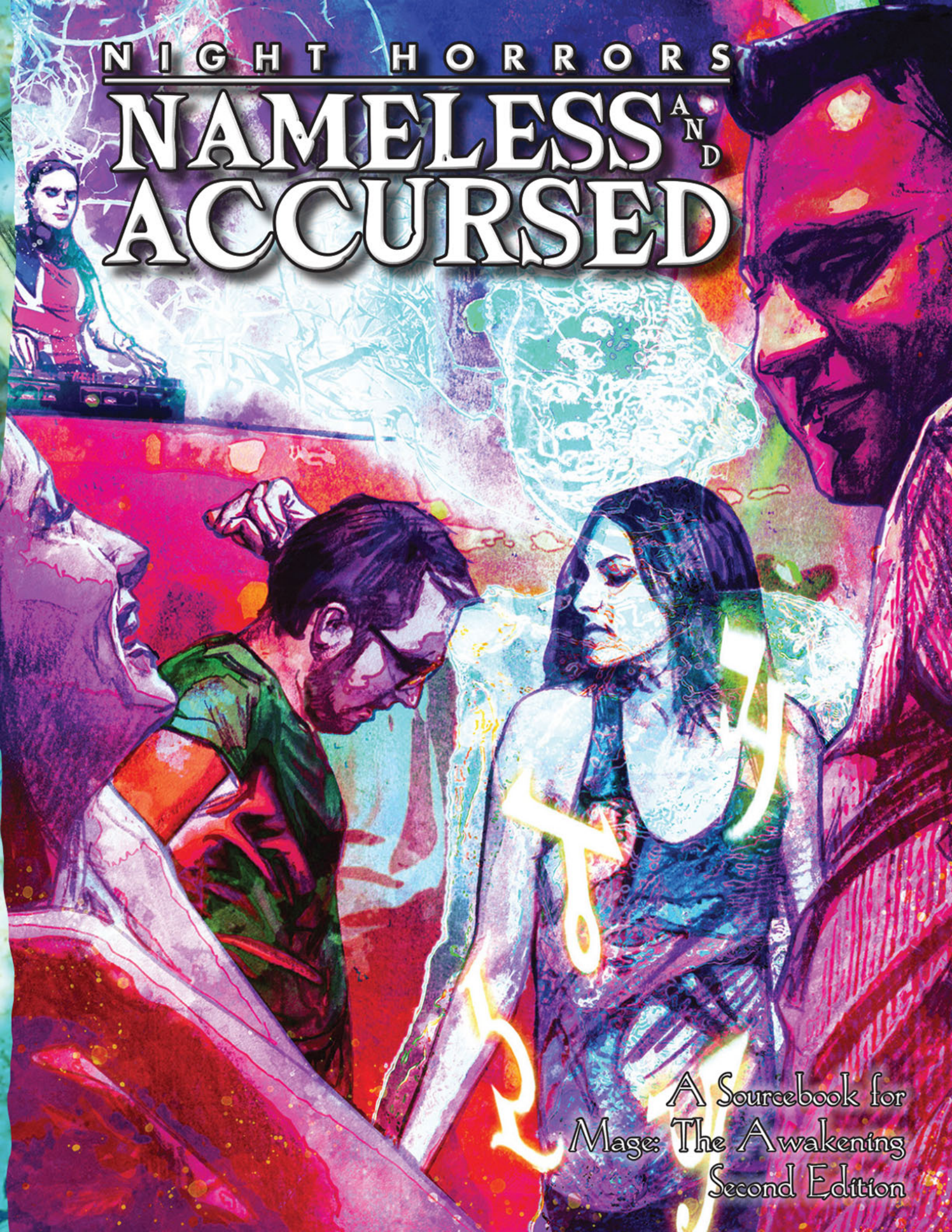
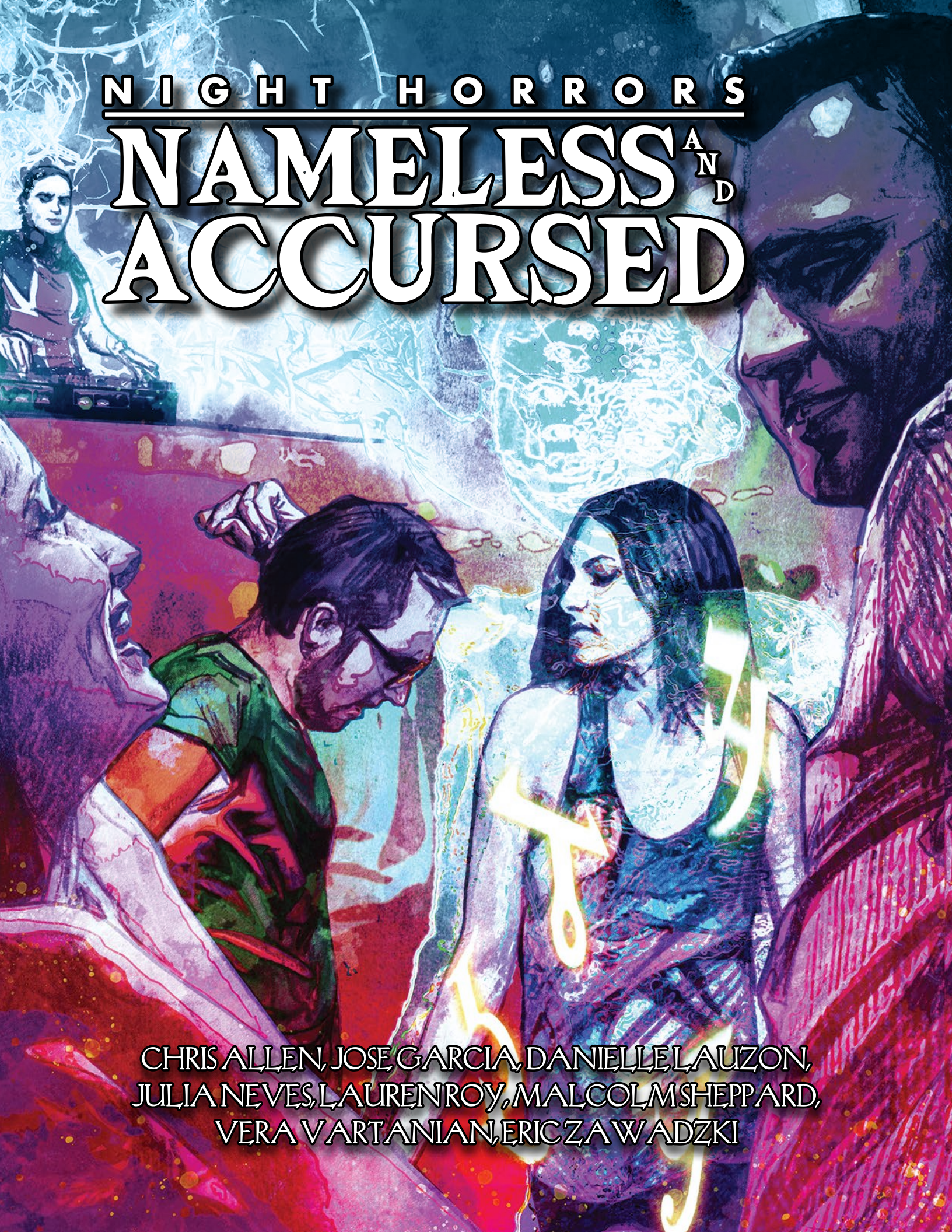

NIGHT HORRORS
NAMELESS AND ACCURSED
A Sourcebook for
Mage: The Awakening
Second Edition


NIGHT HORRORS
NAMELESS AND ACCURSED
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JACK DANIEL'S

"You're going to hurt someone." The woman at the bus stop didn't look up from her book. At first, Madeleine thought she'd misheard, or caught a heated part of a private conversation — she didn't see a cell phone, but the woman wore earbuds whose wires snaked down into her pocket. Those, plus her intent focus on the book and her hunched posture clearly read *leave me alone,* so Madeleine did.

Except the woman said it again, louder this time: "You're going to *hurt* someone." Madeleine snuck another glance, curiosity getting the better of her. The woman now stared over the rims of thick-framed glasses, pinning Madeleine in place with her gaze. The watcher wore a generic retail uniform: khakis and a cheaply made collared shirt, with pin holes where her nametag would go when she got to work. Smart, not to leave it on while riding public transit. This woman was just another commuter — not her boss, not the Hierarch — yet Madeleine felt like she was back in third grade, busted for passing notes.

But she was 32, not eight, and she'd seen things this random stranger would never believe. "Excuse me?"

"You could stop it, but you won't." The woman snapped her book shut and stood. "We'll talk again. After." The 55 bus lumbered to a halt and she boarded without so much as a glance back at Madeleine.

Madeleine pulled her satchel tighter, her fingers tracing the shape of Xan's notebook within. She clutched it to herself as though the woman — now halfway up the street and bound for the other side of the city — might reach through a hole in the air and steal it. With the things Madeleine had seen, it wasn't outside the realm of possibility. Nothing was.

Should I wait, then? What if she's right?

What if she delayed it a few more days? She could double-check her calculations, practice the ritual she'd devised one last time. Be sure she was getting it right.

But the idea of quitting when she was a bus ride away from solving Xan's last puzzle… *No.* Her chest squeezed at the very idea. She couldn't — *wouldn't* — put off the Mystery for another day. Not another hour. Xan died before he could solve it, and now Madeleine was too damned close to the end to wait.

Here came the 115 bus now, as though the universe itself were affirming her decision.

That woman didn't know Madeleine. She didn't know Xan, or how carefully the two of them had researched and planned. As she boarded the bus, Madeleine kept one hand flat over the satchel. Matter let her feel Xan's spiky handwriting through the layers of paper and cardboard and leather. She delved down to the last page Xan's pen had touched, halfway through the notebook. His last written words to her: *Maddy, I've got it!*

Then he was gone, before he could tell Madeleine what he'd learned.

• • •

The 115 dropped her off a mile away from the warehouse, and she had to hoof it the rest of the way. No one really came to this part of the city anymore. With the economy in the toilet, the jobs and factories had moved elsewhere. For a time, some of their friends had taken over the warehouse and turned it into a makerspace. You could go there anytime and find someone sculpting, welding, painting murals, or working through a dance routine. Madeleine and Xan used to climb the shaky metal stairs to the foreman's office and drink cheap beer while they argued about the ideal placements of ley lines and drew configurations in the dust.

The other makers were long gone, now — moved on to other cities, other jobs. Madeleine walked among the pieces they'd left behind. An angel chipped out of concrete loomed over her, its wings supported by exposed rebar. Dance costumes still hung on their mannequins, dust dimming their sequins' shimmer. Xan used to make them pirouette when the Sleeper artists were away. Madeleine sorely missed their little maker community, and Xan most of all.

She set up her tools in the middle of the space and stretched out her awareness. The ley lines remained where Xan had left them. He'd spent months nudging them into place, and no one had shifted them back. No other cabals quite dared mess with Xan's work in the wake of his death, though she suspected they'd get over that soon enough. She was amazed they'd waited six months. She hadn't expected they'd even make it to two.

When the sunset turned the light streaming through the high windows a molten orange, Madeleine began her spell. The ley lines hummed when she reached for them; the Mana coursing past her still held a taste of Xan's Nimbus. She felt it, too, in the slender finger bone she held in her hand to focus her concentration. Of course she did; it was a piece of him, a magical tool made all the more potent by her sympathetic connection to its former owner. Xan had given it to her long ago; as a joke at first, then for real, when they learned he might not live to see it all through.

Ghosts drifted near, drawn by her call and the pull of so much Death. She shone like a beacon to them in Twilight, her hands upraised, a dirge spilling from her lips. She couldn't help but look for Xan among them, though she knew he wouldn't be there. Madeleine had long since accepted that things ended, and people died, even her best friend. But oh, how she wanted him to see this moment, when all their hard work came to fruition.

She ought to have heard the scrape and shuffle that let her know she wasn't alone anymore.

Later, she'd wonder if maybe she *did* hear it, and chose the spell over her uninvited companion's safety.

You could stop it, but you won't.

"What the hell is this?" The voice sounded masculine, older. Frightened.

Madeleine's Imago faltered and failed. The ghosts surged, confused and agitated by the spell's abrupt cessation. Most of them were wispy things, little more than impressions of old passions and fading feelings, but a few were strong enough to manifest. Too late, Madeleine realized their intent. They swarmed the man, each vying to be the one to possess him, if only for a little while. Her reaction time was shot; her mind was still full of Xan's spell. The man's screams didn't help, though those subsided when his consciousness gave up and fled. She peeled ghosts off of him like leeches, muttering apologies that were only partly for him.

Most of them were for Xan.

• • •

When the man woke up, Madeleine told him he must've disturbed a hornet's nest. Never mind that it was too late in the season, or that he didn't have any stings: The Lie had settled firmly back over him, calling anything he remembered into doubt. He declared himself lucky, and thanked her for being there.

Thanked her for saving him, when it was her fault he got swarmed in the first place.

• • •

A week later, Madeleine saw the bus stop woman again. She was behind the counter at the coffee shop Xan used to rave about, the one Madeleine said was too loud, too crowded. Today she needed the noise, to drown out her guilt and tamp down the nagging need to return to the warehouse and try again. The woman wore the same khakis and collared shirt, but this time she had her nametag on: *Lethe.*

"They're going to hurt someone," she said, as she handed a stunned Madeleine her iced mocha. "You could stop them, but you won't."

"Who? When? Tell me and I will."

Lethe shook her head. "It won't matter. You're not ready to let go." She glanced behind Madeleine as though someone were waiting, and Madeleine fell for it, turning to see who was there. When she looked back, Lethe was gone.

• • •

When Xan died, the Lorehouse got the majority of his belongings. Madeleine didn't fight

them over it; she had his primary notebook, and as a Libertine herself, could go visit his personal effects and sift through his napkin theories anytime she wanted. She hadn't gone in a couple of months, too busy finishing her own research, and too proud to admit how much it hurt to stand among the things Xan had left behind. To acknowledge that *she* was one of those things, too.

Maybe that was why they didn't contact her until the last minute. The email from the Ecliptic asked if she wanted to come see the cabal test out some theories based on Xan's work. Their leader, Tallow, had been Xan's mentee within the Council; he and Madeleine hadn't always gotten along. But the invite was an olive branch, and she grasped it.

She met them at the warehouse. The Ecliptic had as much right to the space as she did; it was where Xan had trained Tallow. They'd likely spent time in the foreman's loft together, too, drinking the same godawful beers. The cabal was all set up when Madeleine arrived. They indulged her request to search the premises, just in case, but found no Sleepers lurking. Then there was nothing left for her to do but plunk down at the concrete angel's feet and observe.

With grudging approval, she noted how the spell was laid out, how the hallmarks of Xan's style mingled with the cabal's adjustments. Some of the finer details were lost on her — Xan had had interests across all the Arcana, and much of this particular exercise in Forces sat outside Maddy's expertise. But she could follow some of it, how they'd woven in Prime and used the ley lines to boost the spell.

And there it was, someone fucking with Xan's ley line configuration at last. She spotted it late, after they'd started casting, saw how one change would cascade into another, and how it would reverberate back at the casters.

Later, she'd wonder if she'd really noticed it sooner, and chose to ignore it until it was too far gone to fix.

You could stop them, but you won't.

"Wait!" she cried, staggering to her feet, fumbling at a counterspell. By now they'd all sensed something wrong, as the air around them thrummed with angry vibrations. *Too late.* Lightning stabbed down from the rafters. Electric-blue bolts of Prime rose from the ground to meet it halfway. A shockwave fanned out from where they met, throwing Madeleine into the concrete angel's arms.

When she came to, a few of the Ecliptic had dragged themselves out of the circle. Tallow was on his hands and knees, hauling in painful breaths. The others lay still. One woman moaned in pain. Two others were ominously silent. The scents of ozone and burnt flesh filled Maddy's nostrils and made her gag.

They're going to hurt someone.

Lethe hadn't said that "someone" would be among the Awakened. Or that it'd be more than one of them.

But did it matter?

Was I okay with it, if it was just a Sleeper getting hurt, as long as Xan's Mysteries got solved? Was I okay with them getting hurt, if it left Xan's work intact?

She shoved the thought away, and went to help the wounded.

• • •

The coffee shop was closed by the time Madeleine arrived, but Lethe waited inside. She let Maddy in, and locked the door behind them. Two cups of coffee steamed away on a low table, flanked by two overstuffed chairs. She could imagine Xan curled up in one with a fat tome in his lap.

"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Lethe. She produced a bottle of whiskey and set it between the cups.

Maddy poured a generous slug into her cup as she sat. She'd changed her clothes and showered in water so hot she'd probably cooked some organs, but she kept getting whiffs of seared air and slag. Three of the Ecliptic were gravely

injured, but none were dead. She'd helped get them all back to the Lorehouse before coming here; the echoes of their pained cries chased her across town. "I want to know why you didn't just tell me. Either time. I'd have done things differently."

"You wouldn't have, though. Maybe you'd've postponed. But it wouldn't matter. I know how obsession works."

She opened her mouth to argue, but Lethe gave her that same disappointed-schoolteacher look over the rims of her glasses, and the lie died on Maddy's lips. She was right. As awful as she felt for siccing a passel of ghosts on that man, she'd been back to poring over Xan's notebook within hours. And when the Ecliptic sent her the invite, she'd pounced on it, even though it meant returning to the scene of her crime.

"What do you want me to do, then? If I can't stop it, what's the point of telling me?"

"You *can* stop it." Lethe plucked the pen from behind her ear and scratched a nonsense doodle on her napkin. "Look at this. Memorize it."

It seemed simple enough: a spiral bisected by a slanted line. "O…kay?"

"Watch now." Lethe passed her hand over it, her fingers hot with Prime. Madeleine smelled that sharp ozone tang from the warehouse, and burning paper. When Lethe pulled away, the napkin was intact, but blank. She passed Maddy the pen. "Draw it for me."

Frowning, she took the pen, touched it to the napkin, and —

Maddy blinked. The pen hovered over the center of the napkin, but when she tried to make the first stroke, she didn't know how to begin. *What did it look like?* She shuffled back through her memories of the last few minutes, watched Lethe draw *something*, but in her recall, the napkin stayed blank. "What did you do?"

"I hid it away. Somewhere it can't hurt anyone. Magic, wielded irresponsibly, causes harm. It's like taking a knife away from a toddler." She stopped, sipped her coffee, waited.

The words sank in, and Madeleine scrambled up out of her chair. She snatched Xan's finger bone from her pocket and squeezed it, calling up an Imago. "*Banisher,*" she spat.

Lethe hadn't moved. "I never liked that word. Secret Keeper is more appropriate." She nodded toward Maddy's clenched fist. "Do I need to point out that *you're* the one who leapt immediately to violence? Let that spell fly, and you'll be the killer here, not me."

No. Don't listen to her. The Orders had their warnings about Lethe's kind. They were murderers, defilers of Mysteries, as dangerous as Reapers and the Rapt. Killing a Banisher would be the right thing to do.

Wouldn't it?

"No one died today," Lethe said softly. "No one has to." She glanced at Madeleine's satchel, at the foot of the chair. Xan's notebook was still inside. "Would your friend have wanted people harmed in pursuit of his Mysteries?"

"No." It came out as a whisper. A rush of grief swept over her, as potent as the day she'd lost him. He'd died for magic. *Because* of it. "But you want me to erase him. His work."

"You're wrong. I want you to *keep* it. His work will be a part of you. Safe, secure. Yours alone. Maybe someday someone will be worthy of it, but until then, *you* hold onto it. Onto *him.*"

Madeleine thought of how she'd felt, knowing Tallow and the Ecliptic were studying Xan's work. Not jealous, not possessive. But as if a gaggle of first-graders were fingerpainting over a Renoir. *They're not ready.* How many times had she thought that, when she spotted their posts on Libertine message boards?

And what about her own damned self? *I let that man get hurt. I let the cabal fuck up the wrong ley line. It's my obsession that's the danger.*

Madeleine let the Imago fade, relaxed her grip on Xan's bone. She reclaimed her chair next to Lethe — carefully, of course, in case the Banisher

(Secret Keeper) made a sudden dive for her. But the woman merely sat, patient as the teacher she resembled, and watched Maddy slip Xan's notebook from her satchel.

It was old and scuffed, its pages mostly held in by rubber bands. His initials had been embossed on the leather cover once, but now the gold leaf had flaked away, and even the indents where the letters once were had been worn smooth. She flipped through the pages, through his spiky-lettered notes in assorted inks. Years of his work riffled past: scribbled notes, formulae, locations, book titles. He'd diagrammed his ley line plans across a two-page spread. Then came that last note: *Maddy, I've got it!*, and the rest of the writing was her own. She traced the words with a fingertip and glanced up at Lethe. "All of it?"

"All of it," she said, though she didn't sound triumphant like Maddy would have expected.

It was the empathy in Lethe's voice that decided her. If she'd been smug, if she'd gloated, Madeleine would've scooped up Xan's notebook and walked out the door. But the woman's eyes were kind behind those thick frames, like she knew exactly what she was asking Maddy to give up.

"Show me how," said Maddy.

• • •

"Huh," said Madeleine, as she packed up her things. The last hour was a haze, probably due to the dent they'd put in the whiskey bottle. At some point they'd switched from spiked coffee to straight booze. "Someone left a notebook here."

It was old and ratty, like whoever owned it had carried with them everywhere they'd gone. The pages were all completely blank. Weird, but she knew people who bought pretty blank books by the armload and never wrote in them, too afraid to make a mistake on the fine pages within. Maybe this was some coffee shop customer's novel-in-waiting, if only they could find that perfect first line. "Do you have a lost and found, in case the owner comes back for it?"

"Sure," said Lethe, tucking it under one arm as she led Maddy to the door. "Though I somehow doubt they will."

INTRODUCTION

"Nothing is easier than denouncing the evildoer. Nothing more difficult than understanding him."

— Fiódor Mijáilovich Dostoievski

Awakening is a blessing. It's pure enlightenment, arcane knowledge, untold Mysteries, unimaginable power.

Awakening is a curse. It's all-consuming addiction, existential despair, desperate loneliness, dangerous hubris.

Awakening is knowing you can do whatever you want, and then doing it. Damn the consequences if you like, but your damnation doesn't erase them. Bending reality to your will intoxicates you, but you're not the only one who can. Staring into the Abyss frightens you, but if you can just learn *enough* and work hard *enough*, you can conquer even that — can't you?

Night Horrors: Nameless and Accursed is a book about the Awakened. Horrors from the darkest corners of the universe threaten mages at every step along their mysterious journeys, but sometimes a sorcerer's worst enemy is someone just like her who took one step too far. Someone who assumed they knew what they were doing, but didn't quite. Or just someone whose goals conflict with hers, when neither of them is willing to give up on their obsessions.

Theme: Cautionary Tales

What do you become with unbridled power at your fingertips? What would you give to get back to a place of pure Truth, when you're trapped in the crushing reality of the Fallen World? What would you do to live forever? To take back the greatest regret of your life? To destroy the thing you hate the most?

This book is about the mages who find that the answers to those questions pit them against their own kind. Whether it was their own hubris that drove their fall from grace or someone else's that ruined them beyond saving, these willworker antagonists are cautionary tales. Mentors tell their apprentices these stories to keep them from crossing the wrong line in pursuit of their addiction to Mysteries. Each tale shows a different way in which any mage could go too far. Obsession is a slippery slope, and there but for the grace of *sophia* goes every Awakened in the world. Facing one of these antagonists is like looking into a mirror and seeing your own worst self in a future that could still come to pass.

Mood: Temptation and Denial

Mages are notoriously good at taking the wrong lessons from cautionary tales. All it takes is one unbearable loss, one desperate day, or one temptation too many, for an otherwise stable mage to fall through the cracks; it's not as hard to imagine as the Awakened would like to believe. Each character in this book showcases something that *could*, under the right circumstances, coax a mage to her downfall — especially when she's so good at telling herself she has everything under control. She transgresses, believes the burdens of the Fallen World are hers alone to bear, follows her fascination past the point of no return. The more she does, the easier it is to reassure herself she's doing fine. Many sorcerers look upon their Left-Handed brethren and insist they know better, but of course, that leads to hubris — and it's where most of our antagonists here started out, too.

The story hooks presented with the mages in this book give Storytellers the tools to ensure players can recognize how their own characters might make the same mistakes, driven far enough.

Storyteller Advice: Magical Conflict

Awakened society largely exists to regulate access to Mysteries too dangerous for common use, and adjudicate conflicts between flawed human beings with enough power to destroy cities. Even the Seers of the Throne don't want magic and Paradox tearing their personal empires apart. When wizards oppose each other, it's impossible to keep things from getting violent forever.

It can be difficult, as a Storyteller, to run a satisfying mage-on-mage fight scene without one side abruptly shutting the other down

with a single spell — especially if they're well-prepared (or willing to Reach as far as they need to). The **Chronicles of Darkness** don't assume violent conflict as a matter of course, but when a character can win by drowning her enemy on dry land or reverting him to childhood, it's tough to come up with reasons *not* to get violent.

This section isn't out to tell you not to — after all, the power and flexibility of the Arcana is one of the game's draws. Rather, its purpose is to give the Storyteller recommendations and tools with which to make such scenes interesting and fun for everyone at the table, so that one failed Counterspell or a gap in the cabal's Arcanum coverage doesn't end things in a dissatisfying way.

The following is a mix of general advice for fights with Awakened antagonists and some specific advice for certain kinds of mages with potentially world-breaking goals or methods.

Sorcerous Fisticuffs

Few things are more potent than a prepared mage. Given some time and knowledge, sorcerers are loaded cannons made of glass. *Without* preparation, those glass cannons load on the fly and spill gunpowder everywhere, which is no safer for anyone. Each combatant aims to fire first and hope his spell takes the other out of the fight before a retaliatory strike destroys him. Which might be all well and good for your antagonist's goals, but should give the players pause enough that they're careful about getting into such fights. When they do, it's helpful to ensure more is going on than just an exchange of deadly spells and Counterspells; and that, when things do get to that point, characters face plenty of consequences.

Intent and Surrender

It's often easy to skip over the first step of an action scene and jump straight to rolling for Initiative, particularly when characters' goals within the scene seem obvious. If you want to emphasize the weight of taking violent magical action against an enemy capable of the same, make a point of always explicitly laying out the step of declaring intent for every character present, and use the optional "Beaten Down and Surrender" rules (**Mage**, p. 216).

While the rules for Beaten Down and surrender only take physical damage into account by default, the threat in a conflict between mages can be much stranger than that. Storytellers may extend these rules to apply to other gauges of who's winning when the Awakened are involved, and stretch the definition of "violence" to include any offensive spells that would cause harm or serious setbacks to another character. Some options for when to apply the Beaten Down Tilt to characters in mage-on-mage conflict include:

- When a character spends or loses her last point of Mana or Willpower.
- When a character suffers another Tilt or effect that takes away major options, such as being unable to effectively move, interact with others, or act according to their own desires.
- When a player involuntarily dramatically fails any action.
- When a character succeeds on an Act of Hubris directly related to the conflict or resolves the Megalomaniacal or Rampant Condition in similar fashion, fully realizing the consequences of her violent actions.

As usual, surrendering should produce dramatic story hooks for the characters and present fun obstacles to face, rather than shutting down players' options for the sake of a Storyteller character's unequivocal victory.

Making the stakes clear up front and giving players other options to resolve the conflict helps make magical conflict feel like the dire recourse it is. Remember, mages are creatures of obsession — they all have things to live for that they would rather not *die* for, because a dead mage can't (usually) pursue Mysteries. Most Awakened antagonists should be more willing to surrender or flee in the short-term than to fight to the death (or worse) and lose the opportunity to get the answers they want — and mages have a *lot* of ways to fuck off in the face of danger.

In addition, all mages are themselves potentially sources of Mysteries or avenues to pursuing them. You can encourage players to engage with the surrender rules against Awakened antagonists by giving Storyteller characters Obsessions that pertain to the cabal, and built-in story hooks related to the characters' own Obsessions. Antagonist mages should have lots of reasons not to want to just destroy the cabal, up to and including capturing them and poking them unpleasantly to see what Mysteries come out.

Consequences

In many cases, little can actually stop the players' cabal from waltzing into another mage's sanctum and doing whatever they please, particularly with the element of surprise on their

Optional Rule: Imago Familiarity

When characters *do* face off with other Awakened directly in a knockdown, drag-out magical battle, the Storyteller may use the following optional rule to reduce the likelihood that the whole scene will end in a single turn.

One act of pure will and Supernal force colliding directly with another gives a willworker a front-row seat to his enemy's Imago and techniques, allowing him to more effectively take them apart later. Whenever a mage loses a Clash of Wills against another mage — including when Counterspelling or being Counterspelled — while using Active Mage Sight, his player gains a cumulative +1 to further Clashes against the same foe within the same scene, to a maximum of +5.

side. They should keep in mind, however, that, dispatching an Awakened foe with a single spell — whether they murder him, shrink him to fit in a pocket, or banish him to the moon — is never the end of the story.

Consilium and Caucus

Pentacle Consilia use the Lex Magica to govern how mage conflicts may be legally conducted under their jurisdiction. Order Caucuses have their own rules they expect members to follow, in accordance with their varied philosophies and approaches to magic. These restrictions don't usually protect those who forgo the Consilium's rules, but many councils and Caucuses generally frown on killing or otherwise ruining another Awakened without good cause or due process. Of course, "good cause" easily includes ridding the world of dangerous Scelesti or stopping Seers from enacting an Exarch's awful commands, but terrorizing the Nameless for personal gain or warring with another Pentacle cabal without invoking the proper rights and following procedures is usually a violation of one or more Precepts.

The Duel Arcane is a sacred institution for a reason — it's the primary way the Pentacle and Seers both ensure that conflicts between members don't explode into catastrophic infighting. It's not just a matter of preserving civility and lives, either; winning a Duel Arcane literally makes one mage *more right* than the other, as the symbol of their victory is Truthfully written into the Supernal itself. Even mages who aren't part of any major Order often respect the ancient tradition of the Duel Arcane, knowing it's usually Wiser to preserve an enemy's life than to decrease the number of Awakened souls in the world — and knowing that, if they win, they'll have the right to make all kinds of demands.

Sleepers and Paradox

It's hard to have an all-out magical fight with Sleepers around, and the planet is full of them. Storytellers can use them judiciously to help deter the extremes of magical confrontation — characters understand the consequences of letting mystical battles get out of hand in front of Sleeper witnesses (or if they don't yet, they will the first time they try it). Sleepers increase the chances of causing Paradox, breaking point-induced freakouts attract attention even if the Sleepers later forget how it all happened, and Dissonance degrades long-term magical solutions to short-term problems.

This isn't to say you should randomly have Sleepers show up every time mages fight. If the characters make a solid plan to ensure an encounter happens in a private area, give them that win; but don't let them just assume that an antagonist's turf will be free of Sleepers. Remind them occasionally that they still live in the Fallen World; dramatic failures of all kinds are perfect opportunities to saddle characters with unexpected Sleeper witnesses. They should also remember that Scelesti are particularly keen on having those around to help ensure that a magical conflict will result in Paradox they can exploit.

Additionally, mages have to Reach more when they're unprepared, and a Scelestus enemy wants them to Reach as much as possible. This means she has incentive to be unpredictable, so lean into that.

Friends in Many Places

Antagonists exist in a context, and often belong to organizations or have cabals, colleagues, or minions just as the protagonists do. Mages especially like to belong to groups with magical resources they can use, and to have Sleepwalker friends to better manage their spell control. All of these are pressure points the cabal can exploit for their benefit, but they're also story hook dominoes the players knock over anytime they visit violence upon another mage, and resources the enemy can use to their advantage in a fight — especially when the cabal is more concerned with Wisdom and collateral damage than they are.

Some Awakened antagonists may not have friends, but instead stranger entities working for them. They may employ summoned spirits, Goetia, ghosts, Abyssal entities, or even Supernal beings to do their dirty work. Not only do these provide non-mage foes to pit the characters against, they can also be a hook for larger issues should the cabal take down their summoner: Setting a bound entity free by taking away its controller without a plan B can invite disaster in a hurry, and the cabal might not even be aware of the entity until they've already done the deed.

How to Use This Book

Night Horrors: Nameless and Accursed presents several distinct types of antagonistic mages, including Banishers, the Rapt, Scelesti, and Tremere. Chapters 2-5 begin with a detailed description of how each type fits into the setting, how its spellcasting and other rules differ from the usual Awakened template where necessary, and how to create them as Storyteller characters.

This book also provides a plethora of example Storyteller characters to use in your chronicles, whether you're running **Mage: The Awakening** or another game that take place in the larger **Chronicles of Darkness** setting.

Each sample antagonist comes with traits for use in-game and story hooks to get the players' characters involved in the Mysteries and threats the adversary represents. Feel free to mix and match these hooks or alter them to suit your chronicle as needed; everything in this book is usable either as-is, or as inspiration for something more unique to your table.

Note that where a character entry gives Legacy Attainments, it only lists those Attainments the character knows, not all five.

Chapter One: Rivals and Nemeses

This chapter details mages whose particular obsessions and goals bring them into conflict with the protagonists, whether they're ruthless Seers of the Throne opposing their Pentacle enemies or that Susceptor who just won't stop poking around the cabal's business. These Awakened chase Mysteries just like the players' characters do, but do their ends justify their means?

The Pentacle

Gwydion, the Spanner in the Works. This Acanthus Guardian of the Veil delights in meddling with the fates and prospects of others, but his meddling has a purpose...usually. Can anyone

prevent the dread future he's foreseen? Features Attainments of the House of Ariadne Legacy.

Keres, the Arrow's Poisoned Tip. The last surviving member of her cabal, the Thyrsus Adamantine Arrow Keres works as a secret assassin for her mentor, unaware of the depth of conspiracy surrounding her cabal's deaths. Features Attainments of the Perfected Adept Legacy.

Viridian, Master Thief. The Moros Viridian is a canny Artifact thief hailing from the Mysterium, auctioning off the spoils of her heists to mages of all stripes — even those who can't stand to be in the same room. Features Attainments of the Nighthawk Legacy.

Seers of the Throne

D'Éon, the Friendly Face of Panopticon. A consummate liar and master spy, the Mastigos Seer called D'Éon mires emself in layers of intrigue to carry out the Eye's agenda; infiltrating the local Consilium is eir newest favorite game.

Pangloss, Wolf in Sheep's Clothing. An unconventional servant of Paternoster, the Obrimos Pangloss peddles pop philosophy to expand the Ministry's influence, turning his attention to the Pentacle to fend off accusations of heresy. Features Attainments of the Tyrian Archon Legacy.

Phemonoe, Arbiter of Techno-Destiny. This ruthless Acanthus serves the Horologion Ministry, regulating Sleeper lives with divinatory scheduling software and rejecting the concept of free will by embracing perfect predestination. Features Attainments of the Chronologue Legacy.

Apostates and Nameless

Matatag, the Scapegoat. Betrayed into exile by his corrupt cabal and Order, this ex-Mystagogue Mastigos seeks those who were once his friends, though whether he'll want justice, revenge, or just answers when he finds them remains to be seen.

Ricardo, the Fool. Newly Awakened, the Acanthus Ricardo indulges his every whim and basks in his new power, never suspecting that a Seer of Mammon manipulates him behind the scenes. His lack of magical education makes him a Paradox disaster waiting to happen.

U.O.P.S., the Queen of the Rosy Cross. In a town where the major Orders are scarce, this Obrimos' Nameless Order performs dangerous experiments on Sleepwalkers and lords its influence over the local government. Features Attainments of the Shapers of the Invisible Legacy.

Chapter Two: Banishers

This chapter details sorcerers who make it a point of destroying magic or other mages. Some have come to hate magic and its practitioners due to trauma or delusional ideals; some join Legacies that consume or destroy magic for their own benefit; and some suffer dysfunctional Awakenings that drive them to lash out at anything Supernal.

The Minotaur, Gatekeeper of Truth. Doubt and paranoia clouded this Mastigos' Awakening, after he pushed himself through the Guardians' Labyrinth only to find himself disillusioned by the Truth. Now, he works to tear down Awakened society and all symbols of power.

Officer Kelly and the Dark Passenger. A homicide detective obsessed with the one that got away usurped the murderer's Awakening, and his soul rejected the call. His Harrowing Awakening led the Moros to develop a Shadow identity he believes is a separate entity.

Sophia, Scheming Antiques Dealer. Blinded by hubris and inducted into a Left-Handed Legacy by a mentor with sinister secrets, this Obrimos information broker destroys Artifacts in an attempt to save the Awakened from themselves. Features Attainments of the Logophage Legacy.

Chapter Three: The Rapt

This chapter details willworkers who lose all Wisdom and become Rapt. Enraptured mages have no control over their magic, and pursue a single Obsession — a Fault — beyond all reason, lest their Tulpa erupt from their Nimbuses and bleed unrestrained magic into the Fallen World.

Cleodora, Who Reaches for the Depths. This Mastigos Libertine's research into Scars and experiments trapping people in pocket dimensions pushed her into Rapture. Her cabal protects her secret for now, but wonders how long they can keep it up. Features Attainments of the Reality Stalker Legacy.

Manzazuu, the Reborn. The Silver Ladder unknowingly harbors a Moros serial killer who can't stop pursuing his Fault to recreate a violent vision he experienced that he believes is from a past life. Features Attainments of the Stone Scribe Legacy.

Spiral, the Primal Avatar. This mage-spirit hybrid monstrosity who was once an ordinary Thyrsus has lost much of her humanity, but that doesn't stop her from forcing people and spirits into unnatural fusions to satisfy her occult cravings.

Thalia, Storm of the Century. An Obrimos whose Awakening went horribly wrong merges with a storm-summoning Seraph when her Greater Tulpa erupts, allowing her brief respite from imprisonment in her own Oneiros and a chance to communicate with someone — *anyone*.

Chapter Four: Scelesti

This chapter details the Scelesti, mages addicted to deliberately calling upon the Abyss and its anti-symbols in their magic. They espouse nihilistic and destructive philosophies, some going so far as to corrupt their own Paths.

Enheduanna, Nasnas Eschatologist. This Thyrsus occult archaeologist masquerades as a Seer of Paternoster, but her true loyalty lies with an Annunaki she schemes to bring into the Fallen World with the help of her mystery cult, thanks to the corrupting influence of an anti-Artifact.

Purge, Rabashakim Saboteur. The rebellious young Obrimos Purge leads a column of Rabashakim Libertines who believe they can shortcut taking down the Exarchs and their Lie by refusing to use the tools of the enemy, turning to antinomian magic instead.

Rubedo, Doorkeeper of the Glass Chrysalis. An Abyssal Verge sends tendrils of its insidious song into Sleepers' dreams,

calling them to a ruinous transformation. A Moros Baal with cannibalistic urges guards it, expanding its influence one dreamer at a time. Features Attainments of the Keepers of the Chrysalis Legacy.

Slake, Spider Caught in His Own Web. This Silver Ladder Thyrsus obsessed with pushing Sleepers to Awaken slides down a slippery slope, failing to resist his addiction to befouled magic until he crosses an unforgivable line. Features Attainments of the Illumined Path Legacy.

Tanris, Shedu Wish-Granter. An Acanthus turned jaded by pyramid schemes and false promises found her own way to get ahead: a Left-Handed Legacy and Nameless Order that cons vulnerable people into feeding their hopes and ambitions to a Gulmoth. Features Attainments of the Hand of Destiny Legacy.

Zerzura, Singer of the Falling City. Beware the Qliphoth Zerzura, a Mastigos whose Obsession with finding a mystical ur-city drove him into the Abyss' arms. He has lost himself to the Falling City: the Verge where he sings a mysterious, unfinished song while he desperately seeks escape.

Chapter Five: Tremere

This chapter details the soulless Tremere. Both a Nameless Order and a type of mage with Hollow in place of Gnosis, these Reaper liches earn their place among their fellows with cunning and hard-won strength. They consume Legacies that work with souls, perverting them into Tremere Houses.

Anne-Marie, the Lion of Night. Originally a self-righteous dupe for a corrupt Guardian of the Veil, this Thracian Tremere took the fall for crimes she didn't commit and turned to the Seventh Watchtower for revenge. She harbors ambitions beyond her station, but can't quite bring herself to eliminate her former mentor.

Arpagus, Voracious Monster. Arpagus used to be a mage in the Tremere Order, but slept the mystical sleep of koimaomai too long and became a monstrous preta. It devours flesh and souls as a ravenous, person-shaped abomination, but is still capable of loneliness, in its own way.

Korazon, the Final Savior. After a brush with death during his Awakening and surviving immolation despite all odds, this messianic Tremere of House Nagaraja and his inhuman gang engage in a shadow war against the major Orders, while he studies the soul in pursuit of his grand ambition to enact a mass Hollowing.

Morana, the Folk Mercenary. An Awakened descendant of a long-lost Proximus dynasty connected to the original Keepers of Vedet, Morana inherited an ancient soul-eating sword and believes she's a true successor to a Legacy the Tremere devoured centuries ago; House Vedmak manipulates her for its own purposes.

Paphos, the Art Collector. Bereft of artistic talent of his own but seeking immortality through an ultimate *magnum opus*, Paphos joined House Seo Hel to *steal* talent from others, producing masterworks and offering patronage to promising creatives so he can work his parasitic magic.

Ziusudra, True Believer. This charismatic, newly Hollowed enfante works to prove himself worthy to join the Tremere Order, determined to live forever. Terrified of death and failure, he takes increasingly extreme measures to acquire the souls he needs — not just to survive, but to feel important and successful again.

Beats and Storyteller Characters

Characters in this book have Aspirations, and some of their systems give them Conditions, but the Storyteller doesn't earn Beats. Whenever a Storyteller character does something that would earn her a Beat, such as resolve a Condition or fulfill an Aspiration, she instead gains a Willpower point that vanishes at the end of the current scene if she doesn't use it.

Lexicon

Abyssal Ziggurat: an Abyssal anti-Watchtower, where Scelesti may undergo a Mystery Play and become *Nasnasi*. Associated with the *Dur-Abzu*.

Accursed: a nickname for *Scelesti*.

Amma Su: a *Dur-Abzu*; the Abyssal reflection of the Primal Wild.

annullity: an anti-demesne that suppresses effects governed by the Inferior Arcanum of the soul stone's creator or the Enraptured mage whose Tulpa generated the annullity.

Annunaki: a powerful Abyssal god and stillborn universe that produces Abyssal Verges and other, less powerful Abyssal entities.

antinomian sorcery: magic that a mage has deliberately tainted with Abyssal corruption. *Befouled spells* are a type of antinomian sorcery.

Ao Si: a *Dur-Abzu*; the Abyssal reflection of Arcadia.

Arallu: a *Dur-Abzu*; the Abyssal reflection of Stygia.

Aswadim: an archmaster who deliberately uses the Abyss in her magic.

Autarch: a third-initiation Scelestus who founds or joins an Abyssal Legacy; often conflated with *Shedim* by the major Orders.

Baal (pl. Baalim): a fourth-initiation Scelestus who has bargained with the Abyss for more power in the form of the *Elder Diadem*.

Banisher: a mage who hunts other Awakened or destroys magic, whether because he believes it's right or necessary, or because magic causes him suffering. See also *Harrowed Banisher*.

befouled spell: a spell deliberately tainted with Paradox, in a process called befouling. A type of antinomian sorcery.

choir: a group of Enraptured mages who share the same *Fault* and *Stress* track.

custos (pl. custodes): "guard;" the third rank of the *Tremere Order*. Subdivided into minor and major custodes.

Dread Power: a kind of supernatural ability *Horrors* possess, usually activated by spending Willpower.

Drugaskan: a *Dur-Abzu*; the Abyssal reflection of Pandemonium.

Dur-Abzu: a corrupted Abyssal reflection of a Supernal Realm, one of which every *Nasnas* experiences during his spiritual rebirth at an *Abyssal Ziggurat*, and which corrupts his Path in turn.

Dweller at the Threshold: a Scelesti term for a *Qliphoth*.

Elder Diadem: the term Scelesti use to refer to a Baal's superior abilities.

enfante: "child;" the first and least rank of the *Tremere Order*.

Enraptured mage: a mage who has lost all Wisdom and can no longer control her own magic, completely in thrall to an Obsession or compulsion, called a *Fault*. Enraptured mages are otherwise known as the Rapt.

Fault: an uncontrollable Obsession or compulsive behavior an Enraptured mage must pursue to avoid losing control of her magic and generating *Tulpa*.

Harrowed Banisher: a Banisher who retains Integrity instead of gaining Wisdom, thanks to a flawed metamorphic Awakening (called a Harrowing Awakening), and experiences magic as pain.

Hollow: a trait that replaces a *Tremere's* Gnosis, once she undergoes a Hollowing ritual in which she takes a spiritual journey to the *Seventh Watchtower*.

hollowstone: a variation on a soul stone that also acts as a soul jar. Comes in lesser and greater forms.

Horror: a system term referring to any antagonist who wields *Dread Powers*.

Joining: a trait that replaces a *Nasnas'* Wisdom, reflecting how closely attuned his soul is to the Abyss. Mages who reach Joining 10 become *Qliphoth*.

koimaomai: "spiritual sleep;" a mystical slumber that allows *Tremere* to persist without feeding for a long period of time, during which they appear dead.

magical savant ability: a unique ability each *Enraptured* mage possesses that makes her magic more powerful or flexible in a way related to her *Fault*.

Malefactor: an *Enraptured* mage whose *Fault* is a mundane action, rather than a magical one.

Nagaraja: a *Tremere House* dedicated to scourging and weaponizing desires.

Nasnas: a second-initiation Scelestus who has replaced Wisdom with Joining and corrupted his own Path at a Dur-Abzu.

preta: a soul- and flesh-eating monster ruled by hunger, created when a *Tremere* fails her Hollowing, reaches Wisdom 0, or loses all Hollow during koimaomai.

princeps: "foremost;" the highest rank of the *Tremere Order*.

Qliphoth: a fifth-initiation *Scelestus* who has reached Joining 10, hollowed out and trapped in an Abyssal Mystery Play in a Verge that has invaded his soul and can also trap others.

Rabashakim: a first-initiation *Scelestus* who befouls spells, but still possesses Wisdom.

Savant: an *Enraptured* mage whose *Fault* revolves around an occult Obsession. Not to be confused with a magical savant ability.

Seo Hel: a *Tremere House* dedicated to dissolving the barriers between soul and material substance.

Seventh Watchtower: a symbol for the unification of all subtle Arcana as the true Path of souls, according to the *Tremere*. Also Final Watchtower; personified as the Seventh Dragon.

Scelestus (pl. Scelesti): a mage who deliberately uses the Abyss in her magic.

Shedu (pl. Shedim): a third-initiation *Scelestus* who founds or joins an *Accursed* Nameless Order; often conflated with Autarchs by the major Orders.

Stress: a trait that measures how likely an *Enraptured* mage is to generate *Tulpa*; his Stress track fills whenever he doesn't or can't pursue his Fault.

***Suspire, The*:** the sacred text of the *Tremere*.

Tartarus: a *Dur-Abzu*; the Abyssal reflection of the Aether.

Thrax: a *Tremere House* dedicated to gaining power over souls by defeating foes in violent conflict.

Tremere: a soulless Reaper lich who has replaced his Gnosis with Hollow and believes in the *Seventh Watchtower*. Most belong to the *Tremere Order*.

Tremere House: a Legacy-like initiation and organization within the *Tremere Order*, created by stealing and consuming Legacies dealing with souls.

Tremere Order: a Nameless Order made up of Tremere mages.

Tulpa: an uncontrolled manifestation of an *Enraptured* mage's magic that spills out of her Nimbus when she goes too long without pursuing her *Fault*. Comes in Lesser and Greater forms.

Vedmak: a *Tremere House* of witchkeepers dedicated to spiritually inhabiting souls.

venator: "hunter;" the second rank of the *Tremere Order*.

Walker: an *Enraptured* mage who has no Wisdom due to an arcane mishap or flawed Awakening, trapped in his Oneiros and inhabiting his own *Tulpa* when they erupt.

They had dragged Alexander from his bed and into the night. Now, they carried him through the halls of their sanctum. They paralyzed his body with magic, and their loud chants overpowered his muffled cries for help. Though they were all cloaked and masked, he recognized a few of their voices. He knew Wyatt was one of them; he was the one who approached the cabal in the first place about "where they stood in the county." Hearing Mrs. Green was the biggest surprise — he hadn't even realized she was Awakened. She must have been the one who burst into his room first; she lived only a few doors down from him.

The cloaked figures gently placed him on an altar, stood around him in a circle, and waited.

Crutchfield has to know by now, he thought to himself. *They broke her ward. She's on her way. She has to be.*

The circle parted, and a woman walked to the altar. She laid her hands on his face. Alexander could see the excitement in her eyes. A shock went through him, and he could speak.

"Get me out of here," he said, "before someone gets hurt."

"No one is getting hurt." Her voice was aged and sincere. "The Order of the Rose has been looking for someone like you, Alex."

"Sorry to let you down, but you've got the wrong guy." He laughed. "I can see magic, but I can't do it. You'd want my friends. They're gonna be here soon, and they're going to *rain down hell* all over you if you don't let me go."

The woman nodded. The circle grew tighter.

"Your friends," she said, "have told you a lot of lies, I'm sure. Have many times have they told you about Oracles, Alex? We've traveled all the known realms, and we've never seen them."

She drew a sword from her cloak, and placed the tip on Alexander's chest. He inhaled sharply.

"But we have seen a man of character. A man of great potential, held back by those who claim they love him."

Alexander willed his body to move, to overcome the spell. His limbs refused to obey. The woman motioned for a member of the circle to approach the altar. One of them, the one he was sure was Mrs. Green, came forward with an old tome in her arms.

Outside the building, shots rang out. Some of the circle turned toward the noise.

"Don't get distracted!" The woman gestured for them to look at her. "The guards will handle them."

"I'm in here!" Alexander yelled. "Crutchfiel —"

The woman waved her free hand over Alexander, and he was silent again. Mrs. Green chanted words from the book, and the rest of the circle followed suit. The sword in the woman's hand glowed with a pale red color as she raised it.

"This is the 56th attempt to conceive the Crown," she said. "May it be the last."

Chapter One: Rivals and Nemeses

"If you are different from the rest of the flock, they bite you."
— Vincent O'Sullivan

Desire breeds conflict, and a desire to *know* drives all mages. They pursue their obsessions with fervor, and that makes enemies. Rivalries and grudges are often part and parcel of the Awakened experience. After spending so long Sleeping, the idea of letting anyone or anything stand in the way of Truth feels untenable, even if the obstacle is a fellow willworker.

Pentacle mages know this temptation well. Some use decorum and custom to maneuver their detractors into submission, or see their colleagues as nothing but stepping stones to power. Some test the edge of what the Pentacle considers Left-Handed, coming close to the line but never quite crossing over. Sometimes, enmity comes from simpler origins: squabbles over territory, differences in opinion over what's Wise, or who gets to study a Mystery first. Feuds spanning decades arise from a misunderstanding over how an Artifact works.

Larger, older Consilia are often just as defined by the long-standing antagonisms of their cabals and factions as by their history and mystical treasures. Their Lex Magica lay out contingencies to manage these conflicts so they don't explode disastrously; they use shadow wars and the Duel Arcane as pressure valves. But these can't solve everything, and may end up just sweeping the problems under the rug.

Seer Ministries deal with the same issues. Because they see the universe as a rigid hierarchy to be mastered, they are also primed to do whatever's necessary to increase their station, even if it means leaving their allies to ruin. Rolling over and accepting a lesser place would make them no better than Sleepers, in their minds. Some Seers push their luck, trying to shortcut their way into the Exarchs' good graces. Any one of these factors can make a Pylon just as dangerous to itself as it is to Pentacle cabals.

Apostates and the Nameless rarely face the kinds of complex political rivalries their counterparts do, but they are no less driven or dangerous. Some were cast out from their Orders, accused of heinous crimes committed in their quest for knowledge, and continue their dark work in exile. Many practice their Art alone and unguided. Without intervention, they run the risk of hurting not only themselves, but countless others.

Though Nameless Orders don't have the scope or resources of the major ones, their local power can be just as great. Their smaller scale and more focused goals make them subtler, more insidious opponents — the precision blade to the Pentacle's hammer. History proves the futility of underestimating them.

The Pentacle

Two mages can belong to the same Order, believe in the same ideals, work side by side, and still come to blows. The kinds of professional slights a Pentacle cabal can suffer — or perceive — from another stray into much more egregious territory than those even the most powerful and ruthless Sleepers could devise.

Gwydion
The Spanner in the Works

"Oh dear, it looks like everything's falling apart. Whatever will you do?"

Background

It's not that Sam's upbringing was overly regimented, or that his work life was all-consuming. It's not that his relationships stifled him, or his family demanded too much. He got along fine with his wife. Their two kids did fine in school.

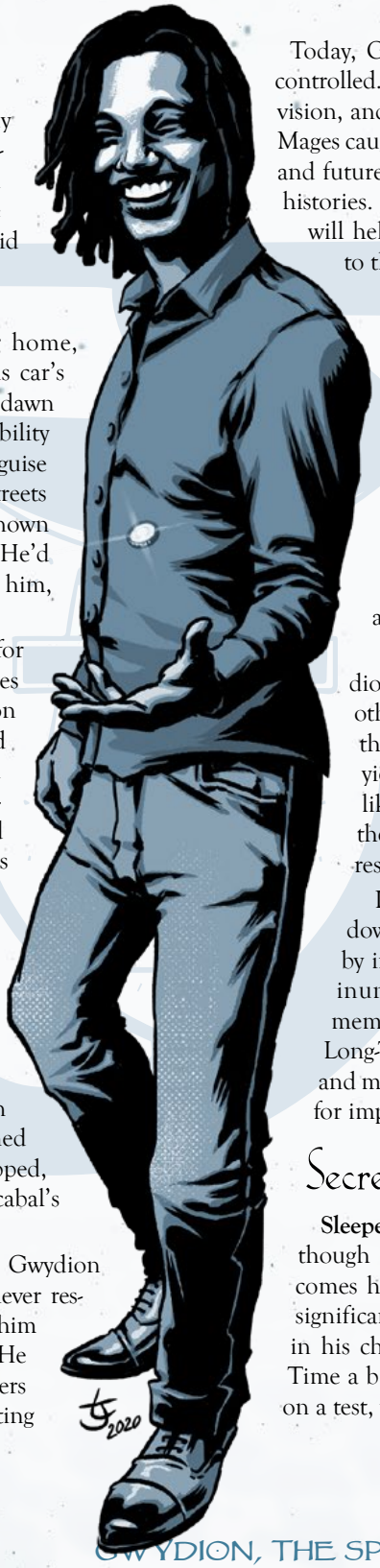
Turns out, *fine* was so damned *boring.*

One June evening, rather than heading home, he kept driving. He flipped the coins in his car's cupholder to decide which turns to take. As dawn tinged the suburban streets, he saw how possibility and probability spooled out before him in the guise of cul-de-sacs and four-way stops, and all the streets leading out of town. Gwydion — formerly known as Sam Drayton — intended to walk them all. He'd go wherever back roads and busy highways led him, and never be bored again.

The newly Awakened Acanthus roamed for nearly a year, interfering with strangers' fates and timelines in one town before moving on to the next. Sowing chaos was fun. It changed things up, for him and for his targets. Gwydion considered himself a benevolent trickster, jostling Sleepers out of their ruts. He was wily and untouchable, dancing away from consequences for as long as he could.

Until those consequences caught up to him. While a cabal of Guardians of the Veil helped him untangle the knot he'd made out of a neighborhood's fates, Gwydion witnessed an event in his own future, its date nebulous and its details hazy thanks to all the Paradox he'd contained. He saw his own doom and others' in a catastrophe that spanned a city. The threads leading up to that day snapped, and though he spent weeks recovering in the cabal's sanctum, he couldn't retrace them.

Though he's an uneasy fit for the Order, Gwydion joined the Guardians. The Esoteric Tenets never resonated with him, but his experience taught him magic is dangerous when wielded irresponsibly. He quickly discovered he excelled at nudging Sleepers toward or away from the Labyrinth and directing his colleagues toward Awakening candidates.



Today, Gwydion still sows chaos, though it's more controlled. Sometimes he gets flashes from his disastrous vision, and knows someone in his vicinity is tied to it. Mages caught in his maelstrom find their pasts jumbled and futures uncertain as Gwydion roots through their histories. He tweaks their destinies in ways he thinks will help change that terrible day, and leaves it up to the affected willworkers to clean up the mess.

Description

Gwydion is a black man in his mid-30s. He's just baby-faced enough that people read him as younger and trust him more than they ought to. He's friendly and warm, buying his victim a beer even as he's tearing apart her timeline. He favors jeans and button-down shirts, outfits that blend in whether he's in a one-stoplight town or a city that never sleeps.

Though his meddling has a purpose, Gwydion also enjoys the confusion his actions cause other mages. He's fascinated to see how they fix things, if they can, and whether their responses yield any changes in the future he glimpsed. He likes using his targets' own Obsessions against them, putting Mysteries in their paths they can't resist, then closing the trap on them.

In Gwydion's Immediate Nimbus, time slows down, so the victims see every second ticking by in excruciating detail. His Signature Nimbus inundates witnesses with their embarrassing memories, replayed in a slow-motion loop. His Long-Term Nimbus results in missed appointments and missed buses, making people just a hair too late for important engagements.

Secrets

Sleeper Ties: Gwydion hasn't abandoned his family, though he lets other Awakened believe he has. He comes home for birthdays, anniversaries, and other significant family occasions, and takes great interest in his children's activities. If he's nudged Fate and Time a bit to help them win the big game or do well on a test, what of it?

Story Hooks

- Gwydion targets the cabal for his experiments after one of their accomplishments attracts his attention. They remember events others insist never happened, know people who don't know them and vice versa, and deal with other ripple effects of the changes Gwydion has made to their histories.
- Years ago, Gwydion passed through the cabal's town. Though the Guardians insisted they caught all of his changes, one subtle one has lain dormant until now, when the effect goes off in a spectacular way. The Sleepers are safe, but the cabal lands somewhere dangerous: perhaps an Abyssal Verge, or in the belly of an Astral whale.
- A cabal member experiences a dream or vision that points to the same hazy future Gwydion dreads, coming soon; the only clear detail is Gwydion's presence, though in what capacity they don't know. They only know he's involved, and might hold the key to preventing it — whether that means working with him, or getting rid of him.

Rumors

The torn-out newspaper clipping reeks of Time magic. The paper's masthead is missing, and the edition's date is partially obscured. A blurry picture of Gwydion helping a young woman out of a collapsed building accompanies the article.

January 14, 202–

Springfield

Federal disaster response teams are still trying to find an explanation for last Monday's tragic events. While rescue workers continue searching for individuals trapped in the rubble, investigators try to make sense of eyewitness reports.

"The sky tore open," said Emma Johansen, 53. "It was like the devil himself crawled up out of hell," said Carl Whitmark, 22.

Gwydion's not sure how much of his vision's apocalyptic imagery was real, and how much was the Supernal World sending a symbolic warning. He's fairly certain an Annunaki intends to lay waste to as much of the world as it can, though he's never been able to pinpoint any details.

"Gwydion's name came up at the Caucus meeting. I didn't even think he was still part of the Order, after his shenanigans fucked up an op. Chewed out by the Epopt, that's never good. I'm not sure why they haven't just booted him out by now. I bet he's got some dirt on somebody important."

When it comes down to pursuing his Obsessions versus doing the Order's bidding, Gwydion chooses his own agenda nearly every time. He's landed himself on various Guardians' shit lists over the years, and spent time atoning for his missteps. Some Caucuses adopt an attitude of "Nice to see you, sorry you can't stay" when he comes to town, unless they need him for a mission. Gwydion's aware of this, and resents it. He has no blackmail fodder keeping him in the Order's good graces, though; if he causes enough trouble for too many Caucuses, they just *might* show him the door.

"Sympathies, friend. I know another cabal who went through what you're dealing with. The Hereafter pissed off Gwydion a few years back, and they're still *putting things back to rights. I doubt they'd be too sad if something bad happened to him. I'll dig up their number for you, but uh. Leave my name out of it, okay? I don't want Gwydion getting wind of me."*

This is mostly true, except the Hereafter never did anything to Gwydion; their story just intrigued him, and he decided to mess with it. He went several steps too far, changing their histories so their initial meeting never happened. He wanted to see if they'd come together another way. They did, but not before one of their original members died. Now they're left with hazy memories of a friendship that never was, and a massive grudge against Gwydion.

Path: Acanthus
Order: Guardians of the Veil
Legacy: House of Ariadne
Virtue: Persistent (Masque: Humble)
Vice: Impulsive (Masque: Greedy)
Obsessions: Decipher the vision of his demise; Learn how Destiny chooses its victims
Aspirations: Forge a friendship unmarred by his fate
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics (History) 4, Computer 2, Investigation 2, Medicine (First Aid) 2, Occult 2
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Rumors) 3, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Between the Ticks; Destiny 2; High Speech; Language (Spanish); Masque 1; Occultation 3; Order Status (Guardians of the Veil) 1; Resources 2
Wisdom: 7
Willpower: 4
Initiative: 5
Defense: 4
Armor: 0/0
Speed: 9
Health: 7
Gnosis: 3
Mana/per Turn: 12/3
Nimbus Tilt: Grants +2 to Initiative rolls.

House of Ariadne

(Acanthus, Seers of the Throne, Guardians of the Veil; Time)

The Metropolitans believe the myth of Ariadne, Theseus, and the Minotaur in the labyrinth is a metaphor for finding Supernal enlightenment in the heart of the urban jungle. With so many threads of Time and Fate tangling together, the city is a whole that far exceeds any one of its myriad parts. They traverse every nook and cranny of the city's streets and secret corners to divine its past and future, investigate its omens to solve its Mysteries, and follow the threads that connect every piece of it to a higher Truth.

Yantras: casting in a crowded place (+1); successfully using Contacts, Allies, or Streetwise to gain information related to the spell (+1, or +2 if rolled); a famous landmark associated with the city (+1); walking Ariadne's thread (+1 per hour walked, maximum +3).

Oblations: discovering or exploring something in the city you've never seen before; watching a sunrise/sunset from a place that overlooks the city; visiting a tourist attraction; attending a private or elite event.

First Attainment: Attune

Prerequisites: Initiation (Time 2, Fate 1, Streetwise 2)

The mage spends the ritual preparation of this Attainment walking through a city at random, tracing the maze of its streets for at least a few hours. Metropolitans call this process "walking Ariadne's thread."

Once complete, this Attainment emulates the Time 1 spell "Postcognition" (**Mage**, p. 187) regarding the history of the city, something or someone within it, or the mage himself, with regard to a valid subject he chooses. The mage may seek a particular kind of moment to view, such as "the last time someone died in this alley" or "the day this building first opened its doors," but the Storyteller decides the precise moment he sees, as the city's Fate calls his attention to the most relevant one for his (and its) needs. This Attainment is Withstood by temporal sympathy, and assigns its fixed Reach to sensory range.

Once per scene, as long as the mage has previously Attuned to the city he's currently in, the Storyteller may offer the player an Arcane Beat for the character to receive this Attainment's benefits without walking the thread or deliberately activating it, as the city reaches out to make a request or express a need through vague omens and symbols. If the player accepts, he must follow up on the vision within that scene to gain the Arcane Beat.

Subsequent Attainments require the mage to have previously Attuned at least once to the city where he uses them; he may Attune to any city. This Legacy's Attainments only function in urban environs, though a small city is just as urban as a sprawling metropolis for these purposes; the legal definition of a place as a "city" or "town" is less important than the way the inhabitants think of the place. The mage enjoys a +1 equipment bonus to Social rolls in a city to which he's previously Attuned (+0 in the suburbs), but suffers a −1 to the same in rural environments or wilderness.

Optional: Space 1

When the Metropolitan views the past with this Attainment, he also learns one of the subject's sympathetic connections per level of the Attainment's Potency, as the Space 1 spell "Correspondence" (**Mage**, p. 172), as long as that connection was within the city at the viewed time or is now.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A half-dollar from the cupholder in his car at his Awakening.

Arcana: Fate 3, Space 1, Spirit 2, Time 4

Attainments: Counterspell (Fate, Space, Spirit, Time); Conditional Duration; Mage Armor (Fate, Spirit, Time); Spirit Eyes; Targeted Summoning (Fate, Time); Temporal Sympathy; Time in a Bottle; House of Ariadne — Attune

Praxes: Divination (Time 1); Grave Misfortune (Fate 3); Serendipity (Fate 1)

Rotes: Choose the Thread (Time 2, Subterfuge); Hung Spell (Time 2, Occult); Shifting Sands (Time 3, Survival)

Rote Skills: Investigation, Stealth, Subterfuge

Keres
The Arrow's Poisoned Tip

"Don't bother bargaining. You can't match my employer's offer."

Background

The military gave Sergeant Jillian Molina everything she'd lacked growing up: steady meals and shelter, reliable income, a community where she felt welcome. She excelled as a skilled marksman and joined Special Forces, participating in ambushes and raids against politically sensitive targets. The army described her role using veiled euphemisms, but Jillian was content to call herself exactly what she was: a damned good assassin.

She Awakened in a hail of gunfire during a botched mission: bad intel, enemies waiting to ambush the ambushers, half her company dead. She got the others out, led by a spirit only she could see. The Singing Stone echoed the cadence she chanted to keep herself focused, only its rhymes spoke new Truths. Afterward, the government swept the entire affair under the rug. Jillian never cared about recognition for her heroic actions, but having her achievements so easily erased made her feel like a ghost.

When she left the service, the Adamantine Arrow was waiting. Keres' new missions mirrored the ones she'd carried out as a Sleeper, but now she hunted Rapt and Reapers in the material world and stalked spirits in the Shadow with her cabal, the Rushing Tide. They all had military backgrounds, dedicated to defending Sleepers as they'd defended their countries. The Tide's success rate made them a sought-after strike force. They became the family Keres never had, the brothers and sisters she never even realized she'd wanted.

Keres' Arrow mentor, the shaman Adder, sometimes pointed her at Pentacle targets. She undertook those assignments alone, giving the Tide the same plausible deniability the army used to employ. Her solo missions weren't an issue — everyone in the cabal had their secrets, and no one dug too deeply when someone went quiet for a few days, as long as they came home in one piece.

Keres was out on one such job when the Rushing Tide received an emergency summons. They left her only a cursory note: *Off neutralizing a target in the Shadow. Probably be home before you are.* Only, they never came home at all. Keres blames herself — if she'd been with them, maybe they'd have survived. Now she's bent on vengeance, willing to tear the material and spirit worlds apart to achieve it, but good leads prove scarce. No one's come forward claiming they hired the Tide to take out the spirit, and the realm Keres tracked her friends to is empty except for their deaths' echoes. Someone out there knows something, she's sure. She just has to find them.

First, she'll make them talk. Then she'll make them pay.

She still participates in Adamantine Arrow operations, and carries out Adder's assignments. She also quietly advertises as a freelance assassin on the side, dedicating the resources from those jobs to help her search for whoever destroyed the Rushing Tide.

Description

Keres is a solidly built white woman in her late 30s. She's just shy of average height, but her straight-backed military posture adds the illusion of extra inches to her stature. She keeps her dark blonde hair cut short; when the ends touch her collar, it's time for a trim. Keres favors functional clothing, preferring durability and a minimum number of pockets over aesthetics.

On a job, Keres is all business, and rarely veers from her course. She plans her moves carefully, studying her target for days or weeks. Dropping her guard invites fatal mistakes, and she has little patience for people who fuck off when they should be focusing. Off-duty, however, Keres is quick to laugh. She's particularly fond of so-called dad jokes, and has an arsenal of awful puns.

Keres' Immediate Nimbus makes bystanders quail with the sudden fear of a predator stalking close by. Her Signature Nim-

Story Hooks

- A member of the cabal ends up on Keres' hit list. They can go toe-to-toe with her, but delving into her cabalmates' deaths or her mentor's extracurricular activities offers other possible resolutions.
- Messages from the Deep Shadow reach a cabalmate — a cry for help from a member of the Rushing Tide who survived the battle with Niradel. Keres enlists the cabal's aid in rescuing her friend, though allying with her may put them in danger not only from Niradel, but also from whoever sent the Tide to their deaths.
- Keres is revealed as the murderer of several prominent Pentacle mages. The Consilium calls for her capture and tasks the cabal with bringing her in, dead or alive. Adder approaches them as well, offering them incentives to help her escape instead.

bus carries the scent of blood on the air and the sense of relief that smaller prey went down instead. Her Long-Term Nimbus brings increased activity from bloody-minded spirits, especially those born of violence.

Secrets

Calculated Survival: Keres' absence on the day her cabal died was no accident. Adder arranged for her to be off on one of his missions. He knows who sent the Rushing Tide to their deaths, and why, and dreads Keres ever finding out. Some of Adder's rivals believe *he's* responsible: the cabal had information that might lead the Consilium to censure him — or worse.

Rumors

"This guy came around today, flashing a picture that looked a lot like Keres. I told him I didn't recognize her, but I don't think he believed me. He had an accent I couldn't place, and I probably wasn't supposed to notice the dude in the fancy town car watching us both."

During her Sleeper career, Sgt. Molina left a long swath of bodies behind her. Though she was never captured, and the military erased evidence to the best of its ability, some of the foreign governments and other agencies her battalion attacked have uncovered her identity. She's on several wanted lists, with hefty rewards for her capture.

"Not to speak ill of the dead, but the Rushing Tide got word about some spirit wreaking havoc and went after it so they could hog the glory. No research, no consulting people who actually dealt with it. Niradel's a nasty entity, but it mostly keeps to itself. They poked a bear and paid for it, and now it's angry and it'll come for the rest of us next."

The Rushing Tide weren't amateurs. Elitist, maybe, and definitely cocky, but professional. They could have defeated the nearly-forgotten god Niradel had it been alone, but whoever sent them after Niradel also provided it with reinforcements that tipped the scales. It *is* angry, but it doesn't want random victims; it wants those who will make sure its name isn't forgotten anymore.

"Of course the police buy that it was an accident, but there's no way that's true. The Sentinel drove getaway cars before he Awakened; he knew how to handle slick roads. Look at the scorch marks. They spell out the Hierarch's name in High Speech. This death is a warning."

How Keres dispatches her victims depends mostly on her employer's specifications. Left to her own devices, she opts for quick and natural-seeming. The less of a trail she can leave, the better. However, should the person who hired her want to send a message to other foes, or glean information from their rivals, Keres' training lets her get creative.

Path: Thyrsus
Order: Adamantine Arrow
Legacy: Perfected Adepts
Virtue: Loyal
Vice: Stubborn
Obsessions: The forgotten god Niradel; Magical combat
Aspirations: Learn who set up the Rushing Tide; Rise within the Arrow's ranks
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Investigation (Stakeouts) 2, Occult 1, Politics 1

Perfected Adepts

(Obrimos, Adamantine Arrow; Life)

A staple among mages of the Adamantine Arrow, this Legacy teaches transcendence through perfecting physical form and mental discipline. They use ascetic techniques and magic to harmonize body, mind, and soul into a whole that is ever more itself, and ever more perfect.

Yantras: casting in a place of physical training, such as a gym, dojo, or running track (+1); swearing an oath of service or performing another genuine act of humility (+1); fasting for at least a day (+2); discarding something of value or a vanity (+1-3 depending on significance).

Oblations: drilling or training in combat techniques, including katas, sword forms, sparring, punching bag work, etc.; feats of endurance, such as running a marathon or long exposure to the elements; successfully meditating (**Mage**, p. 208) for an least an hour.

First Attainment: Vital Force

Prerequisites: Initiation (Life 2, Prime 1, Athletics 2)

The mage gains a heightened awareness of the life force and energy within all living things. This Attainment emulates the Life 1 spell "Analyze Life" (**Mage**, p. 148) combined with the Prime 1 spell "Supernal Vision" (**Mage**, p. 166). The Paragon may only use this Attainment to study living beings. If she successfully meditates for at least 30 minutes immediately before using this Attainment, her player gains +3 to a number of Focused Mage Sight rolls using Life equal to the Attainment's Potency, before the end of the scene.

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Firearms (Rifles) 4, Larceny 1, Stealth (Hiding in Plain Sight) 4, Survival 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Adamant Hand (Firearms); Contacts (Translators); Contacts (U.S. Army Special Forces); Fame 1; High Speech; Mentor 2; Order Status (Adamantine Arrow) 2; Professional Training (Soldier) 5; Resources 2

Wisdom: 7

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Armor: 1/3 (Kevlar vest)

Speed: 12

Health: 7

Gnosis: 3

Mana/per Turn: 12/3

Nimbus Tilt: Imposes –2 to Resolve or Composure rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Her army-issue utility knife.

Arcana: Death 1, Life 4, Spirit 3

Attainments: Body Autonomy; Counterspell (Death, Life, Spirit); Mage Armor (Life, Spirit); Improved Pattern Restoration; Spirit Eyes; Targeted Summoning (Life, Spirit); Perfected Adepts — Vital Force

Praxes: Body Control (Life 2); Howl From Beyond (Spirit 3); Mutable Mask (Life 2)

Rotes: Degrading the Form (Life 3, Survival)

Rote Skills: Athletics, Intimidation, Medicine

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice
Rifle	4L	200/400/800	5+1	–5	8
Unarmed	0B	Melee	n/a	–0	6

Notes: Keres' Asset Skills for Professional Training are Firearms, Stealth, and Survival.

Viridian, Master Thief

"This piece was made by the famed warlock Cantor, and was thought lost during the War of the Roses. But I coaxed it out of its hiding spot. Shall we start the bidding at $200,000?"

Background

The woman once known as Diya Shah amassed an impressive gallery of stolen art and too many warrants to count over the first 30 years of her life. The last time she used that identity was nearly 50 years ago, when she Awakened. She figures the old warrants will be canceled soon, as Sleeper law enforcement decides she's probably dropped dead.

She hasn't, of course. Too many Artifacts to get her hands on. Too many auctions to host.

The Mystagogue thrives on adventure and Mystery, and collects Artifacts. She's explored ruins from the Time Before and beaten Guardians to treasure-filled caches. She's planned elaborate heists to gain entry to a Pylon's Nexus, and swiped Grimoires on a whim. Over the decades, she's cultivated rivalries with a dozen formidable willworkers.

Viridian's extensive studies make her an expert on the preservation and restoration of magical objects, a skill that earns her admittance to sancta from which she'd normally be barred. Smart mages keep her under constant surveillance, and quadruple-check their inventory when she's gone.

Viridian believes knowledge has a price, but insists on setting it herself—much to the Curators' consternation. She's loyal enough to keep the more dangerous Artifacts in the Pentacle's hands, but she counts Seers of the Throne and some Left-Handed mages among her clients.

The Guardians repeatedly call for shutting down Viridian's auctions. Whenever her thievery causes friction with the local Consilium, Mysterium leaders express disappointment and issue sternly worded missives condemning her reckless actions. Unofficially, however, they're often the same mages placing bids and asking whether she might be able to procure a certain item.

Early in her career, Viridian preferred to work solo. As her notoriety grew and other mages tried intercepting her spoils, she chose half a dozen Awakened and two Sleepwalkers to accompany and protect her, manage her administrative affairs, and stand guard in her well-warded sanctum. They're extremely loyal, and are the founding members of her Legacy, the Nighthawks.

Description

Viridian is an Indian woman in her 80s, though she appears closer to 60. Her legendary charm coaxes customers into disclosing information they'd intended to hide. Well before negotiations begin, Viridian knows their bank account balances and has estimates on other assets. She likes when clients surprise her with unexpected trade proposals, though, like long-lost Artifacts, information about unexplored ruins, or Keys to open remote Irises.

When an Artifact poses a specific danger, or could harm Pentacle efforts, Viridian entertains arguments and counteroffers to keep it off the market or tip her auction in favor of a particular bidder.

Viridian's Immediate Nimbus flares with color, reminding bystanders of their dreams' bright possibilities. The Signature she leaves behind scatters those same colors about like confetti, bearing the disappointment of an opportunity passed by. In the Long-Term, temptations grow more insistent, making it hard for people to ignore the things they're trying to give up.

Secrets

Dreadful Mistake: Several years ago, Viridian sold a potent Artifact to a mage whom she later learned was Scelesti. She obscured what tracks she'd left when seeking it out and buried all evidence of the trade. Since then, she's made attempts to reacquire the item, but thus far they've failed. The Nasnas fell off the map entirely in recent months, leaving Viridian worried he'll deploy the Artifact's devastating effects soon.

Rumors

"You're cordially invited to attend the Viridian Foundation's annual gala and auction. Please join us for an evening of art, music, and wine under the stars. The favor of a reply is requested, at which time we'll provide the date and location."

Story Hooks

- The cabal's superiors acquire invites to Viridian's yearly auction, and send the group in their stead to retrieve a particular Artifact. Unfortunately, it's not as simple as being the highest bidder: a Seer Pylon has their sights on the same prize, and they don't intend to pay for it.
- Viridian steals an Artifact in the cabal's possession. She's already arranged a buyer — a mage who rarely surfaces, and who's nigh impossible to track. Once the Artifact leaves Viridian's hands, it's as good as gone without drastic measures.
- An expedition unearths a controversial Grimoire that could offer insights into a cabalmate's Obsessions. The Guardians deem it too dangerous and plan to lock it away, but Viridian wants it. She approaches the cabal with an offer: help her steal it and she'll loan it out until the cabalmate solves her Mystery.

Viridian hosts several small auctions throughout the year, but she saves her biggest finds for her annual gala. Mages who score a coveted invitation understand they may mingle with their rivals and bid against their enemies. Viridian expects guests to uphold a truce for the evening. She immediately ejects anyone who breaks it, and blacklists them from future auctions. Some attendees send proxies in their stead, or sell their spot to other mages. Viridian allows it, as long as the sellers vouch for the new guests and they pass her team's vetting.

"This one time, the Arrow was transporting an Artifact, the Sapphire Burden. They drilled for weeks, laid down extra warding spells, took every magical precaution you could imagine. Everyone involved was prematurely smug about success, even though Viridian had been making noise about wanting the Burden for years. *Day comes. No sign of her. Plan goes off without a hitch. But when they get to its final destination and look inside the locked box it was in, whoops! Gone! She must be a secret master of Space or something."*

Viridian doesn't always rely on magic to get the job done. Sometimes mundane tactics work best: observe patrol patterns, bribe someone on the inside, exploit weaknesses in the chain of custody. Sorcerers — including many of her own Mysterium colleagues — dismiss Sleeper methods to their folly. The same techniques that made her one of the most wanted art thieves serve her well now.

"Yeah, if Viridian can fuck over the Guardians, she does. Way I heard it, she asked to borrow an Artifact they had so she could rescue a close friend of hers. Some Warlock who got himself in a heap of trouble. Guardians said no. Guy bites it, Viridian swears eternal revenge. Some people say it was her son who died."

For nearly a decade, Viridian blamed her friend Danver's death on the Guardians' refusal to lend her the Eye of Neish. As the years passed, she's realized no Artifact or Grimoire would have saved him, and (though she'll never admit it out loud) the Guardians made the right call. Though Danver was young enough to have been her son, and Viridian often considered him akin to one, she has no children of her own.

Path: Moros
Order: Mysterium
Legacy: Nighthawks
Virtue: Restrained
Vice: Proud
Obsessions: Ruins from the Time Before; Magical item restoration
Aspirations: Discover and acquire coveted mystical valuables, and use them to get richer
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Computer 1, Investigation (Financial Records) 3, Occult (Artifacts) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Firearms 1, Larceny (Lockpicking) 4, Stealth 3, Survival 1
Social Skills: Persuasion 4, Socialize 5, Streetwise (Black Market) 3, Subterfuge (Fast Talk) 4
Merits: Contacts (Fences); Contacts (Museums); Egregore 3; Fame 2; Fast-Talking 3 (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 51); High Speech; Order Status (Mysterium) 3; Professional Training (Criminal) 5; Resources 4; Retainer 3; Safe Place 5; Sanctum 5; Trained Observer 3
Wisdom: 6
Willpower: 6
Initiative: 6
Defense: 4

Nighthawks

(Moros, Mysterium; Prime)

Tomb robbers, archaeomancers, and master thieves, the Nighthawks are a Legacy of Mystagogues who believe Artifacts and other mystical objects that lie dormant for too long without active study or use lose Supernal resonance and hasten Pancryptia. As potent as treasures from the Time Before are now, the Nighthawks argue they once were much more so. This Legacy works to unearth and circulate as many old Grimoires and Artifacts as possible, to keep the magic alive.

Yantras: lockpicks and other thieving tools (+1); stealing or unearthing something relevant to the spell (+2); successfully going unnoticed by someone nearby (+1, or +2 if unnoticed by another mage or supernatural being); selling, trading, or giving away an object of mystical power with the expectation of active use (+1).

Oblations: carefully studying or excavating sites and objects from the distant past; engaging in a heist, robbery, or other clandestine effort when discovery is a real threat; actively using an Artifact or other mystical object for at least an hour; attending or giving a lecture, lesson, or presentation about something ancient (or just well-hidden) and newly discovered.

First Attainment: Unburied Treasure

Prerequisites: Initiation (Matter 1, Prime 2, Larceny 2, Academics or Occult 1, Order Status (Mysterium) 1)

The Nighthawk senses the presence of objects that hold Supernal magic. This Attainment emulates the Matter 1 spell "Detect Substance" (**Mage**, p. 154) but the mage's options for types of items to locate are: Artifacts, Imbued Items, Grimoires, Daimonomika, soul stones, Tass, or objects of pure Mana created by spells like "Platonic Form" (**Mage**, p. 169). For the duration, the Nighthawk gains bonus dice equal to the Attainment's Potency to any Clash of Wills when trying to detect or find instances of the chosen object type hidden with magic (Supernal or otherwise).

Second Attainment: Under Cover of Night

Prerequisites: Larceny 3

A Nighthawk's work is subtle and secret, extracting wonders from under the noses of ancient guardians, jealous sorcerers, and hostile powers. This spell emulates the Prime 2 spell "Supernal Veil" (**Mage**, p. 168), but the only valid subjects are the mage herself, her own magic, and objects she maintains physical contact with.

Optional: Death 2

The subject is also considered to be under the effects of the spell "Suppress Aura" (**Mage**, p. 129).

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Gnosis: 5

Mana/per Turn: 15/5

Nimbus Tilt: Grants +2 and 8-again to Persuasion rolls, but −1 to Composure rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A diamond signet ring; the sigils engraved inside the band are nearly worn smooth.

Arcana: Death 3, Life 4, Matter 5, Prime 3

Attainments: Body Autonomy; Counterspell (Death, Life, Matter, Prime); Create Rote (Matter); Durability Control; Eyes of the Dead; Improved Pattern Restoration; Mage Armor (Death, Life, Matter, Prime); Permanence; Targeted Summoning (Death, Life, Matter, Prime); Universal Counterspell; Nighthawks — Unburied Treasure, Under Cover of Night

Praxes: Deepen Shadows (Death 1); Machine Invisibility (Matter 2); Nigredo and Albedo (Matter 3); Shadow Crafting (Death 3); Word of Command (Prime 1)

Rotes: Dispel Magic (Prime 1, Occult); Control Instincts (Life 2, Persuasion); Mutable Mask (Life 2, Stealth); Suppress Aura (Death 2, Subterfuge)

Rote Skills: Investigation, Occult, Survival

Notes: In addition to her Merits, Viridian has access to Artifacts, imbued and enhanced items, Grimoires, and other pieces from her collection at the Storyteller's discretion. With access to her Sanctum or ample time to prepare, the Storyteller can give her more or less anything that makes sense. Otherwise, roll her Wits + Composure and give her items equal to rolled successes, to represent how well she anticipated her needs.

Viridian's Asset Skills for Professional Training are Larceny, Socialize, and Streetwise.

The Nighthawks give Viridian Prime as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Seers of the Throne

Although the Seers of the Throne are the Pentacle's age-old foes, the Exarchs' faithful are ultimately not so different from their counterparts, compared to the stranger and darker Awakened threats lurking in the corners of the Fallen World. Though cynical and selfish, they're just as addicted to Mysteries as any mage, and they maintain their own traditions and mandates as passed down to them by their masters. Other willworkers would be wise not to mistake a more familiar threat for a lesser one, though.

D'Éon
The Friendly Face of Panopticon

"Blame me all you want for lying, but did you question me? No, you preferred the comfortable pretense that we're comrades — which is funny, because if you were honest with yourself, we would be."

Background

Despite everything the specialists said, D'Éon is not a compulsive liar. It wasn't true when a web of lies e told resulted in an awkward fistfight between six-year-olds, it wasn't true when e successfully convinced the high school faculty every absence was down to a lingering case of mononucleosis, and it wasn't true when e convinced the CIA to open its doors to em. D'Éon is not a *compulsive* liar — just a talented one, who doesn't see what the big deal is. Everyone lies, after all.

D'Éon always had that inkling that nothing was quite what everyone told em it was, and when e Awakened, e took the Lie more in stride than most. It took nearly a year of quietly playing with CIA colleagues' minds before a local Pylon realized what was happening and recruited D'Éon; their pitch, coupled with what D'Éon had worked out for emself, was enough to seal the deal. Ever pragmatic, e was not about to turn eir back on the winning team.

Since joining Panopticon, e has become an excellent infiltrator. Eir Pylon, the Unseeing Eye that Reveals All, operates out of a cloud storage server office, feeding em information gleaned from skimming files. E has been CEOs, panhandlers, journalists, and detectives — sometimes replacing real people, sometimes weaving whole identities out of nothing but disparate entries in databases. Eir current operation is perhaps eir Pylon's most ambitious: infiltrating a Pentacle cabal.

Description

D'Éon looks however e needs to look to do eir job. Sometimes it means playing the role of a man, sometimes that of a woman —

Story Hooks

- Someone in the Consilium picked up the trail of an infiltrator and D'Éon, being D'Éon, arranged for the evidence to point elsewhere — specifically, at the cabal. Now, they not only have to prove their innocence, they have to find out who the *real* mole is.
- They were a good friend, a comrade-in-arms, a shoulder to lean on, and then it all just ended — their death was sudden, unnatural, and entirely unforeseen. Clear evidence points to the bastard who supposedly did it. This is one of D'Éon's favorite tricks, because no one ever suspects that the one who "died" was an infiltrator setting them up to make a terrible mistake.
- Infiltrating the Pentacle is one thing; rising to prominence within it is quite another. D'Éon has secured the position of Provost and quietly feeds critical information to eir Pylon. Perhaps surprisingly, D'Éon admits everything to the cabal when confronted: "It's not like anyone will ever believe you." E might be right, and even if e isn't, it could hurt the Consilium's stability and ratchet up paranoia if accusations started flying. Besides, it amuses em.

neither bothers em, as e never felt particularly attached to one identity, making it easy to stick to one or the other when an infiltration mission runs long-term. Between missions, e occasionally feels tempted by the binary, but often defaults to an androgynous happy medium, with brown hair buzzed short, comfortable clothing, and an easygoing smile.

D'Éon's Immediate Nimbus manifests as transient face blindness; for a moment, everyone looks identical to those affected. As a Signature, this results in strange feelings of confusion, isolation, and disconnection. Eir Long-Term Nimbus causes a high frequency of mistaken identities; D'Éon is responsible for a startling volume of wrong numbers.

Secrets

Who Spies on the Spies?: D'Éon is an enthusiastic part of the Tree of Eyes, spying on others within the organization with gusto. E has gleaned a tremendous amount of operational knowledge not just about eir own mission, but about other Panopticon agents in the area.

Intrusive Mentor: Eir mentor is Summanus, a Mind master. Unbeknownst to D'Éon, he created a pruned-down duplicate of his own consciousness and surreptitiously hosted it within D'Éon's own. It has access to all of eir senses and a Strong sympathetic link to Summanus, allowing him to not only perceive D'Éon's surroundings, but receive updates on what e has been up to. The forked copy of Summanus' mind is well-hidden: an Opacity 5 Mystery.

Rumors

"Hey, can we talk? Listen, I know there've been a lot of rumors and such going around, and I just want to let you know, we absolutely are not cutting the grant. The Consilium understands how important your work is. It's just that – you know how politics are. If Cicero doesn't – well, I probably shouldn't name names."

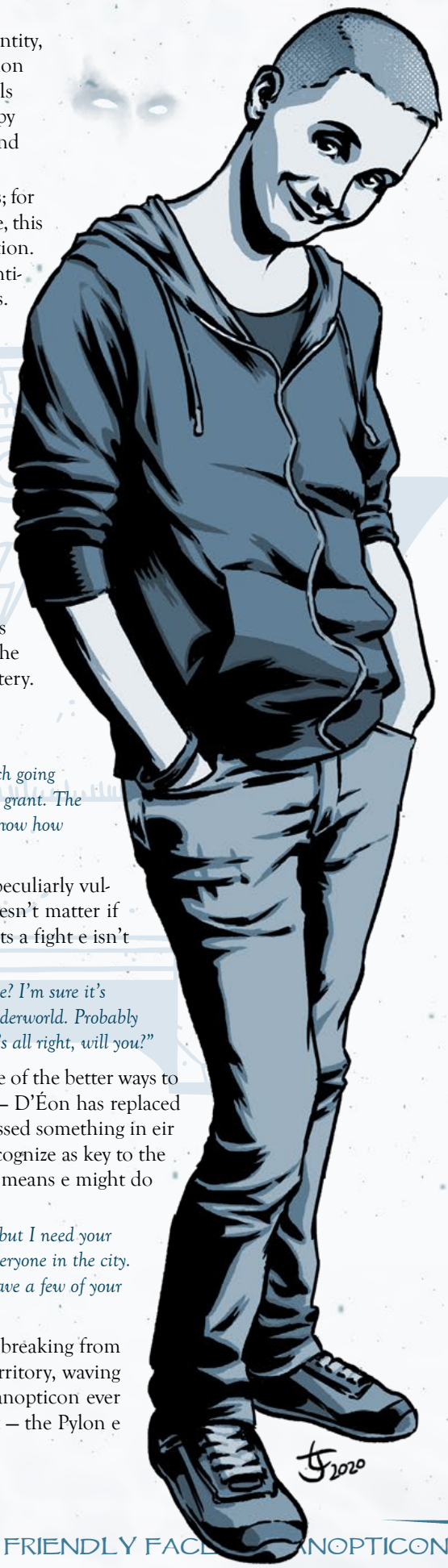
The Awakened, despite their great powers of perception, are peculiarly vulnerable to being set against each other. In this case, it almost doesn't matter if the rumor is true or not — all that matters to D'Éon is that it starts a fight e isn't involved in.

"This is going to sound weird, but can you keep an eye on my cabalmate? I'm sure it's nothing, but she's been acting weird ever since she came back from the Underworld. Probably just saw something really awful and it's fucked her up. Just make sure she's all right, will you?"

Replacing people after they've separated from their group is one of the better ways to gain entrée, and in this case the rumor of "acting weird" is true — D'Éon has replaced the mage in question — but something's gone wrong. Maybe e missed something in eir surveillance: a habit, a turn of phrase, something most people recognize as key to the person e is pretending to be. E can tell suspicion is rising, which means e might do something drastic soon.

"I know you have no reason to believe me – not after what I've done – but I need your help. My Pylon's found something that'll let them get inside the head of everyone in the city. I have my own reasons for not wanting them to have this, and I bet you have a few of your own."

D'Éon doesn't usually go for straight talk, but in this case, e is breaking from precedent; the rumor is mostly true. E turns up in the cabal's territory, waving the white flag and sharing information in ways no servant of Panopticon ever would. The story e's telling contains just one little lie at its heart — the Pylon e is talking about isn't eir Pylon, but a rival one.



Path: Mastigos

Order: Seers of the Throne (Panopticon)

Legacy: None

Virtue: Confident

Vice: Curious

Obsessions: Achieve perfect magical mutability of identity

Aspirations: Convince someone that D'Éon is the real them and they are the fake; Discover Summanus' forked mind copy and turn the tables

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation (Personal Details) 4, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Politics (Shit-Stirring) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Larceny (Disguise) 4, Stealth 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (False Identities) 5

Merits: Artifact (Pearl of Unbeing) 3; Consilium Status 3; Contacts (Department of Motor Vehicles); High Speech; Light Weapons 3 (**CofD**, p. 63); Occultation 2; Order Status (Seers of the Throne) 3; Prelacy (Eye) 3; Trained Observer 1

Wisdom: 5

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 7

Defense: 6

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Gnosis: 2

Mana/per Turn: 11/2

Nimbus Tilt: Grants +2 and 8-again to Subterfuge rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Engraved iron knife

Arcana: Life 3, Mind 3, Prime 2, Space 2

Attainments: Counterspell (Life, Mind, Prime, Space); Improved Pattern Restoration; Mage Armor (Life, Mind, Prime, Space); Mind's Eye; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Life, Mind); Universal Counterspell; Prelacy — Crown of Vision

Praxes: Many Faces (Life 3); Memory Hole (Mind 2); Perfect Recall (Mind 1)

Rotes: Borrow Threads (Space 1, Larceny); Incognito Presence (Mind 2, Subterfuge); One Mind, Two Thoughts (Mind 1, Expression); Scrying (Space 2, Subterfuge); Supernal Veil (Prime 2, Subterfuge); Ward (Space 2, Athletics)

Rote Skills: Investigation, Stealth, Subterfuge

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Init	Dice
Knife	0	−1	5

Notes: D'Éon has the Persistent Mystery Commands Condition (**Mage**, p. 317) due to eir Prelacy. Eir Consilium Status is based on this false identity, and evaporates as soon as the deception becomes apparent, giving em the Notoriety Condition (**Mage**, p. 317).

Artifact: Pearl of Unbeing (●●●)

The Pearl of Unbeing (Size 1, Gnosis 2, Mana 8, Prime 3) allows D'Éon to transform all three of eir Nimbuses and eir Nimbus Tilt, swallowing the Pearl as part of its activation to complete the change as an instant action. E may forge a new set of Nimbuses from scratch, or may perfectly duplicate those of another mage he touches, as long as he's successfully Revealed any of their Nimbuses in the past with Focused Mage Sight. Either effect costs 1 Mana and lasts a scene. The Pearl remains lodged in D'Éon's throat until the effect ends, after which e vomits it back up. Penetrating the false Nimbus is an Opacity 3 Mystery.

Pangloss
Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

"We've built a soft, chaotic world, haven't we? No order, no reason, just senseless feelings layered ad infinitum. Reminds you of a defenseless dodo, doesn't it? Well, friends, we all know what happened to the dodo."

Background

Dr. Jeremiah C. Latimer — or so he calls himself — is a pop philosopher, a one-man self-help program whose internet following and voluminous body of work grow steadily. Latimer is "that guy you saw a retweet from once" for most people, but for his followers he's a modern-day Hobbes or Locke. His claim to fame is bringing a scientific degree and STEM mindset to philosophical discussion — he's fond of terms like "evolutionary psychology" and "selective cultural pressures." In other words, he dances right up to the edge of old-school racism and sexism cloaked in the parlance of modern science.

Pangloss, the mage behind Latimer, isn't much like his alter ego. Trained as a scientist, upon Awakening he devoted himself to the cult of the Father — not out of faith, but because betting on the Seers sounds more reasonable when you've snuck a look at God's hand and found out He's got a royal flush. Despite coming to the Ministry later in life, Pangloss rose high enough in Paternoster's ranks to build a degree of trust, which he immediately spent on his new project. Now he's something of a black sheep, but in his mind it's worth it if he can prove his ideas' value to the Father.

Latimer's philosophy is nothing more than a front for the Exarchal cult. The difference is that, on its face, it's atheistic, enshrining biology's invisible hand as the almighty force in the universe. Paternoster struggles in the West while other Ministries ascend. Pangloss believes his Ministry must adapt, and Latimer is his answer. Instead of unyielding faith, he sells unyielding theory; instead of revealed truth, he sells authoritarian reason. In place of naked tradition for tradition's sake, he provides tradition clothed in trappings the modern Western world is more apt to swallow. As long as the message gets through, Pangloss says, it doesn't matter what the words are; and he'll be the sugar that sweetens the bitter medicine.

Despite the departure from Paternoster's normal methodology, Pangloss survives accusations of heresy because his Pylon vouches for him, and because the project *works*. Latimer has a niche (one might even say *cult*) following, and the three meet-ups he's held attracted enough people to swamp the coffee shops he set them up in (intentionally — nothing says "Hey, this guy's popular!" than word of a standing-room-only venue).

Description

Pangloss is in his 50s, pale from a lifetime of lab work and office hours before his Awakening drove him into even deeper isolation from the Sleeper world. His hair, immaculately trimmed, has gone white. Despite his age, he's in good health — uncannily so, which his followers often attribute to his philosophy (without any evidence, which delights Pangloss). In public, he maintains a carefully sculpted appearance of stern dignity, wearing suits that say "I'm important" without saying "I'm unapproachably wealthy." He's affable and relatable, but unshakeable in his convictions.

Without the mask of Latimer, Pangloss still doesn't look much like a priest unless he's attending a ritual — then, rules are rules. He seems more like the nebbish professor he used to be, and wears glasses instead of willing his retinas into shape. He's still an ideologue, but without an audience he's less likely to argue; unless any Pentacle mages he runs across seem willing to repent, he doesn't waste his breath.

Pangloss' Immediate Nimbus shows a dizzying array of the mathematics underlying the universe. His Signature Nimbus manifests a sense that what lies behind reality has a malevolent will, the numbers adding up to final judgment. His Long-Term Nimbus makes objects (and occasionally people) perfectly arrange themselves, sometimes creating symbols reminiscent of High Speech runes.

Secrets

Fair-Weather Support: Pangloss is so willing to flaunt the traditional design of Sleeper religion because he secured the ear of an influential superior, the Pontifex Apollinaris. Their relationship is a secret for now — Apollinaris has no desire to taint himself with potential heresy — but should the experiment bear fruit, Apollinaris will happily claim credit while mollifying Pangloss with a minor promotion.

Rumors

"Did you hear about the Sleepwalkers going back to Sleep? It's horrible. First, they half-forget who you are, then your wards start unweaving themselves before your eyes, and before you know it, you're wiping memories and dropping these poor bastards back where you found them. Some people even think it's an epidemic, and it'll start hitting us next. What do we do?"

Pangloss' cult is more than a cudgel to browbeat Sleepers into staying Asleep; it's meant to drag those whose eyes are beginning to open back down. The rumor is highly exaggerated; the process is still experimental. Pangloss uses specific cadences of speech, charged with Mana and Awakened will, to turn Sleepwalkers'

thoughts inward, shutting them off from the little Supernal awareness they have. It's early days yet, but he's had some promising results — nothing permanent or total, but hope springs eternal.

"I am at my wits' fucking end. Last Assembly, this one cabal spent half an hour spewing stuff about how 'some kinds of people' are less statistically likely to Awaken than others, and they weren't talking about outlook. When I told them they sounded like they were reading from the Paternoster playbook, they got pissed and stormed out. I'm telling you, they're brainwashed or something. I don't even want to go ask them where they got this shit from, or talk to them at all."

These Libertines aren't victims of Seer Mind magic; they're just acting like bigots after looking for Supernal insight on the wrong internet forums. It's hard to maintain personal and professional relationships spouting "insights" better suited to the 18th century than the 21st, which is another part of Pangloss' design.

"Dispatch, Four-L-Seven, I need a bus at 18th and Westlake, we've got a two-four-zero with multiple vics. Three perps, southbound on 18th in a black SUV, all three white males, late 20s. Yeah, another one. Weird fuckin' symbols spray-painted on the vics and everything – must be one of those Satanic cults."

In fact, Satanism has nothing to do with these rashes of malcontents randomly assaulting people just for walking down the street. Pangloss stokes and exploits repressed tribal rage in his followers, and sometimes the effects of his influence erupt — in this case, as a gang of angry men who leave arcane markings they don't understand in the wake of their senseless violence.

Story Hooks

- It's election season, and the local race is a real mess, with one of Latimer's adherents running for City Council. Something's off about the man, though, a strange mystical matrix tied to every stump speech, every rung doorbell, every irate "What about the men?" rant. He's not Awakened — he's as Asleep as Asleep gets, in fact — but he's a Trojan horse for one of Pangloss' schemes.
- Pangloss is too good at his job. One of his committed followers Awakened — and rejected that Awakening, turning Banisher. He stalks mages now out of a sense of "them or us" morality — and he's set his sights on the cabal first.
- One of Pangloss' enemies in the Ministry accuses him of heresy, and this time the tide turns against him. Pangloss scrambles to defend himself. His rhetoric turns nastier by the day, revolving around the employees and clientele of an indie coffee shop serving as a front for the local Guardian Labyrinth. If he can directly weaponize his cult and deal a significant blow to the Pentacle, Pangloss thinks that'll save his neck.

Tyrian Archons

(Obrimos, Seers of the Throne; Prime)

The Tyrian Archons are a Legacy obsessed with the divine right of kings — they wear jeweled collars and mantles of Tyrian purple, chew terebinth, and wield scepters as Exarchal Yantras representing royalty called by their deity to rule.

Yantras: scepters, lion skins, purple mantles, snail extract, and other classic monarchical symbols (+1); giving a command and having it followed (+1, or +2 if rolls are needed); using Retainer, any Status, or Mystery Cult Influence to accomplish something on the mage's behalf related to the spell (+1, or +2 if rolled).

Oblations: spending a scene/hour asserting control/authority over others, or carrying out Exarchal Mystery Commands; flaunting power in front of others in excess of what's needed to accomplish a goal; punishing someone for insubordination or treachery.

First Attainment: Archon's Ear

Prerequisites: Initiation (Prime 2, Expression or Politics 2, Profane Tool (Scepters), any Status or Mystery Cult Influence 3)

The Archon must never tolerate a subordinate's infidelity, lest he allow blasphemy a foothold to thrive. This Attainment emulates the Prime 1 spell "Pierce Deception" (**Mage**, p. 165). It assigns Reach to instant use, but additionally provides a symbolic sense of the truth as the +1 Reach effect against anyone who acknowledges the mage's authority over them.

Second Attainment: My Word Is Law

Prerequisites: Expression and Politics 2

When the Archon speaks, others listen. This Attainment emulates the Prime 2 spell "Words of Truth" (**Mage**, p. 168). It assigns Reach to instant use, but additionally calls subjects to action as the +1 Reach effect against anyone who acknowledges the mage's authority over them.

Third Attainment: Look Upon My Works

Prerequisites: Prime 3, Expression and Politics 3

The most effective rulers never need to exercise their authority; others simply acknowledge it without question. This Attainment emulates the Prime 2 spell "Display of Power" (**Mage**, p. 168), assigning Reach to instant use.

Path: Obrimos
Order: Seers of the Throne (Paternoster)
Legacy: Tyrian Archons
Virtue: Skeptical
Vice: Craven
Obsessions: Coax Sleepwalkers back to Sleep; Win proof of the Father's approval
Aspirations: Spread his cult
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computers 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics (Factionalism) 3, Science (Biology) 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 2
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Internet Discourse) 4, Persuasion 4, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Media); Fame 1; Library (Science) 3; Mystery Cult Influence (Latimer's Followers) 5; Order Status (Seers of the Throne) 1; Prelacy (Paternoster) 2; Profane Tool (Scepters) (**Signs of Sorcery**, p. 125); Resources 3; Shadow Name 2
Wisdom: 4
Willpower: 7
Initiative: 6
Defense: 4
Armor: 0/0
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Mana/per Turn: 13/4
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes −2 to Resolve rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: A steel scalpel.
Arcana: Forces 3, Life 2, Prime 4
Attainments: Counterspell (Forces, Life, Prime); Imbue Item; Improved Pattern Restoration; Mage Armor (Forces, Life, Prime); Precise Force; Targeted Summoning (Forces, Prime); Universal Counterspell; Tyrian Archons — Archon's Ear; My Word Is Law; Look Upon My Works
Praxes: Celestial Fire (Prime 4); Pierce Deception (Prime 1); Transmission (Forces 2)
Rotes: Control Instincts (Life 2, Persuasion); Control Sound (Forces 2, Expression); Control Weather (Forces 2, Academics); Tune In (Forces 1, Computers)
Rote Skills: Academics, Occult, Expression

Mystery Cult Initiation: Latimer's Followers (• to •••••)

Rhetoric (•): Gain a Rhetoric Skill Specialty for Expression, Persuasion, or Subterfuge.

Strength in Numbers (••): Gain the Contacts (Internet Communities) Merit.

"Us" vs. "Them" (•••): When the character has the group's support available and he's still in regular attendance at meetings, gain 9-again on Politics rolls, and +2 dice to extended actions with Politics.

Popular Opinions (••••): The character is confident the cult will back him up, right or wrong. When spending Willpower to contest or resist in a Social interaction, you may substitute Resolve for the usual +3 bonus; if it's contested, also gain 8-again.

Unwavering Trust (•••••): Once per scene, you may reflexively spend a Willpower point to add one Door to your character's total in Social Maneuvering as long as his defense or argument aligns with the cult's philosophy.

PHEMONOE
ARBITER OF TECHNO-DESTINY

"People who suppose they're wise will tell you Time is a river, unstoppable and implacable. I say people like that have never seen what an engineer can do to a river."

Background

The obsession never really *started* — it was always there. Science fiction and pop culture were replete with tales of time turned on its head, of paradoxes and predestination, and young Lucia Reyes devoured them all. When she was young, she threw herself into mathematics years ahead of what tutors taught her, and learned to code so she could construct elaborate equations and iterate on them endlessly. Somewhere between her legendary flameout from college and her trust-fund-backed Silicon Valley startup going public, something clicked inside her. Lucia broke Time itself, bending herself into a closed loop that stretched all the way back to her childhood — from the first moments, as far as outside observers could tell, that her Obsession was born.

Lucia wasn't certain how long she spent in that time loop. She had no objective way to measure something repeating endlessly, much as she tried to code one for herself. Escape came only when, on her *n*th time through college, something much bigger than her caught sight of the mess she'd made and reached in to straighten things out, intervening in her Awakening and marking her as touched by the Exarchs. Whether the Prophet was amused, proud, or disgusted, the Ochema did not say; but afterward, she took the name Phemonoe, gave herself to the Exarch wholeheartedly, and never looked back.

Since then, Phemonoe has risen high. She hired talented Sleepwalker engineers to work on her algorithmic scheduling app, DeSchedule, which automatically constructs a future calendar for its users based on scraped user data (and a little bit of Awakened insight) without any actual user input. According to her ad copy, predictive calendar software is going to change the world. Privately, she counts the hours until predestination renders free will moot. She formed a Pylon with like-minded Awakened, the Oracular Order of the Prophet's Grace, which serves as a secret board of directors within the company. They've also developed a Legacy, the Chronologues, together. With an Exarch's mark of approval, she's the Pylon's beating heart; newer Seers scheme to gain her favor and join up.

Description

Phemonoe is as rail-thin as she is tall, habitually forgetting meals and substituting her own "innovations" on standard meal replacement shakes — food is fuel to her, and nothing but. The dark circles under her equally dark eyes have settled in after many sleepless nights, but she's got makeup people for that if she needs to make a public appearance. Despite the sleep deficit she's made a way of life, she's always alert; sometimes people wonder if she blinks at all. She keeps her hair shorn short — she spends exactly two minutes on it each morning, no more and no less. The one indulgence she permits herself is the finely tailored suits she wears, not just in the office but everywhere she goes.

Phemonoe understands the value of presentation — and especially of playing to the audience. For investors, she has a smooth, cool routine, all steadiness, ideas, and ambition. For her Sleepwalking employees, it's all inspirational speeches and pushing them to succeed. For her Awakened fellows, she is all-knowing, touched by the divine — but personable, approachable. One needs relationships to manipulate with sufficient finesse.

Phemonoe's Immediate Nimbus creates hiccups in time, in which snippets of speech or activity run backward and then forward again. Her Signature Nimbus manifests as a powerful sense of *déjà vu*. Her Long-Term Nimbus makes events and circumstances repeat with uncanny similarity; effect follows so sharply on the heels of cause it almost seems to come first.

Secrets

Mobius History: Phemonoe's repeating time loop of a childhood rendered her personal timeline confusing — under Active Time Sight, she always appears out of sync, as though she were a time traveler. Following the Signature back to her point of origin (an Opacity 4 Mystery) leads to the moment of her Awakening, rather than her birth.

Rumors

"This app is a little creepy. You know how I've got that, uh – that thing I go to every Tuesday? Look, I don't write about it, I don't talk about it on social media, and I definitely don't put it in my calendar, but somehow this thing found out about it and added it! You think that's bad? I was going to delete it from my phone, and I got a notification about a new event in my schedule – 'Consider Keeping DeSchedule.' What the fuck, right?"

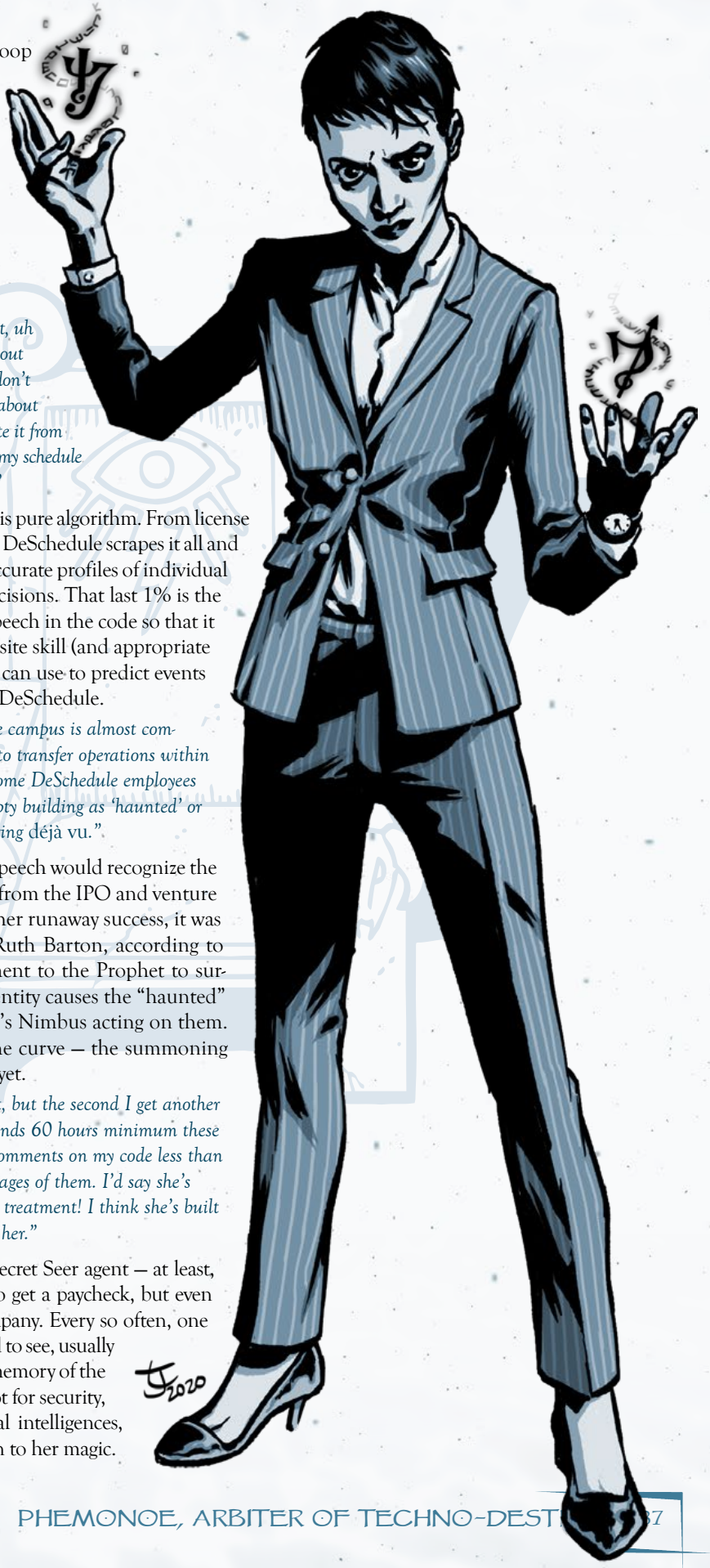
It may seem like magic, but 99% of DeSchedule is pure algorithm. From license plate cameras to credit card bills to phone records, DeSchedule scrapes it all and feeds it into the master servers, producing eerily accurate profiles of individual users that can almost perfectly predict certain decisions. That last 1% is the problem — Phemonoe hides just enough High Speech in the code so that it serves as a sympathetic tap anyone with the requisite skill (and appropriate permissions, or a way to convincingly fake them) can use to predict events anywhere in the proximity of the phone hosting DeSchedule.

"In local news, construction on the new DeSchedule campus is almost complete. Reports say the software company will be ready to transfer operations within the week. Strangely, construction workers onsite and some DeSchedule employees who have already made the move describe the half-empty building as 'haunted' or 'cursed,' citing an eerie feeling of prescience and recurring déjà vu."

From the air, anyone who understands High Speech would recognize the unusual building's layout. With money to burn from the IPO and venture capitalists climbing over each other to buy into her runaway success, it was easy to ensure that Phemonoe's cabalmate — Ruth Barton, according to falsified public records — could craft a monument to the Prophet to surpass all others. Despite the rumors, no malign entity causes the "haunted" feeling — yet, anyway. So far, it's just Phemonoe's Nimbus acting on them. But they're not entirely wrong, just ahead of the curve — the summoning circle built into the executive spa isn't finished yet.

"Don't get me wrong, the pay and benefits are great, but the second I get another offer I'm bailing. It's not the crunch, everywhere demands 60 hours minimum these days. It's the executives! Especially Reyes! She leaves comments on my code less than an hour after I've submitted it for review, pages and pages of them. I'd say she's obsessing over my work but everyone else gets the same treatment! I think she's built some kind of super-advanced AI to do all her work for her."

Not everyone who works for DeSchedule is a secret Seer agent — at least, not knowingly. Plenty of Sleepers are just there to get a paycheck, but even Sleepers can sense something's off about the company. Every so often, one stumbles upon a piece of code they're not supposed to see, usually followed by a few days of mysterious PTO and no memory of the encounter. Phemonoe employs memory scrubs not for security, but to avoid burnout. She doesn't build artificial intelligences, though; everything strange they sense comes down to her magic.



Story Hooks

- Phase 2 of DeSchedule requires access to Panopticon's trove of surveillance information. If she can secure an alliance, she expects her predictions' accuracy to improve by an order of magnitude, preparing her for Phase 3: simulating a future version of herself to violate causality without tampering with the timestream itself. Someone within Panopticon anonymously leaks this information to the cabal.
- Careful Pentacle mages know how dangerous an unvetted bit of software can be. Whether through lack of caution, an antagonist's oracular insight, or just bad luck, the cabal is now in Phemonoe's crosshairs. Something DeSchedule saw in their future — or somehow, something they've already done — upsets her plans to such a degree that merely fighting them in the present isn't enough to stop them.
- Something acausal slipped out of the Lower Depths and haunts Silicon Valley. It consumes personal timelines whole, leaving broken Sleepers wandering unmoored from time. They experience their whole lives as a single instant, a painful deluge of inescapable sensory detail with no beginning or end. A crisis makes strange bedfellows; none deny that Phemonoe's app is probably the best means of tracking the thing, but her aid won't come cheap.

Path: Acanthus
Order: Seers of the Throne (Horologion)
Legacy: Chronologue
Virtue: Diligent
Vice: Distant
Obsessions: Code as magic; Causality violations
Aspirations: Reach market saturation with DeSchedule; Become Minister of Horologion
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer (Programming) 4, Occult 4, Politics 2, Science (Theoretical Physics) 4
Physical Skills: Drive 2, Firearms (Pistols) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 4
Merits: Fame 2; Fast Spells; Hallow 3; High Speech; Order Status (Seers of the Throne) 3; Prelacy (Prophet) 3; Resources 4; Safe Place 5; Sanctum 5; Shadow Name 3
Wisdom: 5
Willpower: 8

New Lesser Ministry: Horologion

Horologion: *Routine is the real opiate of the masses.* With mind-numbing routine, Horologion imposes its regimented future on society in worship of the Prophet, Exarch of control through inevitability. The Industrial and Internet Revolutions greatly swelled Horologion's power, through the supremacy of the 9-to-5 grind in highly regimented environments like corporations, factories, and schools. When a person's every action and moment is accounted for, accountable *to*, and dictated by someone else, they have little time for independent thought and creativity. **Rote Skills:** Intimidation, Politics, Socialize

The Prophet grants the **Crown of Agency** as its Prelacy Crown Attainment. When the mage or another character uses temporal sympathy on a spell with her as the subject, the character counts as having Strong temporal sympathy to any point in her own past. If a supernatural effect (including Time spells) alters history such that the character's past is changed, she does not change immediately but only after her Time dots in turns, allowing her the opportunity to do something about it.

Initiative: 7
Defense: 3
Armor: 0/0
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 5
Mana/per Turn: 15/5
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes –1 to Composure rolls and –2 to Wits rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: A hyper-accurate wristwatch, with etched and razor-sharp silver hands.
Arcana: Fate 3, Space 2, Time 5
Attainments: Conditional Duration; Counterspell (Fate, Space, Time); Mage Armor (Fate, Space Time); Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Fate, Time); Temporal Sympathy; Time in a Bottle; Prelacy — Crown of Agency; Chronologue — If-Then-Else; Possibility Matrix
Praxes: Constant Presence (Time 2); Corridors of Time (Time 5); Prophecy (Time 4); Scrying (Space 2); Shifting Sands (Time 3)
Rotes: Acceleration (Time 3, Drive); Superlative Luck (Fate 3, Science); Warding Gesture (Fate 2, Intimidation)
Rote Skills: Intimidation, Politics, Socialize
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice
Light Pistol	1L	20/40/80	17+1	+0	6

Chronologue

(Acanthus, Seers of the Throne; Time)

The Chronologue pursues the ultimate rejection of free will in favor of flawless predestination, turning society into a machine that runs like clockwork. It's founded on the principles of predictive computer code and digital simulations, but uses the guidance of Time to perfect these principles into something more.

Yantras: timepieces, calendars, and schedules (+1); casting at a time predetermined and agreed upon with someone else, calculated precisely to the second (+1, or +2 if opposed/under stress); the spell would fulfill a previously established prophecy or predicted doom (+1)

Oblations: ensuring an event goes exactly how the mage predicted it would; endure at least 12 hours straight of productivity without rest; repeating the same activity over and over again for at least an hour; precisely following a schedule of the mage's own making.

First Attainment: If-Then-Else

Prerequisites: Initiation (Time 2, Fate 1, Computer 2)

The mage subtly shifts causality to decide how convenient life is for her subject, emulating the Time 1 spell "Green Light/Red Light" (**Mage**, p. 187). The mage herself can't be this Attainment's subject. However, when she uses it, she may choose one specific action that the subject could take during its duration; if they perform that action, she may change the spell's effect from positive effects to negative effects, or vice versa.

Second Attainment: Possibility Matrix

Prerequisites: Computer 3

By spending a scene ritually coding a digital Imago, the mage may view the subject's possible futures at sensory range, as the Time 1 spell "Divination" (**Mage**, p. 186). It gives her detailed answers, and she may track these shifting answers once per five minutes for up to a scene even if the subject is no longer in sensory range, as the subject's actions and those of others (including, potentially, the mage's own) ripple into the future and change what will happen. However, the mage herself can't be this Attainment's subject.

Apostates and Nameless

The Pentacle and Seers both like to present themselves to the newly Awakened as the default mage society, but plenty of will-workers chase Mysteries without an Order's backing, or form their own smaller Orders with like-minded colleagues. Some operate as adjuncts or allies to the larger Orders, but just as many conflict with them over territory, Mysteries, recruitment, or ethics.

Matatag, the Scapegoat

"Exile can be its own kind of freedom."

Background

Manuel Dalisay wanted to be a librarian when he grew up. Awakening and joining the Mysterium was close enough. As a member of the Tree-Root Union, a tight-knit cabal, he helped maintain the Order's largest collection of magical resources in the city. He had more loyalty for the Union than he did his Order or even the Consilium as a whole. His cabalmates were the ones who found him wandering in the throes of his waking world dream, and Baobab, their eldest member, initiated him into the Eleventh Question.

While Matatag studied the Mysteries of the mind, corruption brewed within the cabal. Two of its members, Baldachin and Ironwood, had been studying Reaper practices. It wasn't long before they were stealing souls themselves. Baobab and Matatag discovered their crimes. Out of respect for their friends, they brought the Reapers to the Mysterium first, hoping to avoid the scandal of a full Consilium trial.

The Caucus simply admonished them and sent them home, declaring that because the cabal was so important to the community — and because the only victims were Sleepers — the Mysterium could overlook their "indiscretions." Horrified by the decision and suspecting similar corruption in the Order's upper echelons, Baobab took matters into her own hands. She confronted her cabalmates in their shared sanctum.

Baldachin and Ironwood murdered her and robbed the cabal of its extensive collection of Artifacts and Grimoires, most of which it held in trust for the Athenaeum. Finally, they faked their own deaths, manipulated the scene to pin the crimes on Matatag, and left the city.

For this crime he did not commit, the Mysterium cast Matatag out and declared him apostate. He fled the city. The Consilium, suspicious of the Order's snap judgement, dispatched Sentinels to bring him back to the city for investigation and trial. But he's been burned once already and has no intention of going back. He lives as a fugitive, hoping one day he can find the mages who betrayed him.

Story Hooks

- Someone's been looking into the characters' cabal Mysteries behind their backs. He's poking around at old clues and re-opening old wounds (and other things best left closed). Other cabals in the Consilium are experiencing the same thing, and they're blaming each other. The meddling is starting feuds, and it's only going to get worse. Matatag is at the center of this quiet usurpation.
- An important Artifact was stolen, and the cabal must retrieve it. Tracking it down brings them to Matatag's sanctum before he's figured out how it works. He begs them to let him use it, as it can help him speak to Baobab's ghost. He won't let it go without a fight.
- A Sentinel from Matatag's Consilium arrives in the city and warns everyone that a fugitive from justice is loose. When a local théarch loses their soul and can't remember how it happened, the Sentinel fears the worst, and requests the cabal's assistance. Together they hunt for Matatag. Ashra, the real Reaper behind this, shadows the cabal, hoping they will lead her to the apostate.

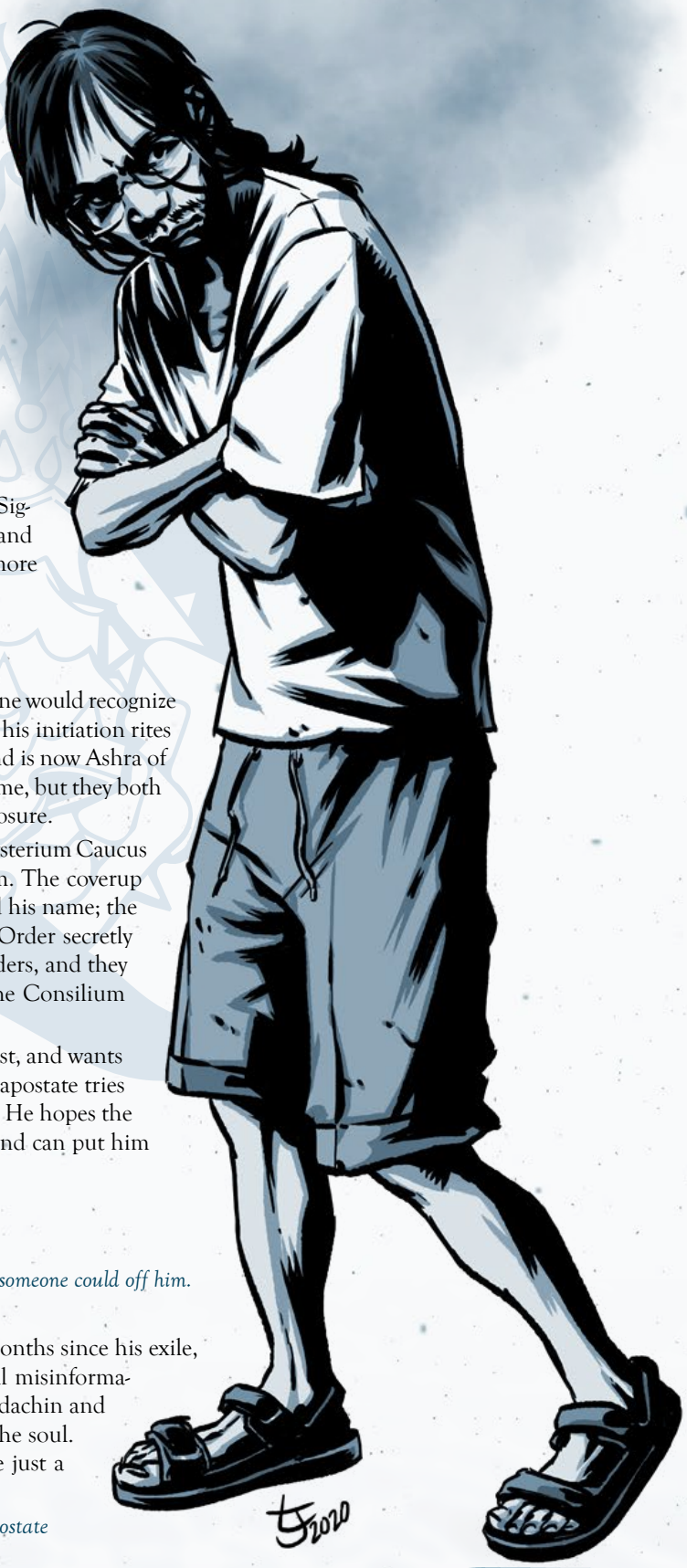
Description

Matatag is a Filipino man in his mid-30s, shorter than average and frail. He wears large glasses and prefers cheap, loose-fitting clothing. He rarely shaves, and his beard is uneven and patchy; he lets his black hair grow to his shoulders.

Thanks to his twofold betrayal, he's washed his hands of the Pentacle. He considers himself no longer beholden to the rules and decorum of a magical society he barely respected in the first place. In each new town, he searches for a new Mystery and pursues it with gusto. He has no problem snatching an unprotected Grimoire from another sorcerer or trespassing on a cabal's territory to reach an Iris, and he's loath to work alongside Pentacle mages even if it would be in his — or everyone else's — best interests.

Beyond that, the search for Baldachin and Ironwood has become his life's work. He isn't sure what he'll do if he finds them. What they did was atrocious, yet not entirely unexpected. He aided them in their research into the soul, something he's not proud of and feels immensely guilty about. When he's alone, he thinks of all the times he should have said something, but stayed quiet for friendship's sake. Some days, he wants to slay them and throw their bloody corpses onto the steps of the Athenaeum. Other days, he only wants to know why they did it.

Matatag's Immediate Nimbus is a glowing, purple fog that tempts those who breathe it into engaging in their vices. His Signature Nimbus is an unpleasant, chalky taste on the tongue and the flush of shame. His Long-Term Nimbus makes people more fearful about their flaws.



Secrets

Soul Hunters: Baldachin and Ironwood are alive, though none would recognize them. They fell in with the Tremere (p. XX); Baldachin failed his initiation rites and became a preta (p. XX). Ironwood was more successful, and is now Ashra of House Thrax (p. XX). They haven't seen each other in some time, but they both hunt Matatag, hoping to consume his soul as a final act of closure.

The Fall Guy: Some of the leaders of Matatag's erstwhile Mysterium Caucus know he didn't commit the crimes for which they exiled him. The coverup was sloppy, and any in-depth investigation would have cleared his name; the decision to declare him an apostate was political. The local Order secretly harbors many Left-Handed practitioners, including those leaders, and they needed a patsy to cover their trail. The Caucus is helping the Consilium hunt him down, but in private they hope the trail goes cold.

Calling the Other Side: Matatag assumes Baobab left a ghost, and wants to contact it. Without his mentor's knowledge of Death, the apostate tries to gain access to Artifacts that can do the job for him instead. He hopes the ghost has insight into the killers' whereabouts and motives, and can put him on the right track to learn the rest of his Legacy.

Rumors

"Matatag's a Reaper. He ate his cabalmates' souls and ran before someone could off him. I don't know how he hides it, but I don't trust him."

Matatag's supposed crimes have been exaggerated in the months since his exile, thanks to both the natural spread of rumors and intentional misinformation. Still, the rumor is based on a seed of truth. Helping Baldachin and Ironwood in their studies sparked his own fascination with the soul. He keeps these studies under wraps and tells himself they're just a countermeasure to his enemies' tricks.

"I was there when Matatag was charged. They declared him an apostate

in five minutes, without a shred of evidence. The Mystagogues here are hiding something."

Not everyone believes Matatag is guilty. A few of the Caucus' Mystagogues are suspicious about the case, although they don't yet suspect Left-Handed leadership. They have tried to reach out to the apostate to get the truth, but he's avoiding them. These mages seek someone who can gain his trust and record his testimony.

"I've seen the records of what his cabal had that he stole. If he still has even a fraction of that, and we bring it back to the Athenaeum, they'll owe us big-time. Or, you know...we could keep it."

No one knows where the stolen Artifacts and Grimoires are, but most believe Matatag has them. He doesn't, but as their former caretaker, he could help track them down. The rumor is right about the collection containing powerful items; among them is a five-dot Grimoire that holds rotes for stealing, consuming, and manipulating souls. It's currently in Ashra's hands.

Path: Mastigos
Order: None
Legacy: The Eleventh Question (**Mage**, p. 200)
Virtue: Studious
Vice: Hesitant
Obsessions: Understand the nature of the soul
Aspirations: Establish a new sanctum; Find my traitorous ex-cabalmates
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Investigation 3, Occult (Artifacts) 5
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Firearms 2, Stealth 2, Survival (Foraging) 3
Social Skills: Animal Ken (Dogs) 2, Socialize 2
Merits: Between the Ticks; High Speech; Language (Latin); Occultation 3; Resources 1
Wisdom: 6
Willpower: 7
Initiative: 7
Defense: 5
Armor: 1/0 (reinforced clothing)
Speed: 10
Health: 6
Gnosis: 4
Mana/per Turn: 13/4
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes −1 to Resolve and Manipulation rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: A weathered brass rod.
Arcana: Matter 2, Mind 2, Space 2, Time 2
Attainments: Counterspell (Matter, Mind, Space, Time); Mage Armor (Matter, Mind, Space, Time); Mind's Eye; Permanence; Sympathetic Range; Temporal Sympathy; The Eleventh Question — The Undisturbed Scene; The Unobvious Answer
Praxes: Divination (Time 1); Hidden Hoard (Matter 2); Scrying (Space 2); Veil of Moments (Time 2)
Rotes: Break Boundary (Space 2, Athletics); Mental Shield (Mind 2, Survival); Incognito Presence (Mind 2, Stealth); Postcognition (Time 1, Academics)
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice
Light Pistol	1L	20/40/80	17+1	+0	5

Notes: The Eleventh Question gives Matatag Time as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Ricardo, the Fool

"It's about time things went my way."

Background

Gagan Bhatia grew up believing he was destined for greatness, though he could never explain why. Unlike his siblings, a founding member of a successful law firm and an indie rock sensation, he never found something he excelled in. While he engaged in many interests, he dropped them as soon as he felt he'd be nothing more than mediocre.

Still, he clung to his hope that he was meant for something more. He studied finance and worked at a hedge fund. The work was dull, but Gagan felt if he played his cards right, he could retire early and pursue what he was really meant for. A decade passed, and he kept his head down, waiting for something to happen.

Then one day, something about the market reports he was analyzing didn't seem right. He read and reread the notes, and it became clear that over the past couple of years, the investments the funds made did more than just ebb and flow with the market. The fund's successes and failures weren't in response to news events; they were occurring *before* the events, as if the market were sending early warning messages. Despite his colleagues' recommendations to stay the course, Gagan tested his theory, convincing the manager to sell off everything and break the pattern.

That night, he dreamed of Arcadia. When he woke, he discovered he could see the early warning messages in *everything*, and change them. He's not sure what happened to him, but he'll milk it for all it's worth.

Description

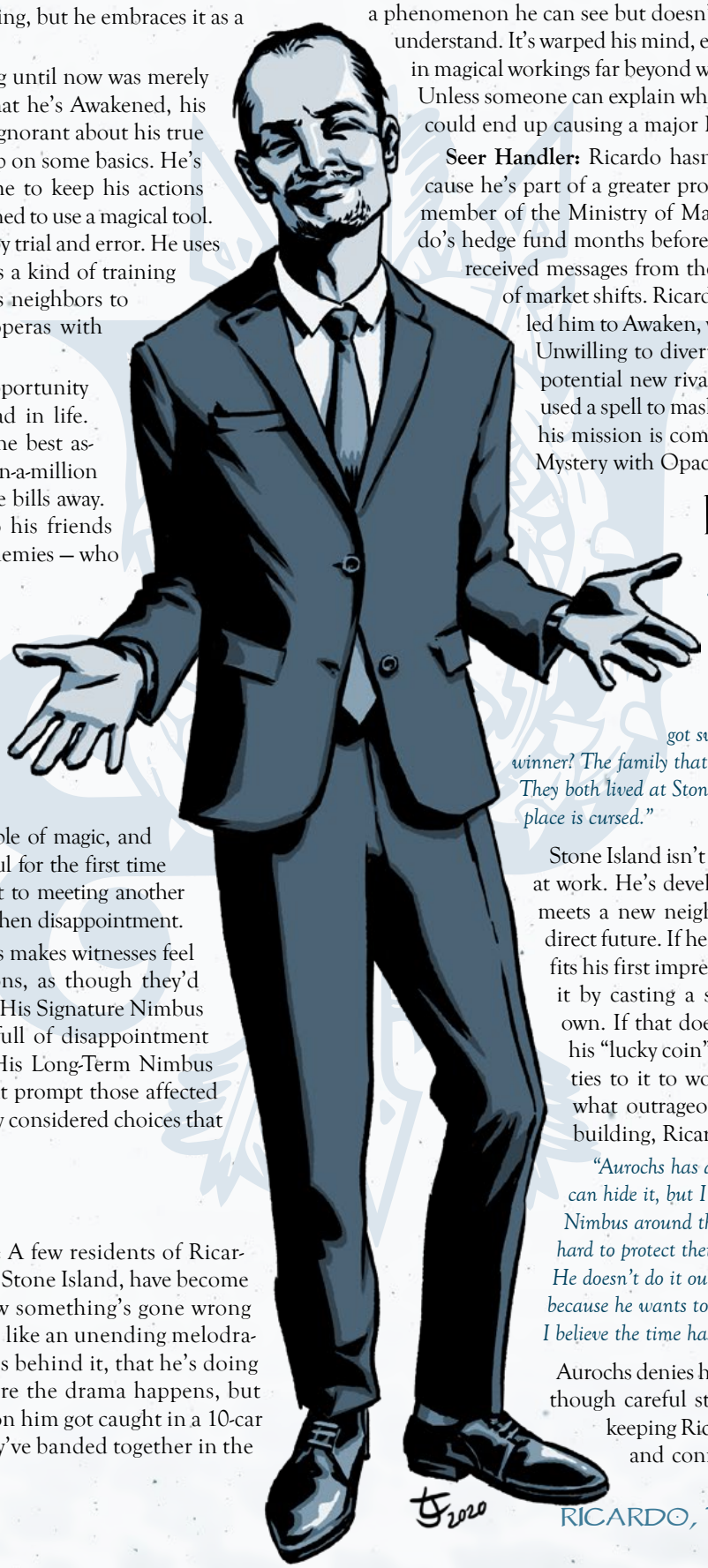
Ricardo is an Indian man in his early 40s. He's of average height, and can easily blend into crowds. He dresses in well-tailored business suits, the only major expenditure he allows himself. His hair is thinning, but he embraces it as a sign of distinction.

He feels that everything until now was merely a waiting period. Now that he's Awakened, his life has begun. He's still ignorant about his true nature, but he's picked up on some basics. He's taken up a Shadow Name to keep his actions anonymous, and he's learned to use a magical tool. He picks up new Arcana by trial and error. He uses his apartment building as a kind of training ground, manipulating his neighbors to create bombastic soap operas with their lives.

Ricardo takes every opportunity to use magic to get ahead in life. He makes sure he gets the best assignments at work. One-in-a-million data entry errors keep the bills away. He brings serendipity to his friends and misfortunes to his enemies — who change on a whim.

His neighbors and coworkers have noticed a dramatic personality change since his Awakening. Within a few weeks, he went from mild-mannered to haughty. As far as he knows, he is the only person in the world capable of magic, and it's made him feel powerful for the first time in his life. He would react to meeting another Awakened with disbelief, then disappointment.

His Immediate Nimbus makes witnesses feel helpless to make decisions, as though they'd lost control of their lives. His Signature Nimbus seems gray and lifeless, full of disappointment and lost opportunities. His Long-Term Nimbus creates circumstances that prompt those affected to make ill-advised, hastily considered choices that they're likely to regret.



Secrets

In Over Their Heads: A few residents of Ricardo's apartment building, Stone Island, have become Sleepwalkers. They know something's gone wrong with the place; life seems like an unending melodrama. They know Ricardo's behind it, that he's doing *something* to people before the drama happens, but the last person to question him got caught in a 10-car pileup the next day. They've banded together in the guise of a tenant's union, to keep tabs on him and figure out what to do. They're in dire need of answers and assistance.

Abyssal Contamination: Ricardo is a walking time bomb of Paradox. After a poor experience with an anomaly, he exclusively contains it within himself. The Abyss flows through his Pattern, a phenomenon he can see but doesn't have enough context to understand. It's warped his mind, encouraging him to engage in magical workings far beyond what he can safely practice. Unless someone can explain what's happening to him, he could end up causing a major Paradox.

Seer Handler: Ricardo hasn't met another mage because he's part of a greater project. Aurochs, a powerful member of the Ministry of Mammon, infiltrated Ricardo's hedge fund months before his Awakening. Aurochs received messages from the Chancellor in the form of market shifts. Ricardo's analysis of these shifts led him to Awaken, which disturbed Aurochs. Unwilling to divert his purpose to induct a potential new rival into his Pylon, the Seer used a spell to mask Ricardo's presence until his mission is complete. Aurochs' cloak is a Mystery with Opacity 3.

Rumors

"You like weird stuff, right? Ever heard of Stone Island? It's this apartment complex just outside town. Newish. Pretty fancy. Thing is, everyone there's got swingy luck. Latest Lotto Ball winner? The family that died in the freak accident? They both lived at Stone Island! I'm thinking that place is cursed."

Stone Island isn't cursed, that's just Ricardo at work. He's developed a system: When he meets a new neighbor, he looks into their direct future. If he doesn't think their future fits his first impression of them, he changes it by casting a spell on something they own. If that doesn't work, he gives them his "lucky coin" and uses his sympathetic ties to it to work his magic. No matter what outrageous story comes from the building, Ricardo is at the center.

"Aurochs has an apprentice. He thinks he can hide it, but I see tinges of an obscured Nimbus around the city. Prelates always try so hard to protect their protégés. Don't be fooled. He doesn't do it out of concern; he does it because he wants to keep us out of his business. I believe the time has come to pay them a visit."

Aurochs denies he has any such apprentice, though careful study shows that the spell keeping Ricardo cloaked is still active, and connected to him. He's only

Story Hooks

- A Sleeper friend of the cabal's moves to Stone Island. One night, the cabal discovers a hex on their friend, one that's hard to trace back to the source. Ricardo is behind this. He's jealous of the Sleeper's happiness and success, and feels that she could use a little misfortune.
- Ricardo succumbs to his Doom: a Gulmoth possesses him. With a direct attachment to the world, the entity warps the city's physics. Aurochs, the only person in the city who knows how this happened, contacts the cabal to help him stop what he enabled. He doesn't know why, but Fate seems to think they're the ones to turn to. Solving the problem without having to reveal his machinations (and mistakes) to his fellow Seers doesn't hurt either.
- The Consilium discovers Ricardo and places him under the tutorship of one of the cabalmates. All seems well until a group of Sleepers and Sleepwalkers demands to speak with the cabal about him. The Stone Island Tenant's Union wants justice for what he's done to his neighbors, and they'll get it by any means necessary.

recently taken an interest in the green willworker. He can't help but admire Ricardo's willingness to embrace magic for his own gain, but would use words like "dupe" or "pawn" rather than "apprentice."

"Every time I put on the Sight, I see the threads of fate getting yanked, like a child's grasping at them. I try to lock on to who's doing it, and I don't see them. What I do see is this horrifying destiny. I'm going to find it. You can help if you want."

Ricardo got his wish: when he Awakened, he also developed a destiny. He can see it in vague visions: people bow to him and he casts spells that change the world forever. What he doesn't realize is that his destiny has a dark side. If nothing changes, a creature from the Abyss will take his body for its own.

Path: Acanthus
Order: None
Legacy: None
Virtue: Tenacious
Vice: Impatient
Obsessions: Warp my neighbors' fates for my entertainment
Aspirations: Flaunt my power; Receive a promotion
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics (Finance) 3, Computer 2, Investigation 2
Physical Skills: Athletics (Biking) 2, Stealth 2
Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise (Navigation) 2, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Destiny 4; Contacts (Hedge Funds); Contacts (Stock Traders); Mentor (Aurochs) 3; Potent Nimbus 2; Professional Training (Analyst) 2; Resources 3; Trained Observer 1
Wisdom: 5
Willpower: 5
Initiative: 6
Defense: 5
Armor: 0/0
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 1
Mana/per Turn: 10/1
Nimbus Tilt: Inflicts −2 to Resolve rolls and −1 to Wits rolls
Dedicated Magical Tool: Shiny American quarter
Arcana: Fate 2, Forces 2, Time 2
Attainments: Conditional Duration; Counterspell (Fate, Forces, Time); Mage Armor (Fate, Forces, Time); Precise Force; Temporal Sympathy
Praxes: Shifting the Odds (Fate 2)
Notes: Ricardo's Asset Skills for Professional Training are Academics and Investigation. His Doom is to be possessed by an Abyssal entity. His Mentor Merit reflects Aurochs' observation and manipulation, as the Seer can step in to interfere subtly with anyone poking around in Ricardo's affairs, although Ricardo doesn't yet know he exists.

U.O.P.S.
THE QUEEN OF THE ROSE

"If you wish to know Truth, I'm always available."

Background

Summer Coleman, a state senator's daughter, needed meaning in her life. She found it in the Holy Temple of the Obelisk, a long-standing organization of mystics. Working under the motto *Ut Omnes Perfecta Sint*, "That All May Be Complete," she dedicated herself to occult practices, much to her traditional family's chagrin.

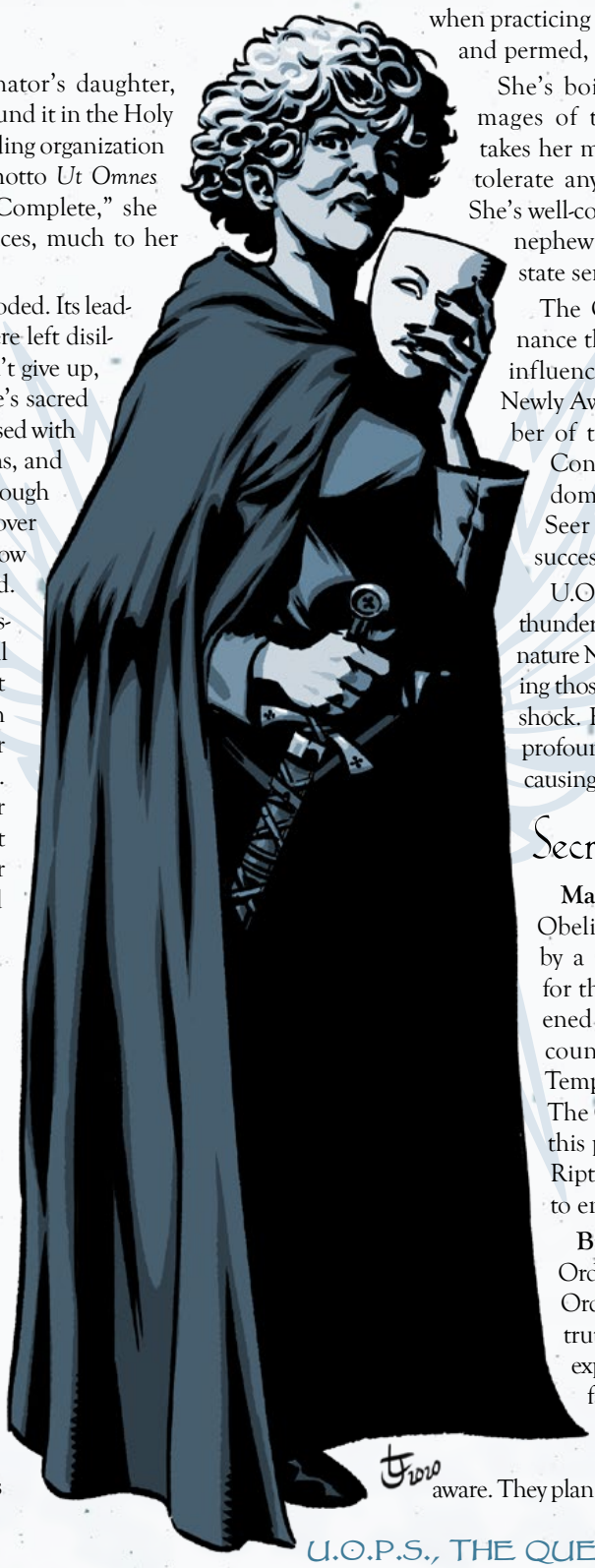
Suddenly, the organization imploded. Its leaders vanished and their disciples were left disillusioned and angry. Summer didn't give up, recovering what few of the Temple's sacred books remained. She became obsessed with the way they described other realms, and the magical energies that flowed through people. One night, as she pored over arcane marginalia, she saw the flow of Mana around her, and Awakened.

Convinced she'd passed her masters' final test, she used her local political connections to reconnect with ex-Temple members. When they couldn't understand her power, she forced understanding. Those whose minds didn't shatter completely under her constant spellwork came through the other side as Sleepwalkers and formed the foundation of a new organization, the Order of the Rose. While most of her flock could not use magic, they could find others like her and bring them into the fold.

40 years later, the Order of the Rose is a full Nameless Order, and the largest Awakened faction in Ripton County, outnumbering the Pentacle and Seers.

Description

Ut Omnes Perfecta Sint, or U.O.P.S. for short, is a white woman in her early 60s. She wears extravagant dresses to public events, but insists on black robes and emotionless white masks when practicing magic. She keeps her gray hair teased and permed, large and voluminous.



She's boisterous and friendly, even to the mages of the major Orders. However, she takes her magical work seriously, and does not tolerate anyone mocking her Order's beliefs. She's well-connected in Ripton County, and her nephew recently took her father's seat in the state senate.

The Order of the Rose keeps its dominance thanks to a strong infrastructure and influence over the county's Sleeper politics. Newly Awakened mages usually meet a member of the Rose first. The area has a tiny Consilium and falls under a Tetrarchy's domain, but the miniscule Pentacle and Seer presence in the region has yet to successfully challenge the Order.

U.O.P.S.' Immediate Nimbus is a rolling thunderstorm with blinding lightning. Her Signature Nimbus manifests as electric sparks, giving those who study her spells' subjects a mild shock. Her Long-Term Nimbus brings about profound religious or spiritual experiences, causing a number of surprise conversions.

Secrets

Mage War: The Holy Temple of the Obelisk was part of the Labyrinth, run by a Guardian known as Voitto. If not for the Silent War of 1979, a local Awakened conflict that mostly wiped out the county's Pentacle and Seer mages, the Temple would have remained to this day. The Order of the Rose took advantage of this power vacuum. Voitto is still part of Ripton County's Consilium, and hopes to end U.O.P.S.' rule.

Broken Promises: When the major Orders resurged, U.O.P.S. promised her Order would refrain from expanding. In truth, she has made many attempts to expand beyond her county, all of them failures. She believes no one knows about these attempts, but the local Consilium and Seers are both well aware. They plan to use her broken promise against her.

Story Hooks

- One of the cabal's Sleepwalker allies is invited to attend a religious service. They gush about how everyone there likes them. They don't realize the service is run by the Rose, who think the Sleepwalker is the perfect candidate to become the Crown.
- U.O.P.S. holds a county-wide Order meeting. She asks for representatives of the other Orders to attend, including the cabal. The meeting is a condescending affair, until suddenly the lights cut out, and one of the Rose' inner circle is found dead on stage a minute later. No one's sure whether U.O.P.S. will go to war over it, or is behind it.
- The Mysterium has tasked the cabal with infiltrating the Order of the Rose, stealing the original copy of the *Crown Notebook*, and bringing it back. It'll be a difficult heist, considering it's deep within U.O.P.S.' well-guarded estate.

Who Wears the Crown?: The Order of the Rose has a secret project: a program to create the Crown of the Rose, a perfected, Awakened human being. The rotes used in these experiments are kept in the *Crown Notebook*, a Grimoire penned by the Order's Awakened inner circle. Every inner circle mage has a copy, but U.O.P.S.' is special. It contains notes describing the Legacy she's developing, the Shapers of the Invisible. Over time, the Rose has discovered many Crown candidates. A few were even willing. All are now dead.

Rumors

"She's one of ours. Hegemony, I'm sure, an undercover one. My worry is that she's too undercover, if you catch my meaning."

U.O.P.S. isn't a Seer, but with her Order's structure and control over parts of Sleeper life, it isn't surprising that anyone would think so. Some Seers believe the best way to end the Rose' dominance is to convert the faith to Exarchal worship. One Pylon has infiltrated the Order to attempt just that.

"Did you hear what they did to Miles? He said they took him to the back room, painted some weird sigils on him, and then drugged him. I'm worried."

The Order of the Rose needs Sleepwalkers. It makes their work easier, and they believe the Crown must be created from one. U.O.P.S. and a few others in the inner circle know how to force a Sleepwalking state with "Stealing Fire" (**Mage**, p. 169) but it's a temporary solution at best. The Order tries to recruit Sleepwalkers from the Pentacle and Seers to make up for it.

"I've seen the graveyard. They give them headstones without names. It's just 'attempt' and a number. There's an open grave there, labeled 'Attempt 57.'"

The Rose treats their deceased candidates with honor, burying them in a private graveyard in a remote part of the county. Then they're declared missing, and the case goes cold. Not all of the candidates die quietly. A few leave ghosts that can tell all kinds of stories about the Order.

Path: Obrimos
Order: Order of the Rose
Legacy: Shapers of the Invisible
Virtue: Patient
Vice: Imposing
Obsessions: Successfully create the Crown of the Rose; Map the Temenos; Contact a Celestine
Aspirations: Convert a promising mage; Wield influence over the county
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 5, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Occult (Astral Projection, Hermeticism) 2, Science (Chemistry) 3
Physical Skills: Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry (Knives) 2
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Inspiring) 2, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Allies (County Government) 5; Astral Adept; Grimoire (Crown Notebook) 3; Hallow 3; Library (Occult) 1; Mana Sensitivity; Mystery Cult Initiation (Order of the Rose) 5; Resources 4
Wisdom: 4
Willpower: 4
Initiative: 4
Defense: 2
Armor: 1/0 (reinforced clothing)
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 6
Mana/per Turn: 20/6
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes −2 to Composure rolls; grants +1 to Strength rolls
Dedicated Magical Tool: Steel ceremonial sword
Arcana: Forces 4, Prime 5, Spirit 3
Attainments: Environmental Immunity; Counterspell (Forces, Prime, Spirit); Create Rote (Prime); Imbue Item; Mage Armor (Forces, Prime, Spirit); Precise Force; Spirit Eyes; Targeted Summoning (Forces, Prime, Spirit); Universal Counterspell; Shapers of the Invisible — Seeing the Invisible; Grasping the Invisible; Harmonizing the Invisible
Praxes: Apocalypse (Prime 4); Command Spirit (Spirit 2); Channel Mana (Prime 3); Display of Power (Prime 3); Place of Power (Spirit 3); Stealing Fire (Prime 3)
Rotes: Celestial Fire (Prime 4, Occult); Create Truth (Prime 5, Occult); Rouse Spirit (Spirit 3, Socialize); Spirit Summons (Spirit 3, Occult)

Shapers of the Invisible

(Obrimos; Spirit)

The Queen developed this Legacy by studying her failures to create the Crown of the Rose. It seeks to harmonize intangible forces with the physical world, with the ultimate goal of creating an enlightened spirit — the key to the Crown's successful creation.

Yantras: perform a ritual to appease a spirit (+1); successfully roll Science to study an occult phenomenon, or Occult to study a mundane one, related to the spell (+2); symbols of a secret society (+1)

Oblations: teaching someone about the spirit world; recruiting new blood for a cult or mystical organization; inspiring someone to better themselves or seek enlightenment

First Attainment: Seeing the Invisible

Prerequisites: Initiation (Spirit 2, Science 2)

This Attainment emulates the Spirit 1 spell "Exorcist's Eye" (**Mage**, p. 180).

Optional: Forces 1

The Shaper may also see invisible mundane forces, such as ultraviolet light, heat, and vibration. This emulates the Forces 1 spell Nightvision (**Mage**, p. 141).

Second Attainment: Grasping the Invisible

Prerequisites: Science 3

This Attainment emulates the Spirit 2 spell "Gossamer Touch" (**Mage**, p. 181).

Optional: Forces 2

For the duration of this Attainment, the Shaper may also shift any one mundane force in the physical world, within an area the size of a small room, to a Twilight state, such that it now affects spirits in Twilight instead of material things and people.

Third Attainment: Harmonizing the Invisible

Prerequisites: Occult 2

This Attainment is a scene-length ceremonial ritual, emulating the Spirit 3 spell "Reaching" (**Mage**, p. 182). It assigns Reach to advanced Duration.

Optional: Forces 3

For the duration of this Attainment, the Shaper may now shift one mundane force from one side of the Gauntlet to the other, as the previous Attainment did into Twilight.

Rote Skills: Empathy, Occult, Science

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Init	Dice	Special
Knife	0L	−1	6	
Ceremonial Sword	3L	−4	5	Two-handed

Notes: The Shapers of the Invisible give U.O.P.S. Spirit as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Mystery Cult Initiation: Order of the Rose (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character is a member of the Order of the Rose, a Nameless Order dedicated to the metaphysical perfection of the human body and soul, and the exploration of other realms. In addition to their benefits, each dot in this Merit acts as Status among other members.

The Chymical Wedding (•): Gain a Specialty in either Occult or Science.

Hermetical Lore (••): Gain the Library (Occult) or (Science) Merit at one dot.

Rote Skills/Otherworldly Awareness (•••): Gain Empathy, Occult, and Science as Rote Skills (Awakened); or, gain a sixth sense for nearby Supernal magic and phenomena (Sleepers and Sleepwalkers). Sleepers cannot progress further in the Order.

One Step Beyond (••••): Gain the Astral Adept Merit. Sleepwalkers cannot progress further.

The Crown Notebook (•••••): Gain the Grimoire (Crown Notebook) 3 Merit. This Grimoire is a custom copy of the original Grimoire for everyone but the Order's leader (who holds the original).

Adelie focused her senses toward the tall, narrow house on the corner. If its eclectic construction wasn't a hint that an Awakened lived there, the webs and lines of magic that draped it like a net was a dead giveaway. Adelie had been trailing the Mystagogue for the past two weeks. It had been far too long since her last meal, and this woman was rife with power. She knew nothing of her prey, but as she touched the magic left in the woman's wake, her Nimbus left Adelie with a heady feeling.

And here it was again, all over the house.

She had watched the woman enter, watched a man leave, watched another woman enter, then leave again. She had no way of knowing whether it was just her quarry inside now, or if others lingered, but her anticipation and desire wouldn't let her wait any longer. Before she knew it, she was out of her car and crossing the street at a half-jog.

Crouching in a flower bed, Adelie could see nearly through to the back from the front window. No one was on the first floor. She tentatively reached out toward the magic encasing the house. It rippled with resistance as she began to unravel the threads. She kept her eye on the room in case her activity alerted its owner, though she assumed it wouldn't.

Her working wormed its way into the magic, unbound it, and collapsed it upon itself. As it fell apart around her, she drank the destruction like cool water. Not enough, no, never enough, but it sated some of her feverish thirst. She checked the window once again; no one was coming.

The door was unlocked. Of course it was; no one who shouldn't be here could have entered through those spells. Adelie slipped in and shut the door soundlessly behind her. She sensed magic from below. Her eyes darted over the staging in the house. Everything looked too well-placed. Dishes sat unused on the dining table, fake flowers rested without dust in the center, and she was sure the cabinets were bare in the kitchen. No one lived here. Good.

A door in the kitchen led to the cellar. A soft light glowed from below, and the room itself pulsed with magic. But this magic wasn't for keeping her out — it was for keeping what was inside in immaculate shape. She ghosted down the stairs and found the Mystagogue sitting in a plush reading chair, bent studiously over what appeared to be a Grimoire. Adelie's smile bore a mix of lust and craving as she approached the other willworker.

The sweet look of shock on the woman's face made Adelie's heart skip two beats. "Who are you? How did you get in here?" she cried as she tried to stand. But her attention to her ink pot and Grimoire wouldn't let her push the table back and endanger her work.

"Shhh..." Adelie intoned words in High Speech. She had already begun unraveling the power in the woman's Nimbus, leeching out her delicious magic.

The woman screamed and tried to run, but Adelie's spell had already taken hold. She was trapped, and her mouth hung open in a wordless cry. Adelie took her time savoring each sensation as she slowly drained the other mage of the Mysteries she held inside her. When Adelie had her fill, she left the woman sitting in her reading chair, hunched over her Grimoire, pristine and perfect. She looked just as delicious in death as she had in life.

CHAPTER TWO: BANISHERS

"Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet."
— James Mattis

Banishers are mages who hunt their own kind. "Banisher" is a catch-all term Awakened society uses for them, but they come in many varieties and turn to destruction for myriad reasons. They may be severely disillusioned or overcome with such fervor that they must consume power, or the Mysteries may actually cause them physical pain.

Most don't call *themselves* Banishers; that would imply kinship with one another or a sense of group identity. Some join Left-Handed Legacies bent on destroying some aspect of magic or preying on other mages, but many others are lone killers or desperate, traumatized sorcerers who believe they have no other recourse.

Ideologues

She thought she was in control. The bolt of lightning she called from the sky was just supposed to be a warning shot. She never meant to kill him, and now his death is on her conscience. Why doesn't anyone else understand how dangerous they are? Sleepers, she decides, must be protected – at any cost.

He only wanted to find out how the woman had died, but reliving her last moments was more than he could handle. The memory replays over and over again in his head, and the more it haunts him, the more he blames the Consilium for letting her die.

Setting the place on fire was deliberate. Calling up the Gulmoth most certainly was not. *This wasn't the first time a mission had gone to shit for her cabal thanks to Paradox, but it was the first time they failed so utterly to contain it. Her terrible epiphany shakes her to her core: magic is wrong. Paradox is a punishment for gazing too deeply. Unfortunately, there's only one true way to stop a mage from chasing a Mystery – one way to save him from himself.*

He wanted to ease the other man's thoughts. But when he took on those memories, he got more than he bargained for. Now he lives with the mind of a killer inside him, hidden away, but ready to come out at any time.

Awakened society tends to gloss over magic's innate dangers. Sure, the Guardians of the Veil caution against Paradox and reaching too far. The Adamantine Arrow warns of the Mysteries' dangers, and stands ready to provide protection. Sadly, mages don't learn their lessons just by taking someone else's advice — and by the time they learn it firsthand it's often too late. Most Orders sweep these individual cases under the rug, not wishing to scare off new apprentices or spread a Banisher-friendly message.

Those who survive the shock or injury that can come from encounters with magic don't always fare well afterward. Magical trauma can leave a stain on the soul. A mage can't eradicate the source of his pain from his life; the supernatural world is ever-present, and he can't turn his insight off. A Banisher is still a mage, drawn to the Mysteries despite himself, and he's empowered to lash out in ways a Sleeper could never imagine. It may seem hypocritical to wield magic while hating it, but magicians aren't immune to self-loathing.

Ideological Banishers have a vendetta against the Awakened or their society that comes from a painful past, and are warped by exposure to the dark underbelly of the Mysteries. Their brand of thinking may not be literally contagious, but a compelling story can catch on quickly with other traumatized or disenfranchised mages. The Orders are generally hard-pressed to tell the difference between a Banisher mystically driven to hunt them and one who just believes wholeheartedly they should die. Careful study could reveal it, but it's hard to study someone who's actively trying to kill you, so doctrinaire mages generally adopt a policy of dispatching Banishers on sight.

Many ideological Banishers Awakened alone and tried out their magic before anyone gave them proper training. A few do come from the Orders, and though their experiences drive them to turn on their fellows, they usually don't get far before their former colleagues hunt them down. The ones who last longest and wreak the most havoc are those who are Nameless, unknown and unfindable.

The Hungry

Power is addictive, and many mages crave it — but for some, gaining power in and of itself becomes the Mystery over which they obsess. Banishers arise when these mages turn to Left-Handed practices, preying on magic or even other Awakened. They

must consume; they must destroy; they must *own* magic, and to them, it's a zero sum game.

These Banishers usually subscribe to Left-Handed Legacies that shape their gnosis into conduits for consuming or destroying magic. These acts power their fell rituals, and sometimes even keep them alive. Some Banishers devour raw magic, taking it from other mages and killing their prey in the process. Some consume other aspects of the Mysteries: secrets, soul stones, timelines, and anything in between. Some Banishers leech the magic from Artifacts and Imbued Items, destroying them and absorbing the mystical backlash. Others perform elaborate rites to absorb Supernal power from the Fallen World itself, creating null zones and stripping away Hallows and Verges.

While the Orders don't willingly or knowingly accept any Banishers, occasionally a Banisher Legacy manages to lurk secretly among them. These mages are often Order members before joining the Legacy, and hiding in plain sight is easier when their colleagues already know and trust them. They hide as long as they can, until their proclivities eventually expose them; but some doctrinaire mages shy away from destroying them outright, in hopes of learning something useful from their atrocities. Seers of the Throne sometimes take a practical approach, making deals with these Banishers to point them at their enemies, but have no qualms about eliminating them if they become a problem.

This kind of Banisher is more likely to band together with fellows than ideologues or the Harrowed, taking on apprentices to induct into their Legacy and occasionally forming small Nameless Orders revolving around these relationships. Some actively seek like-minded recruits, or tempt mages already established in an Order to join them. But ultimately, they're just as likely to destroy another Banisher in their quest for power as any other Awakened.

Legacy Banishers recruit and train others for various reasons. Sometimes it's a question of companionship in their isolation; even power-mad, self-serving sorcerers need friends. Others want to create their own magical society in which the strong must devour the weak to achieve enlightenment. For most, it's also a matter of practicality: it's a lot harder to steal protected secrets and oppose Awakened foes by themselves.

The Harrowed

Every now and then, a Watchtower calls a soul that isn't ready. The new mage signs her name anyway, but alongside her Path's insight, she gains suffering. Willworkers refer to this as a Harrowing Awakening, and the resulting Banishers as the Harrowed.

The Harrowed experience magic as pain and fear, and destroy it to find their own release. They try not to use their magic unless necessary, because casting hurts them and fractures their minds. But they can't help it; they are as obsessed as any other Awakened. Their Peripheral Mage Sight works just fine — and every time they sense something magical, horror awaits. They break, because unlike the Sleepers they resemble, they can't just forget about it. Their eyes are open wide, but they stare into a constant blinding light that tears at their souls. Even those with enough presence of mind to beg another mage to cure them come away in despair — the state is irreversible, as far as the Orders' experts on Awakening know. Learning this, the Harrowed feel they have little choice but to lash out to make the agony stop.

Harrowing Awakenings can happen on their own, for a variety of reasons. Some make it all the way to the cusp before hesitating to reject the Lie, sending a tremor through their soul that never settles. Some push themselves too hard before they're ready to accept gnosis, or are waylaid on their journey by unnatural forces that interfere. But the most common cause of a Harrowing Awakening is another mage: A willworker trying to manipulate unprepared or ill-suited people into Awakening, turning them into victims of hubris; or more powerful beings forcing it onto a soul that can't accept it. This is one of several pressing reasons the Orders warn apprentices against campaigns to push Sleepers into opening their eyes too forcefully; they may be desperate to bring their loved ones into their new lives, but nothing truly prepares an unwilling soul.

In some cases, the Harrowing Awakening is a complete Mystery — something went wrong that lies beyond any mage's ability to predict or examine, and the Banisher is in no condition to pursue the answer herself.

The Harrowed are mages in every way that matters save Wisdom. They possess Mage Sight and cast spells, they don't suffer Quiescence or cause Dissonance, they can join Legacies and cause Paradox, and they obsess over Mysteries even while they suffer for it. Every Harrowed describes the pain and misery of their condition differently: some might get splitting headaches, some become nauseous or feel as though they're burning up from the inside, some suffer severe panic attacks or become dizzy and feel a deep, throbbing ache all over their bodies. Peripheral Mage Sight is a constant torment, and their instinctive way of stopping it is to get rid of whatever triggered it.

Solitary Hunters

Banishers, by nature, are antagonistic to their own kind. Even a Harrowed mage who simply wants to be left alone attacks other mages when they get too close. A well-meaning sorcerer may be able to befriend him or turn him away from murderous tendencies, but he will never fit in with Awakened society. The Orders heavily discourage these attempts, because they don't relish the idea of having to put down their own members who turn Banisher in the process. Although they don't know how it happens, they know a Harrowed Banisher's tainted soul can spread its condition to other mages, even those without any prior evidence of Banisher tendencies. Even an ideological Banisher can be convincing enough to turn someone, under the right circumstances.

Many Harrowed Banishers commit suicide rather than live with the grief and pain magic causes them. Others fall to those upon whom they prey, contending with the full power of a united cabal or Caucus that unequivocally wants them gone. Those who live long enough to become a real problem are the most dangerous and wily.

Because of their solitary existence, most Banishers have limitations on their magical abilities. No one teaches them to

memorize rotes or use High Speech as a Yantra, and few learn or develop Legacies — unless their Legacy is what makes them a Banisher. Without teachers, they can only go so far in exploring Arcana outside their own Paths. The few Banishers who were once Order mages are a rare exception.

All Banishers use magic. Even when it causes them pain or reminds them of trauma, they can't help but draw upon their powers. Banishers jump through a lot of hoops to justify it to themselves. Some see it as a necessary evil to fight fire with fire, one they might as well use rather than let it go to waste. Others view it as a rightful punishment for whatever wrong they've committed, and only when they've finished their task will they see relief. Still others believe all mages are damned, and simply accept their damnation as they fight against the damnation of others.

Many Harrowed Banishers try to fit in with Sleeper society, but quickly find that Sleepers exacerbate their struggles and pain. Banishers tend not to have as fine control over their magic as mages trained by an Order, which can scare or hurt the Sleepers around them. No matter how hard they try to belong, neither willworkers nor Sleepers have a place for them.

Banisher Systems

Create ideological and Legacy Banisher characters just like standard mages, except for the following:

- Banishers usually do not belong to Orders and have no rotes unless they learned them before becoming a Banisher.
- Banishers can have any Awakened Merits, but in general do not have Merits dealing with cabals, Consilia, or Orders, such as Cabal Theme or Order Status. They also rarely have the Mentor Merit unless they're members of a Banisher Legacy, such as the Logophages (p. XX).

Harrowed Banisher Systems

The above guidelines apply to Harrowed Banishers as well, along with a few additional rules:

Harrowed Banishers have Integrity instead of Wisdom, just like Sleepers, and replace Wisdom with Integrity for any mechanics that require it, such as rolling to contain Paradox. Harrowed Integrity works like Sleeper Integrity, and cannot fall below 1. They also suffer a breaking point the first time each story they perform or experience a particular type of magic via spellcasting, Mage Sight, Attainments, and other Supernal phenomena, regardless of its source. The Conditions they suffer for succeeding on a breaking point are the same as a Sleeper's, but those for failing differ. On an ordinary failure, the Harrowed suffers the Berserk Condition. On a dramatic failure, he suffers the Persistent Mage Hunter Condition instead. See p. XX for these Conditions.

Peripheral Mage Sight imposes a –1 penalty on all rolled actions a Harrowed Banisher takes. Active Mage Sight imposes a similar penalty based on what triggered it. Sensing their own powers imposes a –3 penalty; sensing other Supernal magic imposes –2. Sensing non-Supernal supernatural beings and phenomena imposes –1. These penalties are not cumulative; only the highest one applies. They last for the scene, or until the source of the supernatural distraction is removed or destroyed, whichever comes first. Casting spells, using Attainments, studying something with Active or Focused Mage Sight, or using any other magical power deals one point of bashing damage to the Banisher with each distinct action she takes doing so.

A mage who develops a Strong sympathetic link to a Harrowed Banisher is at risk of becoming one herself. If her Long-Term Nimbus settles on a Harrowed Banisher whose own Long-Term Nimbus settles on her, she gains the Supernal Harrowing Condition (p. XX). If she cannot resolve the Condition, the mage could lose her own connection to Wisdom and become Harrowed herself.

The Minotaur
Gatekeeper of Truth

"You have come far — as far as you will get."

Background

Zachary's life as a boy in a city where crime was a way of life because the law was corrupt was a juxtaposition of childish innocence and unbearable violence, a cycle that dragged many of his friends into it over the years. Zachary was lucky; his parents taught their son that while the systems were rigged against him, he would succeed if he worked hard enough. Zachary took these lessons to heart and studied hard, hoping to prove them right and make them proud. He would not fail.

When Zachary left for college, he considered it a small step in his life's journey, a necessary beat that would one day empower him to get his parents into a nicer house in a quieter neighborhood. His classmates and roommates found him weird and standoffish, refusing parties and distractions near exams and ignoring their mockery of his dedication to his studies. To them he had a chip on his shoulder, but Zachary saw himself as one man fighting fate.

His first brush with understanding the Lie came at losing a coveted spot in a college honor society to a far less deserving student with better connections. Zachary refused to resign himself to the system's hypocrisy, even when other students told him it was a regular occurrence. As he dug into the cause of his unjust rejection, he found the chapter of an elite secret society on campus that had pulled the strings. He knew it would be reckless to delve deeper into the rabbit hole, but he felt the call to know more. He *had* to keep fighting, just as he always had, his whole life.

Zachary never left the Labyrinth again.

He was a promising Awakening candidate, moving from conspiracy to cult at speed, but true enlightenment was not to be. His mind slowly frayed as the sheer scope of lies within the Lie made him paranoid, jaded, and eventually hopeless. After the Awakening came, he refused to accept the unequivocal Truth of the Supernal. He doubts it still, seeing *everything* as the Lie.

"Zachary" died upon Awakening and became the Minotaur, a lurker within the Labyrinth and self-appointed guardian of the only Truth he had ever known: the powerful prey upon the vulnerable.

Description

The Minotaur is a neat, well-dressed young man with an athletic build who dresses to fit in wherever he goes. His dark brown eyes focus easily on one thing to the exclusion of all else; his too-intense gaze is something he cannot quite control. Most often, he wears a crisp pair of khakis and a button-down shirt, sometimes with a sport jacket or sweater, but never in bright colors or attention-getting patterns.

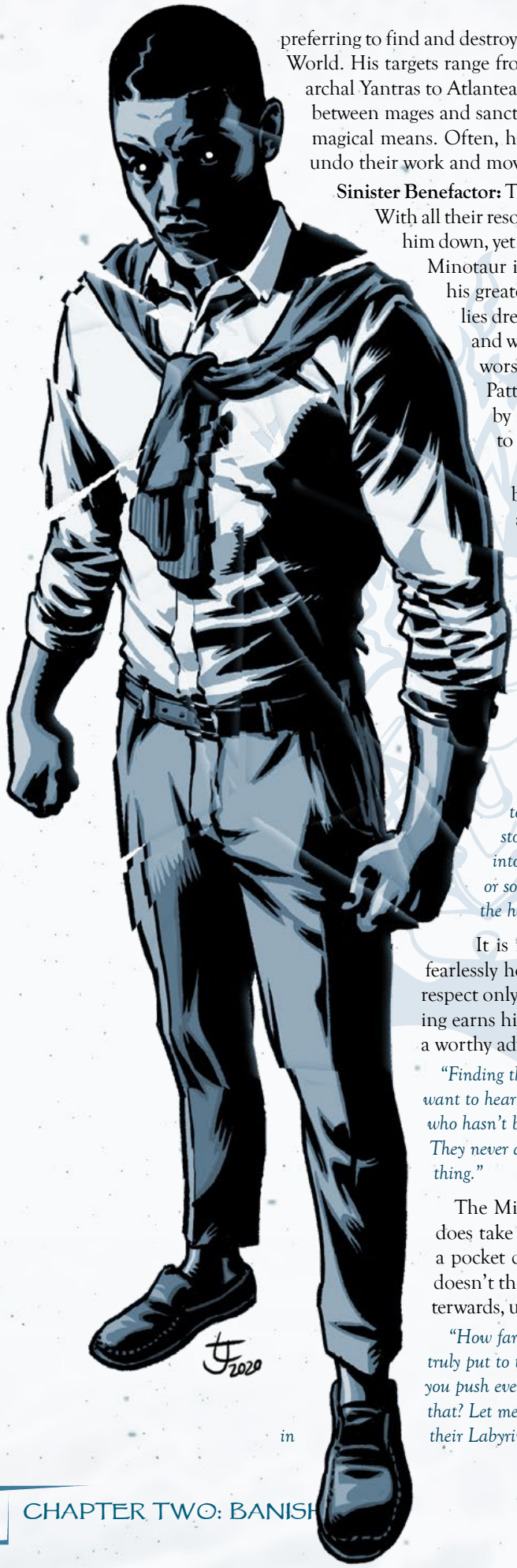
His Immediate Nimbus is an aggressive red aura of hate that bleeds into the world around him, urging those in its vicinity to act on feelings of despair and powerlessness. His Signature Nimbus is a blood smear that stains anything his magic touches. His Long-Term Nimbus makes people paranoid, mistrustful of everyone around them and the power structures that have sway over their lives, mundane or magical.

Secrets

Harbinger of Anarchy: The Minotaur's obsession with institutions of power makes him a dangerous enemy of the Diamond Orders and the Seers of the Throne. No web is too complex for him to corrupt — but he avoids going after the Orders directly,

Story Hooks

- The cabal, while searching for clues about the Minotaur, finds an escapee of the Banisher's pocket dimension. The young Sleepwalker warns them that in the heart of the labyrinth lies a door to the Abyss, wherein a dreaming god eats the souls of the mages the Minotaur captures. He claims to know a way in to rescue the rest, but can the cabal trust this supposed escapee? How would a Sleepwalker have gotten out of there unscathed?
- The local Adamant Sage receives visions of the Minotaur attacking a person of interest in the Consilium, and assigns the cabal to protect the VIP from the Banisher. The théarch in question is in charge of a large local Cryptopoly, which has been facing difficulties with resources for months; as the cabal digs deeper, rumor suggests its leader might have been skimming off the top for a personal project.
- Investigations of the Minotaur take the cabal to the city where the Banisher was born. Although they cannot find anything definitively related to him, something is off about the place, and soon not only is the Minotaur hot in pursuit, but the cabal finds Abyssal underlings infesting the place.



preferring to find and destroy the means through which they exert control over the Fallen World. His targets range from Guardian Labyrinths to Ladder Cryptopolies; from Exarchal Yantras to Atlantean symbols; from ley lines and Hallows to sympathetic links between mages and sancta — anything he can find and poison through mundane or magical means. Often, he doesn't engage with the mages themselves, preferring to undo their work and move on to the next tool of the deceitful Awakened.

Sinister Benefactor: The Minotaur comes and goes, leaving behind little evidence. With all their resources, one Caucus or another should have been able to hunt him down, yet the Banisher remains at large, and the search continues. The Minotaur is an intelligent man with useful magic at his disposal, but his greatest advantage lies in an unseen benefactor: something that lies dreaming in the Abyss. He was a Banisher before it found him, and would be even if it left him alone, but it makes his predations worse. It watches him from afar, drawn by his destruction of Patterns and infrastructure, and sends its minions to aid him by chewing on the fabric of Space and undoing sympathies to protect him from detection. This is an Opacity 6 Mystery.

Family Ties: Unbeknownst to the Minotaur, his Abyssal benefactor found his family, dreaming up the unfortunate accidents that claimed their lives, one by one. When Zachary's mother, Berenice, became the last living member of their family, the dreaming thing dragged the grief-stricken woman into the Abyss. She lives there in a perpetual stasis, much like the Abyssal god itself. Possession of her allows for a permanent connection to the Minotaur, and the Acamoth feeds on the powerful bond between mother and son. This is an Opacity 7 Mystery.

Rumors

"Swear to the Oracles, man! The Minotaur had Rafaela dead to rights and couldn't pull the trigger. And you know Rafaela, she stood her ground and even took the opportunity to stick a knife right into his stomach. Still, he didn't teleport her lower half to Antarctica or something. He escaped, and I owe Rafa a beer, but I wonder what the hell that was about?"

It is rumored that the Minotaur will not kill anyone who can fearlessly hold his gaze. This is true: in his madness, he has grown to respect only the strong. Looking into his terrifying gaze without flinching earns his respect, and elevation from the status of victim to that of a worthy adversary.

"Finding this Mastigos bastard would be hard enough normally, but do you want to hear why it's so difficult? He leaves no bodies behind. Your cabalmate who hasn't been answering your calls for a week? You won't find the body. They never do. They think he eats them. Takes their power. It's a Banisher thing."

The Minotaur does not eat the bodies of those he hunts, but he does take them with him — sometimes still alive — to place them in a pocket dimension of his own making, his very own labyrinth. He doesn't think twice about why he does it or what happens to them afterwards, unaware that the Abyssal god feeds on them as it watches him.

"How far would you go to make sure our precepts and the Awakened are truly put to the test? Merit must guide the Fallen World, right? How far would you push everyone, what kind of example would you create, to make sure of that? Let me ask you this: how the fuck does a Cultor let a Banisher happen in their Labyrinth?"

Although many Guardians of the Veil refuse to believe it, only one real explanation makes sense for a Banisher originating within a Labyrinth and living beyond that point: the Cultor allowed it. Some among the local Consilium don't believe the Minotaur could have outsmarted the Guardians, and think his escape was far from a coincidence.

Path: Mastigos

Legacy: None

Virtue: Dedicated

Vice: Hateful

Obsessions: Find and destroy wellsprings of Supernal power; Tear down symbols of Awakened society

Aspirations: Prove my philosophy is the only Truth; Feed the Awakened to my labyrinth

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Computer 2, Investigation (Mages) 4, Occult 4, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Firearms (Revolvers) 3, Drive 2, Stealth (Crowds) 4

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation (Staredowns) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Language (Spanish) 1, Occultation 3, Potent Nimbus 2, Potent Resonance, Safe Place (Abandoned Library) 4, Sanctum 3

Wisdom: 5

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 6 (5 with armor)

Armor: 2/4 (flak jacket)

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Gnosis: 5

Mana/per Turn: 15/5

Nimbus Tilt: Imposes –3 to Resolve rolls and –2 to Composure rolls

Dedicated Magical Tool: An iron coin, bent in half

Arcana: Fate 4, Mind 2, Space 5

Attainments: Conditional Duration; Counterspell (Fate, Mind, Space); Create Rote (Space); Everywhere; Mage Armor (Fate, Mind, Space); Mind's Eye; Targeted Summoning (Fate, Space); Sympathetic Range; Unbound Fate

Praxes: Correspondence (Space 1), Divine Intervention (Fate 4), Lying Maps (Space 2), Quarantine (Space 5), Shared Fate (Fate 3), Strings of Fate (Fate 4), Veil Sympathy (Space 2)

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice
Heavy revolver	2L	35/70/140	6	–2	7
Unarmed	0B	Melee	n/a	–0	5

Officer Kelly and the Dark Passenger

"5150? Leave it to me. Of course I'm on duty tonight, what made you think otherwise? Kelly out."

Background

Maxwell Peter Kelly was a distinguished police officer, considered a local hero. One case perplexed him: a series of ritualistic murders that he could not forget, even in his sleep. The murders shook Kelly so hard they became an obsession. Soon, he dedicated all his waking hours to finding the heinous crimes' perpetrator(s), refusing aid from other agencies or his fellow officers in his insistence that he alone must solve them.

Kelly's investigation revealed facets of his town he had never noticed before, places that instilled a deep sense of both dread and wonder in his heart: places he had never visited but, in the pursuit of the murderer, he now had the drive to explore. He met strange entities that left lasting impressions on him, and wondered whether he had lost his mind, or if things were finally making sense. Every day spent on the case had Kelly feeling less and less like himself, like he was establishing a connection with his white whale. He thought, at times, that he had embarked on a journey meant for someone else, someone brutal and unknowable to him.

Kelly was never meant to Awaken — his soul rejected the call, because the call wasn't supposed to be for him at all. It was for the murderer. But Kelly's drive to catch the killer, to think like them, to *be* them so he could finally put them behind bars, caught him up in the murderer's waking world dream, until he ended up usurping the Awakening itself. He stood broken and confused before the Watchtower in all its overwhelming Truth and could not make sense of it. He tore himself asunder with the desire to be the hero, and the crippling awareness that he had descended into a darkness he did not understand. His soul twisted, and he became one of the Harrowed.

Ten years later, Maxwell Kelly is back to being a staple of his community, a man almost fully recovered from his breakdown all those years ago. The police officer is a simple, friendly man, until he senses magic in his Periphery. The resulting pain is searing, like knives prying his skin from his bones. When the pain becomes unbearable, it's as though a switch flips in his head; *something* happens, and he loses time. Those who interact with him during these periods describe him as "intensely focused" but distant, always busy with something he never discloses.

The blackouts appall Officer Kelly, but he is too afraid to look into them, fearing to find a connection between them and the grisly murders in the news that coincide with them. Officer Kelly is unwell, and he believes he is not alone in his own body.

Description

Officer Kelly is a tall, tidy man with slicked-back hair and crystal blue eyes. Although his face is capable of brightening up, his uncanny focus makes him seem grim. His features are thin, and though he's pushing 50 he's still fit, capable of outperforming many of the precinct's younger officers.

Kelly's Immediate Nimbus is a flare of red and blue light that bathes the area and compels others to behave in an orderly fashion. His Signature Nimbus is complete, dead silence. His Long-Term Nimbus makes people obsessed with mending little imperfections around them, from removing moles and pimples to stitching a loose button securely onto a coat.

Secrets

Darkness Within: Although it may be hard to accept, evil is not always the province of monsters and unnatural predators

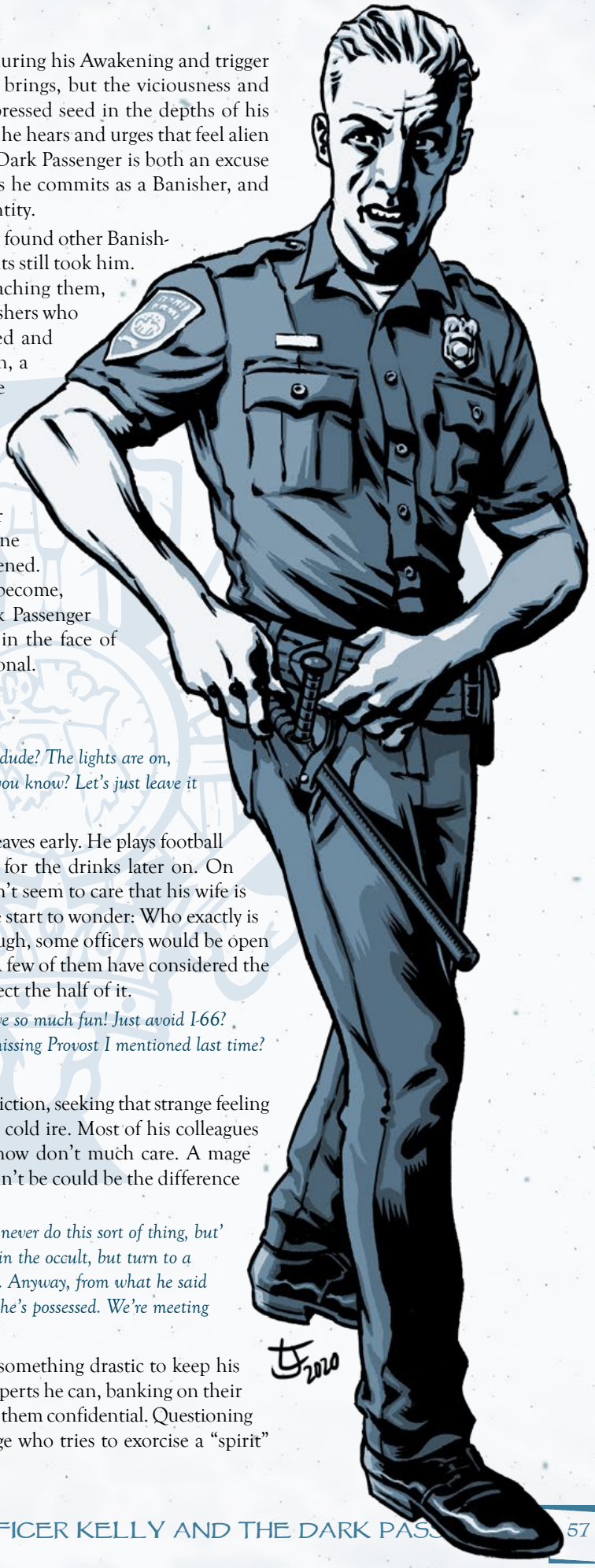
Story Hooks

- The cabal's Proximus ally calls in desperation, saying someone's hunting them down — some psychotic cop by a lonesome exit on an out-of-the-way highway. That's all the cabal gets before the call cuts out.
- The cabal discovers the identity of the original killer Kelly tried to hunt down, who has since then Awakened as a Moros, joined the Guardians of the Veil, and stopped killing. Unfortunately, Kelly has also discovered the murderer's identity, and protecting the Guardian brings the wrath of the Dark Passenger crashing down on them all.
- Someone anonymously delivers security footage to the cabal, all its sympathetic ties and history erased, that shows the Dark Passenger in action, performing clear and obvious magic. Investigation tracks it back to the local precinct's evidence locker, though the name of the officer who signed it out is bogus. Is there another mage in the department looking for help, or is the Dark Passenger using Kelly's position to lure in new victims?

from the shadows. Officer Kelly's blackouts started during his Awakening and trigger in him an irrational hatred for the pain that magic brings, but the viciousness and callousness of each Awakened kill comes from a repressed seed in the depths of his mind. No creature controls him, despite the whispers he hears and urges that feel alien to him — they're all products of his Mage Sight. His Dark Passenger is both an excuse his broken soul came up with to justify the atrocities he commits as a Banisher, and the True self he perceives as his warped magical identity.

Role Model: Over the last decade, Officer Kelly has found other Banishers but never attacked them, even though the blackouts still took him. Instead, the Dark Passenger taught them, and in teaching them, he spreads his condition like a virus. Ideological Banishers who encounter Officer Kelly change, becoming Harrowed and suffering the same kinds of blackouts. Every so often, a cabal claims to have found the murderer responsible for all the dead Awakened; but the real Dark Passenger remains at large.

The Mystery Murderer: The murderer who sent Kelly into the downward spiral toward his Harrowing Awakening is still out there, and the officer is no closer to catching them now than he was years ago, save for one new piece of information: his quarry is also now Awakened. Although Kelly might live in denial of what he has become, when his Peripheral Mage Sight stings and the Dark Passenger comes out, the Banisher sees his Mystery murderer in the face of every Awakened he kills. Every time, the hunt is personal.



Rumors

"Kelly? I don't know, man, I don't like to gossip, but that dude? The lights are on, but no one's home. I kind of get that Hannibal Lecter vibe, you know? Let's just leave it at that."

Kelly attends the neighborhood barbecues, but he leaves early. He plays football with the boys at the department, but he never stays for the drinks later on. On New Years Eve he's home by nine sharp, and he doesn't seem to care that his wife is cheating on him. The small things add up, and people start to wonder: Who exactly is Kelly, and why is he so strange? If asked discreetly enough, some officers would be open to talking about him and those strange habits of his. A few of them have considered the idea that *he's* the serial murderer, but they don't suspect the half of it.

"You coming over? Awesome, awesome. We're going to have so much fun! Just avoid I-66? There's something fucked up going on there. Remember the missing Provost I mentioned last time? They still haven't found the body."

Officer Kelly patrols isolated places beyond his jurisdiction, seeking that strange feeling of something wrong, a sign that marks a target for his cold ire. Most of his colleagues are unaware he's overstepping, and those who do know don't much care. A mage looking for, or noticing, a police car where one shouldn't be could be the difference between life and death.

"He said he didn't know who else to turn to. The usual 'I never do this sort of thing, but' speech. It's amazing how many people say they don't believe in the occult, but turn to a professional medium as soon as they trip over anything weird. Anyway, from what he said and from what I observed, I do think there's every possibility he's possessed. We're meeting again tomorrow night; I'll try an exorcism then."

If he gets desperate enough and feels he has to do something drastic to keep his cover intact, Kelly seeks help from the most obscure experts he can, banking on their overlooked niche in Sleeper society to keep what he tells them confidential. Questioning them could yield clues or opportunities, but any mage who tries to exorcise a "spirit" learns quickly that this rumor is highly inaccurate.

Path: Moros
Legacy: None
Virtue: Just
Vice: Violent
Obsessions: Recent Awakenings; The Dark Passenger
Aspirations: Destroy magic; Find the Mystery murderer
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4 Resolve 5
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 4
Mental Skills: Academics (Law) 2, Investigation 5
Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 3, Brawl (Grappling) 3, Firearms (Handguns) 4, Drive 2, Stealth 4, Weaponry 2
Social Skills: Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3, Streetwise (Hidden Places) 5
Merits: Allies (Police) 2; Contacts (District Attorney's Office); Contacts (Prison Wardens); Police Tactics 3 (**CofD**, p. 64); Professional Training (Cop) 5; Shadow Name (Dark Passenger) 3; Trained Observer 3
Integrity: 3
Willpower: 9
Initiative: 7
Defense: 6
Armor: 1/3 (kevlar vest)
Speed: 11
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Mana/per Turn: 13/4
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes –2 to Wits rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: His police-issue baton.
Arcana: Death 3, Forces 3, Matter 4
Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Forces, Matter); Durability Control; Eyes of the Dead; Mage Armor (Death, Forces, Matter); Permanence; Precise Force; Targeted Summoning (Death, Forces, Matter)
Praxes: Aegis (Matter 3); Corpse Mask (Death 1); Devouring the Slain (Death 3); Machine Invisibility (Matter 2); Suppress Aura (Death 2); Transmission (Forces 2); Zoom In (Forces 2)
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice
Heavy pistol	2L	30/60/120	7+1	–2	8
Baton	1L	Melee	n/a	–1	5

Notes: Officer Kelly suffers the Persistent Fugue Condition (**Mage**, p. 316), triggered by his Peripheral Mage Sight and his own magic. During his blackouts, his Shadow identity — the Dark Passenger — becomes dominant.

Kelly's Asset Skills for Professional Training are Investigation, Streetwise, and Firearms.

Sophia
Scheming Antiques Dealer

"I'm afraid you're mistaken on this piece's origins in Sumer. I'll just take it off your hands."

Background

Sophia, or Angela Jackson as Sleeper society knows her, is a young woman with big aspirations and unwavering dedication. In her early life, she was degraded, shunned, mocked, and forced to navigate a hostile environment designed to make her feel lesser, just for being a black woman in east Texas. At the same time, she had boundless support from her community, a loving family, and a strong sense of identity that brought her through those trials. She became an intelligent young woman keen on making her way in the world and giving back to the community that raised her.

Her Awakening was one of self-actualization and personal growth. Her Watchtower did not draw her in so much as she sought it out. In the end, through the Aether, she truly found her calling. It's shocking to other mages, then, to find out that she quickly fell in with Logophages — or as they call themselves, Secret Keepers.

Sophia's mentor, Izukanne, found her shortly after her Awakening. Had anyone else come to her first, her life might be different, but Izukanne was her only guide to the Mysteries.

Izukanne filled Sophia's mind with her Legacy's philosophy: if power comes from knowing, being the *only* one who knows a thing is the ultimate power. Izukanne indoctrinated Sophia with a belief that the Mysteries are dangerous, and arcane knowledge must be forgotten forever. Understanding, Izukanne told her, is not for everyone: Awakened who uncover secrets destroy Sleepers with the knowledge they gain, and most don't seem to care one bit about it.

Sophia could see the danger of unmitigated power in the hands of people not careful enough to curb its influence on those helpless to resist it, and readily joined Izukanne's crusade. Only much later, after the two women had not only bound themselves together in a Legacy partnership, but a true partnership of love and devotion, did Sophia see the cost of her choices. By then, it was too late. The rush of power when she kills is just too sweet to give up now.

Antiquities Trade

Sophia had an MBA when she first met Izukanne, but brushed up on her history shortly afterward. Izukanne's first task for her was to find Artifacts hidden in Sleeper museums and exhibits, and take them out of circulation. Sophia started out frequenting museums and public gallery collections. It was easy for her to steal the items and leave the Sleepers unaware that the object was ever there in the first place.

She soon discovered this wasn't enough; few true Artifacts are kept in such public places. She investigated private collections and black markets, and there she found a booming trade in not only Artifacts, but other items touched by the Supernal. Frequenting private auctions, Sophia scours the lots for hints of magic. She's gained a reputation among Sleepers as not only knowledgeable in the true origins of antiquities and able to spot fakes, but also a good source of market information and gossip on rare deals.

She uses the antiquities business as a front to glean information on magical items and the mages snooping around looking for them. She hunts down and removes both, ensuring the secrets they hold can never hurt humanity again.

Description

Sophia is a short woman with deep brown eyes and hair kept in neat, tight braids. She loves couture from all over the world, especially Ankara fashion and styles inspired by traditional Nigerian clothes, but can also be found in a conservative skirt suit in the auction halls. Her friendly Texan accent and small stature put people at ease, which she uses to her advantage. She hides from other mages when possible and kills those who get too close to her business.

Sophia's Immediate Nimbus is a purifying, consuming fire that dances across her skin and into the air. Her Signature Nimbus is a heavy gravity from a sucking void. Her Long-Term Nimbus makes people lose track of small things, like their children's soccer games on their calendars or where they left their

Story Hooks

- Another mage asks the cabal for help finding her cabalmate, who vanished after meeting with an antiquities dealer about a rare Artifact. She's worried magic is involved, but hasn't been able to get any information on the dealer. Worse, she and the missing mage needed the Artifact to find their *other* missing cabalmate. Now she's alone, and believes she's next.
- A powerful Artifact turns up in town and it's a scramble to see who can get their hands on it first. The cabal is tasked with procuring it from its private collection, but learns that Viridian (p. XX) has already pilfered it and has lined up a lucrative deal with a buyer among the Seers of the Throne. When Sophia shows up, willing to kill to seal the deal, the cabal must decide how best to secure the Artifact to avoid it falling into *either* set of wrong hands, and whether to interfere with the Banisher's murderous mission.
- Sophia approaches the cabal seeking aid. Izukanne and one of the apprentices have disappeared, and she can't remember anything about where they might be or why. She's worried enough to have broken her moratorium on working with other mages, hoping they can help her find out where her lover has gone.

keys, dismissing them as inconsequential compared to their grander ambitions and goals.

Sophia took her Shadow Name with the conviction that she is a paragon of Wisdom, saving the Awakened from themselves and Sleepers from sorcerers too unwise to know any better. She kills other mages and steals their knowledge, believing she's a protector. Her love for Izukanne makes that logic seem sounder and keeps the guilt of murder from haunting her dreams at night. When the weight of her actions takes too much of a toll on her, she happily scours the memories from her own mind.

Sophia isn't a cold-blooded killer, though. Both she and Izukanne meticulously research their victims, only targeting those who advance too far, by Secret Keeper standards. Newly Awakened get a pass, or are inducted into the Legacy, depending on their personalities and proclivities.

Secrets

Lie to Me: Sophia doesn't keep the secrets she steals, preferring to destroy them rather than let them fall into the wrong hands. Her habit of editing her own memories means she has painted the world into a picture she can live with.

It also means she has willingly forgotten that she learned Izukanne's true plans. Sophia is not Izukanne's only apprentice, though she is her only lover. Izukanne grooms her other apprentices to one day be a grand feast for the two of them, something that horrified Sophia when she found out. She debated for days about telling the neophytes of their danger, but instead decided to compartmentalize the memory deep within her mind. She doesn't know why she didn't just obliterate it, but if someone could make her remember, she might be inclined to turn on Izukanne.

Rumors

"You gotta be careful about leaving Artifacts in Sleeper hands, but it's worse when Banishers get them. I've heard there's a nest of Banishers stockpiling them in hopes to take us all down one day."

Between Sophia, Izukanne, and the apprentices, they can certainly appear to be working together and stockpiling. But the apprentices don't work together or even know about each other, except Sophia who knows about them all. They are consuming, not stockpiling, the objects they acquire, but most mages tend to assume any Banisher is just interested in murdering them.

"There's this woman, Mrs. Jackson, who pays top dollar for information. It doesn't matter how obscure, insignificant, or out there you might think it is, she's willing to pay for almost anything. *I put myself through college giving her useless tidbits."*

Sophia cultivates a reputation among Sleepers as an information broker. She pays for everything, even if it ends up being useless, in hopes that her informants will bring her some gems — and they do. While they can't remember having seen magic, she is adept at pulling repressed memories from the minds of Sleepers who show signs of being touched by a mage's Nimbus.

"The Mystagogues are all up in arms about some Artifact that's gone missing. Not from a vault somewhere, but something someone was tracking down. It's just gone *now. They think it's those Banishers in Houston. Good luck tracking them down."*

Sophia and Izukanne's actions are not a secret to Awakened society, but finding them has proven difficult and dangerous. They kill anyone who gets too close and are meticulous about keeping their footprint to a minimum. The local Mysterium Caucus blames them for every missing Artifact, but they do so mostly in hopes that their complaints will prompt someone else to hunt them down and get rid of them, rather than because they really believe it.

Path: Obrimos
Order: None
Legacy: Logophages (Secret Keepers)
Virtue: Loyal
Vice: Overconfident
Obsessions: Destroy Artifacts in other mages' hands; Learn secrets held by Order mages
Aspirations: Recruit a new mage to join Izukanne's group; Infiltrate the local Mysterium to find their Artifact vault

Logophages

(Mastigos, Guardians of the Veil & Mysterium; Prime)

Logophages believe in consuming secrets completely, learning them all and then eradicating them so none may further harm humanity with their misuse. Better, they say, to let mages who know better keep the knowledge hidden within themselves than allow it to crumble under the cruel gazes of Dissonance and Paradox — the inevitable consequences of other mages' folly. These Banishers are willing to sacrifice of themselves to gain the power to force the sacrifices of others.

Yantras: sources of knowledge (books, informants, etc.) as sacraments (**Mage**, p. 122); encrypting a message (+1); learning something the mage shouldn't know through eavesdropping or spying (+1, or +2 if spying on other mages)

Oblations: spreading misinformation to direct people away from a specific truth; conditioning oneself to forget an event or piece of information without magic; convincing someone to confess a deep, dark secret

First Attainment: Grasp the Arcane

Prerequisites: Initiation (Prime 3, Mind 1, Subterfuge 2, Empathy *or* Investigation 2)

Before the Secret Keeper can consume a secret, she must learn it. This Attainment falls under the Practice of Unveiling. It grants the ability to spend 1 Mana to substitute the dot rating of the highest-rated Attainment known in this Legacy for dots of any Arcanum she knows when her player rolls a Revelation for Focused Mage Sight. This doesn't apply to Scrutiny rolls; delving beyond surface information still requires a full understanding of an appropriate Arcanum. When studying another character this way, she may also receive the answer to one question as though she'd cast the Mind 1 spell "Mental Scan" (**Mage**, p. 159) for each successful Revelation roll, or two questions on an exceptional success.

Second Attainment: Security of the Lost

Prerequisites: Mind 2, Subterfuge 3

The Secret Keeper consumes knowledge, sending it back to the Supernal to await a worthy soul, and gains power in the process. This Attainment emulates the Mind 2 spell "Memory Hole" (**Mage**, p. 160), but the mage herself is the only valid subject. During its duration, she may spend 1 Mana to convert the veiled memory into a point of Willpower, thus permanently destroying the memory rather than simply compartmentalizing it. This Willpower point may exceed her usual maximum, but vanishes at the end of the scene if unspent.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (Ancient Civilizations) 5, Investigation 1, Occult (Ancient Lore) 2, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Drive 1, Larceny (Cat Burglary) 3, Stealth 3

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Contacts (Antiquities Dealers); Contacts (Museum Curators); Language (Igbo); Library (Academics) 3; Mana Sensitivity; Occultation 2; Resources 3; Safe Place 3 (Shared); Sanctum 3 (Shared)

Wisdom: 2

Willpower: 9

Initiative: 8

Defense: 5

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Gnosis: 4

Mana/per Turn: 13/4

Nimbus Tilt: Imposes –1 to Presence and Manipulation rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A small gold mirror.

Arcana: Death 1, Forces 1, Mind 3, Prime 4, Space 3

Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Forces, Mind, Prime, Space); Eyes of the Dead; Imbue Item; Mage Armor (Mind, Prime, Space), Mind's Eye; Precise Force; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Mind, Prime, Space); Universal Counterspell; Logophages — Grasp the Arcane; Security of the Lost

Praxes: Befuddle (Mind 3); Memory Hole (Mind 2); Soul Marks (Death 1); Supernal Dispellation (Prime 4); Veil Sympathy (Space 2)

I push the security center's door open and crash down into a swivel chair. One of the locals is waiting for me; Megiddo looks taken aback at my disheveled appearance, but then he hasn't been hauled out of bed in the middle of the night and thrown through a portal across several time zones at the Bellerophon Group's request.

"There she is," says Megiddo.

The bank of screens in front of us flickers with electronic ill temper. I squint at the image, trying to make her out. There: she's pushing through the crowd on the concourse. No one pays any attention to her.

"All right," I say, and steeple my fingers. "Run me through what we know about Pleroma."

The local nods, keeping his eyes on the grainy little shape threading its way through the airport. "Obrimos, Ladder, started mucking around with souls. She got a telling off and a rap on the knuckles, but apparently it wasn't enough. Since the Guardians were keeping an eye on her, she must have realized she couldn't get away with experimenting on other people anymore."

The security center shivers from the roaring rumble of an aircraft's engines.

"Let me guess." I stifle a yawn. "She started working on herself instead." Megiddo scowls, but doesn't deny it.

I glance over the other screens. They're taking Pleroma seriously, at least; several Arrows are positioned around the concourse, ready to pounce. They stick out like sore thumbs, relying on their magic to ward off questioning gazes from the Sleeper crowd.

"So, what's the Bellerophon playbook?" Megiddo asks.

"Honestly," I admit, "an airport is a nightmare scenario. If she's really Enraptured, she won't hesitate to pull the trigger if your people move in, Sleepers or not. How did you even end up in this situation?"

He has the good grace to look embarrassed. "She's been displaying talent with Arcana well beyond her former recorded capabilities."

I frown. "Right. So, she's been on the run for, what, several weeks now?" He nods. "Dodging Guardians and Arrows. No time to indulge herself. What about her Tulpa? She must have been spilling some out. We need to know how they manifest."

"Her what?"

I stare at him for a long moment, then turn back to the screen. She's at the security checkpoint. The woman she's talking to shakes her head; something's wrong. Pleroma gets angry, frustrated.

"Shit. Neutralize her now. Subtly as you can, excise her psyche, tear her out of time, punch her fucking soul out but do it now because —"

Too late.

Pleroma contorts; the air around her crackles and splits apart in full view of the concourse of Sleepers.

Tomorrow's news will say this is a terrorist attack. All these Sleepers will absolutely believe it.

Right now, though, I watch in horror as a Greater Tulpa tears its way into the world, a shining pillar of fire and light, and the scene descends into chaos.

CHAPTER THREE
THE RAPT

"You become what you think about all day long."
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

To many mages, the *Rapt* are little more than a cautionary tale, a distant example of what awaits reckless Awakened who let their obsessions command them and fall utterly to hubris in pursuit of revelation. The Rapt are the classic horror story of the broken wizard who can no longer connect with her humanity, lost to her hunger for eldritch knowledge and unshackled by limitations of reason or ethics. Mages know the Rapt exist in theory; in practice, few Awakened possess the humility to admit they could ever submit to Rapture, and thus to truly appreciate the threat.

Each Enraptured mage is a walking wound in reality spilling uncontrolled magic. Their Nimbuses leak raw Supernal power, cloaking them from Sleepers and causing bizarre phenomena in their wake. An Enraptured mage labors under the weight of a *Fault*, an arcane compulsion that dictates their behavior or an obsession turned spiritually cancerous.

The Rapt are more than just a cautionary tale. They're a living litany of the sins of the Awakened.

Consuming Obsession

It'll never happen here, the willworker tells himself. *It'll never happen to anyone I know. It'll never happen to me.* He clings to this mantra even as he subjugates the mind of his victim, persuading himself it's necessary: It's for her own good; the ends justify the means. Then he does it again, his Wisdom erodes just a little bit more, and it becomes that much easier to ignore the consequences of his actions or convince himself they don't matter. The harder it gets for him to keep firm control of his magic, the more he *believes* he's in control, until one day rock bottom catches up to him. Obsession drives every mage, and it's so easy to come up with excuses for unwise acts in service to it. The Rapt embody that tendency, taken to its extreme conclusion: sorcerers who not only don't bother justifying their actions, but no longer *can*. Every Act of Hubris brings a mage closer to Rapture.

All Awakened have bad days, or occasionally need to take drastic measures to keep themselves or others alive. They all face tribulations that test their Wisdom, and sometimes they slip up. A single hubristic act isn't condemnation to the path of the Rapt. The looming shadow of Rapture, though, is cast by the uneasy, deep-down certainty that *every* mage has the potential to fall that far.

Now take that one bad day and stretch it into an ongoing nightmare. Dangle enough temptations in front of the so-called Wise; force an Awakened to push down her hunger for Mysteries for too long at the behest of duty or lofty ideals. Under such pressures, what might have seemed unconscionable yesterday seems necessary today. Some magicians don't even need an excuse; they run toward Rapture with arms outstretched, thinking only of the occult rewards of their obsessions and never considering the consequences. After all, a mage doesn't grow any wiser without letting the desire to do so become a Mystery of its own.

Fading Wisdom

Rapture results from the loss of all Wisdom. Most Enraptured mages fall through repeated abuses, slowly losing any ability to judge or reason when it comes to using magic. They commit Acts of Hubris until what they would once have thought monstrous or irresponsible is the new normal.

The Enraptured mage's will splinters apart under the spiritual pressure of his overwhelming obsessions. He pulls away from humanity's collective soul through the Fault that drives him, surrendering to the imperatives of his own magic rather than following the Temenos' cultural and social subconscious. Some

Enraptured?

Enraptured mages, or "the Rapt" for short, are what were previously referred to as "the Mad" or "Mad Ones." The terminology changed to emphasize that the damage to an Enraptured magician's Pattern isn't equivalent to any form of mundane mental illness; it's an occult affliction, a spiritual wound that is usually self-inflicted. These mages don't "go Mad," they succumb to Rapture.

Awakened inure themselves to the grim reality of their actions with a smattering of spells, but they're like children beside the Rapt, who aren't merely cold or callous but entirely broken.

By and large, the Rapt create their own degeneracy. Such Awakened walk the road to Rapture with heads held high, willingly choosing to violate the world around them until all other concerns fall away. A mage might hesitate to carve the eyeballs out of still-living Sleeper victims the first time, but he keeps doing it anyway because he *needs* the vitreous humours of those who have seen death, and that weighs more heavily on him than the screams and the blood and the guilt. Another hungers for a greater understanding of souls. If that means she has to get her metaphorical hands on some — and take them apart — that's what she'll do, again and again, in service to her lust for knowledge. Many chase diabolical Mysteries before they ever fall to Rapture.

A handful of Rapt, though, lose Wisdom due to circumstances visited upon them. Dangerous Mysteries, calamitous supernatural events, or grievous metaphysical injuries can tear the Wisdom out of an Awakened soul, rending her connection to the rest of humanity without any slow descent into hubris. Some calamities are the outcome of a magician's unwise dabbling with powers beyond her ken, but a few Rapt are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, caught in an Astral tsunami that rips at the soul or attacked by otherworldly entities that yearn for Wisdom's sweet taste.

Most pitiful of all are the Rapt known as *Walkers*. These hapless souls never have a chance to grasp the Truth; their Wisdom shreds to tatters during the process of Awakening itself. A Walker appears incoherent or catatonic, but her awareness roves beyond her body, possessing her own Greater Tulpa (p. XX) to pursue whatever weird Fault she now possesses.

Any Enraptured mage is dangerous and destabilizing. He pursues his Fault with little regard for safety, sanity, or side effects. Even Rapt who have banal or minor Faults that snare them in compulsive loops of ostensibly harmless behavior, still leak magic. Their Nimbuses' sorcerous contagion spreads their influence without conscious effort. More self-aware Enraptured are odious, eagerly shoveling shattered souls into the furnace of their research or brutally killing again and again just to keep the blood and pain flowing. Even these Rapt usually don't think they're doing anything wrong, puzzled and upset by other Awakened trying to stop them from building sculptures of living flesh, or poisoning rivers, or killing every mage they meet whose Shadow Name matches some dire portent from their fevered minds.

The Blind and the Foolish

Despite the dangers, some mages seek out the Rapt. Enraptured mages possess significant insight into the arcane matters to which their Faults relate, or emanate Tulpa that are Mysteries in their own right. With complete disregard for any moral or ethical limitations and an unmatched single-mindedness, the Rapt can achieve great leaps forward in magical understanding. Many Awakened are keen to harness these uninhibited revelations.

The Bellerophon Group

The Bellerophon Group is an international network of Awakened, mostly from the Adamantine Arrow, who specialize in researching Rapture and dealing with those who succumb to it. Founded in 1945, Bellerophon shares information and expertise, and keeps vigilant watch for serious incidents caused by Rapt activity.

Usually, an Enraptured magician only comes to Bellerophon's attention after a disaster is already over, but its members still see value in examining the aftermath. These investigations allow them to learn what they can for future calamities and gather evidence to find and capture the mage responsible. Even now, the Pentacle doesn't truly understand the full implications of Rapture, and it's the Bellerophon Group's duty to assemble a complete picture.

A willworker who sees one of the Rapt as a potential tutor or oracle plays a dangerous game. Enraptured mages see other Awakened only as accessories — or threats — to their own obsessions. Just because a mage is Enraptured, does not make her a fool, and some Rapt outright prey on other Awakened as part of their Faults. Anyone who tries to barter with or control the Rapt may find himself manipulated in turn, and should fear the moment when the Enraptured teacher has what she wants from him.

Most Awakened encounter the Rapt without ever knowing it. An Enraptured magician doesn't spring into existence fully-formed; she has colleagues, friends, and rivals who knew her from before the descent into Rapture. At first, her acquaintances may have no idea of what's befallen her, especially when she takes steps to hide whatever Acts of Hubris led to this point. Those closest to the Rapt usually pick up on the signs first, particularly cabalmates, apprentices, and mentors intimately familiar not only with her behavior, but with her magic.

The responsibility of dealing with a friend or ally who succumbs to Rapture is a heavy one. Alerting the Orders or Consilium could well sentence her to death, and it's hard to sign a friend's execution order. Selfishness, rather than compassion, can also influence such decisions. A mentor who sees a promising student fall to Rapture fears her exposure would bring suspicion upon him and his teaching methods. An apprentice cleaves to his teacher even as she rambles off into eldritch perversion, tending to her needs and covering up her crimes — and hoping to gain new insight from her growing power before he moves on.

As a result, an Enraptured mage can hide within the Pentacle or the Pyramid for some time, with cabalmates and colleagues helping to hide her state. Caught up in loyalty, dread, friendship, or love, the Awakened allow the canker to fester in their midst even as their unease grows. Usually, the Rapt ends up committing an act she cannot or will not hide, which risks revealing her allies' complicity.

Some Rapt hold onto superficial control of themselves, realizing that discovery and persecution would deny them future freedom to pursue their Faults. These are often the most dangerous. Suppressing the Fault's drive builds up arcane pressure called *Stress* within the Enraptured mage's soul. Left unsated, it spills out through her Nimbus as *Tulpa* — uncontrolled manifestations of her magic — often in devastating fashion. No matter how much an Enraptured sorcerer may want to hold back, if she cannot indulge her Fault, the Tulpa force the issue.

Unshackled Power

With Rapture comes power. An Enraptured mage possesses incredible talent with magics that relate to her driving Fault. This mastery can manifest as deep personal insight into the occult secrets she wields, an instinctive flexibility with such magic, a nearly unbreakable will in imposing such Imagos upon the world, or gifts an Awakened simply should not be capable of, short of Imperial Practices.

That the Rapt can wield the Arcana in ways beyond the grasp of other Awakened is clearly not a reward for Wisdom's sacrifice. Even if a mage succumbs to Rapture through pacts with horrific entities in which she gives up Wisdom in return for insight, it's never a *fair* trade. The abilities are born from her soul's subjugation to her spiritual Fault; it's the ichor seeping from her metaphysical wound, a symptom of her failings.

Whatever power a Rapt mage might grasp through her inhuman insight, far more spills from her Nimbus in uncontrolled torrents — especially when she suppresses her Fault's urges. Just by existing, she inundates the Fallen World with constant Supernal pollution. This magic is not directed by the mage's will, Imago, or Wisdom; it serves only the Fault.

Should the Enraptured willworker ignore or smother her obsession's gnawing hunger, whether she chooses to or others force her to, the denied compulsions build like rising waters within her soul. The unshackled magic bucks against abeyance until the pressure grows too great and erupts. No Rapt can hold the tide of power back for long; the Stress scratches at her mind, claws at her gut, *demands* she act on her Fault. Its expurgation comes as a relief, a surcease to her struggle against her own nature.

When magic leaks out as Tulpa, it reflects the nature and Fault of the Rapt from whose Nimbus it came. One sorcerer, obsessed with controlling fates, unleashes a tide of fatal freak accidents. Another, craving a remaking of the human image, causes rampant mutation and mutilation of living flesh. Weird weather, storms of mental contagion, and other bizarre phenomena manifest. At their most extreme, Tulpa take the form of Supernal beings that emerge into the world as avatars of the Rapt's obsession — colossally powerful entities with even less restraint than the mage who birthed them.

Even when allowed to indulge their Faults, the Rapt constantly leak low levels of uncontrolled Supernal energy. This ambient magic serves as an unintentional form of camouflage; her presence is so saturated with it that Sleepers react to her as if she *were* magic. Quiescence makes her fade from memory. An Enraptured mage can move through humanity with scarcely a ripple. If she can hold back her Fault, the accruing arcane pressure cloaks her even further.

Greater Tulpa

The Supernal entities that manifest as Greater Tulpa pose a challenging question to Awakened understanding of the relationship between Supernal and Fallen. They are unquestionably Supernal creatures, but fundamentally linked to and shaped by the Enraptured wizard's Fault.

Are Greater Tulpa just Supernal entities drawn into her Nimbus and reshaped to fit the Fault? Does an entity for each possible Fault already exist, awaiting a fall to Rapture so it can reach into the Fallen World? Do Greater Tulpa bring entirely new Supernal entities into being? What do these entities do when they aren't manifesting through a Rapt mage's unstable Nimbus? What do they do once their Enraptured vessels have perished?

No ready answers present themselves, but such Mysteries call to those who ask these questions.

Paths to Rapture

All Rapt share a lack of Wisdom. This unifying trait does not mean they're alike in other ways, that they seek a common goal, or even that they would recognize other Rapt as kindred souls. The descent into Rapture is painfully personal for each of its victims, and no two are the same.

The Pentacle still struggles to understand the Rapt, let alone describe them with any semblance of accuracy. Bickering over terminology seems absurd when faced with a wild mage whose rampant Nimbus bleeds out to wrack the city with shards of razor-sharp folded space. Still, what makes an Enraptured mage from a once-rational human being tends to fall into three categories. Each type of Rapt is most likely to arise from a particular means of losing their hold on Wisdom, but they don't map exactly, and exceptions happen.

Savant

The most common kind of Rapt are **Savants**, those whose Faults are manifestations of one of the occult Obsessions they already possessed. A Savant may not seem all that different from any other mage on the surface: They pursue a particular Mystery to the exclusion of everything else, but like any Enraptured mage, their magical addiction owns them completely. Usually, a Savant loses the last scraps of her Wisdom to an Act of Hubris committed in direct pursuit of her Obsessions. Savants are the most likely to attract desperate or foolish Awakened eager to delve into their Enraptured insight; indeed, the magical savant abilities (p. XX) of all Rapt take their name from this most stereotypical type.

A Savant's Fault relates directly to a specific Obsession. It takes a monumental Act of Hubris to annihilate a mage's last fragments of Wisdom. Many Savants succumb to Rapture due to soul-related crimes, particularly pertaining to the Awakened soul — which usually require Awakened victims. Plenty fall to ill-advised experimentation on themselves instead, though, trying to forge too many Attainments from their Legacies or pushing their metaphysical boundaries too far. Other Savants obliterate or profane Supernal phenomena to fuel their Obsessions. No few succumb to Rapture trying to study or court the Abyss, though Nasnasi (p. XX) and more powerful Scelesti can't become Rapt.

Since a magical Obsession spawns a Savant's Fault, it's easy for other sorcerers to mistakenly assume Savants are like them, just a little more extreme. The common idea of the Rapt is that of a withdrawn or socially isolated mage focused entirely on the study of esoteric matters. Yet Savants are rarely hermits; they are absolutely driven to see their Fault through, which involves seeking resources, gathering allies or victims, and finding or creating opportunities to indulge. A Savant doesn't sit in a cave and quietly contemplate her magic; she needs to *use* it, again and again, regardless of who gets hurt, and is never sated.

Malefactor

The Rapt known as **Malefactors** have Faults that are not magical by nature, though they usually undergo Rapture through losing themselves to Acts of Hubris just like a Savant. The difference is that a Malefactor's Fault is a non-magical crime committed in pursuit of his arcane addictions, though he might use magic to do it. Once the crime becomes a Fault, he loses control of his power and *must* use magic to commit the deed over and over again. The most common Act of Hubris a Malefactor performs that breaks his Wisdom is murder committed in a sudden, impulsive rage. A few Malefactors fall through other atrocities: Mages willing to torture enemies "for the greater good" require close scrutiny, and a willworker succumbing to her deepest, darkest vices can accomplish some truly heinous things.

The stereotypical Malefactor is a sadistic murderer who craves killing, but many of these broken souls take little pleasure in their Faults. An Enraptured mage driven to torturous vivisection, gripped with the conviction that if she doesn't do it the world will come apart at the seams, may apologize through tears with every cut. The Fault is a compulsion, but provides no rationalization. The instigating Act of Hubris may have seemed necessary at the time, but the Malefactor submits to her need to repeat it regardless of new context or circumstances.

Malefactors are less common than Savants, although the crimes that sever their humanity are ordinary compared to a Savant's arcane depravities, which often take more time, effort, and devotion to achieve. Savant behavior doesn't seem *that* strange by Awakened standards; by comparison, most mages are socialized throughout their lives to avoid the mundane acts that destroy Wisdom, and to condemn them in others.

Walker

The least common and most ill-understood Rapt are the **Walkers**, those whose psyches and souls inhabit their Tulpa rather than their bodies. A Walker's body is usually comatose or catatonic, while her awareness is trapped inside her Oneiros, struggling with the pressure of a Fault she can't indulge. Bottled up this way, the Stress eventually erupts as Tulpa that carry her soul with them, letting her act on her urges through them while her Nimbus manifests. Historically, most Walkers perished soon after their Rapture, but modern medical technology can keep a mage's body alive for months or even years, while the hospital staff is completely unaware that their patient is the source of increasingly dangerous phenomena.

Savants and Malefactors suffer the consequences of their own actions, but Walkers are usually victims of circumstance, fate, or insidious outside forces. Most break during Awakening. A few bring this sort of Rapture upon themselves with self-directed spiritual violence or magic that leaves them disembodied. A willworker who Awakens to Rapture experiences the shattering of her psyche's integrity through Supernal revelation, like other mages do; but something interrupts her transcendence, preventing her from seizing Wisdom from the ruined foundations of her Fallen understanding. A Walker's soul is thus cast adrift, thrown directly into Rapture without any slow decline.

Pentacle scholars have studied Walkers for centuries without reaching a solid answer as to why some Awakenings go awry this way. Awakening in the middle of bizarre magical phenomena or Abyssal incursions, getting possessed by malign spirits in the middle of Awakening, and climbing the Watchtower while another sorcerer tampers with the would-be mage's soul have all been suggested as triggers — but while Walkers have emerged from such circumstances, others who experience the same come out relatively unscathed, end up Harrowed Banishers (p. XX), or don't Awaken at all. Experts who study the process believe entities capable of interfering with Awakenings exist, snatching away the victim's name or snaring her in a pact, but they don't know how to predict or stop such meddling without ruining the Awakening themselves.

A Walker's Tulpa are usually incoherent and monstrous, vessels for a soul warped by imprisonment within itself. Her world is a maelstrom of confusion and fear she can't escape, but her periods of freedom to indulge her Fault are intoxicating. She unleashes her power as often and as flagrantly as possible. Sleepers often misinterpret a Walker's presence as a haunting, complete with poltergeist-like activity, dreadful hallucinations, and manifestations of eerie figures stalking or beckoning.

Others

Some Rapt defy even these rough categorizations, their Tulpa manifesting in stranger ways, losing Wisdom under more peculiar circumstances or possessing weirder Faults. One sorcerer faces an Abyssal entity that deletes her Wisdom from her Pattern in an instant; another sacrifices his Wisdom piece by piece each time he invokes an Artifact of nihilistic aspect. Wars over reality and time leave a magician suffering the Wisdom-ruining consequences of decisions he never actually made. Weird energies from a disastrous occult experiment in a Sleeper laboratory stir a willworker's connection to the Supernal into overdrive, drowning her Wisdom with a tidal wave of raw, unfiltered Truth. Mages who tamper with the shape of their own

gnosis via unwise experimentation with Legacies may become Rapt of any kind not through an Act of Hubris, but by breaking some other metaphysical component of their being. These Rapt struggle with their eccentric compulsions, and are even more unpredictable than their fellows.

Enraptured Magic

An Awakened character succumbs to Rapture when her Wisdom rating drops to 0, whether through Acts of Hubris, faulty Awakenings, or other unusual events. The last threads of *sophia* snap, splintering apart in a soulquake that rips open her Nimbus and tears her soul away from the Temenos. Amid the aftershocks, her Fault calcifies as the new foundation of her will, and she loses control over her magic.

This section details the systems by which the Storyteller can create an Enraptured character. The Rapt follow many of the same rules as standard Awakened, but differ in a number of key ways. Create the character as normal, then apply the following changes; for a Storyteller character who falls to Rapture during the course of a chronicle, just apply these rules to that character's existing traits.

Fault

An Enraptured mage replaces her Virtue with a **Fault**, an all-consuming addiction. It cannot be changed or removed; fulfilling it just leaves her compelled to do it again. Some Faults are simple, such as casting a particular spell, in which case her Fault is her hammer, and everything is a potential nail. Some are more complex, requiring her to seek (or create) highly specific situations or find certain kinds of subjects for her magic.

How the mage succumbed to Rapture in the first place often determines her Fault's nature. Those who lost their Wisdom to an Act of Hubris in direct pursuit of an Obsession — usually Savants — gain that Obsession or a magical act related to it as their Fault. A Savant who destroyed an Awakened soul with powerful sacrament Yantras in pursuit of an Obsession might need to destroy more Awakened souls, cast the particular spell she used to do it over and over regardless of subject, or constantly try to discover more potent sacraments.

Enraptured mages who lost their Wisdom to a mundane Act of Hubris — usually Malefactors — gain a Fault based on using magic to repeat that act indefinitely, abiding by certain parameters related to the original crime. An Enraptured mage who murdered a stranger for trespassing in his sanctum by setting them on fire might need to kill more trespassers in any location, set more people on fire for any reason, or simply kill victims inside his sanctum. Regardless of the specifics, he must use magic in accomplishing it.

Walkers who lost their Wisdom during Awakening, and other magicians who succumbed to Rapture through more unusual circumstances, often possess strange or erratic Faults. For Walkers, they could be connected to something important from their Sleeper lives, or to key symbols they interacted with or actions they took during their Awakenings. A fully Awakened mage struck by Rapture may need to replicate the phenomenon that changed her, or simply enshrine one of her existing Obsessions as her Fault.

Every Fault links to a particular Arcanum, determined by the Fault's nature at the moment of Rapture. The Arcanum does not necessarily directly reflect a specific spell or effect: An Enraptured mage who needs to set things on fire might have Forces as the linked Arcanum, but if his Fault is really about the transformation of materials via fire, it might link with Matter instead. If it's about recreating the details of a specific incident of arson that changed his life with its outcome, it could link with Fate.

Systems

- The character loses all Virtues she possessed. She can no longer regain Willpower from them, and effects that would interact with a Virtue do not treat the Fault as one. She retains her Vice.
- The character gains a Fault, which acts as an additional Obsession. It never shifts no matter how many times she fulfills it, and no magic can alter or remove it.
- The Fault also functions as an additional Vice. If the character acts in a way that would refresh a Willpower point from both her Vice *and* her Fault simultaneously, she refreshes *all* spent Willpower.
- The Fault links with one Arcanum she knows, which becomes Ruling for her if it wasn't already.

Choirs of Rapture

Even if several Awakened fall to Rapture together, they usually possess no deeper connection than their shared past. They may continue to collaborate as the most effective way to fulfill their Faults, but they are just as likely to fall into infighting or split up to pursue disparate obsessions.

Occasionally, though, multiple mages succumb to Rapture in the same moment with a shared Act of Hubris or other group experience, and become spiritually intertwined, all sharing the same Fault and driven to work together to fulfill it. The Pentacle calls these groups *choirs*, and far from spreading the burden of Stress among them, they make the situation even worse. All Enraptured mages in a choir share a single Stress track, which builds with all the Stress each individual builds up. When the Stress erupts, it triggers Tulpa manifestation in *all* the members of the choir at once.

Animals and Superhumans

Most Acts of Hubris that condemn a mage to Rapture are extreme, but some willworkers fall victim to quieter and less evident pitfalls on the path of Wisdom. Many wizards use magic to take on inhuman forms or bolster their personal capabilities far beyond human limitations, and it's usually safe to do so, but occasionally they take it beyond excess.

The sorcerer who maintains such an altered state for years or even decades with little reprieve can grow apart from humanity — subverting her reason and Wisdom to the instincts of beasts, or working on so different a plane of thinking that she loses the ability to gauge consequences the way other mages do. Constantly wearing the faces of others risks eroding her own selfhood.

Such extremes might lead a mage to dire Acts of Hubris anyway, but eventually the weight of years of such inhuman states can grind away at Wisdom on its own and leave her Enraptured, unable or unwilling to let go of her changes.

Nimbus

An Enraptured mage's Nimbus is the wound from which her magic spills, a font of uncontrolled Supernal power. Without Wisdom, she can't contain it or choose when and how to let it out. Her Long-Term Nimbus is more like a magical contagion than an occult confluence, spreading without regard for any meaningful connection between mage and subject.

Systems

- The character's Long-Term Nimbus spreads regardless of sympathetic ties; instead, the Storyteller dictates its spread to show how the Rapt's sorcerous influence taints the world, using it as a Mystery and a story hook to draw player characters in.
- If the character flares her Nimbus in contest with another supernatural aura, she gains +5 to the roll due to her Nimbus' overwhelming power, but it releases Lesser Tulpa as though she had generated them due to Stress (see p. XX).

Magical Savant

Each Enraptured mage possesses a single magical savant ability. The following list provides some examples, but Storytellers may create comparable unique abilities for Rapt appearing in their chronicles.

- The character's Fault relates to a specific Practice; he may cast spells of that Practice with any Arcanum, even those he doesn't possess at the proper rating or at all.
- The character's Fault focuses on a particular Skill, or a specific type of dice pool such as Astral Projection or Staying Conscious; gain the rote quality on rolls using that Skill or pool.
- The character never needs to spend Mana on spells while fulfilling his Fault.
- The character's Fault revolves around a particular spell factor; he either halves the dice penalty for steps in that factor, or doesn't need to Reach to access its Advanced version.
- The character gains the rote quality on Clashes of Wills relating to his Fault.
- The character can cast spells relating to his Fault reflexively, without Reaching.
- The character can combine a specific spell relating to his Fault with any other spell, even if he can't normally combine spells at all, or if it would exceed the Gnosis-derived number of spells he can combine at once, and he reduces the total dice penalty to cast the combined spell by two.
- The character always contributes to ritual spells cast with teamwork as though he met the spell's Arcanum requirements even if he doesn't; when he leads such a ritual, he treats the spell as a Praxis even if it isn't one.
- The character's Fault focuses on a particular Yantra. He either increases its dice bonus by two (to a maximum of +5), or it never counts toward his Gnosis-derived maximum number of simultaneous Yantras.
- Choose one Condition or personal Tilt related to the character's Fault; every time he successfully casts a spell, the subject gains the Condition or Tilt if applicable.
- The character gains a bonus Legacy Attainment related to her Fault. She must belong to a Legacy already; the Attainment is a brand new capability appropriate to the Legacy that arises spontaneously.
- The character converts all the Praxes he had at the time when he succumbed to Rapture into Attainments, even if he doesn't belong to a Legacy. These follow all the rules for Legacy Attainments (**Mage**, p. 198).
- The character becomes nigh untraceable by the Arcanum linked to his Fault; he increases his Withstand against Knowing and Unveiling spells of that Arcanum by two, and increases the Opacity for Scrutinizing his magic with that Arcanum's Focused Mage Sight by one. Peripheral Mage Sight can't detect any magic he casts using only that Arcanum.

Paradox

- Paradox anomalies the character causes by releasing Paradox last for a year or an entire chronicle, whichever comes first.

- The character's Paradox Conditions lapse after only one turn.
- When attempting to contain Paradox, the character's base dice pool is a chance die, as she has no Wisdom to roll. However, unlike other mages, she may either spend a Willpower point to add three dice, or spend one point of Mana to roll her current Stress instead of the chance die; if she rolls Stress, she can't spend Willpower to add dice.
- Damage the character takes from absorbing Paradox or scouring away a Paradox Condition is not resistant.

Temenos Detachment

Rapture tears a mage away from the rest of humanity at a metaphysical level. An Enraptured mage cannot reach the Temenos at all; she passes directly from her Oneiros into the Anima Mundi instead. Her fixation strengthens her Amnion if she pursues her Fault while traveling in the Anima Mundi.

Other willworkers and Astral entities cannot access an Enraptured mage's Oneiros through mere association of shared thoughts, but Mind magic or similar supernatural powers can still allow an intruder to visit her personal soul. This is profoundly dangerous, exposing them to rampant Supernal energies. Awakened visitors have a harder time keeping the consequences of magic in mind when surrounded by so much overwhelming power. Worse, interlopers risk stumbling into an Astral scene dominated by the mage's Fault, or the Goetia that directly represents it. A Rapt Oneiros is a broken place, especially one caught in the paroxysms of a Walker building up Stress in the prison of her own soul.

As a consequence of removing their souls from the Temenos, the Rapt struggle to relate to other people. Some Enraptured mages completely disregard others' needs or desires, except where acknowledging such things may help fulfill their Faults. Even those who understand that pursuing their Fault endangers others change their behavior only out of an academic awareness that they should, rather than true empathy. For both, engaging in ordinary social interactions takes conscious effort and makes the Rapt hard to influence. They also lack instinctive inhibitions against violence, and can inflict shocking brutality without hesitation.

Systems

- In Social Maneuvering, nothing can force the character's Doors open, nor can supernatural powers change her impression of anyone.
- The character uses the *higher* of her Wits or Dexterity to calculate Defense, rather than the lower.
- The character does not have to spend Willpower to attack someone who has surrendered, and she cannot gain the Beaten Down Tilt.
- The character's Amnion (**Mage**, p. 249) grants general armor equal to the *higher* of her Gnosis or highest subtle Arcanum, rather than the lower.
- Whenever any character within a Rapt Oneiros works against Astral scenes, Goetia, or other characters acting in concert with the Enraptured mage's Fault (including that mage herself), it inflicts a point of Stress. Should this result in any Tulpa, a Greater Tulpa *also* manifests inside the Oneiros, driven to eliminate the threat to its obsessions.
- Other mages visiting the character's Oneiros subtract a die from Wisdom degeneration rolls as though they were pursuing an Obsession.

Stress

An Enraptured character possesses a Stress track that represents the building pressure to fulfill his Fault, with boxes equal to his Gnosis. Stress is tracked similarly to Health damage. Avoiding or being prevented from pursuing the Fault generates Stress that fills the track. How full the track is determines how likely it is his Nimbus will spew Tulpa; when the track is full, it becomes *extremely* likely.

Whenever an Enraptured mage has an opportunity to follow his Fault and actively ignores it, or whenever another character actively prevents the Enraptured mage from taking it, the Storyteller rolls dice equal to half his Gnosis rating, rounded up. Each success generates a point of Stress. Stress is always marked in the leftmost empty box of the Stress track. Unlike damage to Health, Stress doesn't have different types like bashing or lethal.

Whenever an Enraptured mage goes a whole chapter without fulfilling his Fault, he suffers a point of Stress automatically.

Generating Tulpa

At the beginning of each scene in which the Enraptured mage is present, the Storyteller rolls the character's current Stress as a dice pool. A single success means the character's Nimbus generates a Lesser Tulpa (p. XX), and he heals one point of Stress. An exceptional success generates a Greater Tulpa (p. XX), and heals three points of Stress. If the mage's rightmost Stress box is filled with Stress, this roll has the rote quality and achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

The Storyteller may spend 1 Willpower for the Enraptured mage to skip this roll, but only if his Stress track is not currently full. If he would accumulate further Stress for any reason when the track is completely full, the Storyteller must roll immediately to see whether his Nimbus generates Tulpa.

The range of the Tulpa's effects depends on how much Stress fills the track. If the Stress track is half full or less, the Tulpa manifest in the mage's Immediate Nimbus. A Stress track more than half full manifests them in both his Immediate and Signature Nimbuses, and a completely full Stress track manifests Tulpa in all three Nimbuses. See p. XX for more information.

If the Rapt mage's Stress track is more than half full, the Storyteller may, if they like, also roll to see whether Tulpa manifest whenever other characters use Focused Mage Sight to study the Enraptured sorcerer's magic or Signature Nimbus, even if she isn't present.

Rapt Sympathy and Quiescence

The Stress welling up within a Rapt soul hampers sympathetic ties and worsens her effects on Sleepers. An Enraptured character gains free dots in the Occultation Merit (**Mage**, p. 103) equal to her current Stress; this may increase her effective dots in the Merit above its usual maximum of three, and stacks with any ordinary Merit dots allocated thus. Furthermore, the Rapt loses her sympathetic name, becoming more magic than person. Others may address her by it, but it can no longer be used to aid in sympathetic casting or any other supernatural effect.

The uncontrolled magic leaking from an Enraptured mage's Nimbus also triggers Quiescence in Sleepers, even if she does nothing overtly supernatural. A Sleeper who interacts with her forgets about it in the next scene as though she were an obvious spell, or finds it hard to recall any details about the encounter. If the mage's Stress track is at least half full, the Sleeper forgets in a few minutes, within the same scene; if it's completely full, the Sleeper forgets after a single turn. However, the Rapt don't provoke breaking points in Sleepers unless they make obvious demonstrations of Supernal magic, as normal.

Tulpa

Tulpa are manifestations of pure magic that erupt from an Enraptured mage's Nimbus when her Fault is too long denied. **Lesser Tulpa** are the uncontrolled power of an Arcanum lashing out in often-destructive fashion across an area, whereas **Greater Tulpa** are actual Supernal beings drawn into the world through the Rapt's Fault. The nature of the Fault and its linked Arcanum determine how Tulpa manifest.

A Greater Tulpa is a specific Supernal entity that crosses into the Fallen World from the Supernal World of the Enraptured mage's Path, twisted by her Fault. Every time she releases a Greater Tulpa, the same entity bursts through. The Storyteller should create a matching Greater Tulpa to go with each Rapt character in their chronicle.

When a Walker generates a Greater Tulpa, her soul and psyche merge with the entity. This allows the Walker to escape the prison of her own Oneiros temporarily, fused with her Tulpa and briefly able to influence the world around her. This fusion does not alter the Greater Tulpa's characteristics or traits, but the mage's conscious will inhabits and directs it.

Systems: Lesser Tulpa

Lesser Tulpa manifest as brief but intense surges of magic that leave chaos in their wake. Their scale and duration depend on how far into the Rapt mage's Nimbus they reach — which, in turn, is based on how much Stress she currently has (p. XX).

Scale and Duration

- Lesser Tulpa that manifest in the Enraptured willworker's Immediate Nimbus center on her and affect everyone within an area with a radius of two yards/meters per dot of the Fault's linked Arcanum she possesses. They last for turns equal to her Gnosis.
- Lesser Tulpa that manifest in her Signature Nimbus erupt from and center on anything she leaves her Signature on with the same area as Tulpa in her Immediate Nimbus, for a number of scenes equal to her Gnosis. Characters who study her magic with Focused Mage Sight during this time apply the 8-again quality to Revelation and Scrutiny rolls to do so and negate the effects of her Stress-based Occultation (p. XX) for this purpose; any exceptional success on either type of roll overwhelms their Sight for the rest of the scene, preventing them from applying Defense while using Active or Focused Mage Sight and increasing the usual mundane action penalties by two dice.
- Lesser Tulpa that manifest in her Long-Term Nimbus erupt anywhere that Nimbus is actively influencing people and events at the time, for as long as those phenomena persist in those places, at the Storyteller's discretion. They encompass a widespread area, equivalent to a spell with an advanced Scale factor that gains a number of additional steps on the Scale chart (**Mage**, p. 114) equal to the Rapt mage's rating in the linked Arcanum.

Strength

When Lesser Tulpa erupt, the Storyteller rolls the Rapt mage's Gnosis as a dice pool to determine the Tulpa's **Strength**.

Roll Results

Success: The Tulpa's Strength is equal to successes rolled + 1.

Exceptional Success: The Tulpa's Strength is equal to successes rolled + 1, and anyone affected by them also suffer the effects of the Rapt mage's Nimbus Tilt automatically.

Failure: The Tulpa's Strength is 1.

Dramatic Failure: The Tulpa explode disastrously, scouring the affected area as though it were an annullity rejecting the Fault's linked Arcanum (see sidebar) that lasts for the Tulpa's usual duration. They otherwise have an effective Strength of 0, having no additional effect.

Practices

A Lesser Tulpa's effects abide by one or more of the 13 Practices, each of which inflicts a particular kind of danger, phenomenon, or complication on the area. Each eruption uses Practices with a total associated Arcanum dot rating equal to its Strength; for instance, a Strength 4 eruption could exhibit effects based on two Apprentice Practices, one Initiate Practice and one Disciple Practice, or one Adept Practice. These effects may belong to Practices beyond the mage's dot rating in the Arcanum, up to Master rank.

The specific effects a given Lesser Tulpa eruption expresses reflect the mage's Fault and its linked Arcanum, through the lens of the Practices it follows. Create these effects using the creative thaumaturgy guidelines (**Mage**, p. 123-125), but given the uncontrolled nature of Tulpa, they don't conform to the usual restrictions on spell factors or combined spells:

- A Lesser Tulpa eruption can combine up to the Rapt mage's usual Gnosis-derived maximum of individual spell effects *per Practice*. See **Mage**, p. 118.

Annullities

An **annullity** is a special kind of Demesne that usually defines itself by its associated Supernal Realm's Inferior Arcanum, suppressing that Arcanum's effects within its borders. Ordinarily, mages create them deliberately with soul stones, but sometimes the Rapt create them spontaneously and by accident. Spells of the rejected Arcanum take a two-die penalty when cast within the annullity, or on a subject within it.

An annullity also has a special effect for each Arcanum; those created with soul stones only reject the Inferior Arcana of the stones' Paths, but those the Rapt create reject their Fault's linked Arcanum, creating annullity effects other mages consider Mysteries that don't correspond to any Path's Inferior Arcanum. These special effects are as follows:

Death: Any supernatural creature that falls under Death's purview, such as a ghost, vampire, or mummy, must spend a Willpower to take any action that requires dice within the space.

Fate: All rolls within the space are reduced to a chance die. Nothing can add dice, apply dice tricks, or convert a chance roll to a regular one.

Forces: No Environmental Tilt (other than Abyssal Environmental Tilts, see p. XX) can gain purchase within the space. Any created by supernatural or mundane means end immediately with no detrimental effects.

Life: All living things within the space take a point of bashing damage each turn they remain there; this can render characters unconscious or kill them if they take enough damage to upgrade it to lethal or aggravated. All rolls to perform non-Supernal healing magic or mundane first aid take a −2 as though they were Life spells.

Matter: The Durability of all inanimate objects within the space (except the soul stone itself) is reduced by two, to a minimum of one for magical objects. If this would reduce a mundane object's Durability to zero, it holds together until someone interacts with it, at which point it falls apart or crumbles.

Mind: Characters can't spend Willpower while within the space, as the annullity denies the concept of individual consciousness. Mundane dreaming here is impossible.

Prime: *All* Supernal spells cast within the space or on subjects within it take a −2, as do all mages' Clashes of Wills. Each point of Mana spent there expends two points instead; the second point is wasted.

Space: All sympathetic links possessed by subjects within the space reduce the strength of their connections by two levels until they leave; this can reduce a connection to non-existent. In addition, all keys (or Keys) mundane or supernatural cease to function there. Mundane navigation here is impossible.

Spirit: Any Resonant Condition that exists in or passes into the space immediately ends, and any non-Supernal attempt to create one takes a −2 as though it were a Spirit spell. In addition, the Gauntlet becomes impervious there, and spells cannot affect it or cast through it.

Time: All temporal sympathetic links possessed by subjects within the space reduce the strength of their connections by two levels until they leave; this can reduce a connection to non-existent. In addition, time doesn't pass there. When subjects leave, they effectively lose time; they emerge into their relative future, which becomes their new present, as the Time 4 spell "Temporal Stutter" (**Mage**, p. 191). How much actual time has passed in the interim is up to the Storyteller.

For more about annullities and Rapt soul stones, see **Signs of Sorcery**, p. 89.

- The eruption's spell effects all have Potency equal to the Rapt mage's rating in the linked Arcanum + 1 for each level of her Nimbus the Tulpa reach; i.e. +1 if they're limited to her Immediate Nimbus, +2 if they reach to Signature, and +3 if they reach to Long-Term.
- The eruption's spell effects use the Tulpa's usual duration, scale, and range, as above.

Spell effects that normally wouldn't make sense to apply to an area, such as most Knowing spells, may alter the way they work — a Knowing effect might reveal information in the Arcanum's domain to everyone in the area about any valid subject they can perceive, as wild hallucinations or invasive thoughts. Reach effects that don't affect spell factors may apply, with each effective Reach counting as one combined spell effect.

Tulpa eruptions don't cause Paradox and aren't susceptible to Dissonance, but are always obviously supernatural, and trigger Quiescence in Sleepers — inflicting breaking points in the process — as though they were ordinary spells. In the aftermath, the Tulpa leave the Enraptured mage's Signature Nimbus on the entire affected area.

Withstanding Tulpa Effects

For spell effects the eruption encompasses that would normally be Withstood, compare the Tulpa's Potency to the appropriate Withstand trait for each such spell effect separately. Subjects in the area can thus avoid some of the Tulpa's effects while falling prey to others, if the effects have different Withstand traits. For Tulpa effects that last longer than a scene, anyone in the area who Withstands some or all of its effects once must try anew

in each scene of exposure; the Potency doesn't change, but depending on whether a character used magic or Willpower to improve their traits, their Withstand rating might.

Systems: Greater Tulpa

A Greater Tulpa's emergence shakes reality, drawing a Supernal entity of the type associated with the linked Arcanum into the Fallen World without the traditional summoning process. The entity treats the presence of the Enraptured mage's Nimbus as a summoning circle, whether Long-Term, Signature, or Immediate. The entity doesn't start losing Corpus until the Nimbus fades.

A Greater Tulpa has Rank equal to the Enraptured mage's dot rating in the linked Arcanum. It shares his Fault as an overriding, driving purpose. Create it using the normal rules for Supernal entities (**Mage**, starting on p. 253), but its Attributes, capabilities, and form should reflect the Fault that dominates it.

Once manifested, the Tulpa pushes toward fulfillment of the Fault. That may mean directly helping the Enraptured mage by dealing with obstacles in his way — from eliminating anyone trying to prevent him from performing an atrocity to tearing down the Veil. Other Greater Tulpa enact the Fault themselves, ignoring the Rapt who brought them into the world except to bask in their Nimbus.

When a Walker spawns a Greater Tulpa, she merges with the entity and consciously directs its actions. Once the Tulpa runs out of Corpus, her consciousness is ejected back into her Oneiros, where she once again becomes trapped. A Walker's Greater Tulpa is always treated as being in the presence of the Walker's Nimbus.

If a Greater Tulpa loses all Corpus outside the presence of its conjurer's Nimbus, it perishes to the Abyss just like any other Supernal being. Regardless, the next time the mage's Stress unleashes a Greater Tulpa, an entity with the same traits appears again. Whether this is the same entity somehow rescued from Abyssal desecration, or an entirely new one sculpted by the mage's Fault, is not clear.

Killing the Enraptured willworker from whose Nimbus the Greater Tulpa sprang immediately severs the being's connection to the Supernal. While this doesn't destroy the entity directly, it can no longer treat the Nimbus as a summoning circle, and hence is damned to the Abyss when its Corpus runs out unless another mage manages to "summon" it properly before that happens. Killing the body of a Walker while her psyche is merged with a Greater Tulpa is an even more grievous offense: When the Abyss finally takes the Tulpa, the Walker's soul goes with it. Both of these are Acts of Hubris against Falling Wisdom.

When Rapture Subsides

It's little-known among the Awakened unless they've closely studied the Rapt, but Rapture can be reversed. The Bellerophon Group knows this, but rarely has the chance to attempt it; even when they do, they know it's probably a temporary measure. An Enraptured mage who regains Wisdom is still never quite stable, but she can reclaim a measure of control given the chance.

If an Enraptured mage suffers no Stress, she may spend a Willpower *dot* and purchase a dot of Wisdom at its usual cost and with its usual prerequisite: she must work toward an Obsession to step away from Rapture, as normal for raising Wisdom. Upon doing so, she regains Wisdom 1 and is no longer Rapt — for now.

At this point, she's just like other mages, except in the following ways: She retains her Fault instead of her Virtue, which still acts as an additional Vice and Obsession; and she retains her magical savant ability. However, if she uses that ability or replenishes Willpower through the Fault (including when she would otherwise gain a Beat, as a Storyteller character), she immediately loses *all* Wisdom — even if she raised it above 1 in the interim — and once again succumbs to Rapture. She also becomes Rapt again if she drops back to Wisdom 0 through Acts of Hubris or other effects.

Matters of the Soul

The Rapt possess no particular protection against soul loss, and it affects them the same way it does other Awakened. Another mage who integrates the soul of an Enraptured character into herself doesn't succumb to Rapture, and giving new souls to the Rapt doesn't alleviate their condition; their Faults crack their Gnosis, the "vessel" that holds their souls, and any soul they possess suffers their affliction.

A soul stone created by one of the Rapt is dangerous, however, as it is still intimately connected to the Enraptured magician's Gnosis and, thus, her Fault. Such a soul stone provides significant power, but at great risk. (See **Signs of Sorcery**, p. 89, for more details.)

Cleodora
Who Reaches for the Depths

"It's so close. Can't you feel it? Like it's on one side of the wall and we're on the other, and all we need to do is cut ourselves a door."

Background

Lanie Adams grew up in a house full of slamming doors. Her brothers slammed them when they left for school or practice, when they went to the library or out on dates. Her sister slammed them for emphasis, so the family knew how much trouble they were in with her. Dad slammed the front door when he came home from work, and Mom slammed the bedroom door when she *just needed a moment's peace, for God's sake.*

When Aunt Jane, who'd lived with their family since before Lanie was born, had that last huge fight with Lanie's mother, the door slammed behind her, too. Aunt Jane never came back.

Other doors slammed on Lanie, too, though they sounded in her heart rather than on the air: opportunities denied to her because she was a woman, because she was black. Sometimes, she learned, she could stop the closing door with a well-placed foot and a determined smile. Sometimes she had to pry it back open, and sometimes she had to break it down.

She studied architecture and designed houses with open floor plans and soaring archways. Her homes won awards.

After she Awakened, the new Mastigos took the Shadow Name Cleodora. She found the Free Council's aims lined up with her own. In turn, the Libertines encouraged her study of Verges and Irises — which, to Cleodora, were simply new kinds of doors the Lie preferred to keep slammed shut. Along the way, she befriended the half-dozen other mages that make up the Riverside Cabal, several of whom live with her in the house she designed as her sanctum, which contains her Demesne.

She's made a name for herself as an expert on ley lines, Hallows, and Verges. Other mages seek her out to view her impressive catalogue of known Irises and their Keys. While it's likely the Mysterium or Guardians of the Veil have more comprehensive knowledge, they're nowhere near as free with their information as Cleodora is.

Cleodora's research drove her ever closer to the Mystery of Scars: those Irises where reality weakens, and the Lower Depths threaten to bleed through. Older mages told her to leave them be, that she should avoid Scars because of the danger they posed, and that it was impossible to create one intentionally. How could she expect to assert her will over something that so utterly opposes reality? Cleodora heard that not as a warning, but a challenge. Though she stopped *reporting* her experiments in that vein to her Order, she didn't stop conducting them.

The day the doors appeared was the first clue her cabal had that something had gone horribly wrong. In a house that had as few of them as possible, suddenly every room featured at least one, all of them shut tight but not locked. For several hours, *which* room a given door opened into grew unreliable. One cabalmate passed from the parlor into the kitchen; a moment later, her friend stepped through the same door but found herself in the upstairs bathroom. When Cleodora emerged from her bedroom, the effect stopped, and the once-solid doors faded away. She gave no explanation, and for a while they treated it as a minor Mystery, ultimately deciding some surge in a ley line or soul stone had caused their normally stable Demesne to act like a natural Verge.

In truth, Cleodora was pursuing her Obsession, attempting to open a gateway to the Lower Depths in the master suite. She briefly cracked open a door to a realm that devours Space. After that close call, she stopped running her experiments at home, and instead took them out into the world. Now she opens Irises where unwitting Sleepers are sure to slip through, cataloging their reactions and attempts at escape the way a scientist watches lab rats find their way through a maze. Sometimes she traps people in an out-of-the-way place and tries opening a Scar, using the victims as bait for the Depths' denizens.

Her cabalmates started whispering the word *Enraptured* among themselves, but they are divided on what to do about it. They remain loyal to and protective of Cleodora, and race against the inevitable moment when her Obsession becomes a larger problem. Thus far they've managed to keep it hidden from their higher-ups: rescuing people she's trapped when they find out in time, covering for her when they're too late. But the body count stacks up, and it's just a matter of time until someone finds them out.

Description

Cleodora still dresses for her Sleeper job, though she left the architecture firm shortly after her Awakening. She favors tailored slacks and fitted blouses, and keeps her footwear practical. Some of her cabalmates call it her "college professor look," especially when she throws her dad's ancient, shapeless tweed jacket over her shoulders on chilly days. She wears her long hair in Senegalese twists, which she often pulls back into a ponytail.

So far, she's maintained her working relationships with other Libertines, attending meetings and offering valuable insights on the evening's agenda items. Likewise, she still accepts visits from mages looking for her insights on Verges, though it's grown increasingly harder for her to resist adding the knowledge-seekers to her experiments.

Cleodora is well aware of the danger her research poses to those who matter to her, and knows she's harmed innocent peo-

ple in her quest for answers. Being aware of it is one thing; actually *caring* about it is another. She believes it will all be worth it when she makes her big breakthrough — anyone lost in the process will have made a vital sacrifice toward peeling back one more layer of the Lie.

She can usually pull it together for her cabal, particularly when Swan is present. The older woman reminds Cleodora of her long-lost Aunt Jane.

Cleodora's Immediate Nimbus is a heightened awareness of the area and where things are in it. Her Signature is the disorientation of being lost — the realization one has moved from a familiar place to an unfamiliar one. Her Long-Term Nimbus manifests as wrong turns down unfamiliar side streets, and bystanders ending up in parts of their offices, apartment complexes, or neighborhoods without knowing how they got there.

Secrets

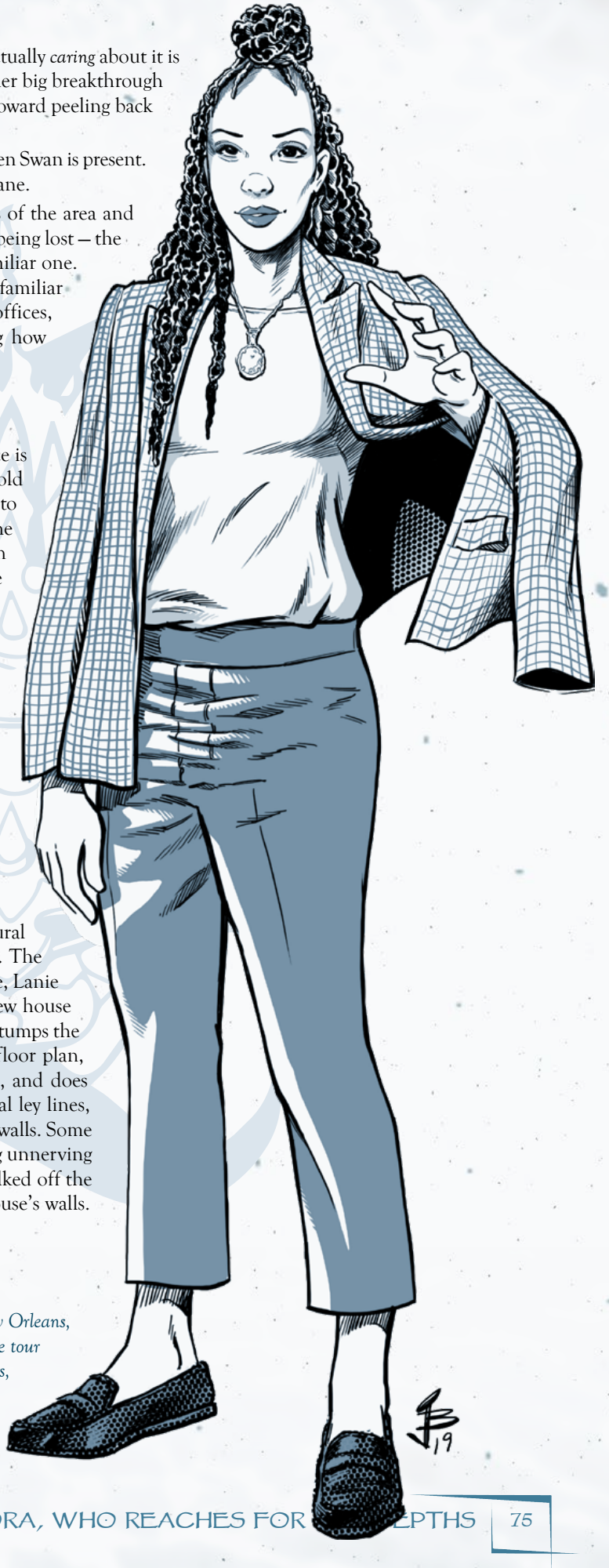
Where's Aunt Jane?: Cleodora's aunt Jane's disappearance is still an open missing persons case. Though the trail was ice cold by the time Cleo Awakened and used her newfound Arcana to investigate, she found evidence of an unstable Verge near the last place Jane was seen. If her aunt stepped through an open Iris, Cleodora has yet to find the proper Key to reopen it. She returns to the location every couple of weeks to test out new theories. This is a Mystery with Opacity 4.

Convenient Fault: Cleodora didn't know most of the people she sent through pre-existing Scars before the day she shoved them through a rift in Space. Most, but not all. She quietly removed a few of her cabalmates' enemies, and cleaned up a difficult situation for the local Libertines in the same manner. Unbeknownst to Cleo or the Riverside Cabal, the Hierarch has clued in to some of the disappearances. Thus far, they haven't sent anyone to investigate the Mastigos or her odd little home in the suburbs, but that's because they've placed a few of their own meddlesome acquaintances in Cleodora's path.

Enraptured Architecture: Cleodora owns a few acres in a rural town a few hours from the cabal's main base of operations. The land is registered under her now-powerless sympathetic name, Lanie Adams, and over the last few years, she's been building a new house on the back corner of the property. The complicated design stumps the contractors she brings in when she shows them the entire floor plan, so instead she hires them to complete one room at a time, and does much of the work on her own. She's quietly altered the local ley lines, and awaits the day she can create her Scar within the house's walls. Some contractors have quit soon after working on the house, citing unnerving experiences. Two disappeared. Local police decided they walked off the job, though the truth is, they're still *on* it, lost within the house's walls. Cleodora's house is a Mystery with Opacity 5.

Rumors

"This guy goes on one of those haunted history tours down in New Orleans, the ones that take you into the cemeteries? One minute, he's with the tour group hearing about the markings on the graves. Next thing he knows, it's just him and all these marble tombs, and no matter which way he walks he can't find anyone. He keeps coming back to this one monument. Finally, he sees someone else. It's been hours. And who's standing there beside him? Cleodora."



Story Hooks

- A member of the Riverside Cabal has decided Cleodora has to be stopped. His allies voted him down, insisting they've almost got it under control and just need a little more time, but he's done waiting. He asks the players' cabal for help, but out of loyalty to Cleodora, wants to solve the problem without the Consilium learning she's Rapt.
- A good friend to the cabal, a character's mentor, or a Sleeper family member becomes trapped in one of Cleodora's nightmarish pocket realms. The Iris won't stay open forever, but there's still a chance to save them.
- Cleodora approaches the cabal. She's figured out the Hierarch is onto her, and suspects he used her to get rid of the Strategos. The Riverside Cabal's been covering for her when officials come asking questions, but she won't allow her loved ones to pay the price for her sins. If the cabal helps her bring down the Hierarch, she'll turn herself in and let them get the glory

When Cleodora resists pursuing her Obsession, her Lesser Tulpa twist Space in the area, trapping those nearby in a maze-like zone. Victims are unable to find the exits, or leave a room only to find themselves stepping right back across its threshold. They might be stuck in a labyrinth of library stacks, or drive past the same landmark over and over.

Missing: Strategos Quaetas.
Last Seen: March 8, 2019
Reward Reward Reward

Interfector Tigraine seeks any and all information relating to the whereabouts of Strategos Quaetas. Any tips will be kept confidential and anonymous.

"Hey, did you see this? I heard someone saw him and Cleodora driving out in the hills, but the Riverside Cabal says she was with them the whole day he went missing."

The Strategos didn't know what Cleodora was up to. He came to the house at the Hierarch's suggestion, seeking her input on how best to shift some ley lines near an Athenaeum in the area. She suggested they go for a drive so she could take a look. On the way, she trapped him in a pocket dimension and left him for the Depth dwellers to feast upon. Whatever results Cleodora was hoping for, she didn't get them. The Hierarch, however, got exactly what they wanted: Quaetas had been sniffing around at things better left hidden. Suspicion and paranoia permeate the local Consilium. Everyone's got theories, but few have answers.

"She's done it. Cleodora's done the impossible and opened a Scar. She won't outright say she opened it, but she accidentally revealed the location, and a bunch of us are going to go see what's there. Wanna come with?"

Cleodora *hasn't* succeeded yet in opening a Scar, but she believes she can, given enough time. The potential's there, because the entire world is made of potential. Through her experiments, she's discovered Irises to realms whose hungry denizens would love to take a bite out of the Fallen World. She's wedged open a few of these cracks in the world to see what might step through. She drops hints about their locations to similarly obsessed mages, drawing them to the Iris and watching to see what happens.

Path: Mastigos
Order: Free Council
Legacy: Reality Stalkers
Fault: Open a Scar (Space)
Vice: Stubborn
Magical Savant Ability: Cleodora can cast spells that open Irises or otherwise interact liminally with otherworldly realms reflexively, without Reaching.
Other Obsessions: Survive the Lower Depths; Architecture from the Time Before
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Architecture) 4, Investigation (Verges) 3, Occult (Lower Depths) 3, Science (Classical Mechanics) 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Contacts (Architects); Contacts (Construction Workers); Fame 1; High Speech; Library (Occult) 2; Order Status (Free Council) 2; Resources 2; Professional Training (Architect) 3; Safe Place 3 (Shared); Sanctum (In-progress) 2; Sanctum (Demesne) 3 (Shared); Techné (Architecture)
Stress: 4
Willpower: 7
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Armor: 0/0
Speed: 9
Health: 8
Gnosis: 4
Mana/per Turn: 13/4
Nimbus Tilt: Grants +2 and 8-again on Survival rolls to navigate the area.
Dedicated Magical Tool: A topaz pendant in a brass setting from her Aunt Jane.
Arcana: Death 3, Mind 1, Prime 2, Space 4, Spirit 2
Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Mind, Prime, Space, Spirit); Everywhere; Eyes of the Dead; Mage Armor (Death, Prime, Space, Spirit); Spirit Eyes; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Death, Space); Universal Counterspell; Reality Stalkers — Gazing Through the Cracks
Praxes: Break Boundary (Space 2); Ghost Gate (Death 3); Secret Door (Space 2); Supernal Vision (Prime 1)

Reality Stalkers

(Mastigos, Mysterium; Space)

Common among Mystagogues but welcoming to any Pentacle or Nameless mages, the Reality Stalkers believe truth hides in the Fallen World's interstitial fractures, and use their magic to slip into passages that cut through space and reality to find esoteric Mysteries that have fallen through cracks both known and unknown, mundane and strange. The Legacy's more practical-minded members often use their abilities to act as spies or thieves, giving them something of a shaky reputation.

Yantras: cracking a code or hacking a network (+2); learning a secret (+1-3 depending on difficulty); telling someone a secret they didn't already know (+1, or +2 with dire consequences); doorways, secret passages, and other liminal spaces (+1).

Oblations: breaking and entering; finding and exploring a secret passage or hidden path; getting lost and then finding the way back to familiar ground; brokering a trade of secrets between two or more parties.

First Attainment: Gazing Through the Cracks

Prerequisites: Initiation (Space 2, Larceny *or* Stealth 2)

The Sneak redefines "secret passage," becoming aware of things no one else can see. This Attainment emulates the Space 1 spell "The Outward and Inward Eye" (**Mage**, p. 174) with Reach assigned to instant use. It also includes the Reach effect to see through existing spatial warps and corridors, but doing so automatically attracts attention from anyone or anything on the other side; the Storyteller rolls a chance die, and on a dramatic failure, the warp or corridor opens to let those who know they're being watched through to meet their stalker. Even if it doesn't, they're aware of eyes on them from afar.

Optional: Death or Spirit 1

The Stalker may use this Attainment to see through Avernian Gates (Death) or Loci (Spirit) as well.

Rotes: Correspondence (Space 1, Academics); Know Spirit (Spirit 1, Socialize); Lying Maps (Space 2, Survival); Sacred Geometry (Prime 1, Occult)

Rote Skills: Crafts, Persuasion, Science

Notes: Cleodora's Asset Skills for Professional Training are Academics, Crafts, and Science.

Greater Tulpa – The Maze (Imp)

The Maze exists in a constant state of flux. Its features furl and unfurl, folding in on themselves in impossible ways. Its translucence makes it easy to miss on first glance – witnesses describe a blurry shape distorting familiar landmarks, like looking through fog or steamed-up glass.

Confusion attracts the Imp, especially people in unfamiliar places. Tourists draw it, as do locals learning the layout of a new office or trying out a different route to jog. When it manifests, the Maze traps its victims in a spatial loop, unable to escape the place where it found them. When the effect wears off, Quiescence dampens their recollection of what happened. A person stands in the center of his living room, peering around and asking, "What did I come in here for?" Commuter complaints flood the city planning office, full of drivers frustrated by missing and misleading street signs, or detours that led them in circles.

The Maze shares Cleodora's fascination with Scars, though its methods aren't as meticulous. It hunts down those who stand between her and success, and holds them within its boundaries until she accomplishes her tasks, or they die. Either outcome is satisfactory.

Fault: Open a Scar

Vice: Greedy

Attributes: Power 10, Finesse 12, Resistance 9

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 21

Defense: 10

Speed: 32

Size: 6

Corpus: 15

Rank: 4

Ban: The Maze releases its victims if it sees anyone trace the pattern of the Chartres Cathedral labyrinth from memory.

Bane: A map of one of its former configurations, drawn on a sheet of blueprint paper.

Arcana: Death 2, Mind 3, Prime 2, Space 5, Spirit 2

Max Mana: 25

Manzazuu, The Reborn

"You look so much like he did.
Why don't you become him for a little while, so that I can become me?"

Background

Manzazuu is a Malefactor driven by an overriding hunger to know who he was before. He isn't suffering from amnesia or memory-modifying sorcery, though. Manzazuu's Obsession lies in his belief in reincarnation — he believes he has lived before, perhaps many times over, his soul returning again and again to experience the world anew. To grasp at that deep well of knowledge and understanding, the Enraptured mage tries to replicate the circumstances of the one clear past life vision he has ever experienced — a scene of cruel murder.

As a serial killer with the power of Awakened magic, Manzazuu uses manipulation and spells to force his victims into carefully tailored roles, recreating his delusions in the hope that this time — *this time* – everything will be perfect, and he will finally recall his past lives with clarity. He needs the victim, who must look like a young man, sandy-haired, whom he must kill with a knife. Thunder rumbles outside. Two others watch the act: one eager for the man's death, the other horrified. The former is a woman, one side of her face cruelly scarred. The latter is an old man, hunched from a long life's labors. Their clothing suggests the early 20th century; the room is dingy, dirty, and cluttered. Manzazuu recalls a dozen other little details — the point when the old man coughs, the mole on the victim's cheek, the vague shape of someone else in the doorway — and each time he gets a little closer to ensuring they're all exactly matched in his recreation.

Due to the complexity of the setup that satisfies his Fault, the Moros is a low-frequency murderer; the scene must be *just so*, and he can't create all the needed context with magic. Finding the right people to fit the roles, the right location to play host to the act, means Manzazuu travels a great deal. He still clings to the last scraps of his life as a thearch, and uses his connections and contacts as an excuse for his peripatetic lifestyle; he can always pretend at investigating some local Mystery or acting as an advisor. The Sleepers he uses as props in his morbid theater are subject to Quiescence, and he's capable of covering up more mundane evidence. As a result, Manzazuu's crimes have so far flown beneath the Consilium's radar.

Memories of Murder

Manzazuu's Obsession with acting out this scene stems from his life as a Sleeper, when he experienced a so-called past life regression. Most people who undergo these at the hands of some charlatan "discover" the self-indulgent past lives of some flattering pop culture significance. They were witches, or kings, or people who *meant* something. Manzazuu's vision held no such reassurance, self-actualization, or justification. He saw death: his hands slick with red blood, the screaming victim, and the faces of those gathered in the room as he vividly experienced stabbing his knife again and again into ruined flesh.

After Awakening, Manzazuu threw himself into the study of the soul — where it might come from, and where it may go after death. He tore apart his own Oneiros, looking for clues or sympathetic threads that might connect his clear memory to another point in time. His cabalmates and fellow thearchs grew uneasy as the Moros stepped ever closer to the line when it came to tampering with souls, but his frustration and lack of answers pushed him on.

When Manzazuu first started recreating the scene of his past life vision, he didn't intend it to end in murder. Working with volunteers and Sleepwalker assistants did nothing, so he collected people who looked ever more like the figures from his memories. It was perhaps inevitable that his vexation eventually boiled over. The first time he killed an actor, a young man who looked *so much* like the one from his vision — it finally felt like he was getting somewhere. Rapture was not far behind.

Description

Manzazuu doesn't seem the sort to be an obsessive serial killer — but then, they never do. He's wiry and lean, with dark hair slicked back from his sharp-edged features. He could be eye-catching if he didn't keep his gaze downcast, his posture meek, and his clothes drab.

Around other Awakened, he's become so unassertive as to be almost apathetic, only stirring to attentiveness if a conversation comes around to the topic of souls, memory, or past lives. Many of his Silver Ladder colleagues wonder why he bothered to join, but respect his willingness to perform his duties with little fuss. The truth is, he struggles with a deep sense of impostor syndrome — that somehow his Awakening was a mistake, that he isn't clever enough to unpick the Mysteries he obsesses over — and originally, he thought the Ladder could give him the confidence he lacked. Now, his Order is just a convenient cover.

When he's working on satisfying his Fault, Manzazuu becomes far more alert, almost jittery with fear that something will go wrong and ruin his careful efforts. He can turn on the charm for short, sharp bursts, becoming remarkably silver-tongued in convincing a target — but he's a shaking wreck a few minutes later. It's only in the act of killing that he gains any true release: After brutally knifing another actor, Manzazuu briefly loses his temper at the lack of any new revelation, then falls into a controlled, confident manner as he cleans up the evidence and moves on.

Manzazuu's Immediate Nimbus is a cold breeze that brings muttered whispers to the ear, hinting at things half-remembered. The Signature he leaves is the distant howling of that chill wind, and echoes of feelings unspoken. His Long-Term Nimbus leaves people encountering strange coincidences from their past and feeling nostalgic.

Secrets

Hidden Past: Jack Trevelyan keeps his sympathetic name well-hidden, even though it no longer holds any power; no one's called him that in years. He travels under assumed names and fake documents. Despite this suppression of his old persona, he doesn't really identify all that deeply with his Shadow Name. He was told he needed one after Awakening, and found Manzazuu when searching the internet for something that spoke to his desire to reach out to the dead past. What he really wants is to discover his past self's name, certain it will feel right as a Shadow Name. He's taken to scouring archives of early 20th century newspapers and government registries, hoping to stumble upon his previous self's identity amid the faded ink and crackling paper.

Prying Eyes: Although Manzazuu seems to have evaded Pentacle detection thus far, he's not as cautious as he thinks he is. His Mystagogue cabalmate Phrygia is aware he kills Sleepers — she just doesn't care. She is content to let him carry on in hopes that one day he will stumble upon a revelation. If he doesn't, she'll betray him to the Pentacle at a convenient moment and collect kudos for stopping a threat. Phrygia is as oblivious as Manzazuu, though, because he's also attracted attention from a Seer Pylon. They're mapping his movements, noting how he often hurries to areas where thunderstorms are expected.

Rumors

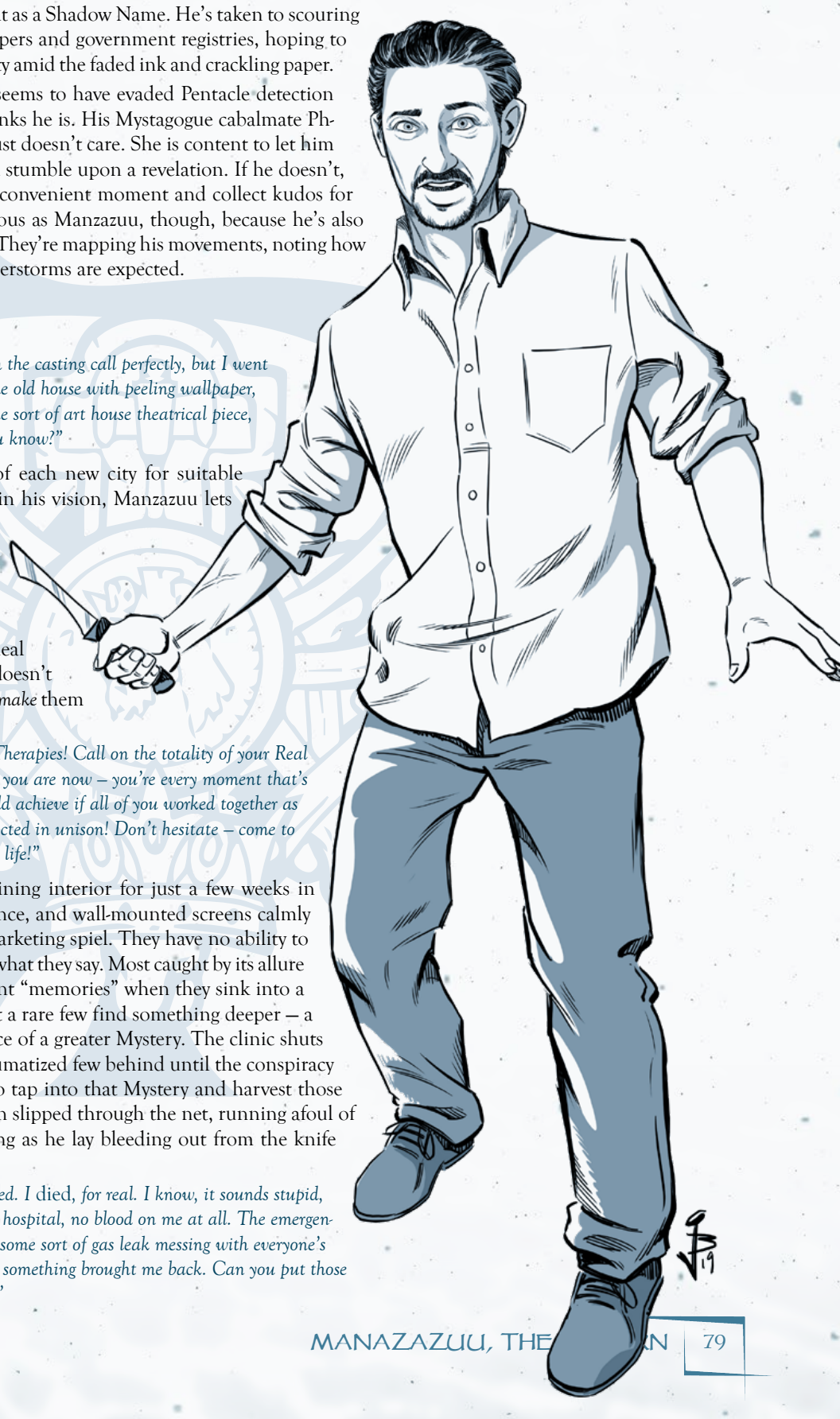
"Don't answer that ad. Yeah, you match the casting call perfectly, but I went along last week and the guy is a creep. Some old house with peeling wallpaper, no equipment, nothing. He says it's for some sort of art house theatrical piece, but I just got such a weird vibe off him, you know?"

Rather than scouring the streets of each new city for suitable candidates who look like the people in his vision, Manzazuu lets them come to him. He puts out ads in personals lists, runs casting calls under the guise of amateur theater or shooting commercials, and uses other legitimate means to reel in victims. Even if he can't persuade an ideal candidate to play along with his lies, it doesn't matter — once he's found them, he can *make* them play their part.

"Unlock your Inner You with Past Life Therapies! Call on the totality of your Real Potential today! You're more than just who you are now — you're every moment that's led up to this point. Imagine what you could achieve if all of you worked together as one — if every moment you've experienced acted in unison! Don't hesitate — come to Past Life Therapies today, and change your life!"

The pop-up clinic opens up its shining interior for just a few weeks in any one place, all smiles and reassurance, and wall-mounted screens calmly murmuring the Past Life Therapies marketing spiel. They have no ability to actually surface true past lives, despite what they say. Most caught by its allure experience only the usual self-indulgent "memories" when they sink into a hypnotically induced trance there, but a rare few find something deeper — a vision of darkness and violence, a piece of a greater Mystery. The clinic shuts down, moves on, and leaves those traumatized few behind until the conspiracy that backs the project collects them to tap into that Mystery and harvest those visions for its own ends. Jack Trevelyan slipped through the net, running afoul of a mugging gone wrong and Awakening as he lay bleeding out from the knife wound in his guts.

"Christ, it was just fucking horrible. I died. I died, *for real. I know, it sounds stupid, but I did. Then I came to and I was in the hospital, no blood on me at all. The emergency services guys, they say it must have been some sort of gas leak messing with everyone's heads, but that's bullshit. I was* dead, *and something brought me back. Can you put those scissors away? They're making me nervous."*



Story Hooks

- One of the cabalmates' loved ones has caught Manzazuu's attention; they're the spitting image of one of the people in his vision. Building on previous failures, the Moros is now convinced that his actors need to be sunk into the role well ahead of the final scene. He plagues the Sleeper victims with anachronisms from the early 20th century, uses Mind to make them choose period clothing, and generally tampers with their everyday lives.
- The cabal receives a message, apparently flung back from some future moment via Time magic. It begs them to avoid interfering in Manzazuu's next killing — implying that the outcome of the act will, for some reason, have important consequences rippling forward, and that stopping the Enraptured mage will have devastating ramifications. Manzazuu's actions may well be news to the cabal — once they do know what's going on, what weight do they place on a warning from the future against the very real murder that is planned to take place?
- An Awakened ally of the cabal's suffers a grievous psychic injury at the hands of her enemies; her Oneiros is ruined, her memories collapsed, and the Pattern of her Mind torn asunder. Manzazuu, known as an expert on matters of memory and the soul, might hold the secret to whatever chance at recovery is available. First the cabal needs to find the errant mage, who is deep in the process of setting his scene, and persuade him to ignore his Fault for at least a little while.

The difficulties in finding candidates who look just right, finding old properties that can provide the stage, and making sure all the props and actors come together at the right time and in the right way during a thunderstorm sometimes leave Manzazuu scrabbling for weeks or even months, with Stress steadily building up. The Lesser Tulpa that bubble up from his Nimbus are odd Time distortions that inflict realistic visions of people's potential future deaths. They don't actually die, but Sleepers can't tell the difference between potential and a real memory with Quiescence warping their recollections.

Path: Moros

Order: Silver Ladder

Legacy: Stone Scribes

Fault: Kill a victim resembling the man from the vision, in a scene as closely resembling the vision as possible (Time)

Vice: Timid

Magical Savant Ability: Manzazuu can destroy a soul as a sacrament Yantra for Time spells as well as the usual Arcana; whenever he does so, he automatically gains all surface information about the soul's Mysteries relevant to all Arcana he knows, and one piece of deep information per level of Potency the spell has, as though he had successfully Scrutinized the soul.

Other Obsessions: Discover what befalls souls after death; Reincarnation

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 4, Computer 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult (Reincarnation) 4, Science (Weather) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry (Knives) 4

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Persuasion 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Alternate Identity 2; Astral Adept; Contacts (Actors); Contacts (Fringe Scientists); High Speech; Order Status (Silver Ladder) 2; Resources 3

Stress: 4

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Gnosis: 4

Mana/per Turn: 13/4

Nimbus Tilt: Grants +2 to Intelligence rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A ragged booklet of recorded past life experiences.

Arcana: Death 4, Life 1, Matter 1, Mind 3, Time 3

Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Life, Matter, Mind, Time); Eyes of the Dead; Inviolate Soul; Mage Armor (Death, Mind, Time); Mind's Eye; Targeted Summoning (Death, Mind, Time); Temporal Sympathy; Stone Scribes — In Memoriam; Borrow History

Praxes: Enervation (Death 4); Forensic Gaze (Death 1); Soul Marks (Death 1); Speak with the Dead (Death 1); Temporal Summoning (Time 3); Veil of Moments (Time 2)

Rotes: Corpse Mask (Death 2, Occult); Ghost Gate (Death 3, Occult); Ghost Summons (Death 3, Occult); Impostor (Mind 3, Persuasion); Psychic Domination (Mind 2, Subterfuge); Shield of Chronos (Time 2, Occult); Without a Trace (Death 2)

Rote Skills: Investigation, Occult, Survival

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Init	Dice
Knife	0L	−1	7

Notes: Time is Manzazuu's third Ruling Arcanum due to his Legacy and Fault.

Greater Tulpa — The Eternity (Specter)

The Eternity appears as a shivering mass of ghostly energy, forged roughly into the form of a human being clad in a grieving widow's Victorian funeral dress. Her stride and demeanor, though, bear

Stone Scribes

(Moros, Mysterium; Time)

The Stone Scribes are psychopomps and confessors of sorts, collecting the aggregate experiences and sympathetic names of the dying at the moment they expire according to occult principles of Supernal reincarnation; they theorize that souls cross over to the Supernal World in death, only to return after they've been purified of the Lie, and that capturing the essence of a soul in that moment can bring enlightenment. These Name Takers ritually create mantles from those memories and names. They call these mantles "final names," and use them to sympathetically become those who have passed on through their connections with their own past selves.

Yantras: delivering last rites or another deathbed ritual (+1); practicing gematria (+1); learning someone's sympathetic name (+1, or +2 if rolls are needed); paying respects to the dead (+1); a graveyard, crypt, catacomb, or other place of burial or remembrance of the dead (+1).

Oblations: meditating (**Mage**, p. 208) for at least an hour while intoning sacred names; carving a tombstone or taking grave rubbings; creating or extending genealogical lineages and family trees; documenting an oral history or memoir.

First Attainment: In Memoriam

Prerequisites: Initiation (Time 2, Death 1, Academics *or* Occult 2)

Most Stone Scribes make a ceremony of listening to the final words of the dying, recording them in writing or as oral history in audio or video, as the ritual preparation for this Attainment, which takes a scene. The subject needn't actually speak, though, for the mage to glean the essence of her life experiences in her moment of death. The willworker could just as easily spend this time going through the subject's keepsakes or researching her genealogy.

This Attainment allows the Name Taker to cast any Knowing or Unveiling spell in any Arcanum he knows using temporal sympathy to learn about a dying or dead subject's past self, even if the spell normally wouldn't be able to do so. This effect is Withstood by temporal sympathy, as normal. For purposes of this Attainment, a character is considered "dying" if her Health track is at least half filled with aggravated damage, or under otherwise appropriate narrative circumstances, such as suffering from the final stages of an incurable disease or a supernatural effect that kills without dealing physical damage. The mage can tell whether someone is dying by using Death or Time Active Mage Sight.

Second Attainment: Borrow History

Prerequisites: Academics *and* Occult 2

The Name Taker steps into the shoes of his subject's past self, no longer an outsider viewing her history but assuming that history for himself. This spell emulates the Space 2 spell "Borrow Threads" (**Mage**, p. 174), but applies to temporal sympathetic connections instead. The mage steals the subject's temporal sympathy to all points in her past that have a connection of a strength whose Withstand he can overcome with the Attainment's Potency. He can only take the connections of others; he can't give his own away.

nothing of sorrow or genteel manners: The Specter is so direct in her pursuit of Manzazuu's Fault that she tyrannizes him (and anyone else) when she appears, with the power to back it up.

Upon manifesting, the Eternity obliterates any direct obstacles stopping Manzazuu from pursuing his Fault, and then sets about forcibly recreating the scene. She has little of a Specter's usual subtlety thanks to Manzazuu's Fault. She drags victims to the scene and locks them in place with Time until she finishes putting together the best approximation of the scene she can manage. If Manzazuu seems hesitant or reluctant, she does her best to force him to comply.

The Eternity has only slipped loose once so far, when Manzazuu fought down his Fault for months on end to maintain the façade of his Ladder career. Manzazuu thinks she's a manifestation of his past lives' need to be reunited with his current soul, so she terrifies him, but he adores her.

Fault: Kill a victim resembling the man from the vision, in a scene as closely resembling the vision as possible

Vice: Impatient

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 7, Resistance 8

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 15

Defense: 7

Speed: 29

Size: 5

Corpus: 13

Rank: 4

Ban: If she encounters a funeral procession or ceremony, the Eternity must stop whatever she's doing and spend a scene in quiet observation.

Bane: The ashes from a unique historical record that has been destroyed by fire.

Arcana: Death 4, Matter 2, Mind 3, Time 4

Max Mana: 25

Spiral
The Primal Avatar

"Your body is a temple. I will enshrine in it a spark of true divinity, and you will become everything you are meant to be."

Background

Spiral is an incomparable monstrosity, a towering nightmare of warped flesh and twisted bone shuddering with the occult energies caged within. The Thyrsus is prison and host to a dozen spirits she forcibly fused with her own mind and meat, creating a hybrid being of immense power. This is her Rapture: to transcend the base human state through apotheosis and serve as the herald for a new future.

Spiral believes humanity has been denied its rightful occult destiny — not by the Abyss, not by the Lie that holds back Awakening, but by the Gauntlet. The Enraptured horror believes the Gauntlet's scabrous veil separates humans from the spiritual forces with which they should be united. She attempts to right this cosmic wrong with metaphysical brute force, doing what she can to tear the Gauntlet away where it is thickest and binding spirits into hapless humans to "gift" them a portion of the same power she now possesses.

Before Rapture — before Spiral forced spirits into fusing with her and catastrophically wounded her own soul — she studied the lack of any direct spiritual representation of humans in the Shadow. Spiral theorized that humans were supposed to serve as channels for that otherworld's power, but the unnatural barrier severing it from the Flesh was a prison to keep the species weak. Awakening is power, yes, but erratic and almost impossible to induce properly. The Shadow, on the other hand, is *right there*, with spirits just waiting to be shackled to humanity's destiny.

Once part of the Pentacle, Spiral now has neither Order nor cabal. Her cabalmates were her first victims when she began hybridizing humans and spirits, and the personal transmogrification she has undergone is so grotesque the Consilium sees it as a profane Act of Hubris. In theory, Spiral is on the run, but in practice she's so powerful the Sentinels have a hard time doing more than finding and cleaning up her latest excesses. The Orders need time, resources, and maybe a miracle to prepare for a showdown with the lurching abomination Spiral has become.

Spiral keeps some of the hybrids she creates — the ones who manage to retain the most sanity, or who have particularly useful Dread Powers. Others, she discards, letting them crawl back into the wreckage of their lives or run wild in service to the spirits' urges. Twisted monsters litter her wake. Despite claiming to be ushering in a new age, Spiral isn't concerned with what happens to these cast-off children of her magic. Her Fault focuses her on producing *more*, not on actually following through with her grand plans.

Description

Little remains of Spiral's humanity. She's a warped behemoth of tumorous flesh, towering over a normal person. The spirits within her make the Thyrsus' body overflow with power; she's a knotted eruption of contorted faces, bulging muscles, dangling tendrils, and bony spurs. Despite the horror of her transformation, Spiral maintains an aura of power and majesty. Seeing her crush steel — or skulls — with her twisted hands only adds to her air of invincibility and terror.

When Spiral speaks, the lesser mouths that pucker from her skin or chew their way briefly out of her flesh all echo her words — and what words they are! Spiral considers herself a herald of the future, here to usher in humanity's glorious ascension. The Enraptured mage genuinely believes she empowers people by forcing spirits into them, and that by tearing the Gauntlet away she can give the whole species the arcane might it needs to take on the Exarchs themselves *en masse*. Although happy to monologue at length about her plans, Spiral is no fool; the inhuman speed of her thoughts and reactions matches the many vigilant, paranoid eyes that bud all over her body.

Spiral's Immediate Nimbus is a taste of blood, a sense of pulsating organ tissue, and a vomit-inducing reflex in the stomach. The Signature she leaves behind causes lingering nausea and vague dread. Those caught in Spiral's Long-Term Nimbus are victims of intense urges and strange transformations — the work of increased spiritual activity that always follows her.

The Claimed

In general **Chronicles of Darkness** terms, Spiral's victims are Claimed (**CofD**, p. 131-133). Storytellers with that book can reference it for more information and use the full rules for spirit Claiming when using Spiral in a chronicle, but they can just as easily use her without them if they'd rather.

Additionally, for Storytellers who have access to **Werewolf: The Forsaken Second Edition** and wish to incorporate its material, Spiral can be considered a kind of Hive-Claimed (**Werewolf**, p. 219) as well as an Awakened mage, and Storytellers should feel free to take inspiration from those rules. That book also explores all types of Spirit-Ridden in more depth.

Secrets

Eldritch Patron: Spiral doesn't remember what her sympathetic name was, because she traded it to something horrific from the Deep Shadow before she ever even succumbed to Rapture, in return for the insight she needed to fuse multiple spirits with her soul without losing her own will. The Awakened task force set to tracking down and destroying the monstrous Rapt has had little success figuring out the nature of Spiral's abominable patron; one of the mages investigating has lost his own name and, indeed, the rest of his identity to the attempt, reduced to a permanent state of confusion without any sympathetic links at all.

Hybrid Monstrosities: The "gift" Spiral gives to the people she chooses as her beneficiaries is to turn them into monsters. Spirits that possess humans for long enough can enter a deeper form of synthesis between the two beings, creating mutant hybrids of flesh and spirit. Only a few spirits can normally instigate this transformation, but Spiral uses her magic to force it upon whatever spirits are nearby.

Army of Spirits: Malevolent spirit broods who want to see the Gauntlet ruined support Spiral's transgressions. These broods are not her direct allies — the spirits aren't willing subjects any more than the humans are — but they work at the fringes of her endeavors, sabotaging attempts to track her down or bring her to heel and luring more victims her way. Spiral does have an entourage of spirits that serve her directly as well: those she conjured, those who couldn't escape her arrival fast enough, or those so opportunistic or desperate they consider Spiral their best option for gaining power and status.

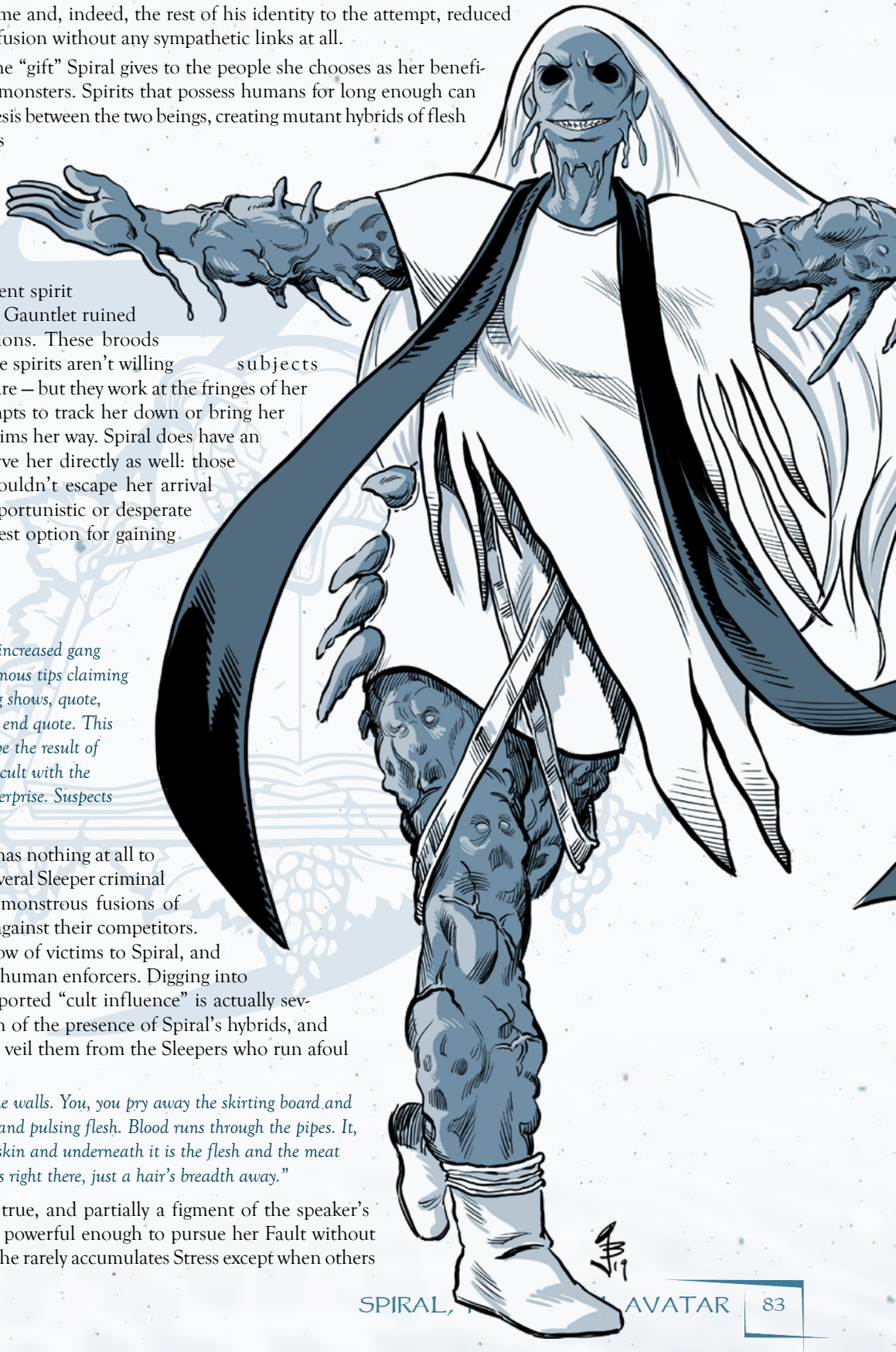
Rumors

"Up next: local police report increased gang activity downtown, with anonymous tips claiming a known human trafficking ring shows, quote, 'clear signs of the Devil's work,' end quote. This new development is thought to be the result of influence from an underground cult with the resources to fund a criminal enterprise. Suspects include..."

The gangs' new behavior has nothing at all to do with the devil or a cult. Several Sleeper criminal organizations now employ monstrous fusions of spirit and flesh as weapons against their competitors. Human traffickers feed a flow of victims to Spiral, and in return gain twisted, superhuman enforcers. Digging into the story reveals that the reported "cult influence" is actually several gangsters' interpretation of the presence of Spiral's hybrids, and Quiescence does nothing to veil them from the Sleepers who run afoul of this atrocity.

"Listen, the flesh is behind the walls. You, you pry away the skirting board and you see it there. Grinding teeth and pulsing flesh. Blood runs through the pipes. It, it's a skin, you see. Reality is a skin and underneath it is the flesh and the meat and the gristle and the teeth. It's right there, just a hair's breadth away."

This "rumor" is partially true, and partially a figment of the speaker's imagination. Since Spiral is powerful enough to pursue her Fault without pretending at a normal life, she rarely accumulates Stress except when others



Story Hooks

- One of the cabal's Sleeper or Sleepwalker allies goes radio silent long enough to worry them. All his sympathetic ties seem to have eroded. When the cabal finds him, he's sitting in an abandoned apartment with every window and mirror shattered, shoving pieces of broken glass into his mouth and chewing on them. He turns to them and they can see that his teeth are broken glass, too, and so are his eyes — just pits of broken glass.
- Spiral manages to capture and hybridize a high-profile member of the local Silver Ladder. The Consilium takes it as an act of war, mobilizing to destroy her small army of spirits and hybrids once and for all. They discover that one of Spiral's secret chambers of horror isn't far from the cabal's territory, which means a magical battle is being waged right on their doorstep.
- A pack of werewolves confronts the cabal, accusing them of crimes against the balance between Flesh and Spirit. They cite evidence of "witches" at the site of one of Spiral's worst atrocities, and they don't care that one mage has nothing much to do with the actions of another — they want the city's Awakened to own up to letting Spiral run rampant, and to atone for it by doing their part to make it right.

directly attack her or derail her schemes. When she does produce Tulpa, though, it's a nightmarish experience for those caught up in them. The Gauntlet collapses and bizarre Shadow denizens crawl across, while intense sensations of meat and gristle oozing and twitching just behind reality's skin plague victims' minds and color their understanding of what's happening before Quiescence kicks in.

"You deal with spirits, right? One came to my cabal making demands and we're pretty sure there's something wrong with it, but we don't have anybody who's studied them enough to figure out what it's talking about. It just keeps saying it escaped the 'bottomless spiral' and it wants us to destroy whatever that is. Our theory is it fell into a Lower Depth and then somehow climbed back out, but hell if we can get it to make any sense."

The "bottomless spiral" is not a Lower Depth but, of course, Spiral herself. The spirit that approached this cabal slipped free of its integration with her soul, and the experience addled its mind and warped its nature into an incomprehensible pretzel of nonsensical Influences, Numina, and traits. It's no longer truly a spirit *of* anything. Unable to get this cabal to do what it wants, it continues to make its demands of anyone who will listen; if this goes on long enough, it'll start taking drastic measures. Anyone who can decipher its babble and calm it down long enough to study it might glean useful information about how it escaped, and about the nature of Spiral's magic.

Path: Thyrsus

Order: None

Legacy: None

Fault: Merge humanity with spirits (Spirit)

Vice: Prideful

Magical Savant Ability: Spiral gains the rote quality on Clashes of Wills related to her Fault.

Other Obsessions: Achieve immortality through the spirit world; Tear down the Gauntlet; Force an Incarna into submission

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 6, Resolve 6

Physical Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 8, Stamina 8

Social Attributes: Presence 8, Manipulation 4, Composure 6

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts (Body Modification) 4, Investigation 3, Medicine 5, Occult (Spirits) 5, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 5, Brawl (Crippling Injuries) 5, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 4, Persuasion (Sermons) 3, Socialize 1

Merits: Allies (Spirit Broods) 5; Familiar (Ambition Spirit) 4; High Speech; Potent Resonance; Resources 2

Stress: 8

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 14

Defense: 11

Armor: 3/3 (Armored Hide 3)

Size: 8

Speed: 25

Health: 16

Gnosis: 8

Mana/per Turn: 30/8

Nimbus Tilt: Inflicts a −2 to Composure rolls, and a −2 to Stamina rolls, which also lose 10-again.

Dedicated Magical Tool: An old wooden rod, carved with glyphs from the tongue of the spirits.

Arcana: Life 5, Prime 3, Space 4, Spirit 5

Attainments: Body Autonomy; Counterspell (Life, Prime, Space, Spirit); Create Rote (Life, Spirit); Everywhere; Honorary Rank; Improved Pattern Restoration; Mage Armor (Life, Prime, Space, Spirit); Spirit Eyes; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Life, Prime, Space, Spirit); Universal Counterspell

Praxes: Banishment (Spirit 4); Bind Spirit (Spirit 4); Birth Spirit (Spirit 5); Bolster Spirit (Spirit 3); Command Spirit (Spirit 2); Howl From Beyond (Spirit 3); Shape Spirit (Spirit 4); Spirit Summons (Spirit 3); World Walker (Spirit 4)

Rotes: Contagion (Life 5, Medicine); Cut Threads (Space 4, Weaponry); Honing the Form (Life 3, Athletics); Life-Force Assault (Life 4, Brawl); Regeneration (Life 4, Medicine); Ward (Space 2, Weaponry)

Essence: 32

Dread Powers: Armored Hide 3 (gain +3 armor); Juggernaut (add Strength rating as automatic damage when striking object or structure); Monstrous Resilience (spend 1 Essence reflexively to end a physical Tilt)

Influences: Faith 4, Fear 3, Fire 2, Healing 3, Stone 3

Notes: Spiral is a bizarre and unique being, a human permanently merged with multiple spirits, although her Awakened will remains the controlling one. She has both Mana and Essence, spending Mana on Supernal magic as normal and spending Essence on her Influences and Dread Powers. She must also spend a point of Essence each day to maintain control over her state; each day she cannot, she suffers a point of aggravated damage, as her psyche tries to tear itself apart. She can replenish spent Essence using the Spirit 2 spell "Channel Essence" (**Mage**, p. 180).

Spiral never suffers wound penalties.

Greater Tulpa — Gristleflay (Totem)

Wrought from tangled sinews, meat, hair, and claws, Gristleflay looks as though half a dozen glorious totemic beasts have been crushed together like twitching, Supernal roadkill. Most striking is the wide maw that splits its bulk from one side to the other — a mouth with disturbingly human teeth and an alarmingly expressive manner.

Although it's a powerful entity in its own right, Gristleflay does not share its Rapt vessel's commanding demeanor. Instead, it's a smirking, wheedling, cajoling thing; where Spiral forces hybridization onto victims, Gristleflay corners Sleepers and persuades or coerces them into accepting its "blessings." Can't they *see* the potential power they could wield, if only they embraced union with the Shadow? It prefers to convince, but it knows pain is convincing; it inflicts grievous wounds, then offers a binding pact with a spirit that mends the Sleeper's ruined flesh. Given the opportunity, it always takes the path of least resistance.

Gristleflay offers no such negotiation to Awakened victims, though. It recognizes them as a significant threat to the fulfillment of Spiral's Fault, and stalks and kills with great relish any mages it encounters.

Fault: Merge humanity with spirits
Vice: Indolent
Attributes: Power 13, Finesse 15, Resistance 15
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 30
Defense: 13
Speed: 40
Size: 10
Corpus: 25
Rank: 5

Ban: A Sleeper who does not submit willingly is an invalid subject for Gristleflay's magic, though it can coerce willingness.

Bane: Objects with a Resonant Condition attuned to the void of outer space.

Arcana: Fate 4, Life 5, Space 4, Spirit 5
Max Mana: 50

Thalia, Storm of the Century

"The National Weather Service has issued a severe warning for this area. Residents are advised to seek shelter immediately, and stay tuned for important safety updates."

Background

Thalia only recalls snippets from before. Trapped deep in her own Oneiros, she believes her name was once Eliza Martinez. It's on the ID badge she flashes in her memories, and the registration of a battered old pickup. Sometimes, her jumbled thoughts are numbers more than anything else: carbon dioxide measured in parts per million, how many millibars make a Category 5 hurricane, record snowfalls, tide charts, wind speeds and the Fujita scale. She was a climate scientist, once, dedicated to finding a way to reverse humanity's effects on the environment. She was a part-time storm chaser, too, with a truckload of equipment and a need for adrenaline. Her memories are full of the low, train-whistle moans of raging tornadoes and the rattle of hail on a windshield. She remembers the smell of rain on hot concrete, and of wood exposed when tree trunks snapped.

When sounds and scents get through these days, it's all beeping machines and antiseptic cleaners. Sometimes she catches the lilac whiff of her mother's hand lotion, and relatives murmuring platitudes, but those come less and less now. Could be she's not getting near the surface as much as she did at first. Could be they're giving up on her.

The last storm she chased raged its way across Alabama, while Thalia and her partner raced to keep up. She drove while he hollered the names of side streets over the roaring winds and gave her a play-by-play of the funnel cloud forming off to their right. As the twister touched down, the world went still. Thalia could read the trajectory of every raindrop, and see the shapes of lightning bolts before they forked down from the sky. The funnel's path turned abruptly, as if drawn to her. She was too caught up in its beauty to point the truck away and floor it.

When it caught them, it was no longer a tornado but a tower,

the door at its base locked with a golden key. Thalia reached for it, intending to turn it.

The winds picked her up and tore her away. The truck was just a truck again, glass and steel and engine oil. Her partner screamed in fear and pain, then went deathly quiet.

She can't remember his name.

Thalia sustained significant injuries, though she never felt her femur snap, or the slivers of wind-borne debris that lacerated her skin as the windshield gave way. She wasn't alone, anymore. Wasn't in control. The storm settled into her bones, and there it's stayed.

Eliza Martinez' body lays comatose at Mercy Hospital, a privately held medical center just outside Mobile. Her mother sat by her side around the clock at first, though as the months wore on, her visits grew shorter. Now she's there every other day, smoothing the sheets, replacing wilted sunflowers with fresh ones, and reading articles from scientific journals she hopes her daughter can hear in her deep sleep.

Thalia herself waits within her Oneiros, chasing after pieces of her old identity and anticipating the moments when the storm inside her breaks.

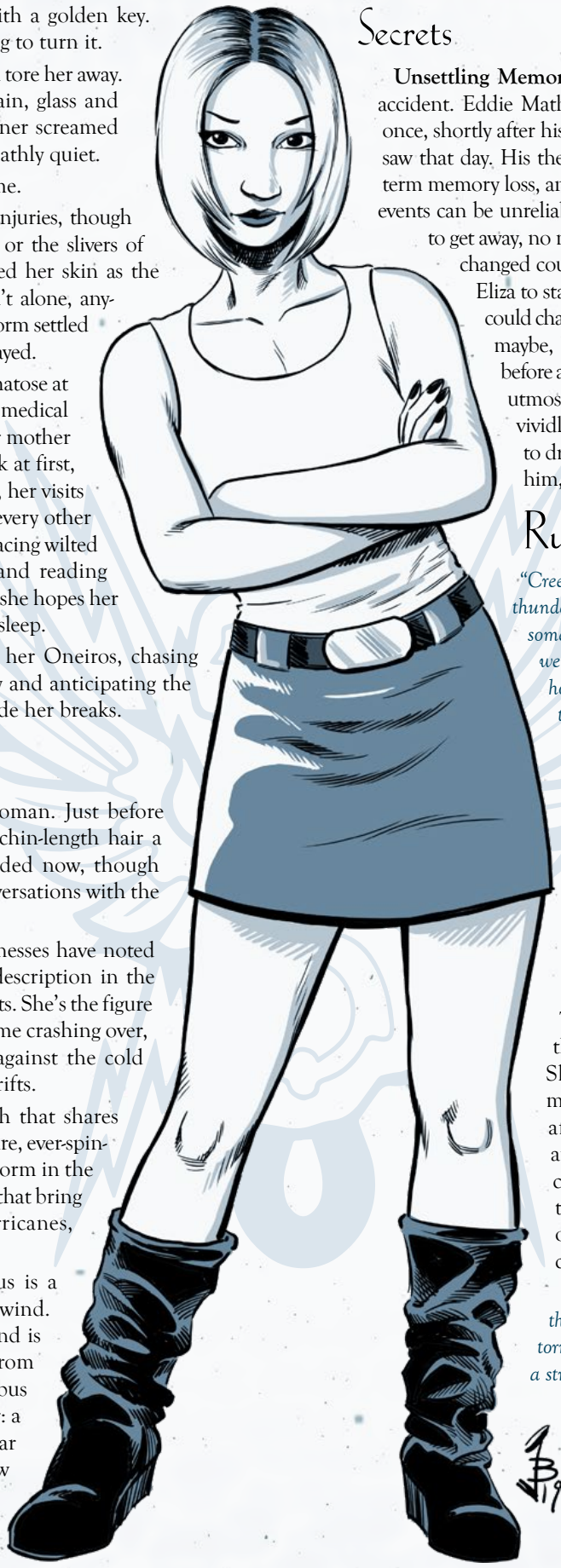
Description

Thalia is a petite Latina woman. Just before the accident, she'd dyed her chin-length hair a deep crimson. The color's faded now, though her mother has had some conversations with the nurses on touching it up.

When her Tulpa erupt, witnesses have noted a woman similar to Thalia's description in the background of local news reports. She's the figure on the sea wall as the waves come crashing over, or the resident bundled up against the cold trudging through waist-high drifts.

In its true form, the Seraph that shares Thalia's soul is a whirlwind of fire, ever-spinning. When it manifests as a storm in the Fallen World, it prefers storms that bring heavy winds: tornadoes, hurricanes, blizzards.

Thalia's Immediate Nimbus is a column of fire and hot, dry wind. The Signature she leaves behind is the cloying smell of smoke from wildfires. Her Long-Term Nimbus results in intense local weather: a sudden thunderstorm on a clear afternoon, a white-out snow squall, or heavy rainfall that overwhelms drainage systems and floods the streets.



Secrets

Unsettling Memories: Thalia's partner survived the accident. Eddie Mathis only visited her in the hospital once, shortly after his own release. He's not sure what he saw that day. His therapist says trauma can cause short-term memory loss, and what people *do* recall of terrifying events can be unreliable. But Eddie's sure they had time to get away, no matter how quickly the funnel cloud changed course. He knows he was screaming at Eliza to start the truck, hit the gas, *go go go*. He could chalk it up to her being paralyzed by fear, maybe, but they'd been in scary situations before and she'd always handled herself with utmost calm. What he remembers most vividly is how, while he was begging her to drive them out of there, she turned to him, smiled, and said, "No."

Rumors

"Creepiest goddamned thing. During that thunderstorm yesterday, I swear I heard some lady talking in the other room. I went in to see who the hell was in my house, but it was just the radio, tuned to somebody droning on about climate change, and what we could do to stop it. Then she stopped talking science and started crying. Said her name was Thalia, and she was in the hospital, and wouldn't someone please help her? Then the signal fuzzed out and I couldn't find it again."

Thalia's work isn't done. When her Tulpa wreak havoc as a storm, Thalia attempts to reach out to those who can hear her messages. She piggybacks onto radio transmissions, or appears as a ghostly afterimage on television screens and computer monitors. She's held conversations in chatrooms thought to be private, and dumped terabytes of data onto websites for users to comb through.

"Have you seen that viral video all the Obrimos are screaming over? This tornado touches down in the middle of a street and a woman appears right in its path, then she vanishes again as it reaches her. She's been spotted a couple of places. People say she's a storm spirit. If you can get to her and grab her hand before she disappears, she'll grant you a boon."

Story Hooks

- A sudden storm bears down on the cabal's location, trapping them in their sanctum before they can evacuate. With every passing hour, the intensity grows and the driving rain threatens to flood the sanctum. When the cabal hears a crash and checks to see the damage, they find Thalia in a room no one outside the cabal should be able to access.
- Storm spirits approach the cabal, asking for their help. A powerful entity has disrupted their domains, and refuses to acknowledge their presence, let alone their claim over their territory.
- The sky immediately above Mercy Hospital turns black, and red lightning forks down from the sky when people try to approach the doors. All communications from within the hospital cease. If the cabal can consult with Thalia within her Oneiros, she can help them stop the storm.

Thalia enjoys watching her own handiwork. The entity that creates the storms revels in its own majesty, while the adrenaline rush reaches the woman herself. Together, they have little regard for the destruction they wreak in lives lost and infrastructure damaged. The Seraph cares little for human woes, and Thalia herself — despite her continuing attempts to disseminate information — sees the storms as the inevitable result of global neglect. She's reaping what humanity sowed.

Grabbing her hand while she's staring down a tornado will only piss her off, but standing beside her and facing it might impress her enough to get her talking...if the mage who attempts it survives.

"Look at these strikes. The patterns they left behind. That's High Speech hidden in the Lichtenberg figures, and we're not just talking about some singed grass on golf courses. People say a woman got trapped in a lightning bolt, that maybe she's some Tamer who was trying to lasso a storm, but no one's gone missing around here."

Thalia's Awakening went awry, and she doesn't have any kind of training or access to the Orders' knowledge. However, she's observed who responds to the storms, to her attempts to make contact, and she's *sure* some of those people have answers to her many, many questions. She's picked up a little bit of the High Speech, some of it from the Seraph, some of it from those hazy memories of her failed waking world dream. She's trying to communicate, even if her forays are clumsy and not always subtle.

Path: Obrimos

Fault: Command storms (Forces)

Vice: Arrogant

Magical Savant Ability: Thalia can't be traced via Forces (see p. XX).

Other Obsessions: Once again grasp the golden key in the Aether; Communicate with someone through Forces

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 5, Resistance 7

Stress: 3

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 12

Defense: 5

Speed: 24

Size: 5

Corpus: 12

Gnosis: 3

Mana/per Turn: 12/3

Nimbus Tilt: Imposes −2 to Stamina rolls, which lose 10-again.

Ban: If another entity controls a storm system in a given area, Thalia may not overtake or attempt to influence it.

Bane: Fulgurite — the fused glass formed by lightning striking sand or soil.

Arcana: Forces 4, Prime 1, Spirit 3, Time 1

Attainments: Counterspell (Forces, Prime, Spirit, Time); Environmental Immunity; Mage Armor (Forces, Spirit); Precise Force; Spirit Eyes; Targeted Summoning (Forces, Spirit)

Praxes: Call Lightning (Forces 3); Control Weather (Forces 2); Transmission (Forces 2)

"I'm terribly disappointed in you," da Vinci announced.

The young man strapped to the stainless steel chair said nothing, but he slouched a little more. His left eye had swollen shut, and the cut on his head bled freely into blond curls.

"I warned you that it was forbidden. Not just in the 'new kid disobeys his mentor and learns an important lesson' kind of way, but in the 'kiss your reputation as a Guardian in good standing goodbye' way. Vice cops don't smoke PCP if they want to keep being cops. They fucking know better, and you should have, too."

He opened his mouth to speak, but only mumbles came out. He spat out the bloody gauze. "Sins for a just end grant Wisdom."

"Don't quote the Tenets at me, Mozart!" da Vinci snapped, furious now. "Half the mages in Chicago are hunting whoever's responsible for that grisly display in the warehouse."

"That was an accident." Mozart sounded contrite, now. "They weren't supposed to be there. Security guards are supposed to patrol on foot a couple times a night, but most don't bother."

"You're lucky I found you first. Others would not have been so gentle."

Mozart barked a laugh through his mouthful of broken teeth.

Da Vinci regretted the damage, but whatever Abyssal filth he had touched had made him proof against her healing magic. She wanted to understand why, even as she knew she needed to let it go. They will already question my role in this.

"I'll get you cleaned up. You'll surrender to the Consilium first thing in the morning. Beg leniency." She was pacing. "They will punish you. They must."

"I will accept their judgment humbly."

That will count for something. I know the Hierarch's secrets. I know the secrets of everyone on the Council. I will make it count for something.

"Do you know what I've learned, this week?" Mozart asked, breaking the silence.

Before she could respond, the door of her sanctum burst open. Da Vinci wanted to scream objections, demand an explanation, threaten to get a Sentinel involved. But Venice is a Sentinel, and she brought a small mob of mages with her.

"He surrendered himself to me, and he is prepared to stand trial," da Vinci said, answering the accusations in all those eyes.

Venice took in Mozart's injuries before making a small motion with one hand. Four sturdy Arrows flowed past the Sentinel. The golden-haired mage looked at his teacher with pleading eyes as they carried him out of the Sanctum.

Da Vinci suddenly noticed Venice was looking at her. "I know he was your apprentice," the Sentinel said, "but you will stay in your sanctum, under guard, until the Council calls for you. We must...understand how he came into this knowledge. We must know who led him onto this path."

Venice left, then. Da Vinci squeezed her eyes shut tight. It was all she could do not to weep.

CHAPTER FOUR
SCELESTI

"The fox condemns the trap, not himself."
— William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Scelesti (sing. **Scelestus**) are mages who intentionally call upon the Abyss in their magical workings, allowing its anti-symbols to pollute their spells or knowingly summoning its denizens to corrupt the Fallen World further. The Orders, even the Seers of the Throne, condemn these Accursed mages and actively hunt them wherever they find them. Even so, Scelesti lurk in every Order, either specifically to undermine Awakened society or as ordinary mages who fell to darker urges.

Few Scelesti begin as nihilists who seek the world's end or its remaking by an alien god. Most dip into the Abyss while pursuing unrelated Obsessions, dabbling in the forbidden until it ensnares them with its power. They slide deeper into its service through a combination of addiction and the falsely comforting Lie it offers in contrast to the uphill struggle for Truth. Other mages call their tainted magic "befouled" or "antinomian."

The word "Scelesti" doesn't describe an Order or a single, coherent group, although some do form groups of their own. It's a blanket term for anyone who courts the Abyss on purpose, for reasons ranging from desperation, to well-intentioned attempts to control Paradox, to the rejection of any Awakened responsibility to preserve reality, to an outright desire for the destruction of everything Fallen *and* Supernal.

The Orders recognize five overarching levels of Scelestus initiation: Rabashakim, Nasnasi, Autarchs and Shedim, Baalim, and Qliphoth.

Rabashakim

The least and most common of the Accursed are the **Rabashakim**, mages who deliberately befoul their spells but have not fully given themselves over to the Abyss. The Orders forbid trafficking with antinomian sorcery, as even with the best of intentions, it leads to a breakdown of the Supernal and makes the Fallen World fall further. They know, however, that to completely forbid the *study* of it would lead to dangerous ignorance of important Mysteries, so orthodox mages walk a fuzzy line in dealing with Abyssal dabbling.

The Wise recognize that befouling a spell never occurs by accident — it's not the same as simply Reaching too far and failing to contain the Paradox. Few mages who set out to invite the Abyss into their spells succeed on the first try. The first successful dalliance with the Abyss usually comes only after a considerable period of flirting with it, each failed attempt a grave Act of Hubris. Even a willworker who has only befouled a single spell cannot claim innocence or ignorance.

The Free Council and Mysterium generally regard anyone who wields antinomian sorcery as an enemy by definition, and condemn them to death. The other Pentacle Orders are not so absolute in their judgment of a Rabashakim who shows convincing evidence of reform, but a pardoned Scelestus' reputation carries a permanent stain. They pass her over for appointment to meaningful posts, deny her access to the best mentors and most valuable Mysteries, and forbid her from taking apprentices, while burying her dark past where they hope no one will ever uncover it. The Seers, on the other hand, allow Rabashakim among them when they can reasonably prove they're using befouled magic to regulate the Abyss, as the Exarchs command; falling further than that tends to be punished as a betrayal.

Corruption's Lure

Having been warned in no uncertain terms of the dire consequences of befouling his magic, why would any right-thinking mage do so?

Some dabble because they suspect such warnings are an attempt to prevent apprentices from gaining power too quickly — after all, greener Awakened can get away with a little excessive Reach here and there without much fuss. They often believe the threat isn't nearly as terrible as their more potent colleagues insist. Others assume the proscription has roots in an ancient, obsolete tradition, a relic from the Time Before. The world's already Fallen, now; surely one Abyssal entity won't tip the scales at this point? Some hope to discover better ways to mitigate Paradox or fight Abyssal corruption. They convince themselves they can resist the lure, and pull back before it devours them as it has countless others. Still others just can't help themselves — they understand the perils, they may hate themselves for doing it, but they become obsessed with understanding something that cannot be understood, in endless pursuit of the unpursuable. Nothing is more maddening than dangling a Mystery in front of a mage and telling them not to touch it.

Despite the Orders' efforts to purge, or at least quarantine, Rabashakim within their ranks, an alarming number of them first learn these Abyssal magics from Accursed mentors who

have eluded notice. The truth most mages don't want to face — one they keep from their apprentices as long as possible — is that theoretically, any willworker could learn to befoul their magic given a teacher, secret knowledge, or just an uncannily strong will to do so. Too many mages think Abyssal magic is a secret, swift path to Supernal power, but contact with the Abyss weakens body, mind, and Pattern. Antinomian magic might allow impressive feats in the moment, but it's innately hubristic.

At the same time, Rabashakim are wading in shallow waters when it comes to Abyssal corruption, and it is possible for them to give it up and return to orthodoxy. It's extraordinarily rare, though, and the Orders quash tales of ex-Rabashakim for fear their students will dabble more readily if they believe addiction to befouled magic isn't permanent.

Learning Antinomian Sorcery

Knowledge about how to befoul spells is a closely guarded secret in most circles, but those who seek it out can always find someone willing to part with it for a price. Antinomian sorcery is counterintuitive, so most would-be Rabashakim find it impossible to learn without an Accursed tutor or forbidden Grimoire; it's not just a matter of causing Paradox, but of *controlling* it, which requires distorting the usual spellcasting process.

- **Befouled Rotes:** Powerful Scelesti create rotes that encode the Abyss into their Imagos, making them as easy to cast as any other rote. These provide the usual rote benefits as well as the antinomian effects (p. XX).

- **Other Spells:** Corrupting an Imago without a rote is much more difficult, and most Rabashakim don't figure it out on their own. Befouling a Praxis requires a successful reflexive Resolve + Composure roll and costs 1 Mana; befouling an improvised spell requires the same roll, but made at a –3, and costing the spell's dot rating in Mana instead.

Casting Antinomian Sorcery

Rabashakim befoul spells to wield Paradox as a weapon, gaining a measure of control over it and using it to inflict harm that can't be predicted or Counterspelled. The feeling of deliberately infecting one's Imago with Paradox is a strange, debased thrill.

Rabashakim Spellcasting

- **Grievous Hubris:** Casting any befouled spell is an Act of Hubris against low Wisdom.

- **Paradox Risk:** A befouled spell *always* risks Paradox, and the Scelestus must release (never contain) it. Whenever she casts a befouled spell that would not normally risk Paradox, treat it as though she'd gone one Reach beyond her safe limit instead. When she casts one that would have risked Paradox anyway, treat it as having one additional unsafe Reach.

- **Paradox Control:** After determining how much Paradox a befouled spell generates (step eight of spellcasting), roll the mage's Gnosis as a dice pool. Nothing can modify this roll.

Antinomian Anomalies

Paradox	Effect
1 Reach	Impose a Condition or personal Tilt on the spell's subject, or on a Sleeper who witnesses the spell if it's obvious magic
2 Reach	Undo or apply a single Reach from the Common Reach Effects list (**Mage**, p. 112), except Casting Time.
2+ Reach	Create an Abyssal Environmental Tilt (p. XX).
3 Reach	Impose a Persistent Condition on the spell's subject, or on a Sleeper who witnesses the spell if it's obvious magic
3 Reach	Change the spell's subject.
5+ Reach	Summon an Abyssal entity of Rank 2. Further Reach may increase the Rank of the entity by 1 per Reach.

Roll Results

Success: For each success, the *mage* consciously decides how to allocate one of the Paradox roll's successes, following the "Antinomian Anomalies" table below. In addition, each success on the Gnosis roll reduces the penalty to the spellcasting roll due to Paradox by one (to a minimum of zero). For instance, if the Paradox roll achieved two successes and the Gnosis roll achieved one, the Paradox penalty to the spellcasting roll would be –1 instead of –2.

Exceptional Success: As success, but the mage instead chooses how to allocate *all* the Paradox roll's successes.

Failure: The Scelestus fails to control the Paradox's effects.

Dramatic Failure: The Scelestus loses all control over the Paradox. Add half her Gnosis (rounded up) to the Paradox roll's successes, and she fails to control any of them.

- **Destructive Anomalies:** The anomalies befouled spells produce follow different patterns than those of other released Paradoxes. They are less likely to modify the Scelestus' spell, and more likely to inflict collateral damage. When a befouled spell provokes an anomaly, use the "Antinomian Anomalies" table instead of the one on p. 116 of **Mage**.

- **Feeding the Lie:** Scelesti can force Paradox they successfully control to resonate with the Abyssal shards embedded in nearby Sleepers' souls; this is why they can impose Conditions or Tilts on Sleeper witnesses to obvious magic

in addition to the spell's subject. An additional option for such a Condition is Dissonant Tuning (p. XX).

- **Abyssal Debilitation:** Antinomian sorcery takes its toll on the mage's Pattern. After attempting to cast a befouled spell — whether or not she succeeds at either the spell-casting itself or controlling the Paradox — a Rabashakim suffers the Abyssal Debilitation Condition (p. XX).

Nasnasi

A Rabashakim may undertake a spiritual journey to explore an Abyssal Mystery that leads to her **Dur-Abzu**, the Abyssal reflection of her Path's Supernal Realm. While the Watchtowers reveal truths that lead to a mage's Awakening, the Dur-Abzu seduces the Rabashakim postulant with paradoxical secrets.

Some Rabashakim undergo this Mystery unintentionally, through Abyssal Debilitation (p. XX). Those who undergo it intentionally pursue it as an Obsession instead. They must spend at least a story exploring anti-symbols and training themselves to reject conventional views of their Path's symbolism in favor of more destructive philosophies. They don't abandon the Supernal entirely, but they twist it to fit a nihilistic archetype.

If a Rabashakim embraces that Lie and aligns her gnosis with it, she becomes a **Nasnas** (pl. **Nasnasi**). Most mages who complete the **Joining** — the process of replacing one's Wisdom with Abyssal attunement — adopt a new Shadow Name, abandoning their cabals and friends in search of darker Mysteries. Nasnasi turn away from their Paths to embrace rebirth at an Abyssal **Ziggurat**, an anti-Watchtower that corrupts their Mage Sight, Nimbus, Path Yantras, and Oblations.

While some of the major Orders might consider allowing a reformed Rabashakim to return to the fold, none would harbor a known Nasnas. Nasnasi may theoretically redeem themselves and reject the Joining, but few Awakened would give them the benefit of the doubt.

The View from the Ziggurats

Although the Joining does not destroy the Scelestus' connection to the Supernal World, her acceptance of the Abyss colors all her interactions with it. She takes up the tools of the Joined, changing the kinds of Yantras her Path allows. Her soul, contaminated with Abyssal energies, creates soul stones that warp Demesnes unnaturally. Her Mage Sight shows the symbols of her Path through a distorted lens, echoing the Dur-Abzu where she reached her awful apotheosis.

Ao Si, the Mound of Thorns (Acanthus)

Calling upon the symbolism of malevolent trickster gods and Fomorians with warped sorcery, Joined Acanthus embrace the Lie that human choices don't matter, and take it as their calling to spread the belief that destiny is an illusion. Far from driving them to despair, this revelation frees Joined Acanthus to wield their magic capriciously and treacherously, eschewing responsibility and embracing chaos. They break oaths as quickly as they make them. They betray those whose trust they've earned. They view obligation and consequence as futile attempts to lend meaning to a meaningless world, and reject them as self-inflicted traps for the weak.

Mage Sight: Joined Acanthus view the Supernal World of Thorns and Mists as entropy and inevitability. Some see the Thorns as a jungle of overgrown brambles that tangle randomly, based not on decisions made and paths taken but on entropic vagaries pushing the Fallen World toward its end — not a fated Ragnarök or Revelation, but an inescapable fading away into Mists portending nothing but obscurity. Others view the Tapestry as a paradoxical Mobius strip that weaves itself without direction, driving an immutable narrative with the same actors doing the same things for eternity after eternity.

Nimbus and Soul: The Nimbus of an Acanthus Nasnas destroys causality and renders intention impotent. Her Immediate Nimbus might dispirit witnesses with endless, identical paths stretching into infinity, or convince them their successes are failures garbed in lies. Her Signature Nimbus might highlight meaningless details, leading those who study it on wild goose chases, or make them feel as though time isn't passing at all. Her Long-Term Nimbus causes hiccups in cause and effect or in probability: Coins tossed a hundred consecutive times come down heads 100% of the time, or people act according to stimuli that haven't happened yet — and may never happen. Demesnes made from soul stones connected to Ao Si exhibit improbable and randomized properties, force time to run backwards, or make exceptional success and dramatic failure both impossible.

Path Yantras: In their Yantras, Joined Acanthus call upon the tales of broken oaths, kinslayers, and inescapable curses they played out in the ever-shifting, thorny maze of their Dur-Abzu. They rely on tools with noticeable defects or subversions, such as a flawed crystal or two-headed coin. They adopt the trappings of dishonor and betrayal, like sacraments made from the ashes of broken contracts or knives used to backstab an ally.

Drugaskan, the Impenetrable Darkness (Mastigos)

Joined Mastigos embrace the Lie that the self isn't worth trying to perfect, and the inherent corruption in humanity's nature means that ultimately, everyone is doomed to be alone: The eternal state of all souls, they say, is damnation. As a nightmare in which those who smother the light of truth endure an eternity of isolation and darkness as punishment, Drugaskan teaches a deep cynicism: its disciples are out to prove that all people are so riddled with flaws and vices that no crucible can purify them. Hell is but a blaze that consumes them utterly and inevitably, leaving only ashes in its wake. If identity is the product of the Chains binding a congeries of Astral demons, Nasnasi Psychonauts say, then without those Chains these wicked collections of sins would disintegrate into the Abyss, too broken by the Fall to reunite.

Mage Sight: A Mastigos Nasnas sees Space's Chains not as emotional connections that defy distance to describe one's place in the greater consciousness, but as fetters that suffocate thought and desire, isolating the self and defining it by its worst impulses. The Auras these Scelesti see are clouds of vicious noise — piercing static, dense swarms of buzzing locusts, or roaring billows of dark, choking smoke — shot through with ugly, pulsating veins

of oil-slick black or blood-red. A consciousness might appear to Mage Sight as a burnt and broken piece of pottery, cracked by the ever-squeezing vise of its shackles.

Nimbus and Soul: Dissociation and judgment taint everything a Joined Mastigos touches, leaving the unshakable feeling that perceptions are false, and no one is worthy. Her Immediate Nimbus might be a claustrophobic gloom imposing sensory deprivation, or a faint mocking susurrus sowing doubt and confusion. Her Signature Nimbus might inflict feelings of profound loneliness or a detachment that makes witnesses feel surrounded by malevolent strangers. Her Long-Term Nimbus turns simple misunderstandings into completely ruinous breakdowns of communication, dims sight, or heightens inhibitions and paranoia to unbearable levels. Demesnes formed from these Scelesti's soul stones sap identity and destroy memories, suppress Virtues and Wisdom, or fill with a crushing darkness no light can penetrate.

Path Yantras: Nasnasi Warlocks' Yantras call back to their Dur-Abzu, where stifling silence exposes the constant undercurrent of demons murmuring a litany of their faults inside their minds. They use tools associated with darkness, damnation, doubt, isolation, and lies. Places where the sun never reaches, mirrors fractured into a spiderweb of cracks such that no reflection is distinguishable, rusted iron, and tarnished brass are common; sacraments that destroy symbols of redemption or hope bestow significant power.

Arallu, the Cave of Rot and Tarnish (Moros)

Among the ever-crumbling ruins in the watery cave of Arallu, Stygian corpses decompose slowly, painfully, and eternally. Stone erodes forever, dust and sediment never reconstituting into anything new. The Lie Joined Moros embrace rejects the alchemy of transformation and rebirth, instead espousing a state of continual decay. Rot and ruin define this Dur-Abzu's symbolism: Nothing truly ends, it just deteriorates forever, in defiance of the inevitable. These Scelesti prolong the suffering of ghosts instead of urging them to move on, and force victims to age into crippling decrepitude rather than submit to death's release as a lesson to all. Quietude isn't the acceptance of death, but the hollow yearning for a peace that won't come.

Mage Sight: To the Moros Nasnas, the Crypts in which all living things languish are sucking vortexes of tarnished reality from which paying the Leaden Coin offers no escape. The ferryman doesn't take the dead across the river, but dunks them in and holds them underwater to perpetually drown. In her Mage Sight, the Accursed feels the weight of every albatross and sees the Shells of the world as burdens to bear interminably or treasures to desperately hoard, rather than baggage to cast off or mementos to pass on.

Nimbus and Soul: A Joined Necromancer's Nimbus draws attention to imperfections and unnaturally prolongs processes both physical and spiritual. One mage's Immediate Nimbus might exacerbate every mistake, sign of wear, and tiny pain, making the daily grind of the flesh seem unbearable. Another's might prompt witnesses to wallow in nostalgia for bygone days and lost possessions. Those who study her Signature Nimbus might suffer exhaustion laboring under a heavy, invisible load, or see the steady decline of all things in real time. Her Long-Term Nimbus causes objects and materials to rust, break down, or otherwise fall apart, and every kind of ending is put off indefinitely. People continue to drive dangerous clunkers rather than consign them to scrap, studios make endless sequels of unpopular movies, guests overstay their welcomes, and a ghost's Anchor persists beyond attempts to destroy it. A demesne with a Nasnasi Moros' soul stone at its heart halts cycles at their nadir, keeps wounds from healing *or* bleeding out, and thwarts all forms of acceptance.

Path Yantras: The Yantras of a Joined Alchemist usually show signs of wear and tear, but some of these Scelesti prefer preserved relics of a time long past, anachronistic objects of irrelevance and obsolescence. In their sacraments, these Nasnasi invoke their crumbling Dur-Abzu, where beauty and function dissolve into useless waste: a candle burning down to a pool of wax, an electronic device submerged until it ceases to function, or food burnt to inedibility.

Tartarus, the Deluge (Obrimos)

Joined Obrimos accept the Lie that the Supernal is akin to Fallen forces of nature: fundamentally fleeting and catastrophically destructive. Smashed temples from the Time Before litter the seafloor of their drowned Dur-Abzu, as reminders that all labors are doomed to collapse under Abyssal tides. To be a Nasnasi Thaumaturge is to not only reject but *subvert* the ideal of sublimity. These mages abandon any sense of wonder at the vastness of the universe, accept humanity's place as small and insignificant, and take it upon themselves to be the guides. In place of the gods, these Obrimos put *themselves* forth as the only higher powers the Fallen World deserves, like the disgraced Watchers of old. After all, can they not command the storm? Call up the flood? Speak words that bring listeners to their knees? As corrupted eschatological deities, they inspire fear and wield the apocalypse as their weapon.

Mage Sight: The Deluge is perhaps the most contradictory of all the Dur-Abzu. It undermines the laws and hierarchies of the Aether with apocryphal inversions and irreconcilable anti-revelations, but simultaneously crowning the Theurgist with the divine authority to rule over the End of Days, bringing about a new Fall that encompasses *everything*. The Obrimos Nasnas sees diametrically opposed Mandalas that can't possibly coexist, describing laws antithetical to reality and sketching out blasphemous rituals designed to annihilate truth. The Dominions her Sight reveals grant authority through perdition, exalting those least worthy from positions of ruin, like the Nephilim chained to the seabed or the serpent crawling on its belly.

Nimbus and Soul: A Nasnasi Thaumaturge is a hypocritical narcissist with the aura of a petulant god, demanding sacrifices in her name for the privilege of destruction. Her Immediate Nimbus might be a display of merciless floodwaters or the instinct to fall to one's knees; her Signature Nimbus might induce shame and humility, or a silent, post-apocalyptic chill. Her Long-Term Nimbus unleashes wanton collateral damage, spawns doomsday cults, or erodes faith. Demesnes created from these Accursed Obrimos' soul stones outright disregard the laws of physics or subtly reward obeying the stone's creator while punishing defiance.

Path Tools: Joined Obrimos favor Yantras that call upon antediluvian mythoi and devastating subversions of divine judgment. They use tools from extinct cultures or places obliterated by cataclysms, such as a shard of obsidian from Pompeii or a kitchen knife scavenged from the ruins of a home flattened by a tornado. Their sacraments are massive and potent, gaining power the more unnecessarily destructive they are.

Amma Su, the Burning Iron Spiral (Thyrsus)

The anti-realm of Amma Su is a continent-sized city of sprawling factories that belch black smoke into smog-filled air, squalid zoos, vast slums, and maximum-security prisons. Amma Su chains the state of natural entities to human progress, muzzling the Primal Wild according to the whims of a species that proved itself willing and able to subdue the wildernesses of nature and Shadow—and, in some cases, eradicate them in service to its own supremacy. Joined Thyrsus embrace the Lie that the natural and spirit worlds are inherently inferior to humanity and thus must not only submit to it, but let it subsume them. To command and bind spirits is not enough: the Nasnasi Shaman forces them to fuse unnaturally with flesh and blood, empowering the material at the Shadow's expense.

Mage Sight: Though these Accursed can hear and follow the Singing Paths just as well as any Thyrsus, the music of the land and its spirits sounds discordant and hollow to their ears by comparison to human Mysteries, which resound like great choruses or sublime trumpets. Even humanity's songs possess a cacophonous edge, though, their Paths leading to blasted wastelands without harmony, deafening and shrill. The Ecstasy these Nasnasi experience as they scour the Mysteries raw, siphoning everything they want and leaving empty husks in their wake, fills them with sensations of grime and pollution. Their Sight is filled with jostling crowds, the beeping horns of rush hour, and the shine of glass and chrome; the compulsive behaviors of animals in captivity; and the hunger of a spirit starved of Essence.

Nimbus and Soul: The Thyrsus Nasnas carries an air of superiority so ingrained it spills over into thoughtless entitlement, like a giant stomping through a forest with no notion of the trees and dwellings crushed underfoot. Her Immediate Nimbus might make witnesses feel like an insignificant insect, or spew clouds of oily gas that sicken and weaken them. Her Signature Nimbus might engender the primal fear of extinction or a queasiness that churns the stomach. Her Long-Term Nimbus weakens Resonance, spawns rashes of spirit possessions that turn into permanent fusions, or disrupts ecosystems and kills off the last of an endangered species. A Nasnasi Ecstatic's soul stones create demesnes that function as spirit banes or impose additional bans, make possession of Sleepers easier, or poison non-human life forms.

Path Tools: Joined Thyrsus use Yantras that express humanity's dominion, or represent "plastic shamanism" using the trappings of traditions they have no connection to and don't believe in. Their tools are manmade mockeries of nature, like plastic flowers or mechanical bulls. Their sacraments are sacrificial lambs appealing to no god, or houseplants razed to ash in salted soil.

Storytelling Nasnasi

A Nasnas' drive to increase Joining incentivizes her toward behavior that reinforces the Lie and destroys Supernal magic — which in turn brings her into inevitable conflict with the players' cabal. The Scelestus needn't roll to increase Joining; she just needs to succeed at an Act of Defilement despite the characters' best efforts.

This isn't meant to pit Storytellers against players, but rather to provide inspiration for story hooks. A Nasnas trying to tempt a Guardian of the Veil into antinomian sorcery so she can recruit him as an apprentice does it because succeeding would bring her into greater harmony with the Abyss and increase her power — and it makes for great drama, too.

Joining

The process of becoming Nasnasi divorces the Scelestus from the call of *sophia*, replacing his Wisdom trait with **Joining**.

Gaining Joining

Newly initiated Nasnasi begin at Joining 1. They can increase Joining by committing atrocities to bring themselves closer to the Abyss, called Acts of Defilement. The difficulty of increasing Joining depends on the Scelestus' current Joining: mages at low Joining have many and varied options, while those at high Joining can only fall further with more and more flagrant Acts.

To increase Joining, the mage must first work toward an Obsession with doing so. This can be broad ("increase my harmony with the Abyss") or specific ("bring an Abyssal plague into the Fallen World"). Then, they must perform an Act of Defilement that exposes them more wholly to the Abyss. This doesn't require a roll, other than any rolls they would ordinarily make to successfully pull off the Act in the first place. The following are example such Acts:

High Joining (Joining 7-9): Destroying a powerful (Rank 5+) Supernal entity. Orchestrating a major Abyssal incursion into the Fallen World (Rank 6+). Annihilating a major, long-term Supernal Mystery (the Lesser Wall in Los Angeles, for example, or the *mundos efímeros* of Salamanca). Unleashing a Paradox anomaly of 5+ Reach. Creating a befouled rote.

Medium Joining (Joining 4-6): Goading a mage into casting antinomian sorcery that brings him into contact with a Dur-Abzu. Destroying or banishing a moderately powerful Supernal entity (Rank 3-4). Bringing a powerful Abyssal entity into the Fallen World (Rank 4-5). Causing a Supernal phenomenon (such as a Hallow or Artifact) to become corrupted by the Abyss. Unleashing a Paradox anomaly of 3-4 Reach. Scribing a Grimoire containing befouled rotes, or teaching one to someone else. Deliberately provoking Dissonance that results in the total destruction of a Supernal phenomenon.

Low Joining (Joining 1-3): Directly opposing a Supernal entity's goals. Destroying or banishing a common Supernal entity (Rank 1-2). Goading or guiding a mage into casting antinomian sorcery or releasing Paradox. Bringing a moderately powerful Abyssal entity into the Fallen World (Rank 1-3). Unleashing a Paradox anomaly of 1-2 Reach. Learning a befouled rote. Corrupting existing Supernal spells with Abyssal influence. Deliberately provoking Dissonance.

A Nasnas with Joining 10 becomes a Qliphoth (p. XX), utterly consumed by the Abyss.

Refutations

A Nasnas can *lose* Joining by rejecting her Dur-Abzu, performing deeds collectively known as Refutations, for they refuse the Lie that wedges open the Scelestus' conduit to the Abyss. Each level of Joining handles Refutations differently.

- Nasnasi at low Joining (1-3) can still turn away from their Dur-Abzu with relative ease; every Refutation carries the risk of pushing the mage out of alignment with the Abyss. However, minor Refutations may not do the trick.
- A Nasnas at medium Joining (4-6) has less difficulty communing with the Abyss. Minor Refutations no longer imperil a Scelestus' Joining.
- A Nasnas with high Joining (7-9) is almost beyond redemption. Only the loudest and most explicit Refutations make progress in pulling the mage free of the Abyss.

Systems

Each time a Scelestus Refutes the Abyss, intentionally or not, roll his current Joining as a dice pool, with the following modifiers depending on whether the Refutation is in accordance with certain traits:

Trait	Modifier
Obsession	+1
Vice	+1
Virtue	–1

The degree of Refutation may provide a further bonus:

Lesser Refutations (Joining 1-3; +2): Going one chapter/day without casting a befouled spell. Successfully convincing a mage with Wisdom to fully contain a Paradox or avoid it entirely when they otherwise wouldn't have. Neutralizing an Abyssal Environmental Tilt he did not cause. Destroying or banishing a common Abyssal entity (Rank 1-2).

Medial Refutations (Joining 1-6; +1): Going one story/month without releasing a Paradox. Causing another Scelestus to Refute the Abyss and risk losing Joining. Neutralizing a catastrophic Abyssal Environmental Tilt she did not cause. Destroying or banishing a moderately powerful Abyssal entity (Rank 3-4).

Greater Refutations (Joining 1-9; +0): Causing another Scelestus to lose her last dot of Joining and regain Wisdom. Permanently sealing an Abyssal Verge or Iris, or destroying an Abyssal Artifact. Destroying or banishing a powerful Abyssal entity (Rank 5+).

Roll Results

Success: The Scelestus doesn't lose Joining.

Exceptional Success: The Scelestus doesn't lose Joining, and the Abyss lays further claim to her soul; she suffers a Paradox Condition (**Mage**, p. 116).

Failure: The Scelestus loses a dot of Joining.

Dramatic Failure: The Scelestus loses a dot of Joining and regains a point of Willpower.

Rolling to lose Joining doesn't grant Beats or Willpower.

A mage who loses her last dot of Joining regains her Wisdom trait at a rating of 1 and is no longer a Nasnas. If she had progressed to a higher Scelesti initiation, she loses all the benefits (and penalties) of those titles, including any Attainments she might have gained as an Autarch (p. XX). If she Joins herself to the Abyss again later, she must work back up to those ranks from scratch.

Even if a Scelestus regains Wisdom, the scars of Joining never truly fade. Her Nimbus, soul stones, and Path Yantras remain forever altered. Moreover, she does not forget any befouled rotes or Praxes, and she never needs to roll Resolve + Composure to befoul a spell.

Nasnasi Magic

- **Joining Replaces Wisdom:** As described above, Nasnasi have Joining instead of Wisdom. They cannot contain Paradox, even when casting spells that are not befouled; and they cannot inure themselves to spells, although any spells to which they're already inured still always risk Paradox, befouled or not. If a Nasnas loses her soul, she loses Joining at the same rate that she would lose Wisdom, but it doesn't return by itself when she regains a soul — she must build it back up the usual way.
- **Abyssal Nimbus:** Upon reaching Joining 5, a Nasnas gains a Persistent version of the Abyssal Nimbus Condition (**Mage**, p. 116) that doesn't lapse on its own; instead, it grants a Beat once per scene (Willpower for Storyteller characters) whenever the temporary version would ordinarily resolve, and it only resolves if the Nasnas falls below Joining 5. While she has this Condition, her Nimbus Tilt adds one effective unsafe Reach to the spells of any mage affected by it in addition to its usual effects. The range of a Nasnas' Long-Term Nimbus is determined by Joining: Strong connections at low Joining, Medium ones at medium Joining, and Weak ones at high Joining.
- **Joining Yantra:** When calling upon her Dur-Abzu's symbols (p. XX), a Nasnas can use her Joining rating as a Yantra that provides +1 at low Joining, +2 at medium, and +3 at high.
- **Intuitive Befoulment:** Nasnasi don't need to roll Resolve + Composure to befoul spells. They don't spend Mana to befoul Praxes, and spend only 1 Mana to befoul an

improvised spell. Befouling spells doesn't inflict Abyssal Debilitation on a Nasnas.

- **Paradox Anomalies:** The duration of a Nasnasi anomaly is based on her Joining: one scene/hour at low Joining, one chapter/day at medium, and one story/month at high.
- **Abyssal Mage Sight:** The Nasnas' Active Mage Sight of any Arcanum can also identify another character's Abyssal Conditions and other such corruption on sight, and sense whether they possess Joining and its relative rating compared to her own. The Elder Diadem (p. XX) appears to Nasnasi Sight as a literal crown or jewel, pulsing with weird static or distorting into impossible shapes at the edges of vision.
- **Wield Paradox:** The Nasnas may keep up to her Joining in successfully controlled Paradox successes stored in her Pattern, instead of releasing them as anomalies immediately. She can spend these successes reflexively to add one die per success spent to the Paradox roll of another mage in her sensory range. Unspent stored Paradox successes vanish at the end of the chapter, dealing a point of resistant lethal damage to the Scelestus per unspent success.
- **Hostile Sorcery:** The Nasnas may spend one successfully controlled or stored Paradox success and 1 Mana to upgrade damage she deals with any direct damage spell to aggravated.
- **Codify Befouled Rotes:** A Nasnas can convert any rote she already knows into a befouled version with 3+ dots of the appropriate Arcanum, and can create new befouled rotes with 5 dots.

Abyssal Summoning

Nasnasi lose the ability to summon Supernal entities, instead gaining the ability to summon Abyssal ones — Acamoth and Gulmoth. While Scelesti can control Paradox to summon Abyssal entities with enough Paradox Reach, they have no control over *which* entities respond to that call, or what they do when they arrive. Using this method, a Nasnas can more directly influence the entity they summon.

This process uses the same systems as summoning Supernal entities (**Mage**, p. 95), but the Scelestus rolls Gnosis + Joining instead of the usual roll, and the beings don't have Arcana. Build them according to the Abyssal entity rules on p. 252 of **Mage**; for any systems or effects that track whether a summoned entity is recondite or manifest, treat Acamoth as recondite and Gulmoth as manifest. The maximum Rank of an Abyssal entity summoned this way is equal to half the Scelestus' Joining, rounded up.

Roll Results

Success: As Supernal summoning, but the being can remain in the Fallen World for as long as it can sustain its Essence, as Goetia (for Acamoth) or spirits (for Gulmoth); see **Mage**, p. 254 for more details. The mage may choose which of the two to summon, and specify up to one dot of its Influences.

Failure: As Supernal summoning.

Dramatic Failure: The summoning immediately *succeeds*, but the Scelestus has no control over or ability to bargain with the entity. It tears its way forcibly into the Fallen World and deals aggravated damage to the summoner and any other mages within 50 feet equal to the summoner's Gnosis, as with Supernal summoning. The entity may or may not be one the summoner *meant* to reach. Rather than creating an area of Abyssal taint, this entity gains an additional ban that requires it to destroy the Scelestus and anyone to whom she has Strong sympathetic ties.

The Summoning

When summoning Abyssal entities, calculate the needed successes the same way Supernal summoning does, with the following changes:

- Adding successes to extend the entity's lifespan adds one day per two spent successes during which the entity doesn't need to spend Essence to remain active. If the mage doesn't allocate any successes, it must begin spending Essence once per day immediately, as normal.
- Check for Abyssal intrusion as normal (**Mage**, p. 85), but if an incursion occurs, treat it as though the summoner had rolled a dramatic failure (above).
- Mages of different Paths don't add successes. The summoner may offer up the soul or life of an Awakened with Wisdom as a sacrament to *subtract* two successes per sacrificed mage.
- A summoning taking place in a Demesne oriented to *any* Supernal Realm that isn't built on a soul stone corrupted by the Abyss adds a success. Subtract three successes if it takes place in an Abyssal Verge.
- Causing Paradox recently doesn't add successes. Add one success if the mage *didn't* cause any Paradox within the past week.
- Subtracting successes based on semiotic associations applies to symbols corresponding to the summoner's Dur-Abzu.

Autarchs and Shedim

Mages in orthodox Orders prioritize **Autarchs** and **Shedim** (sing. **Shedu**) for extermination, often actively hunting them down. If Rabashakim and Nasnasi are like junkies, these Accursed are akin to their dealers.

Autarchs are Scelesti who found Abyssal Legacies, all of which the Orders consider Left-Handed. Shedim are those who create Accursed Nameless Orders. Despite this technical distinction, the Pentacle treats them interchangeably, and a Scelestus can be both an Autarch and a Shedu. Both recruit Sleepers and Sleepwalkers into Mystery Cults. Both tempt other mages into Joining. Both enter into alliance with the Abyss that goes beyond anything addiction or good intentions can justify.

To pursue an Abyssal Legacy as a practitioner, the Scelestus must be a Nasnas of at least Joining 2; founding one requires at least Joining 4. Abyssal Legacy Attainments are usually

created from befouled rotes, and risk Paradox as though they were befouled spells. A Scelestus who loses all her Joining and regains Wisdom also loses access to her Abyssal Legacy, but she is unable to pursue another Legacy; the process twists her gnosis beyond repair.

Baalim

A **Baal** (pl. **Baalim**) is a Scelestus who bargains with the Aeon of Paradox or an Annunaki to gain further control over Paradox via the **Elder Diadem**, a term referring to an abstract power rather than a physical object. The Pentacle considers this the highest of all crimes, and even Pylons set aside other tasks to eliminate an active Baal.

Few Rabashakim or non-Scelesti gain access to the Elder Diadem, but all who do immediately become Nasnasi at Joining 1. Baalim possess the following abilities and traits in addition to those of Nasnasi:

Improved Wield Paradox: The Paradox successes a Baal stores in her Pattern don't vanish at the end of the chapter; she may store them for as long as she likes, and they never deal damage to her.

Create Anomaly: The Baal may spend 1 Willpower and a number of controlled or stored Paradox successes as an instant action to create Paradox anomalies on the fly, using the usual Reach costs of the desired anomalies (p. XX). She can generate as many anomalies as she can afford with a single instant action. However, she can only generate anomalies that don't warp spells this way, such as Abyssal Environmental Tilts or Conditions that affect victims in sensory range; she can't change the subject of a spell that's already been cast, for instance.

Abyssal Dispellation: The Scelestus may spend 1 Willpower and a number of controlled or stored Paradox successes to generate Dissonance (**Mage**, p. 299) on the fly to erode a Supernal phenomenon or heal an Abyssal entity, as normal. This doesn't require the presence of Sleepers or obvious magic. The number of spent Paradox successes serves as the effective result on what would normally be a Sleeper's Integrity roll. Any resulting Dissonance takes effect immediately, rather than at the end of the scene.

Alternatively, the Baal can spend 1 Willpower and stored Paradox successes during casting to add 1 per spent success to the Potency of the Prime spells "Dispel Magic" (**Mage**, p. 165) and "Supernal Dispellation" (**Mage**, p. 170).

Abyssal Counterspell: A Baal can spend up to (her Joining) controlled or stored Paradox successes to use Counterspell on *any* Awakened spell, rather than only those of Arcana she knows. Her Clash of Wills to do so uses a pool of (Gnosis + spent Paradox successes); she must spend at least one.

Improved Paradox Control: A Baal character can attempt to control or store *other* mages' Paradox successes as she controls or stores her own (p. XX), up to a number of successes equal to her Joining, per Paradox roll. The Baal must roll her Gnosis as normal to direct the Paradox, and can only control or store successes from a released Paradox; the mage causing the Paradox must be within the Baal's sensory range.

Abyssal Curse: The Elder Diadem grants great power, but corrupts the bearer's Pattern in a way that represents whatever the Baal agreed to barter away in exchange for the power — even if she didn't consciously make that agreement. Its curse worsens as the Scelestus gains Joining and fades if he loses it, but never vanishes entirely. Even a Baal who regains Wisdom still bears an Abyssal curse as though he had Joining 1. The curse is inescapable, wholly proof against supernatural attempts to cure, counter, or diminish its effects, barring Imperial magic. For instance, a Baal whose bargain inflicts a physical disability cannot use Life magic to remove it or make it irrelevant.

The exact narrative effects of these curses vary from Scelestus to Scelestus, typically reflecting the mage's Dur-Abzu and Ruling Arcana. Each one takes the form of a Persistent Condition. The Baal gains one such Condition when she takes on the Diadem, plus one per three dots of Joining she possesses (i.e. at Joining 3, 6, and 9). If her Joining increases to such a milestone after she gains the Diadem, she also gains another curse Condition at that time.

Example Persistent Conditions can be found in **Mage**, p. 314-319. Common ones from that list include Addicted (to any number of strange and unnerving things), Blind, Disabled, Madness, and Mute. The curse could also encompass a Persistent version of the Open Condition (**Mage**, p. 259) for a particular type of Abyssal entity, granting a Beat (or Willpower, for Storyteller characters) whenever such an entity takes advantage of it to possess the mage, or coerce her into doing something against her better judgment with the Urged Manifestation (**Mage**, p. 261). Other curse Conditions could include Degenerate Mana (p. XX) or Tainted Aspiration (p. XX).

Qliphoth

Qliphoth, or "Dwellers at the Threshold," are Scelesti who fell so far that the Abyss hollowed them out. These wretches have little humanity left. They often appear as disheveled, raving vagrants muttering to themselves in public places, or creeps with too-intense gazes who smile too much. Active Mage Sight reveals them as open wounds in reality. They lure and imprison other Awakened within their Abyssal torment, traps for the curious or determined.

Fully Joined

A Nasnas who achieves Joining 10 becomes a Qliphoth, forever trapped in his own Joined Mage Sight and bound to the Abyss. He exists in an eternal hellscape, a permanent Mystery Play in an Abyssal Verge that only he experiences unless others are drawn in and trapped as well. This Verge is what remains of the sorcerer's Oneiros, gutted by and absorbed into the Abyssal world-entity that devoured his soul. Within the Verge dwell countless Abyssal entities that harass and attack him, including a powerful Acamoth that was once his daimon. Others trapped there might recognize twisted, Abyssal versions of Goetia and symbols that once reflected the mage's Path and Legacy, now become Acamoth and anti-symbols of his Dur-Abzu instead. A Qliphoth can't enter the Astral at all.

Qliphoth count as having high Joining (p. XX) for all mechanical purposes.

Qliphoth Traits

A Qliphoth comprises both the mage himself, lost in the Abyssal Verge that invaded his soul, and a human-shaped shell the rest of the world sees. Anyone who isn't infected and trapped by the Verge can only interact with the shell.

Empty Shell

The human shell the Qliphoth inhabits looks like a run-down, barely lucid version of the mage himself. It doesn't have Attributes or Skills, can't cast spells or use Dread Powers, and never rolls dice; any actions it takes are perfunctory at best, simply mirroring whatever the Scelestus is doing within the Verge to no real effect. Outsiders see someone wandering incoherently and reacting to stimuli that aren't there; Awakened observers may recognize Yantras the shell seems to employ, but the magic only happens within the Verge.

No amount of damage to the Qliphoth's human shell kills it, and it never takes wound penalties or falls unconscious. Even if the body is destroyed, it reforms in a few days, as easily as a salamander regrows its tail. Only killing the mage himself or eradicating his soul within the Verge can permanently destroy a Dweller at the Threshold.

Spellcasting Horror

In system terms, the mage at the heart of a Qliphoth is a **Horror**: a monstrous being with Dread Powers — individual supernatural abilities that cost Willpower to use — in addition to its Arcana and other Awakened traits.

The Skills, Specialties, and Merits given below are standard for most Qliphoth; the Storyteller can add more or change them as necessary for individual characters.

Standard Qliphoth Traits

Path: Choose one.

Legacy: Choose one (if any).

Virtue: Choose one; often strange and twisted.

Vice: As Virtue.

Obsessions: Choose two; usually Abyss-tainted.

Aspirations: Always include some variant of "Escape the Abyss."

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 10, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8

Social Attributes: Presence 7, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Occult (Abyss) 10

Physical Skills: Athletics 6, Brawl 5, Stealth 9, Survival 5

Social Skills: Intimidation 8, Persuasion 7, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Occultation 3, Potent Nimbus 2, Potent Resonance

Joining: 10

Willpower: 10; Qliphoth may spend up to 10 Willpower per turn, but only 1 Willpower per effect.

Initiative: 10

Defense: 13

Armor: 0/0

Size: 5

Speed: 17

Health: 13

Effective Gnosis: 10

Nimbus Tilt: Design as normal, **Mage** p. 90, with Potent Nimbus 2; see p. XX for Dur-Abzu associations.

Dedicated Magical Tool: Choose based on Dur-Abzu, p. XX.

Arcana: Choose up to 15 dots in any combination, with at least 1 dot in each Ruling Arcanum and at least 3 total dots in Ruling Arcana.

Attainments: List those from Arcana and Legacy.

Praxes: Choose 5.

Dread Powers: Hunter's Senses (Awakened), Influence 1; choose six more (see below). For Dread Powers with dot ratings, each dot counts as one additional Dread Power.

Notes: The Scelestus at the heart of a Qliphoth is a tortured, maddened soul. Each one suffers a Persistent Condition reflecting this state, as though he were a Baal with an Abyssal Curse (p. XX).

Other Traits

- A Qliphoth enjoys the rote quality on all Clash of Wills rolls.
- Qliphoth function as Nasnasi except in the following ways: they can't increase or decrease Joining; they can no longer control Paradox, lacking the Hostile Sorcery and Wield Paradox abilities (p. XX); and every spell they cast is automatically befouled.
- A Qliphoth doesn't truly have Gnosis, but its effective Gnosis acts as a Supernatural Potency and Tolerance trait for purposes of mechanics that require them. It can't increase its traits, including Gnosis and Arcana ratings.

Dread Powers

The following are common Dread Powers a Qliphoth might possess; see the **Chronicles of Darkness** core rulebook (p. 144-148) for more examples.

GREMLIN

Mechanical and electrical devices fail in the creature's presence. Lights flicker, cell phones get no reception, televisions and machinery randomly turn on and off. In addition, the creature may spend 1 Willpower to either disable any device with mechanical or electrical components or seize control of such a device. This effect can turn an equipment bonus into a penalty or, if the device is capable of causing harm, lets the

creature attack a character holding or standing near the device using an appropriate dice pool. The attack deals lethal damage and uses the device's equipment bonus as a damage modifier.

HUNTER'S SENSES

The creature has incredibly honed senses for a specific type of prey. Against that prey — redheads, teenagers, people descended from the men who killed it — the creature gains +4 dice and the 9-again quality to all perception-based rolls.

HYPNOTIC GAZE

The creature's gaze can charm and beguile. When meeting the target's gaze, it can spend 1 Willpower and roll Presence + Persuasion contested by the target's Composure + Gnosis. If successful, the creature counts as having a perfect impression against the target for Social maneuvers until the end of the scene.

INFLUENCE (• TO •••••)

Like the Acamoth that torment it, the Qliphoth possesses Influences (**Mage**, p. 257) that reflect the Abyss and its anti-reality; spread this Dread Power's dots across one or more individual Influences. Using them costs Willpower instead of Essence and, unless the activation is directly opposed by a character, doesn't require a roll. For contested and resisted actions, the Qliphoth rolls Gnosis + a suitable Arcanum.

KNOW SOUL

The creature spends 1 Willpower to learn its victim's Virtue, Vice, Aspirations, Obsessions, and current Integrity, Wisdom, or Joining. It can spend another Willpower to learn the circumstances of the character's most recent failed breaking point or Act of Hubris; subsequent Willpower points spent reveal older ones. If it uses this knowledge against the victim, it achieves exceptional success with three successes.

MADNESS AND TERROR

The monster's gaze, voice, or touch induces madness and terror in its victims. By expending 1 Willpower and making a roll of an appropriate dice pool contested by the victim's Composure + Gnosis, the creature may inflict one of the following Conditions on the victim: Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked. For 3 Willpower it may instead inflict the Broken, Fugue, or Madness Conditions.

REALITY STUTTER

The creature's presence sets reality stuttering and convulsing, allowing it to flicker from place to place. By reflexively spending 1 Willpower when it moves, the creature can translocate itself to any location it can see, up to its Speed in yards/meters away. Doing so adds +2 to its Defense for the turn.

SURPRISE ENTRANCE

By spending 1 Willpower the creature may suddenly appear in the scene. Perhaps it can manifest out of higher-dimensional space via any right angle, emerge from any reflective surface, or simply burst through the wall. Any character witnessing this entrance must succeed on a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll or gain the Shaken Condition. If the characters have actively taken appropriate measures to keep the Horror out (barring and locking the door, smashing all the mirrors they can find, etc.) it takes the creature one full turn to break through, giving the characters time to react. If not, it's just *there* as a reflexive action and can take one more action before anyone can react.

TOXIC (• OR ••)

The creature has a poisonous or diseased touch, or perhaps its spellcasting is pestilential. The one-dot version inflicts the moderate version of either the Poisoned or Sick Tilts; the two-dot version inflicts the grave version. This happens automatically when the creature inflicts damage or successfully casts a spell on a subject.

Paradox Trap

To Awakened observers who don't know any better, a Qliphoth could be someone in the middle of an Awakening. Its human shell acts out a neverending Mystery Play that reflects the torments its Scelestus endures, and to Mage Sight, its Abyssal Verge looks something like the inverse of a Lustrum.

The truth is, a Qliphoth experiences the Verge fully all the time, unable to turn off its Active Joined Mage Sight; it's effectively in both the Fallen World and the Annunaki's anti-world simultaneously. Abyssal entities spill over into the Verge, able and willing to incessantly bedevil the Scelestus. The mage has no true control over his magic or will: He can cast spells like any Nasnas, but ultimately his actions are driven by purely Abyssal urges, even if he won't or can't acknowledge it. He may beg for rescue or express regret, but there's no saving him.

Infection and Imprisonment

Outside the Verge, any mage without Joining who risks Paradox within sensory range of the Qliphoth's shell from can't attempt to contain it. Any resulting Paradox is automatically released, but without the usual anomaly effects. Instead, the

unfortunate sorcerer is automatically drawn into the Mystery Play, infected and trapped in the Verge by the Qliphoth's constant Abyssal Mage Sight as though she were a Qliphoth, too. Sleepers who suffer breaking points from Quiescence within range are drawn in the same way.

The Verge's Abyssal entities can interact with anyone thus afflicted, and the infected are subject to all of the Verge's properties, as follows:

- No Paradox within the Qliphoth's Verge can be contained.
- A dramatic failure on any spellcasting roll subjects a caster without Joining to a Paradox Condition (**Mage**, p. 116) instead of the usual effects.
- Skill rolls that rely on knowledge of natural laws, such as Science rolls or Build Equipment actions, suffer a –2, while Gnosis rolls to control Paradox successes and any rolls to summon Abyssal entities gain a +2.

The Scelestus' magic can also now interact directly with them, and vice versa.

Scrutinizing a Qliphoth

Since a Qliphoth's shell often looks like it's experiencing a waking world dream, mages who don't already know its nature are prone to studying it with Focused Mage Sight. A mage without Joining who does so suffers the grave Sick Tilt (**Mage**, p. 323) from exposing herself to its Abyssal taint. The Qliphoth's nature is an Opacity 8 Mystery; any successful Revelation attracts the attention of the Verge's Abyssal entities, who can use the interloper as a conduit to break into the Fallen World proper. A dramatic failure on a Scrutiny or Revelation roll draws the willworker into the Verge as though she'd released Paradox.

Escaping

Once a mage without Joining aligns with the Verge, she's trapped there. Leaving the Qliphoth's immediate presence doesn't help. The Mystery Play isn't a physical place, and the Abyssal entities within care nothing for Fallen notions of distance or physics — or even Supernal notions of Space. Time magic can't liberate her, either, as the Annunaki has no conception of linear time.

The only known way to escape a Qliphoth's grasp is to destroy the Scelestus within, either ending his life or destroying his soul. Since only the shell exists outside the Verge, anyone attempting this *must* first let themselves become infected and trapped. Anyone who survives long enough to destroy Qliphoth or soul takes a point of resistant aggravated damage as they are ejected from the Verge, which collapses catastrophically, causing an Abyssal Environmental Tilt (p. XX) in the Fallen World.

Unfortunately, Qliphoth are immune to ordinary soul theft using Death magic, due to the gaping soul-wound through which the Abyss floods. Even if characters find a way to destroy its soul and it survives the Mystery Play's collapse, the Scelestus' gnosis and sanity are irrevocably broken; it still has Joining 10 but can't cast spells, and integrating another soul just brings back the Verge and all its usual effects. Closing the wound to properly rescue or restore the mage is impossible as far as the Orders know, though some theorize an archmaster might be able to pull it off.

Nasnasi and Qliphoth

Since a Qliphoth's infection pulls its victims into its Abyssal Mage Sight, any Nasnas can enter the Verge without fuss just by using her Active Mage Sight in its presence. Once there, though, it's harder to get out. To escape the Mystery Play, the Nasnas must fully Scrutinize the Verge (subject to the usual effects, see above) to find the anti-symbol that corresponds with her Dur-Abzu, and undergo a similar trial to the one that Joined her to the Abyss in the first place. If she gets through it alive, she can tear herself free of the Verge, but the trial demands a sacrifice: she must either give up a *dot* of Willpower, roll her Joining as a dice pool and take resistant aggravated damage equal to the resultant successes, or destroy another Awakened life or soul as an offering in place of giving up anything of her own.

While it seems like a fool's errand, many Scelesti — particularly Autarchs and Shedim — go out of their way to enter a Qliphoth's Verge and undergo its Mystery Play on purpose. Some do it as an act of worship and divine inspiration, exalting the Qliphoth as a messenger or avatar of their Annunaki god. Others do it as a rite of passage to gain status. A common way for Autarchs and Shedim to decide who has the right to petition for the Elder Diadem is to send all candidates to a Qliphoth's Verge, competing to see who can fulfill the trials and bargain with the Annunaki first. Some Scelesti seek out Qliphoth to scour their internal soul-realms for hidden Abyssal Mysteries and esoteric secrets.

Greater Menaces

The **Aswadim** stand far above Nasnasi and even Baalim, embodying the Abyss rather than simply aligning with it. These archmasters come to believe that true freedom from the Lie is freedom from the Supernal, too — freedom from form and reason, from law and symbol. Imperial Abyssal magic runs deeper than Paradox, requiring exotic Yantras and ritual components. Acting directly would draw too much attention from greater powers, though, so Aswadim suborn lesser Scelesti and their Sleeper cults to do their dirty work in the Fallen World. Few such Scelesti become Aswadim, though; their practices bring them to untimely ends, either by other mages' hands or the damage they do to their own Patterns. Most Aswadim are those archmasters who once shunned the Abyss, but came to embrace it when they reached their limits.

Although terrifying, the Gulmoth and Acamoth that wriggle into the Fallen World from the Abyssal depths are mere germs compared to the dread **Annunaki** that birth them. Each of these anti-gods is also an entire stillborn universe, embodying physical, metaphysical, and occult laws incompatible with those of the Supernal and Phenomenal Worlds. Every Abyssal Verge is the symptom of an Annunaki fragment brushing against reality; a Qliphoth's internal Verge is the result of one of these Abyssal gods having claimed the Scelestus' soul.

The Annunaki literally cannot be — but sometimes their non-existences paradoxically leak into the world anyway. The Ipsophage is a principle of anti-sympathy that forges parasitical bonds forbidding

one of a pair from existing while the other one exists. When it seeps into the Fallen World, sympathetic ties leech selfhood and definition from their subjects, producing cancerous identities that absorb others into themselves and turn their connections to husks bereft of distinctiveness. Occasionally, when a person should die at sea but inexplicably lives anyway, the natural order skips a beat and tendrils of the Ashen Periphery intrude: Slate-gray clouds, featureless mists, and becalmed ocean bleed together into a void of skewed perspective and endless depth in too many dimensions, literally erasing the horizon and inviting unseen raptors that only exist at the edges of sight to feast on souls and sense. Others would remake the world without the presence of one or more Arcana, rendering it uninhabitable, or otherwise rewrite reality in blasphemous ways.

Whenever one of the slumbering Annunaki stirs, it makes unmistakable waves. Scelesti and Abyssal cults devoted to it proliferate, and even those unconnected to the Abyss slide into its patterns as it undermines reality. Ordinary sailors blithely discuss echo sounding into the sky to find shelter from intelligent tesseractic feather-storms on morning radio shows, for example, or predatory, codependent cults of personality spread ahead of a fresh incursion by the Ipsophage. From a Storytelling perspective, the Annunaki are part dark gods worshipped by nihilistic mystery cults, and part overarching atmospheric and setting elements. They can provide recurring themes — an obvious antagonist in one, a tangentially related plot in another, and a mere cameo appearance everywhere else. Together, these make it clear that some impossible force moves behind events, and every small incursion foretells the coming invasion of a major threat from beyond the world.

Sample Abyssal Environmental Tilts

Storytellers can often represent Abyssal Environmental Tilts caused by Paradox anomalies with ordinary Environmental Tilts described with Abyssal narrative effects. However, if Scelesti play a large role in the chronicle (or characters release Paradox often), the Storyteller may want additional — and more sinister — options. Some Tilts resulting from especially powerful anomalies are larger, longer-lasting, or more destructive than usual.

The following are optional, more in-depth rules for Abyssal Environmental Tilts:

- The Tilt is centered on the Storyteller's choice of either the mage or the spell's subject.
- By default, Abyssal Environmental Tilts use the Area of Effect column of the standard Scale table (**Mage**, p. 114), moving the factor up the chart from basic success a number of times equal to the spell's dot rating (or a Baal's Joining, for anomalies she creates on the fly). A two-dot spell's resultant Tilt affects an area roughly the size of a large room, for example. These Tilts have standard anomaly durations based on the mage's Wisdom (**Mage**, p. 116) or Joining (p. XX).
- Every Abyssal Environmental Tilt gives the area the Open Condition for Abyssal entities.
- A Scelestus who successfully controls Paradox to create an Abyssal Environmental Tilt cannot choose its specific manifestation; that's up to the Storyteller.
- The Storyteller may spend additional Paradox Reach to apply one or more of the following effects to an Abyssal Environmental Tilt:

  +1 Reach: For each additional Reach, treat the caster's Wisdom or Joining as one higher for purposes of the Tilt's duration.

  +2 Reach: The Tilt uses Advanced Area instead of Standard Area.

  +4 Reach: The Tilt uses the catastrophic version of the Tilt.

The following Tilts are examples; the Storyteller should feel free to come up with additional options if they like.

ABYSSAL PATTERN

Effect: Everything within the area breaks down more easily, infected with Abyssal anti-Patterns. All sources of damage deal one extra point of the same kind; objects reduce their Durability by one. All Paradox Conditions lapse after a number of turns equal to the mage's Wisdom, or (10 – Joining).

Catastrophic: In addition, all damage is resistant and all Paradox Conditions lapse after one turn. Instead of reducing Durability, objects reduce their Structure by half.

ABYSSAL REVISION

Effect: Whenever a mage casts a spell within the area, Abyssal versions of its symbols worm their way into her gnosis and rewrite her thoughts, destabilizing her magic and loosening her grip on reality. Each successful spell cumulatively reduces her rating in that spell's highest Arcanum by one for purposes of determining her free Reach for subsequent improvised spells and Praxes, until the end of the scene. An exceptional success on a spellcasting roll inflicts the Madness Condition (**Mage**, p. 316) on the caster, which becomes the Insane Tilt (**Mage**, p. 322) in action scenes.

Catastrophic: Each spell the character successfully casts also imposes a cumulative –1 to her Wisdom rolls to contain Paradox. If her effective rating in any Arcanum for free Reach purposes falls to 0, she automatically gains the Madness Condition as above, even without exceptional spellcasting success.

ABYSSAL YANTRAS

Effect: The symbols a willworker sees in certain Yantras corrupt, warping their semiotics unnaturally. Ordinary Path tools and environmental Yantras no longer function; instead, mages within the area can only use tools and environmental Yantras

appropriate to their Path's corresponding Dur-Abzu (p. XX). Dedicated tools no longer penalize Paradox rolls; instead, using a dedicated tool in spellcasting taints the spell's subject. It gains Withstand +1 against all future Supernal magic until her Signature Nimbus fades from it, even if a spell ordinarily wouldn't be Withstood at all or the subject doesn't want to Withstand it, and even if the subject leaves the Tilt's area.

Catastrophic: Mages in the area can't use *any* Yantra other than those appropriate to their Path's corresponding Dur-Abzu or their dedicated tool; dedicated tools grant Withstand +2 instead.

INCONSEQUENTIALITY

Effect: Events no longer happen for a reason, consequences don't follow from one another, and one result is exactly as probable as every other. All actions performed within the area are rolled with a chance die, including spellcasting; nothing can modify these rolls. Rolls to check for Paradox and other quantitative rolls that don't represent actions use their usual pools, but Initiative rolls aren't modified. Rerolls, dice tricks, and other dice manipulation effects don't work. Any spell or other ability that grants knowledge of the future, predicts or creates outcomes, or relies on omens and signs automatically dramatically fails.

Catastrophic: In addition to the regular effect, no changes to any character's Pattern, body, soul, or psyche persist for more than one minute (or one turn in action scenes) unless the perpetrator or the affected party spends a Willpower point. Nothing that happens there matters. Wounds, Condition infliction or resolution, transformations, Mana expenditures and gains, even death — they all reverse shortly after they happen. The only exception is that spent Willpower remains spent.

WITHERING MAGIC

Effect: The anomaly erodes Supernal magic, eating away at it little by little. All spells controlled or cast by a mage within the area, and all spells whose subjects are within the area, decrease one spell factor of the Storyteller's choice by one on each turn this Tilt affects the caster or subject. If any factor is reduced beyond its minimum, the spell ends.

Catastrophic: In addition, all Clashes of Wills made to Counterspell a spell gain 8-again. A successful Counterspell doesn't just disrupt the Imago, but replaces its symbols with nonsensical ones, generating non-Tilt Paradox anomalies of the Storyteller's choice with total Reach equal to the total successes on the Counterspell's Clash roll.

Enheduanna
Nasnas Eschatologist

"Once, our world had real divinities, worthy of worship. The only way to undo the damage is to raise them back up once more. I know this, because they have revealed it to me!"

Background

Enheduanna is an occult archaeologist and Seer of the Throne, her loyalty to the Ministry of Paternoster seeming ironclad after decades of service. She clawed her way up the ladder of power at the expense of many. Her inferiors envy her riches and power, and fear her scornful gaze. Her peers watch her suspiciously, wary from years of brutal politicking and Enheduanna's tendency to hold grudges. Her masters stymie her ambitions, frustrating her attempts to climb the Iron Pyramid further. None of them suspect that, behind her mask, the Thyrsus has become a monster of an entirely different kind.

Several years ago, Enheduanna underwent the Joining and became one of the Nasnasi, bathing in the corrupt majesty of the Burning Iron Spiral. She believes she sees the nature of the Exarchs clearly now, as usurpers responsible for the Fall. She schemes to bring about the resurrection of what she thinks are the old, true gods, a priestess quietly preaching a mad gospel of Abyssal resurrection and the world's salvation.

Enheduanna's most precious possession provoked her apostasy: an Abyss-tainted gobbet of divinity she dug out of the ground in the Annamite Mountains of Laos. With its seductive whispers, it drew out her resentment and frustrations with years of life in the Iron Pyramid, and offered her a new way. She believes the Artifact — or something *like* an Artifact, at least — is all that's left of a Fallen god; it's beyond her power to restore it with her Awakened magic, but the Abyss holds all impossibilities — perhaps even the resurrection of a "deity" the Exarchs cast down. The thing Enheduanna worships is almost certainly an Annunaki, but no other Awakened has yet gotten a close enough look at her Artifact to know for sure.

Enheduanna's Pylon, the Manticore Seal, remains oblivious to the corruption within their ranks. The Seal consists of prominent occult archaeologists, researchers, and other arcane specialists from several Ministries, given significant leeway in pursuing their duties across the globe. The others are too absorbed in their studies, or blinded by self-importance, to pay much heed to Enheduanna's increasingly extracurricular activities. The Pylon shares extensive sancta across New England in the U.S.A. and Maharashtra in India, and its members draw upon all the resources they can squeeze out of their higher-ups for their schemes and excursions. In many ways, the Manticore Seal is a holding pen for powerful, talented Seers with valuable expertise but ambitions their superiors consider in need of containment or diversion.

Description

Enheduanna is a short, skinny Thai woman in her late 40s, all sharp angles and odd scars. She walks with the confident stride of a ruler, wears designer clothes, and adorns herself with a small fortune in discreet but expensive jewelry. The Thyrsus' sympathetic name is Pimchanok Changthongkham, and she still maintains the facade of her Sleeper life; she holds multiple doctorates, and the academic world considers her a brilliant, albeit reserved, archaeologist and historian.

The Seer affects an easygoing but practical manner. The relaxed attitude is a mask for her steely spite, but she does like to get hands-on with problems ranging from the mundanities of

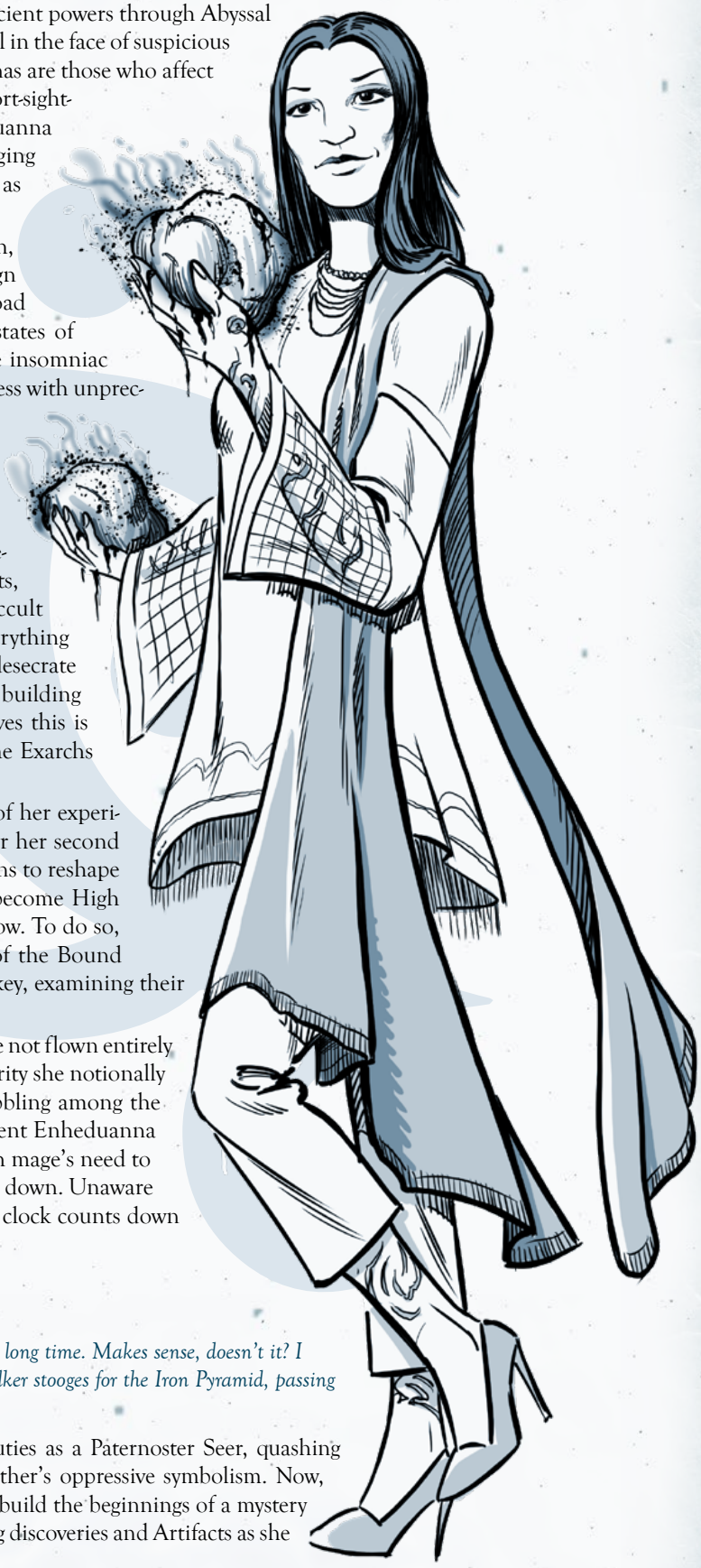
Story Hooks

- Enheduanna freed something from a Lower Depth in hopes of learning from what it would do. What it did was possess the leader of the Pylon dedicated to guarding the otherworldly captives, and all but one of the local Seers below him in the pecking order are now dead or ruined beyond saving. The lone survivor has few places left to turn for help; reluctantly, they approach the cabal.
- A deserted, run-down temple to a god that never was appears on the cabal's turf, and Sleepers are convinced it's always been there. A few of the locals are even members of the church's old congregation, retroactively initiated into Enheduanna's mystery cult. As the Nasnas grows ever closer to gathering what she needs for her sgod's revival, the temple repairs itself, the congregation grows in size and fervor, and subtle Abyssal anomalies manifest across the region.
- It's doomsday. A colossally powerful Gulmoth erupts into reality, annihilating a major Seer hub. Other Scelesti slink out of hiding among the Iron Pyramid's ranks. The Pentacle could use this moment to strike the Seers in their hour of weakness — but the Abyss' servants are an even greater threat, especially the high priestess of an impossible god, who laughs and dances in the ruins.

managing an archaeological expedition to the direct brutality of attacking Pentacle resources. Enheduanna's diminutive physical frame does little to hold her back in a fight; she's a powerful magician, and takes joy in augmenting and changing her shape to tear apart those who anger or displease her.

Enheduanna dedicates herself wholly to resurrecting ancient powers through Abyssal magic. She's a consummate liar, capable of keeping her cool in the face of suspicious Tetrarchs and inhuman horrors. What really riles the Nasnas are those who affect intellectual superiority over her, implying she's ignorant, short-sighted, or otherwise not as clever as she thinks she is. Enheduanna is notorious among her peers for holding grudges, clinging stubbornly to old enmities and making her rivals' lives as miserable as possible.

Enheduanna's corrupted Immediate Nimbus is a harsh, artificial glow, as if she stands under a flickering neon sign or fluorescent bulb; its Signature provokes sensory overload wherever it lingers. Her Long-Term Nimbus brings on states of intense and unnatural hyperactivity; the fatigued become insomniac and others become manic, while cancers and viruses progress with unprecedented rapidity.



Secrets

Blasphemous Ritual: Following the instructions that worm their way into the Nasnas' dreams, she gathers resources and materials from across the globe: potent Artifacts, objects attuned to strange eldritch frequencies, and occult detritus tainted by Abyssal anomalies. Once she has everything she needs, the Thyrsus intends to undertake a ritual to desecrate reality and resurrect a god from her gobbet of divine flesh, building it out of the Abyss' raw un-potential. Enheduanna believes this is the beginning of a new pantheon who will war against the Exarchs in the distant heavens.

Stumbling Toward Apotheosis: Unusually for a mage of her experience, Enheduanna never felt a calling to any Legacy. After her second Awakening, though, she's keen to create her own. She plans to reshape her soul in mimicry of the ancient deposed powers, to become High Priestess of an aborted history in defiance of the Fallen now. To do so, she wants to get up close and personal with a number of the Bound and Lower Depth entities the Seers keep under lock and key, examining their natures to gain inspiration for her own apotheosis.

Stymied Investigation: Enheduanna's machinations have not flown entirely under the radar. The ranking Tetrarch under whose authority she notionally labors investigates her activities, but infighting and squabbling among the Seers tasked with the job hinder their efforts. They all resent Enheduanna and her grudges, but such mutual enmity pales beside each mage's need to be on top of the pile if the investigation brings the Thyrsus down. Unaware of her mad scheme, they waste time bickering even as the clock counts down to disaster.

Rumors

"Yeah, the Seers have had their claws sunk into academia for a long time. Makes sense, doesn't it? I hear the local university's archaeology department are all Sleepwalker stooges for the Iron Pyramid, passing on any valuable relics to their Seer masters."

Enheduanna has long used her Sleeper guise in her duties as a Paternoster Seer, quashing potential academic discoveries that might threaten the Father's oppressive symbolism. Now, though, she quietly reaches out to her old Sleeper peers to build the beginnings of a mystery cult, exposing archaeologists and historians to mind-blowing discoveries and Artifacts as she

works to create a new power base. The local university's scholars aren't Sleepwalkers and they don't serve the Seers; they serve the Nasnas, and indirectly, the Abyss.

"Another disaster out in the Midwest. Half a Pylon reduced to red mist, and some eldritch horror in the wind. The Seers are on the warpath and, of course, they blame us for this fuck-up."

The rumors about escapee horrors are true. The Thyrsus Nasnas now empathizes more with the abominations the Iron Pyramid keeps bound than she does with her fellow Seers. As a high-status member of the Order, she has relatively easy access to a number of such entities for her research. She covertly works to sabotage their bindings; several break loose after one of her visits.

"I don't know whether it's a practical joke, a hoax, or the find of my career. What we pulled out of the ground doesn't match any local culture, or any culture we know of at all. The materials are wrong, and the marks of manufacture make no sense whatsoever. The images, though...they're so vivid and striking. If this is real, whoever left these objects behind cared deeply about their subject. I just can't say for sure whether it was reverence or fear they felt."

The find is real, in a way. Enheduanna makes a habit of tainting history with impossibilities that echo with the potential of her god's return, through Paradox-riddled Time spells, the Gobbet's influence, and summoning Abyssal entities that reach their tendrils into the distant past. Her efforts leave behind bizarre relics that confuse and intrigue Sleepers, who inevitably want to find out more.

Path: Thyrsus
Order: Seers of the Throne (Paternoster)
Legacy: None
Virtue: Hopeful
Vice: Resentful
Obsessions: Restore a "lost" divinity; Create a new Legacy modeled upon the fallen gods; Establish the Sleeper worship of Abyssal powers
Aspirations: Get petty vengeance on anyone who has wronged her
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 5
Mental Skills: Academics (Archaeology, History) 5, Computer 2, Investigation 4, Occult (Time Before) 5, Politics (Seers of the Throne) 3, Science 4
Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Drive (Off-Road) 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2
Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 4
Merits: Artifact (Divine Gobbet) 9; Contacts (Academics); High Speech; Library (Academics) 3; Mystery Cult Influence (Cult of Divine Resurrection) 5; Order Status (Seers of the Throne) 4; Prelacy (Father) 3; Resources 3; Safe Place 4; Sanctum 4
Joining: 4
Willpower: 9
Initiative: 8
Defense: 6
Armor: 0/0
Speed: 10
Health: 8
Gnosis: 6
Mana/per Turn: 50/6 (Paternoster Prelacy)
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes –3 to Stamina rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: A cup of beaten copper.
Arcana: Life 5, Matter 3, Spirit 4, Time 3
Attainments: Body Autonomy; Counterspell (Life, Matter, Spirit, Time); Create Rote (Life); Honorary Rank; Improved Pattern Restoration; Mage Armor (Life, Matter, Spirit, Time); Permanence; Spirit Eyes; Targeted Summoning (Life, Matter, Spirit, Time); Temporal Sympathy
Praxes: Banishment (Spirit 4); Body Control (Life 2); Command Spirit (Spirit 2); Life-Force Assault (Life 4); Shapechanging (Life 4); Shaping (Matter 2)
Rotes: Constant Presence (Time 2, Occult); Postcognition (Time 1, Academics); State Change (Matter 3, Science; befouled); Veil of Moments (Time 2, Subterfuge)
Rote Skills: Academics, Expression, Occult
Notes: Enheduanna's mystery cult bestows the following on its members:

Mystery Cult Initiation: Cult of Divine Resurrection (• to • • • • •)

Unearth the Past (•): Gain a History Skill Specialty in Academics.

Academic Resources (• •): Gain the Contacts (Academics) Merit.

Divine Mysteries (• • •): Gain a dot of the Occult Skill.

See Beyond (• • • •): Gain the Unseen Sense (Abyssal Phenomena) Merit (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 60) (unAwakened only).

Behold the Divine (• • • • •): Gain access to the Divine Gobbet Artifact (below).

Artifact: The Divine Gobbet (• • • • • • • • • •)

The lump of sublime gore Enheduanna found in Laos is as large as two fists balled together. It appears more like a surreal impression of bloody meat than a concrete, real thing; just touching it fills the mind with a whispering cacophony. The Gobbet urges the return of its whole, the recreation of its full and majestic immanence. It's not actually a Supernal Artifact; it's something that fell out of the Abyss, or the heart of an Annunaki, or a tainted piece of the Time Before that lingered after the Fall, or something else clearly *wrong*. Its whispers count as a tutor for learning the secret to befouling spells.

The Divine Gobbet dredges up every negative feeling and dark thought its wielder's ever had and twists them to its purposes. Once per scene, whenever the wielder has the opportunity to fulfill her Vice, she must succeed on a (Resolve + Composure)

roll with a penalty equal to her Joining or (10 – her Wisdom), to a maximum of –5, to avoid acting on it. If she chooses to give in without rolling, she replenishes *all* spent Willpower. The first time she succumbs to her Vice while wielding this Artifact, she gains a Persistent version of the Open Condition for Abyssal entities. It grants a Beat whenever such an entity takes advantage of the Condition to manifest or possess someone, and doesn't resolve unless she gains a dot of Wisdom (losing Joining to regain Wisdom counts) or resists succumbing to her Vice a number of scenes in a row equal to the penalty she takes to her roll to avoid its effects.

Once per scene, when the bearer casts a befouled spell that generates an anomaly, *every* spell cast within (caster's Gnosis x 20) yards/meters of the Gobbet uses the "Antinomian Anomaly" table (p. XX) instead of the usual one for Paradox anomalies, and the Artifact reduces all Withstand traits by one for spells the bearer casts from the Fraying, Unraveling, and Unmaking practices. These effects last for the scene.

The Divine Gobbet doesn't have Arcana or an effective Gnosis, and can't store Mana. However, it *can* store up to 18 Paradox successes as a Nasnas does (p. XX); anyone with Joining can store and spend them while using the Artifact.

Purge
Rabashakim Saboteur

"Fight fire with fire? Listen, they come at me with a lit torch, I'll come at them with white fucking phosphorus."

Background

Purge is mad as hell, and he's not going to take it anymore. His whole Sleeping life, Leslie Graham raged at the shackles with which the Man chains the people; then he Awakened and discovered that, for all the incredible power mages wield, an even *bigger* Man awaits. The boot heel now comes right down from the heavens themselves, sheathed in raw magic and the occult symbols of existence. But no matter how the Exarchs might dress themselves up, it's just the same old oppression writ large. Purge tells himself he'll be the one to change that.

The young Obrimos burns with fierce fervor. He sees the Pentacle running around like scared little ants, hiding away and carefully marshaling their magic; but as far as Purge is concerned, just surviving isn't *living*. The Free Council have the right idea, but frankly even most of his fellow Libertines are all bark and no bite. Everyone clings to Awakened magic, as if it'll somehow turn the world upside down and dethrone the Exarchs if the Pentacle all just hold hands and hope hard enough. Purge believes he sees the truth: You can't fight the Man with their own weapons. You have to go beyond, transgress the limitations the Man wants to impose, and seize a weapon that's not theirs already. The Exarchs rule from the Supernal, but that leaves another source of power they *can't* control — the Abyss.

Purge's rough and ready ideology didn't sprout in his mind fully formed. From day one, the Obrimos was frustrated by his fellows' reticence to go all-out against the Seers of the Throne, but he didn't have a plan for how to change that beyond shouting angrily during Assemblies. A series of ill-judged spells under reckless circumstances was enough to expose him to brief Abyssal anomalies, though, and after he stared too long into the first of them, the hunger to know more quickly took hold.

Purge now leads a small column of like-minded firebrands, all recently Awakened mages caught up in his fervent incitements to action. They call themselves the Renewal, like the new life that sprouts after a forest fire has burned away all the dead wood, and choose Shadow Names that hark to notions of cleansing and purification by flame. They secretly create Paradox anomalies to study and gain insight from, and they've all attempted to befoul improvised spells. The Renewal know it's possible to delve more deeply into the Abyss' power, and have finally found a tutor to teach them how, although he's moving too slowly for their liking. They're quietly looking to bargain or trade for lore that might help them take the next steps on their own.

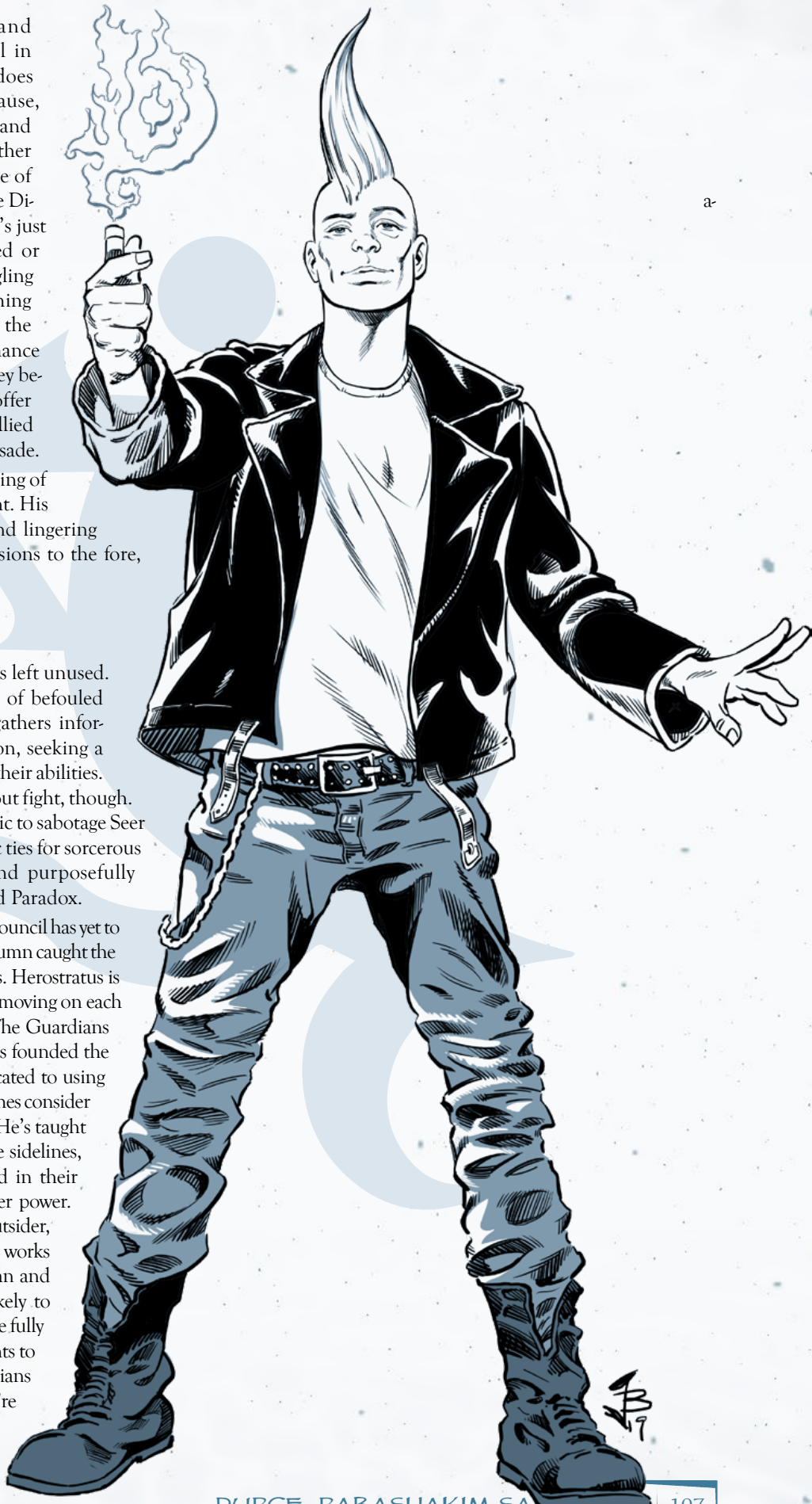
The local Assembly has yet to cotton on to the Renewal being Rabashakim, although Purge's unsubtle rants about seizing any weapon and the ends justifying the means unsettle many of his older peers. Purge knows full well the Assembly won't approve of his actions, but puts it down to cowardice — they're too afraid to grasp the fire that'll burn down the Man's house, since they know it'll burn them too. Well, Purge and his fellows are more than willing to shove their hands into the flame. They'll take one for the team, and show the rest what can be done with the power they've gained.

Description

Purge is a big man, his body rippling with muscle from hitting the gym and brawling in the streets. He sports the paraphernalia of the punk and the radical — leather jacket with revolutionary logos, blond hair spiked up and dyed improbable colors, and a confident, challenging stance. The Obrimos doesn't have any piercings or tattoos, though; he's always been deathly afraid of needles.

The Rabashakim is overbearing and confrontational, quickly losing his cool in the face of provocation. Purge really does think he's doing all this for a good cause, and he'll put himself between a bullet and a friend without hesitation. Plenty of other Libertines look at Purge as a fine example of the sort of dynamism and passion that the Dimond Orders could do with more of. He's just desperate to find something not tainted or subverted by the forces he's been struggling against all his life, and he's found something extremely dangerous that he thinks fits the bill. Persuasive Awakened still have a chance to change the Renewal's course before they become Nasnasi, but it'll take a convincing offer to give Purge hope of something else unsullied by the Lie with which to undertake his crusade.

Purge's Immediate Nimbus is the crackling of flame, the smell of smoke, and ruddy light. His Signature leaves behind a taste of ash and lingering heat. His Long-Term Nimbus brings passions to the fore, stirring arguments and confrontations.



Secrets

Opening Volley: Power is nothing if it's left unused. Now that the Renewal knows the secret of befouled spells, Purge plans to act. His column gathers information on Seer activities across the region, seeking a good target against whom to demonstrate their abilities. They're not planning a knockdown, drag-out fight, though. They want to use their Abyss-touched magic to sabotage Seer logistics: play havoc with their sympathetic ties for sorcerous communication and transportation, and purposefully flood Pyramid sancta with anomalies and Paradox.

Mysterious Benefactor: While the Free Council has yet to pick up on the Renewal's corruption, the column caught the attention of an Autarch named Herostratus. Herostratus is on the run from the Guardians of the Veil, moving on each time his former Order closes in on him. The Guardians are after him with good reason: Herostratus founded the Torches of Artemis, a Scelesti Legacy dedicated to using Abyssal magic to scour those whom the Torches consider unrighteous from the very fabric of reality. He's taught them how to befoul spells and lurks on the sidelines, arranging for scraps of knowledge to land in their hands that whets their appetites for further power. To them, he paints himself as a rebellious outsider, unjustly demonized for his radical views; he works to subtly widen the rift between the column and their Assembly, believing they're more likely to accept his more drastic teachings once they're fully alienated from their Pentacle peers. He wants to pass on his Legacy to them before the Guardians next track him down, but doesn't think they're ready to accept these revelations yet.

Story Hooks

- The Rabashakim's murder of the Hive Soul unleashes a full-scale conflict between the local Hegemony and everyone else; the Pylons don't know who's responsible, so under the pretense of "they could be harboring Accursed," they're targeting vulnerable mages for punishment and interrogation — including the player characters' cabal. The Seers' proactivity causes word to spread that Scelesti are at work; paranoia and blame crack open old divides throughout the Consilium.
- The Renewal's incendiary approach slips out of their grasp, physically and metaphorically. An inferno rages through the city, spreading from the site of a magical battle between the Rabashakim and a Seer Pylon; worse, the resulting Abyssal manifestations conjured a Gulmoth. Now toting a retinue of awestruck fire spirits, the Gulmoth twists the fundamental laws of physics that control the conflagration's spread.
- Purge and his column have been watching the players' cabal, researching their methods and taking their measure. Now, the Accursed Obrimos approaches the cabal — or secretly meets with specific members he believes might be amenable — and makes them an offer. He thinks they possess the same righteous drive to destroy the Lie's patrons, and he wants to share his secret weapon with them. Purge sees them as potential recruits who, like him, will appreciate the success his column's had using the Abyss to fight the oppressors.

Rumors

"I've heard about this new Libertine firebrand, Purge, who's causing a lot of upset. Word is, the Seers fear him. They fear *him! Because they know the only thing really stopping us from tearing down their Iron Pyramid is that we're all too terrified to act, so we sit on our hands. But not Purge."*

One local Ministry is frightened, yes, although they don't yet know Purge and the Renewal are the specific cause. The Rabashakim unwittingly assaulted one body of a Hive Soul, unleashing an antinomian anomaly on it — and it promptly propagated onto the Hive Soul's other bodies, with devastating consequences. Hegemony Pylons in the area now know they've got a Scelesti problem, and have to deal with the blowback from their bosses, who are livid at the Hive Soul's loss, on top of the Pentacle mages who are growing bolder thanks to Purge's example.

"Leslie, always talking like he were a hard man, then he just fuckin' offs and leaves us, eh? What were that about? Aye, the fight against the fascists were all he were about, till whatever fancy took his mind next – and it turns out he gives no shits about the cause after all. And now he's, what, swanning around with some bunch of hippies?"

The Renewal wouldn't describe themselves as "hippies," but otherwise the rumor is true; Purge doesn't keep his Sleeper and Awakened lives as separate as might perhaps be Wise. His old allies in the fight against the Man don't understand that he's found a new, *bigger* Man who needs opposing — one they can't touch — and it takes up most of his time nowadays. The local police certainly haven't forgotten Leslie Graham's lengthy rap sheet. Both sides keep an eye on him now, especially when a protest or other potential public order incident is coming up. Given he's a reckless magician experimenting with Abyssal magic, this is likely to cause a serious problem sooner or later.

"As best as anyone can piece things together, faulty pyrotechnics went off at an illegal rave last night and nearly set the warehouse on fire. Thing is, everyone involved was so high none of the stories quite match up, and even though the reports of a bang and flash from passers-by were clear, there's no trace on-site of anything suspicious."

Humanity is magical, and a shard of the Abyss festers in each Sleeper's soul. To the Renewal, then, it makes sense to experiment with the interactions between antinomian sorcery and the Quiescent curse. The pyrotechnics at the rave weren't faulty; Purge and his comrades regularly provide fireworks and fire-dancers for underground parties, using them as Yantras for flashy, public magic and examining the results for any further edge they might gain over the Seers.

Path: Obrimos
Order: Free Council
Legacy: None
Virtue: Rebellious
Vice: Reckless
Obsessions: Wield antinomian sorcery against the Seers
Aspirations: Cause major property damage with fire; Discover new ways to weaponize the Abyss
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Incendiaries) 4, Investigation 2, Occult (Abyss) 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 4, Brawl 3, Firearms 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry (Batons) 3
Social Skills: Expression 3, Intimidate 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3
Merits: Cabal Theme, Contacts (Activists), Contacts (Sleeper Occultists), Enhanced Item (Baton +2) 2, Fast Spells, High Speech, Order Status (Free Council) 2, Resources 1, Striking Looks 2, Techné (Arson)
Wisdom: 3
Willpower: 5

Initiative: 5
Defense: 7
Armor: 1/0 (reinforced clothing)
Speed: 12
Health: 9
Gnosis: 2
Mana/per Turn: 11/2
Nimbus Tilt: Grants +1 and 8-again to Crafts rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: Fire; Purge's practice of Techné draws from techniques used by Sleeper saboteurs and arsonists.
Arcana: Fate 2, Forces 3, Prime 3
Attainments: Conditional Duration; Counterspell (Fate, Forces, Prime); Mage Armor (Fate, Forces, Prime); Precise Force; Targeted Summoning (Forces, Prime); Universal Counterspell
Praxes: Influence Fire (Forces 1); Control Fire (Forces 2)
Rotes: Cleanse Pattern (Prime 3, Crafts); Cloak Nimbus (Prime 2, Stealth); Fools Rush In (Fate 2, Athletics); Supernal Veil (Prime 2, Occult)
Rote Skills: Crafts, Persuasion, Science
Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice
Enhanced baton	1L	Melee	n/a	–1	10
Heavy revolver	2L	35/70/140	6	–2	5
Unarmed	0B	Melee	n/a	–0	7

Rubedo
Doorkeeper of the Glass Chrysalis

"The cocoon does not mourn the caterpillar's passing, nor does it exult in the butterfly's emergence. Ask me not what the Exile wants. You must experience it for yourself."

Background

Rubedo perches on an old log stool, waiting patiently. She knows they will come: the Sleepers, one by one, called to the Glass Chrysalis by the Exile's siren song. When they stand before that strange oval door, wrought from pitch-black timber and carved with flowing patterns, it is Rubedo they must convince of their desire to change, to become more than they are, to transmute their lives into something with real meaning.

The Doorkeeper grants those who accept her pact access to the sanctum beyond. Those who do not meet her standards, she rends apart, then eats their remains.

The Baal called Rubedo has been doing this for a long time. She vaguely recalls disillusion and discontent with the Silver Ladder in her distant youth, and how she turned to the Abyss to realize desires to truly change the world. Eventually, her obsession with the metaphorical symbolism of alchemical transformation drew her to the Annunaki she calls the Exile. The Exile granted her the Diadem, in return for service as the doorkeeper and warden of its beachhead into reality — the Glass Chrysalis, an Abyssal Verge.

The Chrysalis either moves, or is coterminous with various points in space and possibly time. The entrance is in an alleyway, beneath a neon light that fizzles and flickers in the rain; or it's the creaking door of an old outhouse, where the fields meet the forest; or it's a grimy basement door at the edge of the tenement. Behind that facade lies the antechamber where Rubedo waits in her chair, in an incongruously decorated little hallway.

The Doorkeeper doesn't always rest upon that chair, though. Sometimes she rises from her old wooden throne, emerging from the interstitial space to prowl the surrounding streets or fields. She watches for Sleepers who might be of interest to the Exile, and where she finds one, she marks their mind with the Astral brand that broadcasts its song to their dreams and compels them to come, and to listen. She carefully performs grotesque acts of torture or wreaks Paradox in accordance with whatever alien schedule the Glass Chrysalis keeps. Then she ambles back to her lair, and resumes her vigil.

Description

Rubedo is a stocky woman in her 60s with a slight stoop and a serious expression. Her long, braided hair is more silver than black now, and while her skin sports few wrinkles, it has an unhealthy pallor. At rest, the Baal projects a calm demeanor and speaks with practiced patter, even as she gnaws on the femur of the last Sleeper who failed to impress her while the new petitioner's compulsion keeps them rapt. She affects a grandmotherly amiability that doesn't shift whether she's soothing an anxious supplicant's fears or elbow-deep in blood.

The Moros is absolutely loyal to the Annunaki she serves, and patient enough to see through the decades-long work of welcoming the Exile into reality. However, largely cut off from wider mage society, she craves contact with Awakened peers. Most magicians she encounters are either investigating the Exile's song — and will probably soon want to destroy the Chrysalis — or have fallen into one of her snares. She questions

such victims with avid interest while she torments them, seeing no conflict between pleasant chatter and brutal cruelty. If a mage refuses to play along with the mockery of polite conversation, Rubedo grows surly and sadistic, pointedly causing as much agony as possible before she kills them.

Rubedo's Immediate Nimbus imposes the heavy weight of base metals giving the lie to its tempting golden sheen. The Signature her magic leaves makes anything it touches seem to flake away or disintegrate. Her Long-Term Nimbus sees those influenced undergoing unprecedented transformations of their lives and attitudes, but only for the worse.

Secrets

Hymn of the Exile: The Exile transmits its dream-song throughout the region near the Chrysalis' entrance only rarely, and most Sleepers never hear it, but those with the strongest yearning to change themselves or their lives walk in a dreamlike trance to stand before the Baal's judgment. The yearnings that resonate with the Chrysalis' song seem particularly common among Sleepwalkers who associate with the Awakened, especially those envious of magic's power.

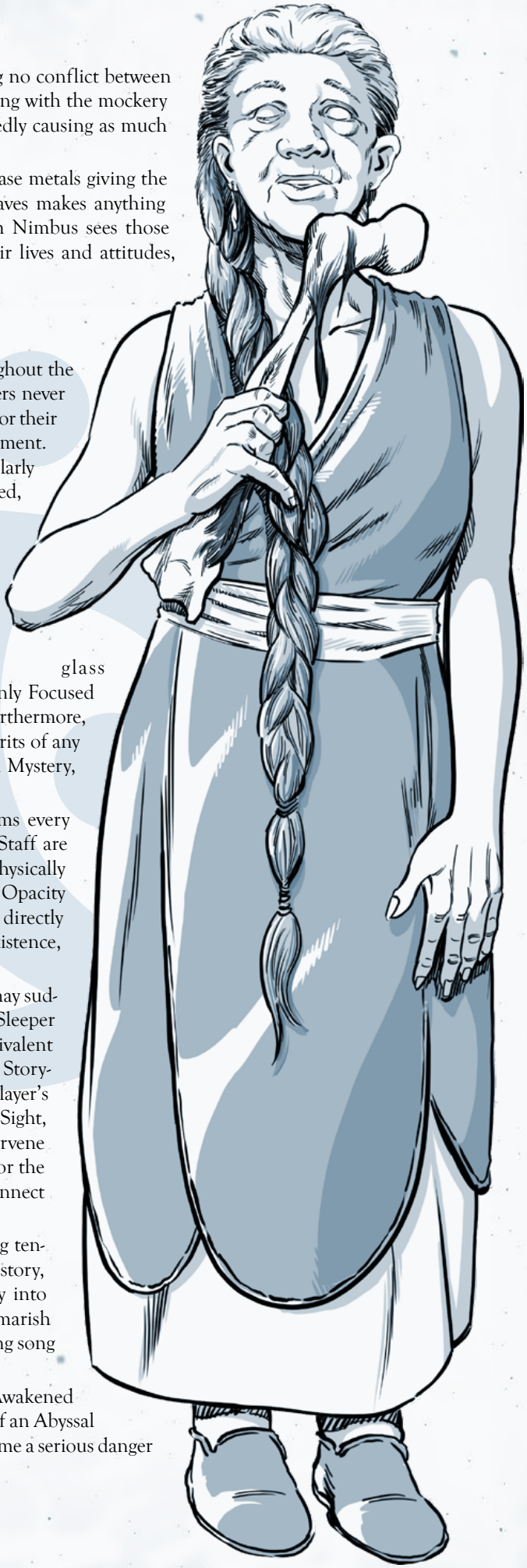
Those who enter the Glass Chrysalis pass into a disorienting prism of light and false revelation, within which a grove of pulsating tree-computers with boughs of human flesh and trunks of glass and wire, bedecked with human eyes, sings a clear tone to a place beyond reality. When Sleepers or Sleepwalkers emerge from the Chrysalis, their eyes are replaced with glistening glass simulacra. The replica eyes work perfectly and look normal; only Focused Mage Sight can perceive any difference, as surface information. Furthermore, the victim's life changes around her — she gains five dots of Merits of any kind, even supernatural, distributed in any combination. As a Mystery, this stage of the transformation has Opacity 4.

From then on, the Exile sings sweetly in the victim's dreams every night. Reality warps to justify her new Merits: newly minted Staff are convinced they've always worked for her, or she's suddenly physically fitter to reflect Physical Merits. Mages who pierce the Mystery's Opacity recognize that it doesn't actually rewrite history or memories, or directly alter the victim's body — it just brute-forces the changes into existence, like a ham-fisted code patch.

Awakened are not immune to the peripheral effects; a mage may suddenly possess a personal relationship (and sympathetic tie) to a Sleeper he didn't have yesterday. Count such a relationship as the equivalent of a five-dot Allies or Mentor Merit for the Sleeper, though the Storyteller can't roll for an affected Storyteller character to call on a player's character. Successfully studying the sympathy with Focused Mage Sight, using appropriate Shielding magic, or casting other spells that intervene breaks the illusion for the mage; but if he acts out-of-character for the new context, the Chrysalis recreates the victim's new Merits to connect the Sleeper to someone else instead.

Over time, the victim's replica eyes turn cancerous, threading tendrils of glass and metal throughout her body. At the end of the story, the slow, vitreous metamorphosis petrifies supplicants entirely into glassy mannequins. *Now*, other Sleepers can perceive their nightmarish transmogrification. The Mystery's Opacity falls to 3, as the trilling song of the Chrysalis resonates in these glassy amplifiers.

The Exile's song and transmogrification have no effect on Awakened who enter its Verge, but they're still subject to the usual effects of an Abyssal Verge (**Mage**, p. 242). In the Fallen World, infected Sleepers become a serious danger



Story Hooks

- Rubedo had a family once, but she's largely forgotten about them. Her granddaughter Awakened recently and, upon discovering Rubedo's history as a théarch, started digging into what befell the old woman. Officially, Rubedo just vanished; but a few Guardians of the Veil know the truth, and plot to use the young woman as bait to lure the old Scelestus out. The cabal gets caught up in the mess when that "bait" turns up at their door with permission from the Hierarch to ask around after anyone who might have known her grandmother, just as the Guardians put their plan into motion.
- The Exile's song takes one of the cabal's friends. He turns up with glinting eyes and a bright smile, having just won the lottery. No one else seems to notice his glass eyes, and he refuses to talk about any of it. Soon, though, the cabal recognizes the glass cancer's spread.
- One of the cabalmates suddenly has a new Sleeper lover, employee, student, or even sibling; but as far as anyone's initially aware — including the Sleeper and the cabal themselves — the relationship is long-established. Little inconsistencies crop up, though, and investigation leads to the disturbing conclusion that this person is, in fact, a stranger.

to the Awakened. The Abyssal taint makes one victim — even a Sleepwalker — count as a whole crowd of Sleeper witnesses for purposes of calculating Paradox (**Mage**, p. 115), and they continue to count as such even as petrified glass statues. Performing a successful Revelation with Focused Mage Sight to study these statues is nauseating, inflicting the Shaken Condition (which becomes the moderate Sick Tilt in action scenes).

Something like that vitreous cancer coils in Rubedo's guts as well, but it slowly turns her innards to gold. It stiffens her spine and worms its tendrils through her limbs. She doesn't fight it, knowing that when the Glass Chrysalis finishes digesting and refining the human need for transformation the Sleepers leave within it, the Exile will return to reality, and she will become something glorious. Rubedo believes the Exile is something from a splintered, rejected timeline, and mages who envied its power over transmutation and apotheosis thrust it into the Abyss, stifling reality's ultimate potential just to serve their own egos. In her eyes, the Glass Chrysalis is a lingering piece of the Exile's grandeur, a crucible in which the worthy can reforge themselves and turn a worthless life into one with meaning through service to the Annunaki.

Rumors

"I don't truck with those Abyss-lovers, you understand, but one hears things. Like how there's some kind of tournament going on, these Accursed bastards coming from all over to fight for supremacy. You think you've seen Paradox? We're all gonna see some real *shit soon, mark my words."*

The rumor is an exaggeration — there's no tournament — but the threat is real; another Nasnas has recently arrived in the cabal's hometown, stirring up trouble. He's mapping out the Glass Chrysalis' appearances, and thinks it will manifest here soon — whereupon he plans to face down Rubedo and try to claim the Exile's favor, expecting to wrest the Elder Diadem from the old woman's hands.

"Listen, you hear anything about the woman with the old bone cane, you tell me. I'll make it worth your while. The cane used to belong to the head of one of the big mob families, and it's got history, so they want it back. You don't need to know any more than that. Just, look, if you do catch her trail? Don't go chasing it by yourself. She's dangerous, they say. Real dangerous. You tell me, and we'll sort out backup."

An odd series of rumors connects Rubedo to a major crime family, but they're slightly jumbled. The Glass Chrysalis called the head of the family to her, but he didn't survive; the Baal fashioned the bone cane, her dedicated magical tool, from his carcass. The mob in question serves as part of a local cryptopoly, and includes a number of Proximi and others with minor supernatural talents. It's just enough occult sensitivity for them to grasp a tiny piece of the picture, but not enough to know how wildly outclassed they are in pursuit of this vendetta. Their investigation is likely to cause as much trouble for the Ladder as for Rubedo herself, as witchling hitmen and mob haruspices poke around the area where the Chrysalis manifests.

"In local news, the anonymous subversive art craze known colloquially as 'glassjam' is raising eyebrows and generating hype. Hot debates rage over what exactly the message of glassjamming is and who's meant to receive it, but enthusiasts agree that it's inspirational and, in some cases, life-changing."

Weird glass statues crop up in odd places, but they're not street installations and the only message they're meant to send comes from the Abyss. Rubedo sneaks them into art galleries, arranges them into mimicries of crowds upon the stage of a deserted theater, and leaves them half-submerged in the waters swirling under footbridges. The Paradox they stir is trouble enough for the Awakened community, but this is just the beginning; Rubedo intends to use them as amplifiers for the Exile's song, transmitting it farther and with greater strength.

Path: Moros
Order: None
Legacy: Keepers of the Chrysalis
Virtue: Patient
Vice: Cruel
Obsessions: Bring the Exile into the Fallen World; Transmute herself into something else

Keepers of the Chrysalis

(Abyssal; Space)

Rubedo isn't the first Baal to take on the task of trying to usher the Exile into the world, though she never learned her awful power from another of her kind. Each Keeper's gnosis and soul are rewritten by the Annunaki itself through prolonged proximity to the Verge, as it shapes its servants into the ideal shepherds for its coming. The Keepers aren't technically Autarchs by many Consilia's standards, as they don't recruit or gather, but theirs is a Left-Handed Scelesti Legacy nonetheless.

Yantras: the Chrysalis' antechamber (+1); glass statue victims (+1); singing along with the Exile's song (+1); transforming something to become completely different, whether tangible or abstract (+1, or +2 if rolls are needed)

Oblations: spending at least an hour inside the Verge listening to the song; luring victims into the Verge; interviewing supplicants or tormenting those who resist

First Attainment: Watch the Threshold

Prerequisites: Initiation (Space 2, Joining 3, Empathy 2)

A Keeper must never waver in her vigilance. This Attainment emulates the Space 1 spell "The Outward and Inward Eye" (**Mage**, p. 174). She may use it normally, or may use it remotely as though she were standing directly on the threshold between the Verge and its antechamber; the latter requires a point of Mana.

In addition, the Keeper's sympathetic tie to that threshold is Connected, and her tie to anyone currently infected with the Exile's glass cancer is Strong.

Optional: Matter 1

If the mage Watches the Threshold from the Verge's antechamber, whether in person or remotely, she may command the door to the Glass Chrysalis to unlock, open, close, or lock as long as she can see it, as the Matter 1 spell "Remote Control" (**Mage**, p. 155).

Second Attainment: Guard the Threshold

Prerequisites: Joining 4

The Exile's Chrysalis and Sleeper prophets are sacrosanct; none may impede the Keeper in her duties. This Attainment emulates the Space 2 spell "Ward" (**Mage**, p. 176), but the only valid subjects are the Keeper herself, the Verge and its antechamber, and Sleepers infected by the glass cancer.

Optional: Matter 2, Mind 2

The Keeper may also use this Attainment to emulate the Matter 2 spell "Alter Conductivity" (Mage, p. 156), but may only use it to increase the ability of glass cancer victims to transmit the sound of the Exile's song, whether they've been fully transformed yet or not.

Third Attainment: Veil the Threshold

Prerequisites: Space 3, Joining 5, Empathy 3

Though the Exile draws the chosen to its Chrysalis, others snooping around where they don't belong endanger its return. This Attainment emulates the Space 2 spell "Secret Door" (Mage, p. 175), but can only veil doors or apertures leading directly toward the Glass Chrysalis or the location of a Sleeper infected with the glass cancer. It assigns Reach to instant use and a Key that allows anyone who has heard the Exile's song to see through the veil.

Optional: Matter 3

Ordinarily, Sleepers transformed into glass statues still count as living beings with minds for purposes of which Arcana can affect them. Upon gaining this Attainment, the Keeper may also use Matter to affect these Sleepers as though they were truly made of glass.

Aspirations: Eat the flesh of those who anger her; Learn about Awakened current events

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts (Glass) 5, Investigation 4, Occult (Alchemy) 4, Science (Chemistry) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Specified Targets) 4, Stealth (Stillness) 5, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy (Sincerity) 5, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Hallow 3; High Speech; Occultation 3; Sanctum 5; Safe Place 5

Joining: 6

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 5

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 10
Health: 9
Gnosis: 5
Mana/per Turn: 15/5
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes –1 on Wits rolls and –2 on Stamina rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: A rod of bone, covered in her own tooth marks.
Arcana: Death 4, Matter 4, Mind 2, Space 3
Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Matter, Space); Durability Control; Eyes of the Dead; Inviolate Soul; Mage Armor (Death, Matter, Space); Permanence; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Death, Matter, Space); Keepers of the Chrysalis — Watch the Threshold; Guard the Threshold; Veil the Threshold

Praxes: Alchemist's Touch (Matter 2); Devouring the Slain (Death 3); Nigredo and Albedo (Matter 3); Shaping (Matter 2); Warp (Space 3); Withering (Death 4)
Rotes: Crucible (Matter 3, Crafts); Find the Balance (Matter 2, Crafts); State Change (Matter 3, Crafts)

Type	Dmg	Init	Dice
Hatchet	1L	–2	5
Unarmed	0B	–0	7

Notes: Rubedo's Abyssal curse is the Degenerate Mana Condition (p. XX). The Keepers of the Chrysalis give her Space as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Slake, Spider Caught in His Own Web

"I wish you could see the world the way I see it. Just a glimpse."

Background

Making friends always came easily to Kevin Pham. He could enter a room full of strangers and leave with six new friends on social media and plans to hang out. If someone needed help moving, Kevin was there first thing in the morning with coffee and donuts, and stayed until the last box was in the new place. He arranged for acquaintances with similar interests to meet up and hoped they'd hit it off. Anything his friends needed, Kevin provided if he could, or knew someone who could help if not. He passed along cool opportunities with the subject header, "Don't self-reject!"

He wanted everyone to experience the best life could offer. People who pulled the ladder up after them infuriated Kevin; they ought to be offering those on the rungs below help with the climb.

It made him a perfect fit for the Silver Ladder. His waking world dream sprawled out over the best weeks of his life, affirming every relationship the Thyrsus had nurtured over the years, and revealing all the potential awaiting him.

Slake took the Elemental Precepts to heart, and got involved with the Golden Lantern, a mystery cult in his hometown. He wanted to shepherd Sleepers toward enlightenment. He also wanted to recapture the feeling of his own Awakening, to once again grasp that moment when his whole world changed. Chasing new Mysteries got him close, but never close enough.

Turned out, Paradox was the answer. During sessions with the Golden Lantern, Slake gave his Sleeper companions the tiniest of metaphysical nudges, encouraging them to glimpse the world beyond the Veil. Knowing he shouldn't, but unable to resist the Mystery, he figured out how to draw a sliver of the Abyss into his working. Maybe it made the presence of the Lie more obvious; maybe it acted like a hint of salt to enhance the sweetness of the Supernal. That day, every Sleeper saw through the Lie, if only for a little while. And Slake at last felt the euphoria of his own Awakening.

He could have stopped. *Should* have, maybe, but at last he was getting the kind of results that could change lives. If there were a few side effects, wasn't it still worth it? What if he'd found the way to hasten enlightenment for all souls? He knew better than to tell anyone what he'd discovered. He needed more research, more success stories, more time for the benefits to outweigh the sins he knew he was committing. He couldn't risk them making sure he'd never feel that elation again.

Slake continued his sessions, tweaking the spell to get the best results. It worked, more or less, right up until Katie Strickland Awakened. Whatever the young woman saw on the way to her Watchtower terrified her. Where Slake's Awakening was full of beauty and wonder, Katie's filled her with dread and revulsion. She became a Banisher, and it was all Slake's fault.

Today, he's in over his head and he knows it, but addiction's dug its claws in deep. More and more of the Lantern members' "visions" take dark and dangerous turns, but they keep coming back for another try — Slake's own addiction fuels theirs. If the Ladder finds him out, if the Consilium tries his case, he's pretty sure what he did to Katie and the Lantern makes him a dead man — or worse.

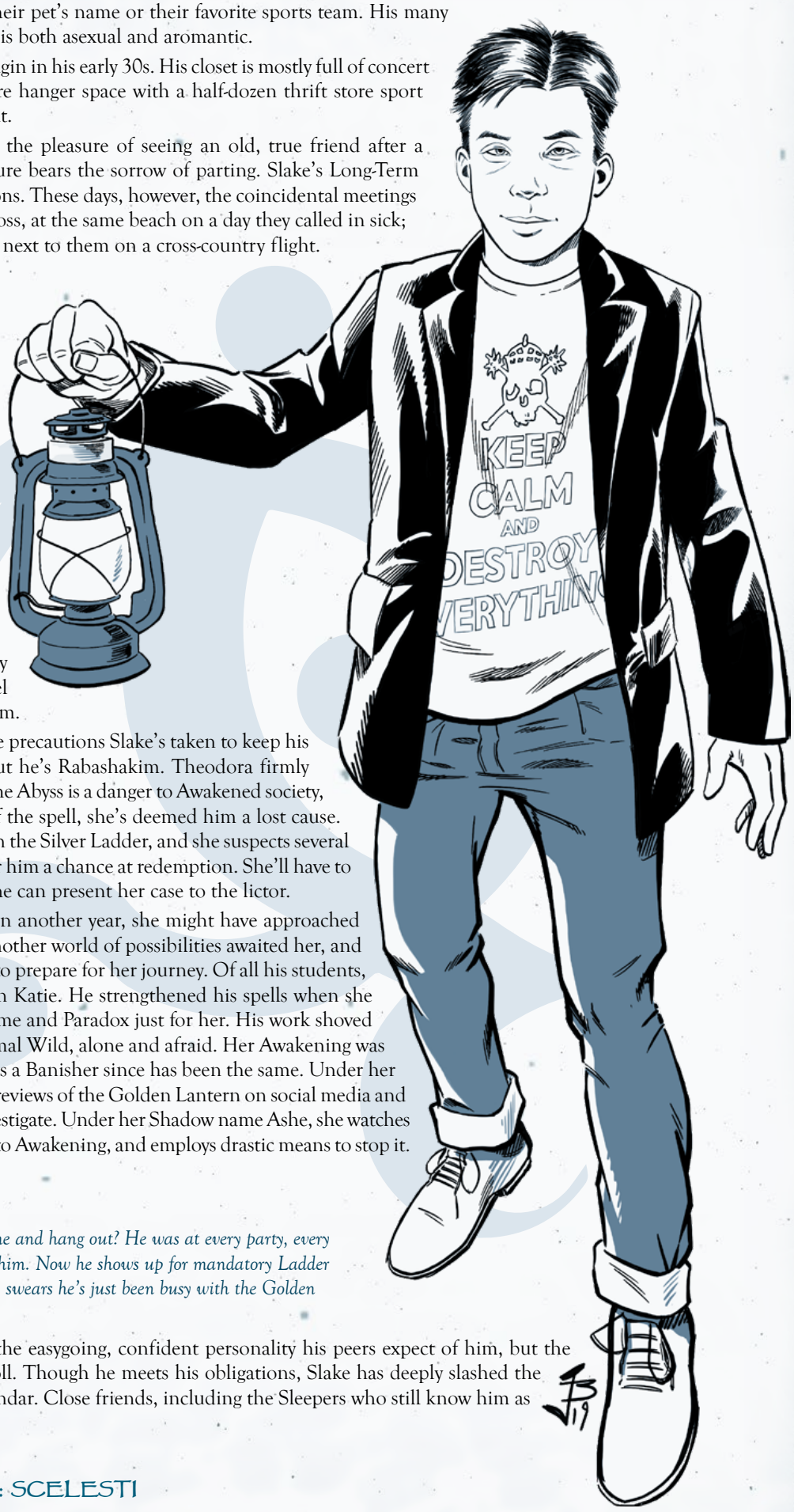
Description

Slake assumes everyone's a potential friend. He turns his full attention toward conversation partners, and truly listens. People he met once months before are astonished when he not

only remembers them, but also their pet's name or their favorite sports team. His many friendships are all platonic; Slake is both asexual and aromantic.

Slake is a man of Vietnamese origin in his early 30s. His closet is mostly full of concert tee-shirts and jeans, but they share hanger space with a half-dozen thrift store sport coats and a single well-tailored suit.

His Immediate Nimbus grants the pleasure of seeing an old, true friend after a long time apart, while his Signature bears the sorrow of parting. Slake's Long-Term Nimbus brings unexpected reunions. These days, however, the coincidental meetings are unpleasant ones: someone's boss, at the same beach on a day they called in sick; someone's racist uncle in the seat next to them on a cross-country flight.



Secrets

Mystery Crime: During his Awakening, Slake witnessed another willworker laying a murderous trap, but didn't yet have the magical knowledge to understand what he was seeing amid the sensory overload. Months passed before he realized the moment's significance. He returns to the scene occasionally, under the influence of his befouled spell, hoping to find new evidence. The other mage covered their tracks well, leaving an Opacity 3 Mystery Slake hopes to unravel before his own sins catch up to him.

Treading Carefully: Despite the precautions Slake's taken to keep his secret, another thearch figured out he's Rabashakim. Theodora firmly believes anyone who draws upon the Abyss is a danger to Awakened society, and with Slake's continued use of the spell, she's deemed him a lost cause. Problem is, he's highly respected in the Silver Ladder, and she suspects several members of her Order would offer him a chance at redemption. She'll have to tear his reputation apart before she can present her case to the lictor.

Katie Strickland wasn't ready. In another year, she might have approached the Singing Stone on her own. Another world of possibilities awaited her, and she'd joined the Golden Lantern to prepare for her journey. Of all his students, Slake sensed the most potential in Katie. He strengthened his spells when she attended, mixing a cocktail of Prime and Paradox just for her. His work shoved her deep into the heart of the Primal Wild, alone and afraid. Her Awakening was full of pain and fear, and her life as a Banisher since has been the same. Under her Sleeper name, she writes scathing reviews of the Golden Lantern on social media and encourages local authorities to investigate. Under her Shadow name Ashe, she watches for other Sleepers who seem close to Awakening, and employs drastic means to stop it.

Rumors

"Remember when Slake used to come and hang out? He was at every party, every meeting. You couldn't not *bump into him. Now he shows up for mandatory Ladder business, but goes right home after. He swears he's just been busy with the Golden Lantern, but I'm worried about him."*

Outwardly, Slake still projects the easygoing, confident personality his peers expect of him, but the guilt and stress are taking their toll. Though he meets his obligations, Slake has deeply slashed the number of plans in his social calendar. Close friends, including the Sleepers who still know him as Kevin Pham, have noticed.

Story Hooks

- Sleepers in the cabal's territory are disappearing, taken by the Banisher known as Ashe. Two of the missing are known members of the Golden Lantern, and frequent attendees at Slake's sessions. Slake approaches the cabal for help, both to take down Ashe, and help him shake his addiction once the job is done.
- A respected member of the Consilium is murdered, and the cabal is asked to investigate. While searching for clues, they find the scene Slake keeps returning to from his Awakening. He's buried the Mystery to protect it from other prying eyes, but his own Nimbus permeates the scene. The Rabashakim runs into them and offers to help them find the killer... but they're going to have to dabble in antinomian magic to do it. He can teach them how.
- Slake's most recent tweak to his Veil-lifting spell tore open an Abyssal Verge and drew the attention of the Annunaki Iyera. Slake and his subjects remain trapped inside her realm, while entities stream from the Abyss, seeking out Slake's Long-Term Nimbus and anyone affected by it. With his vast network of friends, they have ample pickings.

"My buddy saw Kevin scoping out an old yoga studio for lease downtown. He's getting too big for his britches with his weird new friends, whatever it is they're doing. I heard he's starting up his own cult, some kind of spiritual enlightenment bullshit. If you ask me, it's all a scam."

Slake's not looking to leave the Golden Lantern to start his own cult (or scam) anytime soon — it grants him cover. His weekly guided meditation sessions are among the most popular, and the majority of members rave about their experiences. He keeps the group relatively small, no more than 10 people at a time, but the waiting list is so long his peers in the Ladder think he ought to add a second session, or teach someone else his methods so they can lead one. While part of Slake clamors for the chance to help enlighten more Sleepers (and spend more time in the blissful recreation of his own Awakening), he knows doing so would only increase the risk of exposure, so he hedges his bets with the *appearance* of expansion for now.

"Did you hear about the disturbance the other night? This pair of rich assholes tried bribing the receptionist at the Golden Lantern to move them up on the waiting list for Slake's classes. When a fistful of money didn't work, they pulled out threats. They fucked off before the cops arrived, but something was off about them. It went beyond white dudes throwing their weight around and got downright creepy. The Ladder's keeping an eye out in case they come back."

Slake has no idea who's after him, but he's plenty freaked out. He wasn't in the studio when the men came by, and doesn't recognize them from the images he pulled from the receptionist's memories. He worries the Consilium's onto his antinomian magic, but can't confide in anyone. In truth, several Nasnasi embedded within the major Orders have Slake on their recruitment lists. Though he's still dedicated to the betterment of humanity (for now), his steadily worsening addiction makes him a perfect Joining candidate.

Path: Thyrsus

Order: Silver Ladder

Legacy: Illumined Path

Virtue: Generous

Vice: Single-Minded

Obsessions: The process of Awakening; The sinister act he witnessed during his Awakening

Aspirations: Guide a Sleeper toward Awakening; Kick his addiction to the Abyss' power

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Sleepwalkers, Proximi) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy (Soothing Presence) 4, Expression 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Mingling) 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Fame 1; High Speech; Lex Magica; Potent Nimbus 1; Resources 2; Order Status (Silver Ladder) 3

Wisdom: 5

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 4

Defense: 4

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Gnosis: 3

Mana/per Turn: 12/3

Nimbus Tilt: Grants a +2 to Presence rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: An inscribed canteen from his brother's camping bachelor party.

Arcana: Life 3, Prime 4, Spirit 1, Time 1

Attainments: Counterspell (Life, Prime, Spirit, Time); Improved Pattern Restoration; Mage Armor (Life, Prime); Targeted Summoning (Life, Prime); Universal Counterspell; Illumined Path — Mark the Trail

Praxes: Control Instincts (Life 2); Perfect Recall (Mind 1); Stealing Fire (Prime 3)

Rotes: Body Control (Life 2, Athletics); Emotional Urging (Mind 2, Empathy); Pierce Deception (Prime 1, Occult); Words of Truth (Prime 2, Expression)

Rote Skills: Expression, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Notes: The Illumined Path gives Slake Prime as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Illumined Path

(Obrimos, Silver Ladder; Prime)

Mages of the Illumined Path see themselves as guides to enlightenment, viewing Awakening as a spectrum rather than a binary state of being either Sleeping or Awake. They teach practices that coax or jar Sleepers into opening their eyes in hopes they will find their feet upon a Path to the Supernal, and believe Paradox should be neither contained nor feared, but mastered. Many Consilia cast a wary eye on this Legacy's methods, but agree that its philosophy has merit.

Yantras: light from a source the mage carries (+1); reciting from philosophical or religious texts (+1); deliberately releasing Paradox (+2)

Oblations: guided meditation, teaching, or tutoring; philosophical discourse; volunteering for a helpful charity; studying Paradox

First Attainment: Mark the Trail

Prerequisites: Initiation (Prime 2, Empathy 2)

The mage bestows miraculous sight upon his subject, teaching her to meditate on the unseen. This Attainment emulates the Prime 1 spell "Supernal Vision" (**Mage**, p. 166), and takes a scene of meditation on both the caster's part and the subject's. It allocates its fixed Reach to advanced Duration, allowing the subject time to acclimate and study her surroundings. As any Attainment, this doesn't provoke Quiescence or breaking points in Sleeper subjects solely by virtue of showing them magic, but a willworker who isn't careful about how he introduces a Sleeper to its insights can cause breaking points anyway simply due to shock and confusion that linger beyond the Attainment's effects.

Optional: Forces 2

With Forces, anything the subject studies with her newfound vision gains a soft, unearthly glow, pulling light from nearby light sources or the ambient light of the space to gather around the object of her focus. This light is visible to anyone, not just the Attainment's subject; some mages of the Illumined Path use this to highlight foci of interest for their students with themselves as the subject, or just to instill the Legacy's core symbolism in subjects' minds. The Forces effect doesn't work in pitch darkness.

Tanris
Shedu Wish-Granter

"Power is within you, if only you're brave enough to grab hold. Let me show you how, then you can show all your friends."

Background

As Virgina "Ginnie" Hanscomb, Tanris spent her early 20s falling for one pyramid scheme after another: makeup, housewares, essential oils, supplements with dubious health benefits. The companies promised wealth for any salesperson who tried hard enough. Ginnie tried. She ordered extra stock out of her own pocket for demonstrations. She posted videos. She pitched the products to everyone she knew. When opportunities to attend buzzword-filled seminars came up, she borrowed the money to go. She was certain the key to success would become clear during the motivational speeches and classes.

It never did.

She escaped from that life with a garage full of useless product, a slew of damaged friendships, and $15,000 in debt. It took nearly a decade, but she dug herself out. As the dumpster full of worthless goods pulled away, her Awakening began. She saw the ties to her old life stretch and snap, setting her free — leaving her with the power to shape her own destiny.

Tanris rebuffed the Pentacle mages who approached her with offers of mentorship and belonging. Their pitches sounded too much like the ones that drew her in as a Sleeper; only the buzzwords changed. Her trust in other people was too eroded for her to join a new community, no matter the benefits. The Consilium called their leader the *Hierarch*, for goodness' sakes, which was just another word for *pyramid*.

Instead, she went it alone. Her solitary studies led her to dabbling with the Abyss, despite — or perhaps because of — other mages' warnings about Paradox. Tanris understood that something too good to be true usually was, and anything giving her easy power was likely causing harm somewhere else. But she figured she knew the warning signs to watch for.

Her Dur-Abzu called to her, and everything along the path to Ao Si matched the conclusions she'd reached along the way: the idea that Sleepers could seize control of their own destiny was bullshit. Someone's always pulling the strings. So why shouldn't Tanris be the one making others dance?

She courted the Gulmoth Kelbis, an entity hungry for Sleepers' hopes and aspirations. Tanris knew a fair bit about manipulating those very things, and negotiated a deal. Kelbis granted her power, and she reciprocated with a smorgasbord of dreams and wishes to feast upon. One thing she'd learned from all those failed attempts at multi-level marketing: the people at the top of the pyramid reaped the greatest benefits. So she set herself up at the highest point and dusted off her sales-pitch smile.

The Hand of Destiny

Tanris recruited a few like-minded Awakened and formed a cabal that founded their own Nameless Order and Left-Handed Legacy. The Shedu has grown to, if not entirely trust them, at least admire them. Her cabal, the Order's inner circle and the only ones initiated into the Legacy, is composed of the charismatic Acanthus Pictas; Rowan, a social media-savvy Moros with Mysterium connections; and the Obrimos Sylvene, who has a knack for inspirational speeches. They named their new Order the Hand of Destiny, and set to work on their new business. They named the company HopeBerries, uploaded a few videos, and cast wide their nets. Most Hand of Destiny mages outside the inner circle are Rabashakim, not Nasnasi, and don't know about Kelbis or the Legacy.

Their targets are the same kind of Sleepers Tanris once was: hopeful, vulnerable people in uncertain circumstances, determined to climb their way to stability and beyond. HopeBerries suggests that participants who broadcast their dreams to the universe (and more importantly, to their private forums) will succeed if they follow Ginnie's proven method. Merchandise abounds in the form of inspirational journals, visualization aids, and exclusive online chats with the top achievers — all of whom, of course, are Ginnie's people.

Description

Tanris is a ruthless saleswoman, but her delivery is so sweet and sunny, her targets rarely notice the steel beneath. She's a fast talker, quick to suss out what a mark desires most in the world. Her skill at cold-reading a subject is so accurate, she only occasionally needs to resort to Telepathy.

Her style mirrors the women she saw on so many stages over the years: well-tailored, with impeccable hair, nails, shoes, and makeup. Nowadays, Tanris is the motivational speaker people pay to see. She still uses her sympathetic name for the business, and insists people call her Ginnie. Familiarity breeds trust.

Tanris' Immediate Nimbus is the feeling of time running out, when rent is due before the next paycheck arrives and bill collectors won't stop calling. Her Signature Nimbus reflects the resignation and despair of another week, or month, or year of falling behind. In the Long-Term, costly little emergencies add up: the car needs new brakes, day care costs increase, a bad fall lands the sufferer an astronomical hospital bill.

Secrets

Neverending Hunger: Though Tanris believes she's carefully negotiated her deal with the Gulmoth Kelbis, the entity watches as her accomplishments give way to loftier goals and new aspirations. The higher she climbs, the tastier it expects she'll be in the end. Kelbis isn't in a hurry; it hopes Tanris will live a long time, and reach ever higher.

Cutthroat Competition: Rowan wants to be at the top. She feels like Tanris is, ironically, keeping the cabal from reaching its full potential. She seeks a way to turn the others against Tanris, but wants to ensure that, when the coup is over, she's the one in charge. If she can't convince them to overthrow their leader, she might go right over Tanris' head. They're all aware of Kelbis' existence, but Tanris keeps its summoning ritual a secret.

Rumors

"The oligarch's furious. She had all these businesses' CEOs toeing the line, and now it's falling apart. They went on this mindfulness retreat, and signed onto this mystical bullshit. It used to be trust falls and open floor plans. Now it's 'fling your wishes into the void and –' You know, if we'd *thought of it first, it'd be fine. But we didn't, and the higher-ups aren't going to like it."*

Story Hooks

- The Consilium's all over the HopeBerries conference coming to town. On the surface it's just another motivational speaker selling overpriced tote bags and crappy DVDs, but the Council's treating it like something bigger. A whole bunch of Sleepers arrived soaking in weird Resonance. The Arrow's putting people on the security team, in case something goes down, and the cabal gets tapped to participate.
- Rowan approaches the cabal with an offer. She'll help them infiltrate the company to take out Tanris if they'll vouch for her when the Consilium inevitably wants to destroy her for her part in the heinous business. Is this truly a shot at redemption, or is she using the cabal's hopes to prove her worth to Kelbis as a power play?
- Someone uses HopeBerries to target a cabal member. This might be a spate of good fortune as a parent hopes for good things for their child, or bad luck as a rival wishes them ill for her own gain. Not only does the meddling mess with the cabal's fate, it also gives Kelbis a taste for the Awakened target's aspirations.

Tanris didn't start out targeting businesses the Ministry of Mammon had its eyes on, but she's managed to influence a bunch of CEOs and human resources administrators in companies the Ministry otherwise controls. Her impact on leaders in the Sleeper community also throws several Free Council and Silver Ladder projects into disarray. HopeBerries' corporate seminars are popular, and the disruptions to the mages' plans have put Tanris on both the Seers' and Pentacle's radar.

"This Sleepwalker friend of mine, she's always been cool with who she is. She's around magic, and it's been enough. I believed her. But it turns out she joined this self-improvement society, and I think it was because she hoped she'd Awaken. I don't know what happened to her, but...it's like she's forgotten what it's like to care."

Kelbis doesn't just enjoy devouring the hopes of people who are more than mere mortals; it *craves* the feast. It has developed a taste for the hopes of Sleepwalkers and Proximi, and has suggested to Tanris it would very much like to move up to the Awakened themselves.

"Tanris turned the Orders down because she didn't trust anyone. *You really think she's feeding an Abyssal entity without a way to get her entire investment back, make that thing vomit up all the hopes it's eaten? If you honestly believe that, I've got a whole pile of HopeBerries to sell you."*

A few of the Hand of Destiny mages outside the inner circle caught onto the full extent of the scheme after some investigation, but they hesitate to do anything about it, assuming (correctly) that confronting the inner circle or trying to undermine them would invite disaster. But Tanris *doesn't* have a loophole built into her deal with Kelbis. Research into the rituals she created suggests hopes fed to the Gulmoth might not be lost forever, though. If Kelbis can be destroyed, Tanris' victims might be able to reclaim their dreams.

Path: Acanthus
Order: Hand of Destiny
Legacy: Hand of Destiny
Virtue: Determined
Vice: Cutthroat
Obsessions: Increase her status among Abyssal entities; Seize the reins of Fate
Aspirations: Further grow the company; Get her former scammers to sign up for a seminar
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer (Websites) 2, Investigation 3, Occult (Abyssal Entities) 4, Politics 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Firearms 2, Larceny (Online Scams) 3
Social Skills: Empathy (Cold Reading) 4, Expression 2, Persuasion (Sales) 4, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 3
Merits: Cabal Theme 1; Fame 2; Fast-Talking 5 (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 50); Mystery Cult Initiation (Hand of Destiny) 5; Resources 4; Status (HopeBerries) 5
Joining: 5
Willpower: 7
Initiative: 6
Defense: 4
Armor: 0/0
Speed: 10
Health: 7
Gnosis: 4
Mana/per Turn: 13/4
Nimbus Tilt: Imposes a –2 on Composure rolls.
Dedicated Magical Tool: A silver makeup compact with *Follow Your Dreams* engraved on it in a font filled with curlicues.
Arcana: Fate 4, Life 2, Mind 2, Time 3
Attainments: Conditional Duration; Counterspell (Fate, Life, Mind, Time); Improved Pattern Restoration; Mage Armor (Fate, Life, Mind, Time); Mind's Eye; Targeted Summoning (Fate, Time); Temporal Sympathy; Unbound Fate; Hand of Destiny — Heart's Desire
Praxes: Emotional Urging (Mind 2); First Impressions (Mind 2); Mental Scan (Mind 1); Serendipity (Fate 1)
Rotes: Grave Misfortune (Fate 3, Occult); Lure and Repel (Life 2, Persuasion); Reading the Outmost Eddies (Fate 1, Persuasion, befouled)
Rote Skills: Empathy, Occult, Persuasion
Notes: The Hand of Destiny gives Tanris Mind as a third Ruling Arcanum.

Hand of Destiny

(Abyssal; Mind)

The Hand of Destiny alters Sleepers' fates to align with their goals and ideal selves, while using antinomian magic to cast their distractions into the Abyss. Most of the Order's members believe they're helping people live their best lives; they tell themselves that by lessening or eliminating their clients' mundane worries — debt, illness, unfulfilling work — they can focus on loftier goals. These Rabashakim aren't naïve enough to have zero misgivings about the Abyssal magic they dabble in or the secrets their inner circle hides. Membership thus requires at least a modicum of selfish ambition.

Yantras: tools that evoke abundance, such as a handful of coins or a cup brimming with water (+1); symbols of casting everything aside for the possibility of something greater, such as gambling paraphernalia (+1) or burning written contracts as sacraments (**Mage**, p. 122); destroying something via Paradox or the Abyss as a sacrament.

Oblations: fulfilling someone's wishes by removing something from their lives; giving an inspirational speech to a crowd; making a major profit from someone else's investment.

First Legacy Attainment: Heart's Desire

Prerequisites: Initiation (Mind 2, Fate 1, Joining 2, Empathy 2)

The mage scans her subject's thoughts, gleaning his wishes and aspirations. Their conversation may be face-to-face, over the phone, or via chat or web conference. This attainment is similar to the Mind 1 spell "Mental Scan" (**Mage**, p. 159), but requires at least a few minutes of conversation before use. This is a befouled Attainment, and the Hand may spend stored Paradox successes to ask additional questions beyond its Potency, one question per success spent.

Mystery Cult Initiation: Hand of Destiny (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Awakened; Fate 1

Body Language Fluency (•): Gain a Cold Reading Specialty in Empathy.

Vested Interest (• •): Gain one dot of Resources.

Rote Skills (• • •): Gain Empathy, Occult, and Persuasion as Rote Skills.

Reach for the Stars (• • • •): Gain the ability to bestow one dot of the Destiny Merit upon a Sleeper or Sleepwalker for one chapter.

Climb the Pyramid (• • • • •): Gain Status (HopeBerries) 3, or three dots of Professional Training with Asset Skills: Persuasion, Socialize, Subterfuge; Contacts (Small Businesses) and (Human Resources); and Specialties: Persuasion (Sales) and Socialize (Networking).

Zerzura
Singer of the Falling City

[hums a mysterious tune]

Background

Zerzura's just another vagrant, until his eyes open impossibly wide and the city streets split to infinity, and all reality seems to turn to a wailing wind and a lurching fall.

Before the Abyss claimed his soul, Zerzura was a studious Mystagogue who delved into the esoteric Mysteries of cities: strange confluences of architecture, with all those minds crammed close together. He took the House of Ariadne as his Legacy, and won his peers' regard. He pursued the secrets of lost cities that had vanished under the weight of time or fallen to the ravages of weird phenomena. The Mastigos learned all he could of the forces that bind humans together in urban communities.

What took him, in the end, was a bleak melancholy. Prone to perfectionism, Zerzura obsessed over his interpretation of the House's core Mystery: discovering a "first city," an Ur or an Irem, a metaphysical starting point from which all other cities descended. Revelation always remained tantalizingly out of reach, and he despaired. Incapable of accepting a world where his heart's desire did not exist, his search took him finally to the Old Man's Abyssal shores. Zerzura embraced Joining wholeheartedly out of a renewed sense of love and hope, believing true fulfillment of his dream lay in the Abyss' endless impossibilities.

He quickly spiraled out of control, chasing Joining with persistent fervor and soon losing himself to become a Qliphoth; but he did find his city, in a manner of speaking. The Annunaki that hollowed out Zerzura's soul is the Usher of the Infinite Descent; the Qliphoth's Verge is the Falling City, a tangled maze of buildings plummeting through a lambent void.

Description

In his prime, Zerzura was a straight-backed, handsome Arabic man, and the mage within the Verge still looks the same, but his human shell is little more than a shambolic old beggar. Its hair and beard are a wild mane, and it wraps itself in whatever rags or castoffs it gets its hands on. Though unkempt, it has no ticks nor fleas, and is strangely healthy and strong, though no one ever sees it eat anything.

What surprises those who take a moment to interact with this apparent beggar is his beautiful voice. Without prompting, he sings songs of yearning, grand cities fallen, and wonders lost; the Qliphoth has an entire repertoire, many of which are in dead languages or follow forgotten tunes. He's otherwise incoherent, smiling with amiable confusion at anyone who tosses him a coin or a pitying look. Police or angry property owners who try to haul him away find him unnervingly coy; he just brushes them off and shambles unhurriedly away.

Within the Verge, Zerzura's Immediate Nimbus is dust and wind, a sense of bleak and beautiful desolation. His Signature Nimbus is the feeling of lonely freefall, a lurching in the stomach that's part vertigo and part despair. His Long-Term Nimbus leads people to stumble upon things that have been lost, from an old ring dropped down a drain to ancient brickwork under the back garden, but always in ways that paint the loss as their own fault, or destroys the found item.

The Falling City is a dizzying place. It is Space gone awry: A whole cityscape of buildings threaded together by impossibly tangled paths, winding staircases worthy of Escher, and unreal roads are all plummeting down through a livid sky of peach and lavender hues. The farthest corners, where the winds scream past most furiously and the paving stones hover in tenuous formation, erupt beyond the Verge into the Annunaki itself.

Somehow, the chaotic agglomeration of buildings remains roughly together. Anyone falling off the City immediately hurtles upward, left to watch it plummet away while they languish in eye-searing nothingness. The urban architecture is a mishmash of alien designs and the styles of human cities long since lost to disaster or history, wrought in marble and sandstone. In many places, impractical canals and pipes perforate the stonework; they sing the city's descent, the rushing air whistling through them like an overzealous piccolo.

The Falling City is rife with Abyssal entities spawned from the Annunaki's urban guts, clicking and trilling in the shadows. Hunched and inhuman, the Tenants prowl the empty halls, staring with compound eyes and building tapestries and totems of each others' sinews and skin. Sometimes, when the blood that runs through the Falling City's aqueducts and fountains clots and slows to a standstill, they carve into themselves and refresh the reservoirs of gore with their veins. They flinch and hide when larger, gibbering things of thrashing tendrils corkscrew through the city's shrieking winds.

The Steward, the powerful Acamoth formed from what was once Zerzura's daimon, harasses the Mastigos by corralling the Tenants in parodies of protests or block parties, rousing them into a frenzy and unleashing them to wreak havoc. With his intimate knowledge of the nonsensical City and its Abyssal mockery of a thread he can walk, the tormented mage conceals a few sanctuaries to which he can retreat, until the next time they find him. Others drawn into the Verge are less fortunate; some of décor is made from *human* flesh.

Secrets

The Lost Movement: Before Zerzura gave himself to the Abyss, he wrote a striking symphony that blended the myriad

musical styles he researched from across history's city-building cultures. It's a beautiful piece; he clearly had a great deal of musical talent. However, it's missing its final movement, which he intended to derive from his notional "first city." Somewhere in the Falling City, an irregular amphitheater forever tumbles down, and upon its stage a grotesque arrangement of inhuman musicians pipe, whicker, and strum. Listening to their performance reveals the last part of Zerzura's masterpiece, and with it comes awful revelation — knowledge of the final melody, and with it, the key to learning every befouled rote Zerzura knows, and the bans (but not banes) of Acamoth and Gulmoth throughout the City. Successfully parsing the information into something useful is an Opacity 4 Mystery, and yields an Arcane Beat.

Zerzura himself can't parse the Abyssal orchestra's music, but he believes if he could only remember how the final movement's melody was supposed to go, he could follow its thread through the Falling City to reach the *true* first city and escape the Verge. He might be right, but so far, no captive Awakened has been able or willing to help him out and see.

Rumors

"All cities are one to Zerzura. That's the problem. No, it's not some Space bullshit. He just...treats all cities as one place, and reality just fucking goes along with it. Normal magic does shit-all to stop him moving around. He can cross the globe in a few steps. It's nearly impossible to pin him down."

Zerzura's human shell isn't capable of instantaneous teleportation, but it does have a knack for just walking out of one city and into another. The power doesn't seem to be coming from the Qliphoth, though; it just ambles along obliviously. Rather, it seems *the cities themselves* move him. Awakened who have had the brief chance to study the phenomenon — an Opacity 4 Mystery — rapidly grow paranoid.

"So, these thugs decide they're gonna torture some hobo, right, and they set on this old guy dribbling on himself in a back alley, and he just starts singing. Stands up like a marionette, moving like he's seeing things that aren't there, and sings like you wouldn't believe. They knife the homeless guy till he stops moving, but a week later, the same hobo is back in the alley, right as rain."

As a Qliphoth's outer shell, what's left of Zerzura in the Fallen World can't die. Most Pentacle mages know little about this Abyssal phenomenon, and a singing hobo with a beautiful baritone voice who comes back to life could be anything, as far as magic is concerned, so this true rumor draws in curious sorcerers who are likely doomed to entrapment in the Verge.

"You've heard of trap streets? The errors on maps they claim map-makers put there on purpose, to catch out anyone copying their work? Here's the awful truth, friend: Trap streets are really holes in our world, sacrifices Scelesti make to a parasite-place. The Sleepers don't realize, of course. They rationalize it away, as if things have always been like this. But the maps don't lie. In fact, they're the only things telling the truth."

Strange as it sounds, this rumor is true, at least in part — *some* trap streets aren't Sleeper creations, but more sinister phenomena. Zerzura has an avid following of Nasnasi

Story Hooks

- The cabal and their rivals clash in a magical showdown, neither side realizing the Qliphoth's shell is sleeping in an alley or on a park bench nearby, and they all end up drawn into the Falling City. If they work together, they'll have the best chance of escaping this madness — but it'd be the perfect place to make a rival disappear forever.
- Frantically searching for an Artifact vital to their goals, the cabal discovers that — as of yesterday — it was hidden in a place called the Falling City a long time ago. Retrieving it means intentionally entering Zerzura's Verge, finding it in the impossible metropolis without getting killed (or worse) by Abyssal entities, and then putting the Qliphoth out of its misery to get back out.
- A mysterious Tracker from the House of Ariadne has encountered the cabal once or twice before, helping them out of a jam or putting them in contact with someone they needed to see. Now, she's calling in those favors: she wants the cabal to use their Order resources to help her find a Mystagogue Metropolitan named Zerzura who went missing years ago, who she says holds the key to her Legacy's deepest secrets.

worshipers who tail him from city to city across the globe and sacrifice bits of these urban jungles to the Verge in his name — whether they're empty of people at the time or not. A would-be Baal who calls herself Gilgamesh leads the pack, determined to find him and enter the Verge herself to pass the trials and claim the Elder Diadem.

Path: Mastigos

Legacy: House of Ariadne

Virtue: Companionable

Vice: Despairing

Obsessions: Remember the final melody of the Song of All Cities.

Aspirations: Find the first city and escape to it from the Annunaki's grasp.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 10, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8

Social Attributes: Presence 7, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 3, Occult (Abyss) 10

Physical Skills: Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Stealth 8, Survival (Urban) 10

Social Skills: Expression (Singing) 10, Streetwise 7, Subterfuge 2

Merits: High Speech; Library (Abyssal Secrets) 3; Occultation 3; Potent Nimbus 2; Potent Resonance

Joining: 10

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 10

Defense: 12

Armor: 0/0

Size: 5

Speed: 17

Health: 13

Effective Gnosis: 10

Nimbus Tilt: Imposes a –4 to Resolve rolls and a –3 to Stamina rolls.

Dedicated Magical Tool: A corroded copper coin — a token from a non-existent public transportation system

Arcana: Forces 2, Matter 2, Mind 3, Space 5, Time 3

Attainments: Counterspell (Forces, Matter, Mind, Space, Time); Everywhere; Mage Armor (Forces, Matter, Mind, Space, Time); Mind's Eye; Permanence; Precise Force; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Mind, Space, Time); Temporal Sympathy; House of Ariadne — Attune (p. XX)

Praxes: Collapse (Space 4); Co-Location (Space 3); Secret Door (Space 2); Temporal Summoning (Time 3); Veil of Moments (Time 2)

Dread Powers: Gremlin, Hunter's Senses (Awakened), Influence (Cities) 1, Madness and Terror (Singing), Maze, Mind Numb, Reality Stutter, Surprise Entrance

Notes: Zerzura suffers the Tainted Aspiration Condition (p. XX) as his Abyssal curse. He rolls Presence + Expression for his Influences.

MAZE

The creature spends 3 Willpower and touches a building or structure to turn its interior chambers into a tangled mess of corridors and rooms that lead back on themselves; this lasts for an hour. Anyone other than the creature who attempts to move through the maze must succeed at a (Wits + Composure – creature's Resolve) each time they attempt to leave the area or make progress to somewhere specific. If they fail, they get more lost, imposing the usual penalties for repeated attempts.

MIND NUMB

Anyone who touches Zerzura must roll (Resolve + Composure) contested by Zerzura's (Presence + effective Gnosis). Failure makes their mind blur and their senses numb, inflicting a –3 to Initiative, Speed, and Defense, and a three-die penalty to perception rolls, for the scene. Awakened who suffer from Mind Numb apply the penalty to spellcasting rolls with the Mind and Space Arcana as well.

The Falling City

The Falling City is a bizarre realm of screaming winds and nonsensical architecture. It frequently rearranges its streets and buildings as they hang between and above each other, and falling off into the winds' embrace is a death sentence without magic or other means to mitigate it. A victim hurled up into the sky quickly recedes from view into the empty expanse, eventually starving to death as they fly forever. Any character who moves more than half their Speed in a single turn must succeed at a reflexive (Stamina or Dexterity) + Athletics roll to avoid falling off the City.

The Abyssal entities that clamber through the maze-like mess of structures are hostile to any outsiders they come across, and to Zerzura himself. They possess Numina that leave their victims disoriented and confused, and lure the unwary off the stones of the City to be swept up by the howling winds. Larger entities with frond-like appendages swim through the gale beyond the streets, drawn to any minds they sense and hungry for the thoughts that lie within.

She stank of souls. Panic banished the calculus of risk, where she might have dropped some of them to confuse her trail. That's what got her into trouble in the first place. Souls. Greed.

"Goddamn Space." Nekhbet cursed her past disinterest in the Arcanum. She was stuck with burning steps on exhausted legs, and whatever cover the woods could give her. The forest in the Fells blocked urban glow, but it wouldn't have been any comfort. Nekhbet was a Reaper, a soul-stealer, a criminal. A dozen years ago it wouldn't have mattered, but that was the old regime in Boston. Its controlled viciousness was strict enough to keep her from living there, but loose enough to make it a viable stop on her circuit across the Eastern Seaboard. It was amazing who'd deal with her when the possible punishments were inconsistent and politically tinged.

Tearing her way through the bushes, she found it: a great shard of granite, dropped by retreating glaciers a hundred centuries ago. Her fortress and armory. Even the stones dance. The first truth of alchemy. She burned two souls to work quickly and made herself a chamber, traps, and blades.

Boston's changing of the guard didn't bother her, at first. They'd driven Desta out. As far as anyone knew, she was the last Tremere in Boston, and there wasn't much to her. She ate children, which — distasteful as it was — was really bottom-rung Reaping, in Nekhbet's eyes. With her gone, Nekhbet moved in, leaving signs recognizable to fellow soul-hounds. But when she followed answering signs to an alleged appointment, she met nothing but anonymous bullets. As her shield sapped their kinetic energy, she got a good look at them, lazy lead soap bubbles drifting by.

It's not a wasted shot if it flushes the game. She recognized a fellow hunter.

A twig snapped; a dozen stone spikes chased the sound, ripping through branches. Nekhbet retreated into the chamber she'd made in the glacial rock. The granite door shut, but the voice drifted in anyway: telepathy, but her imagination provided an echo.

"You hoard." Male, English accent. "You know you have this tendency, which is why you wander, to avoid giving in to temptation. A rolling stone gathers no moss, they say. But souls are so compact. I have given this tendency free rein within you, so you wouldn't leave your prizes behind. Easier to track you when you're laden down with them. And of course, I don't have to jaunt around the state for your treasures if you keep them close."

She'd sensed the bounty in Danvers, in the apartment complex that had been an asylum: the "Old Kingdom" of the Tremere, in local parlance, long abandoned. The psychic stink and the visions were unmistakable: intact soul jars, hers for the taking. Boston's Consilium had long since driven the Tremere out but, for whatever reason, missed the prize. She drove there the day of the failed deal.

"And you found me," said the Englishman. "Oh, I slept through all the business with the raids. Get the sheep angry enough and they'll even fight wolves like you, or the enfantes of my kind."

In her sorcerous vision, the rock chamber erupted in red light from the portal. Her pursuer stepped through. He was a thin man with long, wavy white hair, his clothing slim-cut and modern, in funereal charcoal. Ridiculously, he carried a violin, and struck a dissonant note as he entered, smiling. Stone shrieked; she felt wetness on the back of her neck, then numbness below it. She did not fall; the blades the man conjured from the rock held her up, transfixing spine and shoulders.

"Of course, their real enemy is the shepherd," said the man. "As God is the enemy of Man, hungry for Abel and the promise of Isaac. He retires to his cave of secrets for the night and then awakens, refreshed, to take up the crook and butchering blade once again."

At that, he raised his violin and bow again, stone-faced but in a spindly, pretentious pose suggesting delight.

"As will become apparent," he said, "my name is Lament."

Chapter Five
Tremere

"It is not the well-fed long-haired man I fear, but the pale and the hungry looking."
— Julius Caesar, as quoted by Plutarch

As a diverse, organized group of Reapers possessed of ironclad discipline, the **Tremere** are more numerous than commonly believed — a Nameless Order with a long history, in fact, hidden by the Tremere themselves and clients in their soul trade.

Emptiness Vaster than Death

Mages who've heard of the Tremere believe them to be a Legacy of liches and Reapers. Long ago they probably were nothing more than this, but over the centuries they spent refining their peculiar Arts, they've become something more. Dangerous studies might reveal some truths about the Tremere, but written sources are a mire of contradictory myths and theories. Weird passages connect them to vampires and fallen gods, lost Atlantean royalty, Abyssal intelligences, and phenomena yet to be explained by Awakened metaphysics.

The Tremere deliberately aggravate the confusion with lies, forgeries, and traditions designed to hide their strength and numbers.

Hunters of Gods and Souls

Tremere believe their prehistoric progenitors, the so-called "shakers of the borders," repudiated the Supernal gods who, demanding worship, claimed knowledge of the Time Before Time. These sorcerers reasoned that, since they possessed Awakened souls with limitless potential (which demoted the gods below the Exarchs), *souls* should be the principal focus of their studies. Instead of approaching the gods with humility and deference, the Wise should bind and interrogate them for occult insights. The border-shakers even considered the Watchtowers — or, as their word that encompassed both Watchtowers and Oracles translates, *Dragons* — a trap, providing Awakening only at the cost of a limited potential. Freed from any sacral duties or taboos, the renegades were free to study the "most-Fallen" entities: great beasts, living nightmares, and blood drinkers.

Seventy-seven generations of Tremere tortured Mysteries out of gods, monsters — and mages obsessed with the mythic Golden Age. Souls of limited vision served the quest for enlightenment by providing, first, whatever narrow insights they had, and then the power of the souls themselves. By the Roman era, the Tremere took on their modern name, but avoided Roman civilization, except on raids for gods and souls. In that era, the Order produced the first versions of their sacred text, *The Suspire*, recording generations of study and oral tradition.

Tremere gathered flesh, blood, and souls to feed monsters transformed into captive tutors. Mightier slave-patrons led to greater soul harvests and more labor-intensive rituals. Some jailers even bargained with their prisoners as near-equals and, as often as not, made unwise arrangements.

From the Captivity to the Seventh Dragon

Tremere legends differ about the nature of "the Captivity," when the early Order's monsters turned against it, and somehow changed the trapped mages' souls. The Tremere retained a damaged Awakening, unable to work magic or master it further without satisfying their new desires or rendering sacrifices to their slaves-turned-masters. The details are lost to history, but the Tremere believe their imprisonment of monstrous tutors and their own Captivity were, at some point and in some fashion, concurrent and interdependent.

How this era of confusion damaged the Tremere's souls varies from story to story, but always includes some impediment to gathering Mana. In search of a cure for their suffering, they experienced visions of a being they called the Seventh Dragon, the personification of a final Watchtower erected from cosmic necessity. It contained the entire nature of the soul, and would heal them — if the Tremere freed it. The Seventh Dragon was imprisoned in the Carpathian fortress of Chur by a cabal of warrior-Masters, the Invoked Veil, known only in name. The Tremere promised their god-monster prisoners freedom if they assaulted the tower. With their aid, the Tremere dispatched the Invoked Veil and destroyed the seals confining the Seventh Dragon.

Hollow Enlightenment

Were a sorcerer to discover the Tremere's inner Mysteries, they might conclude the Order's adherents sacrifice their souls to one of the hungry Bound of the Lower Depths. This expla-

Chur

A remnant from the Time Before, the fortress of Chur marks where the Seventh Dragon manifested. Chur lay in the Eastern Carpathian Mountains and for centuries served as the Tremere's spiritual capital, resonant with the Final Watchtower's power. An unknown force erased the memory and material evidence of its location in the 17th century, after the Tremere used it to defeat the Keepers of Vedet (see p. XX).

Rediscovering Chur, and finding out what eliminated knowledge of it in the first place, is a Mystery of extreme interest to the Tremere. Surveys of the Carpathians reveal nothing, but the Order believes it's still there. Given Tremere selfishness, one or another of them might have already found it and is hoarding the secret.

nation is insufficient. Tremere still use the Arcana, and impose Supernal power upon the Fallen World — impossible through the grace of the Lower Depths alone. *The Suspire* is of no help in determining the truth, for after describing the breaking of the Seventh Dragon's seal, it meanders into strange poetry, automatic writing, and esoteric illustrations, supporting one overriding theory: The true seeker must be cleansed of all restrictions imposed by Watchtower, bonds of friendship or love, and even basic morality. A Tremere becomes Hollow, a spiritual *tabula rasa*. They abandon attachment to a single subtle Arcanum to eventually master them all.

Only Tremere make this sacrifice and therefore, they believe, *their* claims to the Arts of the soul take precedence over all others. Students of the soul should join the Tremere, or feed them.

Tremere Numerology

Tremere believe in seven Watchtowers, not five. This is the basis of the sect's numerology. The five orthodox Watchtowers are called the Unworthy Masters. The numbers the Tremere typically assign to the Paths and their Watchtowers are: 1 (Acanthus), 2 (Mastigos), 3 (Obrimos), 4 (Thyrsus), and 5 (Moros).

They call the sixth Watchtower the Fallen Blood, but it symbolizes no true Path. Tremere believe this was once the dominion of half-human demigods and heroes, identified with the royal line of Atlantis or other potent supernatural bloodlines. The Abyss has twisted the Fallen Blood; the ancient princes are gone, and it sustains only monsters now. Its tarot correspondences are the Tower and a variation of the Hanged Man the Tremere call "the Traitor."

The seventh (or Final) Watchtower, or "Seventh Dragon," is what Tremere believe to be the original path of souls, which now purifies the seeker by transforming gnosis to Hollow enlightenment. Its occult correspondences are not represented in conventional tarot decks; they include Prometheus tormented by the eagle, and the two-headed serpent called the Amphisbaena. To the Tremere, just as the first five Watchtowers symbolize Paths that artificially limit Awakened souls and partitioning enlightenment, the Seventh Watchtower represents all the subtle Arcana united as they once were — embodying the *complete* soul.

Consequently, Tremere writings and oral traditions often come in sets of seven verses, allegorical figures, interlinked parables, and so on. The number 7 represents truth, 6 corruption, and 1 to 5 areas where an aspirant of the sect must tread lightly to avoid being caught or debased by orthodox Awakened beliefs. Numbers may be used as shorthand to describe creatures or phenomena: 56 is slang for vampires, for instance, indicating the Death Arcanum via the Moros and the Fallen Blood, while 33 describes Supernal Angels, the doubling of the Path number indicating its origin beyond the Fallen World.

The Order of Tremere

Once, between roughly 700 and 1100 CE, the Tremere Order was part of the Diamond. They fought, studied, and debated the Mysteries alongside their colleagues in the other Orders, and held positions in their local Consilia and Caucuses. When the Diamond discovered the Tremere were devouring the Reaper Legacies they relentlessly hunted and using those Left-Handed Arts for themselves, it banished them from its ranks. On their way out, the Tremere stole or destroyed evidence of their membership and all detailed information about themselves, locking away histories and scrubbing records (and memories). Over time, remaining knowledge of the Order's fate became myth, which became superstition, which became vague rumors of a wicked Legacy of Reaper liches. Discovering the truth would be a controversial Mystery for the modern Pentacle.

Today, the Tremere comprise a Nameless Order. Neophyte Tremere are called **enfantes** ("children"). Not all enfantes reap membership benefits, but they usually earn them after surviving on their own for a time. This is no easy task; Tremere risk everything to feed, and virtually all other mages despise them. Elder Tremere wouldn't have it any other way. They are unapologetic, if disciplined, predators.

If a Tremere survives the dangers of their calling, they deserve initiation; but like everything else in their culture, initiation isn't a gift, but a paid service. Teacher and student negotiate clear terms, which usually end in the student paying the teacher in souls, magical items, territory, or even cold, hard cash. Sometimes the student may come into a windfall and offer it in exchange for more status and secrets, such as when one enfante stumbled onto the *Vade Mecum Maleficorum*, a Grimoire written by the lost Keepers of Vedet (p. XX), and traded it for two degrees of initiation. Canny young Tremere might manage to buy initiation cheaply, but they must always *buy* it; if a teacher cannot demonstrate they benefitted from the arrangement, the Tremere consider it the same as giving away souls — in other words, a crime.

Tremere Initiation

Mystery Cult Initiation Dots	Title	Other Requirements	Benefits
•	Enfante	Tremere traits (p. XX)	Occultation (•) or High Speech
• •	Venator	Hollow 3	Rote Skills (Empathy, Occult, Subterfuge)
• • •	Custos (Minor)	House membership	Lesser hollowstone
• • • •	Custos (Major)	Hollow 5	Greater hollowstone
• • • • •	Princeps	Hollow 7, House leader or founder	Hollow the Initiate

Ranks and Benefits

Enfante: Depending on their mentors and personal preferences, initiated **enfantes** gain a dot of Occultation (which stacks with other dots the character may possess, but doesn't exceed the five-dot maximum) or learn High Speech.

Venator: A respected Tremere who lacks a House may attain the rank of **venator** ("hunter"). The mage gains the Order's Rote Skills: Empathy, Occult, and Subterfuge. Tremere typically learn these when they read the sacred text, *The Suspire*. Most copies of *The Suspire* are mundane works containing magical knowledge, though a few are more.

Custos: A **custos** ("guard," plural **custodes**) has been accepted into a House, but must acquire this Merit as usual to reflect conscious effort to improve their standing. "Minor" and "major" sub-ranks confer the secrets necessary to make **hollowstones**. A hollowstone is a variation of the soul stone (**Mage**, p. 98) that also acts as a soul jar of indefinite duration, though it is not the product of a spell and cannot be dispelled. Furthermore, a soul stored in a hollowstone is always considered within touch range of the Tremere who made it, regardless of its actual physical distance. A lesser hollowstone can only hold Sleeper souls. A greater hollowstone can contain the souls of Awakened and other supernatural beings.

Princeps: The leader or founder of a House is called a **princeps** ("foremost") and is, accordingly, first among the Tremere. The princeps attains the ability to Hollow the Initiate — that is, confer the Hollowing on a soulless Awakened subject. See p. XX for more information.

Beyond Legacies

In previous **Mage: The Awakening** books, the Tremere were sometimes described as a Legacy. That's how the Pentacle usually sees them, when it sees them at all, but in truth they're a Nameless Order: a small magical society containing sorcerers from many Paths, backgrounds, and philosophies. Due to their unusual initiations, Tremere cannot join Legacies, and adopt Houses (p. XX) instead. While the Tremere may have once belonged to a Legacy, they have not been able to adopt them in the usual way for at least 1,000 years.

The Sevenfold Oath

Initiated Tremere take an oath to follow the Order's precepts, an oath backed up with magical consequences. Its wording changes in different places, languages, and eras, but the meaning has remained basically the same for about 1,000 years.

Through me, souls nourish the Seventh Dragon, so His Watchtower rises from the wastes of Paradox. For His Mystery, I swear:

1. I will not suffer my brethren to preserve me against weakness. If my Arts fail to find me sustenance, let me return to the Seventh Dragon's coils.

Tremere may not supply one another with souls gratis. If a Tremere can't feed themselves, they don't deserve to survive. Tremere may trade souls for services and vice versa, but refusing to hunt for oneself is a sign one is unworthy of the Order.

2. I will betray neither Order nor House, and defend them against enemies and errant friends. I have no tongue to speak our secrets, and no hands for the mudras of treacherous Arts. Let my flesh turn to ash and my mind to red pain if they betray us.

While Tremere aren't generally expected to help each other individually, they swear loyalty to the Order's collective interests, including maintaining its secrecy. Older Tremere have more leeway in this regard than younger ones, who are considered traitors for openly identifying themselves as members.

3. If I am unworthy of a House, I will obey the brethren of a recognized House. If I am of a House, I will obey its princeps. If I am princeps, I will enslave myself to the Mystery.

In the Tremere, one is either an enfante or venator without a House (p. XX), a custos who has been initiated into one, or a princeps who leads one. This produces a chain of command that overrides all other distinctions, though it cannot be used to demand souls from one's inferiors, per the first precept.

4. Loving strength and despising weakness, I will not steal souls owned by my brethren. I will pursue those who steal my souls with wrathful speed, and present no impediment to Tremere seeking their property.

It is forbidden to steal souls from another Tremere, or prevent fellow Tremere from recapturing souls; doing so would prove the mage's weakness and undermine her fellow's ability to see to his own survival.

5. I will render payment in souls as agreed in sworn oaths. If I am unwilling to do so, I am a traitor; my souls and existence are forfeit. If I am unable to do so, destroy me for my weakness.

Tremere must never deal in souls dishonestly. They usually consider this to apply to Tremere alone, but in some places, it even governs interactions with outsiders, often making Tremere trustworthy soul traders among other Awakened.

6. I will claim the Great Art from lesser Legacies and subjugate them as Houses of our greater Mystery.

Tremere doctrine is clear: All soul-manipulating Legacies, especially Reaper Legacies, are Tremere Houses-to-be. Once they're subsumed, outside members who refuse the Hollowing should be killed, and their souls harvested for study.

7. I will erase renegade Arts from the world: those that crawl forth from the Lie, the Fallen Blood, and its diverse inferior beings.

Non-Tremere who manipulate souls must become Tremere or be obliterated. Monsters capable of affecting souls are creatures of the sixth Watchtower and enemies of enlightenment. Tremere should destroy them whenever it's feasible and can't be traced back to the Order.

Tremere
Magic Hungers

You get nothing. You can do anything.

Who gazes into the Abyss? The weak. They see paradoxes, ontological blasphemies, and all kinds of irrelevant distortions. They call it "emptiness" because they measure it against the Self, that thing they carefully inscribe, letter by letter, upon their enslaving Watchtower. Desire murders the flow of things.

You know true emptiness: not unspeakable variations on the real, as the Abyss projects, but erosion. The Great Lack. You took your fixed, limited soul, cast it to the Seventh Dragon, and discovered real nothingness beyond that which simply offends your ego. True annihilation. Yet you remain.

We have given you nothing. You will get nothing from us.

From this point on, your soul is all souls. You consume them all, eliminating their fear and attachment, and bring forth the only pure magic in the universe. You can no longer do evil, because you have no soul for it to stain. Nor can you be attached to goodness. You can only yearn, and the soul of Creation yearns: for warmth and power. For everything and anything. All your appetites are righteous.

Rejoice. Feed.

Universal truth brooks no competition, no limitation imposed by Watchtower, Awakened law, or moral appeal. To sustain ultimate truth, a Tremere gives up their soul. After that sacrifice, the willworker has the right to any soul they can seize, to study and sacrifice to the great hunger of magic: the entropy that creates beauty.

To the Tremere, joining their Order — the way of *Septimus Draco*, the Seventh Dragon — is the ultimate responsibility. A Tremere not only sacrifices their soul to open themselves to magic's hunger and understand every aspect of the soul (which reflects the entire Supernal World, not just the limited filters the Watchtowers impose), but must prove their worth, forever. Tremere initiation provides the key. Without a soul, the Tremere must continually struggle to survive by taking the souls of the less dutiful, including Sleepers and mages from outside the Order. As long as a Tremere thrives, they prove their right to represent magic's hunger, and the cosmic oversoul. Everything is permitted but laziness.

Core Beliefs: The Sevenfold Secret

Tremere ideology is a matter of experience, not abstract speculation. A Tremere takes the ultimate leap of faith, beyond the ordinary limits of Awakening, and accepts responsibility for the consequences. They contemplate the indiscriminate hunger that defines them and accept the Order's conclusions or die.

Creation's Hungry Soul

Existence reflects the soul, but not the limited souls of Sleepers and other Awakened. The cosmos is indiscriminate desire, devoid of particular symbols. A Tremere represents that all-consuming desire, and in feeding their own hunger, feeds Creation.

Contempt for the Inhuman

The undead, Astral thieves of fear and love, gods demanding sacrifice — all these are of the false Watchtower, the Fallen Blood. Even Supernal entities are tainted by the Lie once they cross the Abyss. All such beings suffer spiritual constrictions and, in seeking to exceed them, abuse the worthy. They should be enslaved or destroyed.

The Lie Within the Lie

The five lesser Watchtowers each contain a fraction of the Truth. Sorcerers limit themselves by following Paths and letting them define their souls. Even archmasters who somehow leap beyond Path constraints are still deceived; the damage has been done. While it is currently impossible to Awaken directly to the Final Watchtower, one's Path should be seen as a vestigial hindrance to be abandoned for the truth of the Seventh Dragon.

The Final Watchtower

The seventh and Final Watchtower is the original path to the Supernal, hidden by selfish Oracles, Exarchs, and Old Gods. The Seventh Dragon is its manifestation: reality's hunger. Giving one's soul to this Dragon is the ultimate selfless act, and the only legitimate path to Ascension.

Purity of Soullessness

By abandoning their soul, a Tremere aligns with Creation's oversoul instead of the preconceptions of Path and personality. A Tremere feels the universe's hunger and sates it whenever they consume souls.

Responsibility

Tremere are responsible for their own survival. They must steal souls from the uninitiated or buy them from other Tremere for a fair price. A cheating Tremere weakens their fellow initiates, endangering the conspiracy and throwing their cosmic right to claim souls into question.

Supremacy

As long as a Tremere exists, their sacrifices and insights make them superior to all other Awakened. No law governs Tremere but the law of their Order. Every soul, along with its secrets, is a Tremere's by right. Mages who study soul magic surrender their knowledge to the Tremere and join, or are consumed.

Origins

Before recorded history, the Tremere rejected the dogma of five Watchtowers as fractured reflections of the cosmic soul, viewing them as necessary to *start* the journey, but each incomplete on its own. They distrusted claimants to the heritage of the Awakened City and would-be tutelary gods. They forced the truth from bound entities and souls, until the beings they hunted enslaved them in turn. Over 1,000 years ago, they found salvation in a being representing the true, Final Watchtower of the Soul. They slew the sorcerers who guarded it and, by sacrificing their own souls, freed themselves from bondage. They pretended at orthodoxy as part of the Diamond for a time, until their unwitting colleagues discovered the secret and banished them. See p. XX for more history.

Mysteries

Tremere Mysteries involve the nature of the soul and how it can be transported, reshaped, or consumed for power. All such knowledge belongs to the Order by right. Tremere conquer soul-shaping Legacies and incorporate them as Houses. No Tremere can join a true Legacy — these appease the Lie Within the Lie, they say — but House membership is mandatory for any Tremere wishing to gain prestige within the Order.

Magical Symbolism: The Ephemeral and Physical Are One

Everything can be reduced to the cosmic oversoul and its hunger, so all physical phenomena are spiritual phenomena. Gross Arcana are merely subtle Arcana less attuned to primal vibrations. Conversely, no action lacks subtle significance. Tremere physically wrench souls from their unworthy shells, and feel stolen souls ripple under their skin. The hunger for power and existence isn't an abstraction, it's the real hunger of an empty belly. This pulls Tremere in contradictory directions: Tremere magic may involve a great deal of physicality, but an individual Tremere may appear bent, withered, and dirty, since the body is simply a vehicle for swallowed souls and a nexus for magical power. Other Tremere treat their bodies as extensions of personal and cosmic desire: symbols to be conditioned and made beautiful.

Bones are classic Tremere tools, the secret structure of flesh, just as the soul is the secret template for the body it inhabits. Additionally, their use of musical instruments supports subtle and gross being simply a matter of vibration. The weapon Yantras of the Tremere are instruments of butchery and surgery, those which open flesh for a purpose beyond rage or self-defense: cleavers, scalpels, needles, and the like.

Concepts

Broker of the Forbidden: Isn't it absurd that, after discovering everything you knew — governments, societies, even natural laws — are a Lie, you have to endure new, "Awakened" authority? You deserve real freedom, not the new oppressions your local Consilium offers, so you've come to me. To explore unorthodox Mysteries, you need unconventional resources — no need to name them here. Rest assured, however, I am in a position to supply them. My business is as forbidden as the experiments you wish to attempt, so it's a shared risk. You don't need to trust me to count on my discretion. That said, risk increases the price: Money is worthless to me, but I'll need a favor well within your power to provide.

Trophy Hunter: "Honoring the animal" is just something people tell themselves to deny the thrill of killing. If they were honest, they'd admit slaughter is a greater pleasure than the chase. That's why people mount heads on walls. Not that I don't know how to pursue my quarry; keeping my skills sharp helps me in other pursuits. I started with a rifle but graduated to the bow and spear. The closer I get to that moment of death, the better. Now I could take my old prey, all the animals, with my bare hands, but I've moved on to more interesting targets. I know the clichés: "the most dangerous game," and all that. Honestly, lions are usually worse than humans. Predators are smarter than prey. Thank God I've moved up in the world, to things more interesting than lions and Sleepers and even you. Oh my.

Tremere Characters

Joining the Tremere Order requires the following prerequisites:

- The standard Awakened template (**Mage**, p. 80), with a conventional Path
- 2+ dots in at least one subtle Arcanum, to establish basic understanding of the soul
- The Hollowing, which bestows the Tremere template — a variation on the Awakened template that removes Path

Despite the Order's focus on souls, the Death Arcanum is *not* a prerequisite. As Tremere progress their Hollow, they learn to rip souls out of living beings without spells. Tremere with weak Hollow and no knowledge of Death must aggressively engage full-time in the soul trade hustle to survive.

To undergo the Hollowing, the prospect's soul must be removed. It doesn't matter how this happens, though a princeps often uses her innate abilities to rip it out during a moment of high ceremony. Throats may be slit. The initiate might be led through a maze shaped like a seven-pointed star. Soulless, mind-controlled victims might be forced to sing passages from *The Suspire*.

At the ceremony's conclusion, the princeps guides her prospect through the **Hollowing**, an encounter with the Final Watchtower. This resembles an Astral journey, but the princeps and prospect visit no known Astral Realm. The thing that makes Tremere might be a creature of the Lower Depths, or some hunger that transcends worlds. The truth is for the Storyteller to determine if relevant, but the price of entry is always an Awakened soul: usually the Tremere's own, which the princeps severs and gives to the Seventh Dragon, but if it was lost in a way that denies the princeps access to it, a substitute is acceptable. (This requires the princeps to find a new Awakened soul to offer up, so the prospective Tremere must be exceptionally valuable to merit the effort.) Tremere do not discuss what they experience during this journey, but they return as empty, *hungry* spiritual vessels, halfway between the Gnosis of the past and the Hollow to come.

To fully emerge as Tremere, the prospect must consume a free-floating Awakened soul; it cannot be the soul used to commune with the Final Watchtower, which is lost. This requires rolling the candidate's Gnosis as a dice pool. If he fails, he lacks the strength to become fully Hollow, and becomes a creature of unending hunger, which Tremere call a **preta** after the beings of Hindu and Buddhist mythology. See "Preta Traits" on p. XX for how to create one.

If the candidate prevails, his Gnosis trait becomes a Hollow trait of the same rating, and he gains the other characteristics that accompany the Hollowing, below.

Tremere Traits

Hollowing doesn't guarantee membership in the Order, but most Hollowed mages don't survive long on the outside, and the princeps usually grants at least token membership: status as an enfante with 0 dots in the Tremere's Mystery Cult Initiation Merit (p. XX).

Regardless of membership, Hollowing is an innate condition, granting traits and abilities described as follows. If an aspect of Awakening is not mentioned here, the Tremere retains it without any changes.

Bound to the Final Watchtower

The Tremere is an empty vessel, sustained by the Final Watchtower's enigmatic patronage. Where other mages are free to alter their magic and Awakened natures in various ways, Tremere are not. The effects include:

- A Tremere cannot join a Legacy unless the Order conquers it and incorporates it as a House. (Previous references to Tremere Legacies should be understood as referring to Houses.) Those who already belong to a Legacy that *doesn't* get incorporated lose it completely upon their Hollowing, unable to use its Attainments, Oblations, Yantras, or any other abilities. This also severs all sympathetic ties to their Legacy mentor and any other members or Daimonomika they may have been connected to.
- Tremere cannot befoul spells, and thus, cannot become Scelesti.
- Tremere cannot become Rapt. A Tremere whose Wisdom drops to 0 becomes a preta (p. XX) instead.
- Using the soul manipulation abilities that Hollow grants is never an Act of Hubris for a Tremere.
- Tremere cannot learn abilities that require patronage from the Exarchs or some other potent entity.
- A Tremere retains Ruling Arcana and the Inferior Arcanum from her original Path, but is not considered to belong to it in circumstances that invoke her Path or Watchtower, such as when encountering an Artifact that can only be used by members of a certain Path. If the character must possess a Path for some miscellaneous, systems-based reason, she's considered a member of whatever Path holds her highest-rated subtle Arcanum as Ruling.

Hollow

Replace the Tremere's Gnosis with a new trait, Hollow, on a dot-for-dot basis (so a Tremere who had Gnosis 3 before initiation converts it to Hollow 3, for instance). For spellcasting purposes, Hollow replaces and performs as Gnosis. Otherwise, Hollow transforms some of Gnosis' features, and possesses some new properties. The accompanying table notes differences between the two. Where a trait is not mentioned, use the usual one for Gnosis.

Note that Tremere have a slightly reduced capacity for storing and spending Mana, and gain Obsessions faster.

Soul Sight

The Tremere constantly sees human souls as if always using Active Death Sight and casting the "Soul Marks" spell with

Hollow

Hollow	Obsessions	Mana/Per Turn	Sustenance (Sleeper)	Sustenance (Awakened)*	Other Traits
1	1	10/1	3 stories/6 months	5 stories/1 year	Soul Sight, Soul Breath, Burn Soul, Devour the Years
2	2	11/2	3 stories/5 months	5 stories/10 months	Secret of the Soul Jar
3	2	11/3	2 stories/4 month	4 stories/9 months	Lesser Soul Grasp, House Attainment
4	3	12/4	2 stories/3 months	4 stories/8 months	Subtle Ruling Arcanum
5	3	12/5	1 story/2 months	3 stories/6 months	Hollow Vessel
6	4	16/6	1 story/1 month	3 stories/5 months	Subtle Ruling Arcanum, House Attainment
7	4	20/7	4 chapters/2 weeks	2 stories/4 months	Greater Soul Grasp
8	5	24/8	3 chapters/1 week	2 stories/3 months	Subtle Ruling Arcanum
9	5	40/9	2 chapters/3 days	1 story/2 months	Grasp the Enemy, House Attainment
10	6	60/10	1 chapter/1 day	1 story/1 month	Subtle Ruling Arcanum

* For Awakened souls of Gnosis 6+, increase the duration by one level on the chart per dot of Gnosis the soul possesses beyond 5. If this would increase the duration beyond the Hollow 1 level, the duration doesn't increase further, but that soul can provide Mana via Burn Soul (below) a number of additional times equal to the number of additional levels the duration *would* have increased before the soul is annihilated.

Potency equal to her highest subtle Arcanum, but without any Reach effects. This applies to free-floating souls, souls housed in objects, and souls attached to other Tremere. They can also tell if an object is a soul stone or hollowstone, though the sliver of soul in a soul stone isn't enough to sustain a Tremere for any length of time.

Soul Breath

The Tremere can attach a disembodied soul to herself, including one in an unprotected soul jar she can touch, or one in her own hollowstone from any distance. Until attaining the Hollow Vessel ability at Hollow 5, she may only attach one soul at a time. She can also move a free-floating or attached soul to a soul jar or soulless body by touch, move it from her immediate presence to her hollowstone no matter its distance, or expel an attached soul to float freely. Each of these abilities requires 1 Mana and an instant action.

Burn Soul

A Tremere may reflexively harvest Mana from an attached soul. The soul immediately grants 1 Mana per dot of the original owner's Integrity or Wisdom, then dries up and implodes, destroyed. Souls that had neither Integrity nor Wisdom provide no Mana this way.

Devour the Years

As long as a Tremere has an attached soul, she does not age. She staves off death by feeding upon the soul. The "Sustenance" columns in the Hollow table determine how long an attached soul of the appropriate type (Sleeper or Awakened) can provide sustenance; the duration before the slash is given in units of dramatic time (**Mage**, p. 215), while the one after the slash is given as it passes for the characters. Use whichever turns out to be *shorter*. For instance, a Hollow 10 Tremere consuming a mage's soul would stop gaining sustenance from it after either one story or one month, whichever ended first.

As noted in the table, Awakened souls with Gnosis ratings of 6 or higher provide additional sustenance and, sometimes, Mana. A soul that no longer provides sustenance is destroyed if the Tremere expels it into a free-floating state. If integrated into an individual in need of a personal soul, the new owner suffers the Soul Shocked Condition (**Mage**, p. 318) and loses one *dot* of Willpower.

Secret of the Soul Jar

The Tremere may craft a soul jar (as the Death 2 spell "Soul Jar," **Mage**, p. 129) without casting a spell. The procedure is automatically successful, as if she had cast the spell with Potency equal to her highest subtle Arcanum's rating and no Reach effects, but she can make the effect Lasting by spending 1 Mana.

House Attainment

At Hollow 3, 5, 7, and 9, the Tremere may learn a Tremere House Attainment (p. XX), as long as she meets its other prerequisites. She retains these opportunities to acquire Attainments until she uses them, even if her Hollow increases further before

she does so. If she founds a new House, she must increase her Hollow by 1 or more before using an open opportunity on a newly stolen Attainment. One Tremere can split her Attainments across multiple Houses, but must learn them in order for each House.

Lesser Soul Grasp

The Tremere may tear a Sleeper's (or Sleepwalker's) soul out of his body. To the Tremere, the Sleeper's aura has enough solidity and vulnerability to push, pull, and twist like an invisible limb or tender strip of exposed flesh. This is a new grappling move, selected when the mage prevails in a contested grappling action (**Mage**, p. 218); performing this move breaks both characters free of the grapple, but is not reflexive. The victim suffers the Beaten Down Tilt (**Mage**, p. 319) and his soul is ejected from his body. The Tremere now physically holds it, and may use Soul Breath to absorb or manipulate the soul as a subsequent instant action.

Subtle Ruling Arcanum

One additional subtle Arcanum becomes Ruling for the Tremere each time she gains this ability.

Hollow Vessel

The Tremere may attach multiple souls to herself, to a maximum of (her Hollow rating) souls at once. She still only feeds from one at a time.

Greater Soul Grasp

The Tremere may now rip out an Awakened soul. This functions as Lesser Soul Grasp, except the victim of a successful grasp is not Beaten Down, and the Tremere must achieve total successes on the contested grappling roll equal to the victim's Gnosis + 1.

Grasp the Enemy

The Tremere may seize souls from some supernatural beings. (See the "Souls of the Sixth Watchtower" sidebar.) This functions as Lesser Soul Grasp, except the victim of a successful grasp is not Beaten Down, and the Tremere must achieve total successes on the contested grappling roll equal to the victim's Supernatural Tolerance trait + 1.

Soullessness

Tremere have no souls of their own.

Immunities

Tremere never suffer the Soul Shocked Condition or similar effects that depend on a close connection between self and soul, or possession of a personal soul. The Storyteller determines when these immunities apply.

Soul Starvation

When a Tremere has no nourishing attached souls to feed upon, she spiritually and physically erodes, losing one Willpower dot per week. Upon losing all Willpower, she then suffers one point of resistant aggravated damage per week, until she dies or feeds on a new soul. The Seventh Dragon will have its due. Magic hungers.

Souls of the Sixth Watchtower

Of the supernatural protagonists covered in other **Chronicles of Darkness** books, Tremere can use Greater Soul Grasp to manipulate the souls of changelings, vampires, and werewolves. These souls sustain a Tremere as if they were Awakened, replacing Gnosis with the owner's Supernatural Potency trait to determine whether especially powerful examples provide extended sustenance. The titular characters of **Hunter: The Vigil** and other minorly supernatural characters, such as ghouls, stigmatics, and fae-touched, are humans and count as Sleepers for this purpose even if they possess supernatural Merits, Endowments, or other abilities, and are therefore susceptible to Lesser Soul Grasp.

Feeding on any of these souls may have unanticipated effects. These are left to the Storyteller, and may range from limited or uncontrolled access to the being's powers, to unwilling servitude to whoever or whatever might have a claim on that soul.

Beasts, Unchained, Prometheans, and the Bound don't have human souls; patron Horrors and geists are beyond Tremere control. Deviants' souls are too unstable to steal. The souls of the Arisen from **Mummy: The Curse** belong wholly to the Judges, and are thus immune to theft and all other forms of supernatural tampering.

If the original owner of a used-up soul still lives, and the Tremere keeps it attached, she may shunt that hunger onto the unfortunate victim. Each time she would lose Willpower or take damage from soul starvation, roll her Resolve + Stamina contested by the victim's Resolve + Gnosis to make the owner take that loss or damage instead.

Souls Within the Shell

Spells and abilities that attack, steal, or manipulate a subject's soul affect the soul currently sustaining the Tremere by default, but she can substitute another attached soul to take the effect instead by reflexively spending 1 Mana, as long as the substitute soul is also a valid subject.

Enervated Nimbus

The Tremere's Nimbus is fainter than those of ordinary mages. Her Immediate Nimbus cannot produce a Nimbus Tilt, and her Signature Nimbus only provides a Weak sympathetic connection (**Mage**, p. 173). Her Long-Term Nimbus has subtler, slower effects determined by the Storyteller. Finally, the Tremere has no aura detectable by supernatural abilities.

A Tremere with an attached Awakened soul can use its Nimbus for a scene by spending 1 point of Mana. She can do the same

with an attached supernatural soul of any other kind to project its aura for a scene, using the usual systems that aura would use.

Koimaomai: Sleep of the Soul-Dead

Tremere may enter a period of stasis called *koimaomai*, or spiritual sleep. In koimaomai, the Tremere appears to be an undecaying corpse, and has no need to feed on souls to sustain herself. She has no Nimbus or other aura in this state, except for those belonging to any attached souls, and cannot perceive her environment or the passage of time.

For every 25 years spent in koimaomai, the Tremere loses one dot of Hollow. Each soul she has attached delays that loss: whenever she would lose Hollow, she consumes the soul fully instead. Each Sleeper soul provides an extra 25-year reprieve, while an Awakened soul staves off Hollow loss for 25 years plus additional years equal to (25 x half the soul's Gnosis, rounded up).

A Tremere decides the minimum length of her koimaomai ahead of time, and will not naturally wake before that much time passes. Once it does, roll her Resolve + Composure; success means she wakes as planned, but failure means she continues to slumber until the next time she would lose Hollow, at which point she makes the roll again. If she wakes then, she doesn't lose the Hollow dot.

The close presence of a new, free-floating soul that she could capture with Soul Breath may stimulate the Tremere's hunger sufficiently to rouse her ahead of schedule, prompting the above roll to wake. Tremere and well-informed students of their lore know this, and may release souls deliberately to revive a dormant Tremere. Significant supernatural events may also prompt an unplanned revival, prompting the same roll.

Finally, a Tremere in koimaomai whose Hollow drops to 0 wakes immediately as a preta.

Preta Traits

A Tremere becomes a preta under one of three circumstances:

- She fails to complete her transformation from mage to Tremere, unwilling or unable to consume the necessary Awakened soul
- Her Wisdom drops to 0
- Her Hollow drops to 0 during koimaomai

A preta looks like a bestial caricature of the person it once was. It loses weight while its joints and belly swell, resembling a starved human — save for a mouth full of sharp teeth.

Pretas are more monster than mage. Like Qliphoth (p. XX), a preta is a Horror in system terms; unlike Qliphoth, pretas lose all Mage Sight, and have Dread Powers *instead* of Arcana or Attainments.

Standard Preta Traits

Virtue: Soul Gluttony
Vice: None
Obsessions: Consuming souls
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 5, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 9, Dexterity 6, Stamina 8
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1
Mental Skills: None
Physical Skills: Athletics 6, Brawl (Grappling) 9, Stealth 4, Survival 7
Social Skills: Intimidation 8
Merits: None
Willpower: 3 + Hollow; pretas may spend up to (Hollow) Willpower per turn, but only one per effect.
Initiative: 10
Defense: 11
Armor: 1/1 (natural)
Size: 5
Speed: 20
Health: 13
Hollow: as the mage's previous Gnosis/Hollow.
Dread Powers: Hunter's Senses (Mages, Powerful Souls); Jump Scare; Know Soul; Preta's Maw; Preta's Soul Theft; choose three more (see below). For Dread Powers with dot ratings, each dot counts as an additional Dread Power.

A preta's Dread Powers reflect the Arcana the mage once knew. The same Dread Power manifests differently when used by a preta who was versed in Forces than when used by one who had mastered Mind; the mechanics are the same, but the actual effects differ.

Notes: Pretas spend Willpower to use Dread Powers. They retain the Tremere's Soul Sight and immunities due to lack of soul. Instead of consuming souls the way Tremere do, they use Preta's Soul Theft (below).

Dread Powers

The following are common Dread Powers a preta might possess; see the **Chronicles of Darkness** core rulebook (p. 144-148) for more examples.

CHAMELEON HORROR

The preta blends into its environment, imposing a –3 on rolls to perceive it, which increases to –6 if it remains still.

FIRE ELEMENTAL

The preta can ignite its flesh as an instant action. Anyone within a yard/meter of it suffers three points of lethal damage per turn from the blaze. The preta is immune to damage from heat or fire.

HUNTER'S SENSES

See p. XX.

HYPNOTIC GAZE

See p. XX.

JUMP SCARE

The preta spends 1 Willpower to resolve another character's Shaken Condition, choosing which action automatically fails; the character still earns a Beat. Alternately, it can spend 1 Willpower to turn the automatic failure caused by another character resolving the Shaken Condition into a dramatic failure.

KNOW SOUL

See p. XX.

PRETA'S MAW

The preta's sharp teeth provide a +3 weapon modifier, always deal lethal damage, and have Armor Piercing 3.

PRETA'S SNARE

The preta creates a snare by extending tendrils of its baggy skin into whips of flesh and bone. By spending 1 Willpower, it denotes an area of up to 10 square yards/meters, and can attempt to grapple any victims in the area with the snare, using its own traits with a +3 bonus. Any ensnared Awakened victim loses 1 Mana per turn until she escapes.

PRETA'S SOUL THEFT

A preta steals souls by eating a significant amount of its victim's flesh using bite attacks, which require grappling first as normal and then biting a victim as a grappling move. As long as the victim has a soul that can be stolen and actually dies from the preta's bite, their soul ejects from their body and attaches automatically to the preta at the moment of death. A preta may only possess one attached soul at a time, which provides sustenance as it would to a Tremere with the same Hollow rating (p. XX). Without an attached soul, the preta suffers soul starvation (p. XX).

REGENERATE (• TO •••••)

As a reflexive action once per turn, the preta can spend Willpower up to its Regenerate rating, healing one point of lethal damage or two points of bashing per Willpower spent.

TOXIC (• OR ••)

The preta has a poisoned bite. Whenever it deals damage to a victim with a bite attack, it inflicts the moderate Poisoned Tilt (**Mage**, p. 323) with one dot of Toxic, or the grave version with two dots.

UNBREAKABLE

Attacks against the preta, including damaging spells, that don't achieve exceptional success inflict only one point of bashing damage. Exceptional successes inflict damage as normal.

WALL CLIMB

The preta can walk up walls and cling to the ceiling, and can move its full Speed while doing so.

Stolen Houses

Tremere cannot join Legacies. This is partly due to soullessness, but even attempted magical workarounds, such as grafting a Legacy member's soul onto themselves, always fail. Tremere believe the Final Watchtower protects them from the errant obsessions that plague Legacies, keeping them focused on magic's true nature as the hungry soul of the cosmos. Yet Legacies do make relevant discoveries from time to time, which should belong to the Tremere.

The Seventh Dragon's followers *must* be the preeminent students of the soul, with no rivals, so the Tremere steal Legacies just as they steal souls. They torture their secrets out of practitioners before killing any and all who refuse to become Tremere. These fallen Legacies warp into Tremere Houses.

A House has an important role in Tremere society. One cannot advance far in the Order without joining or founding one. Houses add to the Order's knowledge and provide bonds of trust that are otherwise difficult to form in a sect so dedicated to individual power.

House Characteristics

Houses are similar to Legacies in many ways, but Tremere nature and how the Houses are founded give them other, unique features.

Prerequisites: Houses have prerequisite Arcana, and may require certain Skills, but have no Path prerequisites. The initiate must possess Hollow and belong to the Order, however, and a Tremere cannot join a House on her own via Praxis.

No Ruling Arcanum: Houses do not grant additional Ruling Arcana.

Attainments: A House grants only three Attainments, equivalent to the second, third, and fourth Attainments of the originating Legacy. These are referred to as Apprentice, Disciple, and Adept Attainments, to match the language of Daimonomika

and avoid confusion. The violent, mystical act of converting a Legacy to a House may alter stolen Attainments.

Non-Exclusivity and the Unsympathetic Bond: Tremere may belong to multiple Houses, though it's considered dangerous. A Tremere with two Houses also has two House weaknesses (p. XX), so Tremere only split their dedication in exceptional circumstances, such as when founding a new House after having already joined one. A House's princeps is usually suspicious of a Tremere with divided loyalties.

Oblations and Yantras: Tremere Houses provide Oblations and Yantras, just as Legacies do.

Apprenticeship or Assassination

Soullessness ensures that Tremere can only pass Houses on in two ways: by learning from a Tremere (usually a recognized princeps) with the fourth House Attainment, or by founding a House through subjugating members of its source Legacy.

Under the Princeps

Houses do not turn members into sympathetic Yantras connecting each other, otherwise generate exceptional sympathetic connections, or inspire Arcane Beats through student-tutor interaction, as Legacies do.

Tutelage is a straightforward affair: Study under the teacher for a period of time determined by the student's readiness and the instructor's skill. If the Tremere possesses the necessary prerequisites, he may devote a House Attainment opportunity (p. XX) to the Apprentice Attainment, which costs one Arcane Experience. Upon gaining the Apprentice Attainment, the Tremere also learns the House's Oblations and Yantras, and suffers its weakness.

Subsequent Attainments of the same House cost one Arcane *or* ordinary Experience and may be learned through self-study. (Due to the limited breadth of House training and the lack of innate bond between student and teacher, this is the opposite of Legacy Experience requirements.)

A Legacy's Ashes

Tremere cannot invent Houses through pure insight, as other mages can invent Legacies. Instead, they must destroy a qualifying Legacy in a particular fashion:

- The Legacy must concentrate on the study or manipulation of souls, both in culture and Attainments.
- The Tremere must meet all the Legacy's requirements except those of Path and Order.
- The Legacy's second, third, and fourth Attainments usually cannot depend on its first Attainment, though some Tremere successfully twist stolen Attainments to avoid this problem. (The Storyteller should decide whether this is possible for a given Legacy.)
- The Tremere must kill every member of the target Legacy who possesses its fifth Attainment, attach at least one of their souls to himself, and consume it fully or for at least a story, whichever comes first.
- The Tremere must perform another feat that symbolically kills and devours the rest of the Legacy. This varies from one Legacy to the next, and is never easy. In some ways, this resembles a dark Mystery Play chronicling the Legacy's fall.

Once the Tremere satisfies these requirements and spends one Arcane Experience, he acquires the Legacy's second Attainment, which becomes the new House's Apprentice Attainment (and may, at the Storyteller's discretion, be modified). The character must have an available House Attainment opportunity (p. XX), and must have increased his Hollow to at least 1 higher than the rating at which he acquired the opportunity. The House's weakness then manifests as a corrupted manifestation of the Legacy's theme, influenced by the efforts involved in its inception and the founder's personality.

To learn subsequent Attainments, he must spend an Arcane Experience if he is the first to learn the new Attainment as a House Attainment, but can spend ordinary Experiences otherwise.

The Tremere may also invent Yantras and Oblations for the new House by modifying (in reverence or mockery) those of the source Legacy.

These prodigious requirements — especially the one that requires killing every powerful member of the Legacy — means new Houses rarely arise. Founding one often requires cooperation between multiple Tremere, clashing with the Order's selfish ethos. Selfishness has ended Houses as well, as the last practitioner refuses to share his knowledge before falling to enemies or soul starvation.

House Weaknesses

Lacking souls, Tremere must take on the symbolic self-reshaping common to Houses and Legacies in other ways. These bring about various physical, psychological, or magical impediments. Each House imposes its own signature disadvantage, acquired upon initiation. A Tremere who belongs to multiple Houses suffers each House's weakness simultaneously.

House Attainments

House Attainments have all the advantages of Legacy Attainments. Apprentice, Disciple, and Adept Attainments possess minimum requirements of 2, 3, and 4 dots, respectively, in their primary relevant Arcana. As with Legacy Attainments, certain other traits — especially Skills — may be required as well. Gnosis requirements are unnecessary; instead, the character must have available House Attainment opportunities, as determined by their Hollow rating. In all other respects, use the rules for Legacy Attainments (**Mage**, p. 198).

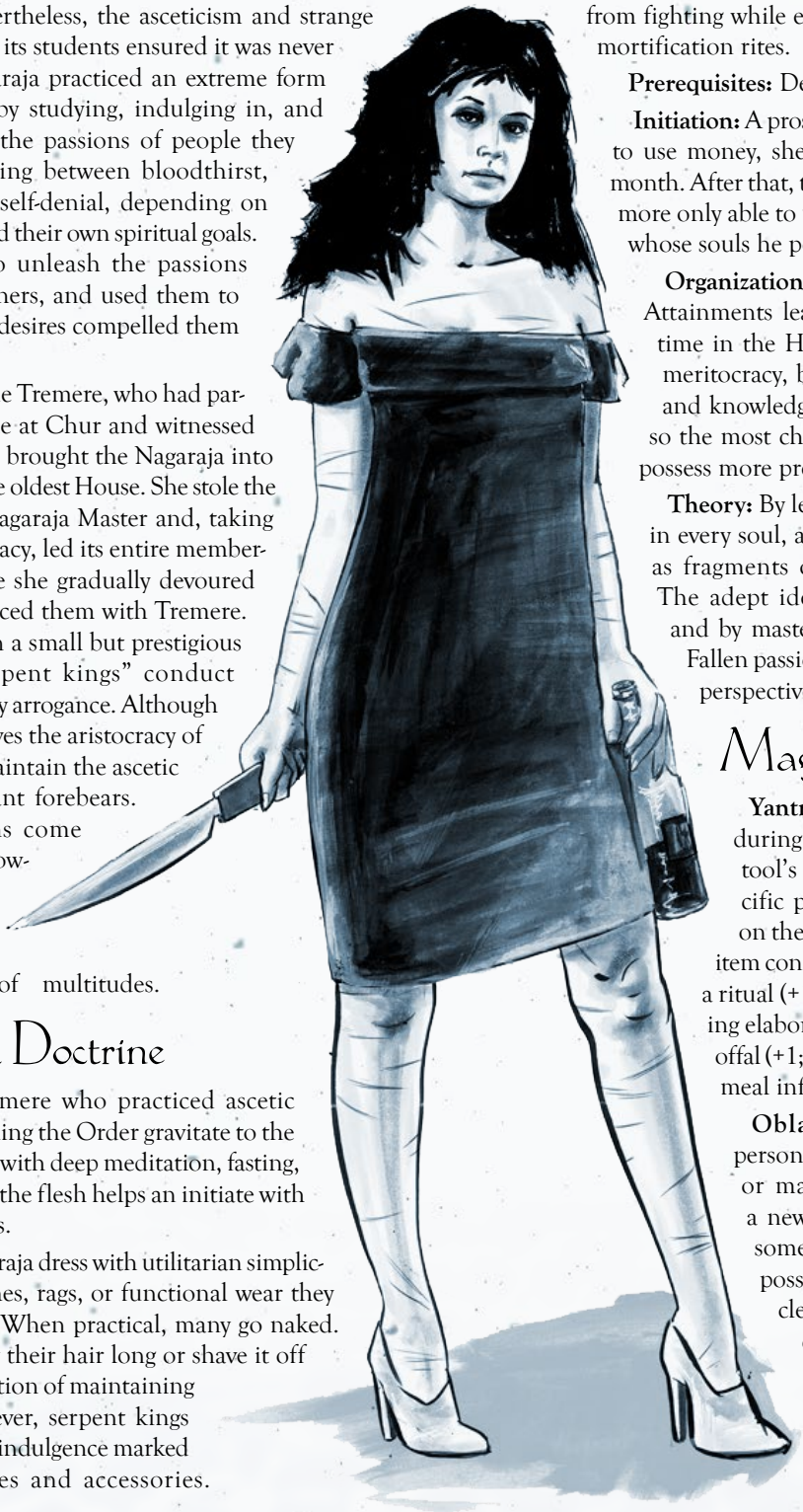
Notable Houses

Only a handful of Tremere Houses exist at any given time, and some of these have just one or two members: student-tutor pairs or solitary practitioners unwilling to part with their secrets. The following Houses enjoy larger memberships, though under Pentacle interrogation, no member would willingly admit their affiliation.

House Nagaraja

The ascetic Nagaraja were a Legacy of ancient lineage. Founded before the Hellenistic era, Nagaraja ranged from India to Asia Minor. Nevertheless, the asceticism and strange behavior required of its students ensured it was never a popular sect. Nagaraja practiced an extreme form of non-attachment by studying, indulging in, and ultimately rejecting the passions of people they encountered, swinging between bloodthirst, greed, and extreme self-denial, depending on those they studied and their own spiritual goals. Nagaraja learned to unleash the passions they observed on others, and used them to punish those whose desires compelled them to hurt others.

One of the first true Tremere, who had participated in the battle at Chur and witnessed the Seventh Dragon, brought the Nagaraja into the fold, making it the oldest House. She stole the soul and face of a Nagaraja Master and, taking command of the Legacy, led its entire membership to Persia, where she gradually devoured their souls and replaced them with Tremere. The Nagaraja remain a small but prestigious House, whose "serpent kings" conduct themselves with lordly arrogance. Although they believe themselves the aristocracy of the Tremere, they maintain the ascetic habits of their distant forebears. Worldly possessions come and go, but true power manifests when a Nagaraja steals, conquers, and commands the passions of multitudes.



Origins and Doctrine

Background: Tremere who practiced ascetic discipline before joining the Order gravitate to the Nagaraja. Familiarity with deep meditation, fasting, and mortification of the flesh helps an initiate with the House's practices.

Appearance: Nagaraja dress with utilitarian simplicity, in traveling clothes, rags, or functional wear they can beg for or steal. When practical, many go naked. Nagaraja either grow their hair long or shave it off to remove the distraction of maintaining it. Sometimes, however, serpent kings explore a cycle of self-indulgence marked by expensive clothes and accessories. These soft periods only slightly change bodies made gaunt by regular fasting. Most Nagaraja are covered with scars from fighting while exploring violence, or various mortification rites.

Prerequisites: Death 2, Empathy 3

Initiation: A prospective Nagaraja is forbidden to use money, shelter, or transportation for a month. After that, the initiate spends a month or more only able to use the possessions of people whose souls he possesses.

Organization: Nagaraja rank themselves by Attainments learned, magical prowess, and time in the House. In theory, this is pure meritocracy, but measuring relative power and knowledge is often a subjective affair, so the most charismatic Tremere inevitably possess more prestige.

Theory: By learning the patterns of desire in every soul, a Nagaraja understands them as fragments of Creation's great hunger. The adept identifies with cosmic desire, and by mastering and discarding various Fallen passions, detaches from their petty perspectives.

Magic

Yantras: Destroying a magical tool during its use (+1 in addition to the tool's bonus); impersonating a specific person (+1 or +2, depending on the degree of accuracy); using an item containing someone else's soul in a ritual (+1 Sleeper, +2 Awakened); eating elaborate meals or feces and rotten offal (+1; +2 if gluttony or the choice of meal inflicts an adverse Condition).

Oblations: Learning another person's Virtue, Vice, Aspirations, or magical Obsession; acquiring a new soul; satisfying the Vice of someone whose soul the Nagaraja possesses; meditating in an "unclean" place such as a sewer or charnel ground; meditating in the office (or another place of power) of a wealthy executive or aristocrat.

Weakness: Nagaraja nei-

Nagaraja of Old

You can find the original Nagaraja Legacy from which this House arose in **Chronicles of Darkness: Dark Eras**, *To the Strongest*, on p. 99.

ther believe in nor identify with Virtue. A Nagaraja recovers two fewer Willpower points (minimum one) from satisfying a Virtue.

Attainments

House Nagaraja's Attainments focus on desire, indulgence, and discarding identity and attachment.

Apprentice Attainment: Expand the Self

Prerequisites: Initiation

The Nagaraja banishes the notion of a fixed identity by taking on another soul's passions, replacing his Vice with that of an attached soul for a scene. This automatically cancels any spell or power that targets or manipulates his original Vice.

Optional: Mind 2

The Nagaraja may share the lesson of transitory desire with another, unleashing a Vice that belongs to an attached soul. This emulates the Mind 2 spell "Emotional Urging" (**Mage**, p. 160), except the urge is limited to feelings in harmony with the unleashed Vice; it lasts one day. The victim suffers the Deprived Condition (**Mage**, p. 315), which resolves when they satisfy the alien Vice and lasts beyond this Attainment's Duration. Furthermore, the subject is considered to have the imposed Vice for Social maneuvering purposes.

Disciple Attainment: Seize the Chain of Desire

Prerequisites: Death 3

When others find moments of inspiration or indulgence, the Nagaraja sees a point of vulnerability by which he might ambush and seize an inward-looking soul. If a Sleeper regains Willpower through satisfying a Virtue or Vice in the Tremere's presence, he may attempt to tear out their soul at any point within the same scene at touch range. This emulates the Death 3 spell "Sever Soul" (**Mage**, p. 132), and lasts one day.

Optional: Mind 3

When the Nagaraja satisfies a Vice he borrowed from an attached soul with "Expand the Self," he recovers Willpower points equal to his Mind rating, and may add this Attainment's Potency to his Composure as the Mind 3 spell "Augment Mind" (**Mage**, p. 161) with the +2 Reach effect, lasting two turns.

Adept Attainment: Liberate Soul

Prerequisites: Death 4, Empathy 4

The Nagaraja obliterates a Sleeping soul. If the soul doesn't reside within its true owner, this is automatically successful. Against a Sleeper, this functions as "Seize the Chain of Desire," except success destroys the soul. This can be used on a Tremere's attached souls, and thus is considered a dangerous power within the Order.

Losing a soul to this Attainment forces a Sleeper's player to roll Resolve + Composure twice to determine the extent to which it annihilates their innermost self. The victim's Integrity changes to the lower of the first roll or their current rating. The victim's Willpower *dots* become the lower of the second roll or their current rating. If these new ratings would equate to advanced stages of soul loss, the character acquires the appropriate Conditions: Enervated at Integrity 1, and Thrall at 0 Willpower dots.

This Attainment requires one point of Mana to activate and doesn't work on the Awakened. The Storyteller can allow or deny its use against others on a case-by-case basis.

Optional: Mind 4

The Nagaraja may liberate another or even himself from specific attachments and fixations. This functions as the Mind 4 spell "Psychic Reprogramming" (**Mage**, p. 164), lasting three turns.

House Seo Hel

The split-visaged Hel was no mother to the brave heroes old Norse culture idolized. Her followers were outcasts, cursed and plagued by waking nightmares. These "grim-faced ones" were considered too profane for poems and sagas, and even worse than the oft-denigrated *seith* followers of the Vanir, whose arts at least belonged to the world of life. The Norse of the time believed Hel's followers could prevent them from reaching Valhalla or Christian Heaven, for the goddess would claim anyone cursed by the Seo Hel Legacy, stripping their bones and nails to make the ships and weapons of Ragnarök. Awakened Norse despised the soul-stealing sect on more refined grounds, but just as intensely. Thus, Sleepers and Awakened collaborated with the Tremere to destroy the Seo Hel.

The Tremere presented themselves as warrior-mages skilled in matters of the soul, and swayed the Norse to their cause. At the head of a great alliance, Tremere hunted the Seo Hel from the Götaland to the Vistula, finally prevailing in a battle outside Gdansk. As far as the alliance knew, Gunborg Ironhair and her leading cabal sacrificed themselves to defeat the massed leaders of the Seo Hel. In truth, they stole the Legacy during the battle, and had to falsify their deaths, because they bore the mark of their new House.

Origins and Doctrine

Background: The House prefers Tremere who need little in the way of social gratification. People who like to live on the outskirts of society, along with introverts and misanthropes, are best suited to deal with the House's practices and curses. Seo Hel has its share of stereotypical members — black metal aficionados who get off on Viking imagery and worshiping death — but these junior members eventually calm down, especially once they fully realize they represent the enemy of the Æsir.

Appearance: Seo Hel wear their House weakness on their flesh, in the form of the Grim Mark. From face to foot, one side of the Seo Hel's body turns gray-black, scaly and hard, like a lightning-felled tree. Magic has limited effectiveness in concealing the Grim Mark, so Seo Hel often wear long sleeves, hoods, and masks. They carry melee weapons and accoutrements inspired by ancient Norse myth and religion, such as runestones and cat-skin gloves.

Prerequisites: Matter 2, Resolve 3

Initiation: The initiate must steal the soul of a victim she's slain in single combat and subjected to the "blood eagle," a ritual in which she pulls the subject's lungs out of their back, to lie like gory wings.

Organization: Seo Hel is an antisocial House. Members form transitory student-tutor relationships but beyond these, conceal the true extent of their knowledge as much as possible. The original Legacy fell because it relied on a fearsome reputation — one that ensured it had no friends when the Tremere came for them. As a House, Seo Hel protects itself through obscurity and dispersal. Members try not to gather in significant numbers and, when questioned, insist the Grim Mark is a unique affliction.

Theory: Seo Hel believe souls are bound by material existence. The idea that one escapes the bonds of matter through enlightenment is considered foolish. Hel is a goddess of rotten earth, dead trees, gnawed bones, and drowned flesh. The connections between soul and matter are innate to both.

Magic

Yantras: Using grave goods as tools (+1); using crooked or reversed versions of Norse runes (+1); cursing the Æsir or Vanir (+1); cutting or burning a mammalian body part, living or dead (+1; +2 if human)

Oblations: Meditating in a graveyard; quickening the deaths of the terminally ill; spending an hour uttering poetry to honor Hel and curse other gods; crafting a nithing pole (a rune-covered cursing staff topped with a severed horse's head)

Weakness: The Grim Mark manifests as soon as a Tremere learns a Seo Hel Attainment. Over the course of a day, it spreads from a small patch on her forehead to cover

one side of her body. Body parts affected by the Mark look like crude, morbid sculptures, made of an impossible blue-black mixture of dead wood and mummified flesh. The character automatically fails Social rolls for which a pleasing appearance would be a positive factor. Spells cast to conceal the Mark can't achieve prolonged Duration by any means. The Mark doesn't physically impair the Tremere.

Attainments

The secret of the Seo Hel is to dissolve the barrier between matter and the soul. Hel's visage teaches that Death must reach beyond subtle effects. Dead things rot, after all. Souls must find purchase in the material realm, in living hosts or magical stand-ins, such as soul jars. The House's Attainments can call upon these connections.

Apprentice Attainment: Hel's Touch

Prerequisites: Initiation

The Seo Hel's Grim Mark causes objects to corrode and crack whenever she desires. If she touches an inanimate object with a body part affected by the Grim Mark, reduce its Durability by the mage's Matter rating. This lasts as long as she wishes, provided she maintains physical contact with the object.

Optional: Death 2

The Seo Hel may also make body parts affected by the Grim Mark solid to ghosts, creatures from the Underworld, Stygian shades, and ephemeral products of Death magic, but not to other Twilight-state entities. She may invoke or dismiss this ability once per turn as an instant action.

Disciple Attainment: Crafts from the Grim Hall

Prerequisites: Matter 3

The Seo Hel conjures an ordinary object important to the last owner of an attached soul. This could be a tool, a weapon, or even a piece of complex electronics. She knows which objects are possible when she uses this Attainment. If the soul's last owner was emotionally attached to a specific object, the mage produces a duplicate, though it always appears slightly damaged and its colors are muted. This Attainment emulates the Death 2 spell "Touch of the Grave," but it steals objects from the soul's residual connections to them, rather than from Twilight. When the Duration expires, the object dissolves.

Unlike "Touch of the Grave," anyone using the object does so with the competence of the individual who produced its connection to the soul. For example, if the object is a handgun, the user may operate it using the Firearms rating of the soul's last owner (without Specialties). Seo Hel prefer to steal souls from competent people whose crafts are particularly refined.

Optional: Death 3

The Tremere may conjure the object from a soul currently integrated into a living subject, taking the victim's competence along with it. She must use her Lesser or Greater Soul Grasp ability and spend one point of Mana. If successful, the mage appears to pull the object out of the victim's body, while the victim suffers a penalty to use objects of that general type (such as all guns or all motor vehicles) equal to the Seo Hel's Death rating.

Adept Attainment: Tools of Poison

Prerequisite: Matter 4

The Seo Hel corrupts an object, giving it the power to sicken those who come into contact with it, provided they've been previously weakened. She spends one point of Mana to activate the Attainment. For the next full chapter, the object inflicts effects that emulate the Death 3 spell "Devouring the Slain," (**Mage**, p. 130) on anyone who touches it. Per the spell, the victim must currently suffer at least one point of lethal or aggravated damage, and the Seo Hel harvests her choice of Willpower or Mana. The effect only works once on a given individual, unless they suffer additional lethal or aggravated damage — so Seo Hel often use the Attainment on weapons, inflicting its effects anew with every wound.

Optional: Death 4

The may tune an object to steal a soul instead. When someone with a soul that can be stolen with Hollow-granted Tremere abilities touches the tainted object, the mage instantly becomes aware of it. The mage may use a variant of Lesser or Greater Soul Grasp, on the victim, who doesn't need to have taken damage first. The object remains physically attached to the person touching it, and can even move toward the target, flying and bending impossibly, to do so. Acting through the object from any distance, the Seo Hel grapples the victim using (Resolve + Death); this works like a normal grapple except she may only use the Hold, Restrain, and Soul Grasp maneuvers. If a Soul Grasp succeeds, it has the usual effects, and the Seo Hel may subsequently use Soul Breath through the object, not only absorbing the soul into it but transporting it to her presence, so she may attach or otherwise store the soul. While acting through the object, the mage has a dim awareness of the struggle for the victim's soul and any physical movement, but no specific sounds, visual impressions, or other information.

House Thrax

Legio IX Hispania, or "the Lost Legion," disappeared from Roman records sometime between the 1st and 3rd centuries C.E. Pop history says the legion marched beyond Hadrian's Wall, never to be seen again. Reputable historians note evidence the Ninth camped in what is now the Netherlands after the year 120. Both stories lack the necessary Awakened perspective. The Ninth did march into Pictish territory under the command of Aquilinus Thrax, Adamantine Arrow, for the express purpose of forcing the natives to share the secrets of magical human sacrifice with his cabal, which was embedded in the legion's command structure. Thrax's soldiers succeeded, and the Ninth cut a soul-fueled swath through Britain, Gaul, and Batavia. By the end, though, the legion was underpopulated, made up of its most inexperienced soldiers, because the Pictish method required sorcerers to sacrifice loyal followers. The Thracian Legacy killed dozens of soldiers for their souls and disappeared.

In the 12th century, the Tremere Gaheris followed legends of "ghost centurions" to Valkhof Castle in what is now the Netherlands, and deduced that its castellan and resident soldiers carried on the Legacy. Gaheris won using a simple strategy: He brought more souls to the fight. Gaheris eliminated the requirement that only loyal souls could be used for the group's distinctive sorcery. For over 900 years, Thrax has been the House Tremere call upon for mass death and destruction — something Thracians never shy from, since it solidifies their status as "war gods."

Origins and Doctrine

Background: Tremere from military, security, law enforcement, and other combative backgrounds are the most common recruits. A Thracian must be willing to gather souls through up-close murder, staring at her victims' faces.

Appearance: House Thrax trains like a military unit, and members embrace the attached culture: tactical clothing, severe haircuts, and a high degree of physical fitness. No Thracian leaves home without a firearm and a close combat weapon, such as a knife or collapsible baton. Members often have tattoos or jewelry with the characters VII • IX (16, for 7+9).

Prerequisites: Life 2, Strength 2, Athletics 3, Firearms *or* Weaponry 2

Initiation: The prospective Thracian must capture an individual of roughly equal physical prowess (about the same total number of Physical Attribute and Skill dots) without the use of magic. The captive becomes her first sacrifice.

Organization: The House's princeps is called its Aquila or Eagle, after the Legacy's founder. This mage selects two subordinates, each of whom commands half the House. These halves compete against each other in training.

Theory: When a Thracian holds the power of life and death over someone, she gains mystical access to their strength. The original Legacy acquired this power through subordinates loyal enough to sacrifice their lives; the House gains it by slaying enemies in combat.

Magic

Yantras: Aiming or gesturing with a weapon (+1); burning entrails (+1, +2 if human); coating one's hands in another's blood (+1, +2 if human); imposing the Beaten Down Tilt on an enemy (+2); suffering lethal damage in open battle (+1, +2 if this drops the Thracian to half her Health or less, rounded down)

Oblations: An hour of combat practice; covering oneself with symbols painted in blood; planning an attack on an enemy; salting the earth; burning an enemy's possessions

Weakness: A Thracian gains a Strong sympathetic connection (**Mage**, p. 173) with anyone she attacks with intent to kill; anyone on whom she intentionally inflicts lethal or aggravated damage counts. Thus, the House's members take serious measures to capture anyone they assault — or steal their corpses. This connection applies to living and dead bodies, as well as the souls of anyone so attacked.

Attainments

All House Thrax Attainments require a "defeated soul." A defeated soul is one whose owner the Thracian killed or

incapacitated in combat. The soul's owner must have attempted to defend themselves or defeat the Thracian. They don't necessarily need to be dead by the end, but Thracians rarely leave their victims alive.

Apprentice Attainment: Drink the Enemy's Fear

Prerequisites: Initiation

The Thracian strengthens herself, converting an attached defeated soul's last, desperate struggle to survive into physical prowess. This emulates the Life 2 spell "Body Control" (**Mage**, p. 148), with advanced Duration and Potency 2, but only the Tremere herself is a valid subject.

Optional: Death 2

The Thracian may instead convert an attached defeated soul's struggle into a shield, emulating the Death 2 spell "Soul Armor" (**Mage**, p. 129); but instead of protecting her own soul, it affects all currently attached souls.

Disciple Attainment: Command the Enemy's Prowess

Prerequisites: Life 3

The Thracian channels an attached defeated soul's physical abilities. This emulates the Life 3 spell "Honing the Form" (**Mage**, p. 160) with Reach allocated to affecting one additional Attribute, increasing both Attributes by 2. This can't increase any Attribute beyond its usual maximum. Only the Tremere herself is a valid subject. Alternatively, she may increase two Physical Skills instead of Attributes; doing so also grants the 8-again quality to rolls using those Skills. She can only increase the selected traits to as many dots as the soul's original owner had, +1.

Optional: Death 3

The Thracian may instead emulate the Death 3 spell "Devouring the Slain" (**Mage**, p. 130), as long as she has an attached defeated soul and the subject is in touch range. If the soul's owner is dead, the soul is considered to have 5 Health and 5 Willpower for purposes of this Attainment. Devouring a total of 5 Willpower or 5 Health from the same soul using this Attainment exhausts the soul, putting it in the same condition as one a Tremere has fully fed on (see "Devour the Years," p. XX).

Adept Attainment: Bless the Centurion

Prerequisites: Life 4

The Thracian can now grant the benefits of the Life version of "Command the Enemy's Prowess" to others. A defeated soul is required, as usual, but need only be in sensory range rather than attached.

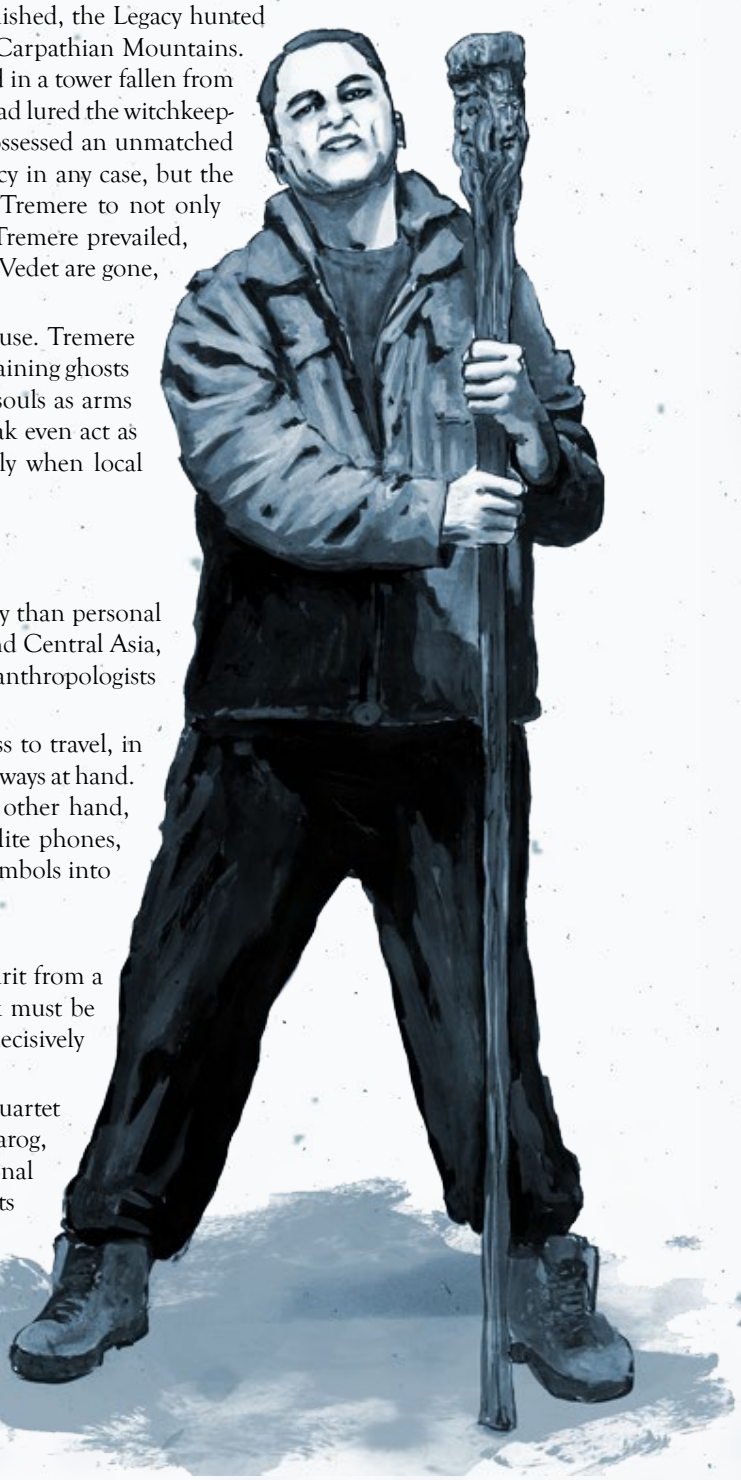
Optional: Death 4

Expending 1 point of Mana, the Thracian can force a defeated soul in sensory range to manifest and serve her. This emulates the Death 3 spell "Quicken Corpse" (**Mage**, p. 131) with the +1 Reach effect and Potency 3. Unlike the spell, souls pressed into service don't inhabit corpses, but instead gain the Materialized Condition (**Mage**, p. 260) and manifest the relevant traits in bodies of shadowy ectoplasm resembling the defeated soul's original owner.

House Vedmak

The Keepers of Vedet were a Slavic Legacy devoted to helping the virtuous dead rest, and protecting Sleepers from angry ghosts, spirits, and similar malefic beings. Wandering Vedma (women) and Vedmak (men and non-binary practitioners) made themselves quietly known to the communities throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This earned them cautious respect, as common people supposed these "witchkeepers" drew power from the devil, but somehow managed to twist it to the service of good. Founded in the 8th century, the Keepers survived the Mongols and went on to train hundreds of members, reaching such popularity that by the 16th century, Legacy Masters considered asserting themselves as an independent Order.

These plans went awry when rumors arose that witchkeepers had fallen to Satan, killing and unleashing evil spirits upon Sleepers across the Keepers' territory. Its reputation tarnished, the Legacy hunted for the source of the trouble, locating it in the Eastern Carpathian Mountains. Divination suggested a place of great, ancient evil, located in a tower fallen from the Time Before — one ruled by the Tremere. The Order had lured the witchkeepers to Chur, fortress of the Seventh Dragon, where it possessed an unmatched advantage. They would have wished to destroy the Legacy in any case, but the witchkeepers' rising power and proximity inspired the Tremere to not only unify against them, but risk Chur in the attempt. The Tremere prevailed, though it was a hard-fought battle. Today, the Keepers of Vedet are gone, replaced with House Vedmak.



Due to its history, Vedmak is the largest Tremere House. Tremere use Vedmak lore to perform feats of reverse possession, chaining ghosts or spirits to the souls they command. Vedmak also use souls as arms and armor to fight Twilight-bound threats. Some Vedmak even act as witchkeepers of old, protecting communities — but only when local citizens promise to pay with their souls.

Origins and Doctrine

Background: Vedmak are defined more by community than personal inclination. Many Vedmak grew up in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, close to rural communities. Neopagans, folklorists, and anthropologists among the Tremere are also drawn to the House.

Appearance: Members of House Vedmak usually dress to travel, in rugged and practical clothing, with a satchel or backpack always at hand. This is part of the House's nomadic tradition. On the other hand, some modern members prefer casual suits, tablets, satellite phones, and first-class flights. Vedmak often work Slavic pagan symbols into their clothing and jewelry.

Prerequisites: Space 2, Wits 3, Occult *or* Survival 2

Initiation: A successful initiate banishes a ghost or spirit from a place. He can use brute force or cleverness, but the task must be challenging, and he must destroy the being, enslave it, or decisively drive it away.

Organization: House Vedmak is led by the **Svetovid**, a quartet of princeps who identify themselves with the deities Svarog, Perun, Lada, and Mokosh. The Svetovid rarely grant personal audiences, preferring to communicate through bound ghosts and spirits. The branches of Perun and Lada use Spirit as a secondary Arcanum, while those under Svarog and Mokosh utilize Death. A Vedmak must choose whether to learn the Spirit- or Death-based optional effects for his Attainments; this remains the same for each Attainment.

Theory: Magic filters through the desires of capricious gods and the unquiet dead, but one may use trickery, bargaining, and force to steal their powers and make them serve one's own desires. To understand this cosmos of hidden motives, one must cultivate exceptional sensitivity, to see the conspiracies of gods in the placement of a single stone or the fetters that keep a ghost bound to the world.

Magic

Yantras: Eating a meal ritualistically (+1); drawing the traditional symbols of Slavic witchcraft (+1, +2 if in blood); invoking deities in the four cardinal directions (+1); indulging in one's fixation (see House weakness) for longer than necessary or seeking out an opportunity to do so (+1, +2 if this involves significant effort or leads to injury)

Oblations: Traveling to a wild place on foot; holding a ritual banquet for multiple people; carving a four-headed representation of the Svetovid: four gods in one

Weakness: The House's emphasis on sensitivity to the natural and supernatural worlds sometimes manifests as a fixation that emulates the folkloric weaknesses of certain supernatural beings. Each witchkeeper chooses one such fixation. Suggestions include counting plant grains (rice, barley, etc.), being transfixed by the appearance of running water, shedding the blood of animals, staring at one's reflection in a mirror, and concealing or destroying symbols of religions and magical practices other than one's own.

The fixation confers the Addicted Condition (**Mage**, p. 314). If resolved, the character acquires a new fixation, which confers a new Addicted Condition. If he goes a scene without indulging the fixation when the opportunity arises, he suffers the Deprived Condition also.

Attainments

All House Vedmak Attainments require the use of a soul. This soul can either be attached to the character, or held in a soul jar or hollowstone.

Apprentice Attainment: Eyes of the Invisible

Prerequisites: Initiation

The Vedmak sends a soul to quietly inhabit a subject, and experiences what the subject does. This emulates a sympathetic Space spell for which Potency is the primary factor, which requires a sympathetic connection and Yantra as usual. It lasts up to one scene, adds 1 to Potency, costs a point of Mana, and requires a scene of ritual preparation. It affects supernatural beings, including those in Twilight, if the character can perceive them. He experiences all the target's physical senses, but not their thoughts. As a side effect, he suffers any wound penalties and sensation-dependent Conditions or Tilts the subject experiences.

Optional: Death 2 or Spirit 2

If the subject is a ghost (Death) or a spirit (Spirit), the witchkeeper can also perform an elementary act of possession while experiencing its senses, willing it to perform tasks. This emulates the Spirit 2 spell "Command Spirit" (**Mage**, p. 181), but the character shares the spirit's senses for the duration, and may suffer sensation-based ill effects. If the creature has supernatural senses, the Storyteller decides which ones translate into sensations the Tremere can comprehend and which are unavailable. Mages are intimately familiar with unusual senses and the Vedmak already possesses the appropriate Arcanum by necessity, so the Storyteller is encouraged to be generous.

Disciple Attainment: Distant Presence

Prerequisites: Space 3

The Vedmak possesses a soul and sends it forth as an extension of himself. This emulates a Space 3 spell with Duration as its primary factor; this phantom body appears anywhere within the mage's sensory range. It requires a scene of ritual preparation, using its fixed Reach for advanced Duration. The manifestation is solid, and has a combination of the witchkeeper's physical features and those of the soul's original owner. The character is fully present in both the manifestation and his real body, and must choose which one to act with at any given time (or on each turn, in action scenes). Injuries and other afflictions, such as Conditions, affecting one body affect the other also; he maintains one collective total for Health, Willpower, Mana, and other traits, at their usual ratings. The Vedmak may eliminate the Distant Presence as an instant action, leaving the harnessed soul floating free wherever he sent it.

Optional: Death 3 or Spirit 3

The Death 3 variant lets the witchkeeper manifest the phantom body in Twilight and gain access to places only ghosts may visit. With the Spirit variant, the manifestation may enter the Shadow as if crossing through an Iris.

Adept Attainment: Bind Within

Prerequisites: Space 5

The Vedmak can physically imprison subjects within a soul under his command. This emulates the Space 5 spell "Pocket Dimension" (**Mage**, p. 178) with +2 Potency and advanced Duration, requiring a scene of ritual preparation to acclimate the soul to its new purpose. The willworker must use other Space magic to transport a subject into the Pocket Dimension, which has Connected sympathy to the soul to which it is linked. Vedmak do not place themselves within their own attached souls, since this produces a paradox: a Tremere inside a soul, inside a Tremere, inside a soul.... The Storyteller is free to invent a strange consequence for characters who do it anyway.

Optional: Death 2 or Spirit 2

With one of the optional Arcana, the Attainment gains the appropriate type of Twilight, as the spell's usual effect with these conjunctional Arcana.

Anne-Marie
The Lion of Night

"Your destiny is what I make of it, loser."

Background

Anne-Marie Monica Anderson was born in privilege into a happy household of three, with a beloved younger brother and a widowed father who indulged his little princess' every whim. Beautiful and pampered, she grew up with an unassailable ego and a vicious streak. She was much luckier than she was competent, and between that and her haughty attitude, the local Adamantine Arrow Caucus was surprised when Hephaestus, a Thunderbolt Guardian with a reputation as a merciless teacher and callous tactician, took Anne as her apprentice soon after the young mage's Awakening and inducted her as a Talon.

Hephaestus forged Anne into a weapon, and while many criticized the brutal mind games to which the older Arrow subjected her disciple, none could argue with the results. Despite the mental and physical scars her training left, Anne was wholeheartedly loyal. She took on the Shadow Name of The Lion of Night, eager to live up to her mentor's fearsome reputation — and to hide her mistakes behind a mask of perfect discipline and borrowed authority. She selectively championed those tenets of the Adamant Way that matched her worldview and became a self-appointed enforcer of responsible magic use and disciplinarian for her Talon peers.

Lion rose in the Order's ranks faster than most through cunning, ferocity, and Hephaestus' unflagging support, making First Talon in record time. Her crowning achievement was becoming a Sentinel after hunting down a mysterious Thracian Reaper and leading the charge to destroy the House's sancta in the city. Many questioned her appointment, as she hadn't put much time or effort into Consilium service to that point. Hephaestus successfully convinced the Hierarch to choose her student, so the grumblings remained merely that.

Many Sentinels are unpopular at best, and while she performed her duties to their letter, Lion's arrogance earned her contempt from those she considered her inferiors in Wisdom and honor. She went a step too far when she took it upon herself to sentence — and personally execute — a mage after she discovered evidence of more severe infractions than the council's investigation had accounted for. Though technically she was within her rights to do so, the victim's cabal and many friends among the Orders were livid at what they saw as a petty abuse of power. The ensuing tumult led to Lion's many enemies framing her for crimes ranging from antinomian magic to additional Awakened vigilante killings, and the Hierarch was only too glad for the excuse to get rid of her. Knowing she'd be vindictive about it, he sentenced her to soul loss, followed by exile.

Lion lost her soul screaming curses at those she disdained as sniveling mongrels concerned more about temporal power and territory than enlightenment. Unable, or unwilling, to see her own sins for what they were, she felt crippled and naked as she left the Consilium and the Caucus without a word to her mentor.

Alone, Lion was afraid but refused to lie down. Her pride did not allow failure, so she treaded the dangerous Left-Handed road, seeking what, in the past, she would have considered sacrilegious. She visited the old sancta of the Thracian foes she'd vanquished, knowing that if she was to have revenge, she needed the means to fight without her soul. Amid the rubble and destroyed tomes, she found lost pages of the scripture that gave her a second breath: *The Suspire*.

What started as a desperate search for ways to recover her soul evolved into an Obsession with the Mystery of the Final Watchtower, which Lion believed was her only path to salvation. In her failing Wisdom, she identified with the Seventh Dragon — a god forced to yield to its lessers — and wished to break her enemies in righteous retribution the same way. She'd allowed herself to be the Consilium's lapdog, but Lion did not

make the same mistake twice.

When she finally found House Thrax and learned the price of Hollowing, Lion flinched, but did what she had to. She looked out for number one, as always, and without magic she killed her father and offered up his soul as a symbol of her dedication to her new path. She would not be defeated. She would rise again.

Description

Lion is a stunning woman in her early 30s, the poster girl for WASP privilege with the confidence to go with it. Her mane of hair is dark and lush, and her steely blue eyes glimmer with cunning. Anne puts the high opinion she has of herself on display; from the designer clothes to the imperious words whispered past perfectly made-up lips, the Tremere is a proud envoy of the Seventh Dragon.

The Lion of Night's dampened Immediate Nimbus creates a faint, oppressive miasma that seduces others into obeying her. Her Signature manifests as black, inky stains in the shape of her lips smearing what her spells have touched, while her Long-Term Nimbus subtly encourages those it influences to refuse to acknowledge their own flaws, condemning them to repeat grievous mistakes.

Secrets

Thracian Trials: On her own, surrounded by soul-eating monsters who won't coddle her like Hephaestus and her dead father once did, the Lion must prove herself. Princeps Syrkala has already told the young Tremere what will earn her advancement in the House: the soul of Hephaestus. Although she tried to come up with ways to fake her former mentor's death or blackmail Syrkala, Lion has decided to hunt Hephaestus down to fulfill what she sees as her destiny. She anonymously attacks Arrow sancta throughout her former Caucus' region, leaving subtle calling cards to draw the older mage out but no survivors. The Order investigates the attacks, but Lion is desperate, which makes her dangerous.

Guardian Angel: Hephaestus watches over and manipulates every step of Lion's journey, letting Lion make her own mistakes but still protecting her prize disciple. The young Tremere is oblivious to her erstwhile mentor's presence in her life — and to the darker plans the Thunderbolt Guardian still harbors for her student; losing her soul and becoming Hollow hasn't made the prideful Anne less of a perfect specimen for Hephaestus' own secret Left-Handed Legacy, Filiae Philosopharum (Daughters of the Philosophers), which seeks to refine Awakened souls into something transcending magic altogether through strange, indirect experimentation. Perceiving the subtle touch of the powerful Arrow's magic on Lion is an Opacity 5 Mystery.

Planning Ahead: Although Lion has just started in her pursuit of the Tremere Arts, she plans to found her own House — one that will hopefully include Hephaestus. To that end, she pursues members of soul-working Legacies around the world in hopes of finding one she can destroy and subvert.

Story Hooks

- One or more cabal members or their allies have become the last practitioners of a soul-related Legacy; perhaps they revived it from the pages of a newly discovered Daimonomikon, gleaned it from a recovered soulstone, or learned it from a dying hermit. Perhaps the rest of the members are simply gone now — killed, vanished, or something stranger. Whatever the case, Lion caught wind of it, and now she's gunning for them so she can torture the secrets of their Legacy out of them and found a new House.
- The cabal arrives at the local Consilium headquarters to help with an emergency: Something that left no signs of its passing but the butchered bodies of Sleepwalker guards inexplicably left behind Grimoires, Artifacts, and other secrets. The Hierarch is on edge. After some investigation, the cabal learns that the only stolen item was a soul jar, containing a soul the Hierarch desperately wants back, though he won't say why. He orders the cabal to find and apprehend the thief, secretly worrying that it's Lion and hoping she has no means to learn what that soul knows about him.
- Hephaestus approaches the cabal for assistance with a highly classified mission to recapture Lion, confiding in them the awful truth: the former Sentinel has gone Tremere. She says she believes Lion is planning something big, a major sacrifice that could give House Thrax an army of souls. Whether this mission is real or just one of Hephaestus' secret experiments, the Super Bowl is coming to town in three weeks, and she claims to fear the worst.

Rumors

"Have you noticed how silent Hephaestus has been on this entire debacle? Makes you wonder what kind of game she is playing. I've heard she was in love with Lion and they had a thing – it would explain a lot, wouldn't it? I bet she's still helping that Scelestus miscreant even now."

The rumor has always been that Hephaestus and Lion were in an intimate relationship, due to the teacher's encouragement of her apprentice's pride, and her continued resistance to denounce Lion. Some say the con goes deeper than that, believing Hephaestus is using her disciple to destroy a reclusive enemy or perform recon from deep undercover. No one yet suspects the truth of her soul-bending Legacy and its long-game goals, but they *do* suspect they haven't heard the last of Lion, thanks to Hephaestus' meddling.

"Lion really hated the Hierarch, and he hated her, by all accounts. I think he had secrets he didn't want anyone hearing about. Venom like that doesn't work itself out of the system."

The Hierarch of Lion's former Consilium didn't hate her until she made his life miserable with her constant rivalries and vicious grudges. He does have a few shameful skeletons in his closet that he'd prefer to keep hidden, but without evidence, Lion only ever *suspected* they existed. Although he might think he avoided her retribution with his somewhat extreme ruling, Lion is not above contacting a cabal in a position to investigate and twisting the truth to put them on his trail.

"I don't know, man. Why would that bitch come back, after all that happened here, just to kidnap her father? She's done for. Dude probably skipped town with some hottie and left his son behind for the grandparents to pay for his education."

Anne has always had a soft spot for her baby brother, Tyler. Although she keeps her distance, every so often she watches his college baseball games, and her grandparents talk about how they've met with her a few times to chat about her "modeling career in Europe." They are all marked by her Nimbus, if faintly, and anyone searching for the missing Mr. Anderson — whether for his own sake or to track down Lion — could start there.

Order: Tremere

House: Thrax

Virtue: Relentless

Vice: Arrogant

Obsessions: Found a new House; Make Hephaestus Hollow; Increase my own Hollow

Aspirations: Exact revenge on my former Consilium

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Firearms (Handguns) 4, Drive 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Empathy (Lies) 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Seduction) 3, Socialize 3 Subterfuge 4

Merits: Destiny 3; Mystery Cult Initiation (Tremere) 2; Occultation 3; Resources 4; Safe Place (Penthouse) 4; Sanctum 4

Wisdom: 4

Willpower: 8

Initiative: 8

Defense: 7

Armor: 1/0 (reinforced clothing)

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Hollow: 4

Mana/per Turn: 12/4

Dedicated Magical Tool: The carving knife with which she killed her father.

Arcana: Death 4, Fate 4, Life 3, Time 2

Attainments: Body Autonomy; Conditional Duration; Counterspell (Death, Fate, Life, Time); Eyes of the Dead; Improved Pattern Restoration; Inviolate Soul; Mage Armor (Death, Fate, Life, Time); Targeted Summoning (Death, Fate, Life); Temporal Sympathy; Unbound Fate; Thrax — Drink the Enemy's Fear

Praxes: Control Instincts (Life 2); Grave Misfortune (Fate 2); Many Faces (Life 3); Sever Soul (Death 3)

Rotes: Devouring the Slain (Death 3, Intimidation); Exceptional Luck (Fate 2, Occult); Honing the Form (Life 3, Athletics); Monkey's Paw (Fate 3, Drive)

Rote Skills: Empathy, Occult, Subterfuge

Attached Souls: 1

Tremere Abilities: Soul Sight, Soul Breath, Burn Soul, Devour the Years, Secret of the Soul Jar, Lesser Soul Grasp

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice	Special
Spear	2L	Melee	n/a	–2	6	Two-handed; +1 Defense vs. opponents with Size 1 weapons or unarmed
Heavy pistol	2L	30/60/120	7+1	–2	9	

Notes: The Lion of Night's Ruling Arcana are Death, Fate, and Time; her Inferior Arcanum is Forces. Her Destiny Merit gives her the Doom of ruination as retribution from someone her hubris once harmed.

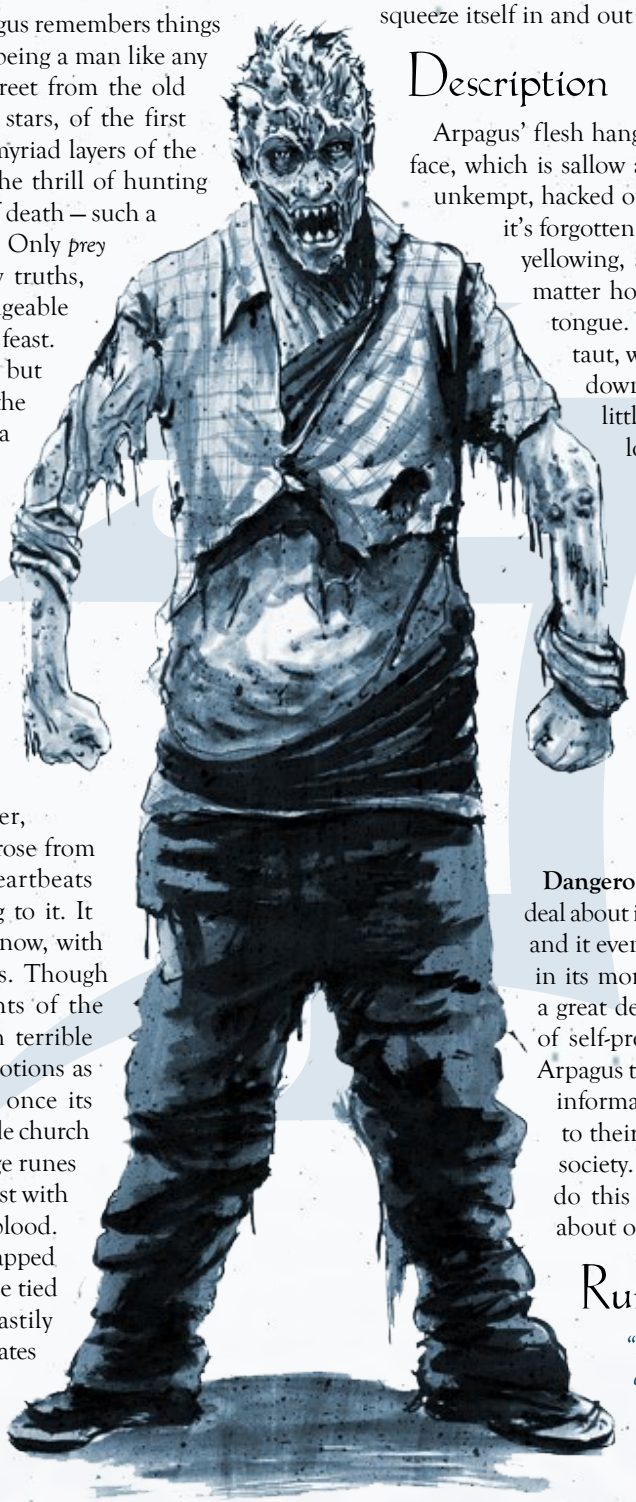
Arpagus
Voracious Monster

"Hey. Come here. I want to show you something."

Background

The thing that calls itself Arpagus remembers things from time to time: memories of being a man like any other, of the diner down the street from the old house, of late nights under the stars, of the first glimpse of truth hidden under myriad layers of the Lie. It remembers friendships, the thrill of hunting down new knowledge, the fear of death — such a silly fear, it thinks. It cannot die. Only *prey* dies. It remembers seeking new truths, forbidden to all but a knowledgeable few, and bringing them down to feast. It hunted with them, for a time, but now it does not. They are too like the prey, it thinks. Enlightenment is a sham. People are either threats or opportunities. The only thing that *really* matters to Arpagus is filling the chasm that's replaced its stomach with the hot, steaming flesh of mortals, freshly torn from the living — supping on the soul, essential though it may be, is just the cherry on top.

When Arpagus was becoming the thing it is — cold moments disconnected from one another, like a dream slipping away as it rose from slumber — it still felt a few heartbeats of dread at what was happening to it. It only half-remembers that dread now, with a chuckle at its own foolishness. Though it's largely given up on thoughts of the Supernal, having found its own terrible truth, it still goes through the motions as self-aggrandizing habit. Its lair, once its sanctum, is an abandoned roadside church turned charnel house with strange runes painted on the interior walls, most with cheap whitewash but some in blood. Dismembered chunks of meat wrapped in butcher paper hang from twine tied to the rafters — leftovers. A hastily sketched summoning circle decorates the floor among shattered pews, but under Mage Sight it's clearly never seen use and the runes are eerily wrong. Boards cover the windows, and the doors are chained, leaving only a small basement window for Arpagus to squeeze itself in and out of.



Description

Arpagus' flesh hangs slightly loose from its arms and face, which is sallow and unhealthy-looking. Its hair is unkempt, hacked or torn short, matted with blood if it's forgotten to wash. The whites of its eyes are yellowing, and its breath smells of meat no matter how often it scrubs at its teeth and tongue. The skin on its belly, though, is taut, with stretch marks running up and down its sides, and its back is just a little longer than it should be. Despite looking so unhealthy, Arpagus has a powerful grip, and a habit of clenching and unclenching its fists right before it's about to strike. It hunts at night, not to avoid the sun but because darkness hides the parts of it that can't pass for human anymore — if it wears a heavy coat or a hoodie, it looks remarkably normal at first glance.

Secrets

Dangerous Snitch: Arpagus knows a great deal about its former comrades in the Tremere, and it even remembers their Shadow Names in its more lucid moments. Someone with a great deal of courage and a terminal lack of self-preservation instinct might induce Arpagus to identify those comrades, provide information about them, and even point to their sympathizers in wider Awakened society. However, Arpagus isn't about to do this for free, and it really only cares about one kind of payment.

Rumors

"I've gone over the evidence again and again. Flesh ripped apart, ritual arrangement of the entrails, sharp tooth marks on what's left of the

Story Hooks

- Arpagus may be a monster, but it was once one of many. Its former House doesn't see the preta as one of their own anymore. It's embarrassing when an accomplished Tremere falls so low, so they've elected to put it out of its misery. Arpagus has set up shop in the cabal's territory, though, and the Tremere certainly don't follow the Pentacle's rules on the sanctity of cabal resources or autonomy.
- The willworker population isn't short of people whose curiosity outweighs their sense. One such mage stumbled upon Arpagus, and has taken it upon themselves to feed the monster like it's some kind of murderous stray cat. They've even begun leading it onto their rivals' trails — but now Arpagus remembers how sweet a mage's soul is, and hankers for more. A rash of gruesome killings haunts Awakened society in the area, and the preta's enabler isn't sure whether to help stop it or cover their ass and pretend they know nothing.
- Arpagus has just enough humanity left in its darkest depths to be lonely, and just enough cunning left to understand that a solitary hunter can only take so much prey. It wants company, or at least something that understands the way it thinks. To that end, it's taken one of the cabal's Awakened friends or associates captive, and with a combination of threats and deprivation is slowly breaking them down. Soon, it'll be only a botched Hollowing away from a word it had almost forgotten: "friend."

bones, weird sigils on the ground. I'm sure of it: it's werewolves. I know, we thought we got rid of those fleabags months ago, but one must've been hiding out somewhere. Call your cell and get the silver, we've got more work to do."

Local monster hunters can't tell the difference between would-be Awakened magic and werewolf rites, nor do they have any idea such a thing as a preta exists. A cabal who hears this rumor could let the Sleeper hunters try to take care of the problem themselves, but they're more likely to just end up on the menu. These underdogs could desperately use a wizard's help.

"They keep calling him The Hitchhiker, but I know better. I saw it by the side of the road, next to a car left idling. Its door was open, there was blood all over, and – look, it's not human, okay? It's some kind of alien, or a shaved Bigfoot, or something. *I don't know, I only saw it for a second. I wasn't about to wait around for a closer look."*

Arpagus usually prefers to hide its kills, but sometimes it's in a hurry — roadside kills in particular, even in the dead of night, are exposed by headlights of passing cars. The media has been attributing these deaths to a serial killer, but the police insist it's the work of a wild animal. This case in particular, however, wasn't Arpagus — something *else* hunts along that stretch of road, and doesn't like the competition. A showdown between the two could have devastating collateral damage.

"Oh dear. I'm sorry to say the Athenaeum hasn't had a copy of that Grimoire you're looking for for a long time. We used to, but it was destroyed in a fire some decades back. Killed a student too, so it must have been some fire – although I hear there was more to it than just some spellcasting accident. Could be the book is still out there somewhere."

It's a rare mage who isn't an inveterate hoarder, and Arpagus was no different when it cared for such things. When the sorcerer it used to be dropped off the Consilium's radar to join the Tremere Order, they faked their own death in a fire that consumed their old sanctum. Arpagus still has most of its old library, tucked away in a windowless room it hasn't visited for so long that dust covers every surface. This particular Grimoire, however, isn't there — Arpagus' fellow Tremere, when they found out what had become of their former colleague after his long koimaomai, quietly raided it while Arpagus was out hunting.

Virtue: Soul Gluttony
Vice: None
Obsessions: Consuming souls
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 5, Resolve 2
Physical Attributes: Strength 9, Dexterity 6, Stamina 8
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 1
Mental Skills: None
Physical Skills: Athletics 6, Brawl (Grappling) 9, Stealth 4, Survival 7
Social Skills: Intimidation 8
Merits: None
Willpower: 10
Initiative: 10
Defense: 11
Armor: 1/1 (natural)
Size: 5
Speed: 20
Health: 13
Hollow: 7
Dread Powers: Hunter's Senses (Mages, Powerful Souls); Hypnotic Gaze; Jump Scare; Know Soul; Preta's Maw; Preta's Snare; Preta's Soul Theft; Toxic

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Init	Dice
Unarmed	0B	–0	19
Bite	–1L	–0	19

Korazon
The Final Savior

"I can smell your fear. I understand this may seem cruel. Rest assured your soul will be part of something greater than any one of us."

Background

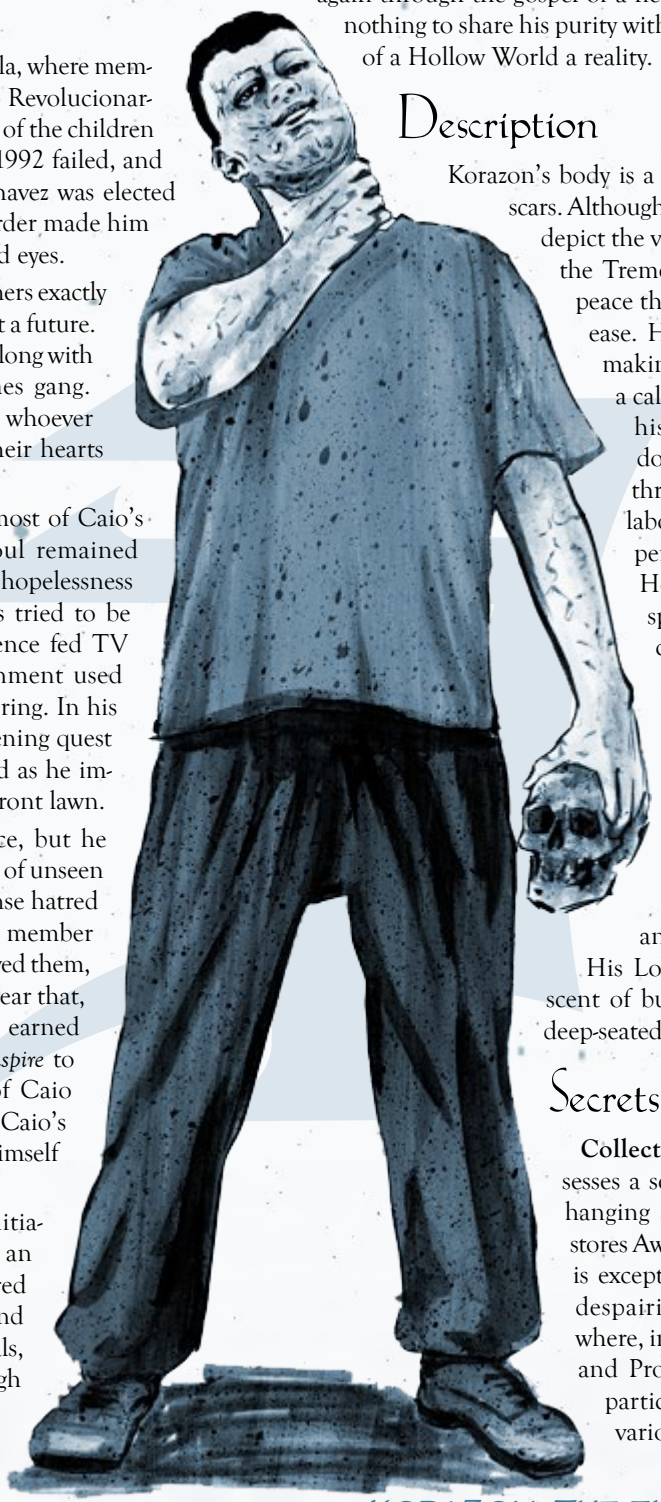
Caio Mendes was born in Venezuela, where members of the Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200 killed his mother. He was one of the children left behind when the *coup d'*état of 1992 failed, and he fled the country when Hugo Chavez was elected just six years later. His mother's murder made him a silent child with eloquent, haunted eyes.

Still in his youth, the boy found others exactly like him, without a place and without a future. Violence became their anthem, and along with them, Caio formed the Pink Slimes gang. Without any aim they lashed out at whoever they could, assuaging the pain in their hearts by inflicting chaos.

The savage lifestyle agreed with most of Caio's friends, but the young leader's soul remained restless while he contemplated the hopelessness of their situation. The Pink Slimes tried to be rebels, but their uncontrolled violence fed TV anchors juicy headlines the government used to justify oppression and fearmongering. In his despair, Caio embarked on a frightening quest in a waking world dream that ended as he immolated himself on the governor's front lawn.

The doctors gave Caio no chance, but he clung to life under the gaze of a cadre of unseen watchers — spirits drawn to his intense hatred for the soiled world around him. A member of House Nagaraja spotted and followed them, and chose to test Caio when it was clear that, despite the gruesome injuries, he'd earned survival on his own. Taking *The Suspire* to heart, Korazon cleansed himself of Caio through Nagaraja doctrine, studying Caio's hate for the world before detaching himself from that petty feeling.

Now years removed from his initiation, Korazon has left his time as an enfante behind, growing into a feared custos who harbors no hesitation and no regrets. Few understand his goals, and he rarely speaks of them, though rumor suggests he's after more than enlightenment. Like a man born again through the gospel of a new lord, Korazon will stop at nothing to share his purity with others and make his dream of a Hollow World a reality.



Description

Korazon's body is a mass of shiny, twisted burn scars. Although his exterior might accurately depict the violence of his younger years, the Tremere's eyes convey a sense of peace that puts those around him at ease. He still does not talk much, making use of gentle gestures and a calm demeanor to make up for his scarred looks. When he does speak, Korazon cradles his throat with a palm, every word labored and rasping through a permanently damaged larynx. He always weighs the act of speaking against the pain it causes him, but he eschews any desire for physical perfection.

Korazon's Immediate Nimbus is a dull corona of embers that instills aimlessness and anguish. His Signature Nimbus is a coat of cool ash upon anything his magic touches. His Long-Term Nimbus is a faint scent of burning hair that provokes a deep-seated self-loathing.

Secrets

Collector of Souls: Korazon possesses a seven-pointed star medallion hanging around his neck, where he stores Awakened soul stones. Korazon is exceptionally good at finding the despairing and disgruntled everywhere, including among Sleepwalker and Proximus assistants. He has a particular knack for finding the various servants mages summon

Story Hooks

- The cabal notices a parade of strange omens: burning hearts displayed everywhere, from tattoo parlors to the local news, far too frequently to dismiss as natural occurrences. Soon, the Hierarch receives a letter demanding the immediate surrender of the Consilium and all its Awakened souls. Less than a week after the refusal, the Hierarch's family dies horribly trapped in a burning building, and all signs point to an unusual movement of fire spirits being responsible for the so-called freak accident. With the Hierarch quickly losing heart and the Councilors scrambling to stave off chaos, the cabal finds itself in the thick of a dangerous shadow war with Korazon and his servants...and soon, they spot a burning heart painted in graffiti near their sanctum.
- While enjoying a night out in the city, the cabal witnesses a biker gang called the Pink Slimes attacking a local restaurant, injuring many and resulting in the death of a notorious stockbroker by the name of Rupert Martin. The attack is vicious, but Peripheral Mage Sight senses the supernatural at work: gang members display inhuman strength, and one even scoffs when a police officer shoots him. As reinforcements arrive, the gang scatters, but the stench of foul magic remains in the air, urging the cabal to investigate further.
- Korazon approaches the cabal, giving no explanation for how he found them. He claims to have found the lost fortress of Chur, where he intends to end his own life as a final sign of detachment that he believes will join him with the Seventh Dragon in apotheosis. He offers to give the cabal access to any long-lost Mysteries and secrets he finds there in exchange for their aid and protection. The Tremere says he won't make the offer to his own peers, as they haven't earned the knowledge of Chur's location and don't deserve to know if they can't find it themselves, but he believes the cabal has shown the potential to open their minds. If he's telling the truth, helping Korazon on his dangerous journey might rid the Orders of a thorn in their side and grant access to unfathomable Mysteries; the Nagaraja might be correct in assuming that death will only give him more power; or the whole thing might be a trap. Can they risk it?

to obey them. He offers them power, riches, and respect, or uses magic to break their obligations, and they give up their masters' most valuable secrets — like where they keep their Demesnes and how to get in.

La Igreja del Segundo Suspiro: The Church of the Second Breath is an organization that affords the downtrodden some respite, and can be found in many communities dotting the West Coast of the United States and down through Central America to Venezuela. The church does a lot of charity work and its message is one of transcendence: only love, it claims, goes with the soul to Paradise. In truth, Korazon uses his church to reap the souls of those who are invisible to society as a whole, providing him with ample victims and influence within his House.

The Hollow World: Korazon believes all that stands between humanity and slavery to the Fallen World's cold, uncaring machine is the Final Watchtower. The Hollowing is not about power: it's about purity. Having known the worst of Fallen existence as a young man, Korazon plans to hone his Art until he can bring a mass Hollowing to as many as he can. He wants to release them at last from their cruel fates, if they are strong enough to seize the opportunity. He observes and abducts newly Awakened mages or makes his Sleepwalker servants perform atrocities in the name of the Sevenfold Oath, trying to understand how Awakened souls work and how to force a soulless mage to accept Hollowing.

Rumors

"There we are, about to go take out the Silver Hill Pylon, when this guy with burn scars all over shows up and offers to help. He refuses to say how he knew what we were doing or even who we were, and just says, oh, the Seers are impure, and they don't deserve the secrets of Awakening, and did we have the guts to do what was necessary? I looked at him with my Sight, and he didn't even have a soul! I don't even want to know what he thought was 'necessary.' Needless to say, we turned him down, and he acted like somebody's disappointed dad about it. I have a feeling we'll see him again."

To Korazon, the Pentacle is too self-righteous to do what must be done for humanity's sake, and the Seers of the Throne are too selfish to care. The major Orders are a waste of potential, and need to be put down. Korazon will gladly save a mage's life if he glimpses in them a desire to change, to learn. He rips out and studies the souls of those who turn him down, or those showing alarmingly low Wisdom, but doesn't consume them; they are too impure for that. In his eyes, Korazon is a savior, and that mentality can be used against him.

"I've seen his gang in action, yeah. They were destructive and loud, bats out of hell – and I mean literally hell. The sounds they made, man, I don't know. I think it is time we skip town. This is getting too strange, too fast."

Korazon's gang, the Pink Slimes, still do his bidding, but after his Awakening the Tremere found another use for the freedom-loving misfits. Using his mastery of the Shadow, Korazon slowly manipulated the Slimes' territory until their unbridled violence allowed spirits of the Shadow to permanently possess the gang's leaders. Korazon's inhuman servants now wreak havoc in his name, granting him backup when he needs more physical force or mass destruction. They're not from any kind of Hell, but to those on the receiving end, it's close enough.

"Sure, Tremere are dangerous, but they always find a way to screw themselves over. The Consilium down in Phoenix got word back in July that the bunch in their region fell to infighting and murdered each other, leaving just their cronies in charge of their agendas. By the time the cavalry was done, Phoenix didn't have a Reaper problem anymore. I'm thinking it won't be hard to drive a wedge between the ones we're dealing with here, either."

The Phoenix Consilium did eradicate Korazon's base of operations in Phoenix, but it wasn't because his fellow Tremere turned on him. Every July, the seventh month of the year, Korazon stops his constant shadow war against the major Orders. For a full month he walks among his church's flock to reap the souls he believes hold potential, and considers any progress or resources lost in the meantime to be simply the price for his duty as the Seventh Watchtower's messiah.

Order: Tremere

House: Nagaraja

Virtue: Faithful

Vice: Violent

Obsessions: Mass Hollowing; The Seventh Watchtower; Causes of Awakening; Soul purity

Aspirations: Bring about a Hollow World; Convert a Pentacle mage to the Tremere

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Medicine 2, Occult (*The Suspire*) 2, Politics (Gangs) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive (Motorcycles) 4, Firearms 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy (Fears) 4, Expression (Speeches) 4, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 5, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Media) 3, Allies (Police) 3, Familiar (Fire Spirit) 4, Mystery Cult Initiation (Tremere) 3, Resources 3, Safe Place (Abandoned Church) 4, Sanctum 4

Wisdom: 4

Willpower: 9

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 9

Health: 10

Hollow: 6

Mana/per Turn: 16/6

Dedicated Magical Tool: A charred skull.

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

Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Life, Matter, Mind, Spirit); Create Rote (Death, Spirit); Eyes of the Dead; Honorary Rank; Inviolate Soul; Mage Armor (Death, Matter, Mind, Spirit); Mind's Eye; Permanence; Seize the Chain of Desire; Spirit Eyes; Targeted Summoning (Death, Mind, Spirit); Nagaraja — Expand the Self, Seize the Chain of Desire

Praxes: Enervation (Death 4); Imposter (Mind 3); Sever the Awakened Soul (Death 5); Shape Spirit (Spirit 4); Telepathy (Mind 2); World Walker (Spirit 4)

Rotes: Alchemist's Touch (Matter 2, Persuasion); Bind Spirit (Spirit 4, Intimidation); Empty Presence (Death 5, Persuasion); Psychic Domination (Mind 2, Intimidation); Spirit Summons (Spirit 3, Persuasion)

Rote Skills: Empathy, Occult, Subterfuge

Stored Souls: 6

Tremere Abilities: Soul Sight, Soul Breath, Burn Soul, Devour the Years, Secret of the Soul Jar, Lesser Soul Grasp, Hollow Vessel

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Init	Dice
Crowbar	2L	Melee	n/a	–2	4
Heavy pistol	2L	30/60/120	7+1	–2	5
Unarmed	0B	Melee	n/a	–0	5

Notes: Korazon's Ruling Arcana are Death, Life, Mind, and Spirit.

Morana
The Folk Mercenary

"I killed your monster, you owe me a soul. I will let you choose which of you will pay the price, but I will leave with what is mine. It is the Old Way."

Background

As a girl, Hila Kaplan survived a car crash that killed her parents, an accident so devastating it left the child in a coma for weeks. It was during this brush with death that she heard the voices for the first time. She could not understand them, and she could not quiet them. For years after the accident, the ghostly whispers filled her head day and night, driving her to distraction.

As a young woman, Hila couldn't take it anymore, and drove her car off a bridge. Dark waters embraced her, but death didn't quite. She surfaced to find herself far from home, on a riverbank where a Watchtower called to her desperate soul, promising blessed reprieve. Here, she could speak with the ghosts that had tormented her most of her life and understand their whispers. They questioned her and considered the answers carefully, bid her faithfully observe their sacred customs, and invited her inside the tower.

At the top, she found a marble statue missing quite a few of its many limbs, holding a sword with a black blade that sucked the light from the room. The weapon was cool to the touch, and she focused on its jagged imperfections: each dent was the story of a failed blow, or a parried attempt on the wielder's life. In her mind's eye, a history of death passed. She paid a Leaden Coin, and received the sword in return. With that blade, she carved her name into the tower's walls, never suspecting until it was over that in doing so, she signed away her soul.

Emerging from her Awakening left her with open eyes, but a hollow heart. With her newfound Sight, she came to understand the significance of what she'd gained — and of what she'd lost. Now that she could see and hear the ghosts properly, they explained that they were once sorcerers of an ancient order known as House Vedmak, and Proximi from an ancestor-worshiping dynasty called Veliona's Hand that served the House. According to them, blood linked her to them through that dynasty, and she was the first of their descendants to Awaken in centuries. The Artifact she recovered on her Supernal journey was her birthright, they said, and she was meant to use it in service to the House (and proper worship of her ancestors, of course). She'd better hurry up and find them, before her lack of soul robbed her of the means to do so.

Hila soaked up all the knowledge the dead could impart, raiding one mystical ruin and forbidden library after the other with their guidance, until she found a Vedmak Tremere in a sanctum underneath a derelict theater. Suitably impressed by her resourcefulness and ability to find him on her own, he listened to the story she and the ghosts told, and accepted payment in return for taking her to see the Princeps. After a series of trials and exchanges, that Princeps presided over the Hollowing that killed Hila and raised up Morana, a soul-collecting mercenary.

Where the Order is usually subtle, keeping their numbers and activities hidden from other mages, Morana's approach hearkens back to the original Legacy's itinerant devil-hunter tradition, as the memories lingering in the sword impart a hazy and incomplete picture of the House's history. She finds places under supernatural threat and preys on the predators, offering salvation at the cost of souls. She has no qualms about *creating* crises she can resolve if that means respecting the Vedmak practice of collecting souls for service.

Description

Hila did not always cut an imposing figure, but now she is athletic and muscular, if lanky. Beneath the minimal makeup, the tattoos, and the leather clothes is a tall, pale woman in her mid-20s. She wears dark, practical clothing with a little goth flair, and keeps her hair long and black as night.

Morana's Immediate Nimbus is a dull, lifeless snowfall that

makes one want to find fire and shelter. Her Signature Nimbus is a bone-deep chill, accompanied by arcane symbols marked in blood. Her Long-Term Nimbus provokes fear of the night and the unknown.

Secrets

Twisted History: Morana's ghostly watchers and fuzzy ancestral memories have convinced her that she's an exemplary witchkeeper, like her ancestors. She half-remembers a time when the Keepers of Vedet wandered the world to protect Sleepers from otherworldly threats, and conflates them with the tales and practices of House Vedmak she learned from the ghosts and her fellow Tremere, who are happy to indulge her delusions. She doesn't know the House murdered and devoured the original Legacy, or that they subjugated her Proximus forebears, and they don't plan to tell her. They're not sure whether she would balk if she knew, or whether her desire for purpose and obsession with her inheritance would override any doubt she might feel.

The Sword of Alec: Stories say the black sword that sucked out Hila's soul is the same one that graced the hand of Alec the Warden, last leader of the Keepers of Vedet, and the weapon the Tremere used to behead that proud warrior in the Battle of Chur. It's the Anchor for Alec's Lemure, the ghost of the ancient Keeper lurking in the Underworld. Alec is ready to recruit a cabal of mages to bring House Vedmak down, if only he could return to the land of the living. Discovering the sword is Alec's Anchor is an Opacity 4 Mystery, but the ghost's memory is as full of holes as the sword's, and his tale of his own past changes with every telling.

The Path of Vengeance: Alec isn't the only ghost out for payback against House Vedmak. When the Keepers of Vedet fell to the Tremere, who enslaved Veliona's Hand to the new House, many of their number chose death over becoming Reaper pawns. The powerful ghosts that decision spawned have plotted revenge ever since — a revenge they've decided starts with Morana. They believe by all rights she should be on *their* side, as the heir to a vendetta against the atrocities the Tremere visited upon her Proximus ancestors.

Rumors

"Stroke of luck, finding that monster hunter when we did, isn't it? It's a good thing that Sleepwalker had run into her before. Otherwise I doubt we'd even know she exists, and we'd be dealing with this ghost infestation problem by ourselves."

Morana does hunt demons and protect the helpless, but she always demands her price in souls. The young Tremere sometimes *creates* these profitable, catastrophic scenarios, like summoning a passel of the dead and angering them into haunting an area before she offers her services to get rid of them. In her mind, the ends justify the means — anything to live up to what she sees as the traditions of her inheritance.

"A friend of mine said the surest way to find this lich is to keep an eye out for ghosts. If suddenly you have a ghost problem, she's around. That part isn't weird, but what is weird is that some of the ghosts linger even after she's gone, like they're expecting something else to happen. Nothing ever does, that I know of."

Story Hooks

- A ghoul servant of the local Invictus approaches the cabal to reveal the presence of a Tremere in the city. Although the ghoul does not know her actual whereabouts, he notes that one of the covenant's businesses has seen a spike in paranormal activity recently, and a mysterious necromancer named Morana offered to get rid of their invisible guests in exchange for souls. Unwilling to negotiate with what they view as a sorcerous con artist, the vampires of the Invictus gladly drop the information into the lap of their neighborhood mages.
- A ghost approaches the cabal while they're investigating the abandoned scene of a haunting. The old, decrepit shade shows signs of diminished Corpus and calls himself Spearbearer. He tells the cabal that House Vedmak sent its dead servants to destroy him, and that he only barely escaped. Spearbearer begs the mages to find Alec-Within-the-Sword and save someone named Hila, the Last Keeper. Although the ghost does provide them with a description of the derelict sanctum-theater she traded many souls to take as her own, his memory for details is spotty; he only warns that they must fight its ghostly guardians and their leader, the fearsome soul-eater Morana.
- The cabal finds a family all suffering from advanced stages of soul loss. Investigating, they find out the family paid their souls in desperation to someone named Morana, so she would rid their home of a dangerous monster. Does the cabal still have time to track the Tremere down before these poor Sleepers' lives fall completely apart — and before she collects souls from someone else?

The vengeful ghosts of the Keepers of Vedet watch Morana from afar and follow in her wake, although they don't dare to make a move without living Awakened allies. These ghosts know a lot, but they're reluctant to share it unless they're fairly certain someone will be inclined to aid them. They need help not only convincing Morana she's on the wrong side of the age-old conflict, but also dealing with the Vedmak ghosts who still watch over her.

"Morana? I've heard the name. She is the leader of a whole clan of Reapers or something. Very dangerous woman. They all follow her despite her young age, like she is a royal."

Morana is the only living Awakened heir to Veliona's Hand, as far as the local House knows, and while the Vedmak don't value that history as far as her standing as a Tremere goes, they

do see her as a Mystery that could answer many questions about their origins and, more importantly, the whereabouts of lost Chur. They don't view her as any kind of leader — she certainly hasn't earned that — but the rumor comes from their frequent offers to help her out or give her resources in exchange for the opportunity to study her, her Artifact, and the ghosts that follow her around.

Order: Tremere

House: Vedmak

Virtue: Steadfast

Vice: Gullible

Obsessions: The Sword of Alec; Magical bloodlines

Aspirations: Impress her superiors; Secure a reputation as an honorable witchkeeper

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 4, Medicine 2, Occult (Ghosts) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Swords) 4

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Haggling) 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Artifact (Sword of Alec) 6, Hallow 1, High Speech, Mystery Cult Initiation (Tremere) 1, Resources 1, Safe Place 2, Sanctum 2, Shadow Name 3

Wisdom: 5

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 7

Defense: 7

Armor: 1/0 (reinforced clothing)

Speed: 11

Health: 9

Hollow: 3

Mana/per Turn: 11/3

Dedicated Magical Tool: The Sword of Alec

Arcana: Death 3, Fate 1, Matter 3, Space 3

Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Fate, Matter, Space); Eyes of the Dead; Mage Armor (Death, Matter, Space); Permanence; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Death, Matter, Space); Vedmak — Eyes of the Invisible

Praxes: Ghost Gate (Death 3); Ghost Summons (Death 3); Quicken Ghost (Death 3); Suppress Aura (Death 2); Windstrike (Matter 3)

Rotes: Aegis (Matter 3, Athletics); Ban (Space 3, Intimidation); Find the Balance (Matter 2, Persuasion); Machine Invisibility (Matter 2, Stealth)

Rote Skills: Empathy, Occult, Subterfuge

Stored Souls: 1

Tremere Abilities: Soul Sight, Soul Breath, Burn Soul, Devour the Years, Secret of the Soul Jar, Lesser Soul Grasp

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Init	Dice	Special
Sword of Alec	3L	–2	7	Two-handed
Unarmed	0L	–0	4	

Notes: Morana's Ruling Arcana are Death and Matter.

Artifact:
The Sword of Alec (• • • • • • • • •)

The Sword of Alec (Size 3, Gnosis 4, Mana 16, Death 5) casts the Death 5 spell "Sever the Awakened Soul" (**Mage**, p. 133) under the condition that a blood relative of the Veliona's Hand Proximus dynasty takes up the sword willingly. In addition, the sword is a greater hollowstone (p. XX) that absorbs the soul it severs into itself. A wielder whose soul the Artifact has removed can use it to summon any ghosts left by any of her ancestors or relatives.

Paphos
The Art Collector

"It is an exquisite piece, isn't it? My muse screamed at me until I finished carving it."

Background

Foster Hendricks' family has a long history of supporting the arts. His grandfather owned a small gallery, where Foster had the run of the halls. He spent his early childhood toddling behind artists and curators, and many of his first words came from art world lingo. Though his mother was a sought-after soprano and his father an award-winning architect, Foster himself inherited little of their artistic talents. Throughout high school and college, he demonstrated a decent command of the basics of the fields he dabbled in — drawing classes, classical piano, poetry, and creative writing — but showed none of the spark that could someday elevate him to greatness. Professors described his skills as adequate. Perfunctory. Average.

Boring.

He Awakened in the halls of Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, surrounded not only by symbols he knew to look for from his Sleeper education, but by an entirely new set of meanings superimposed over them. For one glorious moment, he *understood*. He didn't merely write his name on the Watchtower of the Iron Gauntlet; he engraved a masterpiece on its walls.

Yet, when his waking world dream ended, Paphos' artistic skills remained as banal as before. That connection between envisioning the artwork and recreating it in a physical medium eluded him. Space and Matter let the Mastigos trace every brushstroke in Monet's *Haystacks*, but he couldn't create his own masterworks unless he used those Arcana to guide his hands. It felt like cheating.

Paphos realized he'd never enjoy the kind of immortality Mozart's concertos or Da Vinci's paintings brought their creators. So, he sought another way.

In his Awakened life, his Imagos were superb, perfect representations of the spells he wished to cast, and mages who studied alongside him agreed he worked magic with sublime Supernal artistry. This talent, combined with rumors of his frustration and failure in the Sleeper art world, brought him to the attention of Essina, a Tremere from House Seo Hel. The custos spoke to him of the Seventh Dragon, and suggested that, if art came from the soul and his own wasn't shaped for it, others *were*.

Paphos' Hollowing was an act of both despair and triumph, as he rid himself of the soul that had betrayed him his whole life. What the Seventh Dragon whispered to him remains a secret, but Paphos returned invigorated, eager to create. He considered the Grim Mark that settled over half his body proof of how he'd suffered for his art.

He stole a painter's soul first, an up-and-comer in the Boston art scene. For the first time, the canvas reflected what Paphos saw in his mind's eye.

Paphos' Studio

Soul jars and hollowstones line the shelves in Paphos' sunlit loft. He stores them near the tools of their artists' trades: oils, acrylics, and painters' souls here; sheet music, a keyboard, and a composer's soul there. His framed creations adorn the walls, and music he's written plays over the loft's sound system.

Description

Paphos is a short and slight white man in his early 40s. He dresses according to his current attached soul's style. His sizeable wardrobe includes many garments he designed himself. He bears the Grim Mark of House Seo Hel with pride. It's most apparent on his hands, where he regularly dyes or paints the scales in brilliant colors.

He constantly evaluates his surroundings, seeking out potential sources of inspiration, or viciously criticizing art he deems unworthy. Paphos uses the funds he's ac-

cumulated from his art sales and his share of his family's wealth to sponsor Sleeper creators. His patronage (under his Sleeper name) carries a hefty weight and can launch an artist's career.

Paphos' dulled Immediate Nimbus is the smell of turpentine and a song sung slightly off-key, filling those nearby with the urge to put brush to canvas or pick up a guitar. His Signature Nimbus leaves people with the frustrating feeling of late-night inspirations lost on waking: that snatch of melody she heard in a dream but can't recreate, the brilliant opening line for a novel that he didn't write down at 3AM and can't recall in the morning. His Long-Term Nimbus saps creativity and sows seeds of doubt in an individual's abilities.

Secrets

Ill-Advised Illumination: Paphos has produced his own edition of *The Suspire,* including new interpretations of its poems and new arrangements of the songs in its pages. The manuscript is illuminated and illustrated, and Paphos spared no expense bringing his work to life. To do so, he not only reaped the souls of Sleeper artists, but also snatched those of three Awakened to help him complete the tome. Though other Tremere have seen the finished book, Paphos hasn't taken credit for his handiwork — the effects he wove into the text evoke disturbing reactions from some of its readers, and he's wary of the backlash.

Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Rather than kill his victims, Paphos is often content to let them believe their creative spark has guttered, or that they're suffering from a devastating (and ultimately incurable) case of writer's block. That doesn't mean he's never had to dispose of a body: Several of his creations incorporate his victims' remains, whether he's mixed blood and bone ash into the paint, used their skeletons as a frame to hold up a sculpture, or looped their last words into a song's catchy refrain. A cabal investigating murders might find the evidence or sympathetic links they need on display at a gallery, behind velvet ropes and under glass.

Soul-Crushing Internship: Paphos sponsors a wide spectrum of creators under several prestigious pseudonyms. Many of his mentees burn out soon after they become household names, never realizing their benefactor has taken their souls as part of his repayment. His patronage also comes with legal strings attached, claiming a chunk of the artist's profits and making rights grabs they're often too eager and inexperienced to contest. Over the years, Paphos has mimicked their styles to create "lost" artworks dated from the victim's peak popularity. Fans and collectors jump at the chance to purchase those pieces for a small fortune.

Rumors

"Those posters that took down the mayor last year? That was all Paphos' work. I hear he's got connections everywhere and has dirt on pretty much everyone in the city, including people in the Orders. Talent like that, he could work for Sleeper politicians the rest of his life and never go hungry, but he's willing to work with anyone. You don't have to be, like, the Hierarch. You have a rival you want knocked down a peg? Hire Paphos to do it for you."

House Seo Hel is known for attracting warriors into its ranks, but being on the front lines — really, physical confrontation of any kind — never appealed to Paphos. However, he's proven himself adept at other types of warfare, especially when it comes to swaying public opinion. Sleeper politicians and lobbyist groups hire him to destroy his clients' competition with an image or a song. He takes jobs based not on how much money he'll bring in, but how inspired he is by the project. This makes him accessible to mages with fewer resources, as long as they have interesting personal feuds. Though some Awakened attribute his knack for unearthing sordid secrets to magical means, Paphos is simply a dogged researcher. He might not know where the bodies are buried, but he knows how to find out.

"This one particular guy shows up at the college theater at finals time and watches the students' recitals. They're open to the public, but it's usually just family that comes. But he's always there, in the same seat at the back. Sometimes he talks to a student after and offers to sponsor them. The liberal arts majors say he's the devil come to make a deal. "

Paphos harbors a fondness for his alma mater, and does indeed watch student performances. Though he offered his patronage to some promising artists when he first Awakened, he rarely does so these days unless the performer is exceptionally talented. He worries that someone will trace his early victims back to their time at the college and make the connection to him, but he keeps coming back.

Story Hooks

- Paphos captures a member of the local Consilium and sends messages in that mage's oratory style, attempting to sway a pending vote. The Council itself hasn't realized the deception at play, but the Councilor's mentee suspects something is off. She approaches the cabal and asks for their help rescuing her tutor.
- The cabal receives an invite to an exclusive gallery opening or a secret underground club. Getting on the guest list clearly means they've impressed the right people. As one of the event's sponsors, Paphos takes an interest in a cabal member's artistic talents. Under the guise of one of his art world aliases, he offers her access to the right people and a spot in his never-open makerspace, and hints at the prospect of collaborating with him on a grand project.
- A viral video's contents captivate Sleepers and influence them to take some kind of action. Whether it was created by Banishers attempting to reinforce the Lie, or Panopticon spreading a conspiracy that will lead to even more erosion of personal rights, the Orders scramble for a way to counteract it. The cabal hears about a mage who might be able to mitigate its effects, but Paphos' help comes with a high price.

"The Arrow's been freaking the hell out the last couple weeks. Couple of awful murders, where the victims had the pages of some Grimoire stuffed in their mouths. One had passages tattooed all over him, but my friend in the Order said the ink was fresh, probably done just before whoever it was killed him. It was messed up stuff, from this book called The Suspire. *The Arrow's cautioning its people not to actually read the words if they come across another victim."*

Paphos intended his edition of the sacred Tremere text to confront readers with the truth about the Watchtowers, using imagery so vivid that anyone reading it would experience the event just as Paphos himself did. The effects he wove into the pages work a little *too* well, driving one mage to follow his own gruesome artistic urges. Paphos is aware of this development, but hasn't come forward as *The Suspire* edition's author. He's fascinated to see how the mages' stolen souls might be affecting his creation and those who come into contact with it. The text is a Mystery with Opacity 6.

Order: Tremere

House: Seo Hel

Virtue: Ambitious

Vice: Ruthless

Obsessions: Learn how the shape of the soul shapes the artist; Unlock the deepest meanings contained within *The Suspire*; Immortality; Imagos and Yantras as art

Aspirations: Host an event introducing his current Next Big Thing to the world; Create the perfect *magnum opus*

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Art History) 3, Crafts (Painting) 1, Investigation 2, Occult (Tremere Symbolism) 4, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Composition) 1, Persuasion 4, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Alternate Identity 3, Contacts (Art World), Contacts (Music Industry), Contacts (Publishing Industry), High Speech, Mystery Cult Initiation (Tremere) 4, Resources 4, Sanctum 4, Safe Place 4

Wisdom: 3

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Hollow: 6

Mana/per Turn: 16/6

Dedicated Magical Tool: A tuning fork

Arcana: Death 3, Forces 1, Matter 3, Mind 2, Prime 1, Space 2

Attainments: Counterspell (Death, Forces, Matter, Mind, Prime, Space); Eyes of the Dead; Mage Armor (Death, Matter, Mind, Space); Mind's Eye; Permanence; Sympathetic Range; Targeted Summoning (Death, Matter); Seo Hel — Hel's Touch, Crafts from the Grim Hall

Praxes: Borrow Threads (Space 2), Discern Composition (Matter 1); Incognito Presence (Mind 2); Receiver (Forces 1); Scribe Grimoire (Prime 1); Without a Trace (Death 2)

Rotes: Corpse Mask (Death 2, Subterfuge); Craftsman's Eye (Matter 1, Investigation); Soul Jar (Death 2, Occult); Soul Marks (Death 1, Occult)

Rote Skills: Empathy, Occult, Subterfuge

Stored Souls: 6

Tremere Abilities: Soul Sight, Soul Breath, Burn Soul, Devour the Years, Secret of the Soul Jar, Lesser Soul Grasp, Hollow Vessel

Notes: Paphos' Ruling Arcana are Death, Mind, Prime, and Space.

Ziusudra
True Believer

"Your masters never tell you why you mustn't cross that line in the sand. I can tell you why: They don't want you to have something they're too afraid to take for themselves."

Background

Silas Kincaid started out on the "right" path in almost every way possible. He was born to the "right" family, a small but wealthy clan of elites who'd called New England home for several centuries. He went to the "right" schools, from high-end preschools to private high schools to Ivy League universities, and though he might have earned the occasional "gentleman's C" he managed to graduate on time and without any undue shame. Everything was looking up for him — following a short sabbatical, he'd no doubt have lucked into a cushy job with a corner office somewhere.

Then he contracted a parasitic infection while on a tropical vacation and nearly died. He spent over a year in the hospital, half of it in an inexplicable coma as his soul struggled through visions of Judgment Day, of thundering voices speaking words of power from high above the world, promising *more* — but only for the worthy. When he awoke, he found a trembling in his heart. He feared he would never be worthy, that he would die in obscurity when the End came, unable to decipher the Truth of the voices in the sky. The despair was almost enough to send him back into catatonia.

The Silver Ladder found him during his recovery, explained what he'd been through, and offered to help. Silas was only too happy to take the offer, hoping they'd teach him the answers. Instead, they taught him to ask more questions, and to accept the ugly truth: The vast majority of mages *do* die before they Ascend, no closer to solving the problems of the Fallen World than before. His mentor Ilithiya, a venerable woman of great magical skill, tried to teach him that the journey along his Path was itself enlightenment; that the questions were worth asking even if the world remained Fallen. All she succeeded in doing was inflaming the terror that lurked inside him.

Ziusudra's Awakening left him terrified of death and failure, of condemnation to permanent ignorance and a Fallen grave. When his mentor's obsessions drew her away and her attention wavered, he perused forbidden lore, hunting for the secrets of immortality he was certain existed, held out of his reach by teachers who underestimated him. In one ancient, leatherbound manuscript, beautifully and grotesquely illuminated, he found the words of an Awakened monk attracted to the Tremere philosophy, who learned much of their beliefs before discovering the terrible price each Tremere paid. The monk balked, fled, and scribed the *Acherologion* as a warning to all who might be taken in by what he saw as empty promises.

Ziusudra *didn't* balk. Though it cost the life of someone he considered a friend, he found the price well worth relief, peace, and power his Pentacle elders foolishly ignored. Though the Tremere Order demands he prove himself, just like the voices in his Awakening did, *this* test is within his grasp to pass, and he's determined to do so with flying colors.

Description

Ziusudra could be a model. He's tall, ruggedly attractive, and not yet 30. He's finally found a route to conquering his fear of death, carrying himself with charisma and an energy he hasn't had in years. He keeps his brown, wavy, and immaculately conditioned hair chin-length, just long enough to tie back. He wears tailored clothes to present an image of wealth and confidence to impress potential soul traders. He's yet to internalize the predatory instincts of a Reaper, as he hasn't yet figured out how to rip out souls on his own, and he still occasionally hesitates or makes mistakes. A tiny

part of him feels guilt for what he's doing, but he tells himself: better the victims than him. He'd always been told he was better than everyone else, anyway.

Ziusudra's Immediate Nimbus is a transient hint of faraway, booming voices, and his Signature Nimbus leaves a slight sense of chagrin behind, as if the observer is somehow unworthy. His Long-Term Nimbus steers those influenced toward unfortunate and premature failures, at the hands of grand schemes outside their control.

Secrets

Stolen Secrets: Ziusudra stole an ancient Grimoire of soul-manipulating magic, the *Acherologion*, from Ilithiya's library. Apart from containing the details of the Tremere ritual of Hollowing, it holds a wealth of knowledge about soul manipulation and anomalous substances that souls as raw materials can synthesize. Used as a reference, the *Acherologion* grants three dots of the Advanced Library (Soul Magic) Merit (**Mage**, p. 105), and does not require a Safe Place.

Rumors

"He's a little weird, but he's definitely Ladder – believe me, you'll know it when you hear him talk. He says he's on some errand for his Consilium, borrowing a book on souls from the local Athenaeum. I'm supposed to check him out. I don't suppose you've heard of the guy?"

Ziusudra's cut off from the Tremere — at least, until he proves he's worthy of their patronage — so he sticks to the fringes of Pentacle society, since it's what he knows best. It only works if the local Consilium hasn't heard about his apostasy. Luckily, he's got a knack for picking out the small fry who've yet to establish themselves and are willing to promise unspecified favors for him. He's even managed to score (or steal) a few full soul jars using this and similar cons.

"Remember Ilithiya? That théarch who used to lend out Grimoires and stuff to everybody for favors? She closed up shop a while back and refuses to trade information anymore. The Mysterium's pissed, because she's got some of the most obscure texts in the city. I heard it's because she found the secret to Ascension somewhere in that library of hers and she doesn't want to share."

Ilithiya's never come forward about Ziusudra's theft. She covered up the entire affair and spread vague stories to deflect attention from it, both to save face and to avoid censure (or worse) should others discover her negligence. Confronted with proof of Ziusudra's Left-Handed practices and crimes, she might open up.

"Listen, here's my card. Give me a call if you hear anything. Remember, he goes by Ziusudra, and he's much more dangerous than he seems. Tread carefully; if you corner him, he'll lash out like a trapped rat. And please – be discreet. This is a top secret Guardian matter. We want to keep it as quiet as we can. We appreciate your cooperation."

The so-called Guardian Emissary has enough convincing evidence to survive a surface investigation into their identity, but they are actually a Tremere agent, following Ziusudra and deliberately putting obstacles — like the cabal — in his path to see how he deals with them. If they like what they see, they'll whisk him out of danger and offer to trade some of the Order's deeper Mysteries for the best barter the fledgling can produce. If they don't, they'll leave him for the Consilium to deal with, and eliminate any loose ends that might endanger their facade — including the cabal.

Story Hooks

- Ziusudra doesn't need new souls as often as elder Tremere, but he does need them, and he doesn't yet know how to extract them on his own. As a result, he engages in the hustle full-time, constantly finding new ways to score the necessary souls while keeping would-be investigators off his trail. One soul trader-turned-victim he left for dead in the wilderness didn't die as expected; she instead wandered back to civilization and is currently hospitalized near the cabal's territory. If anyone knew to ask the right sorts of questions, they might learn who's responsible for her condition.
- The Tremere neophyte grows steadily more impatient for recognition and initiation into the Order, and takes any shortcut he can find. Lately, he's taken to kidnapping Sleepers he knows are important to more powerful or connected mages and ransoming them back for souls. Most recently, he's kidnapped someone close to the cabal, and he's not afraid to do something drastic if it means getting what he wants.
- An Awakened friend or mentor of the cabal's is in hot water, the repeated victim of Ziusudra's con games. They've discovered the deception, but have already given up more secrets and resources than they can possibly cover for, and now the Tremere's leverage is absolute. The friend begs the cabal for help, but wants them to keep it quiet, so they can stay in the Consilium's good books. How far will the cabal stick their necks out for a friend? They'll *all* be in trouble if their superiors found out they hid the presence of a soul-eating monster in the city from their Orders.

Order: None
House: None
Virtue: Meticulous
Vice: Selfish
Obsessions: Ascension; Immortality
Aspirations: Acquire an Awakened soul; Impress the Tremere Order

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Medicine (Parasites) 3, Occult 4, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Grappling) 3, Drive 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Earning Trust) 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise (Soul Trade) 5, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Advanced Library (Soul Magic) 3; Allies (High Society) 1; Library (Medicine) 3; Safe Place 5; Striking Looks 2

Wisdom: 5

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 7

Defense: 7

Armor: 0/0

Speed: 11

Health: 8

Hollow: 2

Mana/per Turn: 11/2

Dedicated Magical Tool: A gold pocketwatch passed down to him from his grandfather.

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

Attainments: Conditional Duration; Counterspell (Fate, Forces, Prime); Mage Armor (Fate, Forces, Prime); Precise Force; Targeted Summoning (Forces); Universal Counterspell

Praxes: Serendipity (Fate 1); Transmission (Forces 2)

Rotes: Kinetic Blow (Forces 2, Athletics); Supernal Veil (Prime 2)

Stored Souls: 1

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Dmg	Init.	Dice
Unarmed	0B	–0	6

Tremere Abilities: Soul Sight, Soul Breath, Burn Soul, Devour the Years, Secret of the Soul Jar

Notes: Ziusudra's Ruling Arcana are Forces and Prime.

APPENDIX
CONDITIONS

The following are Conditions referenced elsewhere in this book.

ABYSSAL DEBILITATION

Your character has reached out to the Abyss, exposing her soul and Pattern to its corruption. All damage she suffers for this Condition's duration is resistant; suffer a one-die penalty to *all* rolls. Increase this cumulative penalty by one die for each additional befouled spell she casts. Decrease the penalty by one at the end of each chapter; if it's reduced to 0, the Condition fades without resolution. While the mage suffers this Condition, casting a spell *without* befouling it requires a successful reflexive Resolve + Composure roll, which also takes the Abyssal Debilitation penalty.

Roll Results

Success: The mage casts the spell without befouling it.

Exceptional Success: The mage casts the spell without befouling it, and resolves this Condition.

Failure: The mage must attempt to befoul the spell.

Dramatic Failure: As failure. In addition, the Rabashakim cannot attempt to control any Paradox the spell generates, and the Abyss claims her immediately, transforming her into a Nasnas (p. XX). This resolves Abyssal Debilitation.

Resolution: Exceptional success or dramatic failure to avoid befouling a spell, as above. Beats earned through this Condition are Arcane Beats.

BERSERK

A spark of berserk rage lights within your character. The fury inside demands that he lash out, and the descending red mist makes it hard to tell friend from foe. Each turn, you must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll to avoid attacking the nearest target with whatever weapons or magic your character has to hand. Even if you succeed, suffer a –3 on all actions other than attacking or otherwise trying to destroy the nearest target. Your character always attacks sources of Supernal magic first, then sources of other magic. He only attacks Sleeper targets if they're triggering his Peripheral Mage Sight, for any reason.

Resolution: Fall unconscious, or run out of magical targets to attack.

DEGENERATE MANA (PERSISTENT)

Your character cannot regain Mana without performing what would qualify as an Act of Hubris against Falling Wisdom, if she had Wisdom. Oblations she performs at a Hallow or as part of a Legacy *must* include such an act; spells like Channel Mana and other ordinary ways to regain Mana fail unless she's performed one within the same scene. Performing blood sacrifice for Mana always refills her Mana pool completely.

Resolution: End the Abyssal curse.

Beat: Suffer harm or significant setbacks due to running out of Mana.

DISSONANT TUNING

The Sleeper's soul resonates more insistently with the Lie, amplifying its effects on Supernal phenomena. Whenever he witnesses obvious magic alone, treat the Paradox roll as though there were several Sleeper witnesses instead; if he's part of a small handful, treat it as though it were a larger group; and both a larger group *and* a crowd containing him give the roll the rote quality. Rolls made to gauge Dissonance caused by the Sleeper achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five. A Sleeper who loses his last dot of Integrity while suffering this Condition becomes a defect in reality through which a Gulmoth or Acamoth tears itself into the Fallen World, killing the Sleeper in the process.

This Condition can be temporary or Persistent. If it's Persistent, it grants a Beat whenever a spell or other phenomenon the Sleeper witnesses achieves exceptional success on a Paradox or Dissonance roll.

Resolution: Gain a dot of Integrity; achieve exceptional success on a breaking point roll.

MAGE HUNTER (PERSISTENT)

Your character is consumed by an obsession with hunting and destroying magic wherever she finds it, starting with the Awakened. She gains "Destroy Magic" as an additional Obsession that can exceed her Gnosis-imposed Obsession limit; once per scene, when she destroys an Awakened mage, gain *two* Beats rather than one. She must spend a Willpower once per chapter to avoid acting on that Obsession, within one full scene of her exposure to anything that triggers her Peripheral Mage Sight. Each distinct trigger requires a separate Willpower expenditure. She no longer regains Willpower when she sleeps unless she's made progress in eliminating a source of magic that day.

Resolution: Gain a dot of Integrity, achieve exceptional success on a breaking point, or go three full days without anything triggering Peripheral Mage Sight.

Beat (Willpower): Suffer harm or trauma from a magical source as a result of pursuing this Condition's Obsession.

SUPERNAL HARROWING (PERSISTENT)

A Harrowed Banisher has contaminated your character's soul. Whenever he casts a spell, uses an Attainment, studies something with Active or Focused Mage Sight, or otherwise uses his magic, he suffers a point of bashing damage, as a Harrowed Banisher does. You suffer a –1 to all rolled actions due to the pain of the character's Peripheral Mage Sight. Each time within a scene he suffers bashing damage from his own magic without having resolved this Condition, this penalty increases, to a maximum of –3; it resets to –1 at the beginning of the next scene.

Whenever your character loses Wisdom, roll his new Wisdom as a dice pool, with the Condition's penalty. On a dramatic failure, he becomes Harrowed himself and replaces his Wisdom with Integrity. At the end of each chapter in which he doesn't resolve this Condition, he risks Wisdom degeneration, with the penalty you suffered from this Condition at the end of the last scene.

Resolution: Regain a point of Wisdom or achieve exceptional success on an Act of Hubris roll while the Harrowed isn't in your character's presence.

Beat: Your character fails to cast a spell due to this Condition's penalties, or falls unconscious from bashing damage caused by using magic.

TAINTED ASPIRATION (PERSISTENT)

Choose one of your character's Aspirations (not Obsessions) each time she gains this Condition; she may have multiple different Tainted Aspirations. All rolls made in pursuit of that Aspiration take a three-die penalty and dramatically fail on any failure, and any supernatural effects or other mitigating factors that would prevent the worst consequences of this curse from impacting her suffer the same. If she fulfills the chosen Aspiration and replaces it with a new one, the new one is also tainted.

Resolution: End the Abyssal curse.

Beat: Suffer a dramatic failure due to this curse.

Awakening is a blessing. It's pure enlightenment, arcane knowledge, untold Mysteries, unimaginable power.

Awakening is a curse. It's all-consuming addiction, existential despair, desperate loneliness, dangerous hubris.

Awakening is knowing you can do whatever you want, and then doing it. Damn the consequences if you like, but your damnation doesn't erase them. Bending reality to your will intoxicates you, but you're not the only one who can. Staring into the Abyss frightens you, but if you can just learn enough and work hard enough, you can conquer even that — can't you?

Night Horrors: Nameless and Accursed includes:

- Full entries for Awakened antagonists that you can pick up and use in your chronicle, with traits, story hooks, and more
- Second Edition rules for Banishers, the Rapt, Scelesti, and the Tremere
- A guide for Storytellers to help run scenes of conflict between mages

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