "suspicious Black man."

**Storytelling Hints:** It would be easy for Troy Bell to grow resentful because of what has happened, and in truth, there are nights that he stays awake weeping for his mother and his family. But he loves Kirsten, and when she told him about the baby, part of him rejoiced to be creating a life with her. Troy is still a young man, and occasionally the teenager side of him comes out, but he has matured quickly out of necessity and displays a wisdom and strength of character beyond his years. Somewhere in his soul, he knows he might have to give his life for his daughter or his lover one day, and he is prepared to do that.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation 1, Medicine (Childbirth) 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Running) 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 2

**Merits:** Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 3, Fresh Start, Quick Draw (garrote), Sleepwalker

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 5

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 15

**Health:** 8

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Garrote Special	0		See below	6

If Troy grapples or surprises a target, he can get his wire around the victim's neck with a successful Strength + Weaponry roll (the victim's Defense is not applied if he surprises the victim). For every turn in which the target suffers damage from the garrote, he incurs a cumulative -1 penalty to the next escape attempt, to a maximum of -5. Once the target suffers damage equal to his Stamina, the player must make a reflexive Stamina roll each turn to avoid passing out.

### *Kirsten Quarles*

**Quote:** *I hear you. I hear you talking, honey... what? No, not you.*

**Description:** Kirsten, fortunately, was in good physical shape when she got pregnant. Only just 17, she has chopped her once long blond hair off and dyed it black. She dresses in the maternity clothes she and Troy can buy or steal, and wears a long overcoat to hide her protruding belly. This ruse doesn't work anymore, however — Kirsten is probably a matter of weeks from delivery, and physical exertion has become almost impossible for her.

Kirsten's Nimbus is a wave pain that seems to physically push against anyone standing nearby. Perceptive onlookers might notice that under this feeling is a second Nimbus, this one manifesting as a feeling of innocence so pure it can make a person weep.

**Storytelling Hints:** Kirsten is immediately wary of anyone expressing kindness or curiosity about her, because she is used to such people either dying or turning out to be hunting her. She has no formal training in magic, but she has become practiced at following her instincts to produce the desired effects, and she is more likely to use her magic to escape than to attack (unless Troy is nearby and she can't transport them both away).

**Real Name:** Kirsten Quarles

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Apostate

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 2, Medicine (Childbirth) 1, Occult 1, Politics 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny (Locks) 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 1

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Persuasion (Pity) 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Destiny ("A Prophet is Never Welcome in His Own Country") 4, Direction Sense, Dream 5, Meditative Mind

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 7

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Sloth

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 9

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Mind 4, Prime 3, Space 4

**Rotes:** None.

**Mana/per turn:** 20/3

**Armor:** 4 ("Untouchable," Space ••)

### *The Lovers Reversed*

Quarrels and arguments take the place of playful banter and pillow talk. The honeymoon is over. Indecision and doubt creep in, and the relationship might not be strong enough to stand up to the rigors of the "real world." Infidelity or lies, or the realization that what was once attractive has become annoying.

Since the Lovers is a card of innocence and purity, the Lovers reversed is a card of maturity by way of misery. The pain of the world burns away the childlike, naked innocence of youth. Raw to the elements, the Lovers cover themselves and move out of the Garden.

### *Troy and Kirsten as Harbingers of Doom*

In this variant, the story remains much as it is presented above, except that Troy isn't quite what he seems. The real Troy Bell died at the beginning of the school year, and something unclean and inhuman slipped into his flesh. This spirit, this intruder, animated his body and used it to seduce and impregnate a young, impressionable mage (already Awakened, Kirsten suppressed her memories of Pandemonium and the magic that accompanied them).



The child growing inside Kirsten isn't human. It's a hideous amalgam of an undead creature and the madness of the Abode of Demons. If it is born, it could spell destruction for the Awakened community worldwide. But Troy is an effective mage-slayer, and he's covered their tracks well. Kirsten, for her part, is in deep denial over what's happening to her, and ignores the terrible whispers from her womb. She probably won't survive the pregnancy, but the "baby" doesn't really need her, anyway.

If you use this variant, Kirsten's traits remain as described above. Troy's traits change as follows:

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6 (note that these also change Advantages)

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4

**Mental Skills:** Add Occult 4

**Supernatural Powers:**

- **Essence:** Whenever Troy harms or kills someone while protecting Kirsten, roll five dice. For every success, he gains one point of Essence. Troy loses one point of Essence per week, and spends it to fuel his other powers. He can hold a maximum of 15 Essence.

- **Dead Flesh:** Troy does not suffer wound penalties, and does not need to make a Stamina roll to remain conscious once his Health track is full of bashing dam-

age. He does not become incapacitated if his Health track fills with lethal damage. If his Health track fills with aggravated damage, his body falls apart and the spirit within is banished to the Abyss.

- **Regeneration** — By funneling Essence into his physical shell, Troy is able to heal wounds. Every Essence spent heals one point of bashing damage. By spending a Willpower point, Troy can heal lethal or aggravated damage in the same way for the duration of the scene.

- **Siphon** — Troy can drain away a target's vitality. He must touch his victim to activate this power. Spend one Willpower point, and roll Strength + Presence in a contested roll against the target's Resolve + Composure. If Troy wins, every success converts one of the target's Willpower into two Essence (this damage is considered to be lethal). Once a victim runs out of Willpower, Troy can Siphon Health instead. If he uses this power on a mage, he can choose to Siphon Mana instead of Willpower, but he cannot target Health until all Willpower is gone. Vampires and other undead creatures can lose Willpower to Troy, but not Health. If Troy targets a creature with an Essence trait (such as a materialized spirit or a werewolf), he drains Essence directly rather than Willpower. If the target runs out of Essence, Troy drains Willpower and finally Health/Corpus.



# KEY VII — THE CHARIOT

The charioteer rides proudly in his magnificent conveyance, drawn by horses or, in many decks, two sphinxes. He wears a crown and carries a scepter. Behind him, castles can be seen fading into the distance, and he leaves them behind happily, for the Chariot is a card about ascension. The flight of the Chariot leads the rider up into the heavens, away from the base material of Earth. It can stand for a literal journey, or a major (and hopefully beneficial) change to one's life. All that is required of the charioteer is the courage to take the reins.

For a mage, of course, the flight of the Chariot can be seen as a metaphor for the Awakening, but its position on the journey through the Tarot is too far along for this metaphor to be entirely appropriate. Many mages associate this card with Gnosis, the ability to perform magic at all. Awakening grants this power, yes, but a mage must cultivate his magical acumen. While mages don't recognize Gnosis as a mechanical trait, obviously, they do understand that a certain degree of magic power is necessary before things like soulstones and Legacies become possible. As power grows, greater opportunities arise. The Chariot flies ever higher.

The Chariot, therefore, deals with successful magical discovery, as the mage finds his place within the society of the Awakened or realizes his own potential as one of the Wise. The charioteer must beware, however, of taking such rides too soon or for too long. Phaeton, the son of the sun-god Helios, attempted to drive a chariot, and the results were disastrous. Icarus, too, flew well but ultimately reached higher than his "chariot" was prepared to take him. In either case, the moral is clear — the ascent is heady and dizzying. The descent is quick and brutal. And the Chariot can go in either direction.

## Temple — *The Atlantean Chariot*

Not all Atlantean temples are huge structures buried in forgotten places in the earth, or accessible only through magical portals. Sometimes, a relic from the Awakened City is much smaller and more mobile than that. The Atlantean Chariot is one such item, and it is a kind of questing beast for mages the world over. The mage who finds the Chariot can touch the skies, and break bread with the gods... provided he doesn't let gravity get the better of him.



## *History*

The story of the Chariot's creation is told in pictographs on the side facing the driver (see Description, below). A mage in the Awakened City wanted to create his masterwork, a vehicle from which he could oversee his minions or employees toiling away. The pictures make it clear that he was in charge of a great number of workers, and that they were creating objects that included weapons, tools and even cookware, but what the pictures do not indicate is whether these workers were

slaves. The Awakened, of course, don't want to believe that anyone as enlightened as a mage could stoop to binding others to their will, but even the most optimistic among the Wise have to admit that it's not all that improbable. The "Slavedriver or Master Craftsman" debate about the Chariot is one of the disagreements that fuel the quest for its recovery.

In any event, according to the pictographs, the creator of the Chariot would soar above his workers, checking on their progress and lending his expertise (or providing magical "incentive" to keep them on



task; the pictographs aren't entirely clear). As time goes on, the mage grows older, and finally conjures two lion-like creatures up from the dust, binding them into the Chariot as guardians. This is the last pictograph on the Chariot. After this is a string of runes, but they have not been deciphered. Seekers of the Chariot speculate that they might indicate the date that the master died, or perhaps just a signature of the artist behind the pictographs.

When the Awakened City fell, the Chariot, like many secrets of Atlantis, might have been lost forever. But the Chariot has its own set of agendas, apparently, and it flew far away from the doomed ocean spire.

Over time, it has appeared in Awakened history and legend across the world. The Chariot seems drawn to places of great power — Hallows, Demesnes, intersections of ley lines, and of course, other Atlantean temples. The sphinx-like guardians of the Chariot seem able to answer any riddle or deactivate any trap on such temples, and so it's not uncommon for stories of other temples to mention the Chariot awaiting explorers when they enter.

Consilii sometimes lay claim to the Chariot, but no one manages to keep it for long. The mobile temple always flies off after a few weeks; no matter how many times the guardians are appeased, and no matter what magical strictures are placed upon it. Some scholars believe the Chariot represents a condition of lordship that cannot be maintained for long. Once the owner has established authority using the Chariot, he needs to keep that authority on his own merits.

## Description

The Chariot resembles a two-wheeled racing chariot, but has no hitch to which to attach horses. The front of the Chariot is decorated with two lion-like creatures, one white and one black. Their faces, especially their eyes, show signs of humanity, but their bodies are sleek, feral and predatory. The black lion's claws drip with blood, while the white lion holds a chunk of bone between its teeth. Between the two lions is a column of runes, probably designed to hold the magic on the Chariot. In the exact center is a gemstone about the size of an egg, dark red or purple in color (depending on how the light hits it). This gem is assuredly magical, but the exact nature has never been determined because any attempt to analyze it awakens the lions (see below). Many Awakened scholars believe it to be a soul stone, but it might also be a Shard of the Ladder (see p. 113).

The inside of the Chariot contains the pictographs described above. The pictographs are carved into the metal of the Chariot and inlaid with gold and silver.

The wheels of the Chariot are wooden, reinforced with layers of a metal that modern mages cannot identify. Many suspect the metal is a perfected form of iron, whose creation is impossible without certain materials now lost to time.

The Chariot is large enough for three people to ride in it, if they stand close together. This has an adverse effect on the Handling of the craft, however (see Systems).

## Systems

The Chariot has a number of innate magical properties, some of which can be activated by mages, and some that are the sole province of the Chariot itself.

- **Flight:** The Chariot can reach speeds of at least Mach 1 (770 mph), but those riding in it feel no inertia and no friction from the speed. A rider can let go of the Chariot and not worry about falling to Earth. If a mage manages to activate the Chariot, and thus control its flight, it has a Handling rating of 5. Each additional passenger subtracts one dice from the Handling, however.

- **Mystical Shield:** The Chariot protects the rider. Everyone on board the Chariot is considered to have Armor 5, as though protected by the Forces 2 spell "Unseen Shield." This armor stacks with any personal armor spells the mage might employ. In addition, the Chariot cloaks itself from the view of Sleepers below, thus avoiding Disbelief.

- **Protection from Magic:** The Chariot is highly resistant to magic. It has magical armor (as the Prime 2 spell "Magic Shield," p. 222 of **Mage: The Awakening**) with a Potency of seven. That means that any incoming spell with a Potency of less than seven is ignored completely. The Chariot expends a point of Mana every time it defends against a spell, but since any spell activates the guardians (see below) it doesn't really run the risk of emptying its Mana pool.

- **Authority:** A mage riding in the Chariot receives a +5 modifier to any Social actions he chooses to undertake. Thus, arriving at a Consilium in the Chariot leaves a mage in a good position to make a power play — but his leadership skills had best be up to the task, as the Chariot doesn't stay around for long.

- **Entry to Temples:** The Chariot acts as a key to any Atlantean temple, bypassing guardians and

security. The Chariot does not, however, aid in finding temples.

## *Activating and Claiming the Chariot*

The Chariot is, by default, unclaimed. A mage can “claim” the Chariot (for a short time) by besting both of the lions. The lions are “activated” when a mage casts a spell on the Chariot; normally, this is a Knowing or Unveiling spell cast when the mage discovers the Chariot. Both lions spring from the Chariot, using the Materialize Numen, snarling challenges at the mage in a bastard hybrid of Spirit Tongue and High Speech. The black lion also activates its Terrify Numen at this point, meaning that mage’s player must roll Resolve + Composure + Gnosis in a contested roll against the lion’s Power + Finesse. If the lion wins, the mage flees, and the guardians become inert again. If the mage stands his ground, the white lion states the terms of the challenge.

The lions do not speak any modern language, and current High Speech isn’t really suitable for conversation. A mage with Spirit 1 can cast the “Spirit Tongue” spell and converse with the lions thusly. Alternately, a mage with Mind 3 can use the “Universal Language” spell to communicate. If no communication can be established, the mage has to try and puzzle out what the lion is trying to tell him. This requires an Intelligence + Occult roll with a –5 modifier.

### **Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The mage mistakes the lion’s word as an invitation to ride the Chariot. If the mage attempts to climb onto the Chariot, both lions attack. Even if the mage wins the ensuing fight, the Chariot will not function for him.

**Failure:** The mage is unable to understand what the lion is trying to tell him. He can try again, but if five minutes go by with no real communication, the lions become inert.

**Success:** The mage understands that the lions each demand some kind of challenge, but not the particulars.

**Exceptional Success:** The mage understands that the black lion wishes to fight, while the white lion demands a challenge with a more cerebral component.

## *The Black Lion’s Challenge*

The black lion demands blood. The mage must best it in combat, or at least survive one minute (10 turns)

of battle. The lion does not show mercy or restraint. It will kill a mage if the mage cannot prevent it. The black lion’s traits are as follows:

**Rank:** 3

**Attributes:** Power 8; Finesse 6; Resistance 6

**Willpower:** 14

**Max Essence:** 20

**Initiative:** 14

**Defense:** 8

**Speed:** 22 (species factor 8)

**Size:** 6

**Corpus:** 12

**Influences:** Fear •, Blood •

**Numina:** Healing Heart (as the spell, p. 186 of **Mage: The Awakening**), Materialize, Terrify (p. 212 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**)

**Ban:** If a mage gives the lion a direct command to halt its attack, the lion does so, losing its action for the next turn. It attacks again after that, however. Giving this command requires a roll of Presence + Intimidation – the lion’s Resistance.

Once the black lion has been defeated, it heals the mage in preparation for the white lion’s challenge.

## *The White Lion’s Challenge*

The white lion demands that the mage demonstrate his magical acumen. The lion scratches a pentacle before the mage and tells the mage to choose an Arcanum (as above, this requires some method of communication, although the mage’s player can roll Wits + Occult to recognize the pentacle’s significance in this context — see the picture on p. 130 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The mage should probably choose one of his Ruling Arcana, but the lion doesn’t care one way or another. Once the mage has chosen an Arcanum, the lion snarls quick phrases in High Speech. Any mage with the High Speech Merit can understand these phrases — they equate to the 13 Practices. The mage must demonstrate a spell in his chosen Arcanum for as many as he can.

Obviously, only a Master can use all 13 of the Practices, but the white lion doesn’t demand that the mage be a Master. All he demands is that the mage cast the spells that he *can* cast correctly. The mage must cast at least nine spells (meaning that only a Disciple has a chance of success, and he needs to cast all nine spells correctly). The exact nature of the spells doesn’t matter, nor does their aspect. The lion gives the mage two turns in which to cast each spell, meaning that a mage could use High Speech to give himself a better chance of success, or try to cast the spell once and still



have another turn in which to try if he fails.

No traits are provided for the white lion, as it doesn't enter combat or direct confrontation with characters. If, for some reason, traits become necessary, use the black lion's traits.

### *Claiming the Chariot*

Once the mage has passed both lions' tests, they become part of the Chariot once again. The mage can control the Chariot for a short time, commanding its flight and taking advantage of its magical protection. Mages have, in the past, used the Chariot to make war upon enemies, to seize power in Consillii, to gain entrance at Atlantean temples, and simply as an object of study. The Chariot doesn't provide inspiration, merely a helpful tool. Whatever the mage wishes to use it for, however, he only has one lunar month from the time he claims it. After that, the Chariot soars off into the sky. The mage is free to try and track it down to claim it again, of course, but hopefully he has achieved his goal and can reap whatever rewards there are to be had without the Chariot's help.

The Chariot's utility in the Tarot journey should be clear. A mage on the journey needs to summon up the magical strength (measured not just by Gnosis, but by skill *with* that Gnosis) to best the lions' challenges. And, in besting the lions, he paves the way to advance to the next stage: Strength.

### *The Chariot Reversed*

Cowardice — the seeker is too afraid of change or failure to make the attempt. He refuses to take up the reins of the Chariot, and thus cannot claim its power

or undertake its journey. Worse, the seeker might lose his nerve in mid-flight, crashing to Earth like Helios' son, or grow too prideful. Like Lucifer, Bellepheron or Icarus, his pride is his undoing, his reach exceeds his grasp, and he mistakes the power he has for the power he deserves.

### *The Atlantean Chariot as a Trap*

The creator of the Chariot had a perverse sense of humor. The Chariot *can* fly, but it bestows no other bonuses upon the mage that "claims" it. The lions, however, speak modern languages perfectly, and promise mastery of magic, temporal power and anything else they think might work to coax a mage into accepting the challenge.

But the challenge never ends. Every time the mage bests a lion, the other one comes up with another test. Challenges of combat and magical prowess precede endurance and arcane knowledge. Once the mage swims across a freezing lake, he might be required to memorize an epic poem in a language he has never seen. Eventually, he will fail, and the lions mock him mercilessly — but offer him another chance. This "last chance" always involves using magic in a baneful way against a Sleeper or a weaker mage.

If the mage stands his moral ground, the lions cease the test and the Chariot grudgingly gives up its one benefit — knowledge of a powerful rote (choose a spell that the character would appreciate learning), or perhaps a clue to an Atlantean temple or some other nugget of history. If the mage accepts the challenge, however, he stands to gain nothing, and probably lose Wisdom for it besides.



# KEY VIII — STRENGTH

A maiden forces the jaws of a lion closed, mastering it without killing it. In some decks, a female warrior with a lion on her shield is pictured. In older decks, this card is called “Fortitude,” and this ideal is still the most important one represented by the Strength card. Physical strength is amoral — it can be used for good or for ill. A strong man might be a hard worker, or he might be a brute (or both). But true Strength — Strength of character and of spirit — can tame the oafish heart and bend muscle toward noble ends.

Awakened cartomancers use the Strength card to represent the Forces Arcanum. Forces might not be the most powerful of the 10 Arcana, but it certainly carries the most potential for raw, destructive force. A mage seeking to master it, therefore, has to keep his thoughts and will in perfect control, lest a fire burn wild or the power in a city go out with an errant spell. The vagaries of the mage’s own vices, of course, *must* be tamed before he goes mucking around with Forces. That’s the ideal, anyway, but it does help explain the somewhat intense personalities of Theurgists.

After the lofty ride on the Chariot, the mage is drunk with power. He needs to master himself before he is worthy of the attention of the mentor he is about to meet (the Hermit). He will need the Strength he learns here to survive the vagaries of chance (the Wheel of Fortune), the scales of Justice, and, much later, to stand before Judgment. Strength must come from within. All mages have their own lions in their souls, and the power they wield gives them their claws and their roars. Only the mage’s gentle, but firm and unyielding will can yoke the beast.

## Artifact — *The Metal Dinosaur*

In rural Ohio, in one of those little towns that has a factory, a university and some farmland, turning down a small gravel road leads one to Ed Barron’s home. It’s not a farm, though there’s enough land for it. The land is mostly forested, except for a large area that includes Ed’s house and barn. Scattered around the property are Ed’s creations — sculptures made of wood, stone and steel, some painted, some stained and some adorned with beads and other decorations. The creations are beautiful and artistic, though Ed would never call himself an artist.

Perhaps the strangest of these creations, though, is the dinosaur skeleton. Over 10 feet tall and made of steel, it sits in the barn, waiting. The dinosaur has tasted blood, and it hungers for more.

## *Ed Barron*

Ed Barron wasn’t the sort of guy to let a good idea go to waste. If something came into his head that he thought would be fun, or look neat, or be a good

way to waste some time, he did it. Cook a whole boar over an open fire? Done. Now, every Fourth of July, a hundred people descend on his farm for “Barron’s Boar Roast.” Build his own barn? Done. It’s more a workshop than anything else, since he doesn’t have any livestock, but he built it with his own hands (and some help from his sons and sons-in-law, and his nephews, of course) and he knows every nail in it. If he doesn’t know how to do something, he’ll learn if





he takes a notion to. Ed isn't a gourmet chef, but he can cook a surprising number of dishes that aren't exactly native to his rural area. He's never picked up a gun, but he's a deadeye with a bow. He's never been to the ocean, but he's got a tropical fish tank that he keeps meticulously clean.

And so when Ed Barron decided he'd make a metal dinosaur in his barn, his wife didn't bat an eye. She just asked if it would be done by the Fourth, because they'd need the barn clean for storing food and beer.

Ed Barron wasn't always this way, though. He spent almost 10 years as a fall-down drunk. He wasn't the happy sort of drunk, either. He was vicious, cruel and violent once he got a bottle of whiskey in him, and he'd go through at least a bottle a day. Ed was (and remains) a big guy and he could hold his liquor, but no man should drink as much as Ed did. Many's the night that the last thing he remembers is pulling back an empty bottle like a club. Many's the morning he woke up in the county jail.

Ed probably should have died by the time he turned 40, but then he met Charlie. Charlie — Charlene — stopped into Ed's favorite bar one night. She'd meant to go to a bar with a similar name (Ed frequented Grady's Bar, and Charlie had meant to go to O'Grady's Pub, which was three more exits up the highway) to meet a friend. She sat down next to Ed and commented that he looked sad. Ed, who had never really thought about it, said that maybe he was. She asked why, and he cracked a smile and said, "Cause I never saw Paris."

Charlie pulled out her key ring, on which was a tiny plastic Eiffel Tower. She pulled the tchotchke off her key ring and set it on the bar. "There you go," she said. With that, she left, having figured out how to get where she was going.

Ed stared at the plastic tower for a long time that night, and he realized that it *did* make him sad that he'd never seen Paris. It wasn't because he particularly wanted to see Paris, but because he'd never done anything like that, never traveled, never really learned much. Unlike his father and his brothers, he hadn't served in the military because of an injury he'd suffered just out of high school. He hadn't gone to college, opting instead to work at the nearby auto manufacturing plant. It paid well enough, but he didn't know much that wasn't applicable to his job. He left the bar that night wondering if it was too late. He'd made it halfway across the parking lot when three men — men that he'd trounced in a bar fight the week before — jumped him. Sober for the first night in more than a year, he realized that it might well be too late.

Ed won that fight, but came out of it with a broken nose and missing some teeth. He decided that he was done with liquor, because it was stupid to be sad for what he'd never seen. He bought a little blue notebook and wrote down 10 things he'd like to do. The tenth thing on that list, the one he figured would never happen, was "Marry that girl from the bar."

Three years later, when he'd accomplished the seventh item on the list ("Grow an award-winning pumpkin"), he saw Charlie again at the county fair. She commented that he looked happy, and Ed, unable to speak, showed her the plastic Eiffel Tower around his neck. They were married six months later, and had four sons and a daughter together. Since their marriage, Ed rarely drinks, and never more than a beer or two. He refuses to touch hard liquor — the closest he's come is a glass of champagne at his kids' weddings.

## *Creating the Dinosaur*

Ed got interested in metalworking after his youngest son brought home a sculpture he'd made in an art class at the local university (Ed had never gone to college, but he made it clear to his kids that when they turned 18, they had a choice: the military, college, or making it on their own. Most of them went to college). He gathered up some scrap metal and started welding it together. He sat in on a couple of his son's classes and asked the teacher for tips, and fashioned some useful tools for around the house; racks for laundry, a new pole for the Boar Roast, that kind of thing. And then his second-youngest boy brought his family over for dinner one night, and Ed's little grandson had a book about dinosaurs.

"Hey," said Ed. "Wonder if I could make a dinosaur skeleton out of scrap metal?"

The grandkids cheered. Ed's kids smiled and shook their heads. Charlie told him he'd better have it done by the Fourth.

Ed did, but it was close. The dinosaur never seemed *big* enough, and Ed redesigned it several times before he finally had a version he liked. He made the dinosaur out of unfriendly looking metal and scorched it black. He shaved down the skull to give it a rounded, aged look, and sharpened the teeth. His youngest son was in the barn helping him attach the skull when it slipped, raking the teeth across the man's scalp.

Ed's son needed eight stitches in his head, but Ed finished the dinosaur by the Fourth all the same. Everyone at the Boar Roast had a good laugh over how the dinosaur had already bit someone, and the

kids had a good time peeking into the barn and then running away squealing.

But the dinosaur wasn't amused. It was still hungry.

## *The Primal Wild*

How Ed managed to draw down the Primal Wild into his dinosaur is a mystery. The Hallow on his property probably contributed, but Ed doesn't know the first thing about magic (he's a Sleepwalker; yes, but he's never seen anyone cast a spell, so he's not aware of it). The dinosaur, though, has taken on a perverse and dangerous sentience. It's hungry, and it wants blood. But beyond that, it wants to be beaten in battle, to be worked and shaped and conquered. It combines the predatory hunger of its form with the compliance and utility of the metal from which it is made. Unfortunately, it might very well harm others before anyone manages to best it.

The dinosaur sculpture is capable of animating itself for short periods of time, provided it has the proper stimulus. The methods of animation are listed in the dinosaur's write-up, below. Once it animates, it searches for prey, hunting like a true predator. Unfortunately, that means it searches for weak, slow or sick individuals, making children and the elderly favored targets.

The dinosaur has a special hunger for Thyrsus mages, though it doesn't know that yet, never having met one. The connection to the Primal Wild fills the dinosaur with bloodlust. At the same time, though, a Thyrsus mage has the best chance of defeating the creature.

## *The Hallow*

The Hallow on Ed's property is nestled in the roots of a tree planted nearly a century ago. The tree is the tallest on his land, and has many protruding knots and crooks, facilitating easy climbing (and more than one broken arm over the years, as Ed's kids learned that climbing down wasn't always as simple as it looked). The Hallow carries a resonance that is warm, like summer sunshine, but any mage that absorbs more Mana than his Stamina rating in a single day winds up with painful sunburn for his trouble.

The Hallow can activate the dinosaur as described below, but can also be used to make it sluggish and compliant. The sunlight-like power of the place grants a +2 modifier to any use of the Forces Arcanum against the dinosaur. The mage's Path is irrelevant, and this modifier is cumulative with the modifier that Thyrsus mages receive in combat against it (see below). Thus, a Shaman casting a Forces spell in combat against the dinosaur would receive a +4 to the attempt.

## *The Dinosaur Sculpture (Artifact N/A)*

Durability 5, Size 7, Structure 12

**Mana Capacity:** maximum 20

The dinosaur sculpture can come to life when one of the following events happens:

- A mage with the Vice of Wrath uncloaks his Nimbus within half a mile of the sculpture.
- A mage with the Virtue of Fortitude uncloaks his Nimbus within sight of the statue.
- A mage or Sleepwalker loses at least one Health level to the statue (this is what awakened the statue — Ed's son, like Ed, is a Sleepwalker).
- The sculpture is taken to the center of a Hallow and left there for one full day.

Once it comes to life, it has the traits listed below.

If the dinosaur is bested in battle, it becomes compliant. Besting it requires grappling the beast (see p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for more on grappling combat) and holding it immobile. Every turn the dinosaur is held thus, it loses one point of Mana. If the dinosaur runs out of Mana, it is beaten, and the being that beat it can control it thereafter. It still needs to be animated in the usual ways, but once it is animated, it is a loyal servant of whoever defeated it, willing to walk into a smelting pit if so commanded. Thyrsus mages receive a +2 modifier on all combat rolls against the dinosaur.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

**Social Attributes:** Presence 0, Manipulation 0, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** None

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl (Bite) 4, Stealth 3, Survival (Tracking) 3

**Social Skills:** Intimidation 4

**Merits:** Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 8 (with Fast Reflexes)

**Defense:** 4

**Speed:** 17 (species factor 8)

**Size:** 7

**Health:** 12

**Aarmor:** 5

**Supernatural Powers:**

- **Friend of Metal:** Bullets and bladed weapons cannot harm the dinosaur sculpture. Blunt weapons can hurt it, however, even if made of metal.



• **Blood Essence:** While the sculpture cannot eat, per se, as it has no digestive organs, it can tear off and “swallow” hunks of flesh. Every point of damage it inflicts while eating allows it to regain one point of Mana.

• **Animation:** The conditions under which the dinosaur can awaken have already been noted. While animated, the dinosaur loses one point of Mana per hour.

• **Denizen of the Primal Wild:** The dinosaur can track Thyrus mages without a roll, no matter what magic the Shaman uses to hide himself.

*Ed Barron*

**Quote:** *Hey, you know what I'd like to do?*

**Description:** Ed is a big man. He stands almost seven feet tall, and calling him “barrel-chested” doesn’t cover it. He’s big through the middle, yes, but that pot belly’s from age and a hearty diet, not from lack of exercise. He wears a huge, bushy beard and keeps his hair long. He normally wears overalls and grubby work shirts, but always washes up for dinner. Ed can put on a scary front if he needs to, but now that his only daughter isn’t bringing boys home anymore (she and her husband are expecting their second child soon), he doesn’t usually bother. He laughs loud and long, and careful observers can often catch him staring at his wife. When he does, people comment that he looks happy.

**Storytelling Hints:** Ed is a good man, but he’s also a true rarity in the World of Darkness. He pulled himself back from the brink of self-destruction, and has made a happy and fulfilling life for himself. Ed should be inspirational to the characters, especially if they find themselves overwhelmed by Awakened life and the complications thereof. They might wind up invited to Ed’s annual Boar Roast (getting an invitation is as easy as running into Ed or one of his kids and striking up a conversation; Ed isn’t choosy about who shows up) or they might hear about his sculptures and want to buy one. In any case, should Ed ever meet with a cabal of mages, he might well Awaken himself — or discover a part of his identity that has heretofore gone untapped, that of the Sleepwalker.

The dinosaur, of course, is the wrinkle in the story. This creature is meant for someone strong to beat. While it might seem like that is Ed’s job, he’s *already* beaten his “lion.” The dinosaur is a challenge made for a mage, and Ed might realize that, if he gets all of the information he needs.

Depending on how dark you want to make the story, you might have the characters arrive at Ed’s

property to find nothing left but bodies, and have them learn about Ed’s tragic story through flashback and Time magic. It might be better, though, to allow the characters a chance to save some lives rather than just pick up pieces.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Computer 1, Crafts (Metalworking, Leatherworking, Carpentry, Auto Repair, Cooking) 4, Medicine 1, Science 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Lifting) 1, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms (Bow) 2, Survival 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Expression (Tall Tales) 2, Intimidation 2, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1

**Merits:** Allies (Friends and Family) 5, Contacts (Union, Academic, Artistic, Junkyards), Giant, Resources 2, Sleepwalker

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 7

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Gluttony

**Initiative:** 4

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 9

## *Strength Reversed*

Brutishness escapes. The lion slips through the maiden’s fingers and eats her. Lust, depravity and animal vices rule the day. Alternately, strength can be over-applied, to the point that no desire is allowed. Puritanical, repressive sensibilities are not an expression of strength; they are just another admission of weakness.

## *Ed Barron as a Monster*

Ed created the dinosaur with a connection to the Primal Wild deliberately. The “accident” in the barn was no accident, and here it ends with the death of Ed’s son, not an injury. Ed has been secretly drinking again (or perhaps he never stopped), and has somehow determined that if he gives reign to his animal passions in a symbolic sense, he will gain the capacity to survive the liver disease that will surely kill him within a year. This release of passion will take the form of animating the dinosaur at the Boar Roast and letting it feast as is its wont.



# KEY IX — THE HERMIT

The Hermit stands on a snowy plane, holding a lantern and a staff. He is utterly alone and the card's art is particularly stark — nothing in the background, normally, but gray. In some decks, the Hermit is meant to represent the virtue of Prudence, but this has more to do with attempts to shoehorn this virtue into an existing card (since unlike Temperance and Fortitude (Strength), it isn't represented elsewhere) than with the virtue being emblematic of the Hermit. Yes, the Hermit is wise, but is a solitary existence “prudent,” or simply avoidance? Discovering that would require seeking out the Hermit in his lonely abode, and that, of course, is the point.

The Hermit is a loner, but one who is willing to teach. A seeker must come to him, however, and so the lesson of the Hermit isn't a birthright, but something that must be earned. Doing so requires sacrifice, climbing up mountains or braving harsh terrain to find the Hermit, and even then he might not answer a question until it is asked in the right way. But to learn the Hermit's wisdom, one must think and feel as the Hermit does; otherwise, the wisdom is empty chatter, simple pontification. The Hermit might be the older, wiser version of the Hierophant, finally rising above convenient and contrived dogma and accepting spiritual truth, no matter how simple it might prove to be.

The Awakened see the Hermit as the Mysterium's card. The Mysterium holds the keys to many forms of enlightenment, and might even be willing to share them — with the right seeker. Some mages chide the order for this stinginess of knowledge, using the title “hermits” to refer to mystagogues, but those who seek the order's wisdom often find it. While a literal hermit might require a climb up a mountain, the “hermits”

of the *Alae Draconis* require study and strength of character. These are mountains of a sort, and in any case the parallel is clear: if the Mysterium gives you the knowledge you sought, you *earned* it.

A mage who has found the inner Strength to temper his beastly desires has made the necessary sacrifice, and is now ready to confront some of the searing questions — about life, magic, and himself. He must learn all he can from the Hermit, for he is to face the random vagaries of chance on the Wheel of Fortune, be called to account for his actions (Justice), suffer for his transgressions as the Hanged Man, and finally enter the ultimate crucible — Death.



## Location — The Bleak Demesne

Scattered on the rocky ground are soul stones. Aldous doesn't remember from whom they all came. One is his, yes, but the rest? He bargained for them, stole them... he thinks he might even have forced mages to make them in the past.

The Bleak Demesne is his home, now. Aldous has forgotten more about using magic

to manipulate his own soul than most mages will ever learn. He isn't so much a mage anymore as an earthbound Oracle (or perhaps an Exarch?), and he can't always see the Fallen World clearly. Too many possibilities intersect. The souls and thoughts of a million microscopic life forms and the myriad spirits confuse them, so he came here to be alone.

But he'll listen to pilgrim's questions. He might even answer them. An answer from Aldous is, in itself, enlightenment. But the answers lead to more questions, and those questions can drive a mage mad.



## History

Aldous Awakened in the 17th century, joined the Guardians of the Veil, and expected to die a poisoner's death. But he survived multiple attempts on his life as he attained status in the order, and finally became important enough to the Visus Draconis that they removed him from sight. Hidden from the world, reported as dead to his former cabal and Consilium, Aldous helped guide the policies of the Guardians from the shadows.

And then, one day, the messengers stopped coming. Aldous knew better than to use magic to find his order, so he waited. He had access to anything in Sleeper society that he could have wanted, but he saw no other mages for a decade. During that time, he perfected his own magical arts, learned rites that other mages had never mastered, and created a soul stone. In so doing, he learned something — the soul was infinite, but Gnosis, a mage's connection with the Supernal Realms, was not. Creating a soul stone ate away at that connection, but was it possible to use the soul stones of others to strengthen it?

Another decade went by, and still no contact from the Guardians. Aldous was growing paranoid and restless. He left the city in which they'd left him, and took on a host of identities. He hunted down mages that had created soul stones, killed them and stole their treasures. Rumors of cabals of Banishers working for various governments floated through the Consilium, but no one ever made the connection — and how could they? Any mage who even knew Aldous existed was either dead of old age or sworn to secrecy, and the Guardians wouldn't have claimed him even if they had figured out who was doing the killing.

Aldous was 89 when he developed what he would later come to call "the Feast of Stones." By combining soul stones fashioned through each of the 10 Arcana, Aldous could strengthen his own connection to the Supernal Realms. Of course, hunting down 10 mages who had created soul stones at all, to say nothing of 10 stones of different Arcana, was time-consuming. And, of course, stealing a soul stone from a mage powerful enough to create one is no simple matter.

But with the Feast of Stones, Aldous had achieved a terrifying breakthrough: he didn't need 10 stones. He just needed one, for contained in every single soul stone (and, in fact, every single mage) was all of the connection he'd ever need. It was dangerous work, to be sure, to "open" a soul stone. If Aldous had been born a few centuries later, comparisons to working

with radioactive materials or infectious diseases might have occurred to him. As it was, he simply took a collection of soul stones into the mountains, and started experimenting.

On the first day, he failed, and all of the plant life around him died.

On the second day, he failed, and all of the animals for five miles crumbled away to dust.

On the third day, he succeeded, and he made himself immortal. He removed his need to eat, to sleep, and to breathe. He stopped his aging and made his body strong again.

On the fourth day, he succeeded, and he made himself wise. He removed the creeping madness of age and the selfishness that had come with murder and a lifetime of espionage and skulduggery. He made himself intelligent, returned the wit of his youth, and granted himself knowledge of any subject he could ever want.

On the fifth day, he succeeded, and healed the rents in his soul. He wept for the deaths he had caused and the abominable crimes he had committed. He smoothed over the jagged places in his heart that had led him to those actions, and he made himself compassionate and kind.

And on the sixth day, Aldous looked around at the blighted landscape he had created, strewn with a hundred soul stones and completely devoid of life. And he willed it not to be so, and the trees and grass and animals returned, springing up from the dust as though nothing had happened.

Looking at them, Aldous knew he could never return to the life in the Fallen World: every rock yielded up the secrets of a billion years; every deer told him what it was to mate, feed and fear; and every shadow whispered of things too horrible for living men to know... but that Aldous could not ignore.

And so on the seventh day, Aldous conjured up a portal to take him across the Abyss into the Supernal Realm of Pandemonium. But he did not enter that portal. When travelers ask him why, he sometimes says he stayed to teach others as a kind of *bodhisattva*. Sometimes he says the Supernal Realms are only open by invitation, and he has more to do here. But the truth is — he was terrified. He was the most powerful Awakened mage in the Fallen World. But in the Supernal Realms, he was as a newly Awakened mage once again; powerful, yes, but in mortal danger. And Aldous, having made himself the pinnacle of the Awakened condition here, could not bear to go back to being weak.

Aldous moved farther up the mountain, and waited. With as much magical activity as had been happening in the area, he knew the Awakened wouldn't be far behind.

## Description

The Bleak Demesne is a plateau about halfway up a mountainside (the specific mountain range is up to the Storyteller's discretion). The area is blasted and apparently devoid of life, but examination by someone with experience in this sort of terrain reveals that the soil is just naturally rocky and doesn't support much plant life beyond scrub brush. The plateau butts up against the eastern side of the mountain, and a cave mouth, just large enough to crawl through, leads into Aldous' home.

Inside, a visitor might find just about anything. Sometimes Aldous prefers to live like a true hermit, sleeping on rocks without a blanket or a fire. Sometimes he grows nostalgic and changes the rocks into furnishings reminiscent of his early years in Europe. Sometimes he scans the minds of modern folk and conjures present-day clothing and furniture, complete with an Internet connection. He *never* changes the plateau, however, though sometimes he'll create an animal from the dust and let it roam the area for a while, just to see how long it lives (see *Getting Involved*, below).

If a visitor searches the thin, stony soil of the Demesne, it's likely he'll find a soul stone. More than a hundred are strewn about the area, almost casually. All of them belong to mages long dead, except for one — the one that Aldous himself created many years ago. He doesn't treat this one any differently, however. It simply sits in the dirt, the symbol of a journey that Aldous didn't have the strength to complete.

## Getting Involved

A cabal of mages might decide to visit the Bleak Demesne for any number of reasons. Below are a few hooks the Storyteller might use to intrigue the characters:

- Aldous created an animal that is not even remotely native to the region. Maybe he created a monkey that now lives in the pines of the Sierra Nevada, or perhaps he fashioned a family of kangaroos to hop around the Catskills. In any event, the animals clearly aren't here naturally, but are thriving. Characters with an interest in keeping magic under wraps (or an interest in cryptids) might investigate.

- If the cabal is composed of or includes Guardians of the Veil, they might stumble across evidence that Aldous is still alive and was last seen in the area. Granted, the evidence they find is probably at least 100 years old, but that would still put Aldous well past a natural lifespan.

- The characters might encounter someone who visited with Aldous. This might be another mage, or a Sleeper who knows Aldous only as "the hermit on the mount," but who receives life-changing advice from him. If you want to raise the stakes a bit, what if the characters meet someone who used to be a vampire, but whom Aldous "cured?" Or, perhaps Aldous created a human being out of stone and sent him down the mountain.

- The characters are mountain climbers who stumble across the Bleak Demesne. Maybe Aldous decides to Awaken them all. He might even explain exactly what the process entails, allow the mages to choose what Realm(s) they will Awaken to, and magically create the circumstances to lead them to whatever order they might wish. This would give the characters an unbelievable degree of control over their early lives as mages. What difference, Aldous might wonder, would that make in the long run?

- The characters encounter a ghost mage (see p. 327 of **Mage: The Awakening**) that claims he was murdered for his soul stone by a rogue Guardian named Aldous. He was anchored to that stone, but Aldous altered the anchor (what the mage is currently fettered to is up to you, of course). The mages now have the opportunity to take Aldous to task for what he did... but what can they really do to him now? And do such precepts as "justice" even apply to him anymore?

## Systems

The Bleak Demesne is, indeed, a Demesne, as described on p. 280 of **Mage: The Awakening**. No magic here provokes a Paradox, and all magic receives a +1 bonus (since soul stones representing all five Supernal Realms were used to create it). The Demesne covers the mountain from the plateau up, meaning that the effect extends into Aldous' cave. Aldous is also capable of extending or shrinking the area of effect at will.

The ecosystem would probably be completely altered by so much magic, if Aldous let it. He stops the magic from seeping into the surrounding area, however, and therefore the spiritscape of the Demesne is surprisingly "normal." Mountain-spirits, earth elementals and the spirits of the local wildlife know that the Demesne exists, but they don't know why or what it might portend.



Simply being in the Demesne is akin to being at a powerful Hallow, though. Any mage can perform an oblation at any time, and there is no limit to the amount of Mana that can be drawn from the area. Mages always leave the Bleak Demesne empowered in at least that respect.

## Supporting Characters

The only character in the Bleak Demesne, of course, is Aldous. No traits are provided for him, because he is quite literally capable of doing whatever he needs to do. However, Aldous is a truly strange character, so some information on portraying him is necessary.

Aldous is an archmage, but he's beyond considerations of what that means in terms of what magic can and cannot do. The Fallen World is his plaything. He can reshape anything in it, including himself, as he sees fit—but one of the first things he did upon performing the Feast of Stones was to make himself a virtual saint. He refuses to reshape the world in a manner that suits him at whim because it is not in his nature to be so selfish. It is not in his nature to be so selfish because he decided his own nature. Was that, then, a selfless decision, or did he simply “neuter” his own base impulses?

Likewise, Aldous doesn't get bored. He doesn't feel miserable or frightened, because he chooses not to. He never loses control of himself, because he controls everything about himself, even down to a cellular level (which is why he's always perfectly groomed). If he were ever to grow angry, sad or frustrated, it would be because he wanted to... and wanting to feel that way would be a betrayal of his moral nature, which, again, he chose.

Yes, Aldous does sometimes grow playful or whimsical, and sometimes creates life from unliving matter. But he never inhibits the free will of another being—he wouldn't change one animal into another, for instance.

One important question that characters might have for (or about) Aldous is whether he can see the future. Magically speaking, he can. But whether he chooses to look ahead to the future (or travel to it, for that matter) becomes a question with some ethical implications. Is

it possible for Aldous to travel through time, and thus prevent some of the greatest disasters in history? Maybe it's possible, but it's something that he finds unethical or immoral, and so he can't. Maybe it's not possible, even for him. Maybe he already did it.

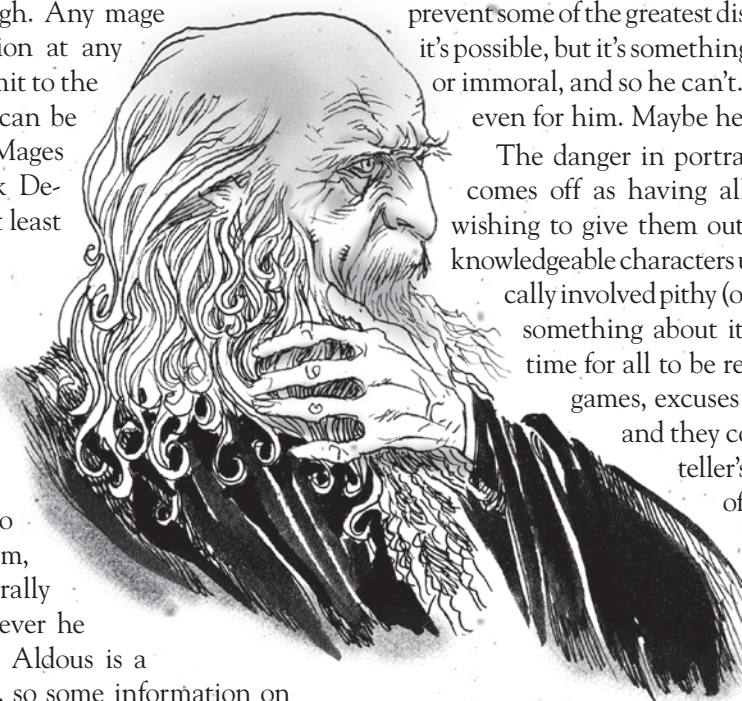
The danger in portraying Aldous is that he comes off as having all the answers, but not wishing to give them out for any of the reasons knowledgeable characters usually have. These typically involved pithy (or smarmy) excuses, often something about it not being “the proper time for all to be revealed.” In role-playing games, excuses like that are annoying, and they come across as the Storyteller's attempt to keep control of the chronicle. Where Aldous is concerned, though, if he doesn't answer a question it's probably because giving the answer would have implications on

an ethical level that he can't accept; and remember, he *can* see the future, so he knows what the effect of answering a question today is on the events of tomorrow. He's happy to explain his situation as best he can, but that brings us to another issue.

Aldous is a god living among mortals. Even Master mages cannot comprehend the power that he wields, and Aldous is constantly living with choices that others do not. He makes a social faux pas—should he rewind time a few seconds to avoid it? He sees in a mage's future that she will someday die at her mentor's hands—should he implant a suggestion in the mentor's mind to avoid this? Aldous has the power to affect the entire world, and the question then is: is the world his responsibility? Aldous did not leave the world because he feared what lay beyond it (and did he choose that fear, given his control over himself?), but he doesn't wish to claim leadership of this planet, either.

Aldous is a complex character, and however the players' characters approach him, they should come away awed and probably a little disturbed. On no account should they come away feeling that whatever Aldous did to gain this power was a good idea. Hopefully, though, Aldous can help them with whatever issues drove them to the Bleak Demesne.

That's really the point, after all. A seeker doesn't climb the mountain to become a hermit. He climbs the mountain to benefit from the hermit's wisdom, without suffering as the hermit did.





**Description:** Aldous is an old man apparently of Germanic origin. He is strong and healthy, and looks nothing like the traditional concept of the cave-dwelling hermit. He is always clean, immaculately groomed, and speaks with a clear, strong voice. He creates clothes as he sees fit, and changes between modern garb (jeans, heavy shirts) and black robes (that a Guardian recognizes as belonging to a high-status mage).

Aldous' magic does not cause his Nimbus to flare, no matter how vulgar the spell.

### *Benefits of Meeting with Aldous*

Below are a few suggestions for whatever the characters might take away from a visit with Aldous.

- **Advice:** Aldous knows everything. Anything he doesn't know, he can find out with a second's concentration. If the characters need to know something that there is *no possible way* for them to discover, Aldous could tell them. Storytellers, be aware that there are players who will take this opportunity to ask questions like "Who killed JFK?" and "Is there a God?" Sometimes, it's perfectly in character. Remember, though, that Aldous does everything based on its moral implications, and confirming the non-existence of God would certainly have moral repercussions.

- **Power:** Aldous can raise a mage's Gnosis rating, grant him knowledge of new Arcana, or, more simply, act as a tutor for rites. He could Awaken a Sleeper, if he was sure that the Sleeper understood what she was getting into. Nothing is theoretically beyond Aldous, subject, once again, to moral considerations.

- **Archmastery:** Certain spells are only available to archmasters. Say, for instance, the characters want to be able to cast a permanent effect on a living being. Maybe a mage wants to change her Nimbus, or her Path or Legacy, or regenerate a severed limb permanently. Aldous can perform these impossible feats.

### *The Hermit Reversed*

The Hermit reversed is a madman. He has no wisdom to impart, no grand insight from his time in exile. His words are mere ranting, and anyone who tries to follow his advice will wind up frustrated or worse.

Alternately, the Hermit reversed might be a charlatan, out for self-aggrandizement, profit, power and notoriety. His home on the mountain is appointed with all the comforts of modern life, but is secluded enough that he can claim status as the Hermit. He doesn't want to help others, only to achieve his own (often very basic) goals.

Another possibility is that the seeker reaches the Hermit, but learns nothing. The Hermit is unable to teach or, perhaps, the seeker isn't ready to learn.

### *The Bleak Demesne as a Dead Zone*

Magic fails entirely within the Bleak Demesne. Aldous is still present and is still a Master of every Arcanum, but his power is limited in just the same ways that other mages' are. He can teach rites, and he knows a great deal about magic and the Guardians, but he cannot leave his Demesne; otherwise hundreds of years would come due in an instant and he would die. Aldous, in this variant, is a sad figure, one who sacrificed his Wisdom to chase power and wound up trapped.

If you use this variant, the "Demesne" is a magical dead zone. No magic can get in or out, meaning that it might make a useful place to hide from an enemy using Space magic. Aldous is still among the most powerful beings in the world, but he can't use his power. This happened when Aldous used the Feast of Stones. Instead of granting him connection to the Supernal Realms, it granted him a connection to the Abyss. The Bleak Demesne is unchanging, frozen as it was hundreds of years ago. Nothing ages within it, nor do living things hunger, thirst or tire. The problem is that anything that leaves immediately feels the effects of hunger, fatigue and age proportional to the amount of time spent within the Demesne, so mages need to be careful not to remain within the area too long without supplies, even though it's possible to stay indefinitely.

Horribly, Aldous is immortal within the dead zone. Any wounds on his body heal immediately. He could, of course, be forced out, whereupon he would crumble to dust or be sucked immediately into the Abyss. But a greater punishment might be to leave him where he is, alone in his wasteland.



# KEY X — THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

The Wheel of Fortune has changed form in the Tarot many times over the years, and its interpretation likewise varies. Common to most readings of the card, however, is the notion that fate can change on a dime, and that one's luck is the province of factors quite beyond human understanding. Not surprisingly, the Wheel is often thought to mean that all of the vicissitudes of the human experience are ultimately meaningless, because the physical world must turn to dust and fall away eventually anyway (the follow-up lesson here, of course, is that only through God, or at least spiritual pursuits, can true happiness, salvation or self-actualization be found).

Another interpretation is that everything moves in cycles. What has been will be once again, and what is now shall be gone soon. This plays into the questions of destiny and reincarnation, of course, but another, more scientific viewpoint might be that everything in the universe is already present, and is in a constant state of changing forms. No "new life" is ever created, because the sperm and egg are alive when they come together. No matter or energy is ever created, they simply change forms. This is the Wheel of Fortune: not a grim caveat that everyone is just a wheel's spin away from misery and death, but a solemn reminder that this, too, shall pass.

To a mage on the journey through the Tarot, the Wheel of Fortune can easily encompass both interpretations. Acanthus mages, especially, with their study of Fate, know that some events *do* seem to be predes-

tined and that much of the world does run in cycles. They also know, though, that to call anything in life "random" is suspect, because every action must have a cause, which in turn was caused by something else.

The lesson of the Wheel is one that needs to be acknowledged: Some things, by dint of destiny or just the immense complexity of the universe, are out of the mage's control. Accept this, and move on.



## *Grimoire — The Book of Cycles*

The morality of magic has long been a point of contention among the Awakened. Some mages feel magic is a part of them, and has no more inherent moral complications than breathing. Some feel all magic is blasphemous, a crime against the natural order, and seek to murder those Awakened who would dare to use their gifts. Most mages are somewhere in the middle, and feel it is the application of magic that can

require a moral distinction. Hubris is a problem for mages because they tend to overstep their boundaries, yes, but those "boundaries" are generally understood to reflect the limits of the power of Awakened magic in the Fallen World. For the boundaries to be literal ones — actual restrictions on what is and is not possible with magic — some reason would have to exist for those restrictions to be in place. If it is not possible, for instance, to teleport a man's heart right out of his chest, why is that the case? Because Patterns are, on a certain level, impossible to disrupt? Perhaps, but why? Those questions are the true cornerstone of a mage's



journey into enlightenment, and to ignore them, to assume that one already has all the necessary answers, is the true hubris.

Mages have written volumes on the nature of magic, hubris and morality. Occasionally a faction uses such a book as its holy text, or at least its guiding principles. The Book of Cycles is a text that, on its face, is a long lecture about how using magic for any reason is dangerous and should be avoided. But buried within the book, some say, is a cipher that allows the mage that breaks it to read the cycles of fate, time and destiny on any level, from the personal to the universal. Those who believe the book exists, however, also say it is guarded by a faction of mages who, for the most part, abstain from magic — except to protect the book.

The Book of Cycles is, according to legend, a thick book with a blue binding. The paper and the binding set its creation at roughly 1810, but the type is more typical of the linotype press that didn't come into use until the end of that century. Since the Ledger of Prague and other sources refer to the Book of Cycles as early as the 1840s, this casts some doubt on the blue-covered version being the original, since the typesetting machine used wasn't invented until 20 years later. Then again, some mages feel that the grimoire might slowly change form in a cyclical fashion, moving from carvings on a wall to papyrus scroll to bamboo book to codex to bound book and so on. Following

that line of thought, it might be a computer data file even now. Since the book hasn't actually been seen by a living mage (with the possible exception of the book's guardians; see below), it's impossible to say for sure.

Mages who have studied the Book of Cycles, though, say that decorations on the book are always circular. Rings and whorls appear in the texture of the binding. If the text were viewed on a computer screen, all instances of a particular letter might be slightly offset, giving the impression that, for instance, the "e's" were forming circles. If a mage views the book using Mage Sight from the Fate Arcanum, the book's surroundings might seem to spin, as though everything in the immediate area were revolving around the book.

## History

"It is the book in which the world itself is contained," wrote a London occult scholar named John Darlington in 1890. "It contains not facts, and not theory, and not history and not philosophy, but possibility. Reading the book would be like spinning a coin, and watching it slow down to such a rate that one could count the rotations, predicting, then, with utter certainty, which way the coin would fall. Apply this perspective to larger questions — will my wife remain faithful, even as we grow older and tired of one another? Will

### From The Ledger of the Awakened of Prague, 1842

*Magus prob. of Italian origin, known among his people as Il Romano ("the Roman"), arrived yesterday. Requested information from Alae Draconis of Prague regarding "il libro di ciclos." Local magi met in secret, voted to turn him out. Entered 28/2/1842, NM.*

*Il Romano arrived in Prague again today with his cabal. All Visus Draconis, all named for their cities of origin (?). Il Romano is leader. Demanded information about the book. Stated that great tragedy would befall Prague within 20 years if he was turned away again. Consilium voted to bar Prague to him. Entered 1/4/1842, NM.*

*Here in your Ledger I shall repeat myself. This city is doomed. The creature will walk again, rising up in a storm of thunder and lightning. All will be laid to waste, for its mark cannot be altered, not after it has completed its journey. It remembers and it hates, hates deeper than anything should. I can predict its path and prevent this, but only if I see the book, and I know your Mysterium knows something. You must provide me with what I seek, now, or suffer the consequences. I will not be refused again. Entered (no date), JR.*

*Il Romano left today after a closed meeting with Censor of Prague. Censor reports that Il Romano will not return to Prague, per the agreement, but that there is some merit to his warnings and information was provided commensurately. Entered 20/4/1842, NM.*

*Censor of Prague found dead today. Throat slit. Raped. No magic was involved. Petty thief and criminal, will soon be caught and brought to justice. Entered 21/4/1842, NM.*



this hand of cards be better than my opponents? Will one nation prosper over another? Perhaps it is possible to see not only the coin spinning, but how the muscles in the spinner's hand affect the probability. At what point does it all become too much to fit into the human mind?"

Darlington never saw the book himself, and according to Awakened historians, he wasn't even a mage. But his musings on the book echo what the Awakened have been saying since at least the middle of the 19th century, when the Book of Cycles first "appeared." The only mage to have ever claimed to see the fabled text regularly took tea with Darlington, and claimed the book was not created by mortal (or Awakened) hands. This mage, known as Lord Gaines, gave the following account of its creation:

*The book exists because it was created. It was created so that the book could exist. Asking who created the book is absurd — the book is itself a cycle, a necessary part of the world. This conversation that we are having created the book. The chance — chance! — encounter on the streets of Whitechapel that acquainted us created the book. The man who came to my home seeking it created it. And if all that were left of the book tomorrow night was this account, then the book would reappear, because it must. Yes, of course, this is cyclical, and to a certain eye, ridiculous. But that is the nature of destiny. Everything that will happen has already happened. Nothing is out of our experience. If we read the book, we are, in effect, re-reading the history of creation. Even if we read the future.*

Lord Gaines, a member of the Mysterium who later abandoned his order and joined the nascent Free Council, was, in the estimation of the mages of the day, quite mad. His philosophies of causality and predestination did nothing to endear him to his compatriots, and his habit of spending time in the worst parts of London, carousing with undesirables of both the moral and supernatural sorts, and his affectation of the title "Lord" made him a pariah. When Lord Gaines was found dead in 1900, hanging from a streetlamp near the Thames, his throat slashed open and what little blood remained in his body dripping out onto the street, no one was surprised. Not even Gaines himself, as it happened — the cabal that half-heartedly investigated his murder discovered he'd had an odd conversation with his tailor the day before. When the tailor noted that he'd cut Gaines' shirt too short, Gaines reportedly said, "It doesn't matter. I'll only wear it once, in any case."

Following Gaines' death (which goes unsolved to this day — current suspicion is that his friend Darlington might have had something to do with it, but he, of course, would be long dead by now), the Free Council exhibited a brief surge of interest in the Book of Cycles, but it died out quickly when all leads turned cold. The book was rumored to be in a state of metamorphosis, changing its form to reflect the needs of a new century. Other rumors stated that Gaines had died because he tried to change something he read in the book. This latter rumor actually seemed to have some evidence backing it — Gaines had become erratic before his death, talking of "a great spiritual injustice" coming to London and "betrayal by a close friend." It was at just about the same time that the rumor spread among the Free Councilors that Gaines had been trying to alter fate that a second, related rumor sprang up.

### *The Lucid*

Supposedly, a faction of mages and Sleepwalkers is devoted to protecting the book from being read or used. These individuals refuse to call upon magic except in extreme emergencies, including protecting the Book of Cycles. Their name — "the Lucid" — indicates that while they are much like Sleepers, they know and accept this condition, rather than being blissfully unaware of the Lie.

Free Council historians note references to the Lucid, or mages very much like them, that predate the mid-18th century reference to the Book of Cycles. Whether this means that the Lucid existed before the book was discovered and later adopted it as their cause, or that the faction was simply discovered before the book was, is unknown. Whatever the case, shortly after Gaines' death, a rumor began that placed responsibility on the Lucid. Unfortunately, the members of that faction refused to step forward and confirm or deny it, and so the Lucid developed an unsavory reputation. Even today, the few mages who have heard of them know them as Banishers, which isn't strictly accurate. The Lucid don't kill mages for being mages, and they don't kill to force their beliefs on others. They only kill mages who get too close to the Book of Cycles.

### *Contents*

The Book of Cycles allows an amount of perspective bordering on precognition, and the truly impressive thing is that the scale of the perspective can shift from, as Darlington implies, the flip of a coin to the



fate of nations. Mages versed in the magic of Fate and Time, of course, have some inkling of how this works and can attempt much the same thing, but the Book of Cycles bestows a degree of accuracy that even the magic of the Awakened cannot. It takes free will out of the equation, it seems, working on the principle that everything has already been decided. Events were set in motion when time began, and everything that happens is inevitable. This might seem a ridiculous and shallow platitude (of *course* everything that is going to happen is going to happen; how could it not?), but the book allows one to see that inevitability. It is, therefore, true, objective future sight.

Naturally, this would carry problems, if true, because it would mean that all that occurs is predestined. Notions of predestination don't sit well with mages, who are used to making their own way in the world. As such, the Book of Cycles is regarded by most Awakened scholars as, at best, a potentially useful grimoire for the study of Fate and Time with an especially offensive legend wrapped around it.

But other mages see the grimoire in a different light. If this book is what it is supposed to be, then its presence on Earth must be proof of a higher order to the universe — of God, perhaps, or at least the Oracles (or Exarchs). For a book to contain every possibility in the universe, it can't be just a simple book of spells. It must be the blueprint of all creation, the original conception of everything, Fallen and Supernal alike. Might it be possible to witness the creation of the Celestial Ladder, and know what truly went wrong? What other secrets might be laid bare by reading this tome? And, indeed, if the book is “just” a grimoire, how does it change its form?

A third camp takes a more reasoned approach. Perhaps the book does what it is purported to do, but not because it actually *contains* every possibility in the universe. Perhaps it contains the means to calculate probability, and therefore given a situation can size up what the most likely outcome would be. Where it moves beyond mundane calculations of probability, though, is that it accounts for things that even a computer cannot. A roll of a six-sided dice has a one in six chance of coming up any particular number, but that doesn't take into account how hard the dice is thrown, or at what angle, or how much one side has been worn away from use. The Book of Cycles, perhaps, *can* take these things into account, and thus can give a perfect prediction of the likelihood of an outcome.

## *Mechanics*

Possession of the Book of Cycles grants a +5 modifier to any use of the Fate Arcanum. In addition, a mage can learn a rote for any Fate spell by studying the book. These rotes do not follow the pattern of Atlantean magic, and the dice pool is the same for all of them (Manipulation + Occult + Fate), regardless of what dice pool is listed for the spell. In addition, Mysterium mages do *not* receive the additional dice for their Rote Specialty in Occult, as the rotes learned from the Book of Cycles do not conform to the notions of the Skill taught by the order.

Learning a rote from the Book of Cycles requires an extended action for research. The dice pool is Intelligence + Occult, and the target number of successes is equal to (the level of the spell x 5). For instance, learning the “Sever Oath” spell would require 20 successes, while learning “Evil Eye” would require only 10. Every roll requires four hours of research. This time is spent studying the book and its discussions of probability, possibility, causality and magic, but also studying the circular symbols on the book and noting how they loop back upon each other.

The book has an additional power, the one that those who seek the book mention most frequently. The Book of Cycles allows perfect, objective understanding of future events. The reader simply focuses on the event in question, from the roll of a dice to the outcome of an election, and then begins to read. The Book of Cycles explains in detail what the outcome will be and why. In game terms, the reader needs to roll Resolve + Composure to focus on the problem, and Intelligence + Occult to maintain focus while reading. Using the book in this way *always* requires a degeneration roll for mages (roll two dice).

## *Dangers*

The main danger of the Book of Cycles, of course, is the loss of Wisdom that can come from trying to alter the course of Fate. Using the book simply for the insight it can grant into the Fate Arcanum is not dangerous in itself, but the temptation to know “what happens next” probably proves too great.

The greatest physical danger of the Book of Cycles is the Lucid. This faction of mages and Sleepwalkers eschews the use of magic except when necessary to protect the book. They feel that magic operates outside the boundaries of the Fallen World, and that using it

## Knowing the Future

Seeing the future raises all kinds of questions in literature, but the main one is: once you know the future, can you change it? The Book of Cycles takes a kind of *Slaughterhouse-5* kind of approach. That is, the "future" has already happened, so nothing can be done to change it. Everything that goes into an event, *including* the reader's knowledge of it, has already made its contribution, and therefore trying to change it only winds up making it happen.

This is all very well for a novel or other work of fiction, but how does it work for a role-playing game? How should the Storyteller handle it when characters try to use the Book of Cycles to find the outcome of a storyline in the chronicle, and then try to alter it?

Our advice is to make finding the book difficult. Have the players deal with sifting through the rumors, dealing with the Lucid, tracking down leads on the book and being frustrated. Along the way, introduce them to characters like Gaines who tried to alter fate and died in the process. Give them dire warnings about the danger of thwarting destiny. Show them a mad mage who attempted it and lost his Wisdom doing so; but it needs to remain *possible* and therefore tempting — this temptation is very much in-theme for **Mage**. As such, if after all the warnings and tribulations, the characters finally do find the Book of Cycles and ask their question, what then?

Describe the event as best you can, based on everything you as Storyteller know. But then describe a terrible feeling of inevitability that descends upon the character doing the reading. He *knows* the future now... and he knows he can't change it. Like Cassandra, he is locked into events that have yet to come to pass, and everything he does only furthers the inevitable; when the events finally do come around, that player doesn't make dice rolls. Random chance, if it ever existed, doesn't have any bearing. The character succeeds and fails as is necessary for the events to occur.

Yes, this means that reading the Book of Cycles with an eye toward changing fate is dangerous and ultimately doomed to tragedy. That's the point. If life is predestined, it's better not to know about it. If life *isn't* predestined, then the act of reading the book somehow cements it. Either way, it's best to take things as they come, rather than trying to "cheat."

is a terrible act of hubris. One member of the faction, when asked to explain the Lucid's aversion to magic, responded, "it is not possible to be more arrogant than one of the so-called 'Awakened,' with a wand in his hand and the power of God in his mouth, pretending that every natural law is, to him, a quaint suggestion."

The Lucid recognize that they are capable of the same kind of arrogance as all mages, but they take issue with the suggestion that because they have the capability to cast spells it automatically means they should. Most Lucid, therefore, have little in the way of training in the Arcana, almost no knowledge of rites (except for the Fate rites they glean from the Book of Cycles), and obviously no membership in the orders. They do, however, tend to have high ratings in both Wisdom and Gnosis, as well as extensive training in a wide variety of Skills. The Lucid find that many mages are magically powerful but weak and undereducated because they focus on magic to the exclusion of all else. The Lucid, therefore, are often able to steer mages away from the book using mundane methods — the

Awakened are so busy looking for protective spells that they miss normal tactics.

Despite the rumors surrounding Gaines' death, the Lucid do not kill, unless the only alternative is giving up the book to a mage that obviously wants to use it to view the future. Even then, if the Lucid are absolutely convinced the mage will make no attempt to alter his fate (it's impossible to do so anyway, of course, but the Lucid feel the intention is enough to disqualify a mage from seeing the book), they might allow a persistent and otherwise moral mage to have a few minutes with the Book of Cycles. They warn anyone who comes looking, though, that Fate is not a plaything.

## *The Wheel of Fortune Reversed*

Chaos and randomness; a world in which cause and effect do not exist, and the results of an action are truly unpredictable. The Wheel of Fortune reversed



can also indicate that one is struggling against one's destiny (or at least, the proper course of action) and will come to sorrow for this hubris.

### *The Book of Cycles as a Tainted Grimoire*

The Book of Cycles can tell the future, yes, and even allow alterations of that future. But anyone who uses the book thusly is just foisting off his future on someone else. Say, for instance, the mage reads the book and learns he will die in a car accident the next day. He stays at home, never getting near his car. The car accident still occurs, but someone else dies in his place.

This event sets up a universal imbalance that eventually rights itself. Of course, that means that a mage who studies the Book of Cycles and uses it to change his fate is damning himself to a much harsher end than he probably would have suffered otherwise. When the accounts come due, interest has to be paid. There is potentially no limit to the number of dire fates a mage could resist with the book... if he can keep it to himself.

No change in systems is necessary for this variant, except that the mage *can* change his fate by reading the book.

## Researching the Book of Cycles

**Roll:** Intelligence + Academics

**Action:** Extended — 10 successes

**Research Time:** Each roll requires one hour of research.

**Appropriate Libraries:** Quantum physics, Causality, Destiny, Divination — Libraries with these topics bestow a +1 to research rolls

### Successes Information

0-2	Nothing.
3-5	A letter found online written by a gunman three hours before he walked into a library and started shooting. The letter concludes, "I don't have a choice. This is what the book said I would do, so it's what I'm doing. And actually, it makes sense. I do wish they hadn't taken the book away so soon, though, because I want to know how I died." The gunman died by his own hand after killing five people that day. Witnesses report that before he shot himself, he raved and pleaded to know "how this ends," and repeatedly cried, "I didn't finish it, I didn't read it all the way through."
6-9	The excerpt from the Ledger of Prague quoted earlier. This could lead to research in Rome, but the Guardians of the Veil are loath to give out information about Il Romano and his cabal. If asked about the Book of Cycles specifically, they state that the official position of the order in Rome is that the book never existed.
10+	The character finds a handwritten note in whatever book he is reading for information. The note says, "You're very close. This is your last chance to stop. The Book of Cycles can be found ( <i>wherever the Storyteller has decided</i> )."



# KEY XI — JUSTICE

Justice sits holding a sword and a set of scales. She sits motionless, balanced, keeping her objects in equilibrium. This is the essence of the Justice card: balance; right hand, left hand, both working in concert; ebb and flow, give and take. In some decks, Justice is blindfolded, in others she is not, but whether or not her earthly eyes are covered, she perceives what is necessary.

Applying that to the concept of Justice, of course, is difficult, because Justice is usually considered in the context of the law or revenge. But Justice is about redressing wrongs, and bringing things back to center. The guilty are punished so the innocent can heal, or so the guilty can learn. When anger enters the issue, of course, the act becomes not about Justice, but about causing harm, and that just puts things ever further out of balance.

The Adamantine Arrow claims this card as its own, and in Tarot decks designed by the Awakened, the card typically includes a quiver of arrows sitting near Lady Justice. The Arrow, of course, knows the necessity of balance — anyone with the training to inflict bodily harm and the power of the Supernal on their side is capable of great and terrible things. The Arrow, therefore, wishes to remind its members there is a time for both great and terrible, and the real issue for them is to know which is which.

For mages, balance is critical because of the amount of information and power available to them through their magic. The Awakened master must be ready to blind himself to information that isn't relevant, to judge a situation on its own merits and to decide what action is required of him. A mage's journey, to this point, has largely been a matter of gathering knowledge at the feet of such powerful figures as the Empress, the Emperor,

the Hermit and the Hierophant. Now, the mage must learn the value of Justice — balance — before progressing to the suffering of the Hanged Man, the chaos and upheaval of Death, and the temptation of the Devil.

## Character —

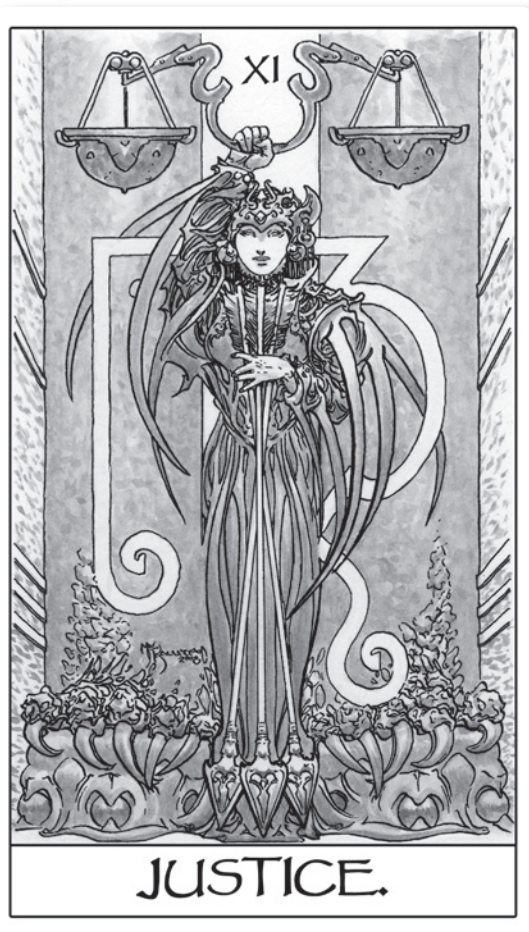
Anaiz Barrera

**Quote:** *If I hadn't done what I did, a lot of innocent people would have died. I'm not telling you that to make excuses. I just hope you can take some consolation in it.*

**Background:** Anaiz Barrera was born in Puerto Rico, and immigrated to the United States when she was a young child. She grew up in a large family, and by the time she was nine she was helping her mother take care of her younger siblings and cousins. Her parents were kind and hard-working, but some of her aunts and uncles weren't quite so conscientious, and some of them were downright bad people.

When her father arrived home one night, covered in blood, she got a hard lesson in the difference between good and bad people. Her father had gotten into a fight with

his brother-in-law, after he'd dropped off his nephew back at home and seen his sister curled up on the floor, bleeding from her nose and weeping. The fight had ended when Anaiz' uncle had lunged at her father with a knife, but wound up impaled on it himself; the police came for Anaiz' father, not really caring about his side of the story. Just another fight among the Puerto Ricans, they felt. But before he was taken away, he told Anaiz that while he was sad that he wouldn't see her grow up, he wanted her to know that he was glad he'd been there. It was a good thing, he said, to give





of yourself to protect others. He took off his medals, one for the Virgin Mary and one for St. Anthony of Padua, and gave them to his daughter. And then he went away with the cops without a word.

He was sentenced to life in prison for murdering his brother-in-law. His sister didn't testify in his defense, and his public defender didn't bother trying to find out the truth. Anaiz visited him every week. He died in prison of pneumonia when Anaiz was 16, and at his funeral, she recounted what he'd said to her on the night of his arrest.

As she stood looking out over the church — packed almost to capacity with family and friends — Anaiz felt time slow, and then stop. She saw a light above her, and heard voices in languages she didn't understand, but knew were commanding her to rise. And she did, hovering up to the top of the church, facing the immense statue of the Lord crucified, and hung her father's medals around His neck. She heard the voices ask if she really could give up something so precious to her, and she said it was right and proper to give of herself.

When her vision cleared, she was standing back at the podium. The crowd was staring rapt at her. Her saints' medals had turned from cheap pewter to gold, and Anaiz had Awakened to the Aether.

Word of the miracle spread, and Anaiz was approached by cabals from as far away as the Vatican, ostensibly there to verify that a miracle had taken place. She refused to join a cabal (at the time, she was still in high school), but did agree to apprentice with another Obrimos, a local deacon named Julio Fernandez (but known to the Awakened by his confirmation name, Antonio). Anaiz came to love Antonio as a second father, and by the time she graduated from high school, she was a skilled mage and a strong young woman.

Anaiz had initially planned to serve her Church, but Antonio talked her out of it. He had known other mages who had taken holy vows, and he felt it was a waste of their gifts. Antonio accompanied Anaiz to a meeting with the local Consilium, and all five of the Pentacle orders courted her. It was rare to find someone who had Awakened so young, but who had kept her humility (and Wisdom) so well. In the end, Anaiz felt drawn to the Adamantine Arrow for its willingness to sacrifice for protection, and to the Silver Ladder for its leadership of the Awakened.



Anaiz spent a few weeks with a Silver Ladder cabal and learned much about Consilium politics, the Duel Arcane and other facets of Awakened society. Antonio, himself an apostate, checked in on her from time to time, but Anaiz was absorbed in this new world she had discovered. Her lessons from Antonio had given her a good grasp on improvised magic, but in rites she found a formula and a pattern — much like prayer and the ritual of Mass — that she could follow. The night before she was to join with an Arrow cabal for a similar “internship,” she had a dream in which a horrid black creature swooped down out of the sky and tore her limb from limb. She woke up terrified, and nearly called off her agreement with the Arrow, but decided to honor it because of the expression that her dream-self had worn. It was serene, not pained or afraid.

The next night, that dream came true. Another young mage studying with the Arrow cast a spell that went horribly wrong, and a creature from the Abyss wormed its way into the Fallen World. Spells rolled off it harmlessly, and its claws cut through magical armor and the flesh beneath.

It turned its attention to Anaiz, and she stood her ground. As it rushed at her, she looked around and realized that Sleepers were in the surrounding buildings, people who had *no* protection from the monster.

Anaiz isn't sure how she did it, even now, but she opened herself to the monster. As it dove for her, she consumed it, locking it in her body. She passed out, and remained unconscious for three days, wracked with fever and cold sweat.

She woke up in a hospital, and learned that the cabal was dead. Her right eye had turned jet black, as had the fingernails on her right hand and the right side of her tongue. Her medal of the Virgin Mary was still gold, but the St. Anthony medal had changed into a dark, glassy material that she couldn't identify; worst of all, though, she had apparently lost her ability to perform magic.

Strangely, the Consilium hadn't found her. She fled back to Antonio and told him what had happened. She asked for sanctuary, terrified that the Arrow or the Guardians would kill her for what she had become. Antonio discovered, over the next few days, that Anaiz was completely invisible to Awakened magic, and that she could cancel the effects of a standing spell with a gesture from her right hand. When her hand was cov-

ered, though, she regained her ability to use magic. She stayed with Antonio for a month, but no food she ate seemed to nourish her, and no matter what she wore, she couldn't stay warm. She grew weaker and weaker, and finally Antonio took off her glove in an attempt to see if her right hand had changed at all. Without a conscious thought from Anaiz, her hand leapt up and grabbed Antonio by the throat, draining away his life in seconds. He collapsed dead on the floor... but Anaiz felt strength and warmth returning to her body.

She fled his home and the city, horrified at what she had become. Over the next few months, she realized she needed to allow her hand to "feed" on magic to keep herself alive. It could "consume" standing spells or take Mana from a Hallow, but the most efficient way to feed it was to touch a mage. Anaiz used this power to kill a Banisher and to terrify a young mage who was abusing his newly acquired power of mind manipulation, but she has also occasionally used her powers to protect herself from Pentacle mages treating her as an enemy.

Anaiz has considered suicide, but her Catholic upbringing is too strong — suicide is sure damnation, but salvation might still be possible. She gives confession whenever she can, but is wary of remaining in one city for too long. She rarely ventures into suburbs or affluent areas, sticking to slums and, especially, *barrios*. She typically "starves" herself as long as she can, and then tries to find a Hallow or a Consilium house to allow her hand to "feed" from. This destroys wards and leaves Hallows drained, of course, but she figures this is better than killing another person.

**Description:** Anaiz is a Puerto Rican woman in her late teens. She has gone from being slender to being downright skinny. Her eyes are sunken and sad, and her once thick and lustrous hair has become thin and stringy. She carries a duffel bag with her few possessions, and mostly lives in shelters and on the kindness of strangers.

Anaiz' magic does not cause a Nimbus, nor can she deliberately uncloak it. The creature trapped within her consumes this excess magic before it becomes visible. This sometimes has the effect of making other mages doubt that Anaiz is a mage at all.

**Storytelling Hints:** Anaiz is desperate to regain the stability she once had, but before she can do that, she needs to come to terms with what she has become. She imprisoned the Abyssal creature within her body because she wanted to protect others, and she feels (correctly) that this sacrifice was noble. The things she has done since, however, have ranged from mistakes to manslaughter, and

## Artifact: Saints' Medals (Artifact .....)

Durability 3, Size 0, Structure 3

**Mana Capacity:** maximum 11

These medals — a gold one bearing the image of the Virgin Mary and a jet black one bearing a barely recognizable picture of St. Anthony — are strung on an iron chain. The St. Anthony medal is activated by a brief touch and an invocation to the saint ("Tony, Tony, come back around, something is lost and has to be found"). Anyone who invokes it can make use of the "Finder" spell (p. 233 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The gold medal can only be activated by a mage, and requires nothing but a thought. When activated, it allows the user to brighten, but not dim, any source of light in the area (as the "Control Light" spell, p. 165 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

she understands these wrongs will have to be redressed at some point. She would be willing to sacrifice herself to destroy the creature, but is afraid of eternal damnation should she die with sin on her soul.

Anaiz might make for an interesting character to use in a murder mystery-style game. Such stories are hard to pull off in **Mage** because of the superb information-gathering capacity of the Awakened, but Anaiz' immunity to magical detection makes her hard to track. Likewise, the characters might be hot on the trail of a Banisher who has already murdered some of their fellows, only to find the murderer drained of life, face twisted in horror — and a note reading, "*Justicia*."

A character on the journey through the Tarot might encounter Anaiz as he progresses from the Hermit to Justice. Anaiz might be a good way to introduce such a character to the harsh, cold realities of the World of Darkness, both by dint of her plight and because of where she typically resides. For a mage who comes from privilege, the poorer sections of a city are an eye-opening experience. And a mage who ventures here must quickly learn that he *can't* save everyone, and must apply his power in balance — in justice. And, of course, a mage or a cabal that actually catches up with Anaiz has to decide what to do with her. Can she be cured? Is she such a danger to herself and others that she should be put down? Where do the scales of justice fall?



**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Saints' medals.  
**Real Name:** Anaiz Maria Christina Barrera  
**Path:** Obrimos  
**Order:** Apostate  
**Legacy:** None  
**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3  
**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2  
**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3  
**Mental Skills:** Academics (Catholicism) 2, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Investigation (Mages) 2, Occult 2  
**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Running) 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival (City) 2  
**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise (Homeless Shelters, Barrio) 3, Subterfuge 1  
**Merits:** Ambidextrous, Artifact: Saints' Medals (see sidebar), Destiny ("Accept the blindfold") 2, Dream 3, Fast Reflexes 1, Language: English (native Spanish)  
**Willpower:** 6  
**Wisdom:** 5  
**Virtue:** Justice  
**Vice:** Sloth  
**Initiative:** 7 (with Fast Reflexes)  
**Defense:** 3  
**Speed:** 10  
**Health:** 7  
**Gnosis:** 2  
**Arcana:** Forces 3, Matter 2, Prime 2  
**Rotes:** *Forces* — Nightsight (•), Control Fire (••); *Prime* — Transform Aura (••)  
**Note:** Anaiz knows the Silver Ladder "version" of the above rotes, in case this information becomes relevant.  
**Mana/per turn:** 11/2  
**Armor:** 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ••)  
**Magic Shield:** 2 (Prime ••)  
**Supernatural Powers:** In addition to her magic, the following rules apply to Anaiz.  
**• Invisible to Magic:** While her right hand is uncovered, Anaiz is completely invisible to magic, including Time magic (Postcognition) and Space magic (Scrying).  
**• Hungry Right Hand:** If Anaiz touches anything with a connection to the Supernal Realms with her naked right hand, she absorbs the magic. A spell loses two points of Potency per turn, a Hallow loses two points of Mana per turn and a mage suffers two points of lethal damage per turn of contact. If she touches a mage with an active armor spell, the hand affects both the spell and the mage simultaneously (i.e., it doesn't need to consume the spell first). Anaiz needs to consume a certain amount of magic to survive. Ten points of Potency from spells, five points of Mana or three Health points from a mage all count as

one "meal" of magic. Anaiz needs to consume one "meal" per week or she begins to suffer the effects of starvation (see p. 175 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). If she goes more than a week without consuming magic, her hand moves of its own accord when there is a source of magic within arm's reach.

**• Confounding High Speech:** Anaiz hasn't learned of this power yet, since she doesn't know the High Speech, but any attempt on her part to speak in High Speech is corrupted due to the Abyssal influence on her tongue. If any mage hears her perversion of High Speech, his own attempts to use the language might be contaminated for a short time. The player of this mage must roll Resolve + Gnosis. If this roll fails, the next spell the mage casts using High Speech is automatically considered vulgar, whether or not it is normally covert. If the spell results in an uncontained Paradox, the Paradox is automatically considered a Manifestation, no matter how many successes were rolled.

**• Abyssal Vision:** Anaiz knows at a glance if a mage has suffered a Paradox within the last week, whether he is suffering from Resistant Damage from containing a Paradox, and whether an object is a dedicated magical tool.

## *Justice Reversed*

Justice is perverted into revenge. Balance falls, either into passive weakness or overly aggressive bloodlust. The sword cuts down enemies with no regard for the scales of justice, and the blindfold constricts too tightly, cutting off reason as well as sight.

## *Anaiz as an Abyssal Creature*

Instead of containing the creature, Anaiz surrendered to it. Both of her hands are tainted by the Abyss, and she can no longer use magic — but she no longer wants to. Her ideals of self-sacrifice are gone, replaced by the insatiable hunger of the Abyss. Anaiz kills mages when she finds them, draining them dry of magic and leaving them as desiccated husks... or raising their bodies as shambling, undead servants, if you prefer.

In this instance, Anaiz carries two long daggers, stolen from one of the mages she killed. These daggers have no magical properties of their own, but when Anaiz wields them they ignore magical armor. They each inflict 2L damage.

Add the following traits to Anaiz if you go this route:

**Attributes:** Strength 3 (this also raises Speed)

**Skills:** Weaponry 3

**Merits:** Fighting Style: Two Weapons 4



# KEY XII — THE HANGED MAN

He hangs from a gibbet by one foot, with his free leg crossed behind the bound one. His hands are tied behind his back, and he wears a serene expression. The Hanged Man is a strange figure — obviously being tortured or executed, but showing no fear or pain for it. In some decks, he has a golden halo, in others he is holding sacks of money (perhaps equating him with Judas Iscariot). Some interpretations mistakenly posit that he is standing on one foot, prudently deciding where to place the other.

Interestingly, this interpretation isn't too far from a common one in Awakened circles. The Mastigos claim the Hanged Man as one of their cards, both for the notion of bearing suffering for wisdom (see below), and for the Arcanum of Space. The Hanged Man is suspended in nothingness, and his soul is *anywhere*. That relationship with the physical world, to be able to ignore it at will and choose one's place within it, is the crux of Space mastery.

The Hanged Man's interpretation in a reading is problematic. A common way to read him is as an indication to bear suffering stoically, to learn from it, internalize it and move on. This isn't necessarily to indicate that one should seek out suffering, or suffer unnecessarily or unjustly, only that if there is no way to avoid pain, at least make it a learning experience.

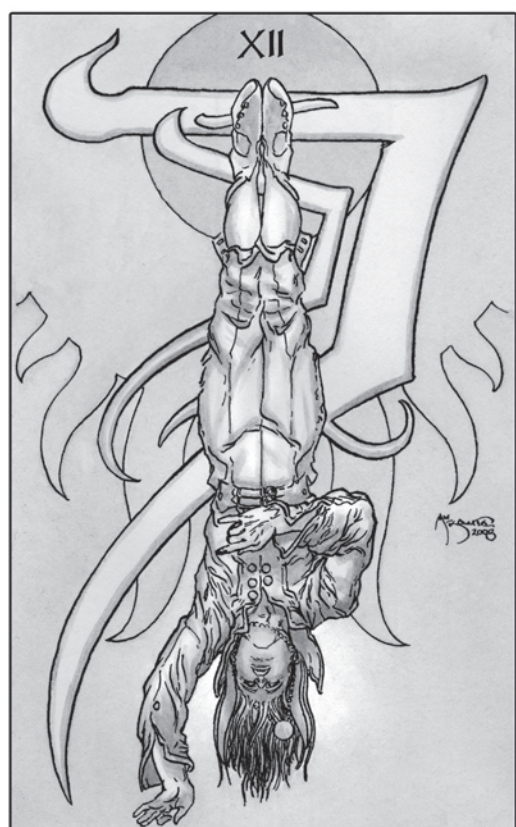
This is especially true if the pain stems from a mistake that the sufferer made or a crime he committed. Thus, the Hanged Man's punishment is a matter of luck or Divine providence (depending on your preference)

or is just desserts, and in either case struggling against it is inappropriate.

The Hanged Man can have loftier implications, too. Suffering for a purpose has resonance from several of the world's greatest mythologies, from Norse to Christian. Suffering might bring wisdom, salvation or death and resurrection, and the Hanged Man can indicate any of these.

For a mage, the Hanged Man is a turning point. The mage is coming to appreciate how serious his power truly is. The moment the mage becomes the Hanged Man varies. It might be the first time he experiences justice from the Consilium for a violation of the *Lex Magica*, or the first time he brings down a particularly severe Paradox. It might be an injury or death he inflicts through careless application of magic. The act isn't as important as the aftermath — the mage must suffer for

what he has done, and in that suffering find a kind of peace. Unfortunately, no one can tell the mage how to reconcile himself with his actions. That is the secret of the Hanged Man, and some mages dangle there for quite some time. Given that the next card in the journey is Death, it's easy to see why they linger.



THE HANGED MAN.



# LEGACY—WHIPPING BOYS

The Safeword is "paradox."

The Whipping Boys appear to be a shallow Legacy, using magic to experience pain for sexual gratification purposes without some of the messy after effects. Life magic, the Legacy's forte, is used to heal the body after long nights of consensual abuse. The Whipping Boys are entrenched in the Sleeper S&M culture, and as such ride close to some seedier practices (especially in the World of Darkness). Given that, other, more conservative mages tend to regard them as freaks or perverts. But the Whipping Boys, beneath their hedonistic ways, have a deeply spiritual side, and roots in ecstatic traditions the world over.

The Whipping Boys believe that through extreme suffering and sensation, a person can reach a place in which the soul is unfettered, unconstrained by any part of the body. The consciousness can then be reshaped, so it's important to enter into the experience with a clear goal. Most of the time, the Whipping Boys use the practice as a way to focus and refine their use of the Dream Merit, but the "Session," as it's called in the Legacy, is also the method by which members advance. In addition, the Whipping Boys claim that a Sleeper who undergoes the Session and remains conscious can reach the Supernal Realms and Awaken.

The Whipping Boys learn and, more importantly, teach, through suffering. Even a mage with no connection to the BDSM culture might find enlightenment—and the beginning or end of the Hanged Man phase of the Tarot journey—in a Session. Of course, that involves moving past the initial feelings of disgust or discomfort, or even homophobia, experienced by the mage.

## History

The Whipping Boys began as a cabal in California. The leader, a brash and hot-headed Obrimos named Steven Babbit (he changed his Shadow Name often, but always chose something offensive—past Shadow Names included Bitch, Faggot, Kike, and Queer), fell into a bout of depression following the death of his lover. Wandering the streets of San Francisco, he found a fetish bar he'd never heard of. He entered, walked into a private room, and told the master on duty to

kill him. He backed up that request with a magical command, using Life magic to bring out a killing instinct in the man.

Over the next six hours, Steven discovered a place that was past pain, past suffering, bleeding, and even pleasure. At the end of the ordeal, as he hung upside down, bleeding and scarred, flesh burned from electrodes, he found enlightenment. He realized that the sensation the body could endure had limits, but that once those limits were surpassed—not just surpassed, but *ignored*—the mind could be free, even for a short while.

He left that morning as the sun rose, and took a new Shadow Name: Ecstatic.

## Forming the New Legacy

Ecstatic was an Adamantine Arrow, but had never been serious about the order before. He enjoyed their training in martial arts and magical combat, but was more interested in sexual exploits than in the order's service-oriented mentality. After his enlightenment, though, he was desperate to share what he'd learned, and so contacted his old mentor, an Arrow Thyrsus named Breaker. The two of them discussed what Ecstatic had experienced, and Breaker felt that the younger mage was on the verge of reshaping his soul without help, becoming the founder of a new Legacy. Ecstatic, who had never been very clear on how this process worked anyway, spoke with other mages who belonged to Legacies and realized that the ordeal he had gone through had left him raw, naked and broken down. That was perfect for the kind of soul-change necessary for a Legacy, but it also meant he would have to do it again.

He went back to the site of the club, but all he found was a boarded-up building. Confused, he asked one of his cabal-mates to check the building's past, but all she found was echoes of music and moans of pleasure. Clearly, this place *had* been used for sex at some point, but not nearly as recently as Ecstatic had claimed. Ecstatic theorized that he had dreamed it all, that his experience had been a kind of second Awakening. He called on an acquaintance, a Mastigos named Minerva, and asked her to hurt him and not to stop

for any reason. Minerva combined magic with her ministrations, and the experience very nearly killed Ecstatic. But hours later, he lay there bleeding once again... and rose, wounds healing, feeling stronger than ever. He had become the first of a new Legacy, and he wished to spread its philosophies.

Ecstatic's cabal fractured after this point. Most of them had no desire to undertake a task like joining a Legacy. They were content to party and use their talents for self-gratification. Some, though, stayed with their former leader, and joined the Adamantine Arrow and then the Legacy, which took the name of the cabal as its title. Word spread throughout the Consilii of California of the "S&M Legacy," and it became a kind of joke for a while ("S&M Legacy? Where from?" "Frisco, of course."). But every so often, a mage with an interest in pain, either for the purposes of enlightening or simple pleasure, came to find Ecstatic and his people. Slowly, the Legacy spreads out from the California coast.

## Induction

Joining the Legacy requires searching out a current member and stating the desire to join. The established Whipping Boys evaluate the supplicant, but the Legacy doesn't take on many pupils. The Legacy is very intimate (see Organization, below), and so new recruits are more often drawn from friends and lovers of a member, rather than strangers. That said, if the chemistry is right, the Whipping Boys might at least agree to a Session just to see what the supplicant is made of.

"Session" is the rather euphemistic title the Legacy uses for its hours-long ordeals of sensory overload. Although pain is a large part of it, Whipping Boys also use pleasurable stimulus (though never actual sex) to bring the supplicant into the desired state. Different members of the Legacy employ different methods — electricity, fire, cutting, whipping, pin-pricks and extremes of cold and heat are all possibilities. The mages aren't above using magic to achieve effects that no Sleeper master could hope for, and, likewise, the Whipping Boys generally keeps a healing spell ready (hung using Time magic, if possible — see p. 260 of **Mage: The Awakening**) in case things get too far out of hand. But apart from a real threat to the supplicant's life, the Session doesn't stop until the supplicant reaches enlightenment. "The safe word is Paradox," is a common phrase in the Legacy. It means that only something as powerful as the Abyss can stop the Session.

Once the Session ends, the supplicant is left alone to contemplate. Sometimes, the supplicant decides this Legacy isn't for him after all. Sometimes, though, the supplicant realizes that in that moment of formless perfection, *past* the pain and the clamps and the tools, there is a beautiful moment of peace and clarity. Those are the mages that the Legacy accepts.

**Parent Path:** Obrimos

**Nickname:** Ecstatics or, less kindly, Perverts

**Orders:** Theurgists of any order can learn the Legacy, but the Whipping Boys have the greatest foothold in the Adamantine Arrow of the west coast. While some Arrow cabals look at the Whipping Boys as hedonists and freaks, others see their point. Pain can lead to enlightenment, and no one can deny the effectiveness of the Whipping Boys in a fight. Ecstatic never intended his Legacy to be peaceful. He was always spoiling for a fight, and he keenly encourages members of the Arrow (of any Path) to undergo the Session, even if they choose not to join.

Opinions from the other orders vary, of course. The Guardians of the Veil has used S&M culture as a labyrinth occasionally, and so doesn't object to a Legacy in place there, provided it's something they can use. They also appreciate any practice that makes members able to withstand (or employ) torture. Unfortunately, the few Guardian Obrimos who have joined the Legacy return to their order refusing to use their newfound skills to harm others. "That's not the point," they say.

The Mysterium and the Silver Ladder don't much care for the Legacy, but again, individual cabals might be more tolerant, depending on their mores. The Mysterium recognizes the long-standing tradition of using pain and sensation to find wisdom, but they find that reading about it and actually being hung upside down and beaten with bronze rods are two different things. The Silver Ladder, on the other hand, finds the whole thing a bit kinky (which doesn't necessarily mean they don't participate).

The Free Council doesn't always get the philosophical side right away, but being the order most closely tied in to modern Sleeper society, they often have a better sense of the culture from which the Legacy came. The order itself doesn't have any problem with the Whipping Boys, and more mages from the Legacy come from this order than any other, apart from the Arrow.

**Appearance:** Some Whipping Boys wear their allegiance on their sleeves, dressing in leathers and covered in body piercings and so on, but most of them blend into



whatever society they move in. While an outsider might expect scars and other marks, the Ecstatics normally heal any damage that might come from a Session. They usually aren't interested in bearing scars from their enlightenment (although sometimes it's fun to show off).

**Background:** Despite the name, the Legacy includes both men and women. Female members sometimes refer to themselves as "Whipping Girls," but just as often use the title "Whipping Boys" to refer to the Legacy as a whole and use the sobriquet "Ecstatic" when referring to themselves. The Legacy takes much of its membership from the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender cultures of California, and from the rest of the world, as the Legacy spreads, but this has more to do with its outspokenly gay founder than a policy on the Whipping Boys' part.

Theoretically, a Whipping Boy can come from any background, provided he can achieve enlightenment through the Session. In practice, this requires that the supplicant be physically fit, socially liberal (intolerant people don't tend to get invited to undergo the Session) and psychologically strong. Beyond that, a Whipping Boy might choose anyone to go under his tools.

**Organization:** The Legacy is very intimate. Members in the same area know one another, and it's not uncommon to see cabals of Whipping Boys rather than several cabals all containing a member. Ecstatic stays abreast of what's happening to the Legacy as best he can, and the members meet annually in San Francisco, often under the guise of a pride parade or street fair. During the rest of the year, the Whipping Boys maintain online discussions and share information through the Internet. A member of the Legacy traveling to a strange city can usually find lodging or hospitality with another member, but this gets chancier as one travels to more conservative or rural areas, or to cities without much of an S&M scene.

**Suggested Oblations:** Performing or undergoing a Session, wrestling, sex, meditation, cleaning and preparing tools for a Session, fighting (sparring or an actual brawl), sensory deprivation, servitude (being at another's beck and call for the length of the oblation).

**Concepts:** Master, sub, martial arts teacher, political activist, religious leader, club owner, trance artist, party animal, drug experimenter, S&M equipment designer.

## *Attainments*

The Attainments of the Whipping Boys are designed to make best use of the moment of clarity that comes after

the Session. As such, they build on the body's responses to pain as well as the immense wealth of knowledge and insight in the unfettered consciousness.

Not all members of the Legacy have the Dream Merit, but most of them develop it after joining. The Session leaves the mind in a perfect state to gain access to the universal body of knowledge. In game terms, when a Whipping Boy uses the Session to activate the Dream Merit, the player adds the character's Gnosis rating to the roll for the Merit.

### *1st: Pain is Strength*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Life 2 (primary), Mind 1, Brawl 1

Ecstatic was a proponent of channeling anger, pain and aggression back on opponents, having been on the receiving end of gay-bashing for much of his life. This Attainment allows a mage to take physical punishment and convert it to a quick shot of adrenaline. Whenever the mage takes damage, the player can spend a point of Mana and add a number of dice equal to the points of damage from the attack to the mage's next Physical action. This action can include combat (hand-to-hand or ranged, though Ecstatic prefers close combat), but could also be used to flee from the fight if things aren't going well. It can even be used for spellcasting if the mage is using a rote that relies on a Physical Attribute (such as Self-Healing).

### *2nd: Pain is Skill*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Life 3

Taking the notion of feeding from pain one step further, the mage can use injury to sharpen his focus, empower his muscles, and even heighten reaction time. To activate this Attainment, the character must suffer at least one level of lethal damage. If the character takes damage from an outside source, he can activate this Attainment reflexively. Pattern scouring (p. 78 of **Mage: The Awakening**) is another possible method.

Activating the Merit requires the expenditure of one point of Mana, and a reflexive Stamina + Resolve + Life roll. If the roll succeeds, the player chooses one Physical Skill. For the rest of the scene, any rolls involving that Skill gain the benefit of the rote action rule (p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The first roll the player makes using that Skill is a rote action at no cost. Every roll after that requires the expenditure of one point of Mana. If the character wishes to enjoy the benefit for more than one Skill, he must activate the Attainment again.

## The Session

Successfully undergoing the Session requires that the character move past pain and even bodily sensation, becoming completely open to his own mind. How, though, do you represent that in game terms?

It might not be necessary to do so. The character's mentor is, presumably, skilled enough to bring the character through the Session inflicting little actual injury on him. Likewise, a lover or master with whom the character is very familiar probably knows him well enough to push the right buttons, so to speak, without really hurting him.

If, however, you need to know if the character reaches the state of enlightenment at the end of the Session (perhaps time is a factor), you can use the following system. The Session is an extended action. It is also a teamwork action (see p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) in which the Whipping Boy is the primary actor. The character administering the pain is the secondary actor. Unlike most teamwork actions, in this case the two characters have different dice pools. The secondary actor's player rolls Dexterity + Wits, while the Whipping Boy's player rolls Wits + Composure. Each roll requires 30 minutes of "work," and the target number of successes is (the character's Stamina + Resolve + 10). If the character also has the Iron Stamina Merit, those dots are also added to the total number of successes required. A mage with sufficient dots in the Life Arcanum can use the Degrading the Form spell (p. 186 of **Mage: The Awakening**) to make it easier on himself.

The character suffers one point of bashing damage for every 30 minutes of the Session, and does not heal while it is still going on. Wound penalties do not apply to the character's roll, however.

**Example:** Ecstatic is in a fight again — seems he shot off his mouth at the wrong bar. Someone breaks a bottle over his head, inflicting one point of lethal damage, so he takes the opportunity to activate this Attainment. He chooses Brawl as the Physical Skill. For the remainder of the scene, his player can spend a Mana point and receive the rote action bonus on any Brawl Skill (one point of

Mana per roll). Later in the fight, Ecstatic gets stabbed for two points of lethal damage and decides to respond in kind. He activates this Attainment again (requiring another roll and another point of Mana) and chooses Weaponry, pulling his own knife. His player can now spend Mana to make Brawl or Weaponry rolls rote.

### Optional Arcanum: Mind 3

The Session is consensual, but it's still torture, after a fashion. A Whipping Boy schooled in the Mind Arcanum can bring the endurance he develops to bear in other situations. By spending one point of Mana, the mage adds his Mind rating to either his Resolve or his Composure. This can be done reflexively, especially if the mage senses an incoming mental or emotional attack, such as an unwanted Mind spell. This Attainment can be used independently of the Augment the Mind spell (p. 210 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but the Attainment lasts only a number of turns equal to the mage's Gnosis, after which it must be reactivated.

### 3rd: *Pain is Perfection*

#### Prerequisites: Gnosis 7, Life 4

At the pinnacle of achievement for the Whipping Boys, the mage can apply the rules for Pain is Skill to Physical Attributes, instead of just Skills. The system and the requirements remain the same, but the character can use the rules for rote actions on, for instance, any Strength roll in a fight, provided the player spends a point of Mana for each one.

#### Optional Arcanum: Mind 4

Following a Session, the mage can leave his body behind and go wandering through Twilight, as described in the "Psychic Projection" spell (p. 215 of **Mage: The Awakening**). This Attainment does not cost Mana or require a roll. The character can stay detached from his body for up to an hour after the Session is complete. After that, the mage can cast the Psychic Projection spell to remain in this state. If he does so, the spell is considered covert, rather than vulgar (since the mage is already out of his body).

## Sample Character

### Leash

**Quote:** I'd love to, master.

**Background:** The sub is the one with the real power. That's the irony of the bondage/domination setup, of course. The dom isn't usually going to stop it, and so the sub is the one that is really in control. Leash



learned that lesson shortly before her Awakening, but it wasn't until she subbed for her brother that she really learned what it meant.

Michelle Deeds started practicing S&M at 14. Always a sexually precocious girl, she'd read *The Story of O* by age 12 and was picking her way through *The Pearl* when another girl at her middle school offered to try a few things out with her. They took turns being in control, and Michelle didn't mind being the top, but where she really felt comfortable, where she really felt satisfied, was in doing another person's bidding. When she started having sex with boys in high school, she was sorely disappointed. Not with the sensation of sex; that was all right. But the boys never seemed to enjoy patiently ordering her about. They just wanted to get undressed. Michelle found that girls could please her better, and as she grew older, she stopped seeing men entirely.

She graduated from college with a degree in education, and painstakingly kept her personal life secret. She moved to California hoping to find a more tolerant atmosphere, someplace that she could go clubbing and not worry about what would happen if one of her students' parents were to see her. As it happened, it was one of her brother's Army buddies who saw her at a fetish bar. Michelle's brother, a thug on the best of days, was on the next plane out. They argued, and he threatened to tell their parents what she was doing if she continued. Michelle, more afraid that he might tell her school board than her family, asked that he stay and "help her get clean again" while she tried to figure out what to do. Her initial plan was to get him to understand why she enjoyed the things she did, so she called a friend and the three of them went to one of the tamer bars in the area.

While her friend entertained her brother, Michelle slipped off and met with a man named Tomás, one of the few men she would allow to dominate her. Tomás listened to her problem, and told her that her brother had the same needs that she did, he was just approaching them from a different (and much less comfortable) place. Tomás offered her a special session that night, one in which she could learn something truly useful. Michelle, intrigued but afraid that her brother might see,

accepted. Tomás, of course, was a Whipping Boy, and in the Session that followed, Michelle Awakened.

She took her brother home that night and, over the next few weeks, did everything he asked. It started off slowly, with her doing the cooking and cleaning — he hardly noticed anything different. But when she started referring to him as "sir," when she started moving invisibly around their apartment, responding to requests that he hadn't made, he realized what was happening. He couldn't stop it, though, because he couldn't bring himself to tell her to disobey him.

Her brother left, and moved back home. He never said a word to their parents. Michelle, meanwhile, took the Shadow Name "Leash" and joined both the Adamantine Arrow and the Whipping Boys. She maintains her life as a teacher, but during her off time, gives lessons of a very different sort.

**Description:** Leash is in her late 20s, and is a quietly beautiful woman. She wears her brown hair short, and typically dresses in professional, but comfortable clothes. She wears jeans on Friday religiously, however, refusing to send the message that educators can't be comfortable.

Leash's Nimbus manifests as a feeling of crackling electricity along any exposed skin of witnesses. Powerful magic also provokes a feeling of subjugation and humility, as though bowing before an obviously godlike figure.

**Storytelling Hints:** Leash takes an almost Taoist attitude toward her proclivities. By bending to the will of another, she becomes more flexible, and therefore stronger. By being willing to do almost anything, she maintains her own sense of self, independent of her actions. She is able to keep this mindset, of course, by choosing who she will serve under (usually Tomás, where magical matters are concerned), and although she is trained to fight, she abhors violence.

Michelle is a deceptively strong character. She might appear meek or even abused, but in fact, she chooses every aspect of her life. She might be a good foil for mages who try to direct and shape everything around them — the Session taught her to allow things to happen, and to revel in powerlessness.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Electric wand

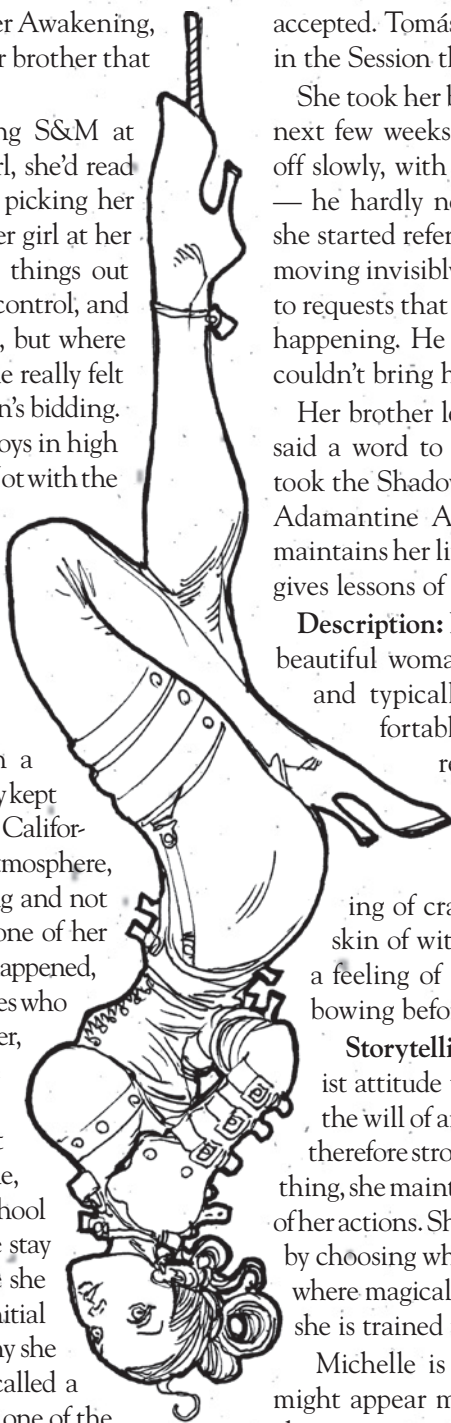
**Real Name:** Michelle Deeds

**Path:** Obrimos

**Order:** Adamantine Arrow

**Legacy:** Whipping Boys

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3



**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3  
**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Teaching) 3, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Science 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Survival 2

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation (Quiet Authority) 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise (S&M Culture) 3, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Dream 2, Iron Stamina 1, Resources 1, Status (Adamantine Arrow) 2, Status (Teacher) 1, Striking Looks 2

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 7

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Lust

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 8

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Forces 2, Life 2, Mind 3, Prime 2

**Rotes:** *Forces*—Tune In (•), Influence Electricity (••); *Life*—Cleanse the Body (•); Body Control (••), Self-Healing (••); *Mind*—Sense Consciousness (•), First Impressions (••), Misperception (••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup>—Pain is Strength

**Mana/per turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 3 (“Misperception,” Mind ••)

**Magic Shield:** 2 (Prime ••)

## *The Hanged Man Reversed*

The pain is too much, and the Hanged Man breaks the rope, crashing to the ground and giving up without gaining any particular insight. He becomes bitter about his suffering, rather than stoic, and might seek to take out this bitterness on other people. This course of action, naturally, can lead him straight past Death and Temperance to the Devil.

## *The Whipping Boys as a Left-Handed Legacy*

Ecstatic was never really able to let go of his anger, even in the trance-like state after the first Session. He

discovered that there were *things* there with him after his flesh had been mortified, and that those things wanted to talk to him. They would end his pain, end his anger, and make him cold and unfeeling, if he would help them. Ecstatic, who entered into this first Session attempting to die, agreed, and the Whipping Boys were born.

The Legacy uses the same Attainments (for the most part, see below), but the ultimate goal isn't enlightenment. The goal is losing pain, losing sensation, and becoming numb to the horror of the world. The Legacy doesn't recruit from the S&M crowd very heavily, but instead searches out men and women who are trying to become “cured” of being gay, bisexual or transgendered, and offering them the ability to make their “unnatural desires” go away. Ecstatic, of course, would never have endorsed this before, but after a few Sessions and conversations with the things in the dark, he just doesn't care.

Over time, Whipping Boys stop talking out loud, and communicate with each other using telepathy. The optional power for the second Attainment changes: instead of becoming more resistant, the Whipping Boys can automatically send telepathic messages to each other. A message consisting of up to five words is reflexive, while a more complex message requires an instant action and a roll of Presence + Gnosis.

Also, the bonus to the Dream Merit does not apply to the Whipping Boys in this variant. Instead, any attempt to influence a Whipping Boy's emotions (though not his thoughts) suffers a penalty equal to the character's Stamina, in addition to whatever penalty is normally levied.

Whatever the voices are that speak to the Whipping Boys in the throes of their pain, they want more servants. They also want to be allowed into the Fallen World. They might be Abyssal spirits, or they might be demons of some kind. In any event, when the Legacy reaches some kind of critical mass, every member's flesh will split open, allowing one of these things to enter our world and remain here. Ecstatic knows this, for he has seen it many times in his dreams. He just doesn't care anymore.



# KEY XIII — DEATH

Some decks don't even put Death's name on this card, since to name Death might summon him. Death is usually depicted by the Grim Reaper, a grinning skeleton holding a scythe. In some decks, he is astride a white horse, referencing Revelations 6:8 — "I looked, and behold! A pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hell followed with him." Women, children, men and even kings are pictured falling in the wake of this dark rider, for nothing can gainsay the hand of Death.

But for all its terrifying imagery, right down to the association with the "unlucky" number 13, the Death card isn't necessarily a harbinger of tragedy. While it certainly can be interpreted as an omen that someone is about to die, the card can also connote change, the "death" of one set of circumstances for the "birth" of another. Everything must pass away to make room for the new, and while the card might be macabre, it can also be hopeful. The joyous times must die, yes, but so too must the sorrowful.

The Moros Path has long claimed this card as their symbol, and the symbol of the Arcanum of Death. The correspondences are clear, the imagery is perfect — but still, some mages, even a few Necromancers, question the choice. If the Death card represents change, might not Matter be a more suitable choice? The power of tradition is strong, though, and the power of names is stronger. The Death card is inextricably associated with the Path of Doom and their shadowy arts in Awakened society; what else would have the same strength?

For mages on the journey through the Tarot, the Death card follows the pain of the Hanged Man. Once the mage has learned to cope with that card, and hopefully come to terms with whatever he did to

deserve its torture, he symbolically "dies," putting the past behind him. He is reborn to a new day, wiser and ready to gain new wisdom — that of Temperance.

## *Location — Church of the Harvest*

It's a bit of a drive from the city proper, but the parishioners who attend the Church of the Harvest are quite loyal. The pastor, Leo Billian, has a warm and easy manner, and his sermons don't incorporate any of the vitriolic, divisive rhetoric found elsewhere in American churches. The church isn't popular with the young folks, of course, but Billian doesn't spend much effort on trying to make religion seem "cool" or "hip." He's not interested in tricking people into showing up. He wants them to show up to gain a deeper connection with God, to foster a sense of community, and above all, to know they have somewhere to go and be safe.

Billian is a good man, and if he knew about the entities living around his church and what they were doing, he would probably pull the place down with his bare hands. Sadly, it

wouldn't help. The Harvest would continue.

## *History*

The Harvest has been going on for many years. At the moment a person dies, the Harvesters come and collect a symbol of the death, and then leave our world through shadows and chill breezes. The Harvesters were here long before the Europeans arrived and built on the site, and they have been here through the property's many incarnations — a corner store, a private home, a farm. Finally, after a cabal of mages burned down the building



on the site 20 years ago (at the time, it was a post office, which meant that the arson made some headlines), Billian bought the land and built a church.

Billian was not always a man of God. He was a doctor specializing in hospice care, looking after the dying and helping them to move on. The fear of death he saw on a regular basis, not just from his patients, but from their families and the lawmakers that tied his hands, frustrated him. Death was frightening, yes, but it also meant the soul could move on, could be with God, and could finally know rest. Why was that so horrible? Billian narrowly avoided prosecution for assisted suicide on a number of occasions, and after one particularly heart-wrenching case in which a woman of only 40 begged him to help her die to end the constant pain she felt, Billian quit. He wasn't a healer of bodies anyway, he said at his "retirement" dinner. He was more interested in people's souls, and that was why he was devoting his life to God.

Billian became an ordained minister and built the Church of the Harvest. He sponsored initiatives to clean up the nearby river, to replant some of the forest that had been lost in the fire, and asked that his parishioners volunteer a few hours a week at a charity of their choice (he favored hospice, of course). Slowly, the congregation began to grow. If the cabal of mages that burnt the place down before were watching, they made no indication. All seemed well.

### *Nightmares and Sightings*

The area around the church has always been home to strange rumors, though. Things go missing — little knickknacks, articles of clothing, and so on. Locals refer to "Collectors," little faerie-like creatures that steal these objects. The stories can be traced all the way back to pre-Colonial times, in fact, but few people have ever made the connection that the objects that go missing correspond to the death of a person.

With the construction of the Church of the Harvest, though, the "Collectors" apparently grew more blatant. Now, people actually saw them, though never clearly. In the hospital near the church, staff and family members would see movement in the hallways at night, hear rustling of curtains or catch a glimpse of what looked like a hand, and then something would go missing. The sightings were seldom discussed by the light of day, though. Like most of the otherworldly entities in the World of Darkness, the Collectors seemed best protected by the fact that people don't *want* to discover the truth.

Billian wasn't from the area and had never heard of

the Collectors. He was, however, interested in death and despised hospice care as it was usually practiced. He built an extension to the church that would allow families to move sick relatives out of hospital care and let them have some privacy and some dignity, and since Billian had kept his medical license current (secretly, he felt he had worked too hard to become a doctor to just let that part of his life go), he could make sure they received the care they needed. But this meant that people were dying with more frequency close to the church, and close to the river. That, in turn, meant the Collectors grew more active.

Billian first knew something was wrong five years ago, when he agreed to a lock-in at the church for the children of the congregation (ages 10 and up, under strict supervision, of course). One of the kids, as it happened, was allergic to peanuts. One of the others was diabetic and had brought along snacks in case her blood sugar dropped... one of which was a small cup of peanut butter. Several of the middle schoolers, these two included, sneaked off to play spin-the-bottle, and the boy slipped into shock and died. The other four people nearby saw something reach out from the shadows, grab his medical ID bracelet, and pull it into the darkness. That story has become an urban legend in the area, with many different variations (including one in which the arm pulled the boy into the darkness, where he was later found dead "of fright"). It is true, however, that of the four people who saw the Collector that night, none of them live in the area anymore. One is institutionalized and on constant suicide watch. One is living in New York City, where he produces some of the most disturbing sculptures ever seen. One converted to Catholicism and took holy orders, and lives far away in a convent. The fourth, the girl who kissed the unfortunate boy, shot herself a year after the tragedy. Interestingly, the shell casing from the bullet that killed her was never found.

Since then, the church hasn't sponsored another lock-in, and in fact has done very little in the way of Sunday school and other youth-focused activities. Billian acknowledges that he is "gun-shy" over the incident, and stresses that he is always available to act as counselor to troubled youths. His primary focus, though, is the Harvest hospice.

### *Description*

The church is a brown, two-story building. The main congregation area is cozy (Billian never expected too large of a crowd, so didn't make the church too grand-





ose), but hasn't ever quite reached capacity. The art in the room is tasteful and subdued, and the atmosphere is always warm and quiet. Many parishioners report feeling lulled by the church — not bored, not sleepy, but safe and welcome. A very few, though, report that they feel something is watching them in the church, clinging to the rafters or hiding in the shadows. These people don't tend to attend services more than once.

The basement of the church is used for storage. It once had a furnished room, but after the fateful lockdown, those furnishings were taken to the hospice. Now, the basement is barren and unfriendly. Only Billian and the church staff ever go downstairs to fetch supplies, and the staff always draws straws to see who gets saddled with that task.

The church is surrounded on three sides by forest, though the trees are still fairly thin, all having been

planted within the last 20 years. On the west side of the church, the ground slopes away into a small valley, at the bottom of which is the river. The river winds past the church and leads to the hospital a few miles downstream. The river *always* freezes over in winter, and the local children sometimes go skating on the ice. Once in a while, a child reports seeing something move under the ice. "The Collectors," older brothers and sisters whisper. "Whatever you do, don't fall after you see one. They'll pull you under."

The hospice is a small auxiliary building, accessible from the church through a covered walkway. The hospice is fully handicapped-accessible (there are no stairs in it at all, in fact), and consists of a supply room/nurse's station and six patient rooms. Each patient room has a bed, a few shelves and a cable hook-up, and Billian helps a "tenant" make whatever reasonable alterations she wishes.



## *Getting Involved*

**Mage** characters might become interested in the Church of the Harvest for a number of reasons. A few possible hooks for a cabal are listed here:

- One or more of the mages might be acquainted with the cabal that burned the post office down two decades ago. In fact, a young cabal might be assigned “follow-up” on this area.
- The characters might attend the church before their Awakenings. One might even start to Awaken as a Moros, but find the way to Stygia blocked (see Systems, below).
- The characters might meet one of the people who attended the lock-in. They might see the artist’s work in New York, or meet the young man languishing in the asylum. In any event, their stories might be enough to spur an investigation.
- The characters might have family or friends dying in the hospice (which, incidentally, might include interesting themes of the limits of magic and whether it’s appropriate to use magic to stave off death from normally terminal disease). If they are present when someone dies, they might notice the Harvest taking place.
- If your chronicle involves vampires, zombies or other undead creatures, you might involve the characters by allowing them to see what happens when a dead being wanders into the area under the Harvest (see below).

## *Research*

If the characters dig into the past of the region, they can learn the information presented below. The methods that the characters can use to uncover this information and how much effort it requires are also described.

- The region has had legends about shadowy creatures collecting tokens from the dying for centuries. If the characters do some research into the beliefs of the Native tribes of the area (which will, of course, vary based on where you have decided the church is located), they learn of legends about spirits known as “Guides” or “Harbingers.” These spirits, supposedly, would lead a soul on its way after death, in exchange for a small token from the deceased. Usually, this was something that the deceased was carrying on him at the time of death, and it became common practice to carry an object of great value to ensure speedy transition to the afterlife. This practice was outlawed in the 18th century, crept back into fashion in the early 1900s, and all but disappeared after World War I. Characters

can learn this information by performing research in any library (Intelligence + Academics, 10 successes needed, every roll requires 30 minutes of work).

- The characters can learn the details of the lock-in, the names of the dead boy and the four witnesses, and their current whereabouts. Learning what happened at the lock-in is fairly easy, since it is a matter of public record (success on an Intelligence + Academics roll). Learning the names of the witnesses requires talking to Billian (see below) or one of the other church staff, which probably necessitates Social rolls (Presence + Persuasion, Manipulation + Persuasion, Presence + Intimidation, or magic, depending on the characters’ approach).

Finding two of the witnesses is easy enough. One is dead, and the other has some acclaim as a New York artist (running his name through an online search engine brings up his web site, complete with photos of his work and contact information). The other two are much harder to find. One is institutionalized (permission from the family or Status, Allies or Contacts with the medical community is required), and the other is ensconced in a convent (Status, Allies or Contacts in the Catholic Church — even her family doesn’t know where she is).

Any of the living witnesses can describe the Collectors, but will require considerable persuasion to do so (at least 10 successes on an extended Social action of some kind, with modifiers as appropriate based on how the Storyteller wants to present these characters).

- Researching Leo Billian through the American Medical Association is fairly simple, and reveals that he has, in the past, been under suspicion for doctor-assisted suicide, but never charged. If the Death 1 spell “Soul Marks” is used on Billian, the mage learns that the minister has, in fact, killed in the past. He bears no evidence of malice or violence, however.

- If the characters interview the medical staff at the nearby hospital, they learn that the nurses and aides are superstitious about working the night shift. They also learn that the staff has undergone repeated investigations after rings and other small, valuable items turn up missing from deceased patients.

## *Systems — The Harvest and the Collectors*

The Harvest, obviously, has been going on for many years. This section explains what the Harvest is and what the characters can do about it.

The center of the activity is not the church or even the land it is on, but the river. Most rivers bear



a sympathetic connection to the Supernal Realm of Stygia, but in this case, the river “leads” somewhere else entirely. If it were possible for a mage to follow one of the Collectors home, that mage would see a bleak wasteland with an amber sky, dotted with stone buildings with smoke-stained windows. The Collectors live here, hoarding their piles of stolen goods, trading among themselves and working toward whatever their goal might be. The connection to this strange land actually *blocks* any sympathetic connection with Stygia. This means the magic of the Moros doesn’t function well here, among other things.

The Collectors are not spirits, not in the usual sense. They do not come from the Shadow, and searching for them in Twilight or past the Gauntlet is futile. They appear when they need to appear and take their tribute, and then return home. Whenever anyone dies on this stretch of the river (which happens to encompass the church and the hospital, as well as any other structures that the Storyteller wishes), a Collector wriggles out of a shadow or flies in on a gust of wind. It steals an object from the dying, a symbol of the death, and then creeps back into its home. It takes with it any ability that the deceased person might have had to linger. That is, it is impossible for someone who dies under the Harvest to become a ghost, to be turned into a vampire (though vampires have their own problems in the Harvest) or to be revived after brain death. This might preclude Awakening as a Moros, since Necromancers very often suffer near-death experiences during their trips to Stygia, except that the way to Stygia is completely blocked anyway.

Why and how did this happen? Where, or what, is the home of the Collectors? It might be that this area has always contained this connection, and that the Collectors come from some strange pocket of reality, similar to an Atlantean temple. If that’s the case, then it opens the question of how many other such unique “bubbles” exist, and what one might find in them.

Another possibility is that this particular “bubble” was opened, mistakenly or deliberately, by a mage or some other supernatural creature. Whatever magic created it must have gone out of control. If this is the case, then the Collectors are failed (or successful?) experiments, taking things from the dying and preventing them from lingering.

A third option is that the Collectors *are* spirits, and that their home is just a pocket of the Shadow. It is so heavily focused on death that Spirit magic doesn’t function as it should, but it is spiritual in nature all the same. What happened here to make the area so

resonant with death? And why hasn’t it happened in places like Dachau, or Rwanda, or Pompei, or any of the thousands of locale that would seem appropriate?

### *Mechanics*

The following game mechanics apply inside the area under the Harvest:

- The death of a mortal never results in a ghost. The soul immediately vanishes at death. Resuscitation is not possible after brain death. If a vampire attempts to change a mortal into a vampire, the attempt automatically fails.
- All Moros suffer a –2 to spellcasting rolls inside the Harvest. All uses of the Death Arcanum suffer a –1. These penalties are cumulative, so a Moros mage casting a Death spell suffers a –3 penalty.
- All Moros suffer horrible nightmares if they sleep inside the Harvest area. They do not regain Willpower for sleeping after a night of such dreams. The Mind 3 spell “Sleep of the Just” can be used to counteract this effect.
- Vampires, zombies and other undead creatures are sluggish and confused while under the Harvest. Self-aware undead creatures suffer a –3 to *all* actions. Undead creatures under another being’s control (such as those created by the “Quicken Corpse” spell) are prone to slumping over inert if not under direct supervision.
- Special mechanics regarding the Collectors can be found below.

### *Ending the Harvest*

It might be possible to “fix” the area under the Harvest, banishing the Collectors and reverting the area back to normal. However, given that the Harvest has continued for at least 300 years, doing so would be extremely difficult — like changing the course of a river. In fact, doing exactly that might be a way to end the Harvest. Since the focal point of the effect is the river, if it were dammed or rerouted, or even poisoned to a degree that made it unable to sustain life, the connection to the Collectors’ homeland might break.

Characters might also be able to forge a connection to Stygia and cause it to override the Harvest. This would probably require a ritual involving at least one Master of Death, and as many Moros as possible. Other beings with connections to Stygia might also be helpful — ghosts, vampires and zombies might cause enough of a sympathetic connection to the Kingdom of Crypts. The ritual might take hours or days, and shake every

dead body in the area loose from its chains, causing a temporary uprising of the walking dead (and more work for the Awakened).

But then, it could be a great deal simpler than that. The mages might just need to prevent a Collector from taking its tribute. If the characters could track the Collector back to its homeland and catch it before it adds the trinket it stole to its pile, perhaps the curse would break and the Collector's home would be sealed off from the Fallen World forever (hopefully, the characters can get back first!).

## Supporting Characters

### Leo Billian

**Quote:** *Not fearing death isn't the same thing as wanting to die.*

**Description:** Reverend Billian is about 55, and works to stay in shape, though he's become a little plump around the middle in recent years. He has black hair streaked with gray, and wears a beard, giving him a fatherly look. He dresses in black most of the time — it's not required of him, of course, but somehow he just feels more comfortable that way.

**Storytelling Hints:** Leo Billian is a good man and a devout Christian. He gave up a lucrative career because he honestly felt that his calling lay elsewhere, and he does occasionally use that fact as currency when dealing with other religious leaders or with disillusioned churchgoers. Some of the folks who attend his church and feel paranoid or uneasy also feel that Billian is a morbid sort of person, but Billian doesn't feel any kind of fascination or love for death. He just doesn't fear it, and he wants to help other people let go of that fear.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Religion) 3, Computer 1, Medicine (Hospice Care) 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Drive 2, Stealth 1

**Social Skills:** Empathy (Comfort) 3, Expression (Sermons) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Allies (Parishioners) 4, Contacts (Religious, Medical), Inspiring, Resources 1, Status (Church) 4, Status (Licensed Doctor) 1

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 7

**Virtue:** Hope

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 7

### Collectors

**Description:** The Collectors are about four feet tall. They are vaguely humanoid, but their arms and legs are spindly and disproportionately long for their bodies. They can grasp with their toes just as easily as with their fingers. Their skin is black, mottled with patches of gray, about the same texture as a frog's. Collectors do not speak, but chirp in a strangely beautiful lilt. They are completely scentless, and do not leave behind fingerprints, blood or any other biological mark of their passing.

**Storytelling Hints:** The Collectors are only motivated by their desire to take their strange bounty. They don't respond to fear, anger or pleading, though they can recognize threats and will not pursue a trinket at a cost to their own lives. Collectors seem to be in competition for trinkets, but they do not fight over them. Rather, if one is distracted or driven off, another appears to claim the prize: Collectors are not as intelligent as humans, but are cunning, and are capable of distracting people to reach their goals.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** none

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Stealth 5

**Social Skills:** none

**Merits:** Fast Reflexes 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Initiative:** 9

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 18 (species factor 10)

**Size:** 4

**Health:** 6

**Supernatural Powers:**

**Unnatural Transit:** Collectors can enter the Fallen World through shadows or by riding on a breeze. A shadow must be large enough to admit the creature. The breeze must be a natural one (a breeze created by a fan doesn't count, though a breeze summoned by magic would). It costs a Collector one point of Willpower to enter our world, and one point to exit *unless* it is carrying a token from a dead person.



**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Grapple	OB	5
Strike	OB	5

## Death Reversed

Death reversed is stagnation. Instead of cycles ending and beginning anew, the cycle stalls and sputters, grinding its gears and building up pressure. Eventually, something will break, but until that time, everything suffers.

The most common reason for this stagnation is fear of change. People might actively work against Death if they fear an ending to the present situation. Even if the present situation is unpleasant for a majority, a change would be frightening, it would be difficult and it would be *new*. New growth might follow the forest fire, but that still means things have to burn, unfortunately.

Death reversed can also indicate that someone (perhaps the seeker) is trying to deliberately subvert the natural order. In mythology, this doesn't tend to end well, and is often called "hubris." When Death reversed shows up in a mage's Tarot reading, he would do well to take it seriously.

## The Church of the Harvest as a Tainted Site

The Church of the Harvest, as written, isn't terribly malevolent. Yes, the Collectors are frightening, but they aren't actually hurting anyone (as far as anyone can tell). In this variation, though, Leo Billian is well aware of what is happening — he created it.

Billian is a Tremere Lich who gave up his soul in 1685. The legends of the Collectors began because his creations stole trinkets from the dying, allowing him to steal their souls and use them later. He was driven away from the area, though, before he could cancel the spell (including the Death-created pocket realm in Twilight). Over time, his creations mutated into the strange, otherworldly monsters they are today.

Billian returned and started up his church as he needs souls much more frequently now. He has, however, lost control of the Collectors, and as a Moros, his magic is hampered under the Harvest. He would like to find a way to bring the effect back under his control, but that means understanding it, and for that, he'll need some help.

Obviously, as a lich, Billian's traits are different:

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Apostate

**Legacy:** Tremere Lich

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Religion) 3, Computer 1, Medicine (Hospice Care) 3, Occult 5

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Weaponry (Hammer) 3

**Social Skills:** Empathy (False Security) 3, Expression (Sermons) 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Allies (Parishioners) 4, Contacts (Religious, Medical), Dream 2, Inspiring, Resources 3, Status (Church) 4, Status (Licensed Doctor) 1

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 1

**Virtue:** Hope

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 7

**Arcana:** Death 5, Fate 3, Matter 4, Prime 2, Space 3, Spirit 3, Time 4

**Rotes:** *Death* — Speak with the Dead (•), Corpse Mask (••), Touch of the Grave (••), Devouring the Slain (•••), Ghost Gate (•••), Quicken Corpse (•••), Suppress Own Life (•••), Revenant (••••), Twilight Shift (••••), Devouring the Living (•••••); *Fate* — Evil Eye (••), Monkey's Paw (•••); *Matter* — Steel Windows (••), Armor Piercing (••), Annihilate Matter (••••); *Prime* — Dispel Magic (•), Inscribe Grimoire (•), Transform Aura (••); *Space* — Omnivision (•), Conceal Sympathy (••); *Spirit* — Spirit Tongue (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (••), Control Spirit (•••); *Time* — Perfect Timing (•), Glimpsing the Future (••), Shield of Chronos (••), Shifting Sands (•••), Present as Past (••••), Temporal Stutter (••••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — Hideous Stipend, 2<sup>nd</sup> — Wicked Chain, 3<sup>rd</sup> — Supernal Theft

**Mana/per turn:** 20/7

**Armor:** 5 ("Entropic Guard," Death ••)

**Magic Shield:** 2 (Prime ••)



# KEY XIV—TEMPERANCE

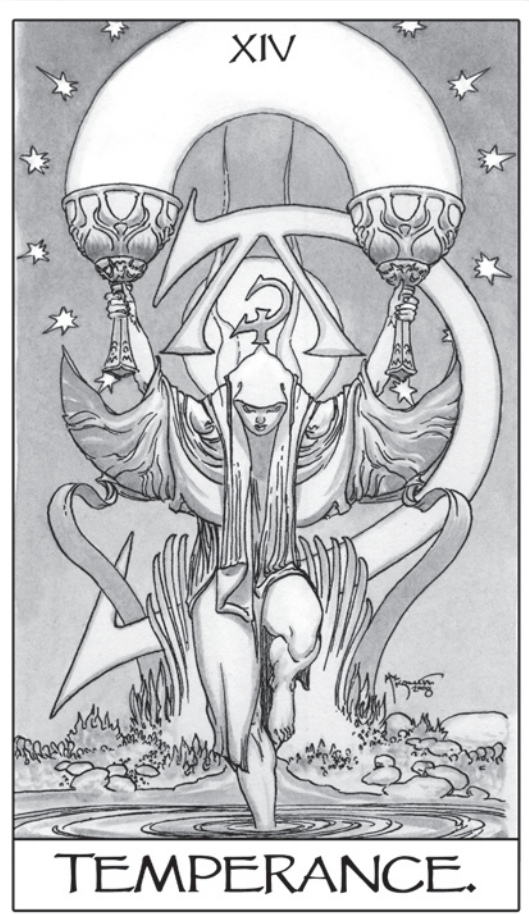
A figure pours liquid from one container to another. In some decks, this figure is a normal man, while in others, he is no less than an archangel. But in either case, the Temperance card makes its statement: everything in due proportion; all ingredients mixed properly. Overindulgence is foolish and dangerous. Some decks show the figure standing with one foot in water and the other on land, reinforcing the idea of balance and moderation.

Another possible interpretation for Temperance, one that steers away from the denotative reading of the term, posits that the flowing liquid represents energy, thought, dreams or even the “vibrations” that some philosophers once believed made up the cosmos. Whatever the liquid represents, it can be “tempered” in the mind or soul of the subject, and shaped into whatever form he wishes.

This mutability calls to mind the legends of the Philosopher’s Stone, and the Arcanum of Matter. Indeed, Awakened cartomancers often use Temperance to reflect this Arcanum, the Moros Path and the practice of alchemy. Moros mages that specialize in Matter, especially to the exclusion of Death, sometimes refer to themselves as Alchemists rather than Necromancers, and use this card’s artistic elements in their personal heraldry, if any.

For a mage, both of the above interpretations have merit. A mage must be balanced and moderate with his power, lest he change something in a way that cannot be undone. The usual threat of Paradox serves as a reminder to be temperate, but even (perhaps especially) covert magic can be a mage’s undoing if he doesn’t consider the consequences. A mage on the journey through the Tarot comes to Temperance

after he has experienced the random events of the world (the Wheel of Fortune) and how to make sense of them (Justice and the Hanged Man), and learned the harsh lessons of Death. It is good, of course, that he learns Temperance now — his next lesson is hard indeed, coming as it does from the Devil.



## *Cabal— Solomon's Lesson*

The Solomon’s Lesson cabal takes its name from a rather ghoulish Biblical fable. In the first Book of Kings, two prostitutes come before Solomon, each laying claim to the same baby (one claims the other killed her own son, and then switched the dead child for the living one while the living child’s mother slept). Solomon, realizing that the guilty woman isn’t going to own up, orders that the living child be cut in half with a sword. The lying woman agrees to this, but the actual mother of the child immediately renounces her claim to the child. By her compassion, Solomon knows that she is the child’s true mother.

The leader of the cabal, a mage originally of the Clavicularius Legacy, formed the cabal several years ago to teach a magical technique he developed after a meeting with a creature that, even now, he cannot identify or even find.

Solomon’s Lesson is a cabal that might be useful for illustrating the Temperance stage of the Tarot journey — it’s rather become Adam Straw’s guiding principle, after all. Even he still has his blind spots, and if a cabal could teach him the lesson of true temperance (perhaps allowing Harmony to join his Legacy), it might achieve or pass that stage itself.



## History

Adam Straw joined the Clavicularii on the winter solstice, 10 years ago. On that night, he conjured up his own demons using *goetia*, and bested them all in bloody combat. Standing in his mentor's basement, holding two blades soaked in gore, he felt drained, centered — he had slain the Wrath within. Adam took the Shadow Name “Epee,” naming himself after a fencing blade, one that was best wielded with skill and deftness rather than brute force. Over time, Epee became a noted Consilium Sentinel, working closely with the Consilium's Adamantine Arrow cabals to ferret out threats that could take advantage of the mage's inner weakness.

As he approached the second Attainment for his Legacy, he met a being that looked, at first glance, like a man, but most assuredly was not. This creature, which only referred to itself as “the Traveler,” tried to avoid Epee, but the mage recognized something supernatural about it and refused to leave it alone. The Traveler agreed to speak with Epee, under a very strange condition: the Traveler insisted that Epee use his magic to strengthen his resolve, as though barring his mind from intrusion. Epee, accustomed to doing so anyway, agreed.

The Traveler spoke with Epee at some length about philosophy and practical ethics. The Traveler had a very clear goal, one which he never explained to Epee (and Epee found he had to fight the urge to delve into the Traveler's mind, which was highly out of character for the mage). This goal obviously meant everything to the Traveler, yet he had no clear idea of how to approach it. Presently, said the Traveler, he was watching people for their failings, their faults and their vices, trying to learn how these things affected people and hindered them.

This, of course, was not so different from what the Clavicularii did, and so Epee offered to help the Traveler. The Traveler refused Epee's offer of *goetic* magic (though he did seem to have an understanding of spirits, albeit one that seemed more practical and experience-based than Epee's), but was happy to listen to Epee's descriptions of battling his own vices, in particular his propensity for violence. Why, asked the Traveler, did vice always return? Was it so much more fragile than virtue? He then demonstrated his own talent: he pointed at another person and could cause them to lash out in anger, greed or whatever their particular foible happened to be. Why was fanning the flame of negativity so easy?

Perhaps, they decided, it would be better to encourage virtue, strengthen compassion, than to study and (theoretically) discourage vice. They parted ways, and Epee did not partake of the second Attainment of his Legacy, but created a new one. He still considers himself a *goetist* and a Clavicularius, but usually uses the title “Solomonist” (a nickname commonly given to members of the Legacy).

Epee recruited several other mages from his Consilium to form a new cabal, one dedicated to exploring the noble parts of the human soul and nourishing them, not to the exclusion of the baser, brutish qualities, but simply to keep the scales tipped toward virtue. His cabal, which he called Solomon's Lesson, has become an inspiration to the other mages of his and many surrounding Consilii. Likewise, though, they have become powerful enough that the Consilium uses them as a threat at times, something that Epee does not approve of in the slightest.

## Practices and Philosophy

Solomon's Lesson is founded on the principles of *goetia* (see pp. 323–325 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Epee himself joined the Legacy dedicated to this art, called the Clavicularii. This Legacy is described in full in the **Mage** sourcebook **Legacies: The Sublime**, but the salient points of their philosophy and all relevant game systems are included here for players without access to that book.

The Clavicularii have a sometimes-deserved reputation as demonologists and manipulators. They undergo lengthy rites of castigation in which they summon up representations of their own “demons,” and, hopefully, best them. By beating his own Vice, a mage can draw strength from it without succumbing to it.

The Clavicularii, also called “Solomonists” or “Key-Bearers,” see themselves as frail, broken and flawed. The sacred work of the Clavicularius, then, is to rebuild himself, excising uncontrolled vice and rising above base instincts. Mages belonging to this Legacy are introspective and self-critical in the extreme. They are also avid explorers of the astral planes — all initiations are, in fact, performed in the Tenemos.

Where Epee's philosophy differs from the mainstream of the Legacy is in the focus. The Clavicularii see themselves as flawed, but with the potential for greatness. Epee sees himself (and others) as great, but prone to failure. Virtue isn't necessarily a guttering flame and Vice the wind trying to extinguish it. As Epee sees it, Virtue is a nourishing and warming fire

that must be constantly fed. Vice needn't enter the metaphor at all, or if it does, it is the howling, hungry beast in the dark, kept at bay by the fire.

The other mages in Epee's cabal joined for their own reasons, but they are, for the most part, in line with his philosophy. Epee does not demand that his cabal practice *goetia* to strengthen their Virtues, and certainly not that they join his Legacy (Epee is a die-hard thearch, and refuses to teach the Legacy to anyone but another Mastigos or Silver Ladder mage). He does demand that they stay true to the Lex Magica and to the precepts of Sleeper law, and that they practice magic in a humane and ethical manner.

### *Magic of Solomon's Lesson*

Epee's Attainments and the spells he has developed follow. The first Attainment is the usual one for the Clavicularii, but the second one is of his own design. Epee has not yet achieved the third Attainment in his Legacy.

#### *1st: Goetic Projection*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Mind 2, Empathy 3

The first Attainment of the Clavicularius Legacy shapes the mage's soul in such a way that his own weaknesses and sins — his Vice, derangements and Mental Flaws — stand out in stark relief to his mind's eye. Because of this, the Clavicularius can sense those taints within, and project them onto others.

By inflaming his sin and projecting it onto another, the Clavicularius creates an impetus to behave in a similar fashion. This acts like the Mind 2 "Emotional Urging" spell, including the ability for the Awakened to sense that they are being manipulated. If the target already possessed the Vice projected by the Clavicularius, however, she is immune to this Attainment — a soul that already battles its own internal sin is immune to that same sin from an outside source.

#### *2nd: Light a Candle*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Mind 3

Normally, the second Clavicularius Attainment allows the mage additional protection against his own Mental Flaws and derangements. Epee, however, inspired by his discussions with the Traveler, decided to forge his own path. His Attainment is therefore a bit more proactive. His title for it, "Light a Candle," refers to the maxim, "It's better to light a candle than curse the darkness."

The Attainment works on the same principle as the "Emotional Urging" spell, but it works on a wider scale. When Epee uses this Attainment, anyone in the immediate area feels a surge of emotional strength. Individuals usually experience this surge as it applies to their particular Virtue. For instance, a character with the Virtue of Fortitude might experience a second wind as fatigue disappears, while one with the Hope Virtue sees the strength of those around her and takes inspiration from that.

In game terms, roll Presence + Socialize + Mind. The Attainment affects a number of people, who must be within view of the mage, equal to the number of successes on the roll. All of these characters regain one point of Willpower. Any sort of mental or magical shield blocks this power, as does even a small amount of supernatural resistance (which means the Attainment only works on supernatural beings if they specifically allow it, and that requires a great deal of trust in Epee).

**Optional Arcanum:** Forces 3

"Lighting a candle" isn't metaphorical for Epee. With a wave of his hand, he can increase the light output from any source. Roll Presence + Persuasion + Forces, and apply successes as described for the Forces 3 spell "Light Mastery" (p. 169 of **Mage: The Awakening**). This Attainment cannot be used to dim lights, however, only increase their brightness.

#### *Know Virtue (Mind ●)*

Epee developed this spell to know, at a glance, the best parts of a person's soul. Everyone has the potential to be charitable or courageous or wise, but one of these traits is generally stronger than the others.

**Practice:** Knowing

**Action:** Instant; subtract target's Composure

**Duration:** Concentration

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

If the spell roll succeeds, the character knows the target's Virtue. Successfully using the "Aura Perception" spell on the target first grants a +3 modifier to the mage.

**Epee's Rote: Who Are You Really?**

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Empathy + Mind

#### *Bolster Virtue (Mind ●●●)*

Any Disciple of Mind can make himself smarter or wittier, and Epee is no stranger to such magic. He felt,



however, that calling forth his Virtue and empowering it was a different sort of spell, and he found a way to do it that produces surprising results.

**Practice:** Perfecting

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

If the spell roll succeeds, the mage's Virtue comes to the fore and influences his actions for the duration of the scene. If the player spends Willpower on an action that serves the character's Virtue, the bonus the player receives is increased to five extra dice, rather than three. The Storyteller is the final arbiter on whether a given action is in line with the character's Virtue.

At the end of the scene, the character regains all Willpower spent in service to the Virtue (that is, any Willpower for which he gained the bonus dice).

At Mind 4, the mage can cast this spell on others.

**Epee's Rote: Best Foot Forward**

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Empathy + Mind

### *Clavicularius Rotes*

The Clavicularius Legacy has rote versions for the "Goetic Struggle" and "Goetic Evocation" spells listed on pp. 324–325 of **Mage: The Awakening**. The dice pools for these rotes are Presence + Intimidation + Mind and Presence + Occult + Spirit, respectively.

### *Members*

Solomon's Lesson is a multi-order cabal. The only criterion for membership is a commitment to self-betterment (of the moral, rather than strictly physical, variety). Epee approves all members himself, and makes it very clear that he won't teach Clavicularii secrets to anyone outside the Legacy. So far, he hasn't taken on a pupil, but as Möbius is a practitioner of *goetia* and a member of the Silver Ladder, that may change soon.

The cabal pooled its money and purchased a small apartment building in the downtown area. The neighborhood, at first glance, might look unsafe, but Epee makes a practice of walking the area and using his magic to bolster the Virtues of the citizens. He also attends the neighborhood church and helps the reverend with his sermons, hoping to shift the focus from avoiding sin to practicing virtue.

Solomon's Lesson controls a Hallow, but it isn't, unfortunately, located within their Sanctum. The Hallow is below street level about a block away. A section

of the iron sewer grate rusts faster than it should, and those rust flakes can be distilled for Tass. Strangely, no matter how much rust the mages scrape off, the grate never gets any smaller or weaker.

### *Epee*

**Quote:** *Vice is a poison. What did your mama tell you about playing with poison?*

**Description:** Epee is of mixed heritage (his mother was Korean, his father was black). He is a shorter man, but obviously strong and confident. He dresses conservatively and always wears a gold cross, and greets everyone with a warm smile and a firm handshake. He hasn't been in a fight in a long time, which he takes as a sign that his philosophy of expecting the best out of people is working.

Epee's Nimbus is a slight feeling of vertigo. People who feel it have a sensation of being lifted into the air a few inches, and then suddenly returning to their bodies.

**Storytelling Hints:** It took a meeting with a bizarre denizen of the supernatural to make Epee realize it, but hope is superior to despair. Building is superior to breaking down. Since making that realization, he's been happier and better able to help other mages. Epee was always a devout Christian, but since his discussion with the Traveler, he's stopped questioning God when things go badly; instead, he started solving the problems himself and then thanking God for giving him the wisdom to do so.

Epee and his cabal can either be a shining beacon of hope in the World of Darkness, or the setup for a horrible disappointment. As it is, Epee has built his cabal on the simple notion that people are just as good as they are evil, and that the side that gets the attention is the side that wins out. This is by no means a new philosophy, but it is a decidedly non-cynical and humanistic one, and that makes Solomon's Lesson a little strange.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Gold cross

**Real Name:** Adam Straw

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Silver Ladder

**Legacy:** Clavicularius

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 3, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Occult (Goetia) 4, Politics 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Weaponry (Swords) 3

**Social Skills:** Empathy 5, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Bringing Out the Best) 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Contacts (Local Businesses, Clavicularii), Fighting Style: Two Weapons 3, Hallow (shared) 3, Inspiring, Library (Goetia, Spirits, Astral Travel) 3, Sanctum (Size 4, Security 2)

**Willpower:** 7

**Wisdom:** 9

**Virtue:** Temperance

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 6

**Arcana:** Forces 3, Mind 5, Spirit 4, Space 2

**Notes:** *Forces* — Influence Light (•), Influence Fire (••); *Mind* — Aura Perception (•), Know Virtue (•), Emotional Urging (••), First Impressions (••), Augment the Mind (•••), Bolster Virtue (•••), Goetic Struggle (•••), Mental Wall (•••), Augment Other Mind (••••), Supreme Augmentation (••••), Twilight Temple (••••); *Space* — Scrying (••); *Spirit* — Exorcist's Eye (•), Gossamer Touch (••), Exorcism (•••), Goetic Evocation (•••), Spirit Guardian (•••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — Goetic Projection, 2<sup>nd</sup> — Light a Candle

Mana/per turn: 15/6

**Armor:** 5 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

## Möbius

**Quote:** *Nothing ever really ends. That's comforting, though, right?*

**Background:** A cancer survivor by age 17, a famous author by age 24, and penniless in the streets by age 30, Paige McAffer's life has never been uneventful. Her luck seems to turn on a dime, and even Awakening to Arcadia didn't seem to change it much. She made a conscious choice to give up all traces of her pre-Awakening life, which means avoiding recognition for her novels (renowned for a few years, and then out of fashion, sadly before the movie deal went through). She took the name Möbius to reflect her strange journey through life, and has begun practicing *goetia* as a way to keep her ever-present spark of hope alive.

**Description:** Paige is thin and pale, with stringy brown hair and bright blue eyes. Her skin is sallow and she moves slowly and deliberately, but she is seldom without a smile or a kind word. She dresses for

comfort; nothing short of a direct order from Epee gets her to put on a dress.

Möbius' Nimbus is bitterly cold, a biting chill that saps the warmth out of those nearby. It carries with it a grim sense of inevitability, the feeling of endlessness on a cold winter's night.

**Storytelling Hints:** Möbius is a living testament to how turbulent one person's life can be. She refuses to give in to despair... most of the time. The other members of the cabal sometimes catch her crying, however, wishing that she hadn't squandered the good fortune that she once had. They always reassure her the same way — by reminding her of her own favorite saying: "How could things be other than they are?"

**Path:** Acanthus

**Order:** Silver Ladder

**Abilities:**

**Writing (dice pool 7)** — Möbius is an accomplished fiction writer and poet. She still writes, though she publishes under an assumed name.

**First Aid (dice pool 6)** — Being in a hospital for as long as she was, Möbius maintains a passing interest in medicine. She can perform CPR or stitch a wound, if need be.

## Pontus

**Quote:** *The sea can keep her dead.*

**Background:** Many, many years at sea hardened Yngwie Hansen. Born in Sweden, he took to the sea in his late teens, first on a fishing boat, then as a merchant sailor, and finally working on a cruise line. All the time, he was searching for something in the waves. When he Awakened to Stygia, he found it.

He saw the dead at sea, floating in the water, millions of corpses choking the life from the ocean. He was on the verge of madness when he returned to port. Another Moros found him and explained that Stygia was the Abode of Shades, and that the sea was not literally preparing to regurgitate the dead. Yngwie has since taken some tentative voyages over the ocean, but the fear of those waterlogged corpses still chills him.

Yngwie met up with Epee quite by accident, and they shared a few drinks while recounting stories of their youth. Epee was impressed that Yngwie was trying to face his fear, but asked if maybe he was going about it the wrong way. The Moros decided to join Epee's cabal, and took the name "Pontus" after the Greek god of the sea's bounty, hoping to one day see the ocean as mystifying and beautiful again.



**Description:** Pontus is a large, gruff, bearded man. He has thinning blond hair, and his beard grows in a tawny reddish color. He favors work clothes and heavy boots, and speaks English in a hesitant, heavily-accented bass.

When Pontus uncloaks his Nimbus, those nearby feel the sensation of drowning, and an uncomfortable sense of pressure in their inner ears, as though diving into deep water.

**Storytelling Hints:** Pontus is hopeful, but knows he lost something by Awakening. He is searching once again, but this time trying to make peace with his new condition. If he'd been left to his own devices, he might have followed the same path as Lantern, the Banisher-turned-Seer (see p. 54). As it is, he maintains a highly ethical outlook, maintaining that using magic to disturb the dead is a grave wrong (and risky to boot).

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Mysterium

**Abilities:**

**Nautical Knowledge (dice pool 8)** — What Pontus doesn't remember about the sea and its dangers — and wonders — isn't worth knowing.

**Knife-Fighting (dice pool 7)** — Pontus regrets it, but he's had to hurt people in the past and during his stint as a merchant sailor, he became quite proficient in it.

### *Harmony*

**Quote:** *I'd rather not say.*

**Background:** Orphaned on the streets of New York, Georgia Tynes became an accomplished pickpocket and shoplifter quite early. A Guardian of the Veil adopted her, and continued her training, hopeful that she might one day Awaken. When she did, the order enthusiastically trained her, hoping to use her talents in stealth and guile to make her into a formidable assassin.

On her first assignment, though, she found she couldn't go through with it. Theft was one thing, but slipping a piano wire around a man's neck and killing him? It was wrong, and she knew it. The Guardians allowed her to finish her training, but gave her menial work and very little support.

When she met Epee, he saw in her a spark of decency and human kindness that was too strong to ignore. Georgia told him what the Guardians had asked her to do, and she showed him the wire — she still kept it, a reminder of her failure. He plucked it, and they listened to the note it played. "Don't worry about that," Epee said. "Find the music. Find the harmony."

Georgia took "Harmony" as her Shadow Name, and joined Epee's cabal.

**Description:** Harmony is a slim black woman of about 25. She wears her hair in tight braids, and favors clothes with a lot of pockets — remnants of a youth spent stealing.

Harmony's Nimbus causes tiny hands to tug at valuables, clothing, wallets and so on of the people nearby.

**Storytelling Hints:** Harmony has just about gotten past her fear of other people and of being left out in the cold one day. Now she worries that the Guardians are using her to find out something about Epee. But what could they possibly want with him? He's a decent, kind soul — Georgia worries, though, that this is exactly what her order doesn't like. Her fears about the Guardians are probably unfounded, but every now and again, the order approaches her and trains her in a skill or a spell that seems random... until she's called upon to use it, usually within a week.

Harmony wishes she could join the Clavicularii, but as a Thyrsus and a non-théarch, she doesn't qualify. This is the only real source of friction between her and Epee.

**Path:** Thyrsus

**Order:** Guardians of the Veil

**Abilities:**

**Stealth (dice pool 8)** — Harmony is adept at remaining unnoticed, and she often uses Life magic to alter her skin color as needed. Sometimes just being white is good camouflage.

**Thievery (dice pool 8)** — Harmony can take a man's belt out of the loops on a good day. If she uses Spirit magic to set up distractions, she could probably get the fillings out of his teeth.

### *Neutral*

**Quote:** *You aren't going to make me angry. That doesn't mean I won't hit you.*

**Background:** Greg Elmond was a hot-headed Obri-mos mage calling himself "Zeus" when Epee met him. He was a Sentinel for the Consilium, and while Epee was skilled in finding threats that tempted mages, Zeus was better suited to violent threats. The problem was, as Greg likes to say now, when you've got all these knives, you've got to cut something. He was getting into fights too often, and his order (the Arrow, of course) was constantly reprimanding him for it.

After Epee's revelation, Zeus was the first mage he visited. Instead of damning Zeus for his overzealous approach, he praised the Theurgist's sense of right

and wrong and his tenacity. If Zeus could improve those traits, Epee said, he'd be a superb Sentinel, rather than just a good one. Zeus took this to heart and embraced Epee's new philosophy with all of his considerable enthusiasm. He also studied Taoist philosophy, and he works to remain neutral (hence the Shadow Name) until he is sure his energies can be applied appropriately.

**Description:** Greg is in his early 30s. He follows a strict physical regimen — vegetarian, constant exercise, daily sparring workouts, and so on. The result is a lean, muscular body and sharp reflexes. He credits his new attitude, though, for the bounce in his step and the smile that's never far from his lips.

Neutral's Nimbus is a crackle of thunder and a burst of chain-lightning arcing from his eyes to his fingertips. Even after his "conversion," Neutral still loves the sensation.

**Storytelling Hints:** Neutral is a devoted member of the Adamantine Arrow, and his status in the order has increased considerably since he stopped meeting every threat with lightning. He has, however, made enemies in his career as a Sentinel, and not all of them care about his newfound focus on virtue. Neutral realizes that a lot of people still know him as Zeus, and that this brings danger to his cabal. He just isn't sure how to meet this kind of threat — violence is sometimes required, but is it really justified?

Neutral is training to join the Perfect Adept Legacy (p. 349 of **Mage: The Awakening**), but hasn't quite finished yet. He might wind up being apprenticed to a character that is well-versed in Life magic, especially if the character belongs to the Arrow.

**Path:** Obrimos

**Order:** Adamantine Arrow

#### **Abilities:**

**Fighting (dice pool 8)** — Neutral is an expert in several martial arts disciplines, including kung fu, aikido and bare-knuckle boxing.

**Building Repair (dice pool 6)** — When the cabal purchased the building, it was Neutral that rewired it (and did much of the carpentry and masonry, for that matter).

### *Temperance Reversed*

Impatience and impulsivity rule the day. The man dipping his foot into the water withdraws it, planting both feet on land, or dives (or falls) into the pool. Consequences aren't considered. Moderation is a laughable notion. All that matters is the moment.

Alternately, instinct and wisdom are ignored in favor of what the seeker was going to do anyway. Self-fulfilling prophecy is held up as truth, or worse, evidence.

### *Solomon's Lesson as Seers of the Throne*

Using Solomon's Lesson as a Seer cabal doesn't take much work. Epee remains a former Clavicularius, and he even retains his focus on encouraging virtue. It's just that the virtue he encourages most keenly is obedience. He makes frequent use of spells such as "Psychic Reprogramming" and "Possession," as well as "Telepathic Control," to make sure the people in the cabal's neighborhood report anything out of the ordinary. His Attainments remain unchanged, however.

The "reversal" of the cabal doesn't remove temperance entirely. The focus on virtue is simply taken to an unacceptable extreme. Epee, as a Seer, wishes to encourage Virtue by removing the option to act in any other capacity. This, obviously, is not temperate behavior.



# KEY XV — THE DEVIL

The Devil sits enthroned on an alabaster seat, two people in chains at his feet. He is the tempter, the slave-master and, perhaps, a bringer of enlightenment through pain and suffering, but most often, what he represents is bondage. Whether this servitude is to material wealth, drugs, carnal lust or any other animal urge or base instinct, the Devil offers Man what he wants, and demands nothing in return except devotion... and perhaps the occasional favor. The Devil might not ask anything immediately odious. He might just ask that his servant open a door, or spill a drink, or tear one particular page out of a book. The act might lead to any number of horrible outcomes: the door admits a vicious killer; the drink stains the suit of a reformist politician on the eve of a debate; the page contains a spell that might have ended a dire supernatural threat. The Man hasn't sinned in service to the Devil, if all he has done is take such a simple action. Next time, the action might be just a *bit* more unpleasant, but by then, the Man's habits are even more deeply entrenched. The Devil pulls the chains ever tighter.

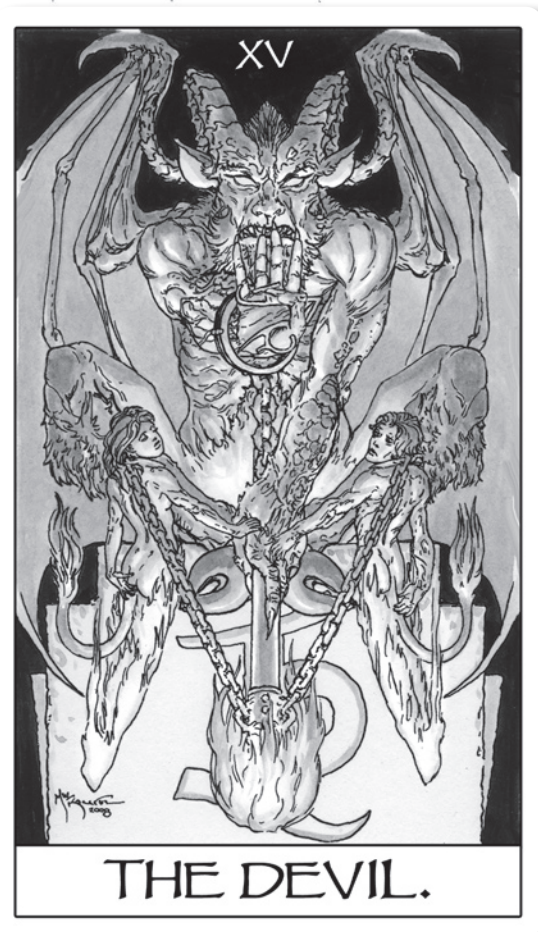
The Devil card can also refer to power or intelligence applied to selfish or base ends. In fact, it can be seen as the inverse of the Magician, depending on how that card is interpreted. The Devil, in such views, is called the Black Magician, and does not refer to literal, sentient being tempting Man, but rather the incredible tenacity and inventiveness of Man turned to ignoble ends.

The Mastigos Path claims the Devil as its primary card, but alters the traditional meaning just a bit. To the Warlocks, the Devil is the temptation that *all* of them face, the quick and easy path to power available to any mage versed in Mind magic (any mage at all,

really). And, more importantly, it is the choice consciously made to seek a loftier path. The Devil also figures heavily into *goetic* magic, and *goetia* requires expertise in Mind; many such mages are Warlocks.

On the mage's journey, the Devil isn't just a little dalliance into using magic for selfish ends. Other cards, including the Magician, the Wheel of Fortune and even

the Empress and Emperor encompass magic for materialism, and a bit of this is to be expected (not every mage can have the self-discipline of the Hanged Man, after all). The Devil is the power of the Awakened turned to goals that are both selfish and harmful. The Scelestus, the Tremere Lich, and perhaps the insane mage — all of these are the Devil. Some Awakened cartomancers include Banishers and Seers of the Throne in the interpretations of this card, but most see these mages, destructive though they are, as polar opposites of the Devil. Banishers and Seers, after all, are driven by ideology. The Devil thinks with his loins.



Character —  
*Lynden  
Chambers,  
Scelestus Philosopher*

*It isn't damnation, despite what your mentors tell you. Damnation implies judgment, and who is it that's judging us? I would argue that your masters — your Consilii — are a hundred times more judgmental than my masters ever would be. And much more complex. All my masters demand is patience. The world is theirs eventually anyway, and certain behaviors here in the aptly named Fallen World please them. In return for these behaviors, they grant me power. How I use that power is up to me.*

*Of course there are... people like me... who use their powers recklessly, violently, and wantonly, but I find that a measured approach is best. I have built myself a fortune and a comfortable life in part by using my power, but mostly by applying my natural talents. Why do I bother, if I am damned? If I am truly the nihilist that your fellows paint me to be, why should I bother doing anything? I could wallow in depravity, but I prefer to sample the finer things in the world while they still exist.*

*Would you like to have dinner with me? All we're doing is talking, after all. If you think your masters — sorry, mentors — would disapprove, consider why.*

*My reservations are at seven tonight. Feel free to join me.*

— A conversation between Lynden Chambers and Agdos, Moros of the Mysterium

Lynden Chambers was born in Boston in 1955. Raised to affluence and privilege, he was nevertheless miserable. He was usually sick, and even when he wasn't he was meek and frail. He retreated into books and art, and became enthralled with relics of the past. He wasn't just interested in paintings, sculpture and other works created solely for the purpose of artistic expression. In fact, Chambers found furniture, tools and other practical items most interesting.

Over the years, Chambers became increasingly knowledgeable about history and about the craftsmanship that a particular time period produced. He could glance at a chest of drawers and guess the year in which it was made, identify an architect by the frame of a house, and even knew what kind of nails and lumber would be used in the construction of such things. His parents wondered if this fascination would ever be practical, but then he took them to an antiques show and pointed out which items were valuable beyond their listed prices. His father, a banker, invested the earnings well, and Chambers never wanted for money.

He attended college, studying history and art, and stayed in as long as he could. He received his doctorate in 1980, and took a job with an auction house as an appraiser.

One night, when Chambers was looking over a cabinet crafted in the late 18th century, he noted an unusual pattern on the tops of the nails. With a magnifying glass, some strong light and a great deal of patience, he realized each of the nails had been individually marked with a strange symbol. He copied them all down and attempted to decipher them, but without knowing what order to read them in, he had no place to start.

He searched for other pieces from the same area and time, and discovered the name of the man who had

made the nails. Digging up records from the nailer's guild of the time, Chambers learned this man had enjoyed a great deal of clout among his fellow craftsmen, and had traded letters with learned men across the colonies. He had died in the Revolutionary War... which was *before* the cabinet had been built, meaning the nails had been marked upon their creation. But what, then, was the point?

Chambers puzzled over this for near a year, and then finally, in frustration, traveled to Copp's Hill and studied the nailer's gravestone. There, nearly weathered away completely, he found the code he'd been looking for. At the end of the code, Chambers added his own mark, a variant on the symbols he'd seen, and in that moment he Awakened.

Unfortunately for Chambers, he Awakened on Copp's Hill, a burial ground that had received the dead for more than 300 years and was home to some truly foul entities. Chambers was unharmed — but he watched re-enactments of some of the horrors that had taken place there, in Twilight, beyond view of humanity. He saw the spirits of the dead and their endless torment, and he saw the far stranger spirits of *death* and what they did to humans who wandered through gateways into their realm.

And something in Lynden Chambers broke. It didn't happen loudly or noticeably. It was a quiet, almost insignificant thing, some part of his mind that winked silently out of existence. Lynden did not actually become a Scelestus for some years after that night, but in truth, he walked out of that graveyard one of the Wicked.

The first mage that Chambers met was Davey Jones, one of the Dead Wrens (see p. 384 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Davey's talk of freebooting sparked Lynden's interest, not because he wished to participate, but because it was so far from what he'd been expecting. By the time he met members of the other orders, Chambers had already joined the Free Council. At first, this was a disadvantage (since the Silver Ladder and the Mysterium are the true powers in Boston's Consilium), but Chambers noted that his upper-class, educated bearing combined with his unorthodox choice of order made him intriguing to some of the cabals in the city. To that end, he never became active in his order's dealings, and refused to join a cabal. He learned magic mostly through trial and error, and used his proficiency with manipulating emotion to secure a job with the Boston Athenæum in Beacon Hill. He worked as curator specializing in Colonial antiques,



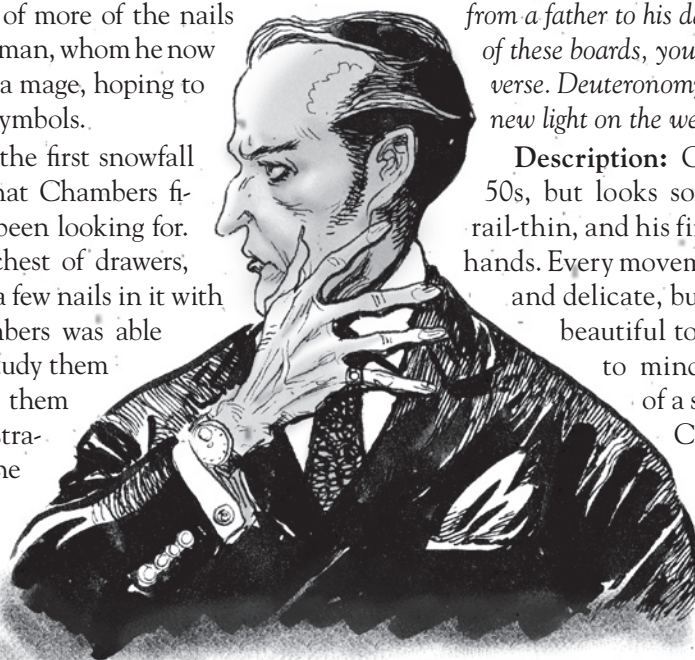
and lectured on the subject at various universities. All the while, he sought out more of the nails from the mysterious craftsman, whom he now understood to have been a mage, hoping to unlock the secret of the symbols.

It was the morning of the first snowfall in the winter of 2002 that Chambers finally found the key he'd been looking for. He'd acquired a simple chest of drawers, badly damaged, but with a few nails in it with symbols on them. Chambers was able to remove the nails and study them at length before tossing them across the room in frustration. They landed with the symbols facing him, and he watched the roll, the symbols changing as they moved. And then he understood: the code was a dynamic thing; it couldn't be understood without change.

Over the next few months, Chambers, with the help of a cabal of Free Council mages from MIT, created a program that mapped each of the symbols onto a computer screen and made them rotate. The younger mages were not able to understand the results, but Chambers was. Encoded in these nails was a road map for soul-sculpting of a most insidious nature.

Another mage might have reported those findings to more knowledgeable Awakened. A more prudent mage would have found a cabal to help determine the identity of the nailer, find out if he was really one of the Wise and, if so, what his proclivities were. But Lynden Chambers wasn't interested, because he knew the fate of the world. He had seen it in the dark on Copp's Hill. It was death, horror and darkness for all eternity, and given that, the chance to know that darkness a little more was one he couldn't pass up.

Chambers became a Scelestus without a mentor, but he found others. Some were members of the Consilium. Some were Seers of the Throne, and some were solitaires like him. They don't meet and hold ritual sacrifices, and they barely keep in touch (Lynden can't stand most of them, in fact). All they do is trade information and help keep each other abreast of purges from the Consilium and the Throne. Chambers, meanwhile, makes it a point to meet new cabals and search for good debate on the subject of magic, death and inevitability. He has yet to find anyone who can change his mind on the world's bleak destiny, but he still looks.



**Quote:** *This piece was crafted as a wedding present from a father to his daughter. Underneath some of these boards, you'll find numbers — a Bible verse. Deuteronomy 22:20. Look it up; sheds a new light on the wedding present, I think.*

**Description:** Chambers is now in his 50s, but looks somewhat younger. He is rail-thin, and his fingers are too long for his hands. Every movement he makes is graceful and delicate, but quite apart from being beautiful to watch, his motion calls to mind the predatory actions of a spider or praying mantis. Chambers' eyes are dark brown, his hair is black, and his head and face are slightly too small for his body. His voice is gentle and light, and he rarely smiles — he has noticed that

people find his smile unsettling.

Despite his generally disturbing air, Chambers makes friends easily. Part of the reason is his magic, of course (he makes liberal use of the "First Impressions" spell), but part of it is that he is intelligent, erudite, and interesting to converse with. It's hard to walk away from a conversation with Chambers without learning something.

Chambers' Nimbus manifests as black, swirling shadow-stuff around his long, spider-leg fingers as he casts his spells. Powerful magic brings on a smell of blood and the taste of iron, and all sound in the area seems to die as he draws near.

**Storytelling Hints:** Chambers might be a Scelestus, but he's a far cry from a black-clad, Abyss-worshipping madman. He's not quite a nihilist, because he loves history, art and philosophy. He's a member of the Free Council because he agrees with many of their philosophies, and he's actually quite a dedicated progressive... it's just that he sees progress as a way to hasten the End. He doesn't harbor any illusions about ruling in Hell or serving in Heaven, because he knows it's all going to come crashing down anyway. Chambers actually has much to teach on the subjects of history, Abyss-worship, and the philosophy of entropy. A cabal having a problem with an Abyssal creature could do a lot worse than Chambers as a consultant.

At the core of the character is the choice he presents to other mages. When exposed to Chambers' philosophies of degradation and hopelessness, do the

characters agree? Do they persecute him as a Scelestus? Or do they try to help him? Chambers is, perhaps, emblematic of the Hope buried at the bottom of Pandora's Box — easy to miss if you're concentrating on the evils of the world. But with the right guidance, perhaps he could be convinced to renounce his Legacy (if that's even possible) and join Awakened society properly.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Iron nail with an arcane symbol etched into the head.

**Real Name:** Lynden Chambers

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Free Council

**Legacy:** Scelestus

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (History) 4, Computer 2, Crafts (Furniture) 3, Investigation 3, Occult 4, Politics 3

**Physical Skills:** Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 2

**Social Skills:** Intimidation (Creepy) 2, Persuasion (Smooth Talker) 3, Socialize 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 4

**Merits:** Contacts (High Society, Museums, Academia, Scelestus), Fast Reflexes 2, Hallow 2, Language (French, Italian, Latin), Library (Abyssal Entities) 1, Resources 4, Sanctum (Size 3, Security 2) 5, Status (Boston Museums) 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 6

**Virtue:** Hope

**Vice:** Gluttony

**Initiative:** 8 (with Fast Reflexes)

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 5

**Arcana:** Death 4, Mind 5, Prime 2, Space 2, Time 4

**Roles:** *Death* — Devouring the Slain (•••), Suppress Other's Life (•••); *Mind* — Aura Perception (•), First Impressions (•), Alter Aura (••), Emotional Urging (••), Imposter (••), Multi-Tasking (••), Hallucination (•••), Possession (•••); *Prime* — Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Unseen Spy (••); *Space* — Scrying (••); *Time* — Glimpsing the Future (••), Acceleration (••), Present as Past (•••), Temporal Pocket (•••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — Inevitable Ending; 2<sup>nd</sup> — Endings and Beginnings (see below)

**Mana/per turn:** 14/5

**Armor:** 5 ("Misperception," Mind ••)

**Magic Shield:** 2 (Prime ••)

## Chambers' Attainments

Like most Scelesti, Chambers developed his own Attainments upon becoming one of the Wicked. His Attainments deal with Time and the unstoppable cycle of decay.

### 1<sup>st</sup>: Inevitable Ending

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Time 2 (primary), Death 1, Occult 2

Chambers is extremely difficult to track or predict through the use of time magic. Attempts to forecast his future using spells such as "Divination," or to read his past with "Postcognition," often only reveal a black, swirling blur and the taste of iron. Any attempt to use Time magic on Chambers receives a penalty equal to his dots in the Time Arcanum. This is in addition to any other defensive spells he might choose to cast.

### 2<sup>nd</sup>: Beginnings and Endings

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Time 3

By touching a target, Chambers can see into its past and future, all the way to its destruction. In a few seconds of contact, Chambers sees months or years of experience, and he can use this information to great effect, whether to play mind games or to strike at vulnerable points.

The Storyteller spends a point of Mana and rolls Intelligence + Crafts (for objects) or Investigation (for people) + Time. If Chambers is using this Attainment on a sentient being, that being's Composure is subtracted from that roll. If a mage is using a spell that cloaks her from Time magic, this "armor" also applies. For each success on the roll, Chambers can choose one of the following options:

- Learn one fact of his choosing about the target.
- Ignore one point of Defense or Durability in attacks against the target (lasts for only one attack against people).
- Apply a +1 modifier to any attempt to use Mind spells to manipulate the target's thoughts or emotions (obviously only applies to sentient beings). This bonus, unlike the one for Defense, remains. After the first use, the target can attempt to shut her mind against that particular avenue of attack (a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll; success negates Chambers' bonus), but she must do so every time Chambers attempts to manipulate her.
- Apply a +1 modifier to Social rolls against the target. This bonus lasts for one scene.



### Optional Arcanum: Death 3

Chambers can touch an object and crack it, hastening its inevitable destruction. He simply reaches into the Abyss and draws out what he finds — that alone is enough to break most material objects. Spend a point of Mana and roll Manipulation + Occult + Death. Every success is applied directly to the object's Structure, bypassing its Durability. This damage manifests as the ravages of time — paper yellows, cracks and disintegrates, while metals rusts and corrodes. Chambers hasn't yet figured out how to apply this power to living flesh, but if he ever reaches the third Attainment, he will.

### *The Devil Reversed*

Slavery ends, the chains break, and those enslaved are freed. The Devil Reversed is often a *good* sign, but it can herald unbridled chaos. It can also mean that those enslaved merely change their focus to loftier goals, rather than lose all fetters.

The Devil here might be thwarted, indicating that a baleful influence might have come to pass, but rectitude and observance of morality prevented it. For a mage, this might signify a narrowly avoided Paradox, or the use of magic in a self-sacrificial or altruistic way.

### *Lynden Chambers as an Uncrowned King*

Instead of succumbing to the bitterness of the Abyss when he witnessed the strange events on Copp's Hill, Chambers came to understand a higher Supernal

Truth: the Fallen World might pass away, as do all material things, but the spirit and the Supernal are forever. He continues on with his work, but earns his position rather than taking it through Mind magic, and eventually comes to join the Coal-burners. Instead of poring over the creations of others, he has taken to making his own. He builds furniture with his own hands (even makes his own nails, adding symbols to the top in hopes of inspiring some future mage to greatness), and donates the pieces he makes to shelters and charities.

He still refuses to join a cabal, but is happy to teach other mages some of the magic he knows. He hasn't taken on a pupil with his Legacy yet. He is waiting for just the right one to come along, someone who shares his love of history and his appreciation for — but not need of — the finer things in life.

If you choose to change Chambers this way, make the following alterations to his traits:

**Attributes:** Increase Strength to 3, reduce Manipulation to 3.

**Skills:** Increase Crafts to 4, add Athletics 2.

**Merits:** Remove all ties with Scelesti.

**Arcana:** Reduce Time to 2, reduce Death to 1, add Matter 4, increase Prime to 3.

**Rotes:** Remove all Death rotes and all Time rotes above 2, add the following: *Matter* — Craftman's Eye (•), Steel Windows (••), Jury-Rig (•••), Plasticity (•••), Repair Object (•••).

**Attainments:** Replace the ones listed with those described on p. 357 of **Mage: The Awakening**.



# KEY XVI—THE TOWER

Lightning strikes, and the tower falls, and those that inhabited it crash to earth. Pride built the tower, not desire for enlightenment, and when this card appears in a reading, one must be careful that the lust for acknowledgment and accolades for an endeavor does not eclipse the more poignant reasons for it.

The most obvious source for the Tower is, of course, the Tower of Babel from Judeo-Christian mythology. Men tried to build a structure so tall it would reach Heaven, and God struck them down for their insolence. But it does beg the question — did they actually have a *chance* of reaching Heaven? If not, why would God have cared enough not only to destroy the tower but also inflict the curse of languages on mankind, forcing them forever into division?

Mages look at the Tower as the perfect metaphor for their own Fall; the destruction of the Celestial Ladder and of the Awakened City. The parallels to Babel are present here, too, although in this case the Ladder could, in fact, reach “Heaven,” and it wasn’t destroyed by an omnipotent being, but rather the ascended masters in the Supernal Realms.

What does all of this mean to the mage on the journey of the Tarot? It means that, at this stage, the mage begins to define himself among the Awakened, to being (or even, complete) the tasks that will allow him to make his mark on the world. He might join a Legacy, or become a leader in his order, take on a pupil or start his own cabal. He might also go mad, or become a Tremere Lich, or sell out to the Seers of the Throne. Whatever the case, the Tower is a reminder to act in accordance with ideals, not in service to ego.

## Artifact — Shards of the Ladder

When the Celestial Ladder shattered, the fragments were scattered across all of reality. Some of these fragments wound up in the Fallen World, some fell into the Abyss,

and some rained down like meteors into the Supernal Realms. These fragments, called “Shards of the Ladder” by some mages, hold incredible power for mages. They are Artifacts on their own, but they can also be worked into imbued items to grant them additional magic.

What follows is a discussion of the Shards of the Ladder, what game systems they require and what use they might be to mages. A raw Shard can be purchased for three Merit dots at character creation (except Abyssal Shards; see below).



## Appearance and General Characteristics

Shards of the Ladder resemble chunks of stone, glass, crystal or metal, usually no bigger than a foot long and six inches around. Some are spherical, some are long and sharp, and some simply resemble rocks. Some Shards are perfectly formed geometrical shapes — simple cubes or cones, or polyhedrons with as many as twenty sides. The shape of a Shard isn’t necessarily indicative of its power, although Awakened scholars studying them have noted that the more perfectly formed Shards tend to originate from Pandemonium or Arcadia more than the other Realms.

Most Shards are silver, bronze, gold or deep red in color, but every color in the spectrum is possible. Some are perfectly clear, and some appear to be filled with liquid (this

is an optical illusion, however).

Shards always appear significant to Mage Sight, and the Analyze Enchanted Item spell reveals them for what they are (provided the mage in question can identify a Shard of the Ladder as such). A player of a mage identifying a Shard from a given Supernal Realm using Mage Sight from one of the ruling Arcana from that Realm receives a +2 modifier to the roll. A mage using an Inferior Arcanum, however, incurs a -2 modifier. All attempts to identify Abyssal Shards receive a -5 modifier — magical scrutiny just seems to slide right past it. Terrestrial Shards receive no modifiers to identify.

All Shards have Durability 4, Size 0–1, and Structure 4–5.



## Spells

All non-Abyssal Shards can be used to cast a one-dot Knowing or Unveiling spell. Supernal Shards, of course, use one of the Ruling Arcana from the Realm in question, while Terrestrial Shards can use a spell from any Arcanum. Each Shard can only cast one spell.

The spell in a Shard is a contingent effect. The character needs to touch the shard to his forehead, lips, eyes, heart or some other body part (each stone is different) to activate the magic.

## Shards in Imbued Items

Shards can be incorporated into the construction of imbued items, and they can even be imbued themselves, unlike most Artifacts. A mage casting the Imbue Item spell (p. 225 of **Mage: The Awakening**) on a Shard or an object incorporating a Shard receives a +3 to the spell roll. It also adds a base of five successes to the required total for the imbuing, but this is subject to some modifiers: Supernal Shards are more receptive to magic cast by mages on the appropriate Path, and to magic using Ruling Arcana from their Realms. Use the following chart to determine how many successes the Shard requires to imbue. Note that this chart *only* applies to Supernal Shards. Terrestrial Shards always require five successes, and Abyssal Shards have their own set of complications (see p. 117).

**Example:** Vulcan, Thyrus of the Silver Ladder, is creating a medicine pouch that will repel baleful spirits. When the user holds the pouch and speaks an abjuration against spirits, any spirit in the area feels compelled to leave. This spell is similar to the Spirit 2 spell “Lesser Spirit Summons” (still a Ruling spell, just with the opposite effect). Vulcan’s player decides that the spell’s Potency is 3, meaning that any spirit in the area needs to exceed that number of successes on a Resistance roll or leave the mage’s presence. Vulcan needs eight successes (3 for Potency, 5 for indefinite Duration). The mage recently discovered a tiny Shard from the Primal Wild, and adds it to the medicine bag. This adds five successes to the total required (for a grand total of 13), but since Vulcan is a Thyrus (same Realm as the Shard) and because he is imbuing the item with a Spirit spell (Ruling Arcanum for the Shard’s home Realm), two successes are subtracted, for a total of 11 successes required. For those 11 successes, Vulcan gets a medicine bag that holds 11 Mana and can be used to cast the Spirit 1 spell “Spirit Tongue” and a Spirit 2 spell to repel any spirit in the immediate area. Vulcan must still relinquish the spell as usual, otherwise it counts toward his maximum total.

### Circumstance

Mage’s Path matches the Shard’s home Realm

Each spell from a Ruling Arcanum for the Shard’s Realm

Each spell from a Common Arcanum for the Shard’s Realm

Each spell from an Inferior Arcanum for the Shard’s Realm

Mage’s Path is different from the Shard’s home Realm

### Addition/Subtraction from Total Successes

-1

-1

+1

+2

+1

## Shards of the Aether

The Ladder’s Shards fell into the Aether and caught chain-lightning, becoming electric blue and metallic gray, or else catching fire and falling through the endless clouds as balls of fire. Some caught in the firmament and shone like suns, and some simply exploded into billions of tiny particles.

Shards of the Aether might wind up in the Fallen World after a mage Awakens as an Obrimos, or at the site of a magical disaster involving fire, lightning or any other display of powerful forces. Particularly vicious or protracted bouts of the Duel Arcane, also, can result in Shards of the Aether being found embedded in the ground, or walls, nearby the battle site.

### Example Shard:

#### The Traitorous Stone (●●●)

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 11

The Traitorous Stone is a cylindrical gem the size of a pebble. It fits nicely in the folds of the outer ear on most people, and could be worked into a piece of jewelry with nothing more than some wire and a little patience. When pressed to the ear, the Traitorous Stone allows the user to hear human voices to the exclusion of other ambient sounds. This allows the mage to ignore three penalty dice from distracting sounds when trying to focus on a person talking, regardless of whether the mage can speak the language. It does not bestow a bonus, but merely mitigates penalties.

### Example Imbued Item: Banisher’s Hand

This item resembles a leather glove with pieces of rose quartz set at each of the four knuckles on the hand. Although a Banisher did not create the item, the item’s effects make the name appropriate. The Shard of the Aether — the rose quartz — allows the mage to use the Prime 1 spell “Analyze Enchanted Item” by touching a suspected magical object. The mage feels a sudden shudder if the object is indeed magical, and would be well-advised to take his hand away. For every turn after the first that the glove touches a magical item (whether imbued or Artifact), the glove eats away three points from its Structure, as per the “Destroy Object” spell (p. 139 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The wearer can resist this effect by spending a point of Mana each turn, but the Mana must come from some source other than the glove itself.

## Potency and Imbued Items

There's a little problem with the Imbue Item spell as written in **Mage: The Awakening**.

The system is inconsistent with the Merit: Imbued Item. To wit, the spell as written allows the creator to determine the Potency of the imbued spell as the item is being imbued. This would mean that, for instance, when casting a spell like "Celestial Fire" it would be possible to incorporate five successes worth of Potency, and have the attack *always* inflict five points of damage. However, the Merit system on p. 84 indicates that when an imbued item is used, the player rolls Gnosis + the Arcanum dots used for the power (three, in the case of our hypothetical Celestial Fire item), which would mean that the Potency varies from use to use, as with other spells.

The reason for this discrepancy is to make imbued items that are created in play potentially more powerful than those purchased as Merits; because there's more work involved for the player and the character. If imbued items that were purchased as Merits at character creation had a set Potency, there would have to be some check involved to represent that (probably involving more Merit dots), and as it is, it's difficult to start out with a particularly powerful item.

For the purposes of the imbued items listed below, we've determined the Potencies as though these items were created in play. This is because the Shards of the Ladder are meant to be found and used this way by player-controlled characters. We've also enumerated how the successes for the imbued items are allocated, so if you want to make, say, a Banisher's Hand with Potency eight, you just need to add on a few more successes.

**Successes Required:** 14/16, determined as follows. 5 (Shard) + 3 (Potency of Destroy Object spell) + 5 (indefinite Duration) + 2 (spell for Inferior Arcanum for the Aether) + 1/-1 (depending on the Path of the mage who created it) = 14/16.

### *Shards of Arcadia*

Arcadian Shards, strangely, often bear signs of having been worked or shaped even before reaching the Fallen

World, as though the strange denizens of the Kingdom of Enchantment have uses for them. In fact, mages sometimes find Sleepers carrying these Shards, though of course, they can't make true use of them. Arcadian Shards are often smooth and shimmering, glistening like quicksilver, or deep ocean blue.

A Shard of Arcadia might appear in the Fallen World following an Awakening to Arcadia, or after an event of great import. When someone meets his destiny, be it a noble and glorious victory or a lonely and pathetic doom, an investigator might later find an Arcadian Shard nearby (or even clutched in the unfortunate's dead hand).

### *Example Shard: Wellstone (●●●)*

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 11

This small, shiny gray stone was found in a well in England, and has passed through several owners since then. When held tightly in the palm of a mage's hand, it grows heavy in the presence of someone suffering from lost time, usually due to abduction by the Fae, but possibly due to being stuck in a pocket of time caused by Awakened magic.

### *Example Imbued Item: Shears of Fate*

The shears are large, unwieldy things, made from iron and silver. An Arcadian Shard the color of a sickly violet is set in the hinge of the shears, and the blades creak if the shears are opened. The Shard allows the user to see the threads between people and objects, as per "Interconnections" spell (p. 148 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Once the threads have been identified, the shears can snip them away ("Destroy Threads," p. 237 of **Mage**) or cut the target out of Fate's view ("Occlude Destiny," p. 186 of **Mage**). The latter effect lasts for one full day, while the former effect lasts until the threads are re-established (the Duration is Lasting). Both of these spells have Potency 2, so if the user were to try and sever an intimate connection, he would need three turns in which to do it.

**Successes:** 17/19, determined as follows: 5 (Shard) + 2 (Potency for Occlude Destiny Spell) + 2 (Potency for Destroy Threads spell) + 4 (Duration factors for Occlude Destiny spell) + 5 (indefinite duration) + 1 (spell from a Common Arcanum) - 1 (spell from a Ruling Arcanum) +/- 1 (depending on Path of creator) = 17/19.

### *Shards of Pandemonium*

The Shards that fell into Pandemonium are often sharp, ready to slice the hands of those who dare touch them. They catch the light in strange ways, making them appear larger or smaller than they really are, or refract light, making them useful as telescopes. They are often pitted or scarred, and might appear as chunks of iron, volcanic rock or bronze.



Shards from the Abode of Demons might appear whenever a mage Awakens to the Realm, or when a great magical disturbance involving teleportation or dimensional travel occurs. A summoning ritual, for instance, that calls a monstrous entity to the Fallen World might also bring a Shard or two, perhaps wedged between the creature's teeth.

### *Example Shard: Master's Marker (●●●)*

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 11

This Shard is a chunk of soft, black stone about the size and shape of a wax pencil. It will not mark a surface, however, unless willed to do so by a mage. The user can sense any object he marks, as described for the Space 1 spell "Finder" (p. 233 of *Mage: The Awakening*).

### *Example Imbued Item: Proctor's Candlestick*

This iron candlestick is meant to reveal the guilty, and it does, in a way. A Shard of Pandemonium is set into the bottom of the hole for the candle. The Shard, now covered in wax, is black and induces a strange feverish sensation when touched. It allows the user to know the emotional states of those nearby, as described under the "Aura Perception" spell (p. 184 of *Mage: The Awakening*). In addition, the candlestick is imbued with a Life spell that makes anyone who is illuminated by the candle's flame (within four yards) and is feeling guilty begin to sweat uncontrollably. A flush enters the guilty party's cheeks, and he feels hot and uncomfortable, as though he is on display and his guilt is evident for all to see (which it is). A Composure + Subterfuge roll is necessary to keep from showing obvious signs of distress, and this roll must be made each turn while the light from the candle falls on the target.

**Successes:** 14/16, determined as follows: 5 (Shard) + 5 (indefinite Duration) + 1 (Potency of Life spell) + 3 (area-affecting Factors for Life spell) + 1 (spell of Common Arcanum for Pandemonium) +/- 1 (depending on creator's Path) = 14/16.

## *Shards of the Primal Wild*

The Primal Wild teems with life, and so when the Ladder splintered and rained into the Realms, the Shards that fell here killed a great many creatures. As such, they are often stained with blood or appear to be made from bone or fossilized plant or animal matter. Some of them are resplendent silver, but just as many are dull, gray rock or muddled amber.

Shards from the Primal Wild might appear when a mage Awakens as a Thyrus, or during any powerful spiritual incursion. When a spirit of rank five or more appears in the Fallen World, it might bring a Shard or two with it. Lesser spirits often attach themselves to these Shards, and bedevil anyone who tries to take them. Werewolves, too,

have a fondness for these stones, although they obviously can't use them correctly.

(It is possible, if the Storyteller desires, for Shards from the Primal Wild to hold Essence instead of Mana, making them quite useful to spirits and werewolves alike.)

### *Example Shard: Exorcist's Lens (●●●)*

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 11

This Shard is a gray stone about the size of a credit card, with a penny-sized hole in the center. When the user holds it up to her left eye, she sees whether the target she is looking at is possessed, as described for the Spirit 1 spell "Exorcist's Eye" (p. 245 of *Mage: The Awakening*). The mage sees the possessing entity superimposed over the victim for a few seconds.

### *Example Imbued Item: Drawing Stone*

This Shard hasn't had any embellishment in the process of imbuing it. It is a simple rock, about the size of a child's fist, pale pink in color and rough and sandpapery to the touch. When placed on the chest of a person who has been poisoned or drugged, it draws the toxins out. In game terms, this adds five dice to any roll to resist the poison that the victim's player must make. The stone continues to have this effect as long as it touches the victim's skin, until the poison is gone.

**Successes:** 13/15, determined as follows: 5 (indefinite Duration) + 5 (Potency of Life spell) + 5 (Shard) - 1 (spell from Ruling Arcanum) +/- 1 (depending on creator's Path) = 13/15.

## *Shards of Stygia*

The Kingdom of Crypts has more than its share of gems and precious metals, and not all of them — not even most — are Shards of the Ladder. But Shards in this Realm can indeed take the form of diamonds and other gemstones, chunks of raw gold or platinum, or even spheres of luminous white marble.

Shards from Stygia can appear whenever a mage Awakens as a Moros, or when a magical event involving a ghost or some other manifestation of death occurs. When a vampire passes her curse on to a mortal, for instance, the newly created bloodsucker might have a Shard of Stygia in his pocket. When a ghost passes on to the next world, he might leave a Shard behind.

### *Example Shard: Looter's Coin (●●●)*

Durability 4, Size 0, Structure 4

**Mana Capacity:** 11

This Shard is a small, round piece of lead, about the size of a silver dollar. If a mage flips it, it always lands on its edge

and rolls toward any hidden cache or secret entrance, as per the Matter 1 spell “Find the Hidden Hoard” (p. 195 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

### *Example Imbued Item: Murderer's Collar*

This powerful item was almost certainly created by a mage with a predilection for murder. It is a heavy leather collar with a milky blue-white Shard set into the front and an iron clasp. When locked about the neck of a corpse, it immediately reveals the cause of death to the user (if the victim was drowned, the mage sees the water in the corpse's lungs start to glow, for example) as per the Death 1 spell “Forensic Gaze” (p. 134 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The mage can then use the collar's magic to change the apparent cause of death (“Corpse Mask,” p. 136 of **Mage**, Potency is 2) and even cause the corpse to stand up and walk, under its own power, to a locale that the mage finds more suitable (“Quicken Corpse,” p. 140 of **Mage**). A zombie thus created has the basic traits for the walking dead listed in the sidebar on p. 141 of **Mage**, but the spell's Potency is 3 for purposes of contesting control by another necromancer. The corpse remains animated for one scene, and can be commanded as usual for the Quicken Corpse spell.

**Successes:** 12/14, determined as follows: 5 (Shard) + 5 (indefinite Duration) + 2 (Potency of Corpse Mask spell) + 3 (Potency of Quicken Corpse spell) – 2 (spells from Ruling Arcanum of Stygia) +/- 1 (depending on creator's Path) = 12/14.

### *Shards of the Fallen World*

Shards that tumbled into the Fallen World after the destruction of the Celestial Ladder can look like any of the Shards described above. They do not usually have distinctly supernatural characteristics; rather, they look like ordinary stones for the region in which they are found. They are the rarest of all of the Shards, and they can be found anywhere on Earth.

When Terrestrial Shards are used in imbued items, no bonuses or penalties are assessed based on the Arcana of the spells or the Path of the creator. The Shard always adds five successes to the casting, no matter what the other particulars of the item are.

### *Example Shard: Center of the Battlefield (●●●)*

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 5

**Mana Capacity:** 11

The Center of the Battlefield is a shard of glass-like stone, smoky brown in color and about six inches long. It could conceivably be used as a weapon (inflict lethal damage, but –1 modifier for its unwieldiness), but its greatest utility for a mage is that it provides an intuitive sense of the user's surroundings. The mage stabs the stone into the ground,

or just marks the ground if it is too solid to penetrate, and then enjoys the benefits of the “Spatial Map” spell (p. 233 of **Mage: The Awakening**) for the remainder of the scene.

### *Example Imbued Item: Uncle Einar's Wings*

The mage who created these wings, obviously a fan of Ray Bradbury's work, wished to be able to fly by night without risking death from crashing into an unseen object. The “wings” actually take the form of a long, black cloak. The clasp is a blood-red stone. This stone, of course, is a Terrestrial Shard, enabling the mage to use the “Nightsight” spell (p. 163 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The cloak itself allows the mage to fly at a Speed of (Gnosis + 10). The mage's flight is subject to the systems listed for the “Flight” spell, p. 177 of **Mage: The Awakening**. The mage can fly for one scene, and each flight costs one point of Mana.

**Successes:** 20, determined as follows: 5 (indefinite Duration) + 5 (Shard) + 10 (Potency of Flight spell) = 20.

### *Shards of the Abyss*

Shards of the Abyss might be more common than any of the others, but it's hard to say, because they are difficult to detect by magic. As mentioned above, any attempt to detect or identify an Abyssal shard using Supernal magic suffers a –5 modifier. They usually do not feel harmful or dangerous, either by touch or through magic. Instead, one's senses seem to slide off them.

This is good, however, for mages in general. A mage carrying an Abyssal Shard adds one dice to *all* Paradox pools, and an additional dice if any Sleepers see his magic. In addition, Abyssal entities can sense these Shards, as well, and can automatically track a mage carrying one.

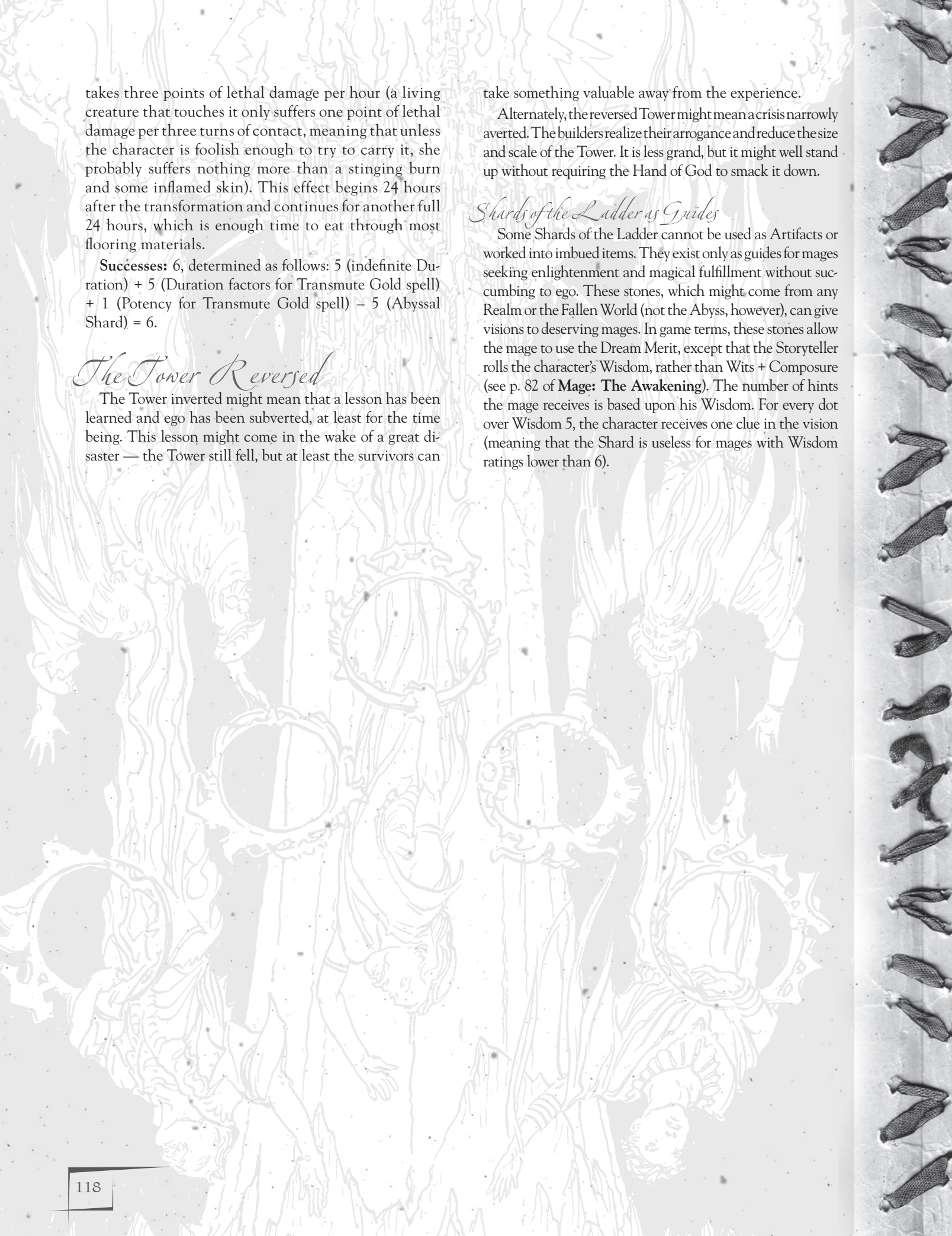
Abyssal Shards cannot be used as Artifacts — they don't hold Mana and bestow no spells. They *can* be worked into imbued items, and there is a benefit to doing so. The number of successes required for the item is reduced by five, rather than increased. Using an Abyssal stone, however, always curses the item. The Storyteller should come up with an appropriate curse for the item, commensurate with the Arcanum dots of the highest spell. Items that create vulgar effects have especially harsh curses.

### *Example Imbued Item: Midas' Noose*

This item appears to be a length of rope, about six feet long, with a clasp made of iron burnt black (the Shard). When wound around an object (Size 5 or less), the rope changes that object into pure gold. It has no effect on living creatures and cannot change objects into any other substance.

The effect, unfortunately, is temporary. As the spell wears off, which takes roughly 48 hours, the gold turns a poisonous shade of green and starts to leak a powerful acid. Anything touching the golden object





takes three points of lethal damage per hour (a living creature that touches it only suffers one point of lethal damage per three turns of contact, meaning that unless the character is foolish enough to try to carry it, she probably suffers nothing more than a stinging burn and some inflamed skin). This effect begins 24 hours after the transformation and continues for another full 24 hours, which is enough time to eat through most flooring materials.

**Successes:** 6, determined as follows: 5 (indefinite Duration) + 5 (Duration factors for Transmute Gold spell) + 1 (Potency for Transmute Gold spell) – 5 (Abyssal Shard) = 6.

## *The Tower Reversed*

The Tower inverted might mean that a lesson has been learned and ego has been subverted, at least for the time being. This lesson might come in the wake of a great disaster — the Tower still fell, but at least the survivors can

take something valuable away from the experience.

Alternately, the reversed Tower might mean a crisis narrowly averted. The builders realize their arrogance and reduce the size and scale of the Tower. It is less grand, but it might well stand up without requiring the Hand of God to smack it down.

## *Shards of the Ladder as Guides*

Some Shards of the Ladder cannot be used as Artifacts or worked into imbued items. They exist only as guides for mages seeking enlightenment and magical fulfillment without succumbing to ego. These stones, which might come from any Realm or the Fallen World (not the Abyss, however), can give visions to deserving mages. In game terms, these stones allow the mage to use the Dream Merit, except that the Storyteller rolls the character's Wisdom, rather than Wits + Composure (see p. 82 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The number of hints the mage receives is based upon his Wisdom. For every dot over Wisdom 5, the character receives one clue in the vision (meaning that the Shard is useless for mages with Wisdom ratings lower than 6).



# KEY XVII — THE STAR

A naked girl pours water from a jug onto the ground, or from two jugs onto the ground and into water. The stars are visible in the sky above her, and very often a bird or a butterfly is perched on a nearby tree. The Star is the card of guidance from above, of light shining down from the Heavens. This light can provide a path for those who are lost (literally or figuratively) or can be the light of inspiration, infusing a seeker with new knowledge, ideas and goals. As the light shines down on the girl, she, in turn, pours the water of her ideas and dreams onto the ground (making those ideas manifest on Earth) or into the water (adding them to the collective dreams and knowledge of humanity).

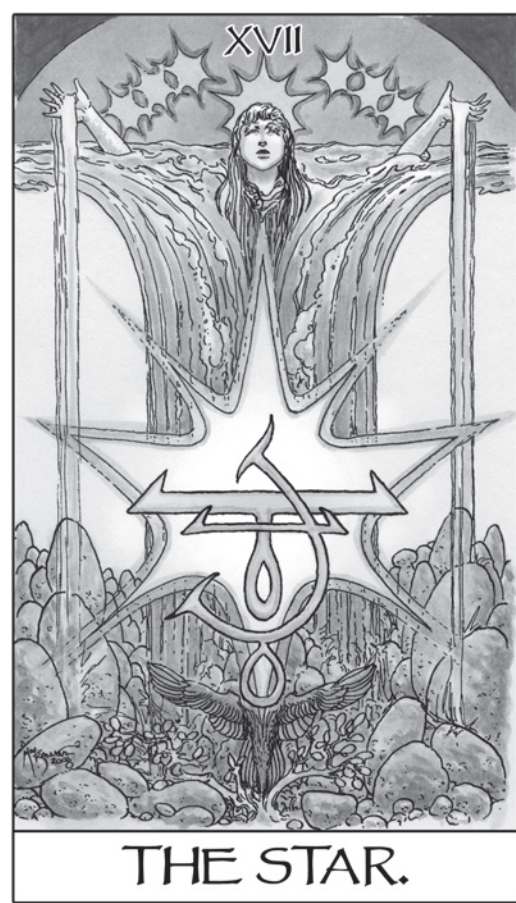
Mages can receive this kind of inspiration from dreams, visions and other glimpses of the future, whether through their use of magic or through connection to a universal font of knowledge (i.e., the Dream Merit). When they act on their inspiration, what they “pour out” onto the world is magic, and thus it reshapes the world in grandiose ways rather than changing it slowly and subtly. Even a spell that has little visible effect on the world often changes it more, and more quickly, than a

Sleeper’s efforts would. Mages, therefore, are perhaps more susceptible to taking inspiration from unsafe sources, especially since they are usually told that their dreams often have deep significance.

The Star is often associated with the Arcanum of Prime. In this case, the material “poured out” upon the world is Mana, the very energy of magic itself.

Mana can be taken from any by a mage learned enough in the Prime Arcanum, and so it really is the essential material of the world. The Star is sometimes associated with the Obrimos Path because of its resonance with Prime, but many mages feel that if Prime is truly the basic energy and matter of the universe, it certainly doesn’t belong only to the Theurgists.

For a mage on the Tarot journey, the Star is the first step onto the final “leg” of the journey. The mage’s concerns now become more esoteric than ever before, as she must start to consider what her role is in the World of Darkness, and how the things she does reflect the Supernal Realms. The Star, then, is a kind of second Awakening, one that re-establishes contact with the lands beyond the Abyss and, hopefully, helps the mage think in a wider and more universal fashion.



## LEGACY — THE ILLUMINED PATH

Don't take your eyes away.

The Illumined Path believes that the Awakening is not a binary condition. That is, one is not either Asleep or Awakened. There are many subtle gradations, many points along a Sleeper’s life at which he might perceive the Supernal Realms. The Illumined Path rejects the notion that Sleepers must carry the

Abyss with them, and that they unconsciously foment Quiescence. All any Sleeper needs to see the world for what it is, to see magic, is guidance. To the mages of the Illumined Path, that guidance is light.

This does mean, however, that some of the Pathfinders believe the Abyss can be burned out of Sleepers.



The right intensity of light — a vulgar spell at the right moment, that is — can immediately change Sleeper to Sleepwalker, or so the Legacy is taught. The members, therefore, are constantly on guard for the appropriate moment. Sometimes, of course, they just guess, and that means they risk Paradox for what other mages might see as no good reason.

## History

The Illumined Path claims a long history as a faction, but only recently became a Legacy. As far back as the Reformation, certain mages worked closely within the Church (and outside of it, probably, but the most reliable records come from priests and monks) to help “illuminate” the souls of the un-Awakened. These mages variously called themselves “guides,” “muses,” and sometimes even “Prometheans,” after the Greek Titan who brought fire to mortals (this title is almost never used in the modern era).

The Illumined Path adopted its name and a formal set of precepts in the early 20th century. A Lutheran priest began the journey to Awakening, but faltered somewhere along the way and wound up trapped within his own mystery play. A Thyrsus mage called Daniel, using a protracted Spirit spell, found his lost soul and brought it back to his body. The priest remembered little of the experience, but did recall seeing “a light, a beckoning light that led me back.” After that, he was able to see magic without succumbing to Disbelief, and became a trusty ally of Daniel’s cabal. The cabal, in fact, dedicated themselves to helping other Sleepers see past the Lie. The priest acted as spiritual counselor and advisor to the mages, and it was he who provided the phrase that has since defined the Illumined Path: “To give light to those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79).

The cabal never referred to itself as “the Illumined Path.” Instead, that phrase referred to their set of philosophical and magical precepts (see below). Over time, Daniel and the rest of the cabal learned that Sleepers were capable of seeing magic and Supernal Truth more often than most mages gave them credit for. The un-Awakened normally didn’t understand what they were seeing, but they responded instinctively to threats even when they couldn’t identify the source. The cabal felt that this kind of instinct was what granted humanity an inherent sense of morality. People knew that hurting others was “wrong” because they perceived the inherent harmony of the universe and wanted to be part of it. Those who were willing to hurt

others, or, worse, took pleasure in it, did so because they were especially blinded by Quiescence.

But then the cabal received a fatal blow to its philosophy — World War I. Daniel, a young man at the time that war broke out, entered the Army hoping to spread his teachings to soldiers on both sides. Instead, he met his end in France, gunned down in a muddy field. His magic was no match for machine gun fire. Back in the United States, his cabal read the reports of what was happening in Europe, and fell to despair. People, it seemed, had no sense of peace or harmony, or if they did, it was quickly eroded when the trumpets of war sounded.

## Revival

It was Daniel’s grand-nephew, Graham Benedine, who revived the Illumined Path in 1982. Graham found Daniel’s Bible while rummaging through a box in his mother’s attic one day. He sat down and read the notes that Daniel had written to himself, took note of the underlined passages, and marveled at the strange symbols that were not English, and yet seemed to mean *something*, though Graham could not put his finger on what it was. Never a particularly religious man, Graham was still fascinated by his great-uncle, the philosopher, and made a list of the notes Daniel had written and the passages he’d marked, in order. What he discovered, with a little interpretation, was the Illumined Path.

Graham, of course, knew nothing of Awakened magic, but he saw the philosophy as meaningful anyway. Enlightenment, as he read it, was something that couldn’t be given, but could benefit from guidance. The Illumined Path rejected notions of preaching, or a master-student relationship, and instead summed up its position with a parable:

*We are all lost in a dark wood. Sometimes, one of us finds the edge, and is free and safe. That man then has the choice: does he leave the rest of us to our fate? Does he feel it is our responsibility to find our own way? Does he lie in wait, hoping to trap us for his own benefit? Or does he re-enter the woods, hoping to guide us out?*

*Likewise, some of us lost here have light. Do we hide our light, selfishly guarding it? Are we so afraid that others will stomp it out, out of fear, out of hate, out of desperation? No. Our lights must lead others on, for light begets light. Once others are drawn to us, we must show them how to light their own way. This is the Illumined Path.*

Graham wrote a book entitled “The Illumined Path,” espousing his great-uncle’s philosophies. It was

published, but never sold very well. The Legacy, of course, uses Graham's book as their bible.

Graham never Awakened, and died in 1990. Officially, his death was of natural causes, but the Legacy believes he was murdered by magic, probably by the Seers of the Throne (but, some speculate, just as easily by the Guardians of the Veil). Shortly after his death, a group of mages (mostly Shamans) who had read and been inspired by his book came together and formed a cabal. A few years later, the Legacy was born. The Illumined Path has refused to name the first member of the Legacy. When asked who the founder of the Illumined Path is, they refer to the unnamed priest whom Daniel guided out of the "dark wood" so many years ago.

### *Philosophy*

The Legacy's philosophy, as explained by Daniel and later Graham, is as follows:

- **Varying degrees of light:** One is not "Awakened" or "Asleep." The ability to perceive magic is a spectrum. A "Sleepwalker" is in the middle of the spectrum, a mage is closer to one extreme, but a "Sleeper" can be led to enlightenment (if not Awakening), and a mage can be led to great insight.

- **Lead, do not preach:** There is no value in abusive teaching. The Guides do not beat their students, and they do not put them through demeaning or hurtful lessons. The world teaches pain and suffering enough, and the Legacy's members do not wish to make it worse.

- **The soul is the brightest light:** A person who has damaged his soul must be healed. A mage that traffics in souls is the worst kind of blasphemer and traitor to the Light. And yet, if *his* soul can be healed, that is the greatest good.

- **Recognize the moment of the spark:** Any Sleeper can be made into a Sleepwalker — or even Awakened — by witnessing magic at the right moment. This moment might be defined by crisis, introspection, or even random chance, but if a Pathfinder can show a Sleeper something magical, be it a vulgar spell, an Artifact, or even a supernatural occurrence unconnected with Awakened magic, she can open that Sleeper's soul to a bit more light.

- **Master Paradox:** Mages can prevent Paradox with magic. They can cope with the results, but the damage it can do to their bodies is great. The Illumined Path feels that allowing Paradox to eat away at their bodies is wrong. Every mage must make his own choice about Paradox, but fear of it only empowers it.

This last tenet is one that the Legacy argues about even today. Daniel, apparently, was notorious for letting Paradox run free, and wound up Branded more than once. Some suspect, in fact, that a Paradox was what killed him on the battlefield. The Illumined Path feels that releasing Paradox, rather than containing it, is generally preferable. It's just not always practical, especially in a combat situation.

### *Induction*

Joining the Illumined Path is nominally a matter of reading Graham's book and dedicating oneself to the philosophies therein, which means anyone, even a Sleeper, can do it. Joining the actual Legacy is a little more involved, of course. Once the supplicant has read the book, she must seek out a tutor and present her request. Thus far, only Thyrsus mages have joined the Legacy, but no specific policy on the part of the Illumined Path restricts it to Shamans.

If the tutor agrees to take on the pupil (and the tutor is left to his own devices for determining suitability), the apprenticeship usually takes a month or two. During this time, the tutor and student find ways to extend guidance to others, hopefully in a way that makes Sleepers more aware of magic without violating the *Lex Magica*. Often this involves interacting with mortals on a spiritual level and helping to foster perception of the unseen. Sometimes, it involves dealing with mortals who have already witnessed something supernatural and avoiding a violent response.

Some Guides take a more martial approach, however, and spend their time hunting down mages and other beings that work to stifle constructive understanding of the magical world. Banishers and Tremere Liches are favorite targets, though the Legacy does sometimes come into conflict (normally non-violent) with the Guardians of the Veil as well.

Whenever the tutor feels it appropriate, he aids the new Guide in reshaping her soul and joining the Legacy. The initiation ceremony is usually performed with Sleepers and Sleepwalkers present, even if this means it must take place under the guise of another such ritual (such as a baptism).

**Parent Path:** Thyrsus

**Nickname:** Guides

**Orders:** Mages of the Free Council and the Adamantine Arrow make up the bulk of the faction (and thus the Legacy). The orders approach its philosophies a little differently, of course. The Free Council focuses more closely on bringing magic in line with modern understanding of



the world, while the Arrow focuses on teaching Sleepers to recognize and protect themselves against the supernatural, but the two views aren't usually incompatible.

The Silver Ladder and the Mysterium make up a small percentage of the Legacy's members, but are much more likely to join on a factional level, if at all. The Silver Ladder, after all, prefers to focus on Awakened matters, and the Mysterium has a hard time shaking the notion that Sleepers can't handle (much of) the truth.

The Guardians of the Veil are forbidden to join the Illumined Path, and it would be unlikely that a tutor would knowingly accept one, anyway.

**Appearance:** Guides try to appear approachable, but interesting. They dress and behave in a manner that doesn't mark them as hostile or exclusive (so many of them shun religious paraphernalia), and try to appear as presentable as possible. Since members of the Legacy are Shamans, they are often capable of altering their features slightly to facilitate this.

**Background:** Since the Illumined Path is open to anyone who wishes to guide others, the backgrounds of the mages (and Sleepers) who follow it are many and varied. The Shamans of the Legacy itself are often from professions that involve teaching or spiritual guidance, but this can just as easily be an avocation as a vocation.

**Organization:** The Illumined Path is a multi-layered organization. As a philosophy open to anyone, it includes an online network including message boards, a mailing list and other such tools to help members keep in touch. The Illumined Path meets once yearly, sometimes on its own, sometimes at other gatherings such as Burning Man or a Rainbow Gathering.

As a faction of mages, the Guides keep in touch through mundane means, and don't even bother hiding much of their correspondence. They don't give out sensitive information, but don't worry as much about referring to magic in front of Sleepers. They reason, usually correctly, that most Sleepers assume they're speaking figuratively or that they're crazy, but that some more perceptive folks will see some of the truth (which of course is the point of the exercise anyway).

The members of the Illumined Path Legacy stay in regular contact through letters, online communication and even telephone. The most important bond is, of course, between student and mentor, but it's not uncommon for a Guide to know others in his region.

**Suggested Oblations:** Guided meditation, teaching, tutoring, philosophical discourse, experimenting

with magic and Paradox, volunteering time for a helpful charity.

**Concepts:** Motivational speaker, clergyman, teacher, sensei, bounty hunter, recruiter, security guard, social worker, judge, law enforcement.

## *Attainments*

The Attainments of the Illumined Path are designed to bring light to others. Sometimes this is literal; sometimes it is figurative or spiritual in nature.

### *1st: In the Dark Wood*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Forces 2 (primary), Spirit 1, Empathy 2

The Illumined Path begins with the desire to bring light to those who sit in darkness, as their "founder" pointed out. This Attainment allows the mage to use an effect identical to the "Nightsight" spell (p. 163 of **Mage: The Awakening**) at will, with no roll or expenditure.

What's more, the character can bestow this ability on another being, even a Sleeper, provided that the character touches the target and the player rolls Presence + Empathy + Forces. This requires that the target's soul is prepared for it. In game terms, the Attainment incorporates aspects of the Spirit Arcanum to make this judgment. Whether a given Sleeper is prepared for the Attainment to work is up to the Storyteller. A Morality rating of 7 or more is a good rule of thumb, but other factors should be considered as well, such as whether the character has any experience with magic.

Finally, the player can spend one point of Mana to brighten any source of light; no matter how small, to approximately the level of a 100 watt light bulb. This light lasts for one scene.

### *2nd: Safeguard the Path*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Forces 3

Part of the reason that Sleepers tend to ignore the supernatural, the Guides feel, is that the supernatural is so often dangerous to them. Most of humanity, therefore, chooses not to see the magic right before them. That might work as a defense mechanism, but it's not getting the human race anywhere in terms of enlightenment, and so the Illumined Path works to keep its charges safe while still guiding them. This Attainment allows the character to create a haze of light around a person or a group of people. This light repels

all attacks. They simply fail to penetrate the light.

The player spends one point of Mana and rolls Resolve + Persuasion + Forces. This roll is subject to normal target factors for additional beings protected (see p. 118 of **Mage: The Awakening**). Everyone under the Attainment's protection gains Armor equal to the mage's Forces rating, as described under "Bestow Unseen Shield" (p. 168 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The mage can project this armor up to 20 feet away.

In addition, the mage can force a hostile target backwards, adding kinetic energy to the power of his light. The Guide must have a source of light handy, even if it's just a match. The player spends one point of Mana and rolls Strength + Intimidation + Forces. This roll can be subjected to target factors as mentioned above. Any targets must exceed the mage's successes on a reflexive Strength + Athletics roll to move forward toward the mage (or whomever the mage is protecting). Even if they do succeed, the targets' Speed ratings are halved. This effect lasts as long as the mage concentrates. She can take no other action while maintaining the Attainment, and must remain stationary.

#### **Optional Arcanum: Spirit 3**

The mage gains the ability to open Sleepers' eyes to the supernatural around her. The character bestows a form of Unseen Senses to the target, allowing her to sense the mage's spells and spiritual activity. The magic of other mages doesn't trigger these senses, nor do other supernatural phenomena. If, however, the mage also possesses Prime 2 or Death 2, she can weave these into the Attainment and allow the target to sense all Awakened magic (Prime) or death-related phenomena like ghosts and vampires (Death).

The character must touch the target. The player spends a point of Mana and rolls Presence + Occult + Spirit. The effect lasts for one scene. At the Storyteller's discretion, a Sleeper that undergoes this treatment often enough might be allowed to develop the Unseen Sense Merit (normally, this Merit is only available at character creation).

### *3rd: Light of Wisdom*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Forces 4

A mage who sees a strange, supernatural occurrence can bring spells to bear to verify what he has witnessed. A Sleeper has no such recourse, and the Abyss hampers his perceptions. This Attainment, though, allows the mage to share his discerning eyes with others by changing the properties of light to illuminate only the truth.

The player spends one point of Mana and rolls Wits + Subterfuge + Forces. The mage must have a source of light handy, and it must be enough to illuminate whatever the mage wants to reveal. When the light strikes an object, it causes the "truth" to glow. What this means depends on the object in question. If a wall conceals a door, the door begins to glow, making its presence obvious. If a "man" is really an Abyssal creature disguised as a person, the monster's true nature is revealed by the mage's light. If the mage uses this light on a person while he speaks, the target's lips glow as long as he speaks the truth. The mage doesn't always know why an object or person is glowing, but generally if something shows up to this light, it is because it has some Supernal quality or it is hiding something.

(Note to Storytellers: This Attainment mixes aspects of the Spirit and Life Arcana, as well as the Patterning Practice of Forces. Spirit and Life are not listed as prerequisites because, since this Legacy is commonly practiced by Thyrsus, the mage would have these Arcana anyway. If a non-Thyrsus adopts this Legacy, she needs Life 2 and Spirit 2 to use this Attainment.)

#### **Optional Arcanum: Life 4**

At this level the mage discovers a magical technique that other willworkers have searched for over the centuries: the secret of using magic to heal damage inflicted by containing Paradox. The trick isn't so much to heal the damage, but to prevent it from happening. The mage creates a layer of tissue at the instant of the Paradox to absorb the damage, which then immediately dissolves. In game terms, the player can spend a point of Mana and roll Stamina + Occult + Life as a reflexive action whenever the character suffers damage from containing a Paradox. For every success, the character can ignore one level of bashing damage from the Paradox. Any remaining damage is still considered Resistant, and cannot be healed by magic.

## *Sample Character*

### *Lucius*

**Quote:** You can rise above the Lie. You wouldn't believe the lie I had to rise above.

**Background:** Born to privilege and wealth, Dermott Zachary never wanted for anything. Even among his most spoiled friends, it seemed as though he was waited on hand and foot. It wasn't just his circumstances, either. The world seemed to be at his beck and call. It never rained on days that he wanted to go out. Every winter saw the school closing from snow at least



once, but it never lasted long enough to get dreary or depressing. Dermott always got what he wanted.

And then he turned 18, and they came for him. People dressed in black seized him at his own birthday party and revealed the truth. Dermott was a descendent of Lucifer, the great Satan himself, and he had a responsibility — to fight the other demons escaped from Hell.



Dermott was having none of it. He played along until these sickos weren't paying attention, and then he ran. He didn't know where he was; they had taken him to some cabin in the woods, far from civilization, or so he thought (in actuality, he was just in a ravine on the poorer side of town, not 10 miles from his front door). He ran through the night, following a light that, apparently, only he could see. He collapsed in a storm drain, and listened as they closed in. In desperation, he scratched his name and the date on the stone in front of him, and in that moment he was Awakened.

He changed his face to escape his pursuers and tried to go back to his old life, but something had changed for Dermott. His money and privilege hadn't saved him, the light had. He started reading any books he could about magic and spirituality, and wound up finding the answers he needed in *The Illumined Path*, by someone named Graham Benedine. He found the Path's online community and wound up joining first the Free Council and then the Legacy. He tells his crazy story to other mages sometimes, and disturbingly, he finds that some of them have *heard* of these crazy people claiming to be descendants of Lucifer. Some kind of cult, obviously... but what do they want?

Dermott, or "Lucius" as he calls himself nowadays, doesn't know, but he sees this cult as the opposite of his Legacy. The Illumined Path is a group of enlightened people trying to bring light to the masses. The cult, whatever they call themselves, is a group of people claiming the name of the Light-Bringer, but sneaking through the metaphorical dark woods, hunting for victims. Lucius would love to find them and stop them, but he's afraid of what he might find if he goes looking.

**Description:** Now in his early 20s, Lucius is tall, strong and well-developed, the product of a lifetime of good health care, nutrition, and exercise. He has soft blond hair and an angelic face, and sports a sun tattoo on his shoulders and back.

Lucius Nimbus appears as a halo of smoky white light around his head. His tattoo also comes into sharp relief when his Nimbus flares. The colors become bright and vibrant while his skin turns a striking alabaster white.

**Storytelling Hints:** Lucius is a young and relatively inexperienced mage who stumbled onto an ancient and powerful adversary. What the cult that tried to recruit him really is, and why they chose him, are questions that haunt him daily, but he isn't sure how to approach it and his order doesn't know what to tell

him. The right kind of cabal could help him, and he'd be happy to pay them, but he'd want to accompany them on the search. And that, of course, could be disastrous if this cult is *right* about Lucius.

Lucius tries to be philosophical and deep, but he hasn't had the life experience to make much in the way of comparison or understand suffering. He tries to solve problems with money, and as such gets taken advantage of frequently. He laughs this off when it's pointed out to him — he can afford to, after all.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Gold-plated pen light

**Real Name:** Dermott Zachary

**Path:** Thyrsus

**Order:** Free Council

**Legacy:** Illumined Path

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Occult (Cults) 2, Politics 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Boxing) 2, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 1

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Expression (Piano) 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Destiny ("Sins of the father") 3, Resources 5, Sanctum (Size 4, Security 4), Status (Free Council) 1, Status (High Society) 2, Striking Looks 4

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 7

**Virtue:** Charity

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Forces 2, Life 2, Spirit 2

**Rites:** *Forces* — Tune In (•), Control Sound (••); *Life* — Cleanse the Body (•), Purify Bodies (••), Visions of the Living World (••); *Spirit* — Coaxing the Spirits (•), Gossamer Touch (••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — In the Dark Wood

**Mana/per turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 2 ("Organic Resilience," Life ••)

## *The Star Reversed*

Inspiration is gone. No light shines down from the Heavens, and all around is blackness and despair. The path is hidden from the seeker, and he is unable to

decide on a course of action. Alternately, the inspiration that the seeker has already felt is from a false or deliberately misleading source, or else the seeker is interpreting that inspiration incorrectly.

Another possibility is that the water is flowing upwards, back into the jug. That is, instead of letting inspiration guide the seeker to change the world, he is letting the world shape his mind, or taking out of the world more than he is putting in.

## *The Illumined Path as a Left-Handed Legacy*

Graham did not die. They came for him one afternoon, horrible creatures with the bodies of men, but no faces, just empty black holes where faces should be. Graham Awakened to the Primal Wild that day and used his newfound power to repel these creatures. And he realized that magic wasn't for everyone. His uncle had lofty goals, yes, but they were unrealistic. And yet, the book had already been published — there was no getting around that.

So Graham used the book to lure in mages and introduce them to his real philosophy. Namely, magic belongs to the Awakened, and people should be actively *discouraged* from Awakening. As such, only those Sleepers who truly have the tenacity to reach the Supernal will Awaken, and they are the most deserving. Graham joined the Guardians of the Veil, and his Legacy dwells under the order's auspices as a dirty secret.

The outward face of the Illumined Path is the same as presented above, but the Legacy itself is only available to Thyrsus mages hand-picked by Graham. They work to prevent Awakenings, to steer Sleepers away from magic, and to kill any mage they feel is undeserving of her gifts.

As a Left-Handed Legacy, the Illumined Path's Attainments change as described below:

## *1st: Darken the Woods*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 3, Death 2 (primary), Spirit 1, Intimidation 2

The mage can make any situation seem frightening and unpleasant. This Attainment combines aspects of Death and Spirit to animate shadows and make spirits in Twilight just *slightly* more powerful, enough to whisper and tease Sleepers.

The player rolls Presence + Intimidation + Death. Any Sleepers within sight of the character suffer a penalty to all Resolve and Composure rolls equal to



the mage's Gnosis. This penalty also applies when Resolve or Composure is used as a Defense trait. This effect persists for one scene.

### *2nd: Losing the Path*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 5, Death 3

This despicable attack allows the mage to strike at a Sleeper's soul. The mage doesn't remove the soul, he merely strikes it with a chilling blast of magic. The player rolls Presence + Occult + Death – the target's Resolve. Each success strips the victim of one point of Willpower, and imposes a penalty on all Physical and Mental actions equal to the mage's Gnosis. This penalty persists for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled.

**Optional Arcanum:** Spirit 3

This power is similar to the one described in the text above, but has a much-different intent and effect. It does open the Sleeper's eyes to the supernatural truth around her, but it also makes shutting out this "truth" impossible. The target sees spirits of darkness and nightmares everywhere (these spirits, of course, follow the character once they realize that she can see and fear them). The target suffers terrible dreams every night while the Attainment is in effect, and regains no Willpower for such sleep. In addition, the

target suffers a –3 to all Perception rolls and Mental actions due to distraction. The target may also become a prime target for spirit possession, at the Storyteller's approval.

The character must touch the target, and the player rolls Manipulation + Occult + Spirit – the target's Resolve. The effect lasts for one day per success.

### *3rd: Hungry Shadows*

**Prerequisites:** Gnosis 7, Death 4

The mage saps the target's strength, drawing out his vitality through shadows surrounding him. This is similar to the Death 4 spell "Enervation" (p. 143 of **Mage: The Awakening**). The character need only see the target, but the target must be standing in a shadowed area (which the character can, of course, arrange easily). The player rolls Presence + Intimidation + Death – the target's Stamina. Every success drops the target's Strength by one. If this lowers the target's Strength to 0, he collapses and cannot stand as long as the shadows fall on him.

**Optional Arcanum:** Life 4

As described above. The Left-Handed version of the Illumined Path finds this Attainment just as useful as the standard version.



# KEY XVIII — THE MOON

The full moon shines down upon the land. In some decks, its light falls upon towers, dogs and perhaps a sea-creature. In others, a man sits beneath the moon with a dial marked with the lunar months. More elaborate versions show a maiden in a chariot riding over the land. The moon means many things in folklore, and is well known for being mercurial and constantly changing, so it follows that the card should have multiple versions.

The meaning of the Moon in the Tarot likewise varies. The towers pictured in some decks can be seen as entrances to other, nighttime worlds. The sea-creature is a symbol of what lurks in the unconscious minds of sleeping people — put another way, the nightmare. The baying dogs might be guardians for the dreamer, or nightmare beasts themselves, or the dreamer's unconscious urges. The simplest way to sum up the Moon, perhaps, is mutability and symbolism — the notion that anything can represent something else, especially in dreams.

To the Awakened, the Moon is the card of the Thyrsus Path, specifically the Spirit Arcanum. As the card of dreams, nightmares and madness, it represents symbolism and uncertainty, divination and premonition. It can also represent the spirit world and the astral realms, any journey beyond the physical that a mage might choose to make.

On the journey through the Tarot, the mage might discover that the world is full of symbols. Everything, potentially, contains a bit of the Supernal, and a mage might drive herself mad trying to find those clues. Better, perhaps, to sift through what “catches” in a dream, to gain insight by analyzing what the mind refuses to let go, rather than spend all day and night searching for true significance. Beware, though, the monsters that might crawl up out of one's mind. These nightmares are only terrifying to Sleepers, but to a mage, they can be horribly real.

## Grimoire — *The Lunar Way*

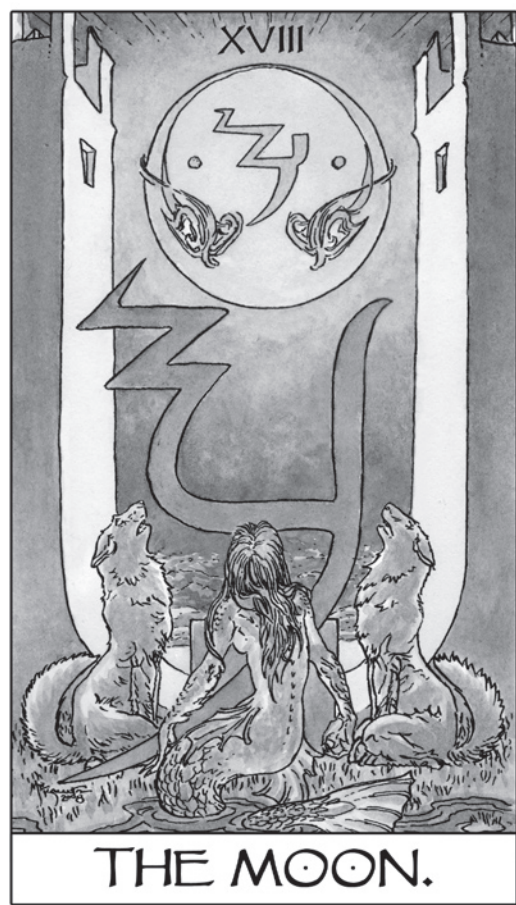
Serial killer enthusiasts and students of the macabre know the story of Peter Stumpf. Supposedly, Stumpf was a farmer living near Cologne, Germany in the 16th century.

In 1589, Stumpf was accused of being a mass murderer and cannibal, and confessed to having the power to change into a wolf. In this form, he said, he had devoured the flesh of dozens of people, including his own son. He was put to death in one of the most elaborate and brutal executions on record — broken on the wheel, chunks of flesh torn from his body with red-hot pincers, limbs smashed with blunted axes, beheaded and finally burned. The wheel upon which he was tortured and killed was put up on a pole, along with his head.

Stumpf claimed the Devil had given him a black belt that let him take on the form of the monster, and that he had lain with a succubus and sold his soul to Satan. Modern scholars take into account the political turmoil of the region at the time, and that Stumpf's “confession” probably happened under at least implied, if not direct, torture. Stumpf was, perhaps, an eccentric but innocent man, whose crimes were actually the work of soldiers fighting a civil war in the area. His execution may well have been for a

political crime rather than one with any real merit, an attempt by one faction of Christianity to bully another.

The truth, as usual, is somewhat more complex. Stumpf's death *did* serve the religious ambitions of the Lord of Bedburg — Stumpf was a prominent citizen and probably a Protestant convert, and executing him in such a fashion would send a very clear message to other converts. But on the other hand, Stumpf also *did* kill indiscriminately while wearing the form of a wolf, though most of his supposed victims did not die under his fangs. Stumpf did not gain





Excerpt from “The Sorcerer, the Werewolf, and the Church — Using Myth to Further Political Goals,” by Joanna R. Harris

Note, too, the case of Peter Stumpf (or Stumph, Stump, etc.) in Germany, 1589. It seems clear that Stumpf was tortured into confessing something that was obviously ridiculous and undoubtedly painful for him. On the wheel, he admitted to devouring his own son’s brain and having intercourse with his daughter, in addition to the more fantastical crimes of changing into a werewolf and consuming innocent Christians. Looking back at the sparse records of the time, one has the feeling that “innocent Christians” meant “innocent Catholics,” since the war between the Roman Church and the Protestants was very much in force at the time. Digging a little deeper, though, we find what may have been a nail in Stumpf’s coffin — a book called the *Via Lunari* or *Lunar Road*. This book, supposedly, contained the details of Stumpf’s ability to change shape, including “blasphemous rituals” that enabled him to summon up the Devil. It is more likely, though, that this book contained church rituals, and details on how to perform them. Stumpf, a widower, might have been in the process of becoming a priest, which would have only angered the Catholics further.

Unfortunately, there are no surviving copies of the *Lunar Way*, and from all available accounts it seems to have been more of a personal journal or a set of letters than an actual text. Interestingly, most accounts of Stumpf, including Montague, don’t even mention it.

his powers from an infernal contract, however. He gained the power — the curse — of shapeshifting from a book called the *Via Lunari*, or the Lunar Way.

### *The Physical Thing*

The *Lunar Way* is a collection of papers dating from the mid-16th century, bound together with what appears to be sinew. The “spine” of the book is a three-foot swatch of wolf skin, black fur still attached, doubled over several times to make it fit the pages. The book is lightweight but surprisingly durable, and the wolf fur always feels strangely warm and moist to the touch, though it leaves no residue. It gives off the scent of a wet animal and, to those with a supernaturally acute sense of smell, fresh blood.

Mage Sight using the Spirit Arcanum, or any other mystical power that allows detection of spirits (not ghosts), indicates that the book is spiritually awake, as if the Rouse Spirit (p. 250 of **Mage: The Awakening**) spell had been used on it. If a mage gains 10 successes on magical scrutiny of the book using any Arcanum (Spirit adds a +1 to the scrutiny rolls), she notices that the wolf-skin binding of the book has a spirit bound into it.

### *History*

The *Lunar Way* began as a series of notes written by a Thyrsus mage wishing to transform herself into a spirit. Frustrated with her lot in life, even after Awakening, she spent her days talking with the invisible entities around her, admiring their purity. Spirits were never born into roles that they could not perform, unlike the mage. Her life was laid out for her by the time she was a young child. She married, bore children, and spent every night awake and wanting to scream. Awakening to the Primal Wild was at first a remarkably freeing experience, but there were no

other mages around to teach her, and she began to suspect that this “power” was just one more punishment.

As she listened to the ephemeral beings around her, though, she learned things. Spirits of knowledge taught her to read and write. Spirits of war taught her to fight. Spirits of lust taught her about the brutal pleasure of raw carnality. She listened to them all, and wrote down their conversations on whatever scraps she could find. Most of these fragments are long gone, but they allowed the mage some practice for the true Lunar Way.

One night, the woman rose from her bed and went walking. The gibbous moon streamed down upon her, Katharina Trump, and she looked past the Gauntlet into the moonlight to see what spirits might play there. She saw the Lunes, spirits of moonlight, and as she watched she realized they had their own purposes. She couldn’t tell what, but the spirits looked busy, directed, swooping up above the horizon and then back down as though summoned. She called to one, and it came to her. She used her magic to help it materialize, and it did, taking the form of a virile young man. And the two lay together on the warm earth, making love without exchanging a word.

Over the next few years, Katharina spoke with many Lunes, and she realized they changed shape with each passing phase of the moon. The gibbous-moon spirits, for instance, were lusty and usually friendly, often taking the form of pregnant women or strong, fine men. The crescent-moon spirits were bird-like figures, amalgams of owls and humans. She never saw new-moon spirits at all, though, no matter how hard she looked.

During this time, she began writing down her thoughts on transformation and mutability. She realized that she, like the Lunes, could change her appearance, even become male for a short time. She could take on the form of a beast and run through the forest, or take on the appearance of a common



harlot and enjoy whatever pleasures men might want of her. She was free — and she had no fear of losing her family to that freedom. That is, until she met Peter Stumpf.

Stumpf was a distant relative of Katharina's by marriage, and already a widower when they met. He was traveling near her home on the way to Cologne and stopped to water his horses, and the two of them spoke alone. Stumpf had been without the company of a woman for years, and Katharina was always interested in new and forbidden sensation. They arranged to meet three nights later — on the night of the full moon.

Stumpf and Katharina spent an unknown number of nights together, and not all of their nocturnal activities were carnal in nature. Katharina revealed her powers to Stumpf, and changed him into a wolf. She also revealed her writings (in fact, it might be from Stumpf that she obtained paper and other writing implements), and with his help she codified her discoveries from spirits. She made great breakthroughs in the study of both Life and Spirit magic, and based on the contents of the book (see below) was on the verge of creating rites allowing her to change shape. Tragedy struck, however, before she could complete them.

The first murders happened under the new moon. Hideous howls echoed through the German forest, and all who heard them suffered terrible nightmares. Come morning, four people were dead, torn to pieces as if by wild beasts. Some villagers blamed wolves, some blamed soldiers, but a few of the older and wiser people glanced to the woods and shuddered. The elders knew that men sometimes walked as beasts, but they also knew better than to speak up... normally. This atrocity, however, was worse than any of them had ever seen.

The night of those killings, Katharina and Stumpf had lay in each others' arms, looking up at the moonless sky. In the morning, when Stumpf returned home, he heard of the murders and wondered. Had Katharina done this, or made him do it? He put those doubts aside, though, when months went by (during which he dallied with his mistress as often as he could) and the beast did not strike again.

The next time the beast attacked, Stumpf and Katharina were again together. This time, the moon was full for the second time that month — a blue moon. The carnage was great, but confined, for the most part, to livestock. A farmer's goats and sheep had been slaughtered, as had his young son, out watching them. This time, there could be no mistake. The tracks around the bodies confirmed that an animal had done the killing. Again, Stumpf wondered whether he and Katharina might be responsible, but said nothing.

Time went by, and the deaths mounted. Each time, the panic of the surrounding villages grew. What might descend on them in the night with a murderous mind? Wolves? Beasts from hell? Catholic soldiers in service to the local lord? Peter Stumpf, though he didn't know it, drew some attention as the killings gained notoriety, because he was often traveling (usually to meet Katharina). He remained blissfully unaware that anyone was connecting him to

the murders, though he occasionally wondered — though not seriously enough to pursue the matter — what effect Katharina's magic might be having on him. Modern mages who have studied the *Lunar Way* and know this history might wonder at his complacency. Most feel that Stumpf, as a Sleeper, was suffering from Disbelief and that by the light of day, his animalistic excursions seemed, to him, like dreams. Some posit that Stumpf was himself on the cusp of Awakening, with much the same result. In either case, most mages agree that Katharina and Stumpf might have been responsible for at least some of the deaths, though they probably killed animals rather than people. The human victims, scholars feel, died by the hands of soldiers or spirits that Katharina was unwittingly giving material form.

These scholars are right, but are unaware of one crucial piece of information.

### *The True Culprit*

A werewolf really was hunting the area around Bedburg for many years before Stumpf died, and he was responsible for killing and eating almost all of the people for whose murders Peter Stumpf died. That werewolf was born a man, hailing from the dark forests to the east. History has no record of his name or indeed of his existence, but he was very real.

Werewolves, as it happens, have greater affinity with spirits than most mages, though the relationship is often less than cordial. This particular werewolf was an outcast from his people — werewolves have laws among their own kind, one of which specifically forbids hunting humans for food, but this werewolf had become addicted to the flesh of men shortly after discovering his lupine heritage. Driven from his homeland on pain of death and forsaken by the spirits, he recognized the Lunes with whom Katharina so loved to speak. The werewolf followed these spirits and heard their whispers to Katharina, and one night under the half moon, he approached them. He asked their forgiveness, and wished to be given back his former rank and position in the society of the wolf-men. The Lunes refused, but the werewolf offered them a deal — if he could turn a man into a werewolf, the Lunes would grant him another chance. The Lunes accepted, for only Mother Luna, the Moon herself, could choose to grant the Change.

But the deal didn't involve the Change, only "turning a man into a werewolf." And with a smile on his foul-smelling lips, the man-eater slunk off into the forest to make his preparations.

The werewolf found Katharina and considered making her into his "werewolf," but since his deal with the Lunes had involved a *man*, he decided against it. Instead, he chose her lover, Peter Stumpf. To his delight, Katharina was already in the habit of turning Peter into a wolf, and so the werewolf's job was half done. He stalked the couple, and on nights on which they were together he hunted down and slew innocent people. He remained hidden from sight, not only from the soldiers of the area and the villagers, but from other, saner werewolves who hunted the region.



But the werewolf knew he had limited time. Once word got out that there was a “werewolf” killing people, ironically, real werewolves would move into the area. It was imperative that the matter be resolved before these shapeshifters investigated, because if they found the rogue member of their race, they would surely kill him.

Fortunately, word did not travel fast (and the werewolf occasionally killed and ate those who tried to carry news to other areas). When the area around Bedburg had been whipped into a suitable frenzy, the werewolf visited Peter Stumpf. He took with him a magical item called a *fetish*, made from his own flesh and fur. He’d bound a nightmarish spirit of change and madness into this fetish, one that possessed the power to change a human being into a wolf. He came to Stumpf in the form of a gigantic wolf, and drove the poor farmer mad, instilling a lunacy from a deep-seated place in every human’s mind. He wrapped the wolfskin belt around Stumpf’s waist and shoved him out into the woods, harrying him in a great circle. As Stumpf rounded back toward his own home, he took on the form of the wolf and lost his conscious mind. He saw a figure step out of the house, but never recognized his son’s face.

When Stumpf again regained consciousness, the authorities were already there and the true werewolf was long gone.

### *Trial and Execution*

Stumpf confessed, but his confession was only accurate insofar as his understanding of the situation. He named Katharina in his confession, but when the soldiers arrived to arrest her, she was already dead — the werewolf had burst in on her and torn out her throat before she could call on her magic. Her body was kept hidden until the trial was concluded, and she was burnt at the stake, executed while already dead.

Stumpf’s daughter, blameless in the entire affair, was unable to convince the local lord of her innocence. She was, after all, the child not only of a werewolf but a Protestant convert. She stood little chance in the courts.

Stumpf himself was quite mad by the time he was lashed to the wheel. He had no memory of the “belt,” but he did remember the Devil coming to visit him. He remembered having sexual congress with one of the women being burnt near him, but could not say which one. He remembered eating human flesh... even his own son’s. Stumpf’s death was a mercy killing, even if the method was horribly brutal.

The werewolf retrieved the belt and used it to bind up the pages of the *Via Lunari* he found in Katharina Trump’s home. He was leaving the area when a pack of werewolves caught up with him. He told them he had simply been there to investigate the allegations of the “Werewolf of Bedburg,” but it had just been a crazy man and a witch. The other werewolves, suspicious, asked nearby Lunes if this stranger was what he appeared to be.

The Lunes, bound by their agreement, could not implicate him. The man-eater had turned a normal human into a werewolf — it had even been declared in a court, and the Lunes of the half-moon, with whom the rogue had made the deal, were bound even by human law. With the *Via Lunari* under his arm, the werewolf departed Germany.

### *The Book’s Journey*

The man-eater died in France in 1600, trying to flee to England from another pack of werewolves whose territory he had violated. They found the *Via Lunari*, but none of them read German and they had not heard of the events in Bedburg. They were aware, of course, of the book’s strange properties (see below), and kept it with them for years. The curse of the book laid them low, however. The last surviving member of that pack was buried with the book in his possession in the crypt of a church near Meaux, and there it remained for nearly three centuries.

In 1915, a young French soldier deserted his comrades after a German offensive. He entered the church and hid in the crypt, where he heard a growling sound and felt hot, animal breath on his neck. Opening a casket, he found the book, still bound with the belt, and took it with him, supposing it might be valuable. He managed to survive the war with the book in his possession, though he shot himself in 1918, claiming in a suicide note that he “couldn’t survive another night of blood and carnage.” His grieving family thought he was referring to the war, but his suicide, in fact, was prompted by nightmares from the book.

The *Lunar Way* passed from owner to owner over the next few decades. Werewolves, mages and other supernatural beings have occasionally taken possession of it, but never for long. The book’s maddening effects ensure that it changes hands frequently.

### *Contents*

The *Lunar Way* is more a personal journal than a scholarly work. It contains the account of the magical life of Katharina Trump. It is written chiefly in German, and the syntax and spelling are atrocious, even for the time — Katharina learned to write mostly by interaction with spirits. The subject matter of the book deals with sexual awakening, conversation with spirits, dreams and physical transformation.

Of note is the fact that although Katharina was a Thyrsus mage, the *Lunar Way* makes absolutely no reference to Supernal magic. No rites are encoded within it, and an Awakened reader would be hard-pressed to realize that the author *was* a mage, rather than a werewolf or some other form of spellcaster. Katharina lived her entire life without contact from any of the orders or even another mage, and she died under a werewolf’s fangs never knowing her true potential. The book, to a careful student, might offer some fresh perspective on the subject of shapechanging, especially to Thyrsus mages just learning the practice.

The book also discusses Katharina's relationship with Peter Stumpf, though it never mentions his last name (and his first name is spelled inconsistently). The events that led to his execution are mentioned, but peripherally, and she never had a chance to write down his arrest. As such, while the *Lunar Way* could shed some light on the Stumpf case, only a dedicated student would make that connection.

The wolf-skin binding of the book is, of course, the fetish belt that the man-eating werewolf created. Normally, fetishes cannot be used by Sleepers, but this particular fetish is an exception. It is capable of changing any living being into a wolf for a short time. The mechanics for this are discussed below.

### *Mechanics*

A mage who studies the *Lunar Way* can reap some benefit when it comes to changing shape with Life magic (see "Shapechanging," p. 190 of **Mage: The Awakening**). When casting an improvised spell to herself or another into an animal, the mage's player adds two dice to the roll. Also, if the mage needs to resist an instinctive urge in her new form, she receives the same bonus. The mage gains none of these bonuses if she uses a rote to change shape.

In addition, the *Lunar Way* provides a great deal of insight into dealing with spirits. The book counts as a Library (see p. 85 of **Mage: The Awakening**) on the topic of Spirits. Again, the book has nothing to say on the topic of ghosts. If the mage attempts to summon, rouse or empower a spirit and she has the book in her possession, the player adds two dice to the attempt. However, if she attempts to harm, weaken or bind a spirit, the player suffers a -2 modifier to the attempt.

The belt, as mentioned above, can change a person into a wolf for a short time. This shapeshifting is *not* dependent on Supernal magic, and therefore the Prime Spell "Analyze Enchanted Item" does not register the belt. Likewise, the bonuses the book bestows on shapechanging don't apply to the belt. To use the belt, the subject must have it wrapped around her (what part of the body is unimportant, but the waist or chest is probably most convenient). The subject must run and experience genuine feelings of fear, lust or hunger, and the belt only works at night. If all of these conditions are met, the subject's player rolls Stamina + Resolve with a -5 penalty.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The subject becomes a wolf (use the traits for Dog found on p. 203 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), but her conscious mind is lost amid a flood of base urges. The character spends the remainder of the night as a wolf, hunting for food and, possibly, a mate.

**Failure:** The character becomes a wolf (use the traits for Dog as above), but retains control of her conscious mind, up to a point. She must resist the wolf's impulses just as if she had used the "Shapechanging" spell. Again, studying the *Lunar Way* confers no bonus here. The effect lasts until sunrise; though the player can spend a point of Willpower and make the Stamina + Resolve roll again before that time.

**Success:** The character does not change shape, but experiences a surge of whatever emotion triggered the roll. The character regains a point of Willpower as if she had fulfilled the condition of her Vice. The sensation is disturbing, but invigorating. Mages must make the usual roll to avoid uncloaking the Nimbus (see p. 90 of **Mage: The Awakening**).

**Exceptional Success:** The character does not change shape, and there is no further effect.

As is probably obvious, the belt isn't a talisman that can be easily manipulated. This is because the spirit inside it can't truly be commanded by beings other than werewolves. The shapechanging effect is more a curse than a power, imbued into the fetish by its insane creator.

The belt can only be used by living creatures — Sleepers, Sleepwalkers, mages, ghouls, wolf-blooded and even changelings are susceptible. It has no effect on vampires and other undead creatures. In the hands of werewolves, the belt has different powers altogether.

Werewolves can spend a point of Essence (they, like spirits, can hold this mystical energy within themselves) to activate the belt, or roll Harmony -5. If this roll succeeds, or if the character expends the Essence, the belt allows the character to instill crippling fear in one target. The player rolls Presence + Intimidation + Primal Urge (see sidebar), contested by the victim's Resolve + Gnosis. If the werewolf wins, the target must immediately flee from the werewolf, taking no other action but running in blind panic.

## Werewolves, Fetishes, and Other Strange Concepts

Storytellers who are familiar with **Werewolf: The Forsaken** might notice that the belt works in a manner very different from most fetishes. This is because the werewolf who designed it was, frankly, insane. The spirit bound into it is a Lune, but the Lune was brutalized and subjugated as it was imprisoned. If you wish to incorporate the *Lunar Way* into your chronicle and you have access to **Werewolf**, the systems presented here work just fine.

If you don't have access to **Werewolf**, never fear. You aren't missing any vital systems or context. As mentioned in the text, fetishes are *usually* only usable by werewolves; but this one happens to be cursed, and it's really the curse part that allows (forces, really) the change into a wolf. Primal Urge, incidentally, is the **Werewolf** equivalent of Gnosis, measuring how in touch a werewolf is with the spirit world and his own inner predator. Like Gnosis, this trait ranges from 1-10 dots, but the common range is 1-3, with very powerful werewolves reaching 4-6 dots.



## Dangers

The dangers of the *Lunar Way* are many and varied. First, obviously, the belt is cursed, though being in a position to fall under that curse is difficult as it requires a specific and somewhat complex set of circumstances. Unfortunately, one of the other dangers of the book sometimes facilitates those circumstances.

The book attracts spirits of madness and nightmares, but only when someone reads it. If the book is left unread for more than a month, the spirits leave it alone. Since the book is written in centuries-old German, reading it is difficult, and the spirits don't notice it as often as they once did. Scholars of the era and, of course, mages, can become vulnerable.

During any day in which someone reads the book (and can draw meaning from it; just looking at the text doesn't engender this effect), the spirits may interfere with her sleep. The player rolls Resolve + Composure when the character beds down. If the roll fails, the character's sleep is wracked by nightmares. If the character is a mage, she use the "Sleep of the Just" spell (p. 212 of **Mage: The Awakening**) counteract this effect, but must do so every night.

If the character suffers nightmares, she regains no Willpower for sleeping and cannot use the Dream Merit (or any other supernatural power that requires sleep or dreaming, for that matter).

Even if the character staves off nightmares, the spirits linger. The player suffers a -1 modifier for every night after the first in which she has to resist the nightmares (which only happens, remember, when she spends time reading the *Lunar Way*). Sooner or later, the nightmares will come.

The madness spirits are even more dangerous, but they don't show up until the character has had at least one bout of nightmares. After that, if the player is forced to make a roll to avoid the character gaining a derangement for any reason, or if the character already has a derangement and the player must roll to avoid it coming into effect, the roll suffers a -3 penalty. The character is simply more prone to madness due to the spirits' influence.

An example of each type of spirit is provided below, just in case their traits become relevant.

### Nightmare Spirit

**Rank:** 1

**Attributes:** Power 2; Finesse 4; Resistance 2

**Willpower:** 4

**Max Essence:** 10

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 4

**Speed:** 16

**Size:** 2

**Corpus:** 4

**Influences:** Nightmares •

**Numina:** Hallucination (as the spell on p. 215 of **Mage: The Awakening**; only works on dreams), Harrow, Material Vision

**Ban:** The spirit suffers a -5 to all Numina directed against a person wearing a piece of silver jewelry. The nightmare-spirits are canny enough to wait until the jewelry comes off before attacking, however.

These nightmare-spirits, influenced by the *Lunar Way*, take on the forms of dead and mutilated people or animals. Huge gobbets of flesh are missing from their bodies, and the animal stink of the wolf clings to them.

### Spirit of Madness

**Rank:** 2

**Attributes:** Power 5; Finesse 5; Resistance 2

**Willpower:** 7

**Max Essence:** 15

**Initiative:** 7

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 20

**Size:** 2

**Corpus:** 4

**Influences:** Madness ••

**Numina:** Breach the Vault of Memory (as the spell on p. 214 of **Mage: The Awakening**), Harrow, Innocuous, Material Vision

**Ban:** The madness-spirit must follow someone who flees in fear.

The madness-spirit resembles a wolf made from moonlight, and as such might be mistaken for a Lune. The wolf's eyes are mad, however, and its teeth jut out from its mouth at insane angles. Its paws are human hands, and its fur takes on the pattern of a torture wheel if one stares at it.

### Dangers to Werewolves

The *Lunar Way* drives werewolves mad much more quickly than it does other beings, because the spirits can attack the dreams of these creatures without any need for the book to be opened. If a werewolf or a pack of werewolves carries the book, or if the pack spends at least four hours a day in close proximity to it, they are subject to the nightmares and maddening effect as described above. In addition, once a werewolf has suffered one night of nightmares from the book, he runs the risk of losing control and becoming a man-eater.

Werewolves are dangerous beasts at the best of times, and when something angers a lycanthrope, he might well lose control and attack. This phenomenon is known as "Death Rage," and the more well-centered the werewolf is (that is, the higher his Morality, which is called "Harmony" for werewolves) the less likely such a frenzy becomes; once the nightmares begin, though, the werewolf risks flying into Death Rage more frequently. The Storyteller can handle

this in one of two ways. If the werewolves in question are Storyteller characters, don't bother with dice. Assume the character enters Death Rage whenever the story requires it. If the werewolves are player-controlled characters, or if you think it's important that the werewolf has a chance to resist the Death Rage, the roll to avoid it (Resolve + Composure) suffers a penalty equal to the number of nights the character has suffered nightmares from the book.

Worse yet, this effect can spread to other werewolves; these shapeshifters band into packs, often bonded by a totem spirit. If one member of the pack suffers nightmares, *all* of the members incur the Death Rage penalty. This can lead to a pack of werewolves hunting for fresh meat, with no conscious control over their actions, in very short order.

### *The Moon Reversed*

Restful sleep, without the benefit or challenge of dreams. The sleeper is untroubled by the contents of his own mind,

perhaps because he is at peace with them, perhaps because he chooses to ignore them. Alternately, inspiration does not strike, possibly due to fear — the sleeper cannot force himself to confront what lurks in his subconscious. While he might not have nightmares, he doesn't have aspirations, either.

### *The Lunar Way as a Beneficial Grimoire*

The *Lunar Way*, as presented, is more of a danger than a benefit. In this presentation, though, the grimoire spent several years in the possession of a pack of werewolves that worked tireless to cleanse it of its baleful elements. The fur belt is long gone, and all that remains is the descriptions of changing shape and experiencing new sensations, of sexual discovery, and of conversing with spirits.

The contents of the book remain unchanged, and it provides its bonus to changing shape and retaining one's sense of self. The nightmare- and madness-spirits no longer haunt it, and the fetish is no longer present.

## Researching the Lunar Way

**Roll:** Intelligence + Academics

**Action:** Extended — 15 successes

**Research Time:** Each roll requires one hour of research.

**Appropriate Libraries:** Spirits, Witchhunt Trials, Werewolves, Non-Awakened Magic.

### Successes Information

0-5	The paper written by Joanna Harris quoted above. While the paper is mostly about the Catholic Church and its use of mythical beings to further its own goals, it is also one of the few modern sources that mention the <i>Via Lunari</i> .
6-9	A book of photographs containing a strange set of rock-piles resembling cairns (burial mounds). The photographer writes that he didn't disturb them because he felt a "menacing presence" in the clearing in which he found them. That night, he dreamed of being lashed to a wheel and tortured, while unseen tormentors asked him, "Where is the belt?"
10-14	A court record from another werewolf trial, this one in France, 1599 (10 years after Stumpf's death). It makes reference to the Bedburg trial, and notes that Katharina Trump was dead at the time of her execution. "The witch's familiar, or perhaps her Black Book, still exists, God have mercy," it notes.
15+	A newspaper article from (whatever city the Storyteller chooses) detailing the suicide of a young man who sank into depression after discovering his great-grandfather's journal, which dated back to World War I. In his suicide note, the man writes, "I could barely read it, but I read enough. Those howls surround me, and God help me, but I find myself howling right along. I'm going to get the taste of blood out of my mouth, so help me." The man was found dead at his home, having swallowed a glass of a powerful cleaning chemical.



# KEY XIX — THE SUN

Blazing sunshine streams down upon a child or several children. In some decks, the child pictured is naked and riding a white horse. In others, a pair of children plays together. In either case, the Sun brings new light, discovery and hope. The mind has awakened to a new day following the confusing horror of the Moon, and with inspiration, new knowledge and a fresh perspective, the seeker is ready to face the future clearly and innocently — like a child.

The Sun, of course, can also have religious connotations. The “light” might be the radiance of a life without sin, and the child calls to mind Jesus Christ, as well as the many sun-based deities on which his legend was based (Balder, Mithras and Horus to name a few). The specific deity is not important, for the purposes of this card. The point is that the Sun is, in some respects, a divine figure, because it does grant life to everything on Earth. Thus, the Sun card can be seen as an object of reverence, if not worship, and its immense power demands humility, hence the depiction of the child. Some decks show flowers growing in the background, further reinforcing the notion of sun-as-giver of life.

It's not hard to imagine why the Free Council seized upon this card as its own. Before the Free Council's development in the 19th century, the Sun was usually associated with the Awakening itself. But the order committed to new ideas, to the magic of progress and science, felt this card symbolized it perfectly.

At this point, the mage is nearing the end of his journey. He has received inspiration from his dreams through the Star, filtered that inspiration through his own fears by the light of the Moon, and is now ready to act, with purity and purpose. Just as the mage once poured the water of his dreams on the ground to encourage them to

take root, now he uses knowledge and hope to encourage those seeds to grow. Next, in Judgment, he will learn if his ideas and dreams are worthy of the World.

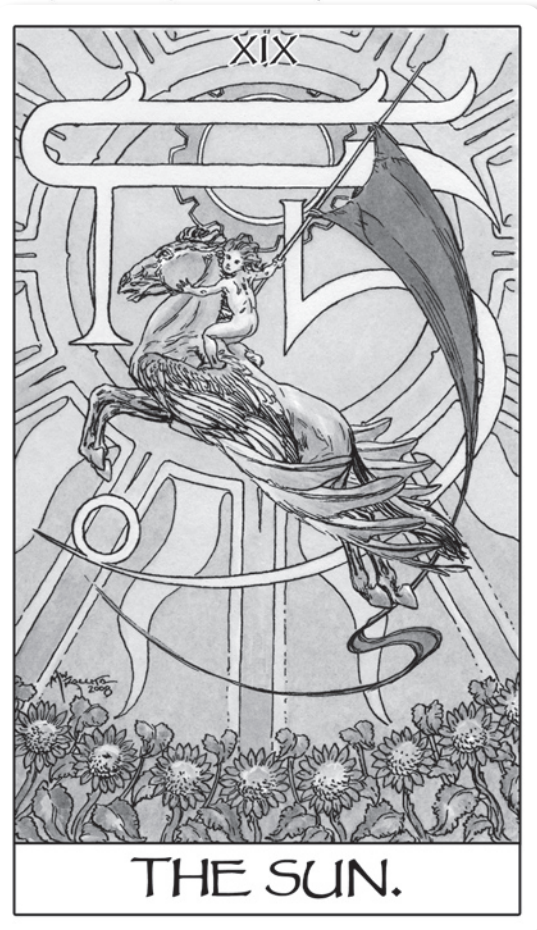
## *Artifact — The Awakened Enzyme*

Biomedical engineering has produced some of the most advanced and innovative creations the world has ever seen. Artificial limbs that resemble hooks and claws give way to cosmetic replacements, but that's just a start. Already, scientists are wiring robotic limbs into their own nervous systems. The ultimate goal? A limb or body part that functions exactly like a real one.

By the same token, enzymes are now in development that convert blood from one type to another. Given that transfusion-ready blood is always in short supply, the ability to convert any blood bag into Type O (which almost anyone can receive without complication) would be an unbelievable boon to the disaster-relief and trauma fields.

Finally, research is underway to harvest stem cells from cloned organisms, bypassing the ethical “debate” that ill-informed politicians seem to enjoy stirring up. With development, it might be possible to replace damaged brain tissue, thus reversing some of the effects of degenerative disorders like Alzheimer's, ALS and multiple sclerosis. And all of the above examples don't even touch on the research and development done in medical pharmaceuticals.

What, then, does all of this mean to mages?



## Mages and Science

Science, of necessity, takes on a different role in the World of Darkness than it does in the real world. In the World of Darkness, for instance, a part of the human consciousness demonstrably exists outside the physical body. We call that part the “soul,” and magic such as the Death and Spirit Arcana can affect, remove, heal or even destroy it. Likewise, it is possible for a mage to send her soul out of her body to wander around interacting with ghosts and spirits — again, not something for which there is a great deal of evidence in our world. The existence or nonexistence of ghosts or souls is something that, in the World of Darkness, is provable using the right methods. But Sleeper scientists (and most Sleeper occultists, for that matter) don’t have access to those methods.

The trouble here is that it paints science as turning its back on anything spiritual due to some kind of ideological bias. That might be true for individual scientists, but science isn’t, in itself, ideology, but method. A scientist, let’s say a neurologist, who discovered (in the World of Darkness, remember) that his patient possessed the ability to leave her body and report on events or situations in a locked room nearby would have discovered psychic projection. If the cause of that projection is Awakened magic, Disbelief would erode that scientist’s perception of the situation, probably causing him to feel his data was tainted somehow (and future experiments, also subject to Disbelief, would confirm that suspicion).

The point is this: science is not separate from magic. Sleepers cannot perceive Awakened magic, and if they do, they tend to forget it. The reasons for that are varied. First, it’s very much in-theme for **Mage: The Awakening** for magic to remain secret and esoteric, something that only the qualified few can attain (“qualified few” being “Awakened”). Second, one of the core conventions of the World of Darkness is that it resembles the real world, and if scientists were diligently studying magic at all levels, which they most certainly would if it were brought to their attention, the World of Darkness would become unrecognizable in short order.

But scientists can and do Awaken, and mages can and do employ the scientific method for their arts. When scientists Awaken, they note that many of the tools and techniques mages use are archaic or outdated (the Free Council, by the way, doesn’t always use cutting-edge stuff — sometimes their tools are just more recently outdated). Clearly, using a wand works, but why? And why are Artifacts normally items such

as swords or wands or robes? Why can’t a mage drive a car belching fire back from the Aether, or bring a computer that can spy anywhere in the world (in real time) back from Pandemonium?

The answer: mages *can* bring those things back, it just doesn’t happen often. The reasons for this are similar to the reasons why diamonds are harder to create or transmute with the Matter Arcanum, even given that they aren’t anything special in terms of rarity in the Fallen World. Technological devices don’t have the same degree of Supernal resonance that other items do, probably because they haven’t been around nearly as long. Cars, for instance, are barely more than a century old. Compare that with a staff — people have been using big sticks for *millennia*. It’s a testament to the ubiquity of cars and how fast the technology has grown that they have any Supernal resonance at all.

With all of that in mind, it’s easy to see why, when Dr. Allan Holms returned from the Primal Wild with an Artifact enzyme running through his bloodstream, it shook up his Consilium quite a bit.

## Dr. Holms’ Awakening

Dr. Allan Holms had a license to practice medicine, but he didn’t. It wasn’t that he didn’t like people, just that he felt uncomfortable around them. A few disastrous misunderstandings during his residency convinced him he should stick to research, where his inability to relate socially to other people would be better tolerated (and probably wouldn’t cost people their lives, which is what he was really worried about).

Holms was especially interested in hematology, the study of the blood and the bloodstream. More particularly, he was interested in how the bloodstream could be used as a carrier for whatever interesting breakthroughs one could make in medicine. It might be possible, for example, to inject a cancer patient with particles that fused with the cancer mass and made it glow, allowing surgeons greater precision in removing it. It was with dreams and goals such as these that Dr Holms entered his lab one spring morning. He learned, however, that more lurks in the blood than he realized.

Staring through a microscope at a blood sample, he felt a sensation of falling. When he woke up, he was in a swamp, surrounding by mythic creatures, gigantic reptiles, and huge insects — the Forest Primeval. Never one to enjoy the great outdoors, Holms panicked... and his blood responded. He *felt* his body releasing endorphins to help him calm down, sugar to help him



run, neurotransmitters to help him focus. He could identify them all as they seeped into his bloodstream, and he could control them.

Holms worked his way through the swamp and found the Watchtower of the Stone Book. He climbed it, controlling his physiological responses to tighten his grip, to reduce his fear of heights, and to lessen his ability to feel cold and pain. He reached the top and wrote his sloppy, doctor's signature... in blood.

When he woke up, still in his lab, he realized he could still control his body in the same way as in the dream, though it was much more difficult. He poked around on the Internet until he found a group of people that seemed to have had similar experiences, and made a tentative introductory post to their message boards. The next day, the Free Council came to see him.

They were excited and pleased that such an intelligent and resourceful man had Awakened; but they thought, at first, he was nothing more or less than a Thyrsus mage with a medical background. As they spoke with him, though, they realized he was casting spells far above the level of a newly-Awakened mage. One of the Free Councilors figured he must have brought back an Artifact, and used Prime magic to scan for it. She found it... in Holms' bloodstream.

Holms brought back an enzyme from the Primal Wild, a chemical in his blood that is somehow infused with the power of magic. Thus far, it has allowed him to make himself stronger, faster and tougher — something that any Disciple of Life can do. But Holms (and the other mages who have examined him) suspect the enzyme is capable of more. One of the Free Councilors called it a "dynamic Artifact," meaning one whose powers are not fixed, but respond to the needs of the mage. Once Holms learns how to control it fully, he might become the most powerful Life mage on the planet. Needless to say, the other orders are trying to court him, but not just because they want him in their corner. If word of the good doctor's ability gets out into the magical community, he would quickly become a target. What, for instance, would the soul of such a mage do for a Tremere Lich? What would the Abyssal entities that the Scelesti worship pay for his life? What might his blood do for a vampire?

Allan Holms is in for an interesting career as a mage.

### *The Awakened Enzyme — Artifact (Unknown)*

Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A  
**Mana Capacity:** 12 (possibly more)

Thus far, the only known "power" of the enzyme is that it allows Holms to make use of the Life spells "Body Control" and "Honing the Form" (p. 182 and 186, respectively, of **Mage: The Awakening**). He can use these powers *reflexively*, however, and Honing the Form does not engender Paradox (though feats of strength obviously beyond his ability can cause Disbelief). The fact that the Artifact is part of his body effectively means that his personal Mana pool is increased by 12, as well.

If the Enzyme is, in fact, a dynamic Artifact, it might allow him to use *any* Life spell, even to the point of archmastery. It seems unlikely that the enzyme would allow him to use spells that affect others, but suppose the enzyme could mutate into a destructive form outside his body? If that were the case, he might be able to cough on a target and use the effects of the "Life Force Assault" spell.

Along those lines, what if the enzyme was self-perpetuating and could be spread? In theory, then, any mage could benefit from its effects. The implications of the Awakened Enzyme are staggering, and they put Holms, a good-natured and somewhat naïve man, in a great deal of danger.

### *The Sun Reversed*

Light turns to darkness. The sun hides behind a shroud, and the illumination of the mind and soul withers. Inspiration dies on the vine, ignored or actively shunned. The Sun reversed is tragic, because it makes a mockery of the wisdom gained throughout the Tarot journey.

Without the sun, nothing can grow. The Sun reversed is starvation of the soul and the intellect. The child grows up bitter, wasted and abused, becoming an adult ruled by ego, spite and fear.

### *The Awakened Enzyme as a Disease*

As written, someone will probably think of this anyway: something returning from the Supernal Realms in a mage's blood? Couldn't it just as easily come from the Abyss?

Well, yes. The only question is its effects. The enzyme might behave as described above for a while, gaining strength within Allan Holms' body, and then reshape him as it sees fit. Depending on what kind of story you want to tell, the enzyme might have any number of effects. Here are a few possibilities:

- **The Werewolf Virus:** The enzyme reshapes the victim's body, growing fur, claws and fangs, and fills

him with a murderous hunger for flesh. This might be an interesting way to introduce a classical werewolf story into your **Mage** chronicle without involving the more shamanistic lycanthropes of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** (or you could use both, of course).

- **The Zombie Virus:** Holms is unharmed, but any corpse he comes into contact with rises as a zombie. What the zombies do is up to the Storyteller. You could go the Romero route, and have them shamble about feasting on the living, or take a more occult approach and stipulate that they are loyal to Holms (but susceptible to Death magic). Other considerations: are the zombies contagious? If so, can they only infect the dead? Only humans? Since Death is the Inferior Arcanum to the Primal Wild, this variation probably

means that something Abyssal seeped into Holms on his way back from his Awakening. Alternately, maybe he went to some heretofore unknown Realm, where Death and Life are the Ruling Arcana. If so... where did the Watchtower come from?

- **The Abyssal Virus:** The enzyme focuses the power of the Abyss, and it builds up in Holms' blood. His Paradox dice don't reset at the end of the scene, meaning that if he casts a vulgar spell, his Paradox pool goes up by one *permanently*. But, he has a way to bleed it off — he can foist off this extra Paradox on other mages. They, then, can pawn the Paradox off in turn... but on the whole, this means Paradox gets more frequent and much harsher.

MW Talley  
2008



# KEY XX — JUDGMENT

An angel blows on a great trumpet. Below him, human beings rise up from their crypts, meeting the angel's clarion call. Today, it seems, is the last day, the day upon which everyone will be judged. In many mythologies, this day is the end of the world: Armageddon, Ragnarok, and so on. But the card itself doesn't necessarily portend something so momentous.

Instead, it encourages the seeker to act as his own judge, and decide if whatever action or attitude the card might represent is right and worthy, or selfish and base. The Judgment card can, of course, indicate that external judgment is coming, whether from a temporal authority or a supernatural one.

Judgment can be a condemnation or an endorsement of the action in question, and the person being judged must take care that he is interpreting the judgment correctly. If the judgment is ambiguous in any way, human beings, especially those with strong beliefs, show a remarkable ability to interpret events in such a way as to justify what they were already inclined to do. One of the points of the Judgment card, then, is to take out of a lesson the wisdom that is in it. This includes considering the source of the Judgment along with the message.

To the Awakened, Judgment is the card of Paradox. Judgment doesn't necessarily come from a source that's fair, impartial or even logical, but it does come, and more harshly than one might expect. Paradox is an inconvenience, most of the time, but a mage who forsakes Wisdom learns that Paradox has a long reach, and that his magic can desert him when he needs it most.

These considerations are even more important for a mage, since mages are capable of seeing meaningful information in so many places and fashions. A mage

at this stage in the journey of the Tarot has grown powerful and enlightened enough to submit himself to the Judgment of his peers (order, Consilium or cabal), his enemies, his mentor, the Sleeping world and himself. He cannot afford to ignore what any or all of these people are telling him, because theirs is the last input he will receive. The next step is the World —

the unimaginable immensity of everything. A wise mage wrings every ounce of wisdom from Judgment that he can.



## *Magical Creature* — *The Angel of the Accounting*

Calling it an angel is, perhaps, misleading. On some of the occasions that it has been witnessed, it does resemble the popular concept of an angel, but just as often it takes the form of something completely mundane: a man, an animal, even a voice over the telephone. I note, however, that it makes absolutely no secret of what it truly is. Any misunderstanding of its purpose, therefore, is entirely the fault of the listener.

*I hope that I never see it, just as fervently as I wish that I could.*

— Sarasvat, Acanthus of the Mysterium, chronicler of angelic phenomena

While it might be comforting to think that some people are "bad" and others "good," the distinction is rarely so clean-cut. Yes, there are people who are unquestionable evil, but even those people have probably performed small acts of kindness in their lives. Some people are universally regarded as good, but closer examination often reveals moments of doubt

and selfishness. Further complicating the issue is the question of motive. If a man gives generously to charity because he wishes to be known as a philanthropist and reap the recognition this brings, does that invalidate his gifts? If a soldier inadvertently kills civilians during combat, does that make him a murderer? What, after all, is the standard for morality?

This isn't a question that magic can resolve. Some spells give a mage a sense of a soul's "health," but a soul can become unhealthy for any number of reasons, and none of them objectively answer the question of what makes a person good. A mage might look at the soul of someone who has killed other people in the line of duty and note that his soul looks similar to that of someone who killed for money. Some acts seem to be constant in what they do to the soul — should that, then, be the yardstick for morality? If so, that means that only mages of a particular degree of skill (Initiate of Death would suffice) can be true judges of morality. Is making that assumption more than a bit hubristic?

Mages, like Sleepers, have wrestled with this question for millennia. Some of them feel that faith in a higher power somehow translates to morality. Others, perhaps more rationally, believe that one's actions are a better measure of morality (but that still leaves open the question of motive). But this discussion ignores a greater issue: morality is comparative. If we say that an action or a person is "good" or "evil," we must compare that to something else. A person might wish to live in harmony with his surroundings, doing as little harm as possible and bringing as much joy into the world as he can. Another person might choose to simply live for himself, and if that means that other people are happy, that's a nice bonus, but it's not necessary.

Before anything can be judged moral or immoral, there must be some kind of standard, and everyone must define that standard personally. Sometimes, a strange being appears to people who require help in determining this standard, and sets them straight on their moral path. This being, called the Angel of the Accounting, does not force morality, nor does it purport to tell the people it judges right from wrong. All it does is balance the books, so to speak.

### *Sightings of the Angel*

The Angel doesn't appear the same way twice, and so it is impossible to know the first time it appeared to a mage. Also, since this enigmatic being appears to Sleepers and even other supernatural beings, it might very well predate the Awakened City. It behaves much

## Morality and the World of Darkness

Before we go any further into Judgment and the Angel of the Accounting, a brief reminder about Morality in the Storytelling system:

The Morality system in the World of Darkness really measures the ability to coexist and empathize with other people. It does this through a behavioral standard that, for the most part, makes the following assumption: a "sin" or a "crime" is something that any given person would *not* want to have happen to her. This standard gets progressively stricter as Morality increases, until at Morality 10, a persons risks Morality for even *thinking* in a less-than-charitable way. In **Mage**, Wisdom takes this a step further, by imposing higher responsibilities on mages because they have the power to alter the world in such far-reaching ways.

The systems for Morality (for Sleepers) and Wisdom (for mages) are not indicative of anyone's concept of how things "really are."

They are meant to provide a thematic approach for the notion of moral choices, much like the Virtue and Vice system. That is, take the quick and easy road, and there may be consequences. Take the high and moral road, and the rewards are longer in coming, but worth it.

like a spirit, but it displays a degree of power beyond that of any spirit that has ever directly appeared in the Fallen World. And, of course, Spirit magic has absolutely no effect on it.

Below are six accounts of sightings of the Angel and the results of those sightings. Three are "historical," and represent records that characters could discover in research. The other three are current, and represent eyewitness accounts that characters could hear in the course of a story.

### *The Reformed Slaver*

Recovered from the personal documents of the captain of the Marianna, a trading ship sailing between the Americas and west Africa:

I left the ship as usual, and stepped again onto the soil of Africa. It was my intention to capture young, strong, fertile Negroes, in order that they might be bred



to save me the trouble of coming back here. I readied my spells, wound the armor of Death tight around me, and walked inland, following their spoor.

But I did not find them. Instead, I found one of the strange animals of this land, called a baboon. And it spoke to me, saying, "We can speak, but we choose not to. Do you know why?"

I responded that I did not, feeling that this must be some spirit or devil.

It replied, "Because then the White man would make us work."

And I laughed, but the laugh caught in my throat, and I saw what I had been doing. I saw the land and the terrible mess we were making of it, encouraging the wars between these people — yes, *people* — and the horror of watching their families torn away and sold.

And I resolved I would not leave again. I cannot stop the slave trade, for no matter how many ships I could sink, they would send more. I will, though, stay here, and the land can do with me what it wishes.

I seal these papers with the mark of Fate and Death. Both will come to any who open them before their intended destination.

### *The Silver Warriors of China*

Translated from a book clutched in the hands of an unnamed man, buried alive in approximately the middle of the 3rd century BC:

I have given him the pills, though I know what the effect will be. The dragon that visited me told me all that I needed to know. I know that immortality is beyond the reach of any mortal, even a man so mighty as the king. He has done many great and terrible things, and I cannot presume to judge him, for he has unified our land and our language and has conquered rivers and armies both.

The dragon came to me and told me I was a general of sorts. My soldiers were quicksilver, and I was sending them to do battle for, not with, death. I was confused, and I asked if the king was not strong enough to absorb the properties of the quicksilver, but the dragon told me our learning was wrong, and that the king would die. But the dragon asked if a man should quest for immortality, even send explorers to die in search of this elusive power?

And the dragon told me of other men who sought immortality, and what they did to people so that they might live on. And this was enough for me to make my decision. I admitted what I had done when the king lay dying, and I shall surely die here in the dark.

But the dragon promised me light and ink to confess, and here they are.

### *The Last Night of the Lighthouse*

Etched onto the glass of the Rudyard's Lighthouse that once stood on the Eddystone Rocks in the United Kingdom:

Tonight the light came alive and spoke to me. And it asked me, have I been good? And I could not answer it. Tomorrow I shall try to induce it to come out again, and I shall answer it.

(The Rudyard Lighthouse burned to the ground in December 1755. The part of the glass with this etching was salvaged and brought back to the mainland. Two keepers were working the night that it burned, and it is not known which of them made the etching.)

### *EyeWitness Account: The Murder*

They call me "the Murder" because of the crows; yeah, the tattoos. That's not important. Just listen. I was in a city last year — no, I ain't saying which one — and I walked into an alley for a smoke. This guy in a black suit walks around the corner of a dumpster, and he says his name is "Destiny." And I'm thinking, "Yeah, whatever, faggot." But then he looks at me, and I know he's not lying. That's who he is. And he asks if the people I've killed deserved it, if the tattoos are something I'm proud of; if I'm more than the flock of birds on my chest.

And I didn't know how to answer him, but I said I wasn't sure if they all deserved it. Probably not. And he asks if I want to know. I said I did. He shakes my hand and my chest starts to burn, and when I look at my tats later about half of them have turned red. So I start making a list.

And here I am. I just wanted you to know, I killed your husband. I don't think he deserved it.

What do we do now?

### *EyeWitness Account: Lichen*

I'm named after the fungus that grows on rocks. You think I give a crap what you think of me? Just listen a sec.

I saw an angel. No, it didn't convert me to your religion or anyone's. It didn't even mention religion. It didn't mention the whole transgender thing, either.

Yes, I have female parts. It's none of your fucking business, so stop casting spells. That's *really* fucking rude.

Anyway, the angel told me that I needed to start contributing or get the fuck out. Well, it implied that.

Really, it didn't say much, but it didn't need to. I got it. I got how I've been scrounging off this bunch of weirdoes for years, never really doing anything, just using magic to make myself into what I really am every now and again. And I guess I always thought that kind of sucked, but I felt like... I don't know, someone owed me something.

So, okay. Here I am. I'm ready to work. What now, Mr. Arrow dude?

### *EyeWitness Account: Marshall Admonsky*

This is about typical for Mr. Admonsky. He wakes up in the morning, takes his meds, and does fine for about three hours. But about noon, he goes into a breakdown like this. Some days it's loud and violent, and believe me, he is deceptively strong. Some days it's quiet and depressing; seems like today's a quiet day.

Admonsky — he likes to be called “Marsh” — came to us two years ago. He checked in of his own accord, said that he needed to “get clear.” We've found no evidence of drug abuse, and he's got no medical history. No matter how hard we look, we don't come up with anything. We even put pictures of his teeth through a missing persons search, nothing. It's like he just appeared from nowhere.

Anyway, Admonsky claims that he was led here by a cat. No, wait, it gets better. The cat talked, of course, and it had golden fur. It told him — hold on, let me check my notes, the wording's interesting. Here we go. “They'll chain you down if you walk in there, but you have to learn how to unlock your own chains. If that's what you really want, go on in. If you want to keep on going with your chains tight around you, walk away.”

I have asked Marsh repeatedly what that all means, but he's getting less coherent as time goes on. He's actually got an appointment with the neurologist next week. We're thinking early onset Alzheimer's.

### *The Angel's Behavior*

The Angel of the Accounting can appear to anyone, regardless of whether they have any connection to the supernatural. The Angel can take any form it chooses, though it usually takes natural forms — animals or people, of appropriate dress or species for the area. Sometimes, its form has an obviously supernatural feature (Admonsky's “golden-furred cat,” for example). Some people see the Angel as a ball of light, or as a classic angel — a winged humanoid, a wheel of fire, etc.

The Angel only appears to people when they are alone, and normally appears to people who have recently lost or avoided losing a dot of Morality. The witness never has any difficulty realizing that the Angel is a supernatural being of some kind. In fact, Sleepers have an easier time of it than mages do, as they don't have a way to delve any deeper. Mages, of course, usually respond by casting spell upon spell, trying to identify the angel. The results of these spells are always the same — the mage knows, instinctively, that the Angel is not human and is extremely powerful, and that it knows everything about the mage. Beyond that, magic reveals no information whatsoever. The spell doesn't fail, it just... stops.

The Angel engages the witness in conversation. For the most part, the Angel asks questions and lets the witness fill in the blanks. It asks the witness if he is happy with his current life, how he is coping with the mistakes he has made, and whether he has any regrets. Although the witness probably doesn't notice, the Angel also removes any chance of another party eavesdropping. Any listening devices, magical effects that allow a distant listener to hear the conversation or open phone lines fail. Even spirits in Twilight cannot hear the conversation. What is said to the Angel stays with the Angel.

The conversation with the Angel *always* makes an impact. The Angel knows everything about the witness, after all, and says whatever it needs to say to challenge the witness' sense of self and morality. Sometimes, that means the witness is left with crushing guilt. Sometimes the witness feels compelled to take a course of action (often one that the witness had been leaning toward anyway, but sometimes a completely new one). Other witnesses feel vindicated in their current mode. The important thing is that the witness examines his own lifestyle, the choices he makes and their effects on others, and makes a decision based on that. In the end, all judgment is self-judgment.

The Angel will not leave a witness until it is sure it has made its point. Sometimes, that means taking more extreme measures. The Angel is capable of performing miracles, but when it deals with mages and other supernatural beings, demonstration of power is often seen as a threat. So, it usually performs an action that the witness will see as significant. When confronting a vampire, it might turn that vampire mortal for a short time, for instance. To a werewolf, the Angel might blot the moon from the sky. It might transport a mage back to the Supernal Realm of his Awakening and show him his own signature on the Watchtower.



Under no circumstances does the Angel ever harm or threaten a witness. The Angel seems content to bring questions of morality to the witness' attention.

### *Systems*

No traits are provided for the Angel of the Accounting. If it truly is a spirit, it is of a Rank that places it beyond the need for game mechanics. It is immune to magic, and it cannot be harmed or killed — any attacks against it miss or fail.

The effects it has on witnesses, however, do require some mechanical explanation.

After meeting with the Angel, a character must decide on a course of action in response to the questions the Angel raises. The player must state this course of action clearly, and the Storyteller should probably ask for an explanation of the plan, just to make sure everyone understands. "Change nothing" is a valid course of action, as is "ignore the whole thing" "Do research on the Angel" is a valid course of action in itself, but in response to the questions, it equates to "do nothing" The player needs to know what the character intends to do about the state of his own Morality.

- **Progress:** If the character's plan is to improve somehow, even if that means facing up to the consequences of his actions, the character can raise his Morality rating by one dot by fulfilling the precepts of that Morality, just as if he were a normal mortal (see p. 92 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The next dot after that can be purchased at a reduced rate (dots x 2). This assumes, of course, that the character behaves in accordance with that Morality level. Any degeneration check, or actions that would call for a degeneration check for the level the character aspires to, ends the process, and the character must immediately check for a derangement (roll Morality just as the player normally would following an unsuccessful degeneration roll). A derangement gained this way represents a severe shake-up to the character's self-worth (depression, inferiority complex and fixation are good choices).

- **Stagnation:** The character refuses to take any action at all. The next time the player must make a degeneration roll, he suffers a -1 modifier. The character also slips into a state of depression for a number of weeks equal to (10 minus Morality). While depressed, the character can only regain Willpower from his Vice once per chapter, and his Virtue once per story.

- **Regression:** It happens sometimes that witnesses not only refuse to make positive changes, they become

more spiteful and selfish. If this happens, the next degeneration check the character makes automatically fails, but the following Morality roll to avoid a derangement automatically *succeeds*. The character has chosen immorality, and that choice makes the transition easier.

### *Sample Characters — Touched by the Angel*

Below are two mages, both of whom have had run-ins with the Angel of the Accounting and made different choices based on that meeting.

#### *Antagonist — Adrian St. Paul*

**Quote:** *It feels good to be on the right path at last. Praise God.*

**Background:** Say what you want about Adrian, but he was motivated. He grew up in an Irish Catholic household, and unlike his brothers, who took the Host but never lived Jesus' word, Adrian (or Patrick as he was then called), tried to live every day as God commanded. He was always a little amused by "fundies," as he called them — of course you couldn't take the Bible *literally*, that was ridiculous. And, besides, the fundies regarded he and his family as idolaters. Adrian would always identify himself as "Catholic and proud" when he walked into the post office past those old ladies handing out their hate-filled little comics. That much anger wasn't Christian.

Adrian Awakened as an Obrimos just after his 21st birthday, and joined the Adamantine Arrow. God needed warriors, Adrian felt, and since a lot of these mages didn't seem to grasp that their powers all came from God, well, Adrian would just have to lead by example. But that was difficult, because it seemed like only the other Obrimos had Awakenings that were really Heaven-sent. Some of the other ones... it was like they Awakened from a trip to Hell.

The cabal to which Adrian belonged had a habit of getting into frequent battles with Seers of the Throne, and during one such battle Adrian shot a Seer seven times, killing him outright. After the dust cleared, Adrian went to church to pray for forgiveness and to seek guidance. While he was praying, an angel appeared in front of him, and asked if the battle he'd fought — if *all* the battles he'd ever fight — were truly in God's name. Adrian, knowing that the Seers commonly sent visions to plague the faithful, averted his eyes and kept on praying. He ignored the angel for hours, and finally,

the angel reached down and touched his crucifix. It burst into flame, and Adrian knew the truth — this really *was* an angel from God.

He spoke with the angel, and he came to the conclusion that the “fundies” had been right. Oh, maybe not about the Bible being literally true, but certainly about Catholics and their idolatry. Adrian burned down the church on his way out, and he’s resolved to make sure his cabal not only fights with God in its heart, but *only* with God in its heart.

**Description:** Adrian is now in his mid-20s. He keeps himself fit as a whipcord, thin and muscular, and wears his brown hair short and parted. He noticed that the burning crucifix didn’t scar him, so he got a tattoo of a cross on his chest — very simple, two straight lines — and wears no other jewelry or embellishment.

Adrian’s Nimbus is a halo of blazing yellow-and-orange fire. Since the incident, it has only burnt brighter, which Adrian takes as a sign that God approves.

**Storytelling Hints:** Adrian was on the fanatical side of devout even before the visitation from the Angel of the Accounting, and he’s gotten worse since. He rarely sleeps and eats only the bare minimum he needs to survive, and keeps very little of his money, giving the rest away to church-sponsored charities. In his mind, the Seers of the Throne and the Catholic Church have begun to merge, and he sees conspiracies everywhere. His cabal-mates are aware that something has changed, but they don’t know how crazy Adrian has really become (he’s *always* been intense, after all).

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** .45 pistol

**Real Name:** Patrick Paul Wheat

**Path:** Obrimos

**Order:** Adamantine Arrow

**Legacy:** None

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Christianity) 2, Computer 1, Crafts 2, Occult 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Punches) 3, Drive (Motorcycle) 2, Firearms 4, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 1

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2

**Merits:** Fleet of Foot 2, Imbued Item (Pistol) 5, Iron Stamina 3

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 4 (suspicion)

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 14 (with Fleet of Foot)

**Health:** 8

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Forces 4, Matter 2, Prime 2

**Rotes:** Forces—Nightsight (•), Call Lightning (••), Control Fire (••); Matter—Discern Composition (•), Alter Accuracy (••); Prime—Counterspell Prime (••)

**Mana/per turn:** 12/3

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Range	Clip	Special	Dice Pool
Heavy Pistol	5L	30/60/120	7+1	Imbued Item	12

**Armor:** 4 (“Unseen Shield,” Forces ••)

**Magic Shield:** 2 (Prime ••)

Adrian’s imbued pistol, when fired, can either muffle the report or make it unbearably loud (as the “Control Sound” spell). In addition, it inflicts two extra dice of damage.

*Ally — Signe*

**Quote:** *Ashes to ashes and everything, right?*

**Background:** Jessica Spayle had dreams of ashes all her life. Not of fire, but of cold ashes, tumbling out of an old, gray stone fireplace. Growing up in rural England, she had the same dream every night. She was cleaning the ashes out of this fireplace, and would turn around to see a tall man dressed in black reaching for her. She looked back at the ashes and saw strange symbols there... and then she would wake up.

She had that recurring dream for most of her young life, and when she got to school, she would often try to recreate the symbols. One day, her history teacher noticed them and asked her about them. When he learned she’d dreamed them, he was intrigued, and taught her the skill of lucid dreaming, so that she could learn more. She did, indeed. She learned that in her dreams, she was only 11, and her name was Signe. She was to be taken away and put in cloister for drawing those runes, by order of the man wearing black (probably a priest of some kind).

Her teacher, a mage, guided her education and was there when Jessica Awakened to Arcadia. Now capable of magic, she delved deep into her own past, searching for clues to what she believed was her former life. She became a Master of Fate, but stayed away from other mages (except her mentor), never joining an order, only interested in Signe, the ash-maiden. She



fashioned a soul stone and created her own Demesne to facilitate travel into the Astral Realms, ever searching for the past.

And then one night, she awoke to find the girl standing at the foot of her bed. But it wasn't really Signe, it was... something else, something important. The "girl" asked her what she hoped to find, what difference it could possibly make if she learned the history of this unfortunate girl, a girl Awakened at a time and place where such power wouldn't be allowed a woman. And Jessica responded that she didn't know, but that she wanted to learn who she was. The girl changed, becoming a perfect reflection of Jessica, and responded, "this is who you are."

Jessica realized that she was right, and that using her power to search for a past that wasn't really hers was a misuse of her power and her time. She reabsorbed her soul stone and joined the Mysterium, becoming an authority on Astral travel and dream-walking.

But she did take "Signe" as her Shadow Name, because she felt she owed a great deal to that unfortunate girl.

**Description:** Signe is in her early 40s. She is rail-thin and has long, tangled gray hair. She favors roomy skirts and heavy boots, and usually wears gray or white.

Signe's Nimbus is a whirlwind of ash, followed by a chilling sensation, as though from a winter breeze coming from a door left open to the cold.

**Storytelling Hints:** Signe, after talking with the Angel, realized her life's pursuit was ultimately pointless. Even if that little girl was a previous incarnation, what could she do to avenge her or console her, so many years after the girl had died? Signe, the little ash-maiden, was long gone, and Jessica nearly wasted her Awakened life pining for her.

Of course, Jessica does sometimes wonder why the dreams she had were so intense if there was nothing to be learned from them. But then, since giving up her quest, she has learned to redirect her dreams to almost any topic, and she has become a skilled diviner and Tarot card reader (with or without magic). So, perhaps, she always had that capacity, and the dreams of the ash-maiden were just getting in the way?

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Dream journal, now locked

**Real Name:** Jessica Spayle

**Path:** Acanthus

**Order:** Mysterium

**Legacy:** Walker in Mists

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (History) 3, Crafts 3, Investigation 2, Occult (Dreams, Divination, Tarot) 4

**Physical Skills:** Drive 1, Stealth 3

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Empathy 3, Expression (Storytelling) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Cartomancer 3, Dream 5, Hallow 4, Sanctum (Size 2, Security 1), Status (Mysterium) 3

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 9

**Virtue:** Temperance

**Vice:** Greed

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 5

**Arcana:** Fate 5, Mind 3, Space 3, Time 3

**Rotes:** *Fate* — Interconnections (•), The Perfect Moment (••), Lucky Coin (•••), Gift of Fortune (••••), Sanctify Oaths (••••), Geas (•••••); *Mind* — Beast Control (••), Sleep of the Just (•••); *Space* — Follow Through (••), Scrying (••); *Time* — Temporal Wrinkles (•), Flip of the Coin (••), Postcognition (••), Divination (••)

**Legacy Attainment:** 1<sup>st</sup> — Peer Into the Mists, 2<sup>nd</sup> — Mist Haven

**Mana/per turn:** 14/5

**Armor:** 5 ("Fortune's Protection," Fate ••)

## *Judgment Reversed*

Judgment reversed is an incorrect decision, an assumption based on the data at hand that might appear rational, but in fact is completely inappropriate. Adrian's decision based on his experience with the Angel, in fact, is a good example of Judgment reversed. The seeker sees what he wants to see, rather than what he should see.

Judgment reversed can also mean refusal to accept judgment. The seeker knows what needs to be done and understands the ruling, but refuses to proceed, out of fear, arrogance or spite. Given that the Judgment card comes so close to the end of the journey, it's easy to see how dangerous this kind of blindness could be.

### *The Angel as an Abyssal Spirit*

It's certainly possible to see Judgment reversed based solely on the actions of a witness to the Angel, but what if the Angel itself were a corrupt force? If the Angel is an Abyssal spirit, its goal is to instill doubt and pain into mages. If this is the case, it doesn't appear to non-mages at all, and magic cast upon it doesn't just stop, it falls away, growing weaker and weaker until it vanishes.

The Angel, here, brings up the most painful memories it can, trying to force the mage into a position

where he will lose Wisdom and become less effective, and, potentially, summon greater and more damaging Paradoxes. Sooner or later, the Abyss can creep into the Fallen World, or seal the Supernal Realms off forever.

As an Abyssal spirit, the Angel still doesn't need traits, but it isn't as powerful as presented above. It can't prevent eavesdropping through mundane means, but it can cancel existing spells. Also, an expert in the field of Abyssal entities might be able to identify it.



# KEY XXI — THE WORLD

A naked woman floats in the sky, holding a staff in each hand. She is surrounded by a laurel, a wreath or, in some decks, a serpent biting its own tail (the Ourobours). In the four corners of the card are a bull, a lion, an eagle and a man, gazing upon the woman. No land is visible — this card represents the World in abstract terms.

The symbolism on the World card is strange and complex. The four animals in the corner have been variously interpreted to refer to the four Evangelists of Christian mythology (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), to astrological symbolism, or simply all of the beasts of the world, mankind included. The woman in the center is sometimes depicted as a hermaphrodite, thus encompassing man *and* woman, and their perfect joining. The Ourobours surrounding this figure recalls the Midgard Serpent, biting its own tail and encircling the planet.

Like the Wheel of Fortune, the World can represent a cycle, but this cycle is not the random, unforgiving cycle of the natural world. This cycle is the perfected, Supernal cycle — out of chaos comes harmony. Out of pain comes healing. Out of darkness comes light. Yes, things might fade back into their original state, but not if the Awakened are vigilant. For a mage, the World must represent both the Supernal Realms and the Fallen World. The serpent, perhaps, is the Abyss between them, and the four watching figures representative of the Oracles (of course, there should be five, but the symbolism doesn't need to be perfect).

This card is the end of the mage's journey through the Major Arcana. The mage finds himself in the World, free to do as he will and make whatever use he can of the resources he has to his name: advice,

mistakes and tragedy. He should, by this time, be mindful of the fact that what happens here on the ground is echoed in the Supernal sky (and, perhaps, vice versa). It might be that when the mage truly inherits the World, he ascends, or else he dies and starts the process over again.



## *Faction — Disciples of the World Dragon*

Every mage schooled in the Atlantean tradition has heard the stories. Early mages were guided to the Supernal Realms by dreams of dragons. Modern mages don't necessarily believe that real dragons — giant, winged, fire-breathing lizards — ever really flew the skies of the Fallen World, but dragons do hold a special place in the mythology and symbolism of the Pentacle orders. The nicknames of the orders all refer back to dragons, and it's not uncommon for old, established cabals, especially in Europe, to work dragons into their heraldry somehow.

A faction of apostate cartomancers, however, takes it one step further. They believe that dragons not only granted the Awakened their powers, but gave the Tarot to the world as well.

## *Legendry*

As the dragons of the dreams guided mages across the vastness of the world, and through their tests and to the island that would come to house the Awakened City, some of the dreamers turned their faces away from the marvelous sights they saw and focused on the dragons

themselves. And they realized that these dragons had names, and functions, and personalities. One dreamer looked at the great skeletal dragon that he followed, and asked it why it looked so emaciated.

The dragon answered, "I am Death, and all things must come to their end through me."

Another dreamer saw two dragons playing together in flight, nipping at each other's wings and chasing each other through the clouds. And she asked why these dragons were so happy.

They answered, "We are Lovers," and continued with their games.

There were others, of course. The dreamers saw the Mage-Dragon, waiting for them at the end of the flight, reshaping the stones of the island into a testing ground. They saw the Hierophant Dragon, handing down edicts and rules for the dreamers on how they might approach their tests. They saw the brutish Emperor Dragon and his consort, the Empress, locked in fiery, fanged conflict with the Devil Dragon.

These dreamers went on to Awaken, of course, and became part of the eventual society of mages. But they never forgot those dragons, and the power and simplicity of what they represented. When the inhabitants of the Awakened City built their ladder, they objected. Only the dragons should decide when Man should move on from the physical to the Supernal. But even by this point, mages had come to see the dragons as nothing more than symbols or dreams, and no one listened. The Namers of Dragons, as they were called, left the Awakened city, never to return, before the fall of the Celestial Ladder. But they left behind a gift — a set of illustrations of the dragons that they had identified. On the reverse side of each illustration was a brief description of that dragon's wisdom. The Namers hoped that the mages would read these cards and take the lessons of the dragons to heart... but they did not. The Ladder fell, and Atlantis with it.

### *Modern Reclamation*

The story about the dragons granting mortals the Tarot was passed down as an interesting curiosity for many years, but mages didn't take it seriously. Mages of the Pentacle understood dragons to be symbols of power and wisdom, but not literal creatures, and there was certainly no evidence that they had been the inspiration for the Tarot. But in 1999, a Shaman of the Mysterium claimed to have seen the "Dragon Cards of Atlantis" in a dream. An accomplished artist, she produced copies, explaining how each dragon had

been depicted in an archetypal pose, which was then later reproduced for human-centered Tarot decks.

She came under criticism immediately for a number of reasons. First, the style of art she used didn't much differ from her usual style. If she was producing copies of the original Dragon Cards, shouldn't they be noticeably different than her own art? Second, the "archetypal poses" bore strong resemblance to the poses in the Rider-Waite deck, and many of those differed from older versions of the Tarot. To all honest scrutiny, it seemed that this mage was taking the modern Tarot and adding dragons, rather than finding evidence that the dragons inspired the Tarot.

But the mage wouldn't give up her dream so easily. She left the Mysterium, claiming that the dragons were speaking to her in her dreams and urging her to travel, to seek, just as the original mages had. She said the dragons spoke in a tongue that was similar to High Speech, but also incorporated elements of Spirit Tongue (which, as a Thyrsus, she could use with a simple spell). She took a new Shadow Name — "Llana," which meant "guide" in the tongue of the dragons (or so she claimed; the word doesn't translate into either High Speech or Spirit Tongue). And then Llana went searching for whatever it was her dream-dragons expected of her.

She probably would have been a point of gossip in the Mysterium for a while and then disappeared from notice, but then she made a significant discovery. While claiming hospitality at the sanctum of a Mysterium cabal called Reclamation Alley, she realized that the sparse "heraldry" of the cabal resembled the constellation Draco. While the mages were out, she meditated at their Hallow, and was rewarded with a visit from the Hanged Dragon himself!

The Hanged Dragon was gone before the other mages returned, unfortunately, but Llana had written down what he had said:

"The orders of the Fallen Isle are lost. They have busied themselves, in the many years since last we saw them, with picking up the pieces of the Fallen Ladder. Let the Ladder decay where it fell! Move on, move on! Remember your dreams, and remember the search. There, in your souls, is the spark that drove your ancestors to become Awakened, before the Watchtowers and before the Abyss. Find that spark again, and the Abyss will close. Find that spark again, and the dragons will return. Find the World Dragon, and find that spark."

The mages of Reclamation Alley joined with Llana that day. When asked why they joined with her based



only on her description of what had happened, they usually reply, "You have to see a dragon to understand." Maybe something incredible *did* happen that day. Maybe the Hanged Dragon manifested and spoke, or maybe they mean "see a dragon" in a metaphorical sense. In any event, Llana was no longer alone.

### *The Faction Grows*

Overtime, the beliefs of the faction have evolved somewhat. Llana realized after her meeting with the Hanged Dragon that the dragons could visit the Fallen World, but only through Hallows and only by riding the connection to the Supernal Realms that a mage produced. It was possible to open a gateway and ask a dragon to step through, but, as Llana teaches her students, it's dangerous to do that — you never know which dragon you'll get. It doesn't matter which Supernal Realm the mage calls to, for the dragons can travel between the Realms at will.

Thus, while the Hanged Dragon visited the Fallen World using Llana's connection to the Primal Wild, he could just as easily have flown across the Abyss using a Moros mage's connection to Stygia. Llana notes, however, that some dragons prefer certain Realms — one is more likely to find the Death Dragon in Stygia, for instance.

Llana's faction traveled to powerful Hallows and used them to summon up dragons. They heard the same lesson from each dragon — the

spark of Awakening could lead mages past the Abyss again, enabling them to unite the Supernal Realms. Doing so, however, meant casting off the baggage of Atlantis, which includes the orders. Every dragon with whom Llana and her followers spoke also admonished them to "find the World Dragon."

When that happens, the World Dragon will be able to close the Abyss and return Paradox-free magic to the Fallen World. But finding this immense dragon has been problematic, and the more Llana learns, the more she believes the World Dragon never made it to the Supernal Realms after the Fall. He is still somewhere on Earth.

### *Organization of the Faction*

The Disciples of the World Dragon, as they are now known, number perhaps 20 mages. Llana is the undisputed leader, although other members of the faction claim to have spoken with dragons. The Dragon's Call, the faction's most precious spell, is jealously guarded. Outsiders are not permitted to witness it being cast, though they are permitted to see the results.

The faction is mobile, constantly searching for the World Dragon. None of the members are permitted to claim membership in any order of mages, including the Free Council (which Llana sees as an unpleasant merger of "Fallen science" and magic). The Disciples are more of an extended cabal than a faction, but as word of their travels and exploits reach the ears of the





Awakened, they gain notoriety, if not credence.

The Disciples might not like the Pentacle orders, but they do make common use of the Right of Hospitality (this tradition allows a cabal or a traveling mage to avail itself of an established cabal's sanctum and Hallow for at least three days, though not all cabals practice it, of course). They seek out cabals that guard powerful Hallows with the intention of meditating and using the Dragon's Call. Of course, "let us use your Hallow to summon a dragon, and you can't watch" is a hard sell on a lot of cabals, and the Disciples have been known to let young, attractive members of the faction distract their hosts while Llana or the other Masters cast the spell. The result: the faction has been banned from several cities, damned as freeloaders or thieves. But every so often, they picked up a new recruit or two — or sometimes, as was the case with Reclamation Alley, a whole cabal.

## *Magic of the Disciples*

Llana is working toward creating her own Legacy, but hasn't developed the necessary magical strength yet. In the meantime, however, she created the Dragon's Call rote, a spell that she has taught only to her most trusted comrades in the faction. In addition to the Dragon's Call spell, the Disciples make common use of cartomancy, divination, meditation on dreams and visions, and searching for hidden symbols in artwork (especially of dragons).

### *Dragon's Call* (Spirit ●●●●● + Prime ●●●●●)

The mage meditates at a powerful Hallow, reaching across the Abyss to the Supernal Realm of her Awakening, and calls forth one of the dragons. To do so, the character must speak in the tongue of the dragons (which is one reason that Llana does not allow non-members to witness this spell in progress). The mage is free to request a specific dragon, but any dragon can use the path thus created. The dragon rides the pathway through the Abyss and into the Fallen World, emerging from the Hallow to speak with the mage.

**Practice:** Making

**Action:** Extended

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** Special, see below

The target number of successes is determined as follows. The base is 10 successes. Add one success

## So What's Really Happening Here?

The Storyteller really has two basic choices when using the Disciples of the World Dragon: either they're right or they're not. Regardless of Llana's sanity and motives, if she's telling the truth, that makes a big statement about the nature of the Supernal Realms, the Tarot and the potential future of the World of Darkness, and that might not be something you're interested in. On the other hand, if you want to run a more high-fantasy take on **Mage**, accompanying the Disciples on a quest to find the World Dragon — a dragon so huge that its head barely fits out of a gigantic underground lake, perhaps? — might be a lot of fun.

If Llana's wrong, then those things that she's summoning are spirits or *tulpa*, and they're just telling everyone what they want to hear. She's not necessarily a charlatan. Maybe she really believes what she's saying, and she's superb at self-deception. She wants those dragons to be real, she wants to find the one, great answer for everything, and she wants to be the one to save all of Awakened society. As such, she's on her own journey through the Tarot, but she's stuck — maybe the characters can help put her back on the right path.

for every point of the Hallow's rating below five (so a one-dot Hallow adds four successes to the required total). Add one success if the resonance of the Hallow is directly opposed to the Realm that the mage is trying to reach (Storyteller's discretion). Add one success if the character is trying to call on a specific dragon. Add one success if the dragon in question is unlikely to be found in the Realm that the mage is trying to reach (again, Storyteller's discretion).

This spell costs 10 Mana to cast. The mage can draw the Mana from the Hallow, from his own pool, or he can add any Mana he does not wish to pay as successes to the target number.

If the spell succeeds, the Hallow splits open and a dragon appears. Thus far, no dragon thus summoned has ever attacked the summoner, though Llana maintains that it could happen if the spell were cast improperly. The dragon can give the character information about whatever topic she might desire, especially



news and descriptions of the Supernal Realms, new rites, or weaknesses and powers of Abyssal creatures. The dragon *always* tells the cast to “find the World Dragon,” however.

#### Disciples of the World Dragon Rote

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Occult + Spirit

### *The World Reversed*

Natural disaster, chaos, destruction, and everything falls apart with nothing learned or gained. Worse, the devastation might be purely man-made. Given the tools for great progress, man falls back on superstition and dogma. Given the capacity for kindness, people choose hatred and ignorance. The optimist says this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist sighs sadly, and agrees.

But the World reversed doesn't have to be *quite* so dire. It might just mean that the lesson isn't quite learned, that the seeker needs to take a step back and appreciate the big picture. He might just be missing some crucial detail, and still be on the crux of a breakthrough. The World reversed is thus cautionary, but not without hope.

### *The Disciples of the World Dragon as Banishers*

In this variant, the Disciples keep their history but have very different goals. They wish to *destroy* all of Awakened society, leaving only them, the Dragon Mages, as the inheritors of the dreams of the great serpents. Llana might seem flighty and foolish, but she is expert at calling deadly spirits out of the Shadow in seconds, and siphoning off a mage's Mana when he needs it most.

The Dragon's Call spell works as described, except that the dragons thus summoned can and do attack other mages. Below are traits for the Moon Dragon; and the Storyteller can feel free to create others as necessary. The Disciples haven't managed to summon the mighty World Dragon yet, obviously, but when they do, they expect him to scour all (other) mages from the Earth.

### *Moon-Dragon*

**Description:** The Moon-Dragon has silvery scales and wicked, bone-white claws. Moonbeams shine from its eyes and mouth, and its cry is not a fiery roar but a maddeningly sweet lilt.

**Rank:** 4

**Attributes:** Power 10, Finesse 12, Resistance 9

**Willpower:** 19

**Essence:** 25 max

**Initiative:** 21

**Defense:** 12

**Speed:** 32

**Size:** 8

**Corpus:** 17

**Influences:** Madness ••, Fear ••

**Numina:** Befuddle (as the spell, p. 213 of **Mage: The Awakening**), Hallucination (as the spell, p. 215 of **Mage: The Awakening**), Harrow, Materialize, Material Vision, Siphon Mana (as the spell, p. 231 of **Mage: The Awakening**), Soul Snatch, Supernal Dispellation (as the spell, p. 229 of **Mage: The Awakening**), Terrify (p. 212 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**)

**Ban:** The Moon-Dragon is easily damaged by weapons made of the lunar metal: silver. Any damage from a silver weapon is subtracted from Essence as well as Corpus.

# APPENDIX: THE MINOR ARCANA

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The journey through the Tarot isn't simply a matter of skipping from one trump to the next. The path of life is beset with triumphs, failures, misfortunes and windfalls, and, of course, interactions with other people. If the Major Arcana are the important stops along the Tarot's journey, the Minor Arcana are the everyday or ongoing events and relationships that help guide the mage between the trumps.

The Minor Arcana consist of 56 cards, 14 in each of four suits. These suits are Wands (sometimes called Batons or Staves), Swords, Cups and Pentacles (sometimes called Coins or Disks). Each suit contains numbered cards, the Ace through 10, and four "face" cards: the Page, the Knight, the Queen and the King. Aces indicate beginnings, whether to relationships, endeavors, or tragedies. The four face cards usually indicate people. The Page is a young person of either sex. The Knight is *usually* interpreted as male, but it depends on the context and who's doing the reading. The King is almost always an adult man, while the Queen is a woman.

Awakened cartomancers sometimes view the suits a little differently, and these mage-specific interpretations are noted below.

This section discusses each of the four suits, first in general terms, and then card by card, giving a very brief interpretative description for the card presented normally and reversed, and a story hook based on that card.

## Wands

The suit of Wands relates to the element of fire, and to vigorous, virile energy. Although many of the cards depict conflict, the suit isn't directly related to strife and struggle the way the suit of Swords tends to be. Instead, the energy of the Wands is progressive, direct and constructive. The suit deals with work and

possibly business (but not commerce, usually, which is the province of Pentacles) and with initiative and learning.

In **Mage** terms, the suit of Wands best relates to the Obrimos Path and the Adamantine Arrow order. Some cartomancers disagree, however, feeling that the positive and forward-thinking energy of the suit brings it in synch with the Free Council.

- **Ace of Wands:** Beginnings of a new enterprise. Start of noble quest. A birth or conception (especially if this card is near the Ace of Cups in a reading). **Reversed:** Destructive pride. Rushing forward without thinking. Failed initiative, due to lack of preparation or a false start. **Story Hook:** A charismatic Obrimos mage wants to start up a new cabal within the characters' home city. He might ask them to join, or, if they are already an established cabal with some Status in their orders, ask if they will help him screen applicants.

- **Two of Wands:** Authority, guardianship, foresight, vision. Power and energy wielded and kept in reserve. The splendor and wonder of a world waiting to be explored, or the fruits of a long and laborious life. **Reversed:** Surprise, which can be pleasant and welcome, or a horrific shock. Blindsided by fate. Misinterpretation of events. **Story Hook:** After many years of work, a Banisher has killed off all of the mages in a large region, possibly a state or a small country. Now, he sits back and enjoys a world with no magic. He's just one man, but characters entering his domain don't have support to fall back on.

- **Three of Wands:** Generosity, an enterprise or partnership, or a fair trade mediated by someone of good character. This card is sometimes connected with sea travel or trade, and sometimes with philanthropy. Voyages of discovery. **Reversed:** Failure of over-ambitious plans, getting overextended. Inability to look past one's own experience and take joy in something new. **Story Hook:** Two cabals have been warring for



years, and nothing, not even the Duel Arcane, has allowed them to resolve the dispute. Both cabals have supporters, and their feud has become a symbol for all of the political struggles in the Consilium. This fight needs to be ended, the situation defused, before an enemy takes advantage of it.

• **Four of Wands:** Celebration, success, revelation, completion of a great task. Can also mean a wedding or a partnership of some other kind, or an armistice. **Reversed:** Being left at the altar, literally or figuratively. A wrench in the works, a last-minute complication, or a damaging natural event. **Story Hook:** Two mages from the characters' Consilium are "tying the knot," and wish to invite every mage in the city. Unfortunately, they also have extensive Sleeper families, and the city's Sentinels, to say nothing of the Guardians of the Veil, insist on keeping magic strictly under wraps during the special day. But how likely is that? And what would a wedding of mages be like, anyway?

• **Five of Wands:** Ordeals, tests, battle and the glorious chaos of ambition. This card can represent the more idealized side of armed conflict (the reality tends to show up in the suit of Swords). Fighting to achieve one's goals, especially against other people. **Reversed:** Disputes resolved by an outside party, turning to the courts, for instance. A battle abandoned or not fought fairly. Trickery. **Story Hook:** A being that appears to be made of pure Mana emerges from nowhere to challenge mages to single combat. It doesn't accept refusal, but it never kills or injures its opponents; it merely leaves them devoid of Mana. Rumor has it this being is an escaped angel from the Aether.

• **Six of Wands:** Riding home in triumph. A hero in victory, arriving to enjoy the fruits of his efforts. The reward after the battle, the recognition for a job well done. **Reversed:** Someone else steals the recognition. Disloyalty and betrayal. Ingratitude. **Story Hook:** A Guardian of the Veil working under deep cover in a Scelestus cult returns to the Consilium in triumph — the cult has been routed and destroyed. Can the characters help him cope with life as a "normal" mage?

• **Seven of Wands:** Individual courage and strength. Beset on all sides by opponents, but with a significant advantage: self-reliance. **Reversed:** Hesitation, indecision, embarrassment in public. An untenable situation. An unwillingness to ask for help. **Story Hook:** Someone — possibly a mage, possibly another supernatural being, or even a Sleeper — steals an Artifact from the characters (perhaps while it is on loan to them from someone else). They need to get it

back, but it makes this young man a formidable and capable opponent.

• **Eight of Wands:** Urgency, speed, energy being expended quickly (possibly too quickly). Haste and rash decisions. Infatuation and ill-advised passion. **Reversed:** Inertia, slowing down to a crawl, delays. Jealousy or internal disputes. **Story Hook:** A gang of bikers burns through the city, not stopping for police or any other authority. They cause traffic accidents and mayhem, but they don't stop. The characters can, perhaps, stop them, but they run on foot if need be. What is chasing them?

• **Nine of Wands:** Recovery from illness or injury. Holding strength in reserve or letting it build against a true threat. Patience, security and defensive positions. **Reversed:** Adversity from a tenacious foe. Waste of saved resources. **Story Hook:** A horde of Abyssal spirits descends on the area. These creatures are invisible to Sleepers (and ignore them, for the most part) but attack mages on sight. The mages must figure out a way to protect themselves, especially in their own Sancta.

• **Ten of Wands:** Selfishness, heavy burdens, taking on the work of others in addition to or instead of fulfilling one's own responsibilities. Being damned with faint praise or receiving a "reward" that turns into an albatross. **Reversed:** Being tricked into the aforementioned situation — deceit, subterfuge. Abandoning one's responsibilities entirely. **Story Hook:** The characters come into possession of a soul stone, but its creator claims it was stolen from him and that the characters must return it. The mage, however, has a reputation for instability and violence — does the cabal want to give up this obvious advantage over him?

• **Page of Wands:** Clever, enthusiastic, witty and vivacious person. An energetic lover or a faithful apprentice. **Reversed:** A lazy, spoiled or shallow person. Indecisive and theatrical — confuses being "eccentric" with being interesting or educated. **Story Hook:** A young Obrimos shows up at a character's doorstep and announces that she is the mage's apprentice, whether the mage agreed to this or not. The Obrimos proceeds to perform any task the mage sets for her. Will the mage take on the duty of teaching the young woman, or abuse her trust?

• **Knight of Wands:** A powerful and decisive, but inconsistent and fleeting person. A man of action, if not foresight. A harbinger of danger, though rarely bearing a direct threat. **Reversed:** A cruel or bigoted person. Someone with a lot of misdirected energy, or some genuinely wrong beliefs. **Story Hook:** The Obrimos apprentice mentioned above was originally

sent to the characters by a mage from another Consilium, someone with a local cult of personality but little Status in his order. He sent the apprentice, and is willing to come to the characters' city and explain himself, if need be. He does tend to bring trouble with him, though. It's part of his charm.

• **Queen of Wands:** A warm, affectionate and stable woman, someone who is well-established in her community. That also means, though, that she is stubborn and set in her ways. **Reversed:** She is unpredictable and inconstant, likely to turn on friends and see opponents where there are none. She is virtuous, but is too cognizant of her virtue, and uses it as an excuse for rash action. **Story Hook:** One of the troubles that follow the Knight of Wands, above, is his ex-wife. She knows secrets about him that she has absolutely no hesitation in revealing — they aren't damning, but are embarrassing and likely to get his hospitality revoked among other mages.

• **King of Wands:** A moral man, but not a dogmatic one. The King of Wands is passionate and intelligent, but his passion has been tempered by years and he relies more on instinct and observation than education. He is proud, courageous and kind, but demanding. **Reversed:** Morality is tainted with fear and callousness. His code has to be the rule of the land, not just his own personal outlook, and he probably has the power to enforce it. **Story Hook:** The Knight and his ex-wife, the Queen, are in the area making trouble for each other and for the Page, who the Queen still treats as her mentor, whether he wants that honor or not. The King is the figure to whom they appeal to set things right. It might be the Hierarchy, or a Master from one of their orders, or one of the characters.

## Swords

The suit of Swords deals with strife, misery, and violent conflict. Its cards include tidings of war and death, and the suit boasts the two "worst" cards in the Tarot deck to show up in a reading (the nine and 10 of Swords). Elementally, the suit is linked with air, for instability and intellect, but the predominant motif of the suit is the violent and stinging blade.

Awakened cartomancers often link swords with the Mastigos Path and Guardians of the Veil, though some also consider it to be the suit of the Adamantine Arrow.

• **Ace of Swords:** The beginning of a fight or a tense relationship. Possibly great success attained at heavy cost. In some decks, the Ace of Swords means death. **Reversed:** The same general meanings, but without any hope of positive interpretation. Violence, war, and misery loom on the horizon. **Story Hook:** The mages of the city look to the sky and see a comet in the shape of a blade. On the following night, a cabal of Seers moves into town to make war. They claim that the comet led them there — did it? Who sent the comet?

• **Two of Swords:** One of the few positive cards in the suit, the Two of Swords means balance, harmony and accord born of constant vigilance and constancy. Can mean faithful friendship or a steady relationship, but an element of tension is still present.

**Reversed:** The accord breaks due to treachery or lies. Seeking trouble for its own sake. Self-destructive behavior. **Story Hook:** An uneasy truce exists between the cabal and another force — perhaps a rival cabal, maybe a group of Seers, or even something more exotic like the local vampire courts. Both sides are ever vigilant for treachery, which means they'll almost assuredly see it. Who profits?





- **Three of Swords:** Dissolution of a relationship or marriage. Heartbreak, woe, and sadness. Selfishness or deliberate mischief. **Reversed:** More of the same, only worse. Madness, mental illness, confusion. **Story Hook:** A Mastigos of the Consilium makes it his life's pursuit to seduce any female mage he can, and he's good at it. The Consilium is becoming a poisonous environment as his liaisons cause relationships to founder, but the mage is out to prove a point — mages are human, and humans have hearts that will be their undoing.

- **Four of Swords:** The peace after the fight, time to bury the dead and celebrate with the survivors. Tensions ease; downtime. Solitude, convalescence, a peaceful retreat. **Reversed:** Peace interrupted, though not necessarily by more violence. The reading of a will. A visit to a grave. **Story Hook:** The characters attend the funeral of a mage they knew well, possibly one who mentored some of them. Who else comes to pay respects?

- **Five of Swords:** Failure, defeat, betrayal, cheating at the game or in war. The trouble-maker walks away victorious and the other combatants just walk away. **Reversed:** Much the same, but, again, worse. This time, the defeated are unlikely to walk away. The scoundrel kills them or wounds them grievously. **Story Hook:** A théarch has discovered a way to cheat at the Duel Arcane that no one has found a way to counter. His cabal, all aware of the technique, now challenge the Duel for any offense as they know they can win.

- **Six of Swords:** A journey by water. Difficulties overcome with hard work, probably at a great cost. A move away from trouble, hopefully to brighter circumstances. **Reversed:** Publicity, uncovering of secrets, possibly a declaration of love. A surprise. Circumstances change, but remain in the same locale (thwarting travel). **Story Hook:** The characters are invited to a symposium of their order on a different continent. This allows them to learn about the cul-

ture of the Awakened — the dangers they face — far from home.

- **Seven of Swords:** Laziness. Giving up too quickly and thus failing. Leaving behind something important in favor of something trivial but appealing. Theft. **Reversed:** Good advice, prudence, a wise decision. Stolen goods returned. **Story Hook:** A cabal of mages performed an exorcism to get rid of a ghost mage, but they didn't finish the job. The mage is back, and intends to kill anyone involved. Did the characters lend a hand? Does the ghost think they did?



- **Eight of Swords:** Hoodwinked, imprisoned or stifled by red tape or illness. Legal difficulties or a run-in with the authorities. Bindings, literal or metaphorical. **Reversed:** Despair, anger, treachery. The same lack of freedom, but with obviously malicious intent. **Story Hook:** One or more of the characters are arrested, and the local Consilium forbids the characters from breaking out using magic. Can the characters get the charges dropped from the outside? And who might come after the imprisoned mage(s)?

- **Nine of Swords:** Utter desolation. Misery, despair, the long dark night of the soul. Possibly indicates death, sometimes something worse. Nightmares. **Reversed:** Doubt, suspicion, justified fear. Someone that shouldn't be trusted. **Story Hook:** Magic fails intermittently. Certain areas of the city inexplicably become dead

zones. Mages accuse one another of tampering with something beyond their ken and bringing down this curse — and maybe that's correct.

- **Ten of Swords:** The worst card in the Tarot deck. Death, disaster, utter ruin, murder, violence, failure and destruction of everything held dear. *No one* can be trusted. **Reversed:** A momentary advantage, a chance to make everything right — but woe to the one who misses that chance. **Story Hook:** Unbeatable foes sweep across the area, possibly under the guise of a Sleeper war or uprising, and kill any mages they find.

The characters are among the last survivors. Can they escape, or will they die to put things right?

• **Page of Swords:** A young person (if female, probably a tomboy) with a quick and cutting wit, a sharp eye and keen intellect. **Reversed:** A spy or a false friend, possibly a cheating lover. Not intelligent, perhaps, but cunning. **Story Hook:** The teenage son of a local politician. He professes belief in his father's conservative platform, but is, in fact, a Sleepwalker, and can see the machinations of the Awakened in his father's campaign.

• **Knight of Swords:** A domineering individual, one who sweeps others along with him (and leaves them wondering why they agreed). Brave, forceful, and exacting. Crossing this man is unwise, as he does not forget slights and has no use for weak or inconstant people. **Reversed:** Impatient and loud, but indecisive and weak. Takes credit for others' success, but never takes advice. **Story Hook:** The politician's campaign manager, an aggressive and intelligent man who wants to groom the son into a crusader against "teenage immorality." Not a Sleepwalker himself, but aware of the supernatural on some level and willing to use the son to sniff out potential targets for the campaign.

• **Queen of Swords:** This woman is often a widow, sometimes a barren or simply unhappy woman. She is intelligent and subtle, certainly an individualist, but that can lead to loneliness. **Reversed:** The woman might be attractive, but beneath the skin she is rotted. Evil, corrupt and vicious, she lives to hurt others, for whatever reasons. **Story Hook:** The politician's mistress. His wife is a good-hearted simpleton, and his mistress is his true love and provides him the challenge and advice he needs. She is aware that something strange is going on with the son, but thinks he might be experimenting with drugs. She needs to remain out of the spotlight, but is concerned about the boy. She might be involved with a Guardian labyrinth at some level.

• **King of Swords:** A man of intellect and power, possibly a government figure, doctor, lawyer or some other powerful profession. Well-educated, but often indecisive. Reactive rather than proactive. **Reversed:** The man has direction, but it is purely selfish. He is unable to conceive of anyone else mattering in the slightest. Like the Queen of Swords Reversed, he is evil and calculating. The two together will probably kill each other. **Story Hook:** The politician himself, on the cusp of Awakening and seeing exactly how strange his life has become. Or, perhaps he will choose to remain asleep — it depends on how much his dogma really means to him.

## Cups

The suit of Cups deals with emotion, love, relationships, marriage and pleasure. It is considered the most favorable suit to appear in a reading. Obviously, it relates to the element of water, and to intuition and expression.

Cartomancers among the Awakened relate this suit to the Thyrsus Path and to the Free Council. More traditionalist mages say it deals with the Acanthus Path, but has no order correspondence.

• **Ace of Cups:** Possibly the most favorable card of the Minor Arcana, the Ace of Cups indicates happiness, fulfillment and the beginning of a new (and good) relationship. Motherhood, conception, marriage or simply a love-letter. **Reversed:** Something new, but not something welcome — evidence of infidelity, perhaps. **Story Hook:** One of the characters is singled out for public recognition among the Consilium. What did he do to earn this, and what effects will it have on his Status? Are his cabal-mates jealous?

• **Two of Cups:** Union, harmony, peace accord or friendship. A happy love affair or marriage. **Reversed:** Wasteful, extravagant behavior. Squandering the good things in one's life. A divorce or break-up. **Story Hook:** One of the characters strikes up a friendship — or a romantic entanglement — with a werewolf. The werewolf's pack is initially receptive, but will they find the mages arrogant and disrespectful over time? Where do the werewolf's (and the mage's) loyalties lie if someone in power orders an end to their romance?

• **Three of Cups:** Celebration, dancing, good cheer, fruition, abundance. Success gained with little cost or difficulty. **Reversed:** The end of the party, now back to business. Costs for success are higher than initially thought. **Story Hook:** The characters happen upon a celebration of mages who have no connection to the Consilium (and possibly don't follow the Pentacle at all). Can the characters let go of their own training for an evening to have fun?

• **Four of Cups:** Boredom, dissatisfaction. Ennui born of overachievement. Can also indicate feelings of awkwardness from another's charitable behavior. **Reversed:** Something new coming, but not necessarily something good or bad. A premonition. **Story Hook:** A Mysterium mage invites the characters on a voyage or quest, possibly to open a forgotten temple, possibly to rid the world of some magical monstrosity. As the voyage continues, it becomes clear that he doesn't intend to return, and doesn't much care if the characters do or not. What brought him to this state?



- **Five of Cups:** Disappointment. Wasted energy. Loss of friends, despite attempts to keep them. Disillusionment. Kindness is spat upon. **Reversed:** Plans will not come to fruition, better to focus on maintaining what advantages are already present. **Story Hook:** The cabal suddenly finds itself on less than friendly terms with the other mages in the area. They don't have the same level of support, and their Status in local orders is ignored or treated with frosty deference. What happened to bring this on?

- **Six of Cups:** Nostalgia. Pleasant memories of the past. A childlike sense of wonder. Alternately, the beginnings of a wish coming true or a plan coming to fruition. **Reversed:** The future is unknown and frightening (but often indicated in the cards surrounding this one). **Story Hook:** Something from the character's pre-Awakened life comes to visit him. It might be an old lover, a parent, a sibling or a teacher, but something that he hasn't thought of in a long time is back in his life. Is this a breath of fresh air, or something he wanted to leave behind?

- **Seven of Cups:** Deceit or false choices. Any victory is only temporary. Alternately, a difficult choice with only one correct answer, but many tempting and damning options. **Reversed:** A strong decision (though perhaps not the right one). A clear choice. **Story Hook:** A series of violent or simply mysterious events leaves the cabal in a position of deciding which one to investigate. They are all orchestrated by the same party, however — a Seer cabal looking to see what the characters' strengths are before attempting to kidnap and recruit them.

- **Eight of Cups:** Aimlessness, disappointment, the realization that what was once the ideal has become the reality, and it has lost its luster. The need to find a new goal. **Reversed:** Reveling in what one has. Gaiety, laughter, merriment. **Story Hook:** A mage approaches the characters for help; he wants to change his Legacy,

or get rid of it entirely. But all Awakened scholarship indicates this is impossible. Can the characters find any way to help him?

- **Nine of Cups:** Physical health, riches, fulfillment in the monetary and occupational sense. The metaphorical cup runneth over. Victory, obstacles surmounted. **Reversed:** Success missed at the last moment, but able to be regained. More work to do before rest. **Story Hook:** The Consilium enjoys a season of prosperity. No threats, unprecedented harmony, new Hallows appearing. Is something lulling the mages into complacency, or are things really going that well?

- **Ten of Cups:** Success on a moral and spiritual level. Contentment and fulfillment that comes not from *having*, but from *giving*. Peace of mind. **Reversed:** Violence, disputes, disruption of peace. **Story Hook:** A cabal of apostate mages joins the Consilium, claiming to offer a philosophy of magical fulfillment. Strictly following this regimen, they claim, completely removes the risk of Paradox, and indeed, their members never seem to suffer its effects. Is there anything to this philosophy of "harmony with the Abyss?"

- **Page of Cups:** Quiet, introspective, gentle and studious young adult (if a boy, probably slightly effeminate). Not a decisive person, but willing to serve, and imaginative. **Reversed:** Flattering but deceptive, possibly with a bent toward seduction. **Story Hook:** The ghost of a young girl who died in the 19th

century while awaiting her beloved's return from war. Not a destructive or malicious spirit, but capable of playing hell with perceptions and emotions.

- **Knight of Cups:** A young man of passion, but not necessarily of action. He might be slow to anger or he might just be lazy. Possibly a dilettante. Susceptible to flattery and seduction. **Reversed:** A liar, an addict, a borderline sociopath. Human interaction means little to him, and he uses others as he sees fit. **Story Hook:** The present owner of the immense house in which the ghost dwells. Very rich, but spoiled and bored. His



presence makes the ghost more active, as he reminds her of her lost love.

- **Queen of Cups:** Dreamy, imaginative and probably artistic woman. A good wife and mother, if she has a family. Easily impressed, somewhat chameleon-like (insofar as she changes to fit the company she is in). **Reversed:** Inconstant, prone to flights of fancy and attacks of jealousy. Manipulative and interfering. **Story Hook:** A local medium and psychic who came to see the ghost and offer the young man some thoughts on how he might lay the spirit to rest. She has since become involved with the house's owner, and hasn't yet seen the ghost. Her presence is making the ghost jealous.

- **King of Cups:** Still waters that run deep — this man is ambitious, powerful and very hard to read. He might be a good man, but he might just as easily be malicious or self-interested. Always looks out for himself, even if his actions appear altruistic. **Reversed:** Here, the man is profoundly and deeply evil. He is suspicious of everyone because he assumes everyone is like him. **Story Hook:** A Moros mage determined to learn something that the ghost knows, and he doesn't care if he has to boil her down to ectoplasm to get it. Unfortunately, the ghost only knows his targeted information when she's contented, and that means the situation with the house owner and the medium needs to be resolved.

## Pentacles

The suit of Pentacles deals with money, business, property, status and worldly influence. It is related to the element of earth, and therefore also deals with solidarity and dependability.

Awakened cartomancers often equate the suit of Pentacles (also called Coins or Disks, though Pentacles is, of course, most common among mages of the five orders) with the Moros Path and the Silver Ladder. Some mages, however, feel the suit represents all of the orders, and interpret a reading with a preponderance of Pentacles as important regarding Consilium business.

- **Ace of Pentacles:** A secure position. Coming into money or property. Stability. **Reversed:** Acquiring wealth at the expense of others. Money-grubbing. Self-satisfaction, lack of vision. **Story Hook:** One of the characters inherits a house, suitable for use as a Sanctum. But the house has its secrets, and the cabal will have to discover them by living there.

- **Two of Pentacles:** Life's inconsistencies. Sudden changes in fortune. The difficulties of managing home and business. A shift in finances is imminent. **Reversed:** Living above one's means. Debt. Faking happiness to keep up appearances. **Story Hook:** Several Sancta in the area have had their mortgages foreclosed. The cabals in question see the hands of the Seers of the Throne, but is that really the case, or is the economy simply on a downturn? Can magic solve the problem?

- **Three of Pentacles:** Approval, notoriety, a promotion or an advance in a project. Acceptance as an apprentice. Constructive work. **Reversed:** Work stalls. Mediocrity. Weakness, faltering nerve. **Story Hook:** One of the characters is accepted as an apprentice to a powerful and well-respected mage, possibly taken on as a student in a Legacy. What sacrifices does that mean he must make for his new position? What secrets must he keep from his cabal?

- **Four of Pentacles:** Consolidation of wealth. A solid position. An avoidance of risk, but not in a cowardly way — holding on to what has been earned. **Reversed:** Delay, cowardice, forces aligning against one's interests. **Story Hook:** Two other cabals approach the troupe's characters about buying a piece of property (that happens to include at least one Hallow) and building several Sancta on it. Can the characters come to a consensus on how this commune would run? Are the characters even interested?

- **Five of Pentacles:** Poverty, hardship, injury or illness that cripples the ability to stay financially stable. Unemployment or homelessness. A loss of face or status. **Reversed:** A chaotic financial or home situation caused by carelessness or reckless spending. **Story Hook:** A local megachurch is robbed, the institution's accounts losing millions. The money turns up in the coffers of a local Free Council cabal, which intends to redistribute it to the poor of the city. The characters discover this through circumstance. What are they going to do with that information?

- **Six of Pentacles:** A benefactor. Charity and gratitude. Gifts from a philanthropist. A new patron. **Reversed:** Withdrawal of support. Greed and covetousness. Promised generosity that does not materialize. **Story Hook:** A local man, known to be extremely wealthy and a patron of the city for many years, is revealed (to the Consilium) to be a vampire. He kills several people a year for their blood, but his gifts have allowed for museums, schools and hospitals to be built. What are the characters prepared to do?

- **Seven of Pentacles:** Hard work that may or may not pay off. A risk with little short-term gain. Failure



to achieve one's goals. Being swindled. **Reversed:** Worry over money or property. A loan with unforeseen interest. **Story Hook:** One of the characters' friends (or one of the characters) makes a deal with a powerful being that he assumes to be another mage. It turns out, however, that this being is a creature from the Shadow, and that interest is compounded very differently where he's from. The repayment on the loan progresses quickly from favors to Mana to blood to souls, and the consequences for defaulting might be even worse. Is there a way out of this?

- **Eight of Pentacles:** Enterprise without vision. Mass production. Money flows in small, but comfortable amounts. No sense of the larger picture. Little pride in one's work. **Reversed:** Hypocrisy. Usury. Fraudulent dealings. **Story Hook:** An Obrimos mage learns that he can sell magical items to Sleepers and rake in money quickly. He sells trinkets on street corners — glasses that allow night vision, keys that open any lock, and so on. Naturally, he'll be in trouble with the Consilium, but he might also run afoul of his customers, once the magic wears off.

- **Nine of Pentacles:** Comfort and safety. Wish fulfillment. A speedy resolution to a problem. A sizeable "cushion" to fall back on, or a good legacy. **Reversed:** Shady dealings. Deviousness. The character might find his nest egg has been stolen. **Story Hook:** The Consilium keeps a stockpile of preserved Tass, imbued items and records of Hallows and other resources against lean times or danger. The characters are charged with guarding it for a month. No one ever really looks in that stockpile — can the characters resist a peek?

- **Ten of Pentacles:** A family estate, a business empire or monopoly. A dynasty of industry. Wealth achieved in old age, and so great monetary success gained without the energy or vigor to enjoy it. **Reversed:** Will disputes. Robbery. Success pilfered and used for another's enjoyment. Identity theft. A death throws things into disarray. **Story Hook:** The Hierarchy of the city abdicates his position. He offers no reason or instruction on his replacement, and he does not return any of his symbols of office. The characters are chosen to seek him out and obtain explanations (and ask him to drop the warding spells on the Consilium's headquarters). In talking to him, they can learn of his lifetime of service to his ideals, and why he gave up his position.

- **Page of Pentacles:** A dark-haired youth, hard-working and solemn. Deliberate and careful in all he or she says and does. Thrifty and wise beyond years.

**Reversed:** Prodigal son (or daughter). A wastrel. **Story Hook:** The youngest member of a cabal of mages living apart from all contact with the Pentacle. She is the only one who travels to the Consilium and represents them, but says little and is largely discounted as irrelevant. She is willing to take risks to be noticed, but will not betray her family. She is too naïve to realize, however, that other mages might ever *ask* her to betray them.

- **Knight of Pentacles:** A hard working, but not terribly young man. Happy to do the work assigned to him, highly tenacious and responsible, but with little initiative and no taste for leadership. A "yokel," but possibly possessed of great common sense and good judgment of character. **Reversed:** Lazy, unemployed, idle. Possibly also spiteful, bigoted, or outright stupid. **Story Hook:** The older brother or lover of the Page, he sometimes goes with her to Consilium meetings, but knows little about magic (he might even be a Sleepwalker). Suspicious of other mages, but easy to manipulate. If he catches on, though, he's an implacable foe.

- **Queen of Pentacles:** A generous, happy and intuitive (if not intelligent) woman. She knows her family well and brooks no interference with their dealings. She is a good listener, practical and true, but can be stubborn. **Reversed:** A drudge. Possibly stupid or mad, she has no initiative and barely understands what is happening around her. Unreliable. **Story Hook:** The Matriarch of the apostate cabal, she distrusts anyone wearing a pentacle and harbors a deep dislike for one of the orders (whichever one the characters belong to) for a past slight. She authorized the Page to interact with the Consilium, but is considering rescinding that decision.

- **King of Pentacles:** Slow to react but decisive when he does, the King of Pentacles is a deliberate and thoughtful man. He might be a teacher, or he might be a craftsman of some kind, but in any case he is devoted to his work and his family. He never forgives a slight, but also never jumps to conclusions and thus is hard to offend. **Reversed:** The man is a brute, holding his family in thrall with fear and violence. He has money, but no principles, and will use his family as leverage if need be. **Story Hook:** The King is the spirit of the cabal's communal property, and is extremely powerful and protective of the mages. Whenever the Page goes to the Consilium, one of the King's servants goes with her. If anything happens to her, the spirit can stir up trouble with all of the surrounding spirit courts against the Consilium.

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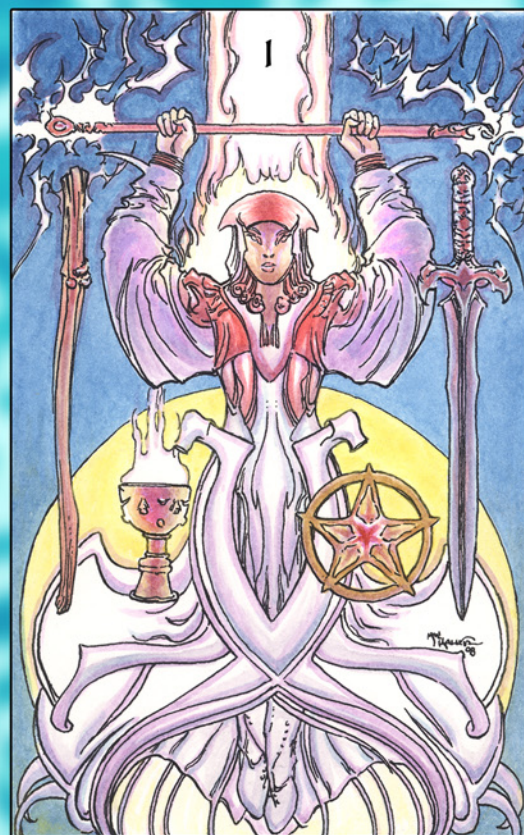
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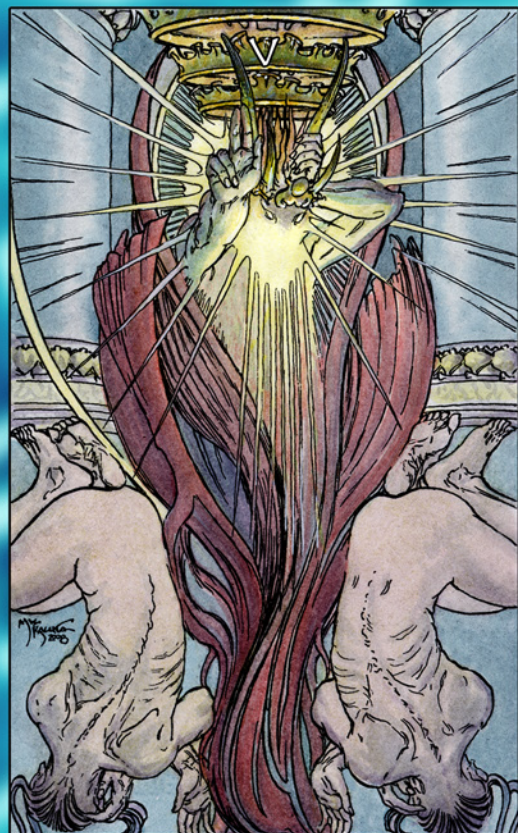
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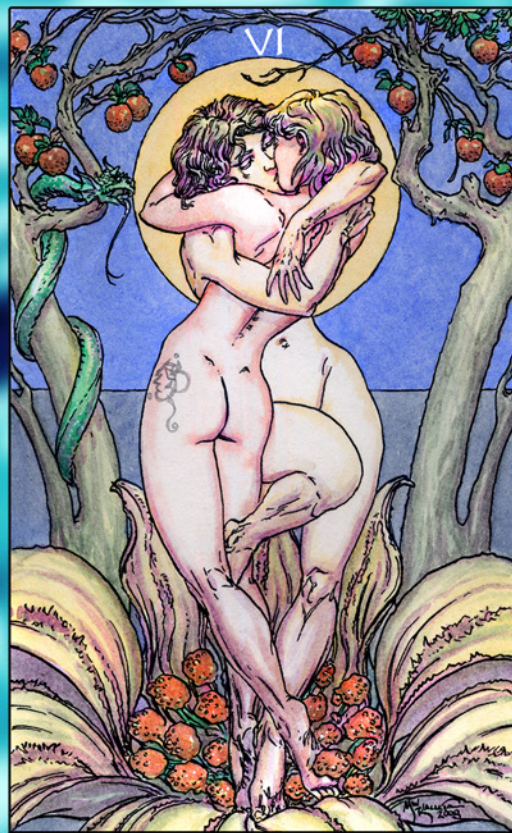
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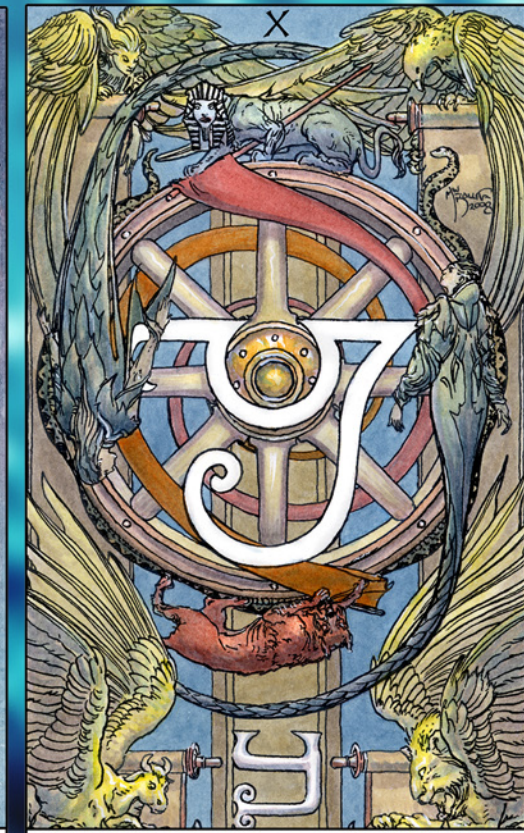
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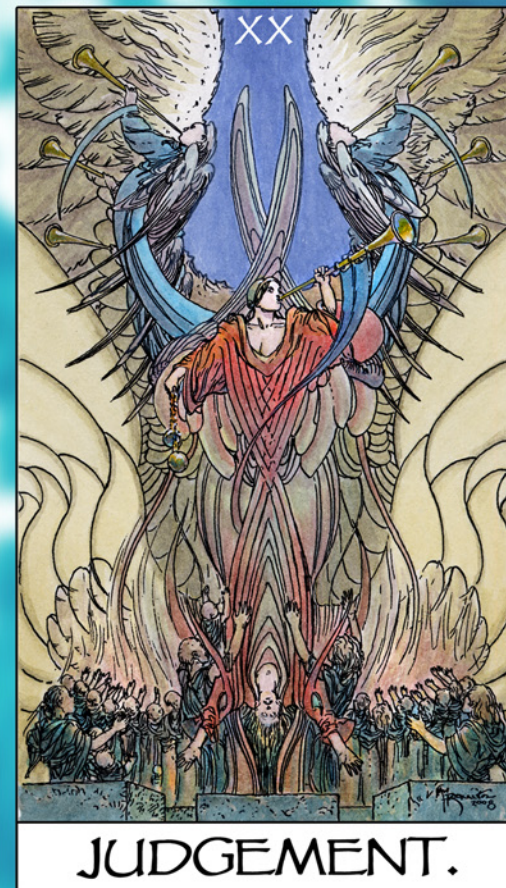
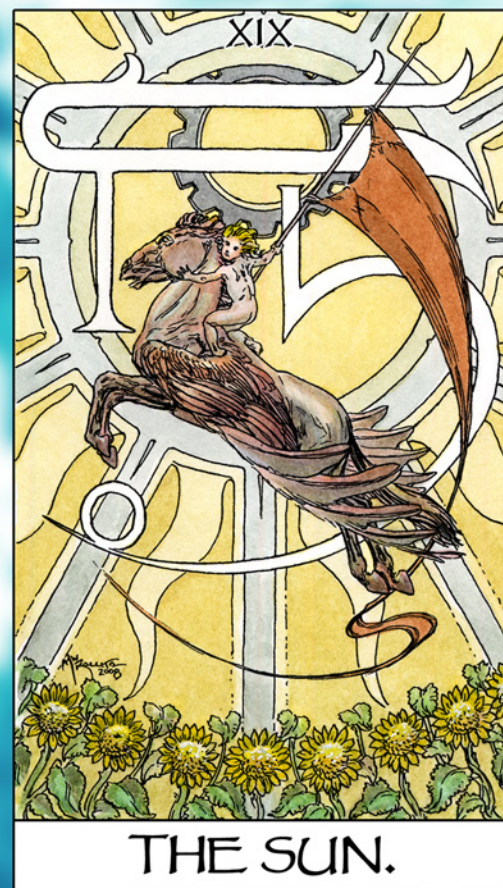
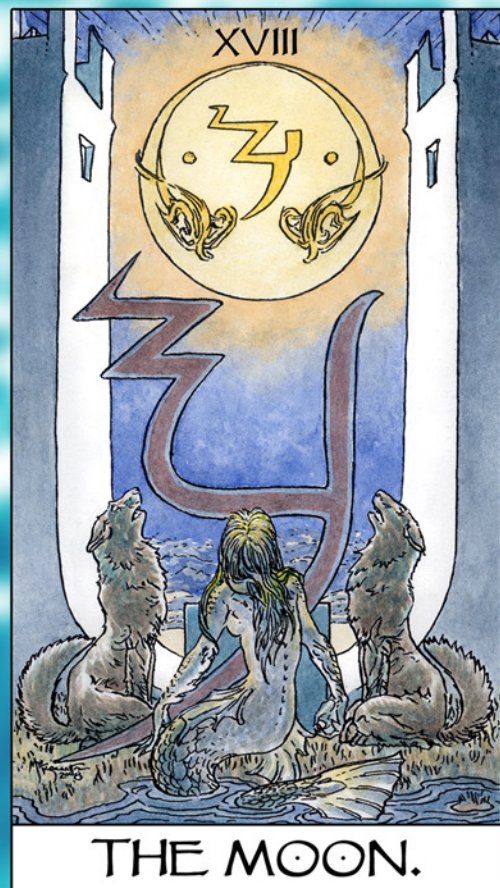
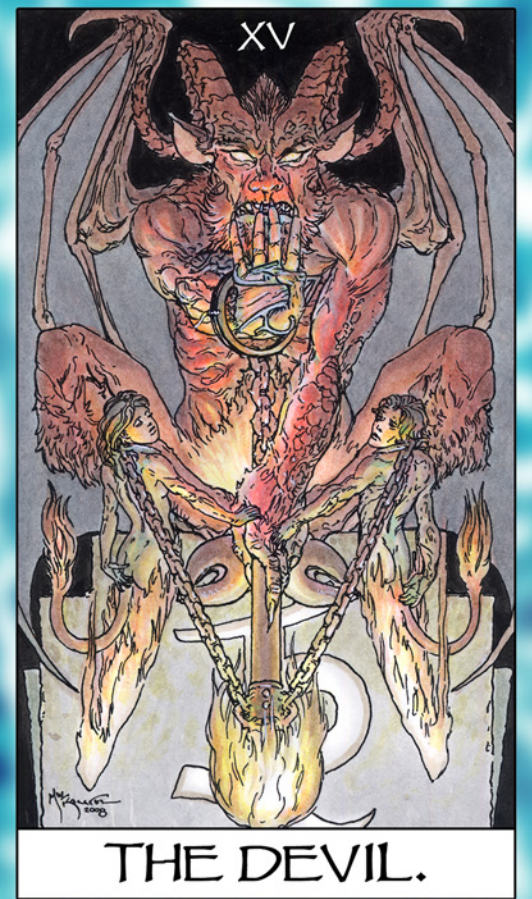
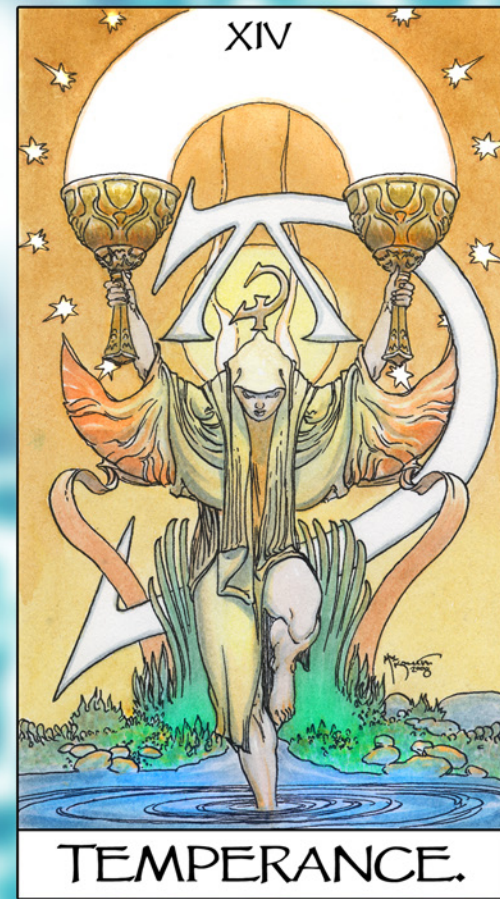
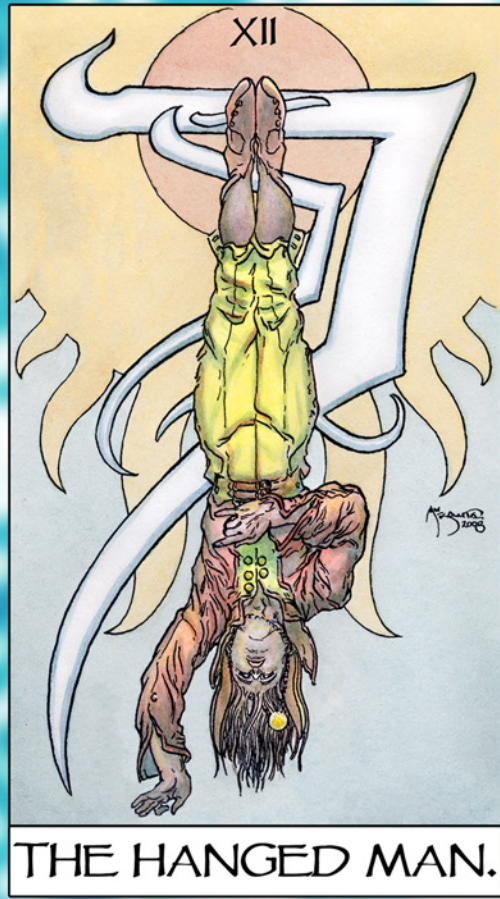
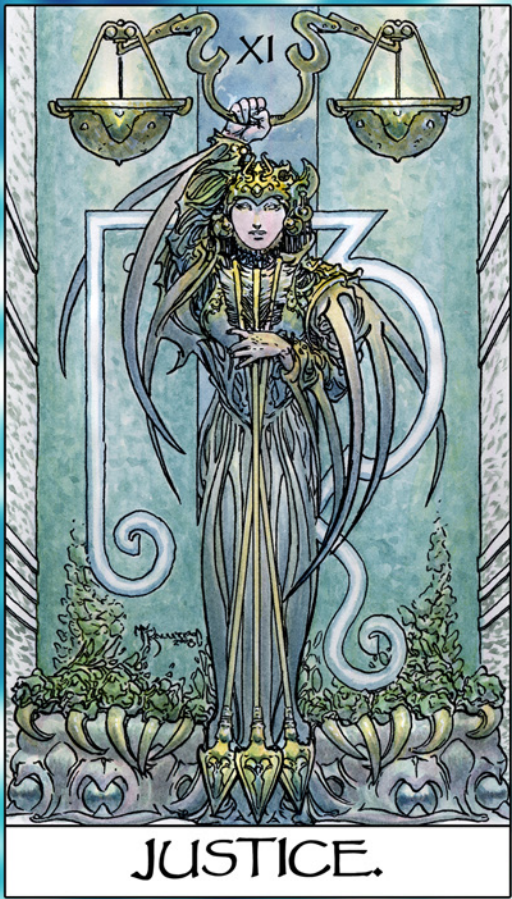


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WHEEL OF FORTUNE.







*The cards aren't power in their own right. They're an interface. When the first Fool card was painted, that didn't create the power it taps into, it just invented a new way to access that archetype.*

*Each of these tells a story, contains a clue. They're pieces of a map, marking out a journey that can take you all the way to... apotheosis, really.*

*But be careful. Those old powers that the cards reveal, they're strong and heedless. Study the clues, and you have a chance at recognizing them when they take on a new form. That forewarning may be all the difference.*

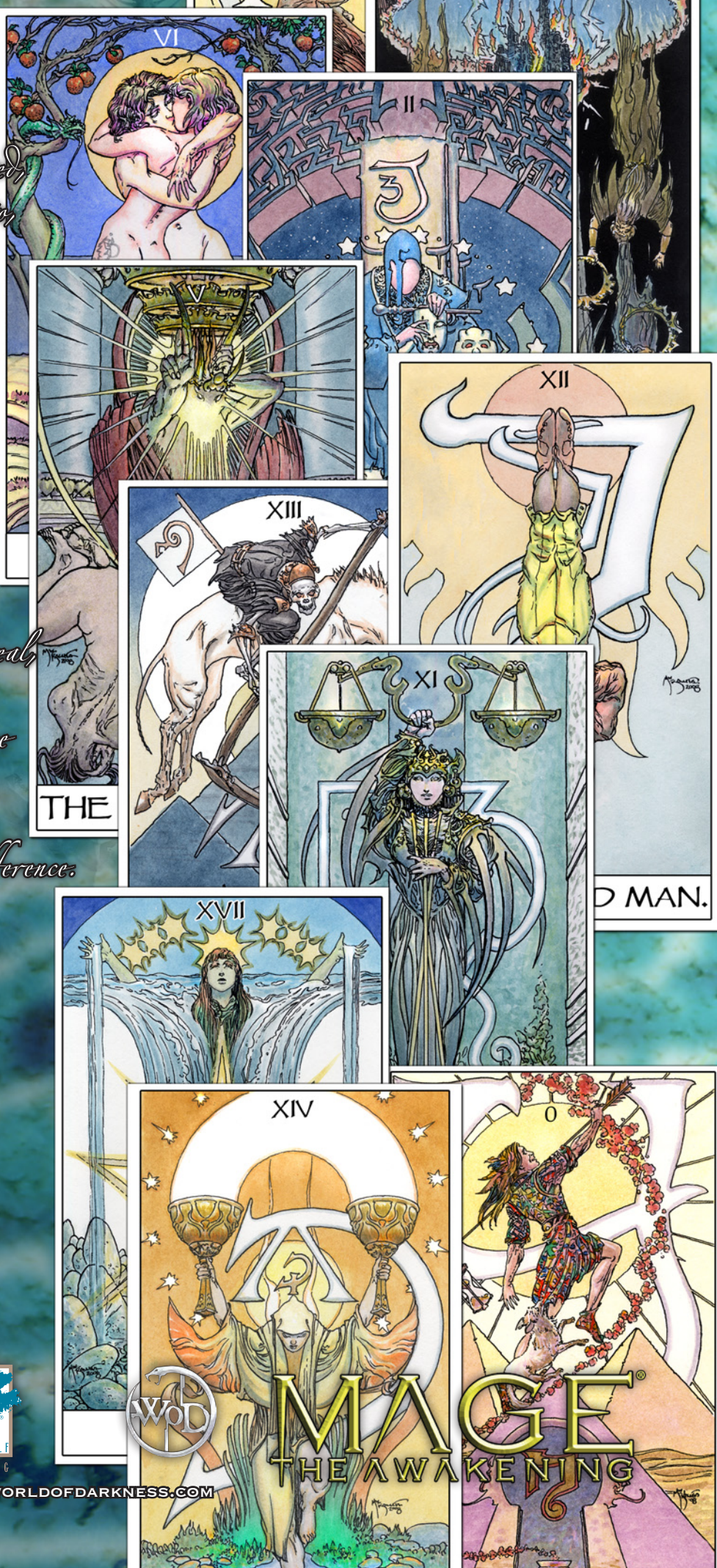
*— Bateleur, vagabond soothsayer*

This book includes:

- New Artifacts, Legacies, antagonists, grimoires, locations and more — a potent inclusion to a chronicle tied to the symbolism of each Major Arcanum
- The Path of Power, a journey from initiate to enlightenment in 22 stages
- Notes on using the Tarot for in-character divination and for story brainstorming and generation; story hooks or even scenarios for every card



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