

# DEAD MAGIC



BLACK DOG  
GAME FACTORY

THE TOME OF LOST CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS FOR IMAGE: THE ASCENSION®  
FOR ADULTS ONLY

# DEAD MAGIC™



BY DANA HABECKER, JESS HEINIG, JAITIES STEWART AND CHRIS TANG

## CREDITS

**Authors:** Dana Habecker, Jess Heinig, James Stewart and Chris Tang

**Additional Material:** Kevin Andrew Murphy, Heather Smith

**Development:** Jess Heinig

**Editing:** James Stewart

**Art Direction:** Aileen E. Miles

**Interior Art:** Guy Davis, Fred Harper, Paul Phillips, Steve Prescott, Conan Venus

**Cover Art:** Steve Stone

**Front and Back Cover Design:** Aileen E. Miles

**Layout and Typesetting:** Aileen E. Miles

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SUITE 128

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# PROLOGUE: THINGS BEST LEFT BURIED



Poring over the ancient manuals, Alistair felt a grim satisfaction. Everything was ready. With the simple linguistic regimens he'd practiced as a Hermetic student, learning the Sanskrit had been simple enough. Getting through the Greek was a little harder; the ancients didn't inconvenience themselves with spacing or punctuation. Moving from one to language to the next proved extremely frustrating, and translating it all into Enochian was equally taxing. Still, the work had progressed. Slowly, he had separated the tiny snippets of value from the badly mistranslated mire. Finally, he had pieced together just enough to begin dying.

With the Traditions scattered and the chances for any real advancement slim, Alistair, like many other mages, had to find his own path to enlightenment. For some, that meant braving the nightmarish storm that even now howled across the barrier between worlds. For others, it meant turning their backs on old rivalries, instead focusing upon simpler challenges like revitalizing their neighborhoods or bringing a little mysticism and wonder to their families and friends.

But Alistair had a more practical goal: He didn't want to die. Or, more precisely, he didn't want to die of old age. He'd pieced together several bits of history and lore, dug around until he could copy or steal the information he needed and made a few more excuses to himself that he was only doing what he had to do.

The Hermetic Order in which Alistair trained offered a great many spells — formulae to control the very forces of the cosmos, rites to bind spirits and angels, potions to ward off aging. Much to his dismay, though, Alistair had learned that the formulae for the much-vaunted potions of longevity were not only costly and difficult, but also, in his case, ineffective. No one was quite sure why — with his reasonably potent magical skills, Alistair should've had no trouble staving off natural aging for a good century — but the typical formulae simply didn't work for him. Several alternatives, all stemmed from Hermetic understanding, were similarly flawed. Though Alistair might've found a mage from a different Tradition to perform the trick, he neither knew anyone else with that skill nor trusted his mortality in the hands of another.

So he'd done the work himself, and now the years of research were over. Alistair's manor was empty, his allies long since gone and his sanctum left inviolate. In his spare hours, he worked out the complex formulae and mathematical correspondences. None of his companions were aware of his project; as his hair grayed and his face creased with age, he'd remained the dignified senior magician, dutifully shouldering the burden of his maturity while the others played their games.

Alistair had delved into hellish manuscripts detailing the Infernal creatures of Babylon. He'd decrypted their astrological symbols using certain Greek interpretations. He'd taken his own knowledge of mystic properties and researched infusions of blood, ash, soil, semen and gold, all in the pursuit of the proper balance of purification and putrescence. He'd burned tiny symbols onto his skin so he could wear their power as he set out careful patterns that led the eye down dangerous paths, into places where corners bent and lines faded into constructs that left their finite ends open, where the mind dropped at objects that didn't meet the demands of corporeality and consciousness snapped in an attempt to accommodate symbols carrying far more weight than space itself could hold. His own sanity had crumbled long ago. To his companions he was an agreeable if distant scholar, but now he held only a burning desire spelled out in imprinted blocks of curved impressions, layered over a shattered remnant of reason that quibbled at the personality foisted upon it while it drained out into oblivion.

Striding to a silver cage in one corner of the artifact-cluttered room, Alistair palmed the pin with his left hand and watched the bird within. It still slept, soporifically unaware due to Alistair's simple magics. A quick motion unlatched

the cage. A moment later, Alistair shoved the screwlike pin into the bird's neck, piercing its throat. He regarded the bird absently as it slowly bled to death. Somewhere in his head, another frayed tether snapped; a mad gibbering bubbled up in his mind, unbidden, as if echoing throughout the room.

Returning to the table, Alistair began a chant of single syllables — "La la... ah nee... esh ka... la la..." The soothing chant contradicted the rising panic in his head as he breathed smoothly, picking up the rest of the serrated needles in one hand. Though he'd spread a numbing paste over his body, Alistair knew that his organs would soon feel the sharp pains of the ritual. He let out a final breath and closed his eyes.

As his breath escaped, Alistair felt his power, his life, settling into the key points of his body — the places where the needles channeled the trapped energy, building loops that prevented it from fleeing. He placed the first needle against one wrist and shoved, the serrations tearing his skin, muscle and veins, the fiery sensation bringing the bilious gibbering to a sudden screech that Alistair could not release lest he interrupt his dissonant chant.

The next needle bit into his thigh, ripping the muscle and causing him to collapse sideways into the large oaken desk. Blood pooled around his feet, dripping from the fresh wounds as he fumbled off his ritual robe. He jammed another needle into his stomach, then another firmly into his pubic bone. He managed to wrap a weakened finger around a simple bone flask, a tiny thing holding no more than a sip of liquid. As he fell backwards, he sucked the liquid into his mouth, committed now and unable to stop this mutilation of body and spirit. He jammed the final needle into the crown of his head, and the virulent fluid in his mouth trickled down to the pit of his butchered soul.

Shivering as his blood oozed over the cold stone floor, Alistair began the process of dying. He would never reach the end.





PRESOTT

# INTRODUCTION



Every culture has its magic, be it simple charms and spells or elaborate mythologies and rites. Though the march of time destroys civilizations through decadence, decay, barbarism and war, the dreams of their people survive. From common legends to forbidden blasphemies, the mystical secrets of lost civilizations claw their way into the practices of those who study the arcane today.

Some magic has become mundane. Little phrases make their way into everyday language: "gesundheit."

Tiny gestures become habits: a pinch of salt tossed over the shoulder. Items of power become decorations: wreaths hung on doors. Private myth becomes public ritual.

Some secrets, however, are too revolting or dangerous to make their way into broader society. Perhaps entire cultures practiced dread rites that were reviled by their enemies and for which they were wiped out... or, perhaps, later civilizations did not understand the power behind their predecessors' bizarre ways. Regardless, magics are buried and left to the decrepitude of time until they are unearthed again by those with the will and vision to risk depravity in exchange for power.

# BE WARNED



The buried secrets of long-dead cultures do not come easily or without price. Some of these recovered magics demand sacrifices of virtue or life. A few are not so twisted, but hint at the hideous profanity practiced alongside them.

**Dead Magic** is not for the faint of heart. In this **Black Dog** book, mages explore the lost magical arts of ancient or secretive cultures. In many cases, these arts were buried for a reason — they were too vile for any human to practice sanely. Still, in the quest for enlightenment and personal power, a few are willing to risk everything.

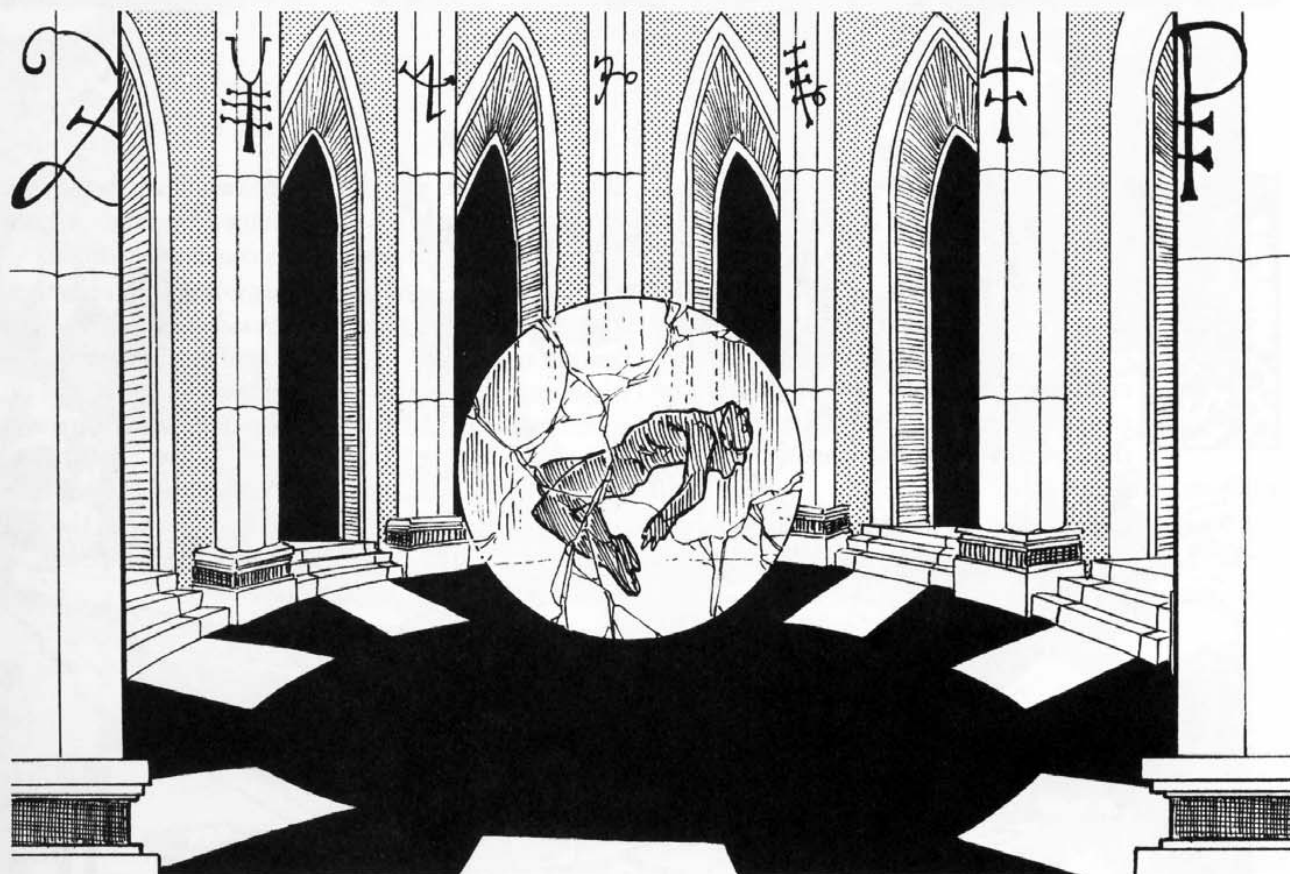
Each chapter of this book describes a cultural angle, giving the history and legend of a small area or era of civilization. Mages relate tales of their travels and studies while Storyteller aids offer new magics, Traits and plot ideas drawn from these diverse locales.

**Chapter One: The Lands of Nod — Sub-Saharan Africa** describes the plains and jungles of the southern reaches of the Dark Continent. It is here that many believe mankind was born, and though the ways of early people may have been primitive, their primal roots held

undiluted power. Still, the many tribes that roamed the earliest lands of man honored peculiar traditions, from disfiguring jewelry to scarification to dances of bravado, entrancement and disaster.

**Chapter Two: The Cradle of Civilization — Mesopotamia** looks at the first cities of recorded history. Babylon, Sumeria and other giants stood as testaments to man's growing ability to conquer nature and to form communities of thinking men. The sorcerer-priests of this age, however, also unleashed Infernal creatures that preyed upon man but granted power to their servants. Though the cities are gone, their unwholesome influence lingers.

**Chapter Three: Fire in the Jungle — Mesoamerica** delves into Central and South America, where the great civilizations of the Aztecs, Incas, Mayas and similar cultures once flourished. Extinguished by the conquistadors, these peoples built monuments that showed a keen understanding of mathematics and engineering, yet they also played bloody games and worshipped gods that demanded constant warfare. Humans became little more than fodder for blood-thirsty deities... but there is power in blood.



**Chapter Four: Pillars of Philosophy — Greece and Rome** explores the historical cultures of Europe, the foundations of much modern philosophical thought. From the legendary cursed heroes of Greek myth to the powerful legions commanded by mad emperors, these societies influenced the very course of thinking and social structure for ages to come. But along the way, Greece invented hubris and the doomed hero for European legend, while Rome went from an imperial power to a teetering ruin of debauched excesses.

**Chapter Five: The Top of the World — The Arctic Circle** joins the Inuit, a culture not quite extinct but ignored by the modern world. The old nomads of the frozen North were capable hunters and shamans, with their own gods, their own creation

myth and customs for survival in a world where the nights can last for months.

## ⊕ OTHER PLACES FAR AWAY

Though **Dead Magic** takes a look at several cultures, it cannot be comprehensive. Any one of the cultural groups explored herein could be the subject of many books. Storytellers should dig deeper into other resources for further inspiration.

The absence of Asia's early cultures may come as a surprise, but Asia itself is so large that its many disparate groups could hardly be explored in a single chapter. Asia's historical demons are unearthed in **Dragons of the East**.

### THE USUAL DISCLAIMER

**Dead Magic** deals with mature themes and subject matter. By that, we mean that as a **Black Dog** book, it has a frank appraisal of many historical cultures, including some of their unsavory, dangerous or horrific practices. While in some cases these may have been stretched for the sake of the game — this is, after all, the **World of Darkness** — these cultures have their roots in the history of the real world. This doesn't mean that their practices are safe or that anyone should try them.

If you're queasy, easily offended or inclined to try dangerous stunts, then you'd better put this book away. These pages contain secrets that even powerful mages can't control... and you're no mage.



# CHAPTER ① ONE: THE LANDS ② OF NOD — SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

*My recent Disciple, Simon Pain, has undertaken a pilgrimage of sorts. Always a student of history, he's decided to see first hand the wonders that our world has to offer. I can only condone such mind-broadening activities; hopefully, the truths that he has learned will help to educate others in our Chorus.*

*Simon has sent me several pages of notes and observations from his trip to Africa. I believe that they are worth your interest even if they are not always directly practical for our everyday needs.*

*— Joseph Kellerman, Adept of Four Spires Chantry*

*According to some, Africa's the real Eden. Scientists suspect that humanity got its start on the Dark Continent, and the place still has enough mysteries hidden away that we might never know the truth of the matter. Religious folks sometimes point to Africa as the Eden from the Bible, rolling up nicely the bits of historical evidence and theological conjecture. It could all be too much imagination or not enough information; it's hard*

to say. What I can say is that is that this place is old, and it has its share of ghosts. Maybe civilization began between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, but that doesn't mean Africa is unimportant - it may well be that the people who settled closer to the Middle East were nomads cast out of Eden, if you believe the scriptures, or just migrated there due to population pressures.

African culture has survived a long time given that a lot of its early (or even recent) history is totally oral. Unfortunately, that also makes it hard as hell to follow up on things: the absence of hard records means that most of what we have to go on comes from distorted handed down stories and a few fragmented artifacts. Of course, if history's malleable, then maybe stories are just as good as any written record. Better, perhaps, if we can choose what we want to see as true.

Naturally, people expect me to focus on Egypt while in Africa. You know, that sandy kingdom to the north - pyramids, mummies, that sort of thing. But that's a mistake. Egypt has been so heavily mined for mysticism and meaning that it's real work to separate the authentic from the crap. Better, I think, to go to south, to what may well be the source of all humanity. Back to beginnings, if you will.

### An Outsider's Perspective

All right, so I'm a white boy. I'm studying a culture outside my own. Why should anyone care what I have to say? After all, they could always go to the source. Still, my status as an outsider has advantages: I can look at this stuff in a context outside its own culture, and I don't take anything for granted so I ask more questions. Take from this what you will.

### Human Origins?

According to what scientists tell us - and you know how reliable they are - proto-people (well, a proto-person, anyway) wandered around in the area that's now Ethiopia about two million years ago. To make a really long story short, several different sorts of proto-folks eventually combined to form the people that we know today (though we've all seen the sloped brow types in the LAPD). These first "humans" had the advantage of brainpower, which meant that they used tools. They also apparently developed communication, in order to take advantage of the ability to learn. Gee, we're so smart. If you buy into the Technocratic party line, we started with rocks, got into grunts, sidetracked for a few million years into superstition and are just now getting out of the rut.

But I don't necessarily buy that Technocratic conceit. In the Bible, humans had already developed intelligence, communication and at least some tools - we're told that they were going to have to develop farming, at least - when God booted them out of Eden. Of course, sources are confused and references to other people besides Adam and company imply that people already lived outside of Eden (who did Seth marry, anyway?), but that could just be because Adam and his brood were "God's chosen cre-

ations" and not the sole human proprietors of the planet. Other creation stories get similarly interesting: humans have variably been spat, spit, born, carved and willed into existence, and most have a sort of "Go forth and multiply" phase, but that's all theology and this is supposed to be anthropology. The upshot is that people may well have been dumped in what we now regard as Africa after the mythic exit from paradise or what have you. (Where those island dwelling guys who claim that they've never lived anywhere else came from, your guess is as good as mine.)

Now, for you mystically inclined folks, there's another option, depending upon your favorite flavor of conspiracy. Ancient astronauts, spores from space, Lemurians or what-have-you have all been credited at one time or another with the foundations of the human race. But where'd they come from?

Well, assuming that they didn't come from space or the Umbra, they may well have come from lands that no longer exist. See, until the Technocracy set the world in stone, locations were much more fluid than they are today. Once you could sail out into the ocean and have absolutely no idea what you would hit - you still can in some rare places. It's possible that those legends about Atlantis hold some water and that men migrated onto land from parts unknown.

So how does this all come together and deal with Africa? Well, science is just one way of looking into the past; mystic divination and the like is another. The specifics may contradict but all the threads lead back to Africa. Whether you use a divination bowl or logical deduction, it all comes back here. It's impossible to say whether that means people just popped out here from some place or evolved from tree-dwelling simians. All we know is that Africa is the crux, not how or why.

Given that all sources point to Africa as the birthplace of humanity, it's surprising that it doesn't get more study. I suppose it's because people (images, too) tend to assume that African culture is somehow "inferior." After all, African nations didn't conquer the world, discover America or harness mystic forces to shape world-crossing rituals, so they must not be worth the time, right?

Bullshit. Mankind's roots grow in African soil; this place is also the center of magical thought, spiritual development, and the very impetus that raised man above animal. It's the place where humans first learned to do magic: the magic of thinking. That's power.

### Indigenous Ingenuity

Humanity's inventiveness was a survival trait. It discovered new tricks: tools, fire, spirituality. Science tells us that humans came up with crude bone, stone and wood tools to hunt and build shelters. Myth tells us that humans talked with spirits, dealt with the incarnations of intelligent

animals, worshipped gods and traveled a dangerous world far broader than anything we know today.

Imagine living in that time: Once omnivorous scavengers, humans learn to work together, call for the aid of spirits, harness fire and wood as allies and communicate in groups. More importantly, they learn to question - to make explanations for things, to experiment, to have a curiosity about what's over the next hill. Dangerous, compelling times: people believe what their senses tell them because there's no other way to deal with the world.

Perhaps the rise of intelligence was the first true Awakening. Perhaps humanity rose from the ruins of some earlier civilization, lost to history and the concealing, changeable mists of the past. We'll never know. But we keep asking the question, just like our predecessors.

Neolithic cave paintings show, among other things, pictures of humans using bows to attack bison, as well as each other. Pieces of stone tools show chipping, scraping and chiseling edges. Obviously, science wants people to believe that these were the only tools of ages past. Science can only offer suppositions about these artifacts, while oral traditions keep alive tales of gods, animal kings and heroes. Which is the greater truth?

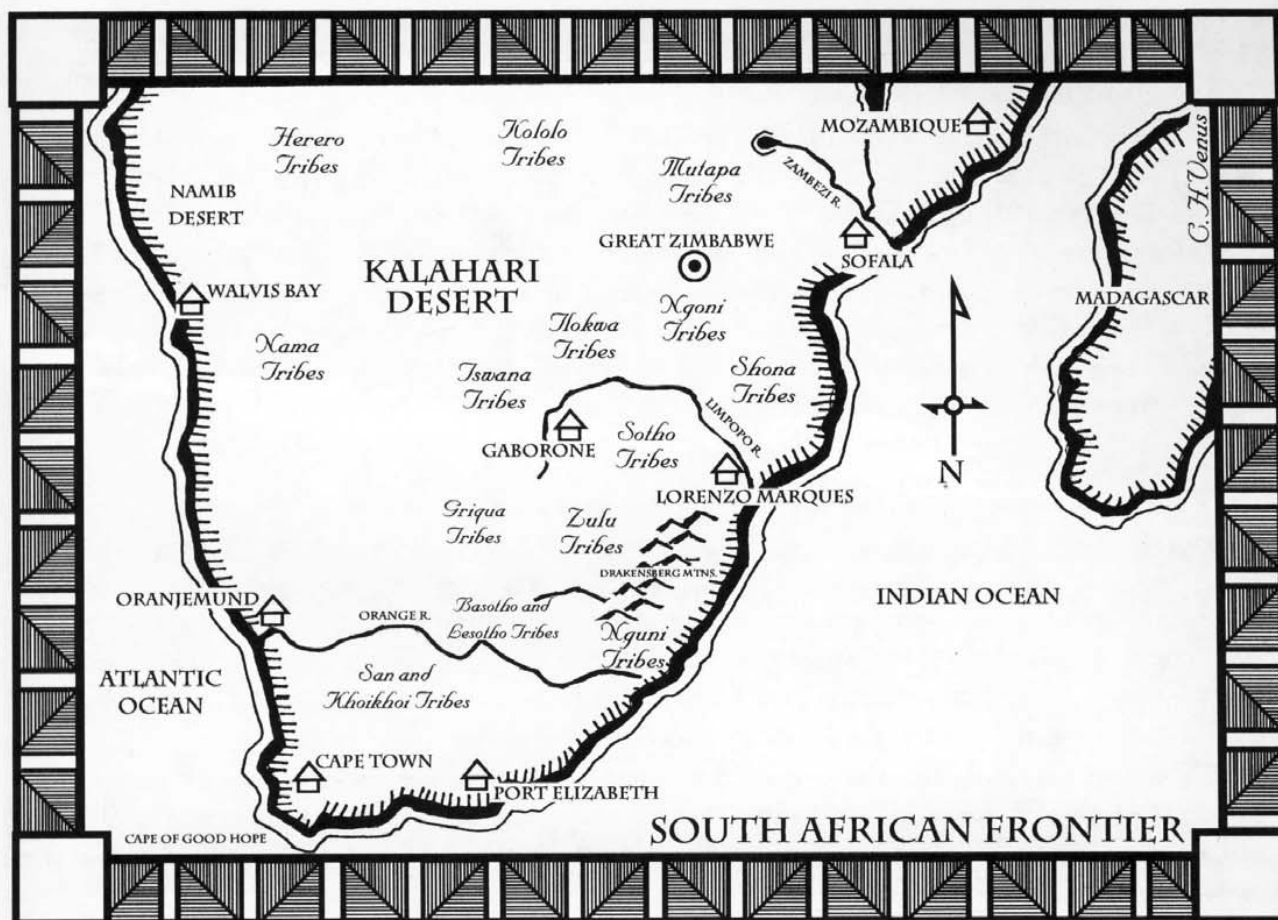
## Early African Inhabitants

The earliest inhabitants of southern Africa were the Khwai, a group that includes most early human hunter-gatherers of the region. They predate historical records - archeology and word of mouth are their legacies. Their home, the area now called Namibia, is flat and featureless: they could hardly have lived in a harsher environment. It's mostly desert - indeed, the Namib is the oldest desert in the world, and the famous Kalahari is here as well - and some very old riverbeds and a few watering holes. Inland, it moves from desert to the dry plains that people know from National Geographic. The early hunter-gatherer culture probably lived by hunting antelope, and possibly large lizards and manifold insects.

The southern reaches of Africa include everything from sand dunes to carnivorous crickets (seriously). This harsh environment left little time for philosophy, complex construction or intellectual discourse. Hunting was the order of the day. By night, the Khwai probably gathered around campfires, told tales and tried to give some meaning to their wanderings. It's always been human nature to attribute work to the day and mysticism to the night. The Khwai slowly spread, becoming the Bushmen - who survive (barely) today.

Bushmen existed solely in loose families of nomadic hunting groups, with little in the way of specialization. The idea of tribes didn't come until much later. Simple rock shelters shielded them from the worst of the elements.

The Bushmen's one concession to anything outside of their hunting culture, as far as can be told, was art: Painters left rock-face depictions of wars, hunts and myths. Few of these paintings survive; most faded away after a few centuries. Painters were an exception to the usual Bushman



society - they traveled from group to group, telling stories, trading information and leaving paintings on nearby rocks, both for information and entertainment. Indeed, the painters may have been the earliest examples of magicians among human society; some tales credit them with the power to bring their images to life or speak with the dead. Typically, a painter carried gourd of colored paints and brushes made from bush stems and feathers, as well as mixing materials and various raw ingredients to grind into new paints. It seems that each painter had his own secret formula for paints, too. As the sole nonhunting specialists in Khwai society, they occupied a privileged place and only acceded to other experts of their trade, perhaps inadvertently forming the earliest magical society as well.

Ten thousand years ago, the Bushmen developed agriculture and animal domestication. This led to settlements and to the development of distinct cultural identities. Eventually, the Khoi-Khoi (more widely known as "Hottentots") displaced the Bushmen. Khoi-Khoi villages rose in the arid but habitable locales near watering holes. That was pretty much the status quo for several thousand years: Nomadic Bushmen wandered north into the Congo and beyond, while settled groups existed in subsistence societies in the blasted deserts. The Khoi-Khoi had diverged noticeably from their ancient ancestors, and were taller and stronger than the Bushmen, but

still attributed a great deal of superstitious dread to the San (their derogatory term for the Bushmen).

Then the Bantu arrived and brought with them the idea of tribal societies. These early social structures allowed the Bantu to organize their groupings, and they managed to enslave or drive out the nomads. Other communities soon emulated the Bantu and took up tribal structures. Most of these remained local organizations, but a few kingdoms cropped up, especially in western and central Africa: the Ife, Great Zimbabwe and others hailed from this time, and it's here that we start finding the real details and remnants of African culture.

## Early Legends

The Bushmen and KhoiKhoi had their share of stories, of course. Though many of their tales are simple, it seems that the Bushmen certainly had experience with spirits and magic. Early creation stories among the Khwai center around the natural universe and the animals that the Bushmen revered. Their tales range from the story of the man whose armpits shine light - who gets thrown into the heavens to become the sun - to the young girl who vomits cinders that become the stars.

Of more immediate interest to mages, of course, are tales of magic and witchcraft. In such stories, some magicians are considered evil and cruel, while in others the protagonist uses magic and charms without any repercussions.

A great many Bushman stories prominently feature Mantis, a character who seems to bridge the boundary between human and animal. To the Bushmen, Mantis is a clever fellow, a trickster and hero who steals fire, creates the moon and changes shapes to play tricks. He's seen not as a god but as a sort of idealized Bushman, perhaps as one of the first of their kind. Mantis is even credited with watching the creation of the Bushmen: After riding a bee across the water-covered earth, Mantis lands on a great flower (presumably land) and sleeps while the bee plants the seed of mankind. Mantis wakes to see the birth of the first Bushman.

The tales emphasize that Mantis is all too human, though indeed, the legends may have their roots in the actions of a mage, a spirit or in some odd being predating both: who's to say that, in early days when men and spirits mingled, there weren't such creatures? Mantis's extended family includes many animals, so it's possible that the Bushmen revered animal spirits, much as some Dreamspeakers still do. The Bushmen I spoke with always knew at least one tale involving Mantis.

Another notable "mage" in Bushman stories was Heiseb, an old magician. Heiseb apparently has a varied lot - he consorts with inhumans, lays curses on the selfish and in one story even creates death: Heiseb's son feigns death from hunger until he's buried, at which point he digs himself out; Heiseb actually kills his own son to finish the job, and in the process makes death a

reality. How Heiseb knew about death before it existed is a fine mystery... perhaps the legend speaks of death metaphorically as slumber, or perhaps death was somehow impermanent. Either way, it's clear that Heiseb possesses knowledge beyond the pale. However, what he does isn't as important as what he knows. Heiseb knows about death. He knows about the hidden failings of people, and he knows how to discern motive from appearance. Whether he's a painter or just an oddity, the legends don't say - my guess is that Heiseb was, like all mages, an exception to the normal rules.

Oh, and one last Khwai story: Legend has it that the Bushmen can speak with baboons. This comes from the tale of Cagn, a Bushman whose son was killed by baboons back when "baboons were like little men." Cagn uses magic to track down the baboons as they dance about the tree where they've hung his son's body. With a spell he forces them to continue dancing, while he fetches several wooden pegs, which he promptly hammers into their backs. After this odd ritual, the baboons run off to the mountains, becoming nothing more than chattering animals. In the most curious part of the story, Cagn raises his son Cagaz from the dead by magic; too bad there's no description of how he did so!

*A curious tale, and one that leads to speculation: The name bears a resemblance to the Caine of vampire legend, as studied recently by our illustrious House. It could well be that this story relates an early tale of that mythical vampire progenitor and his creation of one of the first vampires - raising his dead son by magic, or in this case, by turning the corpse into one of his kind.*

*- Karen Lumed bani Tjtalus*

The Bushmen spoke of legendary beasts and animals, too. Gigantic, horned serpents seem to be a favorite - progenitors of dragons, perhaps? Some cave paintings even depict snakes crushing entire hartebeests. The early Bushmen hunted snakes with reed nets. Such serpents were said to have lived in swamps and river banks in the more humid and temperate areas of central Africa. According to tales, snakes thrashed wildly enough to saturate the air with rainbows, thus giving them their name: karteigin kooras, or "king of the water." Things of this sort may still reside in the hidden tropical areas, though I've not seen them.

Bushmen also attributed rain to bulls - not surprising, since cattle herding became a staple once later cultures developed animal husbandry. Cattle were used as a measure of wealth. With water as precious as it is in the desert, the connection seems a natural one. Stories tell of giant bulls that lived near springs and rivers, which had to be lassoed with a magi-

cal leather thong created by a shaman. The hunters then led the bull across lands where they wished rain to fall, and the shaman ritually butchered it so that its corpse guaranteed a bountiful harvest. The similarities to Verberna magic are readily apparent; even early men knew the value of sacrifice (though Technocrats would doubtless point to the use of the bull's corpse as a fertilization technique and nothing more).

For a people so dependent upon water, though, the Bushmen certainly showed an unusual fear of the rainbow. Aside from its appearance at the thrashings of the Kasteijn Kooras, the rainbow came as a harbinger of fire. Stories tell that the rainbow was a manifestation of the spirit of rain sent as vengeance for the killing of the son of the spirits of rain and fire. To the Bushmen, it's an omen of doom. Those with black hearts are struck dead by Rain, a spirit who wears the rainbow as her belt.

As a final peculiarity, the Bushmen tell stories of an afterlife and of dead spirits, but not as separate from the world. Perhaps their culture predates the sundering of the lands of the living and the dead. Some Bushmen practiced ritual mutilation and deliberately cut off the first joint of one of their own little fingers. Their stories tell that the afterlife is a place called *Too'ga*, a fertile place along the Orange River. The dead aren't separated from the living - indeed, those who go through the finger-cutting rite easily walk there, while those who don't are forced to travel on their heads, fighting various beasts along the way. Apparently, the dead can come back; ghosts are said to ride on storm clouds, and the Bushmen even sang to the ghosts to convince them to bring storms to water their patch of desert. Since the wind was attributed to a winged man at the edge of the world, the Bushmen placed the fables of their world firmly upon human shoulders - as if the randomness of nature stemmed from human unpredictability.

The Khoi-Khoi, who succeeded the Bushmen, naturally adopted many Bushman legends, but also told quite a few of their own. Indeed, they credited the Bushmen with supernatural powers and feared the Khwai. For their part, the Khoi-Khoi told less fanciful tales. Settled in their agrarian society, the Khoi-Khoi valued stability and naturally gravitated toward different myths.

The Khoi-Khoi start with a different creation myth than the Khwai according to their views, the world was formed by T'sui-Goab - "Wounded Knee" - a powerful deity. (And people ascribe monotheism to later cultures. They're obviously not looking hard enough.) T'sui-Goab began life as Ut-tixo, a potent shaman who could see the future and return from the dead. As Ut-tixo, he battled Gaunab, an evil enemy chief, and eventually struck Gaunab down but shattered his knee in the struggle. Eventually, he passed on to myth becoming the god in Khoi-Khoi legends, while Gaunab became his dark antithesis, the enemy of man and the sender of death. T'sui-Goab was even said to live in a beautiful heaven while Gaunab resided in a dark pit -

the parallels to later monotheistic religions are clear, though T'sui-God's rise from mortality to godhood seems a reversal of the Christian concept of God incarnated.

With their settled lifestyle, the Hottentots don't tell many tales of fantastic creatures. Perhaps this was because they didn't roam into the mystic places where Bushmen went; maybe mythic beasts avoided their settlements. Whatever the cause, the Khoi-Khoi stories of animals usually revolve around more mundane creatures, though they often feature talking animals - a characteristic that the Bushmen ascribe to animals before mankind's use of fire scared them away. The jackal figures prominently as a trickster whose cleverness often gets the better of him; the rabbit shows up as a lazy creature and an ill omen. Again, it's clear that the Khoi-Khoi had a mystic tie to the animals around them. Perhaps some spoke with animals in a legendary time or revered animal spirits as well as their god.

Among the Khoi-Khoi's tales of legendary animals reside a few myths about shapechangers. Interestingly, they're almost invariably women. Whether these are magicians or actual shapeshifters of a more mystical sort is unknown. However, they're rarely seen as antagonists. Still, the Hottentots of legend clearly fear them. In one story, a woman changes into a lion at the behest of a fellow traveler, who is so terrified (even though he prompted her to transform) that he climbs into a tree and refuses to ever travel with her again.

Like the Khwai, the Khoi-Khoi counted water as an essential part of their lifestyle. Though they don't seem to ascribe human properties to rain and wind, they note the power of animals to bring rain. The chameleon was said to be able to call gray clouds, and children born in a rainstorm could supposedly cause rain if sent to walk alone. Water itself supposedly had curative and protective properties. A piece of wet clay or a dab of cold water was considered a ward against the spirits of the dead. Evil sorcerers were dunked in cold water, which was thought to neutralize their power.

Once the Bantu arrived and brought with them the idea of tribes, superstition and legend changed. The Hottentots adapted Bantu beliefs to witchcraft: The Bantu brought tales of naglopers, or night walkers, who stalked the people of the kraals (African villages) and wore only the bones of human digits. Naglopers traveled only at night, accompanied by baboons and owls who served as their familiars and omens of their passing. Naglopers were said to dig up bodies after burial, using the extremities for attire and for various foul rituals. Stealthy and cunning, the naglopers entered huts walking backwards and drained the life of the inhabitants, leaving them weak and sometimes ill the next day. Naglopers were also said to rape their victims, taking their carnal pleasures from sleeping humans who remained unconscious due to the night walkers' powers. Bantu witch doctors rubbed mystic concoctions into cuts, which caused a painful burning when a nagloper neared. This allowed sleepers a chance to awaken

before being victimized. Since the legends describe naglopers as having humanoid features and intelligence, naglopers may well be some sort of vampire... though I can't say for sure.

## Great African Civilization

Though the typical picture of historical Africa is a bunch of scantily clad Bushmen running around with bows and spears, the central African plains and jungles were home to some startlingly sophisticated civilizations. The Ife civilization of Nigeria brought with it Yoruba legend, which later influenced animistic traditions like Candomble, Ifa and Santeria. It also developed bronze working, which was taught to the Benin. Great Zimbabwe, a city that flourished from prehistoric times to the 1400s, boasted thirty-foot-high walls, traded gold and copper with the rest of the world and became the commercial center of a powerful state. Saying these were "primitive savages" is pretty much dead wrong.

Really, once outside of the nomadic civilizations, African culture opens up in startling directions. There are the Achanti, known for their weaving; the Dogon, who practice terraced farming in Mali and hosted oracles and community healers; and the Masai, who are known for elaborate jewelry of copper and iron as well as their skill at hunting. It's hard to make generalizations about such varied cultures.



Of course, the establishment of cities and trade opened the door to formal magic. While nomadic societies could depend upon the occasional superstition, settlements allowed for specialists - witch doctors. As a result, not only did the great cities of central Africa develop bronze and iron tools, trade with Europe and Asia (long before colonial times) and organized warfare, they opened the doors to ritual magic, enchantment and their own forms of spirit talk.

Spirits played a major role in old Africa: Villages often used fierce masks or carved heads to ward off evil spirits, while witch doctors offered ceremonial sacrifices to the more benevolent entities. The roots of such spirit dealings probably came from ancient Bushman traditions, but settled witch doctors had other concerns. Spirits were consulted to foresee evil, restore health and serve as patrons for natural places of prosperity (such as rivers). Even today, it's common to see a painted figure or a carefully constructed shrine intended to scare away malevolent spirits or appease beneficent ones. Tourists and "scientific education" cheapen the magic of such places, but it's still there if you know where to look.

In the cities that flourished in central Africa, common people took up iconic practices. Soldiers carried charms, travelers wore amulets blessed by priests and the Yoruba communed with their ancestors through masks and figurines. In many cultures, men and women went through coming-of-age ceremonies by joining secret societies - not unlike political parties mixed with a good dash of mysticism, like the Traditions. Figurines served both as icons of worship and as tools for divination.

Spiritual ties also factored strongly in healing. Practitioners of traditional medicine often accredited malaise to evil spirits, which had to be fought to restore health. To ward off the spirits, medicine men used animal sacrifices and trances, and also called upon the favor of good spirits with songs, dances and rhythmic music, often gauging the emotional state of the victim to determine the appropriate treatment. In some cases the community became involved as well: A shaman might bring forth associates of the victim to find people who harbored grudges or evil thoughts that cast forth shadows of sickness, or he might ask the community to sing together in order to call the good spirits to speed the victim's recovery.

One quick linguistic note: The term "medicine" is used interchangeably with "magic" in many African languages. That's probably because the concept of "medicine," the power that heals mysteriously without any visible effect, was just the same as magic. So when Africans referred to magic in discussions with European settlers, the term "medicine" was used instead - hence "medicine man" or "witch doctor." A person who healed dealt with mysterious forces - forces that the Europeans called medicine, as far as the native cultures could translate.

Since the settled Africans relied on spirits of specific locations, they also developed ancestor worship. After all, the settled tribes re-

maintained in places where they buried their dead and were thus susceptible to hauntings and visitations from the departed. Families relied upon carvings to remind them of the dead and to forge ties to the deceased spirits; these statues provided a way for the dead could communicate with the living. In some places, the statues also functioned as guardians, defending the family against malign influences, either by deflecting the wrath of the departed or by shielding against evil spirits that might come looking for a tie to the living. Mourning periods were also common, but served a twofold purpose - not only was mourning an outlet for grief, it maintained the bond between the family and the deceased, sometimes even by severing ties between the family and the community - a sort of symbolic death of the family, as it were. Oh, and yes, they apparently buried their dead and used grave markers. It seems that such practices may well predate written history.

## Africa Overtaken

It's clear that there were tremendous civilizations in old Africa. Great Zimbabwe itself served as a trade center, shipping out gold and copper as well as local customs. During much of the Middle Ages, Great Zimbabwe not only traded with Europe, but with Asia and parts of the Middle East - after all, much of northern Africa was slowly absorbed by the spreading Muslim influence. Great Zimbabwe had a written language, even if it's one that can't be translated today. It built walls over thirty feet high. Anyone who thinks that Africa was overrun with savages during Europe's Dark Ages obviously hasn't bothered to study what was really going on.

So what happened? Europe did. By the 1500s, the colonial spirit overtook various European countries. Dutch traders may have been the most prominent ones to hit Zimbabwe, but other groups like the Portuguese and Spaniards were also looking for better routes to Asia, new lands to exploit and ways to turn indigenous peoples into subjects of their empires. Though peaceful trade existed for centuries, exploration inevitably became exploitation. The superior magic of guns, soldiers, missionaries and ships rolled over Africa like a tide, and the Europeans wasted no time in carving the continent into little provinces with enforced borders.

As an aside, just about everyone today has heard of "Shaka Zulu." The Zulus continued to live in tribal villages even up to the 1500s, maintaining their hunter-warrior culture. Shaka was a youngster who pioneered new ways for the Zulus to do things. In a time when most tribal warfare consisted of two groups squaring off and throwing brittle javelins at their enemies' shields, Shaka pioneered formation marching and the use of bronze and iron spears in close combat. He was assassinated, like most strong leaders. If Shaka had gotten started two centuries earlier, though, the whole exploration and conquest phase of the world might have come from Africa. Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

## The Myth and the Modern

So, the average mage may very well ask, "What has any of this do to with me?" The answer's simple: As Africa's the cradle of humankind, so to speak, its culture probably spread with the earliest human migrations. More importantly, the first things that mankind ever believed began here. When humanity lived in harmony with the spirit world, it was here. When people figured out their first tools, customs and taboos, it was here. The incredible amount of emotional and magical weight that such tradition and history carries means that there is real power in such beliefs. Even among tribes whose customs are not so widely practiced today, there's an undercurrent of hidden mysticism: People always have their superstitions. Just as the modern man scoffs at magic but still listens to ghost stories and reads Arthurian tales, the sheer volume of lore that's been forgotten in Africa far exceeds the collected knowledge of many other cultures. Parts of the mind still want to believe.

The upshot? Even practices that were discarded long ago retain their power. Modern witch doctors keep these practices alive in their traditions and celebrations. To someone who knows how to tap into that power, these ways offer new directions and new approaches to magic — or, perhaps, very old ones. In the rush to get something "better" we often forget simpler, older ways, but sometimes the simple way is best.

I've included some notes about my magical findings with this document. However, everything's still quite sketchy. To really understand Africa, you need to get into its heart — go there, talk to people, see what it has to offer.

## AFRICAN MYSTICISM IN YOUR CHRONICLE



It's a little too easy for a Storyteller to shoehorn African magic into the Dreamspeaker mold. That's convenient, and it's what the Traditions did in the context of *Mage*'s history, but it's inaccurate. As the notes in this chapter show, African magic may have influenced shamanistic styles, but the sheer number of cultures involved guarantees diversity.

First things first: The cursory treatment given in this book won't substitute for real research into Africa. There are too many cultures with too many disparate beliefs for all of their magic to make it in here, so you need to get some material that really lets you dig into the one or two cultures you want to use.

Second: There's precious little in the way of written history. Much of African culture is handed down through oral tales, traditional dances and archeological finds. Even though Great Zimbabwe had

a written language, that language still defies translation. Many of the oldest cultures had no writing at all, just painting and storytelling. That makes the research job even harder.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's get into how to use Africa in a modern *Mage* game.

### AFRICA AS A MODERN SETTING

Why would modern mages bother going to Africa? Any number of reasons, actually.

As this chapter has already shown, there are historical roots in Africa — roots stretching all the way back to humanity's beginnings, if you believe in evolution and anthropology. Even if you have a different take on things, there are still enough ancient cultures to keep any mage busy researching the beginnings of human thought.



The scarcity of written records can work in a Storyteller's favor: You have much more wiggle room to make up your own tales, histories and legends. There's no way to confirm or deny most of it, so the past is as unformed as you make it. That means you can pull out whatever plot thread you want, and it can be authentic to your World of Darkness in spite of (or because of) the lack of corroboration in the "real world."

For more information about the geography and politics of Africa, see **A World of Darkness**. You can also find a more detailed history of Great Zimbabwe in **The Sorcerers Crusade Companion**.

## AFRICAN MAGIC

Students of African tradition find many ways to focus spirit magic, and also to tie in defenses against malignant forces. The rites included here are just a small selection of what the modern Traditions could do based upon African ideas.

### COFFIN FOR A FISHER (... SPIRIT, .. MATTER)

Old Ghana tradition tells that a fisherman once asked his son to make a special coffin that looked like a fish, so that when he died, the fisherman could continue his fishing in the spirit world. The son honored the father's wish, and the practice became common

among those who so loved their work that they wanted to bring it with them even in death.

**System:** The mage must enchant a special coffin that's built specifically for this purpose. The coffin should somehow symbolize the job that the decedent wishes to take into the afterlife.

The player must defeat the local Gauntlet and roll enough successes to affect all the items desired, though each one could be enchanted separately if the mage is not sure of his skill. When the coffins and trappings are buried with the corpse, they appear in the spirit world as well. Thus, a ghost could be outfitted with royal jewels, weapons, or just the relics of a favored pastime. Even if your chronicle's mages rarely interact with ghosts, this is an ideal way to satisfy the deceased and keep them occupied, so that they don't cause problems by haunting the living.

The Avatar Storm (if you use it) and the Sixth Maelstrom (if it happened in your chronicle) tend to distort this Effect, and sometimes relics are destroyed before they can manifest in the Shadowlands, though that is solely at the Storyteller's discretion.

### COLD WATER'S BLESSING (.. MATTER, .. PRITIE)

As water gives life, it holds the power to protect. Evil magic can be dispersed by cold water, and villain-

ous sorcerers rendered powerless. Even vicious naglopers lose their powers temporarily if dipped in water.

**System:** The mage must somehow hit the target with cold water — whether by tricking it into a river or throwing a bucket of water at it. The mage channels the water's power to heal, promote life and wash away evils. The water soaks into the target and its power becomes primal energy that washes off evil magic (that is, its Pattern is dissociated with Matter and turned into cleansing energy with Prime). Successes scored on the Effect are used to unweave whatever magic that the subject might have, be it a malign enchantment or a special power.

The Prime magic already invested allows the mage to discriminate between magic with a friendly, positive Resonance or an evil, malignant one, so the Effect does not inconvenience a sorcerer who has no ill intent. With Time magic, the caster can cause this Effect to "wait" on the target and then use successes to unweave a later evil spell or Effect that the subject might try to cast — Effect successes counter the supernatural powers of the subject. Thus, an evil sorcerer dunked in water several times (with an extended use of this Effect) might find his next few spells fizzling.

#### COUNTER-IRRITANT (•• LIFE)

In addition to mundane surgery, some healers in Somalia used a counter-irritant, a heated nail or metal rod. The rod was heated then applied to an injury. Obviously, such a practice cauterized the wound. Medicine men believed that the scream of the patient also allowed the pain to escape from the body, and that the patient's recovery subsequently quickened with less chance of infection.

**System:** The mage applies a cauterizing instrument to a wound. (Hopefully, the character has at least rudimentary medical knowledge; cauterizing a wound improperly can lead to shock or even death.) The subject must be allowed to scream — with that scream comes out all of the pain from the injury. A full turn after the Effect is completed, the subject no longer suffers penalties from that particular wound for the duration of the Effect. The caster can also choose to use some of the successes to speed the healing of the wound — each success cuts mundane healing time into a fraction: with two successes for healing speed, the subject heals in half the normal time; with three successes, a third of the normal time and so on. Since most people believe in the efficiency of cauterization and sterilization, this Effect is usually coincidental.

#### DOGON DIVINATION (•• TIME, • ENTROPY)

Dogon and Yoruba priests use a ceremonial tray in conjunction with 16 kola nuts in order to divine the future. The priest holds the tray in his lap while he quickly passes the nuts from hand to hand. As he passes the nuts back and forth, some fall out and make marks on the tray's flour-dusted surface. Once he is finished, the priest reads the pattern left in the dust and uses it to contrive a sacred poem. That poem offers insight into the future or into the actions that a subject should take.

**System:** Like the more traditional forms of Time Sight, this rote allows the caster to glimpse indirectly into the future. The mage does not actually see what will happen; rather, he gets an idea of what patterns are emerging and how actions *now* can help to avert a bad fate *later*. Though the ritual always gives some result, the successes on the Effect give an idea of how accurate and clear the advice is. With only one or two successes, the mage may get a poem that seems cryptic or only peripherally related to events at hand, while with more successes, the reading inspires a poem that eerily parallels current events or shows an obvious and clear threat looming in the future. Interested Storytellers might want to actually look up some Yoruba poetry to find a passage appropriate to their chronicles.

If the Storyteller feels a little overworked by having to fit a mystic African poem into his chronicle, she can simply advise the players as to a specific course of action — if the characters follow through, then the Effect's successes can be used to enhance a later use of an Ability, in the usual fashion of Magic Enhancing Abilities (see **Mage Revised**, p. 155). Such successes are not cumulative; one divination must be fulfilled before another can give insight into the future.

#### FIND THE GUILTY (•• MIND)

In Gabon, death is often attributed to malign influences or evil spells. The power of a person's ill will toward someone else figures prominently in some other societies, too. Though it's too late to do much *after* someone has died, a priest can still find the killer — or at least someone who harbored resentment or hate toward the victim. This can open the door to finding out why and how someone was killed, or whether there are hidden, malign feelings seething beneath the surface of an otherwise proprietary occasion. Should a dark secret come out in this fashion, the priest might well learn of some impropriety on the part of the deceased. Such a ritual is good for closure: Those who harbored hatred toward the deceased can let it out, while the

priest can also uncover and resolve problems that the deceased may have left behind.

To find the guilty, the priest dons a ceremonial headdress, complete with ritual scars, paintings and hairs. The priest then dances among a group of villagers until his feet cause him to stop. Since the headdress may not include holes for the eyes, the priest stops only when the magic prompts him to do so. The person in front of whom he stops is the one whose grudge or disaffection figures somehow in the deceased's demise.

Because this ritual relies upon dance, mask and other cultural icons, the caster must work with a group that understands the ritual's purpose. Among the African tribes that used (and still use) this ritual, everyone understands its purpose after a death; if it's used among people who did not understand it, the ritual carries no weight and thus does not function — though the caster could explain the nature of the ritual beforehand.

Note that this ritual normally is used only with men. Tradition holds that women must not look upon the mask.

**System:** Though this spell does not actually call upon the spirit of the deceased, it lets the caster pull on the emotional strings of those around him. Since everyone involved knows what's happening, their thoughts and memories regarding the deceased are fresh in their minds. Even if individuals try to bury such thoughts, the caster's magic can sense and pull out the general feeling; once the caster stops his dance in front of a guilty survivor, he can proceed with normal or magical questioning to figure out *why* such feelings were there.

Roll the Effect as usual; the mage need only score enough Mind successes to sense the mental impulses of guilt or resentment harbored by one of the ritual's onlookers, and his magic draws his dance to that person. This is often done as an extended Effect: While the mage dances, he lets his mind wander out and sense each person separately, rather than trying to grasp the entire group at once. In game terms, the player rolls for the Effect separately against each onlooker, with the mage moving on with his dance until he finds a guilty party or fails to find anything.

Naturally, appropriate Mind techniques can defend against this Effect. However, a guilty party who wishes to shield his thoughts deliberately must use the normal mental defense rules — for a Sleeper, that means spending a point of Willpower to gain a resistance roll.

## SENSE THE NAGLOPER (•• LIFE, •• TIME, • MATTER)

The malign influence of naglopers can cause illness, fatigue and even death. Since the nagloper's mystic powers enable it to keep its victims in slumber, Bantu witch doctors devised a powder that, rubbed into a shallow wound, would burn when a nagloper neared and thus awaken the victim.

**System:** The magician makes a shallow cut in the living flesh of the subject, then rubs in his magical powder while murmuring protective words. Time magic holds the Effect in place until a nagloper approaches, its presence revealed by its unnatural connection of living and unliving (with Matter and Life). At that point, the powder begins to burn and itch, awakening the subject or at least alerting him to the nagloper's presence (with Life magic). Successes can be diverted to duration (so that the powder keeps itching longer, possibly to wake up a deep sleeper) and to distance (so that a nagloper can be detected before it gets within reach).

This formula sometimes alerts a subject to the presence of vampires other than naglopers, if indeed naglopers are a sort of vampire at all....

## HALT THE NAGLOPER (•• LIFE, •• MATTER, •• TIME)

The dread nagloper often sneaks into tents and huts to feed upon the energies of the occupant, but it can be halted by a proper enchantment. A false *kerrie* (club) placed in the doorway serves as a focal point for the spell; when the nagloper tries to cross the threshold (walking backwards to conceal its approach), it freezes over the club, unable to move so long as no one speaks within its hearing.

**System:** The Time magic hangs this Effect in place on its focal point, the club placed in the doorway. Once the nagloper steps over the club, the Effect paralyzes it. So long as nobody speaks within its earshot, the nagloper cannot move for the Effect's duration. An Effect cast with only a few successes lasts a few turns, and might merely inconvenience a nagloper; with multiple successes, the creature could be entirely paralyzed for some time. Traditionally, an individual inside is also protected by the rote **Sense the Nagloper**, and that individual wakes up and goes to fetch the head of the village, who decides what to do with the beast.

This rote sometimes works on vampires as well, though not reliably.

## HEALING FIGURINE (••• LIFE)

Figurines of animals or people, especially those associated with benevolent intent, can help in the healing process. A carved figure with a magical container at its center can hold healing energies; placed in a room, that figure's energy helps to heal the occupant. Also, an individual can insert and remove a nail from the figure so that its power flows over him. A mage can prepare such a figurine and give it to a friend, or even make one that permanently gives off healing power so that anyone near it benefits.

**System:** People in the area of a healing figurine just naturally seem to recover quickly — they sleep well, their wounds heal without difficulty and they fight off sickness. The mage "plants" his successes on the Effect into the figurine; when it is in a room with injured people, or when someone thrusts a nail into it then pulls the nail out, the figurine unleashes some of its power. The successes stored allow the figurine to heal people just like a simple Life Effect, though generally healing takes a full day of rest for each health level (it's neither instant nor wholly vulgar). If the figure runs out of successes, its power is exhausted.

With enough successes, a mage can permanently render a figurine a healing Artifact. Such a figurine causes everyone in its vicinity to heal at the accelerated rate of one health level per day (excepting aggravated wounds). Such a creation is very potent and requires a great many successes.

## MASQUERADE TO ADULTHOOD (••• SPIRIT OR •• CORRESPONDENCE)

Coming-of-age rituals are common to many cultures — from body piercings to midnight stories that pass on the knowledge of manhood to drunken revels with sports buddies, every culture has its own way of acknowledging the transition from child to adult. In some African cultures, the transition is as symbolic as it is physical: The supplicant dons a specially carved mask and perhaps even a costume or voluminous robe. The outfit protects against eavesdropping or malign spirits during the ceremony and also serves as a transition — a child dons the mask, but it is an adult who removes it. Since many cultures include secret societies, the masked supplicant can listen to the words of the elders and learn the secrets of his family or tribe then push the dangerous knowledge to the back of his psyche as the mask removes accountability.

**System:** This rite serves as a part of a coming-of-age ritual but, when performed with the help of a mage, actually defends against spirits that eavesdrop

on secret societies or interfere with the rite. **Masquerade to Adulthood** also works as a change to the supplicant's mind. The mage overseeing the rite performs this ritual over the ceremonial mask and costume. Effect successes with Spirit can be used to make a ward against spirits. Once the mask is removed, the ward ends (if it lasted through the whole rite at all, depending on the Effect's duration).

Successes used to mute the supplicant's Pattern ties (with Correspondence) reduce the intensity of anything connected to the supplicant's childhood. The ritual turns boy into man; things that had an arcane connection to the child have little or no ties to the adult. Thus, a favored toy that counted as a moderate arcane connection could be reduced to having no special ties if the mage casting this Effect scored enough successes. This doesn't stop the newly released adult from building new arcane connections with old things, of course.

## PAINTING THE WAR DANCE (•• MATTER, WITH •• MIND OR •• TIME)

Bushman painters carry small gourds with their own special mixes of color and use brushes teased out from feathers or sticks to make the strikingly vivid rock paintings for which they are famed. They are so skilled that they need not hunt; instead, they travel from gathering to gathering, telling tales and making paintings in exchange for food and shelter. The most skilled among the Bushmen painters, it is said, could evoke motion and a semblance of life from their pictures. Simple figures danced, moved and performed the stories that the Bushman painted.

**System:** With paints mixed by hand from various natural sources, the magician draws and colors an image of a story. Then, the mage channels his own thoughts and images (with Mind magic) or past events and history (with Time magic) into the image, and the paintings move and take on their own semblance of life. The picture shows the scene that the mage paints, playing out history or the tales of the painter's choice for the duration scored on the Effect roll. Most painters use an extended Effect, spending a great deal of time on the painting. With Time magic, such paintings can show old battles, hunts and scenes from life; with Mind magic, the mage can create whimsical and fanciful tales. The Matter magic allows the paints to move and spread across the rock after they are applied.

Once this Effect ends, the figures stop moving and become normal paintings.

## REFLECTING BANE

(... SPIRIT OR • MIND; OPTIONAL ... LIFE)

Though evil spirits and thoughts can cause harm to people, those malign influences can be reflected with a proper mirror or a polished, reflective statue. Sometimes the spirit sees its reflection and is frightened; in the case of evil thoughts, the whispers of malice are reflected away from the target and dispersed into nothingness. Shamans often place a mirror or reflective statue next to a sick individual to protect him from the evil influences that caused the sickness.

**System:** A reflecting mirror or statue wards against the evil influences of spirits or mental attacks, depending upon how it's enchanted. One designed to reflect malignant thoughts uses Mind magic, of course, while one built with Spirit magic defends against evil spirits. Such an Effect has the usual shielding/warding defenses, though naturally mages most often employ this rote for someone else's benefit. The statue defends against ghosts or other supernatural powers that might harm the subject. If Life is added, the figurine or mirror also speeds the subject's healing.

## SING DOWN THE RAIN

(... MATTER, •• FORCES)

Chanting old prayers or hymns to the dead, the magician can coax ghosts into riding their clouds closer to a desired location. As the dead shepherd the clouds along, the magician convinces them to send down some life-giving rain. Shamans used this Effect to guarantee good crops; modern magicians might use the rain for cover, to slow pursuit or just as a show of power.

**System:** The magician croons a short poem or song that calls to the clouds and their ghostly riders. The magic nudges the clouds to a desired destination with Forces while causing them to give up some of their moisture with Matter. The resulting saturation varies with the mage's successes: One or two successes bring a brief sprinkling, while five or six successes send down a reasonable quantity of rain over a small area. An extended ritual that scores 10 or 20 successes could deluge an entire village. The difficulty might vary by one or two points if it's cloudless or particularly humid on a given day.

## SOOTHE THE DEAD (... SPIRIT)

In Nigeria, priests warn that the remains of the dead must not be disturbed lest their ghosts return to haunt the living and cause catastrophes like poor crops and droughts. To warn the people and to avoid drawing attention from malignant spirits, priests use a voice disguiser — a long, decorated tube that causes the

priest's voice to take on a booming, dissonant quality. Not only is this distinctive to living listeners, but it reminds the dead that they are remembered.

**System:** The mage must use a ritual trapping of some sort, often an actual voice disguising tube, in order to make his voice known to both the living and the dead. As a mundane reminder to the living, the speeches of the mage hopefully prevent Sleepers from digging into things that they shouldn't — though in a place where this sort of thing is unknown, it may well draw curiosity from onlookers.

To the dead, the voice of a mage when it comes through this device becomes resonant, commanding and soothing. Knowing that they are remembered, ghosts continue their slumber without disturbing the living. The mage's Effect roll soothes ghostly passions, causing them to sleep; if the mage manages to best the ghost's Willpower in an extended roll, the ghost falls into a torpor and does not bother the living for at least eight hours, or until some object of significance to it is disturbed. (In **Wraith** terms, the mage can force a wraith into Slumber; the wraith Slumbers for a full eight hours unless its Fetters are disturbed. An unwilling wraith can use Pathos to fight off the Effect with the power of its Passions, or spend Willpower to resist in the same fashion that a living individual might resist a Mind Effect.)

## WARDING HEADS (... SPIRIT)

Carved heads are used in western Africa to ward off the influence of malefic spirits. Placed in shrines or at the edges of villages, the heads can be designed to frighten, and thus dissuade hostile spirits, or they can be made pleasant so as to mollify. Sometimes the heads are actual masks that are used in masquerade rituals; other times, they are simple figurines placed in tiny shelters where they stand watch over the village.

**System:** The mage carves and paints a wooden head, possibly as a hollow mask. The process of building the head imbues it with the mage's power, so that it acts as a ward against spirits. With enough time and effort, the mage could actually make it permanent; in such a case, the head is treated as an Artifact and its ward works as long as the head remains intact and the ward unpenetrated.

## WALK TO TÖÖ'GA (... SPIRIT)

This disturbing ritual is thought to protect the mage after death on his journey to the afterlife. The magician cuts off his own small finger (taking two health levels of lethal damage) and focuses his power through that sacrifice. Once the magician dies, be it of

age or through mischance, his soul moves on to the afterlife unhindered by evil spirits or hazards. Obviously, since the lands of the living and the dead are now separate, this ritual does not help the mage in a physical walk to the Deadlands — rather, it defends his soul after death in the Underworld.

In earlier days, **Walk to Too'ga** allowed the subject to walk easily to the afterlife along the Orange River, but that land of the dead is no longer present in the world of the living. Indeed, this ritual was once so simple that anyone could perform it, but now it requires the use of magic.

**System:** In game terms, a subject protected by the **Walk to Too'ga** is unlikely to become a ghost — instead, his spirit moves on to its final rest, unhindered by material concerns. If some driving need forces the spirit to remain as a wraith, the **Walk to Too'ga** protects and shields that wraith: The ghost enters the afterlife shrouded from harm and near a hospitable place in the Tempest, probably somewhere in the Dark Kingdom of Ivory (see **Wraith** for information about the Underworld). In short, the spirit is unlikely to remain as a haunt, and even if magic is used to communicate with it, it arrives safely in a comfortable afterlife instead of the torturous hells that dot the Underworld.

## ARTIFACTS OF AFRICA

Magical tools blend seamlessly into African magical practice. Masks, figurines and paints focus enchantment; is it the mage or the tool that holds power? Magicians understand that some items and practices hold a potency all their own, which is merely drawn out by the cunning sorcerer. Still, a strong mage can give an otherwise mundane object the gift of power. Both views have importance in the synthesis of African magic. An item may hold the power given it, or release the power it naturally channels.

### BIRD STAFF OF OSANYIN (3-PT. ARTIFACT; \*1 PT. AS A PERIAPT)

According to Yoruba legend, the god Osanyin watches over medicine and herbal remedies. When his elder priests die, their spirits become birds. To represent Osanyin's secrets, the shamans carry iron staffs tipped with crude bird-shaped figurines all along the many curving spires at one end. The staff helps to focus Osanyin's power so that the shaman can call upon knowledge of his departed elders.

Such a staff can channel the expertise of those past lives; in effect, the holder has three extra dice of the *Dream Background*. A few staffs also function like

Periaps, holding extra Quintessence; such staffs hold only four or five points of Quintessence.

### DIVINING STAFF (6-PT. ARTIFACT)

Just as a priest can seek out the guilty by searching for evil thoughts and ill wishes, a divining staff can pull toward such negative energies. A priest gathers together the community and lets the staff guide his hand. The staff, a long rod topped with two sharply curving, overlapping spires, points to the person responsible for evil among the group. Even if the person does not know of his transgressions or believe himself evil, the staff attunes itself to the harmful energies surrounding the subject.

A divining staff naturally seeks out the cause of problems in a small community, much like the rote **Find the Guilty** but without the concomitant limits. The staff points out who is most likely responsible for difficulties that the community faces. Such staffs are not perfect, though, and can be fooled by protective magic or may create more problems by pointing out someone whose helpful actions inadvertently cause trouble — the staff simply seeks the guilty, without remorse for extenuating circumstances.

### DOGON DIVINATION BOWL (2-PT. ARTIFACT)

The kola nuts and special trays used in ritual divination are stored with the care one takes with holy objects. Carefully adorned bowls with carvings of animals served as containers for divination tools. A bowl that is blessed and used to store such tools increases their efficacy for divinations.

Though the kola nuts and trays are simple focal tools, they deserve the respect due their magical station. When properly cared for and stored in a blessed divination bowl, such focal tools greatly improve the chance for a helpful and accurate divination; tools that have resided in a divination bowl for at least a week subsequently give a -1 difficulty modifier to proper divinations (such as the **Dogon Divination** rote).

### HEALING FIGURINE (6-PT. ARTIFACT)

A mage can temporarily enchant a healing figurine, but powerful magicians can craft figurines that hold and continue to draw healing energy. Such figures are valued as heirlooms, placed in a corner of a room where they can watch over the wounded and constantly exude vigor and health.

As an Artifact, a Healing Figurine doubles the rate of natural recovery for anyone resting in the room that it guards.

### MEDICINE BAG (2-PT. ARTIFACT)

A proper medicine bag holds the tools of the shaman's trade. Not to be confused with the medicine pouches of the Americas, an African medicine bag holds bones, shells, twisted roots, sticks and teeth all meant to help in calling upon the spirits for favorable healing. Normally, such a pouch is considered a focus for Spirit or Life magic, but a few are actually enchanted to coax spirits to the shaman's aid.

A formally enchanted medicine bag grants one additional die on all magical Effects that involve the Spirit or Life Spheres for healing purposes. Conjunctive Effects that heal and protect gain this bonus, but anything else is out — a mage cannot weave a conjunctive Effect that heals a friend while baking an enemy and expect the medicine bag to help.

### VOICE DISGUISER (2-PT. ARTIFACT)

A voice disguiser looks like a simple tube, adorned with colored seeds and a painted face at one end. A priest speaks through such a device to distort his voice and make it boom with authority. The **Soothe the Dead** rote relies on such an object, but some magicians invest a voice disguiser with the power to grant such authority over the spirit world to anyone who speaks through it. The magical form of a voice disguiser allows the speaker to send his voice into the Underworld, where its vibrations soothe ghosts, just as if using **Soothe the Dead** — but an enchanted voice disguiser can be used by anyone, not just a mage. So long as the speaker recites praises to the dead or warns the living not to interfere with their rest, the sound weaves its sleepy charms upon ghosts.

A voice disguiser typically has two dice to attempt to put ghosts into slumber (difficulty 5). It functions as per the rote **Soothe the Dead** but works for anyone who uses it properly.

### ZULU WARSHIELD (2-PT. ARTIFACT)

The Zulu warriors used long, oval shields with wooden reinforcements and hide coverings. Hide came from cows herded by the Zulus, with each Zulu detachment choosing its own patterns from the hides. After being dried in the sun, buried under manure and pounded into thin, hard layers with rocks, the hides were painted with colors based upon the experience of the warrior to carry it. It is said that Shaka believed that a shield dipped in water could even deflect musket balls. Though the Zulus fell to the British Army, they managed to overtake most of the tribes of their era and even held off Dutch explorers. Perhaps some of the shields really could deflect bullets....

A treated Zulu Warshield is a rare trophy, and certainly draws attention if carried openly. Protected by magic and its rituals of construction, such a shield adds an additional die to the soak pool of the person who carries it. In addition, a shield of this size increases an attacker's difficulty to hit by 2.

### TRAVELER'S CHARIT (1-PT. CHARIT)

Soldiers often carried good luck charms into battle; cattle herders carried bone charms to ensure breeding and travelers sometimes asked priests to bless an antelope horn charm for good travels. Such charms slowly wore out but could be rebuilt, added to and blessed again.

A good luck charm blessed by a priest or magician brings luck to the wearer — such a charm could provide a reroll on any one nonmagical task up to three times before its power is used up. After that, it must be blessed again.

## STRANGE CREATURES OF AFRICA

Africa's savannas and jungles are home to a few legendary beasts mentioned in the campfire tales of the natives. As large swaths of Africa regularly go without any human contact for months at a time, and many of the jungles and swamps are uninhabited by anything but beasts, it is quite likely that the Bygones of Africa survive unhindered in the far corners of the wilderness. Indeed, hunters may well stumble across such creatures from time to time, caught completely off guard.

### RAIN BULL

Found only at the heads of streams and rivers, a rain bull appears to be nothing more than a fine specimen of his species. A mystically sensitive hunter can tell, though, that it carries with it a strong Resonance of the water near which it lives. Legend has it that a rain bull brings a downpour if its horns are roped with a blessed thong and it is guided across dry fields. Should it be slaughtered and its remnants buried by a priest, sweet onions and other good crops are guaranteed to grow.

A hunter trying to rope a rain bull has to land a thong around or over one or both of its horns — generally, a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 8) is appropriate. Then it's a contest of strength to tug the bull into place; the bull uses Willpower to resist in addition to its formidable strength, but once it's out of Willpower, it becomes docile. Once startled, a rain bull usually flees, but if cornered might well gore its assailants (rain bulls do, after all, have the same temperament as normal bulls). Rain bulls could be thought of as living

reservoirs of Resonance and Tass; they are not really a mystical creatures, and could be bred with normal cattle (which would have no special traits). The rain bull simply holds the power of water, which is released by proper rituals.

Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

**Willpower:** 5, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Gore for 8 dice; trample for 6 dice

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 1

**Quintessence:** 5

**Resonance:** (Dynamic) Rainy 2

### KOUTEIGN KOOOROU

The king of the water seems like a tremendous snake, possibly with stunted horns on its head. It occupies deep water in swamps, often in jungles far from dangerous hunters. Unlike mundane reptiles, kouteign koorou has a malign — if simple and animalistic — intelligence, and it delights in crushing animals or humans for the sheer pleasure of killing. Such a beast is a true danger to travelers and wildlife alike, though its hide or flesh might be useful in magical experiments.

Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

**Willpower:** 5, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Once kouteign koorou gets its coils around a victim, it uses its Strength in a resisted roll against the Strength of the victim; for each success, the victim suffers one level of bashing damage. When the victim runs out of bashing health levels and falls unconscious, the snake continues crushing for lethal damage as it collapses ribs and induces asphyxiation.

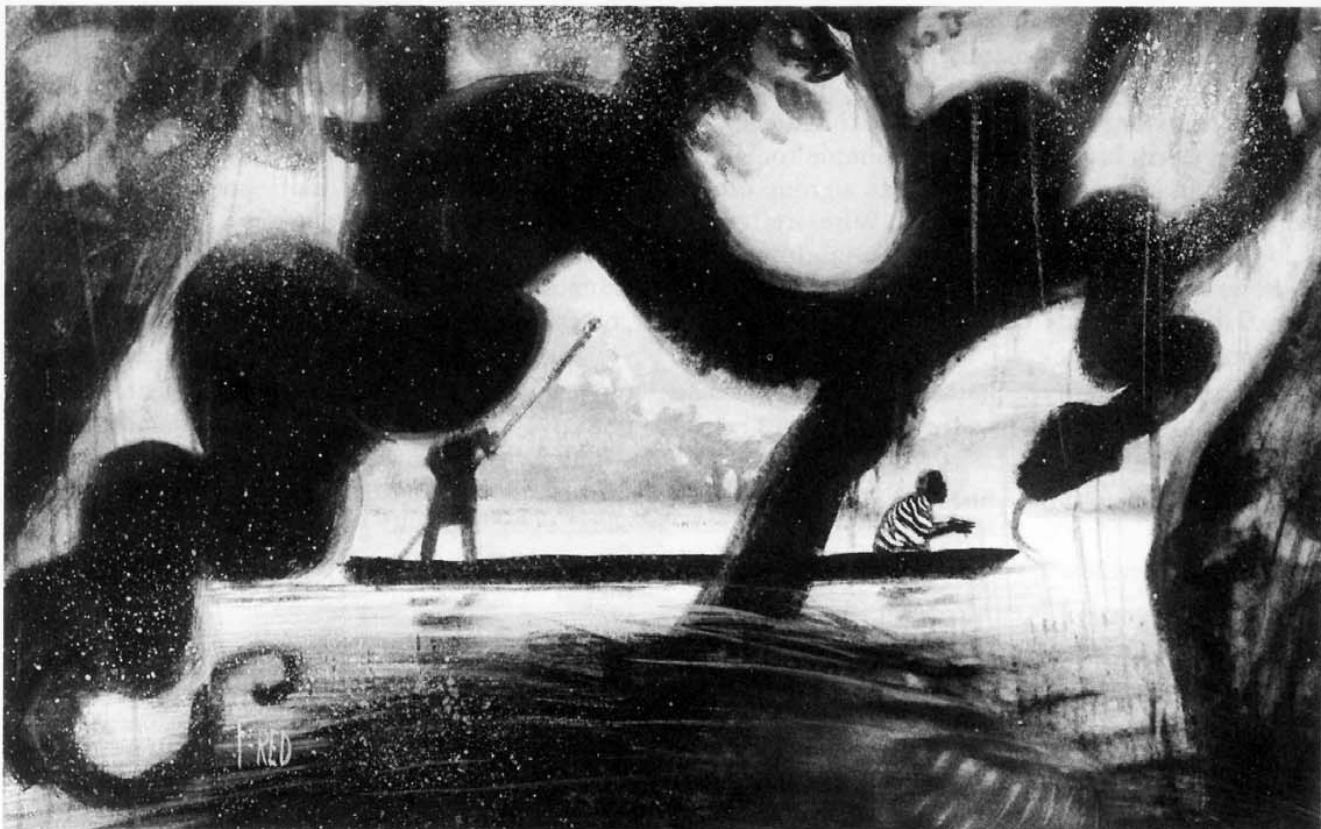
**Abilities:** Alertness 4, Brawl 3 (grappling with coils only), Dodge 3

**Quintessence:** 10

**Resonance:** (Entropic) Thrashing 3

### NAGLOPER

The nagloper are strange humanoid sorcerers that stalk humans during the night and feed upon the life forces of their victims. As a nagloper approaches a settlement, its magic puts the inhabitants to sleep. The nagloper enters backwards so that its footprints face the wrong way, and then it proceeds to drain life from children and sexually assault adults while its enchantments keep the people asleep. Victims wake up exhausted, sometimes ill, and may even die if the nagloper's attack was particularly ferocious. There are various magical ways to deal with a nagloper, but most require preparation in advance. Since a nagloper is intelligent and often adorns itself to look like a normal person (albeit traveling at night), this warning usually



only comes after it has assaulted at least one household. Individuals with magical senses might be able to track a nagloper after it leaves a habitation, though, and catch it in the midst of necromantic rituals as it uses pieces of corpses for hideous spells. Naglopers can also be identified by the fact that they are often accompanied by baboons or owls, which serve them and act as ill omens.

A nagloper can loosely conform to the rules for a young vampire in the Antagonists chapter of *Mage Revised* (p. 280). Since a nagloper feeds on life force and necromantic energy, it must be affected with conjunctive Life and Matter magic if its Pattern is to be physically altered. Naglopers might have with them owls or talking baboons (see below) and can cast various curses, sleeping enchantments and life-stealing Effects.

### TALKING BABOON

Even today, Bushmen claim to be able to speak, haltingly, with some baboons. According to Bushman tales, the baboons themselves once spoke just like humans — but perhaps the two races grew apart, or the baboons were cursed to remain animals. Biologists claim that a baboon cannot speak human languages because its vocal structure is too primitive, but a human could imitate baboon noises. However, there might well be a few baboons out there who *do* still chatter away in languages that men might understand.

Talking baboons merely possess a basic intelligence, but they can be quite cunning and dangerous. Since baboons often accompany naglopers, are known as tricksters and can use simple tools, they can be an interesting challenge to a group used to more sophisticated opponents. Wise individuals look around for *other* problems if a talking baboon shows up — a nagloper may be near, and the baboon probably has friends of its own, in addition to being a symbol of bad luck.

Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

**Willpower:** 4, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Punch for 2 dice, bite for 3 dice; may use crude weapons

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 4

## AFRICA'S MYTHIC PLACES

Not only is Africa the birthplace of humanity, but spirituality began here as well. Even though the Gauntlet long ago sundered material from spiritual, many places in Africa still touch the world that holds its

heart. Perhaps more than any other place, Africa retains sites of brutal, natural majesty and mystique.

Nodes are still fairly common in Africa, as well as natural gates to Umbral Realms of wilderness and unspoiled nature. As civilization encroaches, such spots become increasingly rare; strip-mining for precious metals and gems, constant warfare between nations, and bitter postcolonial tensions can make the Mirror Worlds dangerous in Africa. The wilds are hazardous for their own reasons, but when travelers find places seldom trod by men, their natural strength is the strength of the untrammelled earth.

### QUIVER TREE FOREST

Southern Africa is largely arid, so a stand of three hundred aloe trees in one dry place is an unusual sight indeed. Spread across several acres in Namibia is a collection of such bushes, firmly rooted in the rocky soil. As some of the plants are two or three hundred years old, this "forest" is certainly a strange spectacle. It's quite possible that the forest has been there for ages, and that the oldest trees there were simply young ones in a larger forest long ago. Protected by law, the forest is a reminder of the flourishing life in the midst of the African desert. The trees themselves grow up to twenty feet in height, with smooth trunks and bright yellow flowers on their branches.

Quiver Tree Forest takes its name from the substance of the aloe plants: Native Bushmen and Khoi-khoi made quivers for their arrows from the tough but flexible material. Though the tribes have since moved on to other places, the forest remains. Primitivists have to collect the bark surreptitiously since the government frowns upon damaging local tourist attractions, but wood taken from the trees carries a useful Resonance. The bark can be shaped into many forms of flexible containers; such objects are resilient and easily take on properties that a mage might invest them with.

A mage who watches carefully might catch a thinning of the Gauntlet here, too — it's easier to step into primitive Umbral Realms, places where memories reside from the days when mankind hunted across the veldt with bows. In small clusters of the trees, a mage could even find a way through the Umbra's Avatar Storm, stepping quietly into the spirit world while the rugged trees shake off the worst effects of the wind.

### GIANT'S PLAYGROUND

Only a few miles from Quiver Tree Forest, the Giant's Playground is a great field of dolerite boulders. The angular rocks have the appearance of tremendous building blocks once used by giants, as if worn by huge

hands and left haphazardly strewn across the landscape. Overlapping with crumbling edges, the boulders form a veritable maze, and indeed some people lose their way in the winding corridors between the stones. Presumably volcanic in origin, the rocks bear a doleful weight, as if they were left behind after their playful owners moved on to other things.

Pieces of stone from the Giant's Playground could hold a tiny bit of Tass, but a mage needs to get away from the well-traveled tourist areas on the outskirts and become lost somewhere in the maze of boulders. A

wanderer might do best to simply let his mind go and stagger throughout the corridors without thought; somewhere in the middle, the rocks themselves contain memories of older times. Sensitive mages might pick up fleeting images of earth when the stones were young, when great things walked the land (or when fiery volcanoes spewed forth chunks of rock — the images depend upon the mage's personal view of the past). However, anyone who becomes lost in the boulder maze needs to find his way out — he might run into other things that got lost long ago.



# CHAPTER TWO: THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION — MESOPOTAMIA

## SIX IN SUTTERIAN: DR. WINSTON BROWN ABROAD IN BABYLONIA



5 July 1999

Whoever first called Babylon a whore was right on the money. In Al Hillah, the crumbling backwater that withers atop the ruins of Babylon, you can get whatever you want — someone's daughter maybe, or a big, sticky ball of hash, or the passport of a dead European journalist, if you can wait until morning. The American embargo hasn't been kind. Urchins and flies and poverty and broken-down Volkswagens and the whole lot of defaced posters of Saddam Hussein on every wall. I don't want to sound like another Western capitalist asshole, because God knows that's all this place needs, but Al Hillah is a slithole by any standard.

The partially restored Hanging Gardens are gaudy and full of tourists. I'm still figuring that one out.

I'm staying in a hotel in what passes for the nice part of the city, which is to say the part farthest from downtown. The place is called the Royale Grand Prix, built by some Trump clone when we were on the other side of the Iran-Iraq conflict. The name sounds only slightly less ridiculous in translation. Still, it's not a bad flophouse if you're a foreign correspondent who's too timid to sleep in Baghdad. There's a lot of press credentials floating around — not bad cover for an 88-year-old white guy from Kansas, even though Americans are pretty scarce these days. Unless they're in F-16s, I mean.

Grunes sent me here to track down some original version of the Sebel el-Mabrouh Whash. Two Batini named Rabbath and Derimus adapted it for use in combating Nephandi. The original is much older - older than Rabbath and Derimus and older than the Latin of the earliest known edition. Surviving copies have been pretty scarce since the Inquisition. Even Dr. Benet can't find one and the Chantry in Boston isn't returning my calls. Grunes thinks the original was written in Sumerian. He thinks, and I get stuck with the dirty work.

Even after being here two nights, I can tell the old demons linger in this place. Still, the ancient city is gone and there's no good reason for the book or the tablets or whatever the hell they are to stick around. I'll find the Whash of course, because that's the way it goes. I've got a good record with this sort of thing. I'll find the Whash, learn the old rituals, kill my grandmother and retire to Lawrence and await Ascension in the next life. Did I mention that the water tastes funny here? Bedtime.

7 July 1999

The first days of the search have been fruitless. I'm not too worried; time's always wasted at the beginning. A jeweler and local politico named Assad promised to show me the ruins of Etemenanki. He took me out in the desert and drove off with my backpack after we stopped so I could piss. I'm too old for this shit. A swami madam in the market down the street from the Grand Prix said that my dead wife Elizabeth had beautiful hair and had an important message for me. She offered to serve as a medium for three bucks. I told her my wife's name was Evelyn so she called me a Whore of Pepsi and spit on my hat.

My assistant Bryan's doing the real work. He got a lead from an artifact smuggler/hedge magician up in Baghdad. Bryan's on to something, and I can trust him with certain things. He's on his way to Mastery (he won't tell me which Art) and does okay in the musical chairs of the Order, but he'll probably end up as an Archmage or an Exemplar or some other equally pathetic dead end. Still, he's a good kid to have around. Spry and enthusiastic, like I used to be. Bryan insists he's going to leave if I don't tell him why I'm looking for the Whash, but he doesn't have the guts. I haven't written him any recommendations yet, so... Note to self: Find out where you packed the gun.

10 July 1999

Bryan returned last night. Baghdad was a bust. No real luck in Al Hillah either. I met a vampire named al-Morayah who said he was around when Cyrus the Persian destroyed half the city to teach the Babylonians a lesson. He couldn't tell me anything about the Whash or the demons of old Babylon, though. He did, however, point me in the direction of this Saudi bookworm here from the British Museum who might know a few things about Sumerian collections and whatnot.

There was some unpleasantness and al-Morayah had to be dealt with. When I get home, I'll apologize to Stan for my disparaging remarks about House Flambeau.

11 July 1999

The damn tablets are in the British Museum. Dr. Ghali, the archeologist recommended by al-Morayah, remembered six in Sumerian that were in particularly bad condition. The military here collects stuff every few months and they end up selling the relics to the BM. The historic types separate out the junk that just looks old and ship the good stuff to London. Ghali knew just the tablets I wanted. I don't think she really knows what they are, but if you're willing to be vulgar, a little Mind magic can stir the memory. The stupid things were right here the whole time, but I arrived late and now I'm on the wrong continent. Bryan flew up with one of Ghali's interns to get them. He'll be there by morning and secure them before Benet or some other overzealous librarian catches up to me. I hope my kidneys last long enough for me to see Bryan return.

12 July 1999

Talked to Bryan today. He got the tablets and is on his way back to Iraq with ancient mysteries in his arms.

He refused to fly back until I told him what I needed the Whash for. What do I tell him? I can't say that Gruner and I are looking for a way - any way - to wax Ingrid Brown, Nephandus, sell soul and all around evil bitch. She's also my paternal grandmother and probably the reason I Awakened in the first place. Life is hideous sometimes. I remember her pulling quarters out of my ear and I couldn't figure it out. Fucking magic.

Of course, when she came over for Thanksgiving turkey or sat in the front pew of the Lawrence Methodist Church for my confirmation, none of us knew she was a hell-bent, broom-riding, inverted Avatar whose of the Infernal Void.

But a boy can always forgive his grandmother, unless she kills his wife.

15 July 1999

Bryan arrived with the tablets. They're broken and a mean read. I can decipher most of one incantation that I'll try out tomorrow morning. Hope the stuff that's missing isn't too important.

18 July 1999

Spoke to Ea, stag of the Abzu, father of Marduk, today. Ea, the god of the subterranean freshwater ocean before Creation. I summoned him with the incantation from the Whash, the same incantation Marduk used to summon his father by reciting his titles. Ea appeared to me with the usual horned cap of divinity; streams of water (subterranean fresh water, I assume) with little shiny fish flowed from the sleeves of his pleated robes.

I asked him to share with me the wisdom of Babylon's past and he said to me, 'My son, what is there that you don't know? What can I add? All that I know, you also know.' But with the obligatory Jedi stuff out of the way, he told me about the Babylon of old, and how it was infested with demons, and how they came from many underworlds, corrupting leaders and priests, making mischief in homes and spreading disease - all the classic demon stuff that's old hat now, except that it started in Babylon. The Babylonians invented it. But Ea showed me many things - he showed me how to read the stars, and how to protect the dead.

I asked Ea if he could introduce me to Siduri, the barmaid-goddess. He declined. All in all, he was a pleasant sort, definitely a god but not too self-important. I've met worse.

30 July 1999

Spent the last few days with Ea in the bar at the Grand Prix, mostly going over old rituals and history and stuff. Ea told me how Babylon declined, and why Marduk left the city. I've transcribed some of the less powerful rituals and mailed them off to everyone I owe a favor to. Gruner gets a few since he's the one who turned me on to the Babylonians in the first place. I'm sending this impotence ritual to Hendrik because I know he's been stalking the chat rooms so long that he probably couldn't get it up with a real woman.

Babylon, Babylon, Babylon. The first demon summoners, and also the first to deal with the demons they called. We who still fight the Babylonian sorcerers' modern inheritors, the Nephandi, have much to learn from the old methods. And the best part about it is that the spells used to summon demons are damn near useless to the Nephandi. Those dark magics escaped the triple walls of the city long before its decline and now every two-bit Satanist knows them.

Bryan never got to meet Ea. I sent him back to Boston early and told him to sit tight. He'll have other chances to meet gods. Ea and I are packing our bags and heading back to the States. I'm going to show him the sights. We're starting in New Orleans and working our way up through the middle of the country and then it's off to California. When we pass through Kansas, I've got two new tricks for Grandma Brown. If the first one doesn't work, the second one will.

After that, Evelyn, I'll see you soon.

# HISTORY: FROM SUMER TO BABYLON



When on high the heaven had not been named  
Firm ground below had not been called by name,  
There was nothing but primordial Apsu, their  
father,  
And Mother Tiamat, who bore them all,  
Their waters commingling in a single body;  
No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land  
had appeared,

When no gods whatsoever had been brought into being,  
Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined,  
Then it was that the gods were formed within them.

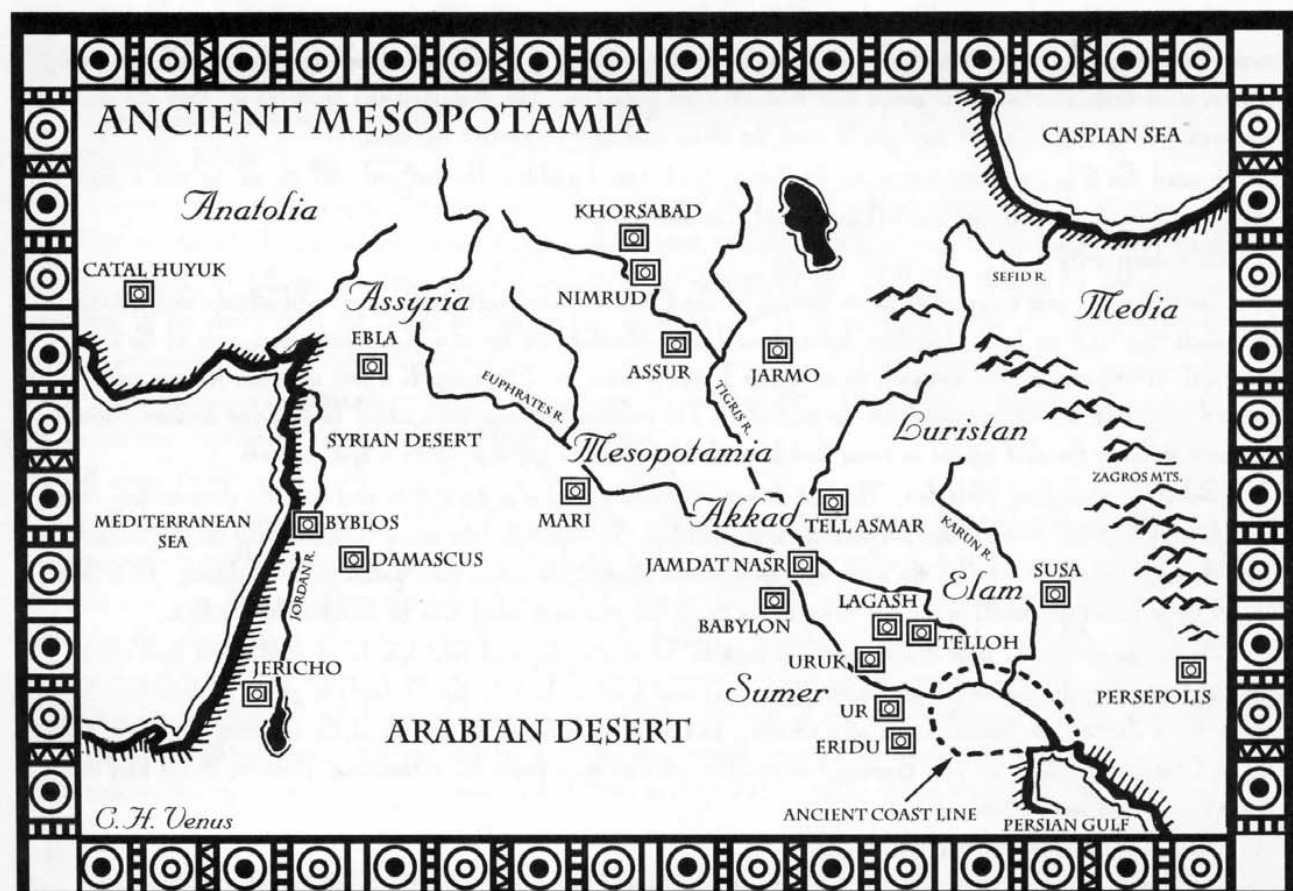
— The Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*

Tiny bands of people, struggling to survive, dotted the face of the ancient world. Among the earliest of those cultures were the people living between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The land was fertile, and the inhabitants learned to plant grains and tend crops. As time passed, their settlements grew and prospered. This land is known as Mesopotamia, Greek for "between the rivers." It is an area that stretches over parts of the modern nations of Iraq, Kuwait,

Saudi Arabia, and Iran, and is often considered the area where civilization was born.

The ancient cities of Mesopotamia were unlike anything the world had ever seen before. In Erech, in Kish, in Ur and Eridu, humans prospered. For the first time, people could apply their creativity to something other than day-to-day survival. Art and literature flourished. Scholars began studying the universe around them, attempting to understand it, to change it, to control it. The discoveries and innovations of the ancient Near Eastern peoples shaped the futures of their nations, and served as the cornerstone for the cultures that followed them.

Sumer was the first known civilization in the world, located in the southern part of Mesopotamia. Twelve thousand years ago, nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes wandered throughout the land, living off of what the earth had to offer. This mysterious group of people developed a common language unrelated to any other known human tongue. Eventually they learned to grow food of their own and began to congregate in areas most favorable to farming. In time,



## WRITING

Writing is essential to civilization. Its development is closely related to urbanization and the formation of centralized government. As the ancient Near East is often considered the birthplace of civilization, it isn't surprising that the earliest forms of writing also appear in that area.

Sumerians developed cuneiform, named for Latin word for "wedge-shaped." It draws its name from the shape of the strokes, which are thick at the start of the stroke and narrow at the end. Several strokes combined form a symbol. A single symbol could have a variety of purposes. Some represented sounds or syllables. Others represented an entire word or idea. Still others had grammatical functions.

During the second half of the fourth millennium B.C., several cultures began using tokens imprinted into clay for business transactions. These tokens were mostly pictographic so they had meaning in any language. In addition, some of these tokens were scratched with a reed stylus to indicate various features. As these scratches became more common, they developed into symbols rather than pictures.

When people began building the first cities, temples and palaces, new symbols appeared with greater frequency. Many lacked the token they were associated with earlier. Drawing curved lines and intricate figures in wet clay was difficult, so the lines gradually became straighter and the figures simpler. Thus evolved the first form of writing.

they formed the first cities. Perhaps they descended from the nomadic Bushmen of Africa, who moved north into less arid regions; for whatever reason, they developed cities before their predecessors.

Uruk, patronized by the gods An and Inanna, was one of the area's most prosperous cities, and the era that is named for it starts in about 3800 B.C. when the city was founded. It was located near the Euphrates River about forty miles from Ur. The people of Uruk built what is thought to be the first ziggurat and began using cylindrical clay seals that later developed into the earliest method of writing, cuneiform. Today, the site is known as Warka.

Tammuz the shepherd supposedly came to power during this period. After his reign as king, Tammuz was worshipped as one of the pastoral gods and figures prominently in Sumerian mythology, where he is por-

trayed as the paramour of Istar. This could be connected to the Eanna of Uruk, elaborately decorated temples dedicated to Istar, which were built during this period. These buildings served municipal purposes as well as their religious functions. At these temples, craftsmen practiced their arts. The priests were often in charge of storing surplus food and distributing it as needed.

The Jemdat Nasr period, from 3200 to 2900 B.C., is best described as an extension and decline of the Uruk period. The Great Flood supposedly took place during this era. It is possible that the legends of the flood may have been based on an extraordinarily devastating flood of the Tigris, the Euphrates or both into the already marshy land surrounding them. Unlike the Nile, which flooded regularly and predictably each year, the two rivers of the fertile crescent were temperamental.

The Early Dynastic period lasted from 2900 to 2370 B.C. ; the capital shifted to Kish, one of the possible sites of the legendary Tower of Babel.

Some of the kings of this era evolved into mythic heroes later on, and some were even deified. One of the earliest kings, Etana, secured the First Dynasty of Kish and established rule over all Sumer. The traditional Istar fertility ritual may have its origins during Etana's reign, as the Babylonians later believed that he rode to the heavens on the back of a giant eagle and received the "plant of birth" from Istar so that he might produce an heir.

## BUREAUCRACY

The ancient Mesopotamian city-states were constantly at war with one another, because water was a scarce resource. Over time, the victorious city-states grew larger by absorbing conquered lands. These states needed a new form of government in order to manage larger areas and diverse groups of people. As a result, the Sumerians developed what is thought to be the world's first monarchy.

In the Sumerian government, the political and religious systems were closely interwoven. The *ensi* was a sort of priest-king. His duties included leading the military, regulating trade and national finance, adjudicating civil disputes and leading or participating in the most important religious functions. The other members of the priesthood, who acted as the state's bureaucrats, aided him in these tasks. These people had the distinct honor of being the world's first pencil pushers.

## LAW

Every successful culture has to have some form of social regulation and conflict resolution. The Sumerians went a step further and solidified this system into a code of law, notable for three distinct features:

Law is administered by a central authority so that retribution does not escalate into a cycle of perpetual revenge. Sumerian law is balanced between personal revenge and bureaucratic judicature. It is up to the accuser to drag (sometimes literally!) the defender to the court, but the court then determines the nature of the requital. Second, laws must be written. This allows the system to become independent from both its creators and administrators. The law, not a person, determines justice. Finally, Sumerian law provides the first known institution of *lex talionis*, which is a form of judgement in which the punishment fits the crime. *Lex talionis* reveals that revenge is the fundamental basis for law: don't get mad, get even, as the saying goes.

Sumerian law is also noteworthy in that it made allowances for distinctions between classes. A crime against a priest or member of the ruling class was far more serious than one against a slave; however, the penalty was more severe for members of the upper classes than for those from lower classes who committed the same crime.

Although few records of Sumerian law exist, later cultures adopted many of their practices, including their legal system. A Babylonian document, the Code of Hammurabi, reproduces the earlier statutes fairly accurately, proving that the Sumerian laws recorded on the stele at Ur-Nammu had lasting importance in the region.

Uruk was still powerful during this time. Meskiaggasher founded the Dynasty of Uruk, and he and the kings who followed him were known as the "sons of Shamash," the sun god. A few generations later, around 2600 B.C., the mythical hero Gilgamesh took the throne of Uruk. Another prominent city, Ur, was ruled by Mesannepadda. The rulers of Uruk, Kish, and Ur became involved in a three-way power struggle.

Although Mesannepadda was eventually victorious, taking the traditional title of King of Kish, Gilgamesh became a demigod, immortalized in the earliest epic poems.

The constant wars between the city-states weakened the entire region. Eventually, the Kish and Uruk dynasties faded and other city-states could not maintain a firm hold over the empire. Sumer was perfect for conquest; Sargon seized the opportunity.

Sargon united Sumer with the region of Akkad to the north. His realm extended all the way from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River. He built the city of Agade, established an ostentatious court there, and erected a new temple in Nippur. Trade from the new empire and lands beyond made Nippur the center of world culture during Sargon's reign.

However, his dynasty lasted for less than 40 years after his death. Rebellion consumed the empire, and Urhegal of Uruk finally raised an army and deposed Sargon's successor. Unfortunately for him, one of his lieutenants usurped his rule and established the third Ur dynasty shortly before 2100 B.C.; Ur-Nammu intensified his control over the area by defeating the city-state of Lagash. He soon gained control over all the Sumerian provinces.

Ur-Nammu established the earliest known examples of recorded law and ordered the construction of the phenomenal ziggurat of Ur, a structure that towered 60' high (about as tall as a five or six story building) and stretched over 200' wide. For the next century, Sumer prospered, but the society collapsed shortly after 2000 B.C. when the Amorites, a Semitic people from Syria and Arabia, migrated into the area and gained control of the region. A few city-states managed to keep their independence for a while, but eventually they were absorbed into the rising empire of Babylon.

Although the Sumerian empire eventually withered, the culture managed to persist much longer. The infiltration of the Amorites was gradual, and the small tribes that moved into populated areas often adopted the practices of the local inhabitants. Over time, the Amorites became familiar and even comfortable with Sumerian ways. Although the original creators of Mesopotamian civilization were no longer in control, their culture survived and flourished under their successors.

The Amorites centralized Mesopotamian government. They chose for their capital the city of Babylon. In contrast to Sumer's independent and relatively autonomous city-states, the Babylonian empire consisted of dozens of interconnected cities. In order to keep the civilization stable, power shifted from individual cities to the Babylonian monarch.

One of the results was a new set of laws invented by the Babylonians — laws that dealt with crimes against

the state. In addition, the state was given more power to deal with criminals. Punishments became drastically more severe — the death penalty applied to any number

of crimes. With so much power in the government, corrupt officials became more and more common as the empire settled into a pattern of decadence.

## THE TOWER OF BABEL



*And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

— Revelation 18:2, King James Version

The name “Babylon” means “the gate of God” but what walked through the gates was anything but holy. While the mysterious East and the haunted forests of pagan Europe had known demons since prehistory, the city of Babylon was a Casablanca for Infernal entities. Servants of Entropy, star-bound creatures from the outer Void and denizens of the Pit nested within the walls of the first great city. While truck with demons and the binding of foul spirits is now standard practice for Nephandi and other sell-souls in the modern World of Darkness, Babylon was the birthplace of the summoning arts. Long before anything like the “Nephandi” or the “Traditions” arose, Mesopotamian sorcerers sought opulence and power through favor from the Underworld. Before hell existed in the human imagination, Babylon vied to become hell on earth.

Some say little has changed since the time of this first great city. The modern metropolis is equally hellish — a busy, impossibly confusing place where the multitudes scurry to fulfill their obligations as prisoners of complexity. Although cities are the locus of culture and industry, cynics argue that they are also dirty, crime-ridden, overcrowded blights. Urbanity lifts citizens above the animal existence of the past or the uninspiring alternative of subsistence agriculture but dehumanizes the people it seeks to elevate. New York, London, Tokyo — Babylons all. In the end, a city is defined by its demons.

### THROUGH GATES OF BRONZE

To speak of “ancient Babylon” is something of a redundancy, since the city’s history begins with the arrival of its first settlers around 4000 B.C. and ends when the city finally crumbles under Sassanian neglect in the third century. Located 60 miles south of modern Baghdad at Al Hillah, Babylon stood for centuries as Mesopotamia’s center of culture, religion and commerce. The city straddled the Euphrates,

with the old city on the east bank. High triple-walls made of glazed blue bricks surrounded Babylon. Depictions of monsters and demons adorned this intimidating barrier. Travelers entered Babylon through towering gates of bronze.

The Babylonian economy was primarily agricultural, but also supported a class of priests and nobles who maintained their power by controlling the expansive irrigation system that watered the otherwise arid land.

The fundamental economic principle at work in Babylon is best exemplified by the city’s Hanging Gardens, later described by the Greeks as one the Seven Wonders of the World. As the story goes, Nebuchadnezzar had a bride from a distant land who wasn’t acclimated to the heat of the region. To make her comfortable and remind her of her home country, Nebuchadnezzar built a cool, shady garden on the roof of a vaulted terrace in the northwestern corner of the old city. To maintain this opulence, prodigious amounts of water had to be pumped from the Euphrates to the upper terrace. Hydraulic pumps — and around-the-clock shifts of slaves — did the job.

The great city of Babylon worshipped an equally great patron: Marduk. His realms of influence changed over the course of his worship, but were primarily matters of wisdom and urban life. Modern scholars among the Verbena and Hermetics conclude that Marduk was probably some sort of higher Umbrood who refined the Pattern basic to all cities, the Pattern that informs the Tellurian whenever large human populations converge.

Marduk’s followers in old Babylon, and the few who keep his cult alive today, would vehemently disagree with the ghettoization of their god as a mere spirit. Regardless, the worship of Marduk coincided with the rise of Babylon to economic and cultural prominence. But while Marduk’s presence defined the first great city and provided the pattern for the great cities that followed, the priests of Etemenanki co-opted his ambitious design for Babylon and turned the city into a haven for things Infernal.

Babylon swarmed with demons. From the time of Hammurabi until the city’s decline under Seleucia, the conspiracy of Etemenanki invited malice and profanity

## LEXICON

The ancient tongues that the people of the fertile crescent used to describe and explain their world have long since faded away. Some of the words remain, though they offer only the slightest taste of the language.

**Abubu:** A huge winged monster, used to represent the Flood.

**An:** The heavens. Also the name for the Sumerian sky god.

**Anki:** The universe.

**Anunnaku:** 1. The primordial gods who ruled before Creation, undifferentiated by names. 2. The fifth section of the *Enuma Anu Enlil* that details omina of particular use to Awakened astrologers.

**Arallu:** The abode of the dead in the Underworld, ruled by Ereshkigal.

**Bau:** A term coined for the authors of the Anunnaku section of the *Enuma Anu Enlil*.

**Bel:** 1. A later name for Marduk. 2. The high priest of the conspiracy of Etemenanki, responsible for overseeing the temple of Marduk and administering the Sacred Marriage.

**Cella:** The central shrine of a ziggurat.

**En:** The high priest of a ziggurat.

**Enlil:** Sumerian air god; eclipsed An, the sky god, late in Babylonian history. He rules the earth from the air, while An oversees the heavens.

**Enki:** Sumerian god of wisdom.

**Ensi:** Priest-king.

**Enuma Anu Enlil:** A sequence of tablets from Babylon containing instructions for predicting the future based on celestial events.

**Ereshkigal:** Sumerian goddess of the Underworld.

**Esagil:** The temple of Marduk and his wife Sarpanitu, located in Babylon.

**Etemenanki:** "The foundation of heaven and earth," the name of the ziggurat located in Babylon.

**Etemmu:** Ghosts that sometimes return to seize living persons.

**Gallu:** Demons that carry the spirits of the dead off to the Underworld.

**Igigi:** The great gods.

**Ki:** The Earth.

**Lilitu:** A scorpion-tailed she-wolf often thought to represent Lilith.

**Marduk:** Patron god of Babylon, a god of wisdom and magic.

**Me:** The rules and traditions handed down by the gods.

**Melam:** The blessing of the gods. Often conveys a shining aura to the recipient and can be worn or removed like an article of clothing. Symbolized in art as a crown or sigil.

**Mimma lemmu** – All evil.

**Mushussu:** An enormous snakelike dragon, the favored form of Tiamat.

**Omina:** 1. A sign foretelling the future, especially one derived from observation of the heavens. 2. A specific omen listed in the *Enuma Anu Enlil*.

**Ni:** Not Monty Python's herring-wielding knights but a mantle of fear, the opposite of Melam. A creeping sensation of physical dread (adrenaline rush, sweats, pounding heart) accompanies the vestment.

**Sacred Marriage:** A ceremony of ritual prostitution used to summon demons in the temple atop Etemenanki.

**Sibit Etemmu:** Possession, usually by a ghost, resulting in seizures.

**Stele:** A pillar, often decorated or inscribed.

**Utu:** Sumerian sun god, brother to Inanna; not to be confused with Uttu.

**Uttu:** Sumerian goddess of weaving, corresponding to Stasis in some modern cosmologies. Her sign also connotes "spider."

**Ziggurat:** A staged temple; from "zaqaru," meaning high or raised up.

**Zisurru:** "Flour which makes a boundary," a specially prepared powder used for warding circles.

inside the walls. In came the servants of Entropy, those beings who serve the primordial spirit of destruction; Infernal demons, apparently the servants of a hell that exists either deep in the Umbra or in some fracture in space; and the Things-That-Should-Not-Be, the denizens of the outer darkness, the Void, those unexplainable, gibbering creatures who long to enter this universe. All three shared the splendid city.

## ETEMENANKI

Near the Western wall of the old city stood a seven-tiered ziggurat named "Etemenanki," which means "the foundation of heaven and earth." The enormous structure stood 91 meters high and its base was one hundred square meters (or about 273 feet high with a 300 square foot base). Etemenanki's origins are lost to history, but

some speculate that Hammurabi ordered its construction around 1830 B.C.; the ziggurat has probably been there as long as Babylon itself, with rulers throughout the city's long life adding new tiers or expanding the base. Some theologians equate Etemenanki with the Tower of Babel from the Old Testament; the story's accounts of strange tongues and ambitions to reach the stature of God seem to confirm the research of Dr. Winston Brown, who unearthed numerous Babylonian rituals for the Order of Hermes.

A temple to Marduk stood on the highest tier of the Etemenanki. While ceremonies performed in his honor certainly took place there for centuries, another worship clandestinely shared the temple with the god of the city.

## THE CONSPIRACY OF ETEMENANKI

Before Creation, there were the Anunnaku. The Pure Ones experimented with the Quintessence that would one day become the Tellurian. But some of the old gods trapped themselves in the knots in the threads of the Tapestry. Within these knots, the Anunnaku panicked and devoured the Patterns around them. From this harvest, the gods absorbed a trickle of Quintessence to sustain them in their captivity. These trapped gods became the Void, and the stars were their prisons.

But even from the first times, humanity knew the names of the unnamed gods. Men whispered to the heavens at night as they looked up at the stars and begged for power. Their prayers were answered. The things in the Void used their starry snares to communicate with those who sought them, promising their strength in exchange for freedom.

High priests and slaves, retired public officials and second-born sons, Awakened mages and Sleepers looked to the skies for signs from the Void. In the nights under Hammurabi, their number was small. By the time of Nebuchadnezzar, almost half of the officials and priests in Babylon joined the dark society. Influential followers of the Void ensured that the *En* of Marduk, when he wasn't a part of the conspiracy himself, turned a blind eye to the nightly rituals that took place in Marduk's temple atop Etemenanki. Eventually, Marduk's worship was relocated to Esagil so that the quiet heresies at the ziggurat could proceed uninterrupted.

The conspirators chose a priest from among their ranks, called the *Bel* in mockery of Marduk. The selection process changed through the centuries, but in the time of Nebuchadnezzar it was a contest to summon the most powerful demon.

Etemenanki, guided by one *Bel* or another, became the first "Labyrinth" even before the word was used. From the high perch overlooking the city, astrologers studied the signs and fulfilled their masters' wishes. The conspirators used their Void-born magics to bring Babylon to prominence and ensure their lengthy rule. At the same time, the origins of many modern Nephandic traditions began in the splendid city. Etemenanki became something of a laboratory for Qlippothic Entropy; mages took their first timid steps into the Deep Umbra and the Underworld. And sometime around 1500 B.C., even before the last rock of Stonehenge was set in place, the mages of the first Labyrinth created a gate.

## THE SACRED MARRIAGE

In the fifth century B.C., Herodotus traveled the Mediterranean world. Of Babylon, he wrote that every woman in the city must spend a night in the "Temple of Aphrodite" atop Etemenanki to await a conjugal visit from Marduk. The account was wildly inaccurate, of course. The truth Herodotus missed was worse.

The priests of the conspiracy used a ritual called the "Sacred Marriage" to activate their Gate. They weakened the Gauntlet — and the ancient Gauntlet was paper thin compared to today's — to corrupt Marduk's temple from its holy purpose. The statues, usually gawking in awe of the gods, shut their eyes. An altar with legs carved like those of an animal revealed itself in the center of the *cella*. Conspirators brought their wives, daughters and female slaves up the stairs of the ziggurat. The "Inanna" awaited the *Bel*'s attentions. The intensity of hours of chants and intercourse — *Bel* standing, Inanna on the altar — gave the Void the strength to manifest in Babylon. In Etemenanki, the foundation of heaven and earth, the two realms came together to bridge the waters between. Sometimes taking on Infernal forms, sometimes using the Inanna as the host, demons beset the city.

It was a glorious time to lose one's soul. Things from the Void, and soon Malfeans and others demons as well, had free reign over the city. They troubled the sleep of children and whispered in the ears of kings. And they rewarded those who invited them inside the walls. Members of the conspiracy gained power over all of Mesopotamia. Babylon became a center of art and trade. Babylon became a great city. Although the first visitors were inconsequential, soon Lords of real power came down from Etemenanki. According to the Sumerian tablets that inspired the Sebel-el-Mafough Whash, one of the trapped Anunnaku walked through the gate to welcome Cyrus the Persian to Babylon.



Marduk saw the mockery of his temple and the corruption of his great city, and sought to reclaim what had been stolen from him. His followers were quick to oblige; the growing audacity of the demon summoners required more and more women of beauty and station for the Sacred Marriage. The conspirators could no longer sustain their practices with members of their own families. They began to use the highest born daughters and matriarchs of the city, and anyone else who might satisfy the Void. A tablet from Ninevah, now in the possession of the Celestial Chorus, records the lament of Numusda, High Astrologer of Esagil, in which he complains that his daughter could not win the expected dowry because her body had become the home of Aadschluerghera, the "Drowner in the Abzu." If Numusda's story is typical of what went on in Babylon, the conspiracy stepped on some powerful toes, and a backlash was almost inevitable.

The drive to expel the servants of the Void manifested in all aspects of society. The Awakened among the physicians learned to cure demonic ailments. Students of space and Pattern learned how to strengthen the Gauntlet to make passage to earth more difficult. Awakened artisans decorated the city walls with the images of Umbral creatures to frighten the demons and keep them from inhabiting cities all along the Tigris and Euphrates. Royal astrologers learned to read the same stars that guided the conspiracy and composed the *Enuma Anu Enlil* so that the generations to follow could be prepared for the calamities to come. The *Bau's* observations of the flux of Quintessence and Pattern warned them of the Void's every ambition. Mages welcomed beneficent spirits to Babylon to combat the Infernal. The eventual victory of Marduk and his followers was overshadowed by the decline of Babylon under the Greeks, but their triumph was no doubt pivotal to the survival of the Tellurian.

# THE ENUMA ANU ENLIL



*The King cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.*

— Daniel 5:7, King James Version

The Babylonians are the magicians of history. From the paths of birds through the sky to earthquakes and dreams, Babylon's culture was one of omens and portents. But these Chaldean sorcerers were particularly renowned for discerning omens foretold by the sky. Even in antiquity, writers such as the Greeks Strabo and Aelian described the Babylonians as a people skilled with horoscopes and astronomy.

This reputation was sometimes an unfavorable one — when the prophet Isaiah condemned Babylon for its idolatry, he said, "Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them." In the book of Daniel, Babylonian astrologers give birth to a cliché when they cannot read the writing on the wall.

Modern knowledge of Babylonian celestial omen watching comes from three types of unearthed clay tablets. The first is the series *Enuma Anu Enlil*, a collection of 70 tablets containing almost 70,000 specific omens (*omina* to the Babylonians). The second group of tablets contains commentaries on the *Enuma Anu Enlil* written by later Babylonian scholars. Many of these commentaries were refinements and corrections as Babylonians came to realize that the sky doesn't behave consistently over hundreds of years. Third are astrologers' reports on specific omens, usually sent by messenger to government officials. Because Babylonians used a system of lunar months, which last around 29.5 days, many surviving reports were addressed to the king, informing him whether the coming month would have 29 or 30 days.

Most of these tablets are now housed in the British Museum. Of their collection of around 10,000, a thousand or so deal with astronomy. Many of the *Enuma Anu Enlil* fragments were found in Assurbanipal's library at Kuyunjik (later Ninevah) and were inscribed in the seventh century B.C.; the actual omens are much older — a series named "The Day of Bel" is thought by

the Hermetics to have been written during the time of Sargon I, King of Agade (around 3800 B.C.). While scholarly Traditions such as the Order of Hermes have known about the tablets for decades, most were ignorant of their use until Brown's expedition to Al Hillah.

Each omen consists of a *protasis*, an "if" clause that describes the celestial phenomena observed, and an *apodosis*, a "then" clause that describes what occurs when the conditions of the protasis occur. Protasis: "When the moon darkens Jupiter," then apodosis: "the king of kings, his hand will overpower his enemies." Most omens protases describe celestial events directly: "If the stars are visible at sunrise, rains and floods will persist." Others, however, personify the heavens or use metaphors relating to the gods: "If the old man's chest is very dark, thieves will make a breach in the palace." Some Sleeper scholars point out that certain protases call for apparently impossible events, like an eclipse on the twentieth day of the month. If they knew what Babylon was like when the *Enuma* was in wide use, of course, they'd have to refine their notions of impossibility.

Matters of diplomacy and war were central to Babylonian omens since potential invaders surrounded the nation on all sides. Babylon shared a border with Akkad to the northwest, Subarti to the northeast, Aharru to the southwest and Elam to the southeast. Often apodoses made specific reference to relations with these nations. For example, "If an eclipse is in Ululu until the midpoint, the king of Akkad will establish hostility in his midst; country will mix with country in armed conflict." While a handful of Awakened astrologers used the *Enuma* to divine the plots of hell, legions of high priests watched for signs of war.

Concern with conflict and politics was good for business. The most highly ranked astrologers held hereditary office and wrote reports to the rulers of cities and nations. A prophet who foretold good things for the king, or destruction for an enemy, avoided the "kill the messenger" syndrome.

Babylon's ominous astronomy spread to the West via the influential texts of antiquity. Most notable was Ptolemy's reliance on Babylonian records of celestial observations in writing his *Almagest*. Hermes Trismegistos borrowed Babylon's omens of thunder when he composed the Hermetic texts. No wonder certain members of the Order, particularly Brown, were so interested in the original omens.

## THE BABYLONIAN HOROSCOPE

Although Babylonian astronomy was influential in its own right, Babylonian omina spread across the Western world by way of the Greeks and Egyptians. Particular aspects still survive in modern astrology. Compare the Babylonian horoscope to the one employed today:

### Babylonian Horoscope    Modern Horoscope

The Hired Man	Aries
The Bull of Heaven	Taurus
The Great Twins	Gemini
The Crab	Cancer
The Lion	Leo
The Barley Stalk	Virgo
The Balance	Libra
The Scorpion	Scorpio
Pabilsag (a god)	Sagittarius
The Goatfish	Capricorn
The Giant	Aquarius
The Tails	Pisces

Who called this stuff dead magic, again?

But while much was transmitted to the West, there was a fundamental difference between the Babylonians and their Greek inheritors. The Aristotelian notion of ether — explained by Ptolemy to directly influence the sublunar world — held the phenomena of the celestial sphere to be the cause for earthly events, while the Babylonians saw the celestial and the terrestrial as correlated. To the Babylonian mind, the sky and earth had a complimentary relationship, synchronized but not causal. They reflected one another, but the sky did not determine mundane occurrences. Ironically, the omen-obsessed Babylonians saw the outcome of forecasted events as somewhat uncertain. In Babylonia, there even existed rituals of *namburbu* that dispelled the doom foretold by the stars. For the Greeks, the sky held signs; for the Babylonians, warnings.

Certain historians within the New World Order are also interested in the Babylonian omina, not for their magical methodologies but because of their contributions to the history of science. The *Enuma Anu Enlil* was undoubtedly critical to the development of mathematical astronomy. The need to discern omens drove observation, and centuries of recording the position of heavenly bodies and noting celestial occurrences inevitably resulted in the recognition of patterns. Relying completely on naked-eye observations, the duration of the endeavor — as generations of astrologers watched

the same planets and stars for the same omens — gave the Babylonians a long record of celestial events to study. Although the *Enuma* itself is not concerned overmuch with precision, the commentaries and reports it spawned show a sophistication that wouldn't be seen again until Hipparchus drew up his star catalogue. Some astronomical eclipse reports list the month, date, time, magnitude in fingers (*ubanu*), direction of the eclipse shadow, and stars visible at zenith. Not too shabby for a bunch of mystics looking up in the sky, watching for portents of doom.

## THE BABYLONIAN REVIVAL

Since the war in Horizon, and largely from the recent efforts of the Hermetics, the study of the *Enuma Anu Enlil* has resurfaced within the Traditions. This is not the first resurrection of these ancient omens. Their practice was lost to all but a few of the most learned astrologers in the high courts of Babylonia. Later astrologers revived the omina to combat the unrestrained demon infestation that reached its peak under Nebuchadnezzar.

Of the various white magics designed to combat the Infernal presence in the city, astrological prognostication proved the most effective. While the *Enuma Anu Enlil* had prophecies for many aspects of life, one sequence was particularly useful for keeping tabs on the demonic.

## ANUNNAKU, THE FIFTH SEQUENCE

The *Enuma Anu Enlil* itself is divided into four parts: *Sin*, the lunar omina; *Samas*, solar omina; *Adad*, meteorological omina; and *Istar*, omina of stars and planets. While mages in Babylon used all four, a fifth sequence *Anunnaku*, still largely unknown to mortal scholars outside the Arcanum, contained prognostication methods specifically for the supernatural.

The name of each section refers to the gods who controlled the phenomena. *Samas* was the god of the sun, and so on. The *Anunnaku*, however, were the first gods, existing in the Tellurian long before Creation. The omina associated with them involve Patterns and Quintessence — perhaps Paradox as well — to discern portents from the building blocks of existence. The *Anunnaku* dealt not only with the stars, but the Patterns surrounding those stars.

Among the royal astrologers who kept the king and local leaders informed on the prophecies of the sky, a small cell of mages who developed the original omina of the *Anunnaku*. They applied the principles

## THE ①MINA FROM ANUNNAKU

### Brothers:

A small group of translators within the Order of Hermes is quietly deciphering the Anunnaku, a series of tablets from ancient Babylon. The Anunnaku supposedly contains 1000 portents and omens revealed in the position of the stars and the Patterns between them. These Patterns influence everything from the strength of Paradox backlashes to the formation of Tass around a node. My contact within the Boston Chantry, where most of the translation is taking place, refused to release a copy but seemed eager to taunt me with these particular "omina." Please examine the phrasing of these selections and let me know what sort of astronomical observations are necessary to divine these omens. Let us hope that they have not already come to pass. Hurry — we must not be blindsided again.

— Abe Guro, Paladin of the Nagoya Xiudaoyuan

• When Utti's webs draw the stars closer to the north, ravens will light in the house of Siduri and what was meant to be renewed shall not.

• If the daws of the scorpion scintillate, the Euphrates will be fitful as it drains the Abzu.

• When the Bull of Heaven walks Ea's road twice before Sin appears ready for the ceremony, the vitality of our enemies will thin as the dead die again.

• On the day when the Ferry lingers and Jumping [Mercury?] hides behind Samas, the three faiths of the city will return to claim their riches.

• If Sin is absent and Marduk's wells run dry, the highest among us shall make war upon themselves.

• When the beard of the father looms over the temple, and the sorcerers of Subarti are blighted with Ni [Paradox?], the oldest of the dead shall trouble the land of cedars.

• When red hunger [Mars?] opens its baneful eye, Bel will sink into the Anku.

of observation found elsewhere in the Enuma to certain aspects of Creation that only the Awakened perceive: threads of the Tellurian, Patterns, Quintessence, flows of Prime, the thickness of the Gauntlet and so on. Beyond the Anunnaku, none of this sect's records survive, if they kept any at all. The one fact established in Brown's study is that one of the charter organizers of this society was born in Lagas and moved to Babylon when his father was appointed to the

priesthood of Esagil. In his book, Brown refers to the authors of the Anunnaku as the "Bau," after the oracle of the goddess Bau located in Lagas.

How could the Bau look at the Patterns of the heavens and predict the future? The stars reflected how the beings trapped inside them used their powers. If the Bau could decipher Infernal communications between the Pure Ones and their followers on earth, it was easier to counteract their plans.

## STORYTELLING WITH MESOPOTAMIA



Mesopotamia in general, and Babylon in particular, figure prominently in the myth of magic — so why don't mages know more about it? For one thing, the old Tigris and Euphrates civilizations sit in what's now Iran and Iraq. Most of Western civilization pays attention to these places only when they're bombed. It seems that Babylon's grandeur passed away long ago.

Nevertheless, Babylon's heritage still affects modern magic — from astrology to demonology. Like any of the other dead cultures presented here, there is plenty of room for exploration, discovery and danger.

### HISTORY BE DAMNED

Don't think you can pass next week's Ancient Civilization test because you've read this chapter. While we try to be historically accurate, when there's a conflict between "accurate" and "interesting" we choose interesting. Also, given the antiquity of the subject matter, the scholarship on ancient Babylon is more a collection of competing theories than of consistent facts. This chapter concerns the Babylon of the World of Darkness — would it be the same if there were really mages and demons running around?

Hendrik

Got a troubling email from gibil@etemenanki.org this morning. It's an invitation to fly out to Santa Cruz to consult on some Babylonian rituals. It's an incoherent, conspiracy-laden mess, clearly written by a nut (or someone with a BAD Quiet problem). The problem is that the email throws around some terms that crackpots shouldn't have any access to - terms like 'Kisibai' and 'neutron star NGS 989219N'. Where did they learn them? Find out. I know what you VAs can do. Hopefully they're just some lucky punks in way over their heads, and the problem will fix itself. By the way, can a demon be bound to a sector of the Digital Web?

Yours Very Truly,  
W. Brown

## BABYLON'S CHILDREN

The story of demonic Babylon is of incredible importance to the history of the Awakened, but that means little to modern mages. While only a few Hermetics know that Winston Brown learned his secrets from Ea himself, the doctor has many friends and his findings have circulated among the Traditions. Mages who often find themselves at odds with the Nephandi could benefit from his research. For mages who seek this ancient wisdom, there are possibilities within all the Traditions, but some have certain advantages.

### The Celestial Chorus

The Chorus is sitting on a gold mine of Babylonian magic and they don't even know it. Their libraries across the world and the Horizon hold commentaries on the Enuma Anu Enlil, transcriptions of tablets inscribed by Babylonian physicians and lists made by the En of Marduk. Brown's work would need a complete re-evaluation if the Chorus's collection came to light. So far, no one's done the research.

### Hollow Ones

The magic of the Hollow Ones is nothing if not a collection of hand-me-downs. At first, only the members of cabals with Hermetics or Euthanatoi learned any of the rituals. But those few were quick to pass along what they had learned. Among the Goths, finding the

old rites is a matter of knowing someone who has already learned them.

### The Order of Hermes

Winston Brown was a Hermetic and fully disclosed his findings to certain members of the Order. Research and a favor or two leads inevitably to learning the old rites. The Chantries in Boston and Lawrence, Kansas remain the centers of the Babylonian Revival.

### Virtual Adepts

Henrik Kohlmaan, a Master of Correspondence with various home bases in South America and Europe, has done the most among the Virtual Adepts to adapt the old Babylonian Effects to the technological paradigm. Magic circles and figurines have been replaced by firewalls and virulent emails. One of Kohlmaan's interns administers a MUD with code for faithful (and intricate) virtual Babylonian rituals. The resulting Tass keeps shredding his T1 lines, but Henrik's not complaining.

## COMMONLY USED MAGICS

The civilizations of the ancient Near East were famed for their understanding of the will of their gods. Much of their magic focuses on divination and necromancy, and sometimes requires the caster to know the name of a spirit in order to invoke its power.

The Babylonian perspective on life was quite pessimistic: humans were created for service and could expect nothing better than a life of suffering and toil which, at death, did not lead to some eternal reward but to oblivion. The only ones who could change this were the gods. Therefore, nearly all Babylonian magic included a petition to several gods for aid. If the caster offered the right sacrifice and performed the ritual at the right time, the gods were pleased by the mortal's service and granted her what she asked. Then again, more than one ritualist was engulfed in excruciating torment when her patrons decided that she was demanding rather than begging and that she needed to learn a new lesson in supplication.

### ANIMAL SHIFT (••••• LIFE)

Long ago, the ancient gods chose animals to represent them on earth. This ritual allowed a follower to assume the shape of an animal that was sacred to his chosen deity. The change was temporary, allowing the priest to exact revenge on his enemies or to spy on those who claimed to support him. However, the shifters were careful not to let others know of their ability, for they were unable to use their magics while they wore the form of an animal.



it might not see results in a single lifetime. However, the rote has short-term as well as long-term uses. A mage who works as a tour guide in a museum that has a fascinating Civil War display can strengthen the importance of a specific battle, garnering more tourist money for the museum and the site of the battle. A mage who drives an ancient Ford pickup but brags about its durability and takes friends on camping trips to show them how well it holds up probably won't have his car break down for months — or years. Magic rolls involving the object of the casting gain one die for every three successes the caster accumulates on this ritual. A botch removes successes but does not necessarily negate the entire Effect.

### STAY THE GOD'S HAND (•ENTROPY, •OR •••LIFE)

The Mesopotamian gods were unpredictable in the best circumstances, and at their worst their capriciousness could be deadly. The most common sign of having fallen into disfavor was an illness. Often the victim had actually offended a temple official and was suffering from a curse as a result. Ailing individuals requested the aid of a temple physician to diagnose which god was causing the sickness. The doctors removed the curse, demanded payment, and divided the money with the official who had invoked the curse in the first place, leaving them both the richer and the dupe grateful to be well.

Performed as a pair, these rites allow a mage to discover the cause for a lingering malady and attempt to treat it accurately. The mage lights an offering of incense and recites an appropriate invocation. Then she puts one hand on the victim's forehead and meditates for about half an hour, during which time she empties her mind. Eventually, an idea starts to form, and as the last embers of incense die out, the mage can identify the cause of the suffering. To treat the illness, the mage must request a favor from a higher power, in return for a small service. This "higher power" can be anything or anyone — from a spirit to a policeman to the mage's boss. If the favor is granted, the answer comes to the mage in the form of a dream or vision. However, if the mage then fails to perform the promised service, she's stricken with the same symptoms she removed from the victim.

**System:** Either one of these rites is useless if performed alone. Without knowing the source of the problem, it is impossible to cure it. Likewise, understanding the problem doesn't help if the mage does nothing about it. The caster's understanding of it is limited by his paradigm; what might be an imbalance in

### MYTHOLOGY

The pantheon of Mesopotamia is complicated, to put it mildly. The Semitic migrations of the late third millennium B.C. toppled the Sumerian empire. However, the victorious invaders abandoned most of their former religious practices and adopted the Sumerian beliefs. By renaming some of the Sumerian deities, replacing others and adding a number of new gods, the conquerors wreaked havoc on the celestial genealogy.

Sumerian religion was polytheistic, honoring powerful anthropomorphic gods who were usually associated with natural forces and astronomical bodies. In addition to resembling humans physically, the Sumerian gods resembled people in their personalities and actions. They suffered from human frailties such as lust, greed, anger, hatred and guilt, but they also enjoyed love, happiness and understanding.

The Sumerians believed that their lives were rooted firmly in this world. Although there was a "Heaven" and an "Underworld," these were actual physical places inhabited by the gods. Human beings did not accrue rewards or punishments in the afterlife; the dead became ghosts who faded out of existence within a century.

To the Sumerians, humans had no special place in the cosmos — indeed, humans were created as servants of the gods. For this reason, one did not make demands or petitions lightly. Rather, humans used rites to beg the gods for audience and favor. There was no way to compel obedience — the gods granted favors on whims, or capriciously punished offenders.

the cycle of life and death to a Euthanatos is perceived as a discordant voice in the universal Song by a Chorister. The difficulty depends on what the actual problem is; pneumonia or other "natural" causes are more easily detected than vampiric possession, for example. The normal difficulty of the treatment is 8, lower if the mage agrees to perform some exceptional service for her higher power. The cure should fit both the disease and the mage's paradigm, and therefore offer a clue to the root of the problem.

### WEEPING FOR TAMMUZ (•••ENTROPY)

Tammuz was a mortal shepherd, beloved by the goddess Istar. When he died, Istar went to the domain of her sister Ereshkigal, goddess of the Underworld, and demanded that he be returned to the living.

Ereshkigal agreed, but according to divine law, a soul could not leave unless there was another to take its place. Istar was trapped, and the earth began to wither and die. The gods declared that Tammuz must be taken back to the Underworld so that Istar could leave and the land would prosper. Upon her return, Istar worked out a bargain with the gods: Tammuz would be returned to her, though only for half the year. In addition, his sister Gestihanna would be taken to the land of the dead in his place.

Every year at the beginning of the planting season, Sumerian cities held re-enactments of the return of Tammuz to the Underworld. Each city took its most beloved young man and buried him alive. The entire population dressed in black for eight days, and the priests and priestesses of Istar dressed in black for a month, mourning the symbolic death of the god.

This rote works best for Choristers, Hermetics, Verbena and other mages whose paradigm stresses selflessness. By giving up something that is important to her, the mage may ensure good fortune in a certain endeavor.

**System:** The mage doesn't have to bury someone alive but can bury an object of great personal significance instead. If the rote is cast successfully, the mage may add a number of automatic successes to a specified task in the future. The Storyteller chooses the number of successes (generally one to five), depending on how important the item was to the character. This sacrifice is permanent.

## ENUMA ANU ENLIL — RITUALS AND RITES

The old stargazing rites of Mesopotamia can be used almost unchanged, as long as a mage understands the proper observations. For any of the following Effects to be successful, the mage must have a copy of the appropriate section of the *Enuma Anu Enlil*, as well as a place to observe the heavens. Cities are too polluted with light to see the sky clearly. Barring some more powerful, vulgar magic, it's necessary to get as far away from the lights of the city as possible. See the sidebar *Divination Mechanics* for more information.

### ADAD

(•• ENTROPY, •• CORRESPONDENCE, • SPIRIT)

The omnia contained in the Adad relate to meteorological phenomena. The amount of rain, the direction of the winds, the pattern of lightning or the sounds of thunder all carry significance. The omens discerned from this Effect usually involve the fates of a people or

their homeland. When scouting locations for new Chantries, modern Hermetics sometimes use this ritual to track the fates of cities. A vague reading might reveal a general trend in the near future ("prosperity") while an especially thorough reading might foreshadow a specific event ("a breach in the walls").

**System:** The divination of Adad ties in to the spiritual aspect of a location, as well as its future fate. Successful divination tends to reveal emotive and economic trends. A mage is unlikely to discover details about a specific building, but might learn that the city is going into decline or that a celebration will bring an influx of money.

### DIVINATION MECHANICS

For each of the divination rituals in this section, roll the mage's Arete against the magic's base difficulty as determined by the Spheres involved (long-term divination is usually coincidental, a "lucky guess"). For every additional evening spent observing the sky, lower the difficulty by 1, down to a minimum difficulty of 6. The more successes rolled, the more accurate and informative the reading. A botch indicates a misinterpretation of celestial phenomena — in Babylon, such a mistake might end in an unjust declaration of war or violent panic within the city walls. Storytellers, feel free to make botches in your chronicle equally catastrophic.

1 success: You observe the wrong phenomena or the revealed omen is especially vague.

2 successes: Perhaps your calculations were a little sloppy. A few omnia fit your observations, but you probably overlooked some important detail.

3 successes: You observe several distinctive phenomena, and the omnia that meets those conditions is likely to unfold.

4 successes: Your observations have clearly revealed to you a particular omen. Your prediction almost certainly comes to pass, but not in the way you expect.

5+ successes: You've read all the signs with unmistakable accuracy. Whatever you predict — in some form — comes to pass.

Finally, a mage doesn't ask questions of the *Enuma* like she might do with the I Ching or a Tarot deck. She merely observes the motions of the heavens and checks the omnia of the appropriate *Enuma* section. There's lots of stuff going on upstairs; only those astrologers who keep up with all the potentially revealing motions can divine anything useful.

## ISTAR

(•••• ENTROPY, ••• CORRESPONDENCE, ••• SPIRIT)

The motions of the stars and the planets hold secrets for those familiar with the omnia of Istar, in particular the fates of nations and their leaders. The futures of kings, advisors, princes or presidents, governors and mayors are all hidden in the sky. The omnia in this Enuma sequence tend to be highly metaphorical, but predict broad changes.

**System:** Assuming that the mage can interpret the metaphors of Istar (in which an Intelligence + Academics roll may be useful), he can divine the general fates of an entire nation and its ruler. This divination is very general and is not specifically tied to events: The mage probably won't learn that the ruler has cholera or that the nation will suffer an earthquake shattering its most prominent city, but could get a general sense that malaise hovers about the ruler or that a terrible disaster will soon come to the land.

## SAMAS (•• CORRESPONDENCE, •• FORCES)

Samas, the sun, doesn't actually move. But because the Earth revolves around it, the sun seems to travel across the sky. The ancients understood that the sun's path changed a little every day, a fact less known in our ignorant modern times. The variations are small, and the corresponding omens are vague but frequently come to pass. The omens discerned from Samas don't fall into any neat category; a mage might learn the fate of crops, the economy, the weather, diplomacy or anything else.

**System:** The omnia of Samas are the easiest to read; only the path of the sun and the stars and planets visible at sunrise or sunset are relevant. When using Samas, the mage lowers the usual divination difficulty: successes gained from Samas can subsequently be used to improve the accuracy of other divinations, by lowering the difficulty as much as 3. Extra days spent in observation don't lower the difficulty of this Effect.

## SIN (•• ENTROPY, •• SPIRIT, • PRITIE OR •••• ENTROPY, •••• SPIRIT, •••• PRITIE)

All the complexity of the heavens pales next to that of the moon. Its phases, color, brightness and path through the sky are all significant. Eclipses are particularly meaningful. The omens told by the moon are as broad as those of Samas but tend to be straightforward. The more powerful version of this Effect allows the mage to see truly great changes or calamities.

**System:** The divination difficulty for a reading of an eclipse is high — increase the magical difficulty by 2 or 3, just because the Effect is presumed to be taxing — but even a few successes could reveal something

momentous. Entire chronicles might turn on one such reading. Additional nights of observation do not lower this difficulty.

## ANUNNAKU

(••• ENTROPY, ••• PRITIE, ••• SPIRIT)

The abundance of Paradox, Quintessence or Tass along with the actual Patterns of the heavens reveal the fates of the Awakened in the broadest sense of the term: mages, vampires, demons or anything else that haunts the World of Darkness. The Bau of Babylon read the Patterns of the stars nightly to learn the fates of the city's demon summoners. Although this sequence of the Enuma Anu Enlil is disseminating slowly, and mostly among the Hermetics, this Effect has proven critical in several recent Tradition victories over the Nephandi. The will of the Void reveals itself in the stars; a successful reading exposes the quality, if not the specifics, of Nephandic activity to come. Because the stars are different from every viewpoint (a phenomenon known as "parallax"), an accomplished astrologer can determine the future of local events involving the Nephandi.

**System:** This divination is specifically useful in foreseeing the fates of supernatural beings. With a few successes, a mage might gather a sense of vague foreboding. Multiple successes could indicate an illuminating insight into the warped plans of some potent malefic entity: an ancient vampire, Earth-bound demon or a Nephandus and its colleagues. As with all such divinations, the results are not wholly detailed or accurate, but can provide a picture of things to come: Whether an enemy plans to attack, retreat or hide; whether a specific type of supernatural influence is involved; whether the mage's current actions will lead toward victory or defeat. This divination can also be used to observe the ebb and flow of Paradox, Quintessence, Entropy and so on, and reveal the significance of such fluctuations.

## NAITIBURBU (•••• ENTROPY, ••• PRITIE, ••• SPIRIT, •• CORRESPONDENCE, •• LIFE)

What the sky has foretold must come to pass, but the ritual of Namburbu can make the results of predicted events less severe. This Effect is not a divination at all, but rather a defense against grim portents.

The ritual involves five steps. First, those involved must seclude themselves from the rest of the world, either literally in a hut or symbolically within a circle. The participants shave and wash themselves while tamarisk incense purifies the area. After the mage in charge of the ritual sacrifices a goat, he rings a copper bell to draw divine attention. Finally, the participants

## STORYTELLING PROPHECIES

Many of the Effects derived from old Babylonian magic involve divination. Nothing too definite arises from these prognostications. "If the moon eclipses the sun while Jupiter crosses Mars, the assassin's poison will ruin the feast." — the conditions are pretty clear, but the outcome is not. Literal interpretations are rarely accurate.

But this is good for the Storyteller. Really.

When a mage uses some sort of divination, use the vagueness of the appropriate omina to your advantage. Effectively deployed predictions can foreshadow upcoming events or set a mood without locking the Storyteller into a definite outcome. Roleplaying games are unpredictable, and stories resolve themselves in unforeseen ways. A properly read omen always comes to pass, if only in a subtle way.

With that advice in mind, here's a few ways to incorporate vague prophecies into your games:

- A chronicle begins with a reading of the stars. Through the chronicle, the characters discover what the omen means and then deal with events as they come to pass.
- The characters are completely stuck for ideas on how to solve some problem, so they perform a divination. The Storyteller uses the opportunity to drop a useful clue in the players' laps.
- A particularly fatalistic prediction can precede a major confrontation, and the players wet their pants as they march their characters off to death.
- There's plenty of stuff going on in the World of Darkness, but not enough time to keep the characters involved in everything. Use prophecies to keep the characters informed of events in the metaplots that run through all the game lines (a new red star? What the hell?).

Some final advice: Vary the effectiveness of divinations. If they're always useful, all the characters will do is scry until they figure out what's going on. If they're worthless or just used to establish a brooding sense of mystery, the players stop using them because they never seem to move the story along.

For more information on omens and stargazing, check out **Rage Across the Heavens**. Yeah, it's a **Werewolf** book, but it's an excellent resource.

offer food and incense to the gods as they beseech the heavens to prevent the omen from coming true.

**System:** The mage casting the ritual rolls the Effect normally, but can be assisted by other mages. For every five successes, the realization of an omen diminishes in some way. A riot might instead be a few scattered violent crimes. The murder of the king might be an extended illness instead. Most omina are so vague that the actual effects of this ritual are hard to determine. This ritual may only be used once for any given omina. Storytellers must take care that this ritual doesn't become a substitute for other preventative action.

## BABYLON AND HERITIES

Dr. Winston Brown unearthed the following rites during his sojourn to Al Hillah. Since the Order of Hermes deals in old formulas and ancient arcana, they can cast these Effects in their original forms. Certain members of the Verbena can use these rites if they are familiar with the foci. Other Traditions need more extreme adaptations to translate these Effects to their paradigms.

### ZISURRU (•• CORRESPONDENCE, •• SPIRIT)

The prototypical ward against demons. By spreading flour in a circle and lining the circumference with the statues of protective deities, the mage creates a boundary that cannot be crossed by Umbral spirits. Anyone within the circle who is afflicted by an Infernal ailment gains a temporary reprieve until the circle's effects dissipate.

**System:** When creating the circle, the player rolls for the Effect as normal; the Correspondence component allows it to cover a large space all at once. Any Umbral spirit who wishes to enter the area must roll its Willpower against a difficulty of 5 + the number of successes the mage scored on the zisurru's creation roll. The circle temporarily ameliorates the effect of a demonic curse or illness; the symptoms are suppressed unless the rating of the power that caused the ailment exceeds the mage's successes on the circle creation roll. The Effect fades at sunrise, and the area must be rededicated if it is to offer any protection.

### SURPU (••• LIFE, •• SPIRIT)

Babylonian sorcerers had purification rituals for every type of ailment. But if the cause of some sickness or curse could not be determined, healers used a catch-all ritual called **Surpu**, or "the burning." Developed to remove the curses of demons that healers initially knew little about, this ritual treats the symptoms when the disease cannot be named.



The ritual begins with an exhaustive listing of all possible sins, enumerating any potential cause for the subject's affliction. Then some item is slowly dismantled and cast piece by piece into a fire. Usually, this means peeling an onion or stripping dates from a branch. The flames symbolically purify the patient.

**System:** While this ritual does not actually cure diseases or remove curses, the symptoms subside for a number of days equal to the mage's duration on the Effect roll. The severity of the symptoms determines the amount of Effect successes that must be generated to suppress the symptoms. After the ritual expires, the symptoms return with full intensity. The ritual takes most of one evening to cast successfully.

The Life magic used in **Surpu** alleviates symptoms. The Spirit component counters curses and demons that may afflict the victim — or, at least, allows the mage to soothe pain caused by malevolent forces.

## ADAPTATIONS OF BABYLON'S MAGIC

Most of the Effects below were never used in Babylon. Rather, these are the Tradition's modern adaptations of the ancient ways. As the Storyteller decides, some of these rituals and rites might require modification to conform to a mage's paradigm.

### ANSU ISHTEN

(...ENTROPY, ...MATTER; OPTIONAL ...LIFE)

This traditional warding incantation draws its name from the first phrase uttered by the caster: "Ansu Ishten," meaning God is All. The rote designates a specific object or person who will be kept safe from various sorts of harm. It is useless against magical attacks, but provides a nominal measure of protection from various accidents, attacks, diseases or other unfortunate events.

## CONTINUATION FOCI

For players and Storytellers who don't have time to wade through the history of Babylonian magic, here's a list of foci and common ingredients that were used in many spells.

Most of the foci required by revived Babylonian rituals seem mundane, including fire in a stove or brazier, onions, date branches, reed mats, goat's hair, red-dyed wool, flour, tamarisk branches, reeds, salt, cedar, juniper, fragrant resins, incense, sea water, figurines of gods and amulets worn around the neck or hung on the wall.

The caster invokes a protective deity with a brief preliminary chant, then recites the types of harm that will not affect the object of the rote, in a rather Seussian fashion ("It won't be crushed beneath a train, it won't be left out in the rain, it won't be dropped in boiling fat, it won't be eaten by a cat"). While the sing-song rhyming technique is useless for most paradigms, a pattern must be established for the incantation to work. A Virtual Adept might use a repeating string of code, while a Hermetic might place the object within a runic circle and walk around it, adding a measure of protection each time he reaches a certain point on the circle.

**System:** The player wishing to use this rote must detail every form of misfortune from which the object of the spell will be protected. Storytellers, by all means, exercise creativity! In the above example, the object might be dropped in boiling acid rather than fat — a fate that is within the confines of the ward, yet still unpleasant. Each success on the roll adds 1 to the difficulty of an attack in that medium. Since the ward does not provide absolute protection, the Effect is coincidental. As always, the Effect only lasts as long as the duration garnered by the mage's successes; this rite is not a way to gain permanent immunities. The Entropy component defends against mischance while the Matter magic specifies the exact types of harm that leave the object unscathed. Life magic can optionally fortify a living subject against such injury.

## AUDIENCE OF INANNA

(•• CORRESPONDENCE, •• MATTER, • TIME)

Say goodbye to obsolescence. Originally an Effect to prevent impotence by placing a figure of Inanna on the head of the bed, the Virtual Adepts have adapted this ancient ritual into an Effect that allows older computer hardware to exceed the limitations imposed by cutting-edge software. With this Effect, a 286 can run Windows 98 at peak performance or a Pentium III

can execute algorithms meant for Crays. Software can function regardless of operating system. Usually vulgar, although one Virtual Adept supposedly funds his research entirely with this Effect.

**System:** The Audience of Inanna rote enhances all manner of computability — the Effect simply requires that Inanna be invoked into the system (often with special desktop wallpaper, a figurine on the tower case and some convoluted lists of charms and incantations stored in high memory). Success speeds the processor, boosts its connectivity and improves its performance standards; generally, each Effect success increases the computer's performance by a factor for the duration — one success helps a 286 to limp along, but with ten successes on an extended Effect, that same 286 could become the equivalent of a Pentium for a day or more.

## BERATE THE DEITION

(••• SPIRIT, ••• MATTER)

In Babylon, everything was thought to be the potential home of a demon, including materials used in ritual magic. Some Babylonian mages prepared their foci by yelling at the demons inside. The mage declared himself a representative of the gods and informed his tools that they had better obey him. Vague threats seemed to work best.

While this Effect is not yet in wide circulation, many Traditions are developing permutations to suit their paradigms. Sons of Ether seem particularly fond of berating their equipment, but so far it has only been effective on tools the berater created himself.

**System:** If the Effect is successful, the difficulty of the next extended ritual involving the berated foci is lowered by 1. Consider this a specific form of Magic Affecting Abilities (**Mage Revised**, p. 155). The Effect improves the spirit/material tie of the focus in question. Some speculate that egotistical willworkers have the most success with this rote.

The mage need not reach into the actual Gauntlet to perform this Effect, so it does not suffer from problems like the Avatar Storm.

## KISPU (••• ENTROPY, ••• CORRESPONDENCE)

Originally a ritual to secure a soul easy passage to the land of the dead, modern Euthanatoi have adapted Kispu for a more specific purpose. By sacrificing a large animal and reciting the names of the gods of the dead, the ritual protects a recently deceased person from becoming a wraith, and her existence proceeds to whatever awaits afterward. The Hollow Ones call this an "Enfant Abortion."

**System:** The corpse need not be present, but the subject of the ritual must have died less than 24 hours before the ritual is begun. The mage must acquire more successes in an extended ritual than twice the subject's Willpower. The subject goes peacefully into the great beyond, with no lingering traces or attachments. If the subject already became a wraith, he can still be dispersed into nothingness with this rite, but the ritual fails if the wraith has gained awareness of its new state already (that is, if the wraith's Caul has been removed).

## THE MONSTERS OF MESOPOTAMIA

Mesopotamian literature describes a host of monstrous entities, from winged guardians to demonic spirits. Of course, in the World of Darkness, such creatures were (are?) all too real.

### ALADLAMMU

A winged bull with a human head, the Aladlammu is a benevolent guardian creature. It is sometimes depicted on old pottery; tales relate that the Aladlammu was intelligent and wise. Aladlammu are often associated with the guardianship of sacred knowledge, not with simple treasures. Such a creature might defend old magical texts and could even work in the company of a

virtuous wizard. Aladlammu might also trade magical knowledge with a curious and nonthreatening mage. Though such a creature hardly makes for a consistent mentor, it could offer a few jewels of advice.

It is possible that the demonic traffic of Babylon drove the Aladlammu away; perhaps in some far reaches of the Mesopotamian deserts, a few still guard the knowledge of virtuous magic, awaiting for a mage untainted by the Infernal practices that flourished in the first cities.

Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

**Willpower:** 9, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -3, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Trample for 6 dice

**Abilities:** Alertness 5, Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Brawl 3, Cosmology 6, Dodge 3, Enigmas 6, Linguistics 5

**Quintessence:** 10

**Resonance:** (Static) Protective 3

### ANZU

A huge lion-headed bird, the Anzu appears in one of the tales of Gilgamesh. Nesting in the huluppa tree, the Anzu apparently lived with both a great serpent and Lilith herself. Gilgamesh shattered the huluppa tree and scattered its inhabitants to the mountains, but the Anzu is clearly mentioned as having offspring — other



Anzu may survive in some distant mountain or Umbral Realm. It is said that a tree still grows in Uruk commemorating the Anzu, so perhaps the huluppa tree, twisted and gnarled by Gilgamesh's attacks upon it, still stands somewhere.

In another myth, the Anzu steals the tablets of destiny from Enki, the god of wisdom, but is captured and punished. By stealing the tablets, the Anzu gains control over fate, enabling it to curse its attackers and even slay gods. Ninurta brings the Anzu back to

Enki as a prisoner. A modern mage might experience that tale again himself, if the Anzu takes an interest in his tomes and steals them, requiring a quest to regain the stolen knowledge.

**Strength** 3, **Dexterity** 5, **Stamina** 3

**Willpower:** 5, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Bite for 6 dice

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 5 (Flight), Brawl 3, Dodge 2



# CHAPTER THREE: FIRE IN THE JUNGLE — MESOAMERICA

## FAIR WARNING



So, you want to know about the secrets of the south, eh? — the jungles where the Aztecs built their empire on steaming hearts and the Mayas consorted with strange beings from the sky. You wanna know about those pyramids that people say connect with Egypt and send signals across the world. You wanna hear about how the mystics use the sacred leaves to get visions of the future. You wanna figure out how to turn into a jaguar and how to make obsidian so it cuts through steel.

Well, you must be one sick fucker, because those people had some messed-up shit. I mean, theologians may say that there's no such thing as true maltheism — why would any dumb shit worship a god that actively hates him? — but some of these folks came damn close. You're digging into things best left unknown. That is, of course, unless you think a few lives and your sanity are a fair price.

What, you don't believe me? I've been there. You wouldn't be asking if you didn't think I knew this shit. I'm not just trying to scare you either. This is some grade-A soul-wrecking crap. I did not get these six-inch scars on my forearms — yeah, the ones that magic won't remove — by studying nice, happy, jungle-dance magic. You gotta get your hands deep in blood before you figure this stuff out.

## Doomsday

I can tell you don't really believe me. You know these people did some crazy things but you're thinking "They can't really be that bad, right?" Let me give you a couple of eye openers. The Incas believe their civilization was started because the gods were impressed with a woman who trapped her brother in a cave for eternity — that sort of cleverness definitely deserved the reward of civilization. A pair of gods created the Aztec world by tearing a monster in half. The Mayan gods created humanity to worship them, then wiped out the test batch entirely when they didn't work out quite right. Now this may be all myth and legend, but remember, a people's myths are the foundation of their culture. These were not gods who liked humans, by any stretch.

So, the result is that you get some pretty nasty people. Hey, if the gods say "You know, people suck," then there's not much incentive for the people to do things like not kill each other. Hell, lots of these gods gloried in human carnage, so people went out of their way to be nasty. There are still theories as to why some of these civilizations simply disappeared: some say disease, or tectonic upheaval, or giant stone spaceships. Me, I say they were just plain mean.

Of course, the Aztecs are the ones usually credited with bloody-handed murder, and justly so, but they're not the only culprits. Mayan and Mixtec murals also show people not only getting sacrificed, but eviscerated, splayed apart and rent asunder. This wasn't done for entertainment like the debauched gladiatorial games of Rome. It was done because these cultures believed that they had a divine duty to inflict pain in order to survive.

Gods aside, there's power in that belief. Life is a potent thing, and its exhaustion is equally potent — more so, the more terrible its demise.

Am I scaring you yet? No? Then you might just be far gone enough to try some of this stuff yourself.

## Strange Mysteries

Aside from the Aztecs, who everyone thinks of when they think of pre-Colombian Central and South America, there were several other civilizations: the Incas, for one, and the Olmecs, Mayas, what have you. Not all of them were totally brutal, but they were all strange.

The Mayas are the folks on the top of the fucked-up mystery list. As with the other nasty cultures of the area, they survived for the better part of a thousand years and totally dominated the area of southern Mexico and Guatemala. While Europe was still bawling around in the Dark Ages, the Mayas were clearcutting their forests for arable land, paving roads, experimenting with pottery and building huge temples, and basically giving European development the finger. The Mayas had an incredibly accurate calendar, mathematics and astronomy. Sure, they sacrificed people, they stuck babies' heads in between planks to flatten them (this for the nobles, who thought it was a cool look) and they mutilated their own genitalia. Ya gotta take the bad with the good, I guess.

Oh yeah. The Mayan calendar is predicated on cycles: right now we're supposed to be in the fifth cycle. They say that the world is wrecked and made anew each cycle. The sixth cycle supposedly starts December 23, 2012. If you're into that sort of thing...

The Mayas are a mysterious bunch because of their sudden decline. Just before the turn of the first millennium, they abandoned their southern cities and other civilizations absorbed their northern outposts, until Cortez and friends wrecked them all in the sixteenth century. Maybe the Mayas saw Cortez coming; no one has a clue.

Anyhow, the Mayas had tons of rituals dealing with astronomy and solar confluences. They equated the rising and falling of the sun with death. They had no real belief in a particularly pleasant afterlife, though their kings supposedly were reborn as gods (with that whole rising sun motif). To the Mayas, the sun actually traveled through the Underworld each night, and it was up to them to make sure that the gods had enough power to fight off evil deities and ensure the sun would rise again the next day. Ritual

mutilation and human sacrifices provided some of that power, so the Mayas thought that their bucked-up crusade was saving the universe. Maybe they were right in their little corner of the universe. Who knows?

## A Little Lower

To the south of the Mayas and their vanishing act you find the Incas, who hung out in Peru. You know, the Andes? Legend has it that they built their cities on places of power over these giant mazes in the Andes, where strange dwarf men lived. I can see that's perked up your interest a little.

Like the Mayas, the Incas developed some heavy-duty accounting, engineering, and agriculture. They were also sticklers for religious ritual. But unlike the other folks, they didn't have a written language. All right, the Mayas didn't have one like ours, either; they used carved sigils to communicate certain concepts in weird ways. Sure me. They did, however, have a really odd system of knot language. They used colored knots tied into cords to denote certain mnemonic elements. They also managed to build a phenomenal road system, which was good because they had an empire of six million or more subjects and definitely needed paved roads, considering that they never developed wheeled transport and used llamas (llamas!) for everything. The use of labor for tax purposes facilitated the construction; people gave time and service instead of money.

So what's so special about these folks? They didn't even conduct bloody sacrifices. The Incas did, however, continue a tradition that had been handed down from tribes in Argentina: mummification. They stuck bodies into caves maybe fifteen or twenty feet underground, wrapped in leaves and preserved by salty soil and the cold. These were the Incas' answer to angry deities — the mummies in the Andes were sacrifices to the gods. Not only that, but the sacrifices even included children. The Incas wine'd and dine'd a prospective young soul, doped her up with grain alcohol and walled her into a tomb. Pleasant people, eh? Not only that, but they believed that the mummy became a goddess of sorts, able to prophesy and answer questions to those who paid homage at the tomb. Perhaps their ritual really did provide some sort of link like that.

## Blood for the Blood God!

So now we come back to the Aztecs. For a group that started out as a band of refugees, they sure rose to prominence. After getting kicked through much of the continent, they dropped in on a swampy little area and decided to build a town in the middle of a lake. With the development of specialized agriculture to take advantage of the terracing and the marshy climate, they increased their population greatly. Like the other civilizations of the area, they developed mathematics and engineering to a great degree, all the way up to floating structures and those staged pyramids for which Mesoamerican architecture is so famed.

The Aztecs really got going because of their gods, though. As the chosen of Huitzilopochtli, they needed human hearts for just about everything. Hearts made the world go round, literally. They sacrificed to Tezcatlipoca, the Smoking Mirror, their evil jaguar god; their warriors emulated for strength. They sacrificed to their patron Huitzilopochtli. The Aztecs also sacrificed to the sun god, the rain god, the monster that made up the Earth and just about anything else in their litany of deities.

The unending parade of sacrifices required fresh meat for the grinder. Aztec expansion probably happened solely out of their need for more people to kill.

Having built a city out of a swamp, the Aztecs made significant strides in agriculture and tool manufacture compared to their neighbors. It wasn't long until the Aztecs started conquering the lands around them. Huge bridges and roads connected their city to the mountains around it, while the subjugated populace fed the burnaces of their hungry gods. They kept this nastiness up until the Spaniards showed up and ransacked them.

The Spaniards called them pagans as an excuse to kill them. Rather hypocritical, since the conquistadors kidnapped the Incan emperor from under a flag of truce, ransomed him for gold, then strangled him and marched on the capital anyway.

There were probably vampires in there somewhere. I don't know about you but anywhere that huge oceans of blood show up, I tend to think of vampires.

Anyhow, the Aztecs were fierce warriors and athletes. Depictions show them using obsidian-tipped war clubs and heavy fur-and-feather cloaks. Slightly more apocryphal stories tell of them turning into jaguars and eagles, too. Not an easy feat, but one that I might be able to show you.

## The Price

So yeah, these were some messed-up people by our standards. By any standard, I guess, given how many people they killed! And that's why I'm warning you about all of this.

You see, if you want to know what makes them tick you are going to have to do what they do. Are you ready to be a killer?

I'm already a killer. I've killed quite a lot of people. I've sacrificed all manner of scientists and civilians and soldiers and kids in the name of my god, who is called Kicking the Asses of Technocratic Sympathizers. Even my friends say I'm crazy. I say I'm committed. And yes, I have held a beating human heart in my hands.

So, do you want to start with the human sacrifice, or with shoving a needle through your dick? Your call, really. After all, you're the one who wants to know this stuff.



THE EXACT DATE OF THE END OF THE WORLD,  
OR AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MAYAN CONCEPTION OF TIME

Storyteller's note: We've included this explanation of the Mayan calendar for several reasons: First, it shows that the Mayas were more than bloodthirsty nuts who spent their days sacrificing people to appease the gods. Second, this calendar underpinned the Mayan understanding of time; if you don't get this, you're not gonna get the Mayan paradigm. Third, the Mayas precisely calculated when the world is scheduled to end — information we hope will be useful to players and Storytellers alike.

Stop playing around, Bryan. This is serious stuff  
— Dr. Brown

**A Report from Dr. Winston Brown's Hermetic Committee  
on the Impending Apocalypse**

Given their cultural obsession with the cycles of existence, the Mayas developed a complex calendar, and one that's startlingly accurate. It accounts for so many variables that it only misses a day every 6000 years — even the most jaded Technocrat can tell you that's far more accurate than the Julian calendar used by most of the modern world.

To the mages of the Mayas, the cycle of time was everything, so they had to be damn sure they always knew what to call each exact moment. After all, the world had been destroyed five times and recreated four; the priests who designed the calendar wanted to know when the next routine creation/destruction was to take place.

Although it might seem somewhat alien to those Sleepers among us, the Mayas thought of time as cyclical. While Mayan

time had a definite direction, certain patterns repeated over cycles that lasted for thousands of years. These patterns played themselves out not just in our immediate reality, but also on a variety of spirit realms that modern mages refer to as the Umbra. Carrying certain periods of time was often the burden of particular deities, whose disposition determined the luck or misfortune of that particular time.

*Yeah them and every other dead tribe. Maybe if ancient cultures had spent less time stargazing, they wouldn't have been so damn primitive.*

But the Mayas paid some attention to outward appearances; their astronomical observations were extensive. For centuries, Mayan priest-astronomers accurately predicted celestial events such as solar and lunar eclipses. Inscriptions in the ruins of Naranjo in northeastern Guatemala describe a battle possibly timed to coincide with the retrograde motion of the planet Jupiter, a phenomenon Mayas could predict with great accuracy. A surviving collection of Mayan mathematical and astronomical tables commonly referred to as the "Dresden Codex" shows corrections made to calculations of the synodic period of Venus — corrections that were a matter of fractions only observable after decades, perhaps even centuries.

There was an added incentive to be accurate in this society that practiced human sacrifice — a mistake by an astronomer was typically corrected through ritual execution.  
*Hermetic Initiates sometimes need similar incentives.* →

With such extensive knowledge of the cyclical repetitions of the heavens, the Mayas created their complicated calendars. Though several minor calendars exist, such as those based on the orbits of Venus or the moon, three calendars were used consistently throughout Mayan civilization: the ritual calendar, the solar calendar, and the "Long Count." These calendars were based on a combination of religious belief and astronomical observation, and could be combined in various ways, most notably the "Calendar Round." Perhaps inspired by the repeating nature of the apparent motions of the celestial sphere, these calendars were a collection of cycles that spanned days to millennia.

What follows is an elementary explanation of this time-keeping system the Mayas created; its various interconnections have astronomical as well as religious significance. →

*A thesis worthy of Miss Thistlebottom.*

## The Ritual Calendar

Although the original name for this calendar is lost to history, modern scholars refer to the ritual calendar as *tzolkin*, meaning "count of the days." This calendar was used to keep up with cycles of dates that were important for rituals and prophecy. The calendar records cycles of 260 *kin* (days). Any particular date on this calendar consists of two elements: a number between 1 and 13 and one member of a collection of 20 months, each with its own religious connotations: Imix, Ik, Akbal, Kan, Chicchan, Cimi, Manik, Lamat, Muluc, Oc, Chuen, Eb, Ben, Ix, Men, Cib, Caban, Etz'nab, Cauac, Ahau.

The 260-day cycle of the ritual calendar has no apparent astronomical counterpart. Perhaps its origin is a combination of the numbers 13 and 20, to which the Mayas attached numerous superstitions. Another explanation put forth by German ethnologist Leonhard Schultze Jena equates the 260-day cycle with the duration of the typical human pregnancy.

## The Solar Calendar

A 365-day calendar, based on the motion of the sun, was borrowed from the earlier civilizations of the Zapotecs and

the Olmecs. The years followed linearly with no leap years, although the Mayas knew through observation that the actual solar year was slightly longer. This calendar consisted of 18 months with 20 days each, the days numbered 0 to 19 — notice the contrast to the numbering of *tzolkin* days, which begins with 1. This made a 360-day year called a *haab* and five extra days at the end were numbered 0 to 4 and called the *Uayeb* — five days rarely considered lucky by the Mayas. Although the Mayas recognized that the solar year was longer than 365 days, they didn't use leap years regularly, though they are encountered in some records. ↗

Bryan, if I see one more passive construction, you get an *I*. Passive voice indicates something being acted upon. Would you talk to an Umbrood Lord with your language indicating that you want to be acted upon? Remember your Enochian. It's not what you say, it's how you say it.

In contrast to the ceremonial *tzolkin*, the solar calendar was used primarily for civil and agricultural purposes. Still, the names of the months retain religious significance as the year cycles through these months: Pop, Uo, Zip, Zotz, Zec, Xul, Yaxkin, Mol, Ch'en, Yax, Zac, Ceh, Mac, Kankin, Muan, Pax, Kayab, Cumku, and the five-day *Uayeb*. In accordance with the Mayan belief about the cyclical nature of time, the last day of each month is also the beginning of the next. The day 19 Pop is both the end of Pop and the beginning of Uo; this day is called "the seating of Uo" and

every other 19th day has a similar title, depending on the name of the new month.

### The Calendar Round

*I've seen one of these calendars. Uglier than my grandmother.*

The 260-day ritual calendar and the 365-day solar calendar can be combined into the so-called "Calendar Round." The dates on each calendar advance concurrently, and no combination of dates from the two calendars repeats for 18,980 days, constituting 73 ritual years or 52 solar years. This combination of calendars was also used by the Zapotecs for records historical and divine.

### The Long Count

This calendar most clearly represents the Mayas' mystical sense of the cycles of time. This cycle spans literally thousands of years and is denoted with a 5-digit number in a distinctive vigesimal system (based on place values of 20) used just for this calendar: the basic unit is the 360-day *tun*, which consists of 18 *uinals*, each of 20 *kins* or days. Twenty *tuns* is *katun*, and 20 *katuns* comprise the largest division of the Long Count calendar, the *baktun*, equaling 144,000 days.

Watch this word.

The scholarly consensus holds that this calendar counts the days since a "creation event" on August 13, 3114 B.C.; by adding a "correlation constant" of 584,285 days to the number of Julian days since that starting date determines the Long Count.

Archaeologists studying the Mayas are greatly aided by the appearance of Long Count dates on most samples of Mayan writing. A date typically appeared in the forms of all three calendars: the ritual calendar date, followed by the solar date, followed by the Long Count. February 8, 1999, the day this paper was originally due, would be recorded by the Mayas as "9 Men 8 Pax 12.19.5.16.5."

As late as you are, you shouldn't get cute.

### The Planets and Other Calendars

Mayan astronomical efforts mostly centered on the appearances of the sun and moon, but astronomers also kept records of the paths of the planets and attached special importance to Venus. The appearance of Venus at helical rising marked ceremonies of feasting and human sacrifice. The Mayan value for the synodic period of Venus was 584 days, remarkably close to the accepted modern value of 583.92 days. Synchronizing the calendar recording Venus's movements with

the solar and ritual calendars results in a cycle with an error of less than one day in 6000 years.

Clearly, the Mayas saw celestial phenomena as another expression of the recurring cycles of the universe. The behavior of the sun, moon, and planets was incorporated into their calendars for pragmatic reasons, but as the ritual calendar and the importance of each date demonstrate, the discoveries provided by observing the heavens were enveloped in multiple religious meanings.

*Lucky me — I'm supposed to be in hell that day.*

On December 23, 2012, the Long Count will again reach the end of another great cycle that resets the count to 13.0.0.0.0, where the world is destroyed a sixth time and recreated a fifth. The Mayas would probably celebrate it with a deluge of blood such as the world has never seen, but more sensible people might view the destruction and recreation of the world as a possible inconvenience. Given the extreme accuracy of the Mayan calendar, Dr. Winston Brown's Hermetic Committee on the Impending Apocalypse recommends that society spend as least as much effort preparing for this date as it did for January 1, 2000.

*Bryan, you can control minor Forces, but you can't write a paper that's not cribbed from the encyclopedia. I need a drink.*



# STORYTELLING MESOAMERICA



South America is a wonderful setting for World of Darkness games, but it's too often overlooked. Let's face it: Your typical North American player isn't used to thinking of things outside the US of A and Europe as being remotely "civilized."

South America's got civilization too; it just took longer for conquistadors to spread across it, probably because the huge jungles were less conducive to travel and settling than, say, the great plains of North America. Plus, Spain wound up on the downside of colonialism and wasn't able or willing to support the effort. So modern civilization emerged more slowly in South America. Nevertheless, the continent has more than its share of "neat stuff."

South America is a great setting for a chronicle that's a little foreign without relying on the staple of Asia or not-too-alien Europe. Major cities like Rio still have modern amenities, so your techno-fetishist characters can have their electrical outlets. On the flip side, even with the huge deforestation of the Amazon, there are great swaths of jungle and wild lands in South America. There are pyramids, tombs, mummies, magicians, lost civilizations *and* Technocratic planning, shapeshifter threats, unaligned vampires and political upheavals. In short, you can run just about any sort of story you damn well please in South America.

## ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS?

The famous Nazca lines in Peru supposedly feature symbols of beings that resemble sketches of aliens from various abduction victims. Are they really beings from another planet? Mages might classify them as Umbral entities, but they *could* be some sort of other intelligence. And what did they want with the Incas? The Technocracy obviously tries to debunk such theories, but a Dreamspeaker in South America insists that the Union has a secret base where they're holding the Gray-Mayan hybrid race.

## BLOODY HELL

The Aztecs killed a *lot* of people. A *lot*. The victims are very mad. Those who left souls behind, that is. Rampaging spirits on the loose in Mexico can start causing a ruckus, especially when they're using



weapons from the twelfth century. Worse still, what if some dead Aztec ghosts are coming back to possess people or otherwise begin their sacrifices anew?

## HOLY SHIT! IT'S GOLD!

The Incas apparently believed that gold and silver were literally the feces of the gods. The Spaniards melted down most of the Inca's ceremonial statuary during their conquest of the area, but high-altitude explorers have discovered many old Incan sites that have remained untouched for years. Since these sites have treasure and perhaps old magical artifacts, mages and Technocrats alike might be interested — mages to get the gold to pay their bills and grab some new trinkets, Technocrats to keep them from doing so.

## BLOODY ENCHANTMENT

Make no mistake: Much of Central American magic is not for the faint of heart. Although the Mexican cultures had some shamanistic practices, the Aztecs and their subjects enforced a brutally hellish regime upon their subjects. Bloody gods demanded bloody rites. Mayan, Incan and Toltec practices are shrouded in mystery; their rituals connect powers that even Hermetic mages of the day would have found daunting. All in all, a strong magic demanding an equally strong mage.

### CUICUILCO'S DEMISE

(..... FORCES, ..... MATTER)

Cuicuilco was a great city in the Mexican central highlands, until its destruction in A.D. 150 by an erupting volcano. Teotihuacan went on to become the most powerful remaining city of the region. Some mages speculate that Cuicuilco's demise was planned in a fiery disaster to end its potential threat, while others attribute its end to the act of angry gods or unfortunate tectonics. Whatever the case, *some* sort of ritual has been handed down that points to magical influence.

The mage must sacrifice a human victim, as might be expected for magic of the Mesoamerican sort, in order to awaken the power of the volcano (fire gods and what-have-you, after all). In some versions, the victim might actually be thrown into the volcano; in others, the subject is merely slaughtered near the volcano's base. Either way, the ritual is dangerous, since it is unlikely that the mage will get out in time.

**System:** Effect successes generate tremendous tectonic forces and pressurization of material in the heart of a chosen volcano. With enough successes on such a ritual, the mage could theoretically cause a volcano to erupt, perhaps destroying an area just as Cuicuilco was destroyed. Such an Effect is a phenomenal feat, easily

requiring twenty or more successes for even a marginal result; a mage who scores fewer successes might succeed in getting some unpleasant burbling and maybe a single stream of lava from a volcano, but no spectacular eruption. Don't botch.

### HEART FOR HUITZILPOCHTLI

(..... LIFE, ..... SPIRIT, ..... PRITIE)

The Aztec practice of human sacrifice is well known. Scholars of the occult theorize that they used such rites to feed bloody, demanding gods, perhaps even vampire priests. What is conclusively known to mages today is that the power of human suffering can be channeled through rites of human sacrifice — but the price in terrible Resonance is high indeed.

The Aztecs considered themselves the chosen people of Huitzilopochtli, and to him and their other hungry gods they sacrificed a regular train of human hearts. The Aztec creation myths even state that the monster from which the world was formed demanded human hearts in exchange for the growth of crops.

A hideous and terrible rite, this power requires the mage to cut open the chest of a victim and tear out his heart. The blood of the victim is drained into a fire, spattered across the altar or sometimes even swallowed by the demented magician. As the mage pulls the heart from the struggling, screaming victim, he tears out the subject's life force and devours it for magical power. Aztec magicians probably offered up that power to their gods, but greedy and psychotic mages of the modern era might well try to capture such power for themselves.

**System:** The mage must literally kill her victim and tear out his heart. Nothing less suffices for this rite. The subject must die, typically on the wrong end of a ceremonial knife. Once the subject expires, the Effect captures the victim's life essence and spirit, then shatters them into power for the mage. The mage starts casting this Effect as she plunges the knife into the victim's flesh and finishes it as she tears out the heart; each success scored on the Effect channels *three* points of Quintessence directly into the mage *or* into any entity or receptacle prepared and waiting (the Quintessence can be split up, if desired). If the Effect generates five or more successes, the victim's very Avatar is sundered — Gilgul — in the process. Quintessence generated by this Effect typically has the Entropic Resonance of Death, though in some very special cases of sacrifices to fertility or agricultural gods it might have the Entropic Resonance of Renewal.

Every time a mage uses this Effect, he gains a point of Entropic Resonance. Aztec priests were terrifying figures with distorted, sunken countenances and a maniacal



obsession with gathering victims for their gods. Any mage who delves into this rite risks following their path. Furthermore, using magic of this sort is certain to bring down the ire of any other mage who discovers it: The Aztec empire had many enemies among its neighbors, because the constant demand for bodies sent the Aztecs to war with so many surrounding cultures.

A botch on this rite is hideous indeed: Some ancient power decides that the mage's sacrifice is insufficient or incorrectly performed. The exact effect is, as always, left up to the Storyteller, but a horrendous and lingering death is not a bad start.

### BLOOD FOR THE GODS (... SPIRIT, .. LIFE, • PRITIE)

The Aztec priests had dozens of sacrifices addressed to specific gods. In the sacrifice to Huehueteotl, for example, captives were drugged, thrown into a pit of fire and dragged out of the blaze with hooks. Then their hearts — still beating — were pulled out and thrown back into the fire. The Aztec gods rewarded such sacrifices with power. A few modern paradigms, usually bleak and demonic, address this ritual to different gods.

**System:** Successes on the Effect roll determine the duration of the gifts granted by the gods. The specific gift depends on the deity to whom the ritual is addressed. Spirit magic attracts divine notice, while Life incorporates the god's boon into the mage's Pattern. A modicum of Prime is required so that the Pattern can assimilate the powerful influx; one mage who performed this rite without the requisite Prime acquired a disturbing Resonance noticeable even to Sleepers a few days before he spontaneously exploded in a bloody spray.

This Effect increases one Attribute or Talent by 2, or grants some minor special characteristic, and earns the mage a frightening Entropic Resonance. The Storyteller determines both, based on the nature of the deity who received the sacrifice. A botch means the god was not pleased.

Note that this rite is not quite the same as the rote **Heart for Huitzilopochtli** and is marginally easier to cast; the intervention of the gods doubtless smoothes matters. However, it does not grant the mage the same level of raw power. Rather, it gifts the mage with some benefit from the gods — perhaps making him phenomenally quick for the duration if the sacrifice goes to Tezcatlipoca, who often appears as a jaguar, or giving him a fearsome visage and the ability to breathe water, if sacrificed to Tlaloc the rain god.

## THINGS THAT KEEP YOU UP AT NIGHT

There's no denying it: The Aztecs did some pretty horrible, fucked-up shit. They perpetually waged war just to acquire more bodies for their altars. They sacrificed thousands (prisoners and citizens alike) to their bloodthirsty gods. They worshipped entities that devoured the very life of their empire.

What compels a civilization to do such a thing? The survival of the universe, for starters. The sacrifice of human blood and hearts gave the Aztec gods the strength they needed to maintain Creation. The sun itself needed blood if it was to rise again the next day.

These dismal beliefs spread throughout the region as the Aztec empire expanded. And if the consensus of belief forms reality...

What if the Aztecs were *right*, and the sun really would not have risen without all those warm and bloody hearts? What if the sacrifices of the Aztecs were the only thing keeping their world from ending? Given this grave "reality," the ritual sacrifice of thousands must have seemed like cheap insurance by comparison.

## OUR ENEMIES ARE DELICIOUS (... LIFE, ... SPIRIT)

The Aztecs had something like the neighborhood backyard Barbecue, but the meat was particularly rare. The Aztecs conquered new people constantly not only for sacrifices, but because they were an empire of cannibals and their delicacy was captured warriors. After the priests sacrificed hundreds of prisoners, the corpses were returned to the warriors who had captured them. The corpse was then served at a banquet thrown by the warrior and attended by his friends, neighbors and relatives.

Aztec cookouts demanded the proper decorum. Exotic foods garnished the dead, and the warrior's friends were expected to compliment the host on the quality of the meal.

If an Awakened priest performed the sacrifice, however, the flesh imbued the cannibal with strength. Entire armies cannibalized their prisoners to give the warriors that bit of the departed soul that lingered. The priests only used this rote before critical battles, to prevent addiction among the ranks.

**System:** If a person eats a corpse prepared by this rote, raise all of his Physical Attributes by 1 but lower his Social Attributes by 1 as well. The corpse must be eaten the day it's prepared. (In some paradigms, the

cook — not the priest — performs this rote on the corpse.) Each day after, the cannibal loses a dot on one of his Physical Attributes and regains one on his Socials, until they all return to their original ratings.

The rote has two dangers. First, ritual sacrifice and cannibalism risk a strong Entropic Resonance. Second, a cannibal can become addicted to the powerful delicacy. Each time a character eats meat prepared with this rote, roll the character's Willpower (difficulty 5, but quickly rises if he cannibalizes such corpses regularly). If the roll fails, the character's got a corpse habit; lower his Physical Attributes by 1 if he doesn't indulge at least once a week. A month of cannibalism-free living and plenty of spent Willpower cures the addiction, if not the Resonance.

Of course, the Effect is usually built to last at least a day. A shorter version can be cast if the mage simply can't score enough successes, but the amelioration of social decay doesn't speed up.

## THE BALL GAME (... LIFE)

Sometimes a sacrifice just *has* to go off without a hitch; that's when you start pulling hearts out of athletes. The Aztecs and Mayas made their slaves play a soccer-like game with a huge rubber ball; both teams were ultimately sacrificed, but the winners were pampered first. Perhaps the game amused the gods, or just worked up the competitive juices, but the players made worthy sacrifices.

In modern nights, several groups have adapted this ritual to their paradigm. The *Caballeros Aguila*, a Tijuana street gang, holds victims at gunpoint and forces them to play football in an alley before they sacrifice them to Tezcatlipoca, the Aztec god of war and death.

**System:** If the successes rolled on this extended ritual exceed the difficulty of the subsequent sacrifice, lower the difficulty of that sacrifice by 1 if it involves a participant in the game. The sacrifice is rolled separately. A botch raises the difficulty of the sacrifice, or means that the gods didn't enjoy the game....

## VISIONARY BLOODLETTING (... SPIRIT, ... MIND)

Sometimes when you lose lots of blood, you start to see things. The Aztecs and Mayas did, anyway. They used lancelets to pierce spiritually significant body parts like ears, genitalia and tongues. Sometimes they ran knotted string through the punctures to really get the blood flowing. The dizzy hallucinations that such bloodlettings inspired were thought to be important messages from the gods.

**System:** The nature of the vision varies with the number of successes rolled on the Effect. With one success, the mage might see a momentary and incomprehensible image. With four or more successes, a

Mesoamerican god (or one from a different pantheon depending on the mage's paradigm) appears to the mage, offering cryptic advice or revealing its message through a particularly vivid hallucination. Typically, the sacrifice of blood causes the spirit to be favorably disposed toward the mage, so it usually gives useful advice.

While the mage's vision may present useful information, sincere worshippers use the rote simply to commune with the divine. Spirit magic contacts the gods (or accessible Umbrood, if the mage's paradigm excludes deities), while Mind draws upon the deepest symbols and associations within the caster's brain to translate the spirit's message into a meaningful hallucination. The mage regains one or two Willpower points at the end of a successful casting, more if the Effect was particularly successful or the hallucination particularly enlightening. (Storytellers can, of course, give significant information through such visions, though a Storyteller should not be compelled to try to predict the exact future of a chronicle.)

While experiencing the hallucination, the mage is unaware of his surroundings and may be vulnerable. Although the mage may be awakened from his vision, the Effect is ruined if something snaps the mage from the reverie. Typically, the blood loss and piercing inflicts two levels of lethal damage; since the mage is deliberately injuring himself, this damage cannot be soaked, even magically.

Barring certain uses of Life magic, a mage can only use this rote every other week or so. Copious amounts of blood lost on a regular basis make a man lightheaded, to say the least.

In some paradigms, **Visionary Bloodletting** leads to a Seeking.

#### CUP OF ITZ (•• LIFE, • PRIME)

One Mayan fresco shows a priest sacrificing his own blood that he might hold the power of the gods. A large decorated bowl with a paper in it is used to catch the blood, and the paper is then burned; smoke from the paper travels through a hole above the altar into the sky with the gods. In return, the gods grant the supplicant a bit of their divine energy, which similarly comes down from the sky and into the priest. The rite is clearly similar to other forms of sacrifice used by some Tradition mages (see **Heart's Blood**, **Mage Revised**, p. 182), but this version is a bit more fearsome — the typical Mayan form of the ritual required the mage to pierce his genitalia with a long needle and squeeze out the blood for the enchantment.

**System:** Successes generated on this Effect allow the mage to bleed out his own life and turn it into Prime

energy, as with the **Heart's Blood** rote. However, the addition of the Life magic gives the mage an opportunity to minimize the worst effects of the damage; although it can't prevent the injury, at least the mage needn't suffer overmuch from the pain of the rite. Mayan priests probably indulged in some hallucinogens or narcotics along with the ritual — or, at least, that's what Technocratic historians posit.

#### WAITING TO EXHALE (••• ENTROPY, •• SPIRIT; OPTIONAL •• CORRESPONDENCE)

This rote is like the Cup of Itz, but a group of women — usually relatives or close friends — contributes blood to the ritual. The smoke from the bloody paper wafts up to the gods, who in return protect the women's homes, neighborhoods or even cities from unfortunate accidents. With modern adaptations of this ritual, this rote reduces the likelihood of anything from fires and heart attacks to skateboarding injuries and burned TV dinners.

**System:** Spirit magic ensures that the offering reaches the gods, while Entropy allows changes of fortune. Each success on the Effect extends the duration of this rote or raises the difficulty of any harmful coincidental Entropic Effect in the area by 1. If Correspondence is used, successes can also contribute to the range of the Effect beyond the place where the ritual was performed. The ritual takes one night to cast. Use the Acting in Concert rules (**Mage Revised**, p. 154) if more than one mage contributes blood to the ritual.

#### OBSIDIAN STEEL (•••• MATTER)

A razor-sharp and knappable rock, obsidian was the staple material for Mesoamerican tools and weapons. Though crafting the obsidian pieces into shape required careful work, a well-sculpted piece could serve as a short knife, a scraping tool or a tooth on a piercing weapon. Even modern science recognizes obsidian's incredibly fine edges, useable even for surgery.

As a weapon, then, obsidian was deadly. The only drawback was its fragility; pieces larger than an arrowhead shattered when striking with any force and broke against stone or metal. A powerful priest, however, could make obsidian durable. By bathing the finished weapon in blood, hardening it in fire and sharpening it against stone, the mage can give the obsidian strength to pierce nearly any armor.

**Obsidian Steel** seems like a simple Matter transmutation, giving obsidian the durability of hard stone or metal. Pieces treated in this fashion do not crack or shatter, and their edges can penetrate even hide, wood or, in some cases, metal. The rote's Effects is often

coincidental: If a lucky piece of obsidian doesn't shatter when it hits something, who can tell?

**System:** Successes scored for **Obsidian Steel** cause the treated pieces — generally, nothing over the size of an arrowhead unless the magic is vulgar — to become more resilient. Pieces could be placed in a club so that it can pierce and slash armored opponents with ease. It can also be used to make piecemeal armor. Of course, the mage must score enough successes to make the Effect last long enough to be useful. A permanent Pattern change (with Prime added) could make an Artifact; it's rumored that there are still a few rare clubs out there so enchanted.

### JAGUAR CLOAK

(..... LIFE, .... MATTER, .... PRIME, .. SPIRIT)

Fierce warriors showed their off their battle skills with grisly trophies. Some dressed in the skins of jaguars and other dangerous animals. Just as the Norse berserkers wore bear skins and gained the bear's ferocity, Mesoamerican warriors drew upon the jaguar's speed and hunting prowess. A few could even transform themselves into jaguars and run through the jungles at great speed or slay their opponents with claws.

Of course, few warriors had the magical skills to actually transform themselves, but their priests knew rituals to enchant jaguar skin cloaks and armor so that the warrior could transform when he wore them. Warriors met with the priests periodically to renew their cloaks, undertake secret tasks and maintain the power of their jaguar skins. Kills in battle also maintained the magic of the cloaks.

**System:** A jaguar cloak or skin enchanted with this rote is attuned to a specific wearer. Through Life magic, the skin recognizes only its owner and grants him the power to assume the form of the jaguar. A strong-willed and fierce warrior can even control the transformation, briefly gaining claws or a nasty bite without fully turning into a beast. When the wearer transforms, the Matter magic causes the cloak to become part of the wearer — in effect, it becomes his skin, and turns back into a cloak when the wearer reverts to his normal form.

A mage enchanting a jaguar cloak must score enough successes for the item to have a worthwhile duration and empower the cloak to affect its owner. The wearer risks the normal problems of transformation: His mind may become feral if he remains too long in the shape of a jaguar. Thus, the secret warrior societies that used such cloaks often accepted only the most strong-willed and brutal warriors — those with the presence of mind to



retain their intellect and with enough animal cunning that they already seem like a jaguar (thus having a good Resonance to work with the spell).

The jaguar cloak renews its power through its wearer's deeds in combat. As the wearer slays his enemies, the enchantment channels the anguish of departing spirits into magical energy (with Prime and Spirit magic). The spirit energy floods into the warrior in a wash of ecstasy that feeds the cloak. Each person killed by the wearer in heated battle adds another day to the cloak's enchantment. Eventually, the warrior becomes blood hungry and seeks out battle both to further the cloak's power and to sate his own increasingly animalistic appetites — some warriors even gorge themselves on the organs of their foes, as if the mere rush of souls is not enough to satiate them.

Few dare to use these cloaks in this day and age, but rumor has it that, in the Amazon, there are men who run as jaguars.

### QUAHUITL (•• CORRESPONDENCE)

When the Spaniards first encountered the Aztecs, the precision of Tenochtitlan far outstripped that of any Spanish city. Spanish land measurement varied from province to province, while the Aztecs had developed a rigorous understanding of land measurement.

**System:** Anyone could use a *quahuil* — a cord cut to a specific length — for measuring distance. However, a mage can empower a quahuil with specific properties — sort of like the Aztec version of zoning. An area cordoned off with lengths of quahuil, probably over several turns as the mage sets and resets the length of cord, can be warded against improper intrusion or exit. Functionally similar to the **Ward Effect** in *Mage Revised* (p. 159), this rote demonstrates how a mage might do a common Effect under a specific paradigm.

### PATTERNS OF THE LONG COUNT (• PRIME, • SPIRIT)

As the sidebar *The Exact Date of the End of the World* (p. 65) explains, the Mayas thought that the earth and the spirit realms were governed by cyclical patterns of time. Depending on the god who carried a particular span of time, certain occurrences were more likely. And the Awakened who could perceive Patterns saw tendencies in the passage of time and the motions of the spirit realms.

**System:** The mage reads the Long Count, also perceiving the Patterns that exist among the dates of the calendar. For the duration of the Effect, lower the difficulty of Effects involving one Sphere by 1. This is just one pattern that can be found in the Long Count.

Troupes might devise their own, perhaps making Paradox backlashes more severe on a certain night or increasing the rate at which Quintessence can be drawn from Nodes. Just keep the bonuses low and be sure that the prevailing cosmic tendency fits the story.

The patterns discerned by the reading only apply to Effects cast by mages who believe in the cycles of the Long Count (ultimately, the caster perceives the tendency, but that doesn't make it real to others). At the Storyteller's discretion, this rote might also give the character insight into the state of reality given the current Long Count. A botch means that the mage has misconstrued the pattern; let the lying about difficulty numbers begin.

### SCHEDULE OF HEAVEN (••• SPIRIT, • TIME)

The divine patterns of the Mayan Long Count governed not just the earth, but the many Mayan spirit worlds as well. During certain periods of time, minutes to millennia, the planes of existence came closer together. Modern Dreamspeakers who still observe the Mayan ways read the Long Count to determine the best times to step sideways into the Umbra.

**System:** A student just learning the intricacies of the Long Count might know enough to locate one or two times a certain Near Umbral Realm is most accessible; a Master, however, can discern more propitious times even for Realms in the Deep Umbra. Successes on this rote lower the difficulty of crossing the Gauntlet. Successes can also increase the usefulness of the reading, revealing the best times and Realms to the mage. The Storyteller can also decide how accessible certain Realms are depending on the needs of the story or the date of her chronicle's Long Count.

A botch could mean missed opportunities or useless frustration. On the first night in two hundred years that it's been easy to travel to the Deep Umbra, for example, the mage believes it impossible.

Note that the Schedule of Heaven doesn't necessarily sidestep other travel problems like artificial Gauntlet strengthening or the Avatar Storm; it does, however, help the mage in sensing useful Junctures, times when the Umbra gains strength within a certain area. This can also be useful in determining when a close correspondence between spirit and material worlds might result in a surplus of Quintessence that can be harvested by someone with the appropriate knowledge of Prime.

### TRINKETS AND ITEMS CODEx MENDOZA (SPECIAL)

When the Spaniards razed the Aztec empire, they carried off many artifacts and treasures from Tenochtitlan. Of course, Aztec society disgusted the

Spaniards and many murals and books detailing religion and history were burned. The Codex Mendoza survived this purge. Several copies have been made, so one could conceivably crop up nearly anywhere.

The Codex Mendoza describes the Aztec's history from the perspective of the culture itself. A reader needs to be able to decipher its logographic language — the Aztec language that evolved from Mixtec pictograms. Aside from containing tributary records and results of various wars, the *full* Codex Mendoza's pictograms elaborate on some religious and magical practices, including the rite that mages know as **Heart for Huitzilopochtli**. Naturally, any mage aware of this fact is eager to make sure that copies of the book stay out of the hands of any enemies, especially the Nephandi, but it appears that the Nephandi have had a heads-up on the rite for some time. Now it's just a matter of containment.

## HUACA (2-PT. ARTIFACT)

The *huacas* are sacred carvings, often of small men or scenes from tales. It's said that huacas carry the power of the objects they depict. Since huacas often show magical events or the dwarfish beings reputed to live under the Andes, such talismans can actually be useful in forging arcane connections. This means that a mage could use a huaca to draw a connection to one of the dwarfs, possibly to weave a protection enchantment, or that the mage might be able to garner insight into the location of a historical mystic event, like the landings of the so-called "ancient astronauts."

## MYSTIC PLACES

Peru, Mexico, Brazil; the Amazon, the Andes, the Temple of the Sun: There's no shortage of sites to draw mages to South America. Mages recognize the placement of ancient temples and pyramids in places that once held power (and in some cases still do). Many such sites have become tourist attractions, but a few retain links to their past. And, of course, some are so grand that people lose sight of the magic amid the majesty.

### THE ANDES

Though the Andes are too large to be considered a single Node, they hold enough mysteries to draw mages in search of the hidden places reputed to lie in their peaks. Formidable in height, the Andes present several problems for prospective travelers — though trips can be had through the Andes, most mages know that the good stuff is off the beaten path. Furthermore, few are prepared for their sheer height, and travelers unaccustomed to physical exertion in high elevations are asking

for trouble, *especially* if they're running from hostile spirits or creatures.

Legend has it that the Incas built their cities and civilizations upon the ruins of older, subterranean cities. Explorers of the Incan ruins might discover a Technocratic conspiracy to cover up such ruins. Some stories even claim that the tunnels connect across the earth with hidden lairs under Egypt, China and places on the other side of the planet. If such stories are true, a mage who discovered a means to travel quickly from site to site could gain access to a tremendous web of powerful Nodes.

Beyond the Incan ruins, mages find the Andes a repository of untouched mountain wilderness. Of course, large tracts have been mined, forested and overrun (especially in the World of Darkness), but there are still uncounted acres of free space that hide all manner of strange flora and fauna. Mages with a bent toward Life magic could find uses for the creatures or plants of the Andes, some of which aren't found anywhere else on earth — or outside of the Umbra.

## CHOLULA

The Olmec-Xicallanca dynasty built a pyramid at Cholula, the largest pyramid built in the Americas. If the rumors are true, the South American pyramids are, like their cousins in Egypt, sites of enormous power. Rumor has it that a mage of sufficient Prime skill could not only awaken the Node at such a site, but channel and direct its energy to any other pyramid on the planet. If so, no mage has done so in millennia.

## JAINA

The strong death ties of many Central American cultures mean that it's no surprise that they, too, built necropoli. In this case, though, they dedicated an entire *island* to the function. Jaina became an island necropolis off the west coast of the Petén Lowlands. The angry spirits of those who died and were buried without ever knowing the bloodcurdling sacrifices of the temples might still dwell here. It's almost certain that old tools and magical items might be left behind here, and one Dreamspeaker swears that a natural gate to the Underworld exists, though ghosts of Mayan warriors are said to guard the gate.

## SAN LORENZO

A thousand years before Christ, the Olmecs built one of the first prominent cities in South America. The site now known as San Lorenzo persisted for several hundred years as a tribute to the brutality and butchery that later spread across the continent.



San Lorenzo shows evidence of having been a place of religious ceremony and culture. It has the first historical indications of ball courts, temple records and sacrificial charnel pits. Stone drains served as an aqueduct system, while tremendous carved heads and murals

adorned the city. The people indulged in the pastimes of their culture — human sacrifice, cannibalism, religious hallucinations. What Resonance might such a place have today?



# CHAPTER FOUR: PILLARS OF PHILOSOPHY — GREECE AND ROME

## A Beginning

Here are the documents I have accumulated for my report on secret societies within Greece and Rome and their effect on the modern Traditions of the Council of Nine. The variety of interviews, documents and personal journal entries tell the story. I have not revised my journal in the hopes of maintaining the authenticity of my original notes.

Submitted in Good Faith,

Simon Pain

Celestial Chorus

## Greek Society

I arrived in Greece today. I did not come as Odysseus came to Greece after months of travel and hardship, but on a plane with pretty stewardesses and complimentary meals.

I'm in Athens, a city trying to be the capital of both a European city and a Middle Eastern one. I am out of my element here. The major religion is Greek Orthodox, a sect of Christianity not given much attention in

America, much less considered a viable sect by most Protestants. The Chorus has more voices than we allow ourselves to hear, I guess.

Well, first things first. I need to start on that list of people to contact for interviews. I'll add my notes to my journal as I get them.

## The Pervasive Greek Influence

From the journal of Matthew Argivian, translated from Greek, dated 1872:

When most people look back on Greece, they don't bother to think where their culture comes from. Many historians say that the Greek influence on Western culture comes from the Crusades. On their way to reclaim the Holy Land - in the name of God, of course - the crusaders stopped to rape and pillage the city of Byzantium. When they returned from their occupation of the city, they brought with them Greek culture. From this classical influence came the Renaissance which led to et cetera ad nauseum.

Czarist Russia considered itself to be the extension of the Byzantine Empire in the modern age - a conceit only slightly more accurate than the notion of the "Holy Roman Empire."

But the Greek tradition was alive and well long before this hand-me-down history. Where do you think Merlin learned his tricks from? It's no coincidence that alchemy practiced by the ancient scholars of the Middle Ages was handed down to them in a direct line from Pythagoras and was in turn handed to him by his predecessors.

Never any respect for the past.

## The Golden Age

Dr. Deterious, *Paradigma*, Vol. 83, No. 2

An old Greek legend states that two races existed before mankind. The first was a race of men made of gold, who lived in the appropriately titled golden age. Then came the silver age, not quite so beautiful, when men were made of silver. Now is the iron age when men are made of iron, a brutal age of strife and warfare. Sometimes I think about the Technocracy and their push for mankind's blood and bones to be replaced by plastic and steel. Is this the promise of a better and more beautiful world or just another degradation, a fourth age more brutal and harsh than the last?

## Shiny Happy People

Personal account by Eva Silvers, *The Green Ones* cabal:

We were deep within the spirit world far beyond any reflection of Earth and very near to the Horizon. That's when the beastie started chasing us. It resembled a corrupted Entropic spirit but had multiple heads. It seemed to be almost made of heads and necks but we were too busy trying to get away to actually get a good look. That's when we saw him. Meghan was the only one to get a good look at him, and she never describes him

looking the same way (of course, her eyes got burned out of her head, the poor girl). I shielded my eyes from the being's intense light, and then it was gone. For as deep in the spirit world as we were, this was not an odd occurrence, but just before the light left us I heard a voice in my head saying "Be well, you are protected here...."

Sister Whitewood Verbena:

The silver race? I can tell you what became of them. They are all around us. They are everywhere, but they stick to the forests. The silver race has gone by many names - moon beasts, shapeshifters. They remember the old gods like Gaia and Luna as no one else does. They preserve that which is still good in the world. They are the true preservers and defenders of mankind in all their natural glory. Mundane folks cannot handle the awesome sight of them and are cowed by the ultimate beauty of their natural form, but our kind has the rare and extraordinary gift to see these beings as they truly are. We must not squander this gift for they are our only allies in these dark times.

Dr. Brown, Order of Hermes:

You've gotta be kidding me. People made of silver became werethings? Yeah, right.

My guess? If there was a golden or silver race before man, it existed as some sort of proto-construct thing, an awareness tied to matter before living flesh could hold on to a spirit. Or something.

Besides, if my body were made of gold, I'd probably sell it for a beer and two tickets to a Mexican donkey show. Doubtless, the silver and golden ones have fallen to similar temptations; we shall never see their kind again.

## The Peloponnesian War

Transcript from an interview with Father Eucebio Stavrides Ph.D., May 11, 1995:

Father Stavrides: How long do you believe the Ascension War has been going on?

Simon Pains: According to Tradition history, the Council of Nine and the Technocracy formed in the late Renaissance. That's when the Ascension War began.

FS: Typical answer. Do you really believe that, young man?

SP: Believe what?

FS: Do you believe that that is how the Ascension War started?

SP: Well, there were conflicts prior to that but there weren't exactly clear sides as to who was who, since there were no official factions.

FS: And when do you think the first battles began?

SP: I'm not exactly sure, though it seems the fall of the Mythic Age roughly coincided with the Crusades. At least that's what my research shows.

FS: <right> Well, you have a lot to learn, my boy. First of all, do you know about the Peloponnesian War?

SP: I know the historical documentation of it.

FS: Do you think mages were involved?

SP: Well, not really. I never thought about it.

FS: Exactly.

SP: Are you saying that the traditional account of how the Ascension War began is false?

FS: The crux of it is this: The war wasn't about land or economics or political factions or even religion, it was about magic. Sparta was a nation of science and organization; they worshipped order and militarism. Athens was a nation of ideas and gods where they worshipped innovation and individual achievement. Now replace "Sparta" with "Technocracy" and "Athens" with "Traditions" and there you have the Ascension War in a nutshell. Perhaps the tradition of fighting each other in an organized fashion wasn't centered around us individually, but that's what it was really about.

SP: That doesn't exactly fit with the way things turned out in the end. Sparta won the Peloponnesian War and the Mythic Age continued. Macedonia conquered the Greeks. Then the Romans conquered everybody.

FS: And how exactly did Macedonia conquer Greece?

SP: Well under the leadership of Alexander the G -

FS: Exactly, Alexander the Great. Who do you think was Alexander's tutor?

SP: It was Aristotle, I believe.

FS: Right again, boy. Ever read any of Aristotle's philosophy? His observations of society and taxonomy of organisms are nothing less than the inspiration for generations upon generations of scientists.

SP: I see, but how -

FS: Do you know why Socrates was killed?

SP: Excuse me?

FS: You know of Socrates, right? Great thinker, coined the term "philosophy" - why was he killed?

SP: I'm not sure.

FS: Because he had no piety for the gods of the state. He was a heretic, and that was punishable by death. Plato, his student, advocated absolute truths and higher forms that were immutable. Alexander, through Aristotle's instruction, inherited their philosophies and tried to bring Greeks, Macedonians, Egyptians, and Persians under the rule of one authority and more importantly, one culture. Sound like the Technocracy to you yet?

SP: How does Rome fit into all of this?

FS: Ah, but don't you see? That's what the whole of Rome was about in the first place. We, the spiritualists and idealists, had lost the Peloponnesian War and were wary of centering our efforts around a nation. Nations, after all, tend to worry more about themselves than the philosophical basis for what they do. Look at Rome: it was a Technocracy. The aqueduct, the auditorium, the roads - these things didn't just come from the gods - that would be too mystical. It was science.

SP: But there were cults of mysticism and religion in Roman culture.

FS: And that is how they were ultimately undermined, you see. Religion was present in Rome but it was never anything more than functional and utilitarian, like everything else in the empire. It held the society together as a common culture. Christianity changed all that. Christianity came from the Jews, one of the conquered peoples of Rome. Christianity instilled a sense of mysticism and wonder that had been lost for so long, and the Mythic Age returned. Now what could be a new Christianity to return wonder to our world, hmm?

## The Oracle - Mage, or More?

Transcribed from a conversation with Jan Kauten:

"So what faction does the Oracle belong to? Sounds like a Hermetic stunt to me."

"No one controls the Oracle or her protectors," replied Jan.

"So she's like a Craft mage, right?"

Jan sighed at this and shook his head. "Young Initiate, you have much to learn," he intoned in a semi-serious voice. "Craft, Tradition, Convention - what do these words mean? You are placing the group before the individual. Each and every Awakened being is special. There was a time when none of these labels existed and each mage was a force unto himself. That is essentially still the case. Some just like to pretend otherwise because one's network of friends and colleagues has become more formalized."

## A Question

Transcribed from my encounter with the Oracle:

"I have come to ask the Oracle a question."

"Everyone comes to ask the Oracle a question. Why should we grant your request?"

This shocked me. The idea that I wouldn't be simply charged for the show and handed a fortune cookie for my trouble was not what I expected. I was unprepared to defend my query.

"What are you doing here, Simon Pain?" said a female voice from behind the monk.

"My lady, he brings no question to take from you an answer nor any sacrifice to give to you," the monk replied.

"What do you mean?" I asked while I tried to get a better look past the mark. Standing in the stained stone arch of the doorway stood a woman completely wrapped in a soft, white fabric. Even her face was completely obscured.

"Ever the inquisitive one. Did you come here to debunk us as practitioners of your Art? Perhaps you came to convert us to your religion."

"I came to visit the Oracle."

"Well, here I am, what do you want of me?" the woman asked, with more than a trace of annoyance.

"Just to speak to you, I suppose."

"Know yourself, Simon."

"What do you mean?" I'd expected cryptic words, but not this brushoff.

"No one ever needs to visit me. All the answers anyone ever needs are within themselves if they but look within. Why are you here? Why are you traveling, staying in cheap hotels and asking questions to which you already know the answers? Where do you belong, Simon? It's not here."

I felt incredulous - could she really be saying these things? It all sounded too nonsensical - too pat. Defeated, confused, but with a new direction in mind, I turned around and walked away.

## Orpheus' Journey

I vaguely remember the story of Orpheus' descent into the Underworld. He used music to charm Cerberus, to charm even the gods into letting him violate the natural order. He descended through a cave into Hades and returned with his dead paramour - almost, but he blew it at the end.

Parts of Greece feel almost like passages between our land and Hades. The well-photographed tourist areas are just traps for money and cameras, but off the beaten roads there are little-known ruins. It's in places like those that ghosts still linger. Sometimes you can't tell if the wind is satyr's music or if a dark doorway actually leads down to Tartarus. The more I look around, the more I get the feeling that everything I want to know is already here; it's not a matter of digging up dead magic but of listening to living words. Perhaps the Greek magic has indeed returned from the Underworld, but when I turn around to look, it's like Orpheus turning as he exits Hades. What am I missing?

## Closer...

Everyone knows the Greek myths; I don't need to retell the *Iliad* in my journal. What people don't know is how true they might've been.

Africa's passed its myths into mystery, but Greece keeps its stories alive. The Greeks have living myths. The more I get away from civilization, the more I feel like I'm going back in time. Some things seem clearer when

you're out on a quay in the sea, or meandering through dusty remnants of a ruin at dusk.

I've felt it. A small breeze picked up while I explored a bit of a nearly collapsed tunnel (possibly a storeroom or a buried building). Something on the ground glittered as the sun set. A piece of bronze — a simple arc, perhaps part of a bracelet or a vase. As I stooped to pick it up I heard voices from afar, as if from the other side of a wall. I saw blinding scintillations as I stood. Something had come close. I'd almost touched the myth.

## Myth Revealed

Myth is just the fantastic put into a form that the consciousness accepts. We weave fanciful tales then say that they're just whimsical explanations for things that weren't real, but they're as real as we let them be.

In remote places, away from most of humanity, there's a boundary. You feel it as you cross, when the material world gives way to the mythical. Maps do not show these lands, but they are fleeting remnants of the myths you find if you walk the right paths.

I've found a place here that crosses the borders — an arch, which is a gateway to the myth. The creatures and magic of the past still wait in the hidden corners. I'm beginning to understand. Pythagoras needed to define geometry so that he could delineate these things, put up boundaries and see where they came from and where they went. Playwrights needed no such constructs. They let these things run loose in the imagination.

I don't think that the myths can cross back easily into our world any more. No centaurs galloping across the plains. I've learned something about the weave of myth and man, though. I think I have a new song, one to touch the divine with the spark of imagination.

# ROOTS OF THE OLIVE TREE



There seems to be an eternal fascination with the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome. From the Renaissance until relatively recently, a college-educated man was expected to have read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, analyzed Plato and Aristotle, and been able to recite — if not understand — a smattering of Latin. Even in these ignorant times, words like “cyclops” or movies

like *Spartacus* saturate our culture with the legacy of Greece and Rome.

So what really happened?

We seem to hear more about Greek gods than we do about Greek culture itself. Rome we know as a center of civilization, and we hear phrases about its glory: “All

roads lead to Rome,” and “When in Rome...,” but few people even know the date of Rome's fall. This chapter discusses how modern society remembers these ancient cultures, specifically how mages remember Greece's magical traditions.

Oh, technically, “Hellenic” is probably a better term for ancient Greek society, but that's nit-picking.

## THEITIES OF GREECE AND ROME

Greece and Rome gave us intense concepts like hubris and epic tragedy. They gave us heroes doomed to failure for their mortal flaws, gods whose whimsy extinguished civilizations. Secrets, the world can deal with. It's okay to kill an entire family and bury them in your backyard, just don't bring it up at the



Johnson's barbecue party. Truth is difficult to deal with when we don't like it, especially when it concerns a past we want to call our own.

There's also the theme of opening up oneself to one's true nature. What was reviled soon becomes a part of the self. Whether that new identity is something we want to have or others are willing to accept is another matter. The Greeks and Romans gave us the hero — the man who strove to overcome his nature, who traveled through adversity while he simultaneously made an inner journey to open himself to wisdom. Even as he tragically falls, the hero fulfills his true, inner nature.

### A LITTLE GREEK HISTORY...

In a world of vast empires, the Greeks were organized into self-governing city states. This was largely due to the mountainous terrain of the area, which forced people into somewhat isolated clusters. Primary among these cities were two well-known names: Athens and Sparta.

Spartans were considered masters of warfare. After the Messenian War, Sparta annexed its neighbor Messenia for arable land but was in return nearly overrun, as the Messenians far outnumbered the Spartans. Sparta survived by turning the Messenians into slave labor while their own society dramatically evolved

into one completely suited for war. Boys were trained from manhood to be military men, to subsist on a minimal amount of food or to steal what they needed.

One Spartan story, often retold, tells of a young boy in military training. Boys of that age were not given food so they had to steal everything they ate. If they were discovered, it was taken from them. This early lesson taught the boys to steal food like a soldier — quietly and with whatever guile could be mustered. One boy sneaked into the forest and caught a fox. As he returned to the barracks, a guard stopped him and asked him about where he had been. The boy began calmly talking with the guard, keeping the fox firmly under his arm, where the fox had gotten free and began clawing at the boy's flesh. Finally, the boy fell over dead from the wounds and the fox ran out from under his shirt. Heralded as a hero and a true Spartan, the boy's tale was retold for most of Spartan history.

Spartans had little time for crafts, much less for growing food. This was left to the Helots, the enslaved Messenians. One well-known chronicler said of Spartan cuisine that "after tasting Spartan food [he] understood why Spartans were so willing to die." Even in modern languages, "Spartan" remains synonymous with austerity. Sparta valued strength, discipline and war, but little else.

Few visitors were allowed inside the city. This was probably for the best — Spartan values and culture so strongly clashed with outsiders' standards that most visitors doubtless came away with a rather terrified picture of the city.

Athens, on the other hand, is sometimes heralded as "the birthplace of democracy." In truth, this is a romanticized vision. In its youth, the city was just as monarchic as any other, with wealthy landowners controlling the elected council. In a quirk of history, falling agriculture prices forced Athens to select a dictator to reform the city. Within a few generations, Sparta, suspicious of Athens' increasingly imperialistic policy, attacked and managed to oust the dictatorship. Though Sparta nominally won, Athens' government changed again, this time to something like a democracy. Of course, only male, land-owning Greeks who were born in Athens could vote. Still, for its time in history, Athens was remarkably egalitarian. Leaders were not elected to office by vote, but each Athenian citizen was expected to take his turn randomly in a station of public office. This was facilitated by the Agora, an open area where people shopped and debated. Imagine a cross between a mall, a grocery store and a nonstop political debate between candidates. As Sparta's militocracy declined, Athens' democracy rose.

Given that the city-states of Greece formed one of the most potent alliances of their era, conflict with external forces was inevitable. Athens and Sparta came together along with their allies to repel the Persian invasions by Darius I and his son Xerxes I. After the war, Athens formed an alliance with the surrounding city-states called the Delian League, in order to tax them and support the huge navy of Athens. Sparta in turn formed an alliance called the Peloponnesian League to support its army and keep away the Delians. Ultimately, this friction led to what is now known as the Peloponnesian War. At least that is what the history books tell us....

The Peloponnesian War severely weakened the Greek states, exhausting their resources on civic infighting. Already tired from their constant feuding, the city-states were pickings for an outside conqueror. The entire peninsula was conquered by a small country called Macedonia, by one of Aristotle's students — a curious man called "Alexander the Great." Alexander conquered all of Greece, Anatolia (present day Turkey), Egypt and Persia. Under his rule, Greek culture exchanged with surrounding areas, spreading the ideas of Greek philosophers and architects and allowing a wealth of new ideas into the fold. This trade actually worked in

Greece's favor — it prevented cultural stagnation and the Greek philosophies spread to influence thinking across the Mediterranean and beyond, bringing about an era of Hellenistic greatness. Alexander died before he could spread his empire into Asia, but in his wake his three most trusted generals divided his empire into thirds. These fragments declined slowly until another military power could unify them once more; the old colony of Rome returned to conquer her forebears.

## THE OLYMPICS

### Summary Report

*As I head off to attend the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, I am writing this summary report of the documents and interviews with contacts in Atlanta during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Clearly, there was a great deal of activity in Purgatory (or the Dark Umbra, as the Council of Nine calls it); however, I have yet to see any clearly mystical activity associated with it. There was a well-documented convergence of ghosts in the area. My previous theories at the time stated that such a convergence always happens near large gatherings of people, as spirits tend to gravitate to areas of high emotion (as the games stimulate in some). My recommendation in a field report at the time stated that such a gathering could happen in all major cities worldwide during the festivities at the end of the millennium. However, given the activity and occurrences in the Dark Umbra that took place in 1999 and continued to the present, I highly recommend a study of the events in question to determine if there was some causal effect between the two.*

The Olympic games represented a religious festival that united all the Greek city-states as one. Every four years, all the wars of Greece were suspended while the greatest athletes (or at least the greatest male athletes) went to the city of Olympus. Games and competitions were held in honor of the gods and to celebrate the human body, a immensely holy thing to the Greek soul. So important were the Olympic Games that the Greek calendar marked its first year as the first year that the Olympic Games were held.

Under the reign of Emperor Constantine, the Olympic Games were cancelled for being "pagan and idolatrous" in the eyes of the new Roman Church. Still, the Games remained firmly established as a sign of unity and competition, and as a peaceful means of bringing together warring groups.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF ROME

For fifteen hundred years Rome represented the pinnacle of European civilization. The gradual decay of the Greek states led inevitably to isolated pockets of culture. With armies exhausted by the constant warfare, the cities had limited room for expansion, trade or protection of territories. Stagnation resulted.

In Rome, representative government continued by tradition. Instead of adhering to a formal body of laws, the Roman governors ruled by weight of historical precedent. The senate passed its laws based upon previous similar judgments. Debate and argument about precedent determined the acceptability of a legal position. Naturally, this meant that skilled debaters, ones who could make a weak precedent seem strong, prospered politically.

Just as Rome held on to the old representative governmental traditions established earlier in Athens, though, it also held dear the militocratic principles of the aggressive Greek city-states. Military prowess led to political favor; successful generals could rely on their campaigns as badges of honor to gain popular approval. Furthermore, land ownership guaranteed privilege and wealth. With an argumentative collection of politicians, the only way to increase holdings outside of business was, naturally, to expand the Roman hegemony through conquest — so many statesmen founded their wealth and power through military actions in their youth. This incentive led to the constant expansion of Roman territory, by intimately tying personal political gains with Roman interests.

### THE EMPIRE OF THE WESTERN WORLD

Rome was probably founded after native tribesmen drove out the Etruscans. However, Rome came into its own during its imperial period: The Roman senatorial reliance on legal precedent without recourse to records paved the way for a charismatic leader to influence the senatorial process. That leader arose in the form of Julius Caesar.

The Roman representative government had suffered through a slow decline through much of the second century B.C.; generals used Roman military detachments to further their political arguments. Often, a senator's backing in legal matters could be attributed to his legions stationed near the city of Rome — the threat of violence to back up authority. The senate itself kept no legislative authority, but the elected officials who required senatorial backing pressed hard upon the walls of tradition. In a system run by precedent, those who could get away with new and dangerous

schemes set precedents for themselves. Rhetoric fell to the wayside as violence became the favored tool in settling political disputes: political officers assassinating one another on the personal level, or engaging in military feuds on the national level.

By the arrival of Julius, the Roman hegemony was well into a state of legislative shock. Infighting paralyzed the legislative process and made it impossible for the nation to deal with problems of debt, infrastructure and private use of military power. Julius, a charismatic figure by all accounts, managed to wave off the customary behaviors and expectations of the day. Acting in a high-handed fashion and with supreme confidence, he set what precedents he desired and used his considerable political savvy to bring the senate into line. From 49 to 44 B.C., Julius effectively dictated policy to Rome — though he refused monarchy, he accepted the accolades and cooperation of the legislature and cemented his place.

Naturally, success breeds enemies. Julius' heavy-handed treatment of the Roman public and his dismissal of customary procedure earned him no great admirers among other ambitious politicians. In 44 B.C., Julius was struck down by angry members of the senate and their co-conspirators. The liberators, though, found that Rome's people hailed Julius' showmanship; the assassins were forced to disperse, with public sentiment turned against them.

Julius' reign led to the establishment of the empire, though. From a failing popular government, Rome converted to a dictatorial regime. A spate of warfare between Mark Antony and Octavian, the successor to Julius, ended when Julius managed to secure the popular support of the senate. Commanding an army with legislative sanction, Octavian routed Antony, whose army had been declared a public threat, to the eastern territories. In a move of political genius, Octavian took the moniker Caesar, after the fashion of his adoptive mentor Julius, and thus established a direct connection to his charismatic predecessor. Octavian's army was kept busy with civil war — the Roman republic had splintered under the disparate demands of pro-Caesar factions; the senate only served to legitimize actions of conquest and terror after the fact. Without the broad political support of his opponents, Octavian had to act decisively and use his one advantage: his appeal to the military men that he'd led on campaigns earlier during Julius' reign.

Octavian settled disputes to cement his control of western Rome, then switched sides to gain popular support. While he was merely a military commander he had to rely on his battlefield successes to garner ac-

## ROMAN ORATORY (AND KILLIN')

Understanding the Roman political machine takes a little work. It helps to look at what the upper-class citizens of Rome actually did. To them, manual labor was slave work; intellectualization was work for philosophers. The true citizen concerned himself with the advancement of Rome, and with his personal holdings.

In Rome, personal holdings often came down through families. How could a young upstart gain some land? Take it by force, of course. The youth could lead a small military force on expeditions to expand the empire — one of the reasons for Rome's impressive conquests. Then he made the conquered peoples into Roman subjects and taxed the province. The veterans of the war were forged into a potent fighting group by their shared experience, and they profited from the war effort. Many settled down and established homes in the new province, with strong loyalty to the leader who brought them prosperity.

Once settled in with some land and money, a rising star could get involved in politics. Leadership often became a matter of politicians contesting with their private armies — Mark Antony's war against Octavian merely brought such conflicts to a head. Since a young citizen couldn't be expected to grow up doing slave labor, he didn't study craftsmanship, mathematics or the like. Result: the many years of scholarship and instruction went into dramaturgy and linguistics. The Romans took the rigid Latin language and made it into a remarkably flexible creature, bending it to their whims; many became phenomenal public speakers, simply due to their long and grueling studies of language. Roman politicians thus had excellent skill to motivate and manipulate the populace.

claim. As head of state, though, he could gain popularity through the support of Roman tradition, especially given Antony's continued affair with Cleopatra (and subsequent acceptance of non-Roman customs and superstitions). Hailed as a hero, Octavian carefully cleaved to Roman traditional standards so that his final move against Antony had the support of military, public and body politic.

In 31 B.C., Octavian and Antony clashed in Greece. Octavian's navy, under the command of Agrippa, blockaded and sank Antony's ships. Antony and Cleopatra were routed to Egypt, where Octavian followed; a year

later, he caught up with them, absorbed their defecting army and annexed Egypt.

Octavian successfully stabilized the Roman hegemony and defeated all competing claims; he re-established the ties between the eastern and western republic and managed to annex Egypt as well. No wonder he was accepted as a hero and as the only remaining influence in Roman politics. In 27 B.C., he cleverly offered to settle to private life, leaving the senate with the messy job of cleaning up a republic desperately in need of strong leadership, a republic with grain shortages and debt, with rioting and no clear direction. Naturally, the senate offered him more perks as an incentive to stay — and over the course of several decrees, including the destruction of all ancient Roman legal records, he named himself "Augustus" and became the de facto ruler of all Rome.

Octavian — Augustus — Caesar — set the model for Rome as an empire. For fifteen hundred years, a succession of despotic heads of state set precedent and law.

The emperors of Rome were a mixed lot — some effective, some despotic, some crazed. None can doubt that their assertiveness created perhaps one of the most widespread and potent nations the world has ever seen. The Roman legions, already formidable, were able to turn their attentions outward, to the annexation of new territories instead of internal political disputes. Broad edicts made it possible to concretely address problems like grain shortages, revolts, debt and infrastructure. Rome grew in stature corresponding to its decisive leaders. Unfortunately, not all of its leaders were as skilled as Augustus.

## THE MAD MEN OF ROME

Certainly, Augustus' work in cementing the empire brought new order, but it opened the door to new problems. Augustus turned the empire on its head; later imperial developments accelerated Rome's decline with the terrible policies of insane emperors. Since his successes were phenomenal, especially considering his lack of political ties, Augustus' victories raised some eyebrows among mystic communities — did he, perhaps, have some outside help? A mentor, perhaps, who aided him subtly in the formation of the empire, but later cursed it to a horrific decline? Most mages are sure that Augustus was simply a great leader, but certainly some dark infection followed the transformation of Rome from republic to empire. Whatever power may have resided there could still wait to strike a devil's bargain with a would-be follower of Augustus' successes.

The weaknesses of Augustus' imperial scheme showed up only a few generations after his reign. The

first of Rome's madmen-emperors was Gaius, better known as Caligula. Following the suspicious emperor Tiberius in A.D. 37, Caligula inherited a canny sensibility from Augustus but also had a noteworthy temper and a hidden streak of malice. He played the part of gentle son until his ascension; it took years for his depredations to come to the fore. Caligula may have been truly mad, or perhaps influenced by some outside force or internal design.

Caligula's sadistic exploits are legendary: He forced the suicide or execution of various advisors, he forced wealthy citizens to will their possessions to the state and then murdered them, he reveled in displays of profound torture, lasting for days at a time, he had spectators dragged into arenas to battle tigers. Legislation from Caligula made it a capital crime to look down upon him, or to fail to bequeath possessions to the emperor in one's will. He eventually deified himself: By his order, a temple was built to him. He compared himself to the pantheon of Roman gods and goddesses and had those who doubted his power slowly flayed as a reminder of his authority.

Caligula is also remembered for his debauchery. It's said that he engaged in sex with whatever women struck his fancy; he lived with and used his sister Drusilla, then murdered her to tear their child from her, convinced that the infant would be a god. He publicly called for various women, even wives of his senators, used them and discarded them. He discussed their practices and failings in graphic detail. Men, too, suffered his notice; he engaged in liaisons with popular actors of the time, even with his sister's husband. But his sensuality could turn at a moment's notice — after having his way, he might well have his plaything executed. Even those who survived his attentions were left with stern warnings: Any neck could fall under the axe at his whim.

Caligula, like many despots, finally fell to assassins. Conspirators ambushed him as he left a theater, stabbed him and his current wife to death, and crushed his child's head. Even after his reign, though, his nightmare lived on. The Roman populace refused to believe the reports of his death. His arbitrary policies could not be easily reversed. The Roman treasury had been exhausted, public figures executed and humiliated, and the empire left a wreck scant decades after Augustus had consolidated it.

Second after Caligula in infamy is Nero, the emperor whom legend credits with watching Rome burn. Nero rose to the political stage primarily through the machinations of his mother, Agrippina, a direct de-

scendant of Augustus. Agrippina strengthened her ties to the throne by marriage to the previous emperor, Claudius. Through her influence, Nero was married to Claudius' daughter and recognized as a legitimate heir. In A.D. 57, Claudius died — presumably due to Nero's intervention — and Nero became emperor. Nero became the centerpiece of a web of conflicting influence. Though he briefly had the support of the Praetorian Guard, he was pulled in multiple directions by his wife, his mother and other influential figures. He started his decline with the assassination of his own mother, followed by the exile of his wife and closest advisors.

Able to move unhindered, Nero survived a pair of tremendous fires that swept through Rome — but most startlingly, some evidence suggests that he may have ordered the fires himself. Indeed, some think Nero ordered his guards to fuel the fire, or that he engaged in his own dramatic ambitions during the blaze.

He certainly capitalized on the destruction to create a new Rome according to his design. As a result, Nero's popularity waned; the people of Rome blamed him for the destruction, so he used Christianity as a scapegoat. Persecution of the Christians diverted attention, but Nero's eccentricities had already damned him; his followers realized, after watching his matricide

## ROMAN WARFARE

Warfare in ancient Rome began with the Greek tactic of the phalanx. The phalanx was a battle unit of professional soldiers called Hoplites by the Greeks. A proper phalanx consisted of each soldier shielding the man to his left and attacking with his right hand. This was actually superior to defending oneself with one's own shield, if the unit was properly trained.

The Romans used this technique but took it the next logical step. In the Roman Army, there were sometimes almost as many engineers as there were soldiers. These engineers customized siege weapons to destroy specific cities or topple certain defenses. This gave the Romans the advantage that they did not have to rely on the same weapons of warfare from place to place. Instead, the Romans could use the trained phalanx to shield their siege weapons, then bring out machinery tailored to the battle. Roman legions also trained with Spartan dedication since military service opened the door to citizenship and a political career. As the empire's successes expanded its territory, more and more soldiers were demanded to defend its borders.

and then his martyring of Christians, that Nero, in the fashion of many emperors, always found a means to slay anyone who blocked his designs.

One conspiracy was uncovered before it could come to fruition, but Nero's rage this time was uncontrollable: He killed his lover, Poppaea; he murdered most of his family as threats to his rule and managed to alienate the populace and the influential Praetorian Guard with his eccentricities and murderous habits. Nero was finally forced to flee Rome after his reign of terror turned the senate against him, and he committed suicide even as the centurions hunted him down.

Following Nero, a succession of emperors struggled with the damaged Roman state, but Domitian, in A.D. 81, surpassed Caligula in cruelty. While Caligula whiled away his time with carnal pleasures, Domitian suffered no immorality and saw himself as the ultimate arbiter of justice and conduct. From the bizarre habit of catching flies, impaling them and tearing off their wings, Domitian grew into a true terror — he routinely had Jews executed, he hosted dinner parties with black accoutrements to terrify the attendees and he even had the vestal virgins of Roman temples slaughtered.

While Caligula was brutal, Domitian was sadistic. Domitian devised new methods of torture. He set his soon-to-be victims at ease with social pleasantries then had them executed. His use of the arena, unlike Caligula's, seemed geared more toward mass slaughter than any sort of rarefied entertainment of cruelties. He introduced the burning of genitals as a method of torture. Even with his clear condemnation of sexuality, though, he used his authority to wed such women as took his eye, and had their husbands killed to legitimize his practices. By the later years of his reign, Domitian became consumed with paranoia — his obsessive drive to dole out "justice" saw conspirators everywhere; he routinely executed advisors and appointees, accusing them of amassing power to dethrone him. His appointments eventually turned against him and proconsuls who feared a short life span in his cabinet assassinated him.

Elagabalus, emperor from A.D. 218 to 222, probably personified wanton carnality more than any other emperor, even beating Caligula to the punch. A mere teen, Elagabalus nevertheless took multiple paramours and wives, going through slaves, vestal virgins, courtesans and more. He built a phallocentric cult, worshipping the sun god El-Gabal in a temple with giant penis statues as decoration and a black meteorite as the centerpiece. He even had public baths placed in the palace so that he could find suitably endowed lovers, and dressed himself in the fashion of a prostitute and waited outside his chambers, soliciting visitors and



palace staff alike. He even frequented brothels, not as a patron, but as a prostitute! Elagabalus indulged in cross-dressing, makeup, pedophilia and animal sacrifice until the army, sickened by his indulgences, revolted and had him and his followers killed.

### THE INEVITABLE DECLINE

Naturally, Rome fell. The increasing instability brought on by dictators of dubious quality only contributed to its decline. Historians argue over the many possible causes; some point to the increasing use of foreign mercenaries and the invasion of barbarian forces. Others cite Roman economic decline, social decay or even lead in the water. As internal contests for the imperial seat intensified, Roman economics failed to support the increasingly far-flung army. Infrastructure — roads, communication, transport — simply couldn't support an empire the size of Rome; by the time that reports of a military failure on a border reached the capital, six months had already passed. Eventually, civil war weakened the army to the point that barbarians could invade the empire. When the army failed to evict them, they slowly overtook Roman holdings. Every province lost translated into fewer taxes and resources for Rome.

Rome's economic decline probably set in around A.D. 100. The Roman empire had become accustomed to an unfavorable balance of trade with outside nations. Constant import of luxuries to support the upper classes led to the devaluation of Roman currency. Increasing tax burdens upon the middle classes led not only to unrest but to the compression of various social classes in a stratified society. As the central empire's expenditures increased, it put pressure on provinces to support its taxation. In turn, the central army was dispersed. Roman units introduced foreign mercenaries and conscripts, and spread to many different areas.

The combination of economic and military decline, prompted by a central bureaucracy that couldn't handle the demands of such a widespread empire, led to a slow but steady decline over 300 years. Rome itself finally collapsed in A.D. 410, and the last emperor was dethroned in A.D. 476. German kingdoms became the new authority in the region.

### ROMAN LEGEND

The multifaceted history of Rome makes for complex reading, but it only whets the appetites of political mages. Students of the arcane look into Rome's mythic sources for inspiration as well. As a pagan state, Rome (before its conversion to Christianity) followed a diverse array of gods; Roman emperors later deified themselves and their wives in an attempt to gain popular support or

perhaps a form of immortality. Rome's heroes, too, confronted a wealth of creatures much like their Greek counterparts, and the ordered structure of Roman civilization fostered a new breed of mages.

Much of Roman legend was influenced by Greek myth, of course. Later, Rome's culture was shaped by the rise of Christianity. Still, some records remain of heroes and their exploits. The Latin language, inflexible as it may have been, was used for most common records, and even later Christian influence couldn't entirely wipe out the stories that came out of the empire.

### THE CULT OF MERCURY

Perhaps of the greatest influence on modern mages was the Cult of Mercury. Practicing a combination of Greco-Roman philosophy and older Egyptian magic, the Cult took Roman religion to build its icons but also used elements from Pythagorean cults, Egyptian spiritualism and even a little pagan influence. The result: an inclusive, widespread, hierarchical mystic organization — the predecessor to the medieval Order of Hermes.

Of course, the foundations of the modern Order of Hermes wouldn't come for several hundred years, but the Cult of Mercury established many of its practices. For starters, some members of the Cult acted publicly in matters of state. The empire's legions were supplemented by the Cult's magical support, often covertly. The Cult's public organization mirrored the structure of the Roman military. Mages accompanied legions and drew energy from the bonds between veterans. Rome's expansion let the Cult co-opt outside magical groups and exert political influence. The Cult diversified its magic and its membership.

Obviously, the Cult of Mercury didn't use the same principles as the Order of Hermes. The techniques, forms and Spheres that the Order used hadn't yet been theorized. Still, the Cult pioneered important developments like the idea of actually *sharing* magical knowledge in a unified theory. Better still, the Roman focus on language meant that the Cult's mages had a broad base of studies and the means to descriptively trade formulae. There's a reason that the Order of Hermes used Latin for so long!

The Cult's magical practices clearly didn't make it into the history books, but that doesn't mean that they weren't influential. Cult mages learned from, countered and absorbed ideas from the pagans of the British Isles, the Christian mystics that later formed the Celestial Chorus, shapeshifters in Germany and necromancers from Egypt. Although the Cult remained suspiciously introverted, its mages sought whatever advantage they could. Usually that meant knowing the enemy. Actual translation and use of other mages' practices was rare, but did happen.

The Cult excelled in formulaic styles. Since its mages relied on preplanned ritual, linguistic legerdemain and cooperative effort — especially in secretive cabals or at the heads of legions — they developed techniques that relied on extensive ritual. Spontaneous magic was rare, only used by the few magicians who used pagan principles.

The decline of Rome paralleled the decline of the Cult of Mercury. The Cult espoused a loyalty to the state religion but felt a higher calling to magic itself. (The notion of personal advancement through magical mastery counted, too.) As the empire's economy declined, the mages gathered substantially less money and political power; it was only natural to split up, hoard wealth and closet away secret knowledge. The Cult almost certainly kept various spells and Artifacts hidden away in places throughout Rome's old empire, all left by mages looking out for their own welfare.

To this day some of the Cult's magic remains poorly understood, primarily the Effects that involved many people. Of course, modern willworkers can call upon the belief of large groups of followers to assist the casting of huge Effects, but the Cult's techniques allowed them to power the spells through the very life force of the participants. Some mages have delved into these Effects with limited success.

## TRADITIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

As Greece's influence spread across Europe and parts of Asia, its ways of thinking influenced the development of mysticism in many cultures — and, thus, became strong roots for many Traditions.

By far the most concerned with the Greek mythos, though, is the Order of Hermes. Hermetic apprentices routinely study the Greek pantheon and the role of each of the gods within Olympus. the Hermetics deal with Celestines that often appear as some sort of Greek manifestation. The *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, *Medea* and other pieces of classical literature are part of the required reading in the training of a Hermetic sorcerer. As a whole, the Order of Hermes remembers classical Greece as a sort of golden age of magic where their culture flourished unchallenged.

Indeed, the idea of Hermes as a messenger stems from Greek myth and passed through the Dark Ages when the Order flourished. Greek tradition was especially emphasized by the Hermetic Solificati; the Solificati claim a spiritual heritage from the ancient alchemists and with the Greek natural philosophers. It's no mistake to say that Hermetic thought bears great debts to Greek philosophers and their ideals.

Some other Traditions didn't maintain such fond ties to Greece. The Cult of Ecstasy remembers a contested Greece. Most American Ecstatics are unaware of this history, but it is fairly universal lore among the Ecstatics of Europe. The Bacchanae, as they were called in those days, devoted themselves to Bacchus — a god of wine and revelry but also prophecy. However, Greek revelry watered down the Cult's ideals of experience. Bacchus' cultists slowly became indulgent, frenzied mobs instead of priests who achieved ecstatic communion, and the rites of the Bacchanae deteriorated from tools of magic into simple indulgences. The Cult takes this as a lesson — their early Indian roots corrupted by Greek culture, they discovered that embracing *too much* experience can be just as limiting as *not enough*.

Under Roman rule, many Ecstatics shifted their reverence to the Titan Chronos, the master of time. The philosophical basis moved away from hedonism and became more epicurean. This is not to say that the more traditional Bacchanae did not survive as a group, just that they became obscure....

The Technocracy also lays claim to Greece as a spiritual center. Iteration X recalls Greece as one of its homelands: This was an age when innovation combined with heroism. The Union naturally claims Daedalus as a founding father and reveres his works in Sacred Geometry as well as his legendary flight. Indeed, his very name became synonymous with the Order of Reason during the Renaissance, as it looked to that hero as a model of ingenuity and also a warning against pride.

The Progenitors honor the legacy of Hippocrates, the father of medicine whose oath is still taken to this day by modern doctors. Some Progenitors eschew the Hippocratic Oath because certain versions — perhaps written with the Awakened in mind — forbid the creation of new life. According to Progenitor records, Hippocrates intended certain parts of the oath for less-enlightened healers who could not understand the subtle art of creation. Still, Hippocrates pioneered the understanding the human body in Western thinking, and the very concept of the physician whose elevated role demanded rigorous ethics — another model to which Technocrats aspire.

## PYTHAGORAS: RATIONALIST, REVOLUTIONARY

Any educated person could understand the mathematics or theology of the Greeks, but it took Pythagoras to put the two together. Pythagoras combined Greek mathematics — including the input of numerology from various cultures, the use of advanced engineering

in building ships and temples, and even the progress of musical scales and astrology — with the legendary tradition that emphasized gods, heroes and the supernatural. Pythagoras expounded, refined and in some cases created ways to comprehend math as a universal language, to understand mystic principles and to delve into the soul through the very concepts of infinity and singularity. In doing so, he built yet another new way to see, and ultimately manipulate, the Tellurian.

Pythagoras refined the works of previous pre-Socratic scholars who sought to classify the material world. By delving into the world's forms, these scholars hoped to uncover universal principles — the principles of motion, perhaps, or the beginning and ending of all formative processes. Pythagoras, though, combined his insight into abstract classification with mystical explanations for creation. His formidable mind conceived specific laws about such universal processes, and he pursued his studies according to his definition of the highest principles of humanity: philosophy, literally the love of wisdom.

Ultimately, Pythagoras founded his own school and gave lectures about his discoveries. But with the trappings of mysticism, Pythagorean schools became more like cults: Student-acolytes attributed almost divine import to Pythagoras' pronouncements. Since Pythagoras himself did not write down most of his teachings, the only surviving records come from secondhand reports; any number of unusual, secretive practices could have been hidden among the otherwise precisely scientific disciplines. Indeed, Pythagoras himself posited three levels to humanity: lovers of material gain, lovers of honor and lovers of wisdom; the philosophers, himself included, occupied the highest strata of humanity, which in turn stressed greater responsibility to his followers, who shared his love of wisdom.

In concrete terms, Pythagoras provided mathematical proofs to geometric problems. His understanding of geometric figures led naturally to principles like the correspondences of right triangles or the computation of Pi. His equations shaped mathematics and engineering, or, in terms of the Spheres, reinforced elements of Mind and Correspondence. His followers wrote these thoughts down and provided the foundations for many modern mathematical proofs.

As a mystic, though, Pythagoras' role is sketchy — partly because esoterica is by nature secretive, and partly because rational historians discount his mysticism while emphasizing his scientific work. There's no denying, though, that Pythagoras had a strong interest in the fantastic. He deliberately set out to unify metaphysics with mathematics. Indeed, his theory of creation stated that everything sprang from a unified, unlimited principle, which only

came into form when limits were set upon it. The distillation of Quintessence into a set Pattern, perhaps?

Cults that arose around Pythagoras eventually split into two groups: those who studied his mathematics and derived new theories from them, and those who took his theories on the nature of reality and used them in the Arts. Clearly, his mathematical students influenced later scientific development; the mystery cults supposedly died out, but in the World of Darkness, such groups rarely disappear completely.

## PYTHAGOREAN CULTS IN YOUR CHRONICLE

The combination of mathematicians and cosmic mysticism in Pythagorean cults is too good to miss! Pythagoras somehow managed to reconcile his disparate beliefs in a calculable geometric theory within an infinite universe, but the later division of the Technocracy and the Traditions shows that the two systems of thought diverged severely. On one side, right triangles and radians; on the other, metaphysical creation and dynamic rebirth.

Followers of **Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade** can recognize Pythagorean elements among the Craftmasons, the Order of Reason Covention that relies on Sacred Geometry to create lasting structures and potent wards. And Pythagorean mysticism certainly survives in the World of Darkness to the modern day. While Pythagoras himself didn't write much down, he had many students. The study of math went on to be socially acceptable, while the study of mysticism was ridiculed. Just the sort of thing that a Tradition mage can identify with.

Modern Pythagorean cults aren't just confined to Greece, though their numbers are centered there. Any philosopher-mage might well have some Pythagorean leanings, with beliefs in an infinite universe divisible into limited, measurable parts. The cults are strongest in southern Italy, where Pythagoras himself and his later followers built their geometric sanctuaries. Protected by potent warding shapes, the cults continue their exploration of Greek philosophical concepts undisturbed.

Pythagorean mages can explain elaborate mathematical structures that lead to intricate descriptions of space and matter. Such training quickly develops a mage's understanding of Correspondence. Pythagorean mystics believe that geometry simply indicates the inherent properties of symbols; a properly written symbol carries its own power — a notion that seeped into the Order of Hermes long after Pythagoras' death. To learn Pythagorean mysticism, though, which is handed down through oral repetition, a mage has to join the cult, possibly by making some profound connection between mathematics and magic.

A cult of Pythagorean mages may not be an active antagonist in a game, but it could certainly operate behind the scenes. Imagine robed gentlemen huddled in a cave somewhere deep beneath a modern Greek office building, surrounded by geometric symbols, in a chamber lit with torches burning with *logos*, or primal fire. Their intuitive understanding of space allows them to reach out and ward areas at great distances, to touch others with their magic and to combine their efforts. Lined in a strange sequence of poses with geometric correspondence, they can provide puzzling imagery for the players.

What are their goals? Pythagorean cultists tend to take Pythagoras' teachings at face value and pass them down through repetition in order to achieve a deep intellectual and subconscious understanding of geometric powers. Individual cultists, however, could be motivated by anything. Heck, you could even throw a few into a game and give them *no* real motive, just make them do strange things and watch the players panic. Instant story hook.

## SOCRATES, PLATO, ARISTOTLE

The most prominent philosophers of Greece were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle — at least as far as modern thinkers are concerned. Though other philosopher-scientists did exist, these are the three names that everyone remembers, and with good reason.

Socrates began life as a soldier and craftsman. Possibly disillusioned by the Peloponnesian War, he took to wandering the marketplaces, accosting random merchants and passersby, asking them for simple directions and then segueing into questions about morality and thought. Though some tales paint him as an eccentric and obnoxious man, he was clearly a critical thinker. Questions occupied his time; instead of lecturing pedantically, he let people make their own conclusions, simply by questioning assumptions. Of course, questioning natural law and theology lead to questioning the status quo and the religion of the day. Charged with corrupting the youth, Socrates was sentenced to death.

Plato was Socrates' student. Having watched his mentor's death, he left Athens to avoid the hostile attitude of the culture. Only from Plato's writings do we get a glimpse at Socrates' philosophy. Socrates questioned morality and concepts of goodness and beauty, but Plato worked in slightly more pragmatic terms. He wrote *The Republic*, which posited a hierarchical government of laborers, warriors and philosophers. He developed the concept of forms, or creations of pure thought that existed without material flaws. He also wrote dialectics, wherein he critically examined Greece's cultural assumptions through Socrates' methods of questioning.

Plato was quite well traveled. He visited Egypt and Sicily before returning to Athens to found his Academy. Whether or not Plato was Awakened, his concepts shaped fundamentals used by the Traditions — the concept of forms and ideas expresses itself in Patterns, pure constructs of Quintessence that lend shape to material objects.

Then came Aristotle. As a student of Plato, he excelled in rhetoric and political theory. He taught at Plato's Academy and then went on to travel Asia Minor, after which he founded the Lyceum and taught biology and botany as a contrast to Plato's mathematical and logical sciences. He wrote physics, logic and metaphysics texts and apparently dabbled with secret societies — a perfect candidate for magedom if ever there was one.

So how do these three luminaries fit into your game? Most Western philosophical thought, including magical thought, can be traced to their writings. Mentors still teach using the Socratic method; mages still debate the nature of virtue, a famous inquiry of Socrates'. Plato's definition of the world as material and ideal set the form for Patterns and the High Umbra: Though perhaps such constructs existed beforehand, Plato's work definitively locked them down into the forms that mages recognize today. Aristotle studied broadly and established many of the branches of science and philosophy that now exist, in effect naming and categorizing entire disciplines of thought. Any Tradition would gladly claim these thinkers as founders or "spiritual ancestors."

Unfortunately, many of their notes have been lost. Plato's works cannot be conclusively verified as authentic, Socrates apparently did not record his questioning and Aristotle's original publications are gone, referenced only through surviving lecture notes and scribbled ideas. The lost knowledge of any of these philosophers would be a true treasure for any mage.

## GREEK MYTH AND LEGEND

Perhaps more than any other culture, the ancient Greeks kept alive a tremendous body of tales, fables and myths. With their highly literate civilization and their theatrical traditions, the Greeks kept alive more stories than nearly any oral culture. These tales influenced Rome and remain well known in modern society.

Arguably the best known remnants of Greek myth are Homer's *Iliad*, the tale of the Trojan War, and the *Odyssey*, the story of Odysseus' ill-fated journey home from that same war. Bits of stories and theater round out the tales of the gods, as well as other volumes such as the stories of Jason and the Argonauts, the tales of Oedipus, and of course Hercules and his 12 labors. The curious seeker of mythology should sit down and read translations of these works.

## WHO'S WHO

Oh, those terms and names. The Greeks had a great many gods and heroes, and the Romans borrowed heavily from their overcrowded pantheon. Without further ado, the five-minute Greco-Roman hit list.

**Achilles:** A raging warrior who fights against Troy in the *Iliad*. Achilles is dipped in a magical spring at his birth, so his skin is rendered impervious to harm, except for the tendon of his foot where he's held while dunked. This is his undoing, as an arrow strikes him in this weak point and leads to his death during the fight against Troy.

**Aphrodite (Venus):** Goddess of love, romance and beauty. A rather fickle deity, as befits her portfolio. Wed to Hephaestus. Aphrodite can be traced to the deity Astarte, who in turn may come from Istar, all the way from Sumeria.

**Apollo:** A vain and beauteous sun god, patron of poetry and diviner of the future, Apollo has many roles. Apollo favors music and prophecy but later shares those joys with Hermes. He is also seen as the patron of herdsmen, and stories tell of him watching over cattle, as improbable a task as that may sound for a deity.

**Ares (Mars):** God of war, storms and battle fury. Ares is a cunning tactician, but he glories in bloody combat. Not someone whose attention you want to attract. He shows up personally during the Trojan War and is actually knocked down by one of the heroes there!

**Athena (Minerva):** Goddess of war and wisdom, mental acuity and skill at handicrafts. She sprang fully grown from the brow of Zeus (gods can do that sort of thing). Athena acts as a sort of aloof patroness to many heroes; she gifts Theseus with a reflective shield that helps him slay the Gorgon Medusa. She watches over Jason's Argonauts, and she inspires Odysseus with the idea for the Trojan Horse. She serves as a goddess to Athens (no coincidence in the names) and is credited with creating the olive tree, which gave Athens much of its economic power since olives were a lucrative Athenian export. She also shows up to wreak some havoc on the field of battle during the Trojan War.

**Demeter:** Mother of Persephone and goddess of growing things. Demeter was responsible for healthy crops. When her daughter Persephone was spirited away by Hades, her grief brings about winter.



**Dionysus (Bacchus):** God of revelry and intoxication. Dionysus is a two-sided deity — he represents bliss and euphoria, and inebriated rage or lust. Often accompanied by maenads and satyrs.

**Hades (Pluto):** Ruler of the Underworld. Hades kept watch over a grim and joyless kingdom, but stole away Persephone to bring some joy to his bleak existence. Hades guards the souls of the dead in his realm (also called Hades) and its pits of torture for the wicked (Tartarus).

**Hephaestus:** Blacksmith to the gods. Hephaestus is credited with the creation of great weapons and armor, including in some legends Zeus' thunderbolts. Clubfooted and lame, he is wed to Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, in a joining of craft and practicality with femininity and love.

**Hera:** Wife of Zeus; plagued him and his offspring due to his infidelities against her.

**Herakles (Hercules):** Demigod son of Zeus and the mortal Alkmene. Possessed of phenomenal strength and a bit of a temper, Hercules performed 12 great labors, including slaying various beasts and recovering numerous items of power. As with all the Greek heroes, he eventually dies because of some rather awful mistakes but later becomes a god.

**Hermes (Mercury):** The messenger god, Hermes is something of a prankster. He steals various artifacts from other gods but his cheeky humor causes them to overlook his indulgences. As a god of prophecy, he became a figure of signs and symbols, which in part explains his importance to the Order of Hermes.

**Jason:** Leader of the Argonauts. Jason is guided by an oracle to claim his rightful throne, but Jason's usurper has been warned of his coming and sends him on an impossible task — the quest for the Golden Fleece. Jason gathers a host of heroes, including Hercules, Theseus, Orpheus and others, and sets sail in the *Argo*. After many harrowing adventures (and the loss of several crewmembers) Jason returns with the fleece, kills the usurper, marries the princess that he met along the way, then undercuts himself when he takes a mistress. Did we mention that his wife is Medea, one of the nastiest bitches ever? Bodies start dropping left and right until Jason goes into exile to avoid causing more problems. He returns to the beach where he left the *Argo* — and the bow of the ship breaks off and kills him. That whole Greek tragedy thing again....

**Medea:** Wife of Jason and daughter of Aeetes, the king who held the Golden Fleece. Medea is a powerful sorceress; with her magic she makes Jason

immune to wounds and fire so that he can slay a dragon. Later, when she catches him fooling around, she gives his mistress a poisoned robe as a gift, killing her; then she burns down the palace, kills all of their children and shacks up with Aegeus, another Mediterranean king. Now *that's* a divorce.

**Odysseus (Ulysses):** The hero of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus is drafted into the war against Troy, and there accomplishes many great feats, but he becomes lost on his way home — “lost” being a major understatement. He spends several years traveling around the Mediterranean in a ship, fighting many fantastic creatures and braving the perils of the ocean, before he finally comes back — just in time to find his home full of suitors trying to cart off his wife and estate. An asswhipping of legendary proportions proceeds from there.

**Orpheus:** A blessed musician and another member of the half-divine. Orpheus has the true gift of music; he can sway the feelings of even Hades. He travels with the Argonauts and his music sees them safely past the sirens — with the sailors concentrating on his unearthly tones, the siren song bears no power. Later, he gets domestic with a nymph, but in typical fashion she gets killed. Orpheus, in a monumental quest, passes into the realm of Hades and plays his music to stir the heart of the Underworld. He is allowed to bring his bride back to the land of the living so long as he doesn't look back before reaching the surface — you can guess what happens. Despondent, he spends seven months in mourning before he's torn apart by some random maenads. His head and harp wash up on the shore of an island a little later, but their story is pretty much over at that point.

**Persephone:** Daughter of Demeter; Persephone is carried off to Hades by the deity of the same name. After eating of a pomegranate, she is bound to remain in Hades for part of each year; myth tells that her mother Demeter weeps for her during this time and refuses to bring growth, thus resulting in autumn and winter.

**Poseidon (Neptune):** God of the sea, in counterpart to Zeus' dominion over the air and Hades' control of the Underworld. Poseidon is a chancy fellow who has offspring by many giants — these children become various monsters like the Kraken. He also holds a grudge: His curse sets Odysseus to wandering the seas for years when Odysseus blinds one of his sons, the cyclops Polyphemus. Poseidon does occasionally crop up sympathetically gifting

water to a young damsel in need, but more often he causes floods or droughts. Sailors do their best not to draw his ire. Poseidon also tends to invent some rather cruel vendettas, as shown by the incident of the Minotaur (see that creature's entry later this chapter).

**Theseus:** Another foolish hero; Theseus ran afoul of Medea early in his career (not a good start) but was recognized by her consort Aegeus, his true father (seems that a lot of these Greek heroes were orphaned). After a long trip slaying several robbers who had bizarre habits like throwing people off of cliffs or tying them to beds and stretching or chopping them up, Theseus makes it to Athens, only to be scorned for wearing an Ionian robe and having long hair. Apparently the Athenians didn't like hippies. He kills several giants to prove his strength then sets sail to Crete to challenge the Minotaur. With the help of the daughter of Minos, Crete's king, Theseus slays the beast and finds his way out of the maze.

Despite this victory, Theseus forgets to put up a white sail on the voyage back to Attica; since the black sail was the arranged signal for his failure, his father Aegeus leaps from the cliffs, thinking that Theseus is dead. Worse still, Theseus abandons the daughter of Minos, feeling that it is improper for him to come back and marry the daughter of the king who exacted horrid tribute from his people. Damn it all! He winds up becoming King of Attica anyhow and gets in a few good years before some tumult with Athens puts him on the run again and winds up getting him killed while seeking sanctuary. Somewhere in there he finds time to hang out with Jason and the Argonauts on that whole Golden Fleece thing. Busy man.

**Zeus (Jupiter):** Sky god and nominal ruler of the gods. Zeus is portrayed as an incurable philanderer, and his many peccadilloes result in constant strife with his wife Hera (and also, incidentally, in the births of many heroes). He hurls lightning at those who anger him.

## WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT DEAD GODS, ANYWAY?

Sure, the Greek and Roman heroes and gods are gone. They've passed into history along with the cultures that spawned them. The Traditions, however, point out that mages tend to be collectors of obscure history. Mages don't just know about the mysticism of the past, they deal with it every day.

Naturally, Greco-Roman heroes and gods aren't likely to show up in a game. That doesn't mean their influence is unfelt. Remember, Avatars often carry memories from former lives. A mage could well find that he's a reincarnation of some Greek hero — an appropriate reason to have the *Legendary Attribute Merit*. Or perhaps he is distinctly tied to some deity (see the *Primal Marks Flaw*). Perhaps he simply has old memories of the travails of some luminary. Maybe he's actually an *Avatar Companion* to some other reincarnated hero or the chronicler of the hero's great adventures.

Also, a mage could run into an Incarna that claims to be a god, or has aspects of a god, or just pretends to be a god. For that matter, whatever happened to the Golden Fleece, or to the Helm of Invisibility, or to Aegis? These tremendously powerful Artifacts could still be out there, waiting for someone to stumble across them. Then again, if a mage finds one, she might suddenly find herself the target of everybody else who wants them.

Greek and Roman theater gave us great notions of tragedy and heroic journeys. Though the descriptions here are by necessity simplified, they suffice to explain the sorts of epics that involved these heroes. Any such classical adventure is a worthy model for a **Mage** story. Naturally, a mage probably won't be questing for the Golden Fleece, but any adventurer worth his salt (another Roman phrase, there) appreciates the obstacles in the quest for an item of power. It's in Greek theater that Orpheus descends into the Underworld to bring his lost love back to life, that Daedalus ingeniously escapes captivity in a maze of his own design, that Oedipus kills his father and weds his mother, that Paris steals away Helen and from which the very term "hubris" springs. Any Greek play/story/myth can serve as an inspiration for a **Mage** story.

## THE DAEDALEAN LEAGUE

Most mages don't know where the Daedaleans came from — if they've heard of them at all. The Sons of Ether say the Daedaleans are just another school of thought in the big Trad itself. Ask the Technocracy, and well... good luck getting an answer. Most Masters are hesitant to explain the history of the Technocracy. They spill a lot of claptrap about how ancient and mystical their secret orders and cabals are but they never tell you how the mess of the modern scientific world got started.

Here's the straight talk on that: Nobody remembers. The war has been going on longer than recorded human history. Babylonian tablets relate it, so does the Bible, even stuff as far removed as Cherokee legends mention this war. You can see the Tradition mages and the Technocrats duking it out in some form as far back as you want to go.

At first glance it seems that the Daedalean version of their history is a corruption of the "facts" in *Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade*. It is entirely possible that some Initiate stumbled upon documents the Ksirafai were trying to hide shortly before they managed to get to all of them. On the other hand, there is the possibility that this is the real truth. Why do the Craftsmen call themselves Daedaleans anyway?

So where did the Daedalean League come from? Well, a long time ago someone had a fucked-up idea: "Hey, we don't have to kill each other just because we disagree. With magic and science we can have the best of both worlds," or something like that. The man with that fucked-up idea was Daedalus. He fled Greece and all its petty conflicts. He went to Rome to change society so that technology and magic had equal importance. To Daedalus, people — not gods — were the center of the universe.

That's where the Daedaleans really come from: They're the legacy of a society that tried to bring peace to everyone, to respect everyone's beliefs. It seems like a far-fetched "world peace through conquest and magic" scheme, but that's why the rest of the Traditions call them *mad* scientists.

After the founding of the Electrodynic Engineers, one of its newest recruits started making forays into the history of the Convention and the Technocracy as a whole. What he found unsettled him. Contrary to what he had been taught about the Technocracy — that it was a modern organization dedicated to the betterment of humankind — he found records of their existence that went back all the way to the Middle Ages, and still he could not find a beginning. He secretly founded a cabal of Enlightened Scientists to unearth this shadow history.

Then someone caught on. Most of the records disappeared.

When the Electrodynic Engineers threatened to join the Traditions, the Daedalean League as a whole pushed for independence. After the Convention left and became a Tradition, the Daedaleans came out of the closet, so to speak, to reveal the truth to their brethren. Alas, without the precious evidence they once had, their argument largely fell on deaf ears and the small cabal could only grow through mentoring as many Initiates as possible.

## ON WINGS OF WAX

In its infancy, the Technocracy referred to its members as Daedaleans; a few oddball Sons of Ether, clinging as they did to old terminology and practices, adopted the term as their own long after the Technocracy gave it up. Even for Sons of Ether, the Daedalean magic style is strange. Most Daedalean Etherites do not see their belief system as consisting of theories the way many Traditions do; instead, they recognize "natural selves." Most of this philosophy is deeply rooted in the philosophy of Aristotle; some comes from the creations of Daedalus, and some from discoveries popularized by various members of the League. This mixture forms a less physical and more experimental approach to magic and science.

But there's still the question: Who were the old Daedaleans? Does anyone remember, and if so, how would they react if they discovered people who call themselves Daedaleans, many of them within the Traditions? This could be an interesting hook for characters who want to learn the truth or Storytellers who wish to obscure it further.

The Daedalean League isn't necessarily confined to Greece, of course. Any Etherite could find solace in Aristotelian and Platonic works, and make the leap to a philosophy of logical but nonexperimental science.

## Daedalus Awakens

"What are we? That's easy, soulless one. We are the next generation of heroes and legends. In an age gone by, the children of the gods walked among men and slew the monsters that plagued us. They all bore names like Alexander and Herakles. Now it is our turn only when our forebears revealed themselves to us in all their hidden glory could we see the majesty which is our destiny. Beware, spawn of the dark gods, Nike is coming!"

I attended a ceremony today held by the Daedaleans. They seem to put some stock in ritual divination. I contemplated pointing out to them that

this was perhaps not the most scientific way to go about things but I decided that they probably would not get the joke.

We stood around in white robes before an altar where a dead calf had been placed. The high priest went before the altar as the group chanted in Latin; it was rather like attending a Catholic Mass. Then he plunged a dagger into the belly of the calf and ripped open its flesh. A wet stench suffused in the air. If you've ever been to a place where they kill lots of animals you never forget the smell of death and stagnant blood and suddenly it seems like you're submerged in the stench and you just might drown in it. I haven't been able to eat beef for days.

They spread out the entrails and examined them closely.

It took a day to make a decision based upon the divination. The mages came to a conclusion and said that I should not continue with my journey to the former site of Carthage. According to the ritual done yesterday there is some sort of dark fate that awaits me there. Not death, but something malignant.

## ROMAN MAGIC

Magic was just as organized and ritualistic as anything Roman, but very little of it was prominent in the culture beyond divination. Romans were particularly concerned with fate. They divined the future by examining the entrails of a sacrificed animal (usually a bull or a cow) — a practice known as “haruspication.”

Not all Romans were so dutiful in observing these sacred divination rites. Before one battle in the Punic Wars, all of the sailors refused to engage in the battle because the divination ceremony had failed. The chickens wouldn't eat — bad luck. The flagship of each fleet carried a dozen or so chickens deemed holy by the priesthood. These fowl were ridiculously well cared for and lived in golden cages where they ate only the finest of grains, but for some reason the chickens refused to eat that day. The frustrated captain of the ship cried out “If they won't eat then they can drink!” and threw the chickens overboard. Needless to say, the Romans lost the battle.

## STORYTELLING WITH GREECE AND ROME

It can be hard for a Storyteller to separate Greek and Roman elements — they blend from so many common traits that it's easy to mix them up. That's fine! Modern people may have only a vague handle on Greco-Roman myth, and the same is true for many modern mages. Since similar elements influenced the roots of both cultures, focus on the symbolism of those elements, in the real core of what they represented. That shines through equally well in the myths of both cultures.

## MOOD

Exotic and erotic. Greece is unlike any other country in Europe. It has been the center of two different empires and the home of most of the recognized ancient scholars. It has a cultural tradition distinct from every nation around it. In Greece, homosexuality is a matter of course and is not mentioned even though it is widely practiced. In Rome there is the Vatican City, the spiritual home of the Catholic Church in all its opulence and majesty alongside the ruins of the Coliseum. And in the land where humanity's loftiest thoughts were immortalized, three strippers have seats in the Greek Parliament. For some reason, neither country can escape its own sexuality. Ancient philosophers posited universal truths based solely on thought without experience or experimentation while the debauched upper classes threw their orgies.

Of course, mages don't have to travel to Greece and Rome just to get laid. The Greco-Roman mood can come across through architecture, through visitors who have delved into those places and even through old memories, books or flashes of past lives. The Craft of the Sisters of Hippolyta, in particular, have explored their Greek roots; the Order of Hermes also claims much that is Roman, including magical styles and use of Latin for many major texts. The hooks are already there, so you can integrate Greco-Roman culture as much or as little as you like.

## THE SEARCH FOR GOLD

This chronicle centers around the search for a mysterious race of people who populated the Earth

## THE PURPLE EMPIRE

Stretching back to the ancient days of the earliest Western civilizations, the Phoenician Empire predates both the Roman and Greek Empires. With roots in modern day Lebanon, the Phoenicians developed seafaring, trading, and colonizing. The Greeks had to colonize less arable lands like Italy because northern Africa and the Iberian Peninsula had been claimed by the Phoenicians, whose influence spread throughout the Mediterranean.

Ultimately the Phoenicians ran into conflict with the Romans over land and other disputes. This led to the Punic Wars. "Punic" was a Latin word meaning purple, the color associated with the Phoenicians.

during the so-called golden age. In a Traditions game, it's a quest to bring the golden and silver ones back to our world to help humanity, to seek some piece of wisdom or knowledge that only they possess, or even just to find out whether they exist. As a Technocracy game it could center around trying to squash belief in the legend or destroy those who propagate it. This should involve a certain amount of investigation and field work in Greece itself as well as the Umbra.

## SEEK AND DESTROY

This Technocracy chronicle revolves around a strike team of Technocrats whose job is to report and destroy reality deviants in the islands of the Mediterranean. This allows characters a certain amount of free movement and independent operation compared to other cells, but also means that backup is less likely to appear (if at all). On the flip side, the characters could be from the Traditions, probably Verbena, and try to preserve the existence of the monsters on the islands by concealing their location, relocating them, or other methods — supernatural resource destruction and ecoterrorism, perhaps. The Technocracy wants to sterilize and control the area and stamp out "foolish myths," while the Traditions hope to bring a rebirth of the cultural and mystic values of Greece and Rome. A clash is inevitable, but the Technocracy may not have the backing for an extended fight, while the Traditions can try to summon slumbering allies like the monsters of yore.

## THE SIGIL OF SILVER

This chronicle begins when the players' characters stumble upon an ancient Artifact (possibly an amulet or a vase or even a tool of some sort) which the

Technocracy is hot to get its collective hands on. Could the Technocracy be trying to debunk some mystic power associated with the Artifact? And who are these "sisters" who pursue it as well?

## HAVE A COW

Many cows have been disappearing from the local barnyards. Tabloids blame everything from UFOs to the second coming of Elvis, but it turns out that an ally of cabal has been performing old-fashioned divination, Roman style. She asks the cabal to help her avoid any unwanted press. Since the last thing mages want is exposure, the characters must tie up the loose ends of their friend's haruspication (please excuse the sickening pun). After all, if the woman came to the characters, then anything that can be traced to her can be traced them.

## SPELLS FROM GREECE AND ROME

The Greek and Roman philosophers gladly mixed theology and pure thought with mundane observation. As a result, they believed in the power of the mind to comprehend the mysteries of the universe. They often posited that all constructs stemmed from ideals that only the mind could clearly and perfectly understand. Thus, there was power in the mind's ability to learn new forms and to examine the connections between universal ideals. Though many philosophers frowned upon physical experimentation, their pioneering work in mathematics and mental forms led to rigorous intellectual development and to theories that could be applied to the physical world — after all, if the physical world was just an imperfect reflection of the mental world, then the mind could exert power over physical forms and understand them completely.

Later Roman magicians focused their power around Rome's greatness, building magic by taking tiny bits of power from the huge structures and armies of the day. While a more limited mage had to work with the energy available from a specific power source, a Roman magician could rely on the synchronicity of Rome's immense spread. The interlocking designs and clear cultural affixation allowed a sort of linkage, a Correspondence affiliation, that a mage could use — and through that, the mage could draw potent energies by stealing just a little bit of magic from a multitude of interconnected sources.

## EPIPHANY OF THE MUSE

(•• MIND, WITH ••• SPIRIT, • PRIME OR • ENTROPY)

The nine Muses, daughters of Zeus, are said to inspire new ideas in the minds of men. This rote is a

formalized prayer to call upon their inspiration for some insight or new thought. The mage sacrifices to the Muses something of value — distinctive cuisine, expensive jewelry, a magical Artifact. The Muses, in turn, gift the mage with their insight.

**System:** The Storyteller can use this rote as an excuse to give the players some information that they're not getting from their current situation's clues. This should not replace roleplaying, obviously, and even if successfully cast does not have to be answered in the way that the players necessarily desire. A Muse of poetry could hear the prayer and inspire the character to some great work of rhyme to bemoan his current situation of being locked in a room, but give him no insight as to how to escape his confines. Muses are fickle things and most often give artistic inspiration; cryptic clues are not guaranteed, but they are possible. The Mind Effect opens the mage's perceptions while the secondary Sphere looks for Patterns or literally calls to the Muses: Prime or Entropy seeks out ebbs in the currents of magic and probability around the mage while Spirit actually summons a Muse.

#### LEGION'S LIFE (••• PRIME, •• LIFE)

Somehow, the Cult of Mercury managed to pull off an Effect that the modern Traditions consider impos-

sible. The underlying trick hasn't been figured out, but the rote apparently works. When the Romans put together a legion of soldiers, they formed a tightly knit group of warriors who fought, loved and died together. That closeness made their Patterns so tied to one another that the legion magicians — who likewise worked in groups — could draw from the whole of the legion for their Effects. Somehow, the Mercuric magicians discovered a way to bleed off *just a little* energy from everyone in the legion and convert it into Quintessence — something that should be impossible, since Quintessence freed from a Pattern normally goes straight back into the universal pool. Sure, experienced mages could "skim off the top," but these Roman mages drew upon great stores of energy and used them to fuel their battlefield magics.

**System:** This rote only works on a set of "bonded" Life Patterns; they must be human, and there must be at least twenty. For the purposes of this rote, "bonded" Patterns are those that have gone through significant shared adversity and triumph. The Roman legions probably got their strong mystic ties from their discipline, martial experience and homosexual bonds. For every twenty Patterns involved, the mage can eke out a single point of Quintessence without causing any actual injury. Successes scored on the Effect determine the maximum amount of Quintessence a mage can harness. For a really



large army, several mages must work together. Such a draw can only be done once per day, as Life Patterns must have time to stabilize their Quintessential flow.

### MAZE OF THE MINOTAUR

(••• MIND; OPTIONAL •••• CORRESPONDENCE)

Through Sacred Geometry, early craftsmen formed mazes that confounded an individual's sense of direction. Daedalus in particular built for King Minos a tremendous and nigh-inescapable maze, in which dwelt the Minotaur. Through the confusing magics of the maze, Daedalus insured that anyone wandering within became utterly lost until discovered and devoured by the Minotaur.

**System:** A craftsman can lay an enchantment into a maze or complex during its construction; indeed, the Order of Reason used such techniques in some of its early fortresses and the New World Order almost certainly uses a variant for its offices. Cast over an area, the enchantment befuddles the sense of direction. Objects are arranged *just* so to confuse the traveler, and the area proper is prepared during construction so that interlopers become disoriented ("You are in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike"). Laying the Effect over an area requires the use of Mind to place a mental "fuzz" in the locale. The Storyteller might also require Correspondence if the mage is trying to ward areas that he hasn't personally visited, but since a maze of this sort is typically enchanted by the mage as he builds it, Correspondence isn't a strict requirement. (A mage could theoretically use Correspondence to distort space, but that's a much different proposition from distorting a subject's sense of space.)

Focusing this Effect on an individual causes the victim to doubt his path, and can even make the subject question a map or set of explicit steps. This is not amnesia but a subconscious loss of sense of direction and memory: "Did we take a left or right the first time we came through here?" Such an Effect relies solely on playing with the victim's perceptions and thus only requires Mind 2 (plus the appropriate Correspondence if the mage is using the Effect from a distance).

Individuals may find their way out of the maze by accumulating more successes on a Wits + Enigmas roll than magical Effect successes scored by the mage who laid the trap. Since most mazes are constructed over years, this could take some time.

Manipulating an area to become confusing could be anything from moving a potted plant in front of the door to entirely rearranging the furniture and repainting the walls bright orange. Most often, this Effect can be considered coincidental — anyone can lose her way.

### MIND OF THE ANT HILL (•••• MIND)

Based upon the tactics of the Roman phalanx, this rote allows for subliminal group tactics. Naturally, the New World Order developed similar group tactics, but their roots can be traced ultimately to organized combat as established by Rome and its predecessors.

**System:** For every success on the Effect roll, the group has a die that any member can call upon in combat. This die, once used (successfully or not) is exhausted from the pool that the group can call upon. War machines can be used as foci to lower the difficulty, and if cast as an extended rite over the course of time preparing for the battle, the group may have a huge pool to draw upon. A group waiting during the casting of this rote may only prepare for the upcoming battle or engage in combat — the rote must be used immediately beforehand. Note that Correspondence may be necessary to spread the coordination over an extremely large gathering.

### PHLOGISTON PHLUX (•• MATTER)

The ancients believed that fire was the release of phlogiston from burning substances. As a substance burned, it released its phlogiston, which served as a viscous tie; when the phlogiston had all been released, nothing remained but ash. Thus, fire was a tangible elemental form and not a force of nature, nor was it a release of energy any more than the other elements of air, earth and water.

**Phlogiston Phlux** allows the practitioner to increase or decrease the amount of phlogiston in an object, thus causing it to burn longer or shorter depending on the mage's desire. It also allows the mage to add phlogiston to an element, thus making fireproof objects burn like paper. The mage can also take away phlogiston, so that brittle wood does not even catch fire from a burning coal. Of course, modern science "proves" that phlogiston is not real and that fire stems from other sources — isn't magic great?

**System:** Depending on the severity of the Effect, the rote could be coincidental or vulgar. A torch burning for an extended period can be coincidental while causing a house to remain unscathed despite direct application of a flamethrower is certainly vulgar. Successes garnered on this Effect alter a subject's soak dice against fire — the mage can give or remove fire susceptibility. Since this is a Matter Effect, it doesn't work on living things. A mage could try to make a version that adds phlogiston to living things, of course... but thus far nobody has (successfully, anyway).

## STOICISM (• MIND, • MATTER)

The Greek philosopher Zeno believed that human beings should remain calm and free from passions so that they could accept the unavoidable events of fate and nature rather than struggle needlessly against them. Greek mages such as the Pomegranate Deme looked upon this evolution of thought with interest. Using his refined senses to interpret and emulate the indifference of an observed stone, the mage escapes all sense of pain, grief, joy or pleasure. In effect, the mage invites the stone into his mind, and becomes like a rock: implacable, unfeeling.

**System:** With a single success, the mage has locked his mind away from the world and can observe it dispassionately. If he chooses to remain stationary and achieves more than one success, his mind becomes as a stone. Torture becomes useless and thoughts fade away to nothing. Alternately, with at least three successes, the mage can act in a deliberate fashion. His thoughts are cold and without empathy, but allow an eerily calm continuance of motion. Some Pomegranate Deme use this detachment to perform necessary killing unpolluted by personal feelings. Reading emotions from the mage becomes impossible, as he has none. Of course, this freedom from lesser drives is not without cost; the mage cannot expend Willpower points for the duration of the **Stoicism** Effect. All difficulties to Dodge and social rolls are penalized by three while the rote is in use.

## PROTECTION OF THE GOLDEN RACE (••••• SPIRIT, •• PRITIE)

By several accounts, the people of the golden age are still out there protecting humanity from monsters and unnatural things in the night. The caster calls upon the closest member of the golden race to protect them from an opponent. A blinding flash of golden light appears, wounding if not killing the attacker.

**System:** This rote can only be used upon supernatural entities and is always considered extremely vulgar. What actually happens to the creature is left to the Storyteller; the caster literally unleashes the guardian power of the golden race.

Note that this rite does not actually empower the mage — rather, it summons the golden ones themselves. The reactions of the golden ones are unpredictable; as protectors of humanity, though, they are likely to incinerate most supernatural predators — so long as the summoning mage is not also a threat! After all, a mage's powers can be just as dangerous to humanity as any vampire's unnatural hungers.

Summoning the golden ones is a difficult undertaking. The ancients have long since left the Realms in which most mages operate. Calling them through the

Gauntlet and across the Umbra is a difficult task. Casting this rote is vulgar (difficulty 10), and the Storyteller is the final arbiter of how many successes are necessary to successfully call the golden ones. A mage should never be certain of his ability to call on these saviors for intervention. Note also that a mage must know about the golden ones to be able to call them; learning this rote requires extensive study into Greek legend and culture (best represented by an extended Intelligence + Academics or Investigation roll and a great deal of roleplaying).

## SPONTANEOUS GENERATION (•• PRITIE, WITH ••• MATTER OR LIFE)

In olden days, philosophers believed that animals and most matter could spontaneously generate out of nothing. Maggots came from meat and horses sprang from the mist of waterfalls. This rote duplicates such spontaneous generation. The mage can't pull a gun or a sword out of thin air, but he or she can turn one thing into something that it is not, even something radically different. The mage simply reaches into an appropriate source and the object or creature spontaneously generates.

Spontaneous generation happens only from certain sources — one can spontaneously generate maggots from meat, mud or corpses, but not from glass or plastic. Horses may spring from waterfalls or great blazes of fire, but not out of wooden doorways or earthen mounds. The player should research a few theories of spontaneous generation. A modern mage must certainly alter this rote; a Virtual Adept might pull a computer chip out of a pile of circuit boards, while an Akashic could grab a spear from a thicket of reeds.

**System:** The number of successes determines the accuracy and the quantity of material generated (three successes might mean a newborn foal comes out of the mist of a waterfall while ten or more might generate four grown stallions leaping forth at full charge). A mage must alter this rote to make it suitable for modern materials like plastics and alloys, of course.

## WINGS OF ICARUS (•••• FORCES)

This rote mimics the legendary flight of Daedalus' doomed son Icarus. The mage straps on a pair of delicate feathered wings held together by wax — a noticeable prop indeed. This Effect uses the natural potency of the wind to lift the user into the air.

**System:** At least three successes are necessary for this rote to work. Otherwise, the winds in the surrounding area simply aren't strong enough to provide lift. Assuming that the mage manages to catch (or create) a convenient wind, she can fly clumsily for the Effect's duration. It's probably a good idea for the mage to spend

some preparation time strengthening the wings, checking for a good wind and so on (that is, using an extended ritual). Strong winds modify the Effect: A brisk breeze might lower the difficulty by 1, a strong tailwind by 2. Of course, in modern times, this Effect is vulgar.

Don't botch. Icarus botched.

## BEYOND DEATH

Orpheus traveled Hades to recover his bride; Achilles shrugged off mortal weapons; Hercules cheated death to become a god. These heroes were simply a few in the long line of men and women who defied their own mortality. Stories date as far back as the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Egyptian rites of mummification.

Egypt's obsession with death led to magic designed to deal directly with the Underworld. Fascinated by the prospects of the afterlife and rebirth, the Egyptians created a Spell of Life to bring life to mortals after their time, a spell that caused them to be forever alive but dying.

Greece and Rome's interaction with Egypt — through Carthage, Mark Antony and later the Crusades — meant that Egypt's magics inevitably seeped into Greek culture. The influence was slight — only the rare necromancer or demented Infernalist bartered directly with the powers of death; Greek mystics focused more on transcendental matters. However, this philosophical training gave the Greeks the ability to comprehend new directions for Egyptian magic, and to describe them in efficient terms.

The result? Though Egypt birthed many rites dealing with the dead, the Greeks and the Romans preserved them. Modern mages still call the Egyptian gods by their Greek names. Egyptian symbolism filtered through the Roman Cult of Mercury before arriving in the Order of Hermes. The Spell of Life was transformed into a means to cheat death.

The original Egyptian Spell of Life created mummies, beings who died but returned to the sunlit lands in their own bodies. By the time fragmentary records from the Greek *Secret Writings of Cabirus* filtered into the Roman Cult of Mercury, though, the cult's priorities had changed. The mages who became the Order of Hermes wanted to avoid death, not to experience it again and again. With the incredible precision they developed through their studies of language, the Roman mages altered the formula. This altered form inverted the Spell of Life; instead of dying and returning, the mage hovered forever on the cusp of death. Buried after the fall of Rome, the spell only resurfaced later in the Middle Ages, when wizards of the Order of Hermes sought alternate means to prolong their lives so that they had time to master the intricacies of their magics.

Only fragmentary information about the original spell survived. Hermetic researchers had to piece together the necessary components and improvise their own finishing touches. Each version of the spell was unique, a means for the individual mage to preserve his Pattern.

Naturally, the means to cheat death are not easy. The frightful requirements of the rite put off most students, even in an academic capacity. But there are always a crazed few for whom the lure of immortality is too tempting.

LICHEDOM (•••• ENTROPY, •••• LIFE,  
•••• MATTER, •••• SPIRIT, •••• PRITIE, • MIND)

Nature ensures that living patterns eventually degrade and die. Age consumes the body, rot overtakes the flesh and the soul moves on or fades away. And perhaps humanity's greatest curse is the knowledge of its own mortality. Among mages, who have some inkling of the spiritual fates that wait beyond life, such terrors can become obsessions. Those determined to hang around after their mortal days seek cryptic formulae designed to skirt nature, restore youth, halt decrepitude and cheat death itself. Some mages end up inviting death, but on their own terms; they use the rite of lichedom.

While the Order of Hermes commonly used potions and rituals to prolong life (and other Traditions created similar Effects within their own paradigms), only within the Order did the dread of mortality and the drive to master magic become so great that a mage risked life and soul for a spell to ward off the reaper. The formula for lichedom, though buried by time and suppressed as heresy, promised a way out. Still, the offer of perpetual existence remains a tantalizing shadow to those mages whose fear of death, desire to finish some great deed, or drive to Master their Art pushes them beyond rational measures.

Ironically, the formula for lichedom is marginally easier to cast than most comparable immortality spells. Indeed, a mage need not even be a Master to use this magic. The temptations of the dark road, perhaps.

While some mages cheat mortality with age-defying spells, lichedom relies on a means to welcome it. The mage surrounds himself with the trappings of his magic and ego. Through the strength of his dedication, he severs his Avatar from the changing, living world about him. At the end of the rite, he kills himself and invokes the final step, which causes his Pattern to linger perpetually on the cusp of life and death. No longer truly alive, yet not wholly dead, the mage lives the half-existence of a liche. Already straddling the threshold of death, the liche need no longer fear its ultimate demise.

The Order's records of lichedom are far from complete, and many Hermetics consider lichedom an abominable state. Thus, the rite is rarely copied or

archived; some mages even destroy any records that they find regarding lichedom. Chroniclers and theorists of the Order might keep fragmentary ruminations on the process, but it is certain that no whole and complete copy exists except, perhaps, among the tomes of a liche who still exists today.

Because Order records are so fragmentary, the rite of lichedom is poorly understood, and the steps are often personalized by the few mages who pursue it. The mage starts by building a special edged or piercing weapon (or weapons) with which he kills himself. This weapon is made first because it accompanies the mage through the remainder of the rite. The traditional Hermetic paradigm prescribes that the item be made of silver, though other materials might also function.

Once the weapon is complete, the mage must reclaim every piece of his Avatar and sever all external ties to it. This means that the mage must capture and destroy every Talisman he has empowered and every sympathetic link that he has tied to his soul. He must even murder his own familiar, if he has one. A mage with a fragmentary Avatar must track down and reclaim the lost pieces; one with a phylactery must somehow manage to keep it on his person for the duration of the rite. Brands and damaged pieces of an Avatar do not hinder this portion of the rite, but if some piece of the whole Avatar has somehow been split from the mage, it must be recovered.

Once the mage has severed ties to his magical self, he must purge his Pattern of any external magic. Only his own willpower can keep him alive beyond the shadow of death. The mage must isolate himself, with no magic but his own nearby — no magical items, no spells placed by others, no intruding supernatural forces. Surrounded by his magic, he allows it to suffuse his Pattern. Some mages supplement this step by ingesting potions, often laced with their own flesh and blood, thereby internalizing and concentrating the magical energies that they carry. Other mages focus on meditation, sensory deprivation or other mental techniques to hone their personal energies. For a year and a day the mage must wait in solitude, with no other magical spells or beings disturbing his concentration, as he steeps himself solely in his own magical will. Most mages at this step are so obsessed with their magical development that they spend the time to further refine their techniques.

Cloistered away and empowered by his own spirit, the mage finally takes the last plummet down the precipice of mortality — he must quaff a specialized potion, which requires components harvested from Bygones and materials renowned for their longevity and power (dragon's blood, demonic ichor, mercury,

grave dust and other foul, rare and poisonous materials). With the weapons previously created, the mage kills himself and removes the seat of his life — this may mean severing his arteries, piercing his chakra points, or even stabbing his own heart. The fluid of the potion sustains him and halts the death of his body. At this point, if the mage's rite is successful, he becomes an undead corpse and hovers on the boundary between life and death. The rite cements his Avatar and soul to his corpse-like frame, while his Pattern becomes mutated into something between Life and Matter. If he fails...

Clearly, the rite of lichedom is so dangerous that it suits only the rare mage who's desperate enough to try it. Worse still, there is no concrete way for the mage to know whether his formula is successful or correct except to kill himself in the attempt. No two liches have ever used the same formula. It's possible that some steps might be omitted, while it's almost certain that most liches have undertaken unnecessarily terrible steps simply because there is no way to know what the formula requires. For someone willing to undertake this hideous transformation, nearly any abominable sacrifice seems reasonable. Mages who lack the skill to use some of the required magics might well seek out alternate steps to make the rite easier. It's said that crazed wizards hoping to become liches have slaughtered their entire families, undertaken personal mutilations and sucked out the very souls of other mages in order to fuel their transformations.

Once a mage has paid the terrible price and taken the steps that cannot be undone, he becomes one of the undead. His body no longer heals or grows, and indeed may suffer the ravages of time, but it never dies unless slain by magic. If the rite is not performed properly, the mage simply dies; if it is only partially successful, the mage may survive a short time, but decompose and die within a few days or weeks. A successful liche can, barring excessive Paradox or magical injury, expect to "live" forever.

**System:** Despite its terrible costs, lichedom is fairly straightforward. The mage in question needs to do some heavy research — many rolls of Intelligence + Occult or Investigation, many visits to libraries and mentors, and so on. Such research is best roleplayed. A mage who openly looks into such materials risks the censure of his peers and the possibility of seized records, madness-inducing tomes and righteous hunters who hope to stamp out even the study of such abominations.

The research process is part of the rite. The mage makes his Arete rolls based upon his research and execution of the proper steps. If the mage has done only sketchy research (one or two successes), he may only get to roll one or two dice. Similarly, if he executes the steps shoddily or imperfectly, he may suffer a difficulty

penalty, while extreme attention to detail may give a bonus as described under Abilities Affecting Magic (*Mage Revised*, p. 155).

The final casting of the rite occurs as the mage prepares the potion for the infusion of licheedom. Successes accumulate to generate the duration and degree of success. To finish the rite, the mage must invest one point of Quintessence for each health level that he has and must score enough successes to perform a phenomenal Effect (10 or more successes). The rite is naturally vulgar, so the base difficulty is 9. A permanent duration is, of course, desirable, but if the mage doesn't score enough successes, the spell may not let him exist long as one of the undead. The mage generates successes as he makes the elixir, drinks it and kills himself. Naturally, wound penalties apply to the task of finishing off the potion while the mage stabs or slashes himself to death, so the mage is advised to also use a rite to resist pain.

The final task can be done as an extended ritual, to the usual limits of casting time based on the mage's Arete and Willpower. Note that the mage can only cast the rite himself. This rite cannot be performed for someone else. Since the mage must surround himself with only the trappings of his own magic, the rite also cannot be cast with the aid of any Talismans. The mage must finish the spell using his own knowledge.

With the mage's inward concentration of personal magic and awareness, and the use of Mind and Spirit magic, he manages to shackle his Avatar, soul and consciousness to his body so that they remain even as he dies. The Life, Matter and Entropy Spheres halt his body along the path to death and transform his Pattern into something on the cusp between.

Various omissions or mistakes are possible, and they can have many detrimental effects on the process. Without Mind magic, the mage's consciousness departs as he dies; his body becomes a shell without volition. Without Spirit, his Avatar flees and he becomes a self-willed but powerless walking corpse, with no magical capabilities (and no ability to learn other supernatural powers, since he is not truly a vampire or one of the Risen). Without sufficient Entropy, the body's death processes do not come under control in the transformation to Matter, and the mage becomes hideously decrepit (losing one point from each Physical Attribute, his Bruised health level and all Appearance).

If a mage fails to complete the rite successfully, he simply dies, and the potion has no effect except perhaps to make the corpse twitch, choke and burn spasmodically. If the mage *botches* the ritual, he manages to kill himself, shred his Avatar (permanently destroying it, perhaps) and generate sufficient Paradox to level his

laboratory and bestow an Entropic Resonance on area. The remnants of the mage's corpse may well become Quintessence-laden chunks of Tass (though a mage would have to eat the pieces to gain the Quintessence) or become inhabited by something *else* out there.

Once a mage becomes a liche, his body stops being a pure Life Pattern and becomes something else. Sustained by his formidable will and magical prowess, the mage puts off death by keeping it in a sort of holding pattern between Life and Matter. This has several consequences:

- Once dead, the mage's body becomes cadaverous, gaunt and slightly bluish, like one would expect of a corpse. This raises all Appearance-related difficulties by 2.
- The liche does not heal naturally. Only magic can heal his wounds. Each health level healed requires the expenditure of a point of Quintessence, so the liche is essentially a thaumivore.

- A liche cannot die from lethal damage, only aggravated wounds — Pattern damage — can destroy him permanently. Since the liche's body is dead, he takes only half damage (rounded down after soak) from bashing attacks, and gets a full soak roll (difficulty 6) against lethal damage. Lethal or bashing damage may incapacitate a liche and cause his body to become nonfunctional for a time, but eventually the liche overcomes the hindrance. Remember, wound penalties do not affect magical casting difficulties, so the liche can easily use Mind or Spirit magic to send his astral form to gather Quintessence and return to heal the body.

- The liche's body may continue to decay. Many liches use some Entropy magic to sustain them, but over time they become unconcerned with such trivialities. Without special preservative magic, the liche's body rots at the speed of natural healing: After a day the liche loses his Bruised health level; 3 days later the Hurt level rots away and so on. This rotting is visible and causes the mage to lose Appearance (one dot per health level) as he decays, until the rotting is healed.

- Liches are sterile, of course. No amount of magic can fix *that* problem. A liche might simulate sexuality, like a vampire, but ultimately is a half-dead *thing* with other ways to spend eternity. A liche can eat and drink, and its body metabolizes food, but it no longer requires sustenance.

- Since a liche is dependent solely upon his own magic to sustain him, the rite burns out connections with any external magical processes. The liche cannot have *True Faith*, *Fae Blood* or similar Merits. Any such existing ties are destroyed. A liche can't become a ghoul, vampire or other supernatural creature.

- Upon completing the rite, a liche gains one dot of both Static and Entropic Resonance. Furthermore, the liche's Resonance is disconcerting not merely to

mortals, but also to supernatural creatures. Vampires, changelings, even spirits and the like all recognize the liche as some sort of unnatural abomination. The smart ones flee. Even other mages are affected, and have a tendency to hunt down and destroy liches.

- As a static creature, the liche can never gain additional Arete — ever. He can continue to improve his Spheres but his enlightenment is frozen along with his body and soul. Ascension has been traded for the chance to exist beyond mortal limits in the quest for magical power. A liche *can* suffer Gilgul; many do, shortly before they are permanently slain. Still, the liche has eternity in which to study, improve and expand his knowledge of the Spheres, and he's damnably hard to kill, too.

- Liches cannot have familiars. (You killed yours as part of the rite, remember?) This is true even if the liche never had one in life. The liche's unliving Pattern cannot properly bind familiars.

- The liche rite cannot be undone with simple countermagic. Most liches also add other protections to prevent unweaving. Should the rite be undone, the liche finishes the process of dying and becomes a corpse. Thus, reversing the rite also requires some way to raise the dead — good luck with that one.

- A liche can place its Avatar in a phylactery (see the *Phylactery Flaw* in **Mage Revised**, p. 300). This is a necessity if the liche does not have sufficient Spirit to hold on to his Avatar and soul during the rite itself; the liche can bind the phylactery with Spirit 3.

- Liches have a tendency toward insanity. *Nobody* goes through the rite without gaining at least one Derangement. Over time, most liches become increasingly eccentric, until they find themselves completely unable to relate to the "normal" world.

- The process of lichedom so greatly changes the individual's Pattern that his True Name is distorted. The subject's old True Name no longer applies. The rite warps its name; someone familiar with the old name and the liche formula *might* be able to puzzle out the corrupted name (Intelligence + Occult, difficulty 9). There is a True Name for "liche" but each liche *also* has an individual True Name that is necessary to affect the individual with True Name bindings, banishments and so on.

- Liches are, of course, Paradoxical, and the rite gives the caster permanent Paradox. The exact amount is up to the Storyteller. Certainly in a low-fantasy game, a liche suffers from a great deal of Paradox.

## LICHE CHARACTERS

A liche is not the sort of character to run around with a group of players' mages. The dedication required

to finish the rite is immense, and the requirements of destruction and solitude are so severe that they disrupt just about any group. Most every cabal has someone with a moral objection to the rite of lichedom. And that's discounting the fact that a mage crazed enough to attempt the rite is probably so maladjusted that he can't handle the company of other mages (or Sleepers) anyhow. Besides, if a mage was so hell bent on immortality that he became a liche, what *else* might he consider "reasonable" in pursuit of his own goals?

This is not to say that liches don't belong in **Mage** chronicles. They make excellent antagonists — most mages don't have as much torque as they do, plus the typical Disciple doesn't know how to fight one. That means legwork to dig up facts and find people knowledgeable on the subject. Since liches could be considered a political hot topic among the Traditions, one liche could have an entire cabal of Disciples running around ducking their heads to avoid censure while trying to get the information necessary to take out an undead enemy — especially if that enemy is so well hidden that the rest of the Traditions can't be bothered to deal with it.

The liche formula is a neat aside for players' mages to get their hands on as well. If a mage stumbles across a bit of the formula, what does he do? Destroy it? Hoard it? Share it with his (horrified) friends and companions? Use it? Players' mages are a fractious lot; there's gotta be *someone* crazy enough to pay for or use such information. For that matter, just knowing the rite earns the character some enemies — holier-than-thou Traditionalists, paranoid liches who don't want the formula known (and possibly undone), vampires who consider liches competition....

A liche might also be a *patron* to a cabal — one that doesn't know or care about the liche's state. The liche's magical resources are immense, and given time it can probably become a true Master (at least). A would-be liche could send mages out to destroy the Talismans that it created and lost earlier in life. A repentant liche might send people to find the magical knowledge to restore its mortality (good luck). With long-term planning, a liche could develop the extreme views common to elder vampires, Archmasters and the like; Disciples and lesser mages become pawns in such games.

Liches are by no means common. It's probable that there are no more than three or four in the modern Tellurian, with only a single one even bothering to remain on Earth. Like any potent creature, a liche is best used as a plot device. Even the *hint* of a liche or its formula can be enough to drive a story.

And, of course, this is the World of Darkness. Those who cheat death with the curse of undeath rarely meet pleasant ends.

## BYGONES OF GREECE AND RÖTIE

The Minotaur, harpies, Furies, Gorgons, gods, ghosts — there's no limit to the critters that populate Greek and Roman myth. Such Bygones may not interfere with the material world much, but unlike the Bygones of other cultures, these things may well be recognized. People today may not *believe* in the Minotaur, but they've heard the legends. This, in turn, means that the Bygones of Greece and Rome are, perhaps, closer to Earth than any other Bygone creatures — they, at least, are remembered.

### THE BACCHANAE

The worship of Bacchus wasn't all drinking and screwing. The cult of Bacchus, called the Bacchanae, worshipped the god in the most sacred of ceremonies with a sacrifice of one of Bacchus' most favored animals — a lion, a sheep, or a human being.

The followers of Bacchus — advocates of a more intuitive philosophy of spirituality and action — were often at odds with the more logical and conceptual Gnostics, who vied for control of ancient Greece's mystic societies. This struggle continued from the time of ancient Greece until the rise of Christianity. Paul the Apostle fused the classical Greek philosophy of Gnosticism with Christianity (then a small but fanatical sect of the Jews) to form a religion acceptable to both Greeks and Romans. Somewhere along the way, the intuition of Bacchus was lost and the cults suffered persecution or conversion. However, not all the infidels were accounted for and it is possible that cults of the mad god still exist not only in Greece but anywhere that Greek immigrants or Greek thought has spread.

Human cultists still revere Bacchus through rites of fertility and debauchery. These people merely revel in the god's gifts of wine and wantonness. However, from time to time the deity's power touches a few of his revelers and infects them with his own maddened, frenzied passions. In olden days, Bacchus joined his revelers personally; in the modern age, the faraway spirit of the god is likely only to touch those rare mortals who embody unbridled passion in the furthest wilds or in places that rest close to the Umbra. Human followers touched in this fashion become something else — the Bacchanae. It is these berserk, cannibalistic beasts that embody pure lust and desire, and these creatures are the dangerously inhuman "cult" that might perhaps attack an unfortunate traveler to satiate their brutal passions.

Bacchanae cultists seem much like normal people, but their intimacy with their god drives them insane. Bacchus transcends ecstatic revelry to become the power of madness; Bacchanae are charged with this energy as they copulate with and devour their victims and one another. The threat of the Bacchanae stems from their utter madness, their pack formations and their insensibility to reason or pain. Some Bacchanae might be accompanied by wild faerie creatures that are lost in the storm of carnality and cannibalism.

Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

**Willpower:** 9, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Bite for 3 dice

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 4

### Blood on the Grass

When I was a kid I watched *Fantasia*, mostly to see Mickey Mouse run around in a sorcerer's outfit. There was that one piece, though — I don't even remember what it was called — about the worship of Bacchus. There were all these centaurs and fauns and they ran around drinking wine, crushing grapes and going off into the woods to fuck. In the middle of this was a jolly fat man drunk out his mind trying to ride a mule around this party and failing miserably. When I was kid I thought that the fat guy was Santa Claus and he was having some sort of party because Christmas was over. Well, I saw a real party of the followers of Bacchus last night, and no matter how drunk Santa was, I do not think he would have approved.

The locals told me the legend about a Bacchus cult living in the woods near their village. They warned me that the Bacchanae, as they are called, kill anyone who invades their woods at night. Of course, I had to see if this was true.

I wandered into the woods quietly at first and swept as much territory as possible. Nothing, I thought that perhaps I should make more noise to attract some attention. That's when I heard a scream. I rushed in the direction of the sound. I had half expected to see some sort of drunken orgy, and I was only mildly disappointed. Two youths from the town lay entwined on the ground in a rather desperate act of copulation. This is fairly unsurprising; kids often use the thrill of being in a haunted spot to heighten the thrill of doing something they're not supposed to do.

Having no business in that particular grove I debated whether to interrupt them when I felt impending danger. This instinct has never failed me in the field so I readied my defenses and reinforced my prayer to be hidden from the eyes of man.

What I saw next nearly made me drop my defenses in shock. I saw something I could barely believe: a throng of men and women whose bodies were crisscrossed with scars from running through bramble unclothed. Their bodies were so mutilated that it was difficult to tell how old they were, but there could be not have been any children among them. At first they snickered to themselves as they slowly surrounded the couple, who remained oblivious to their imminent peril.

I felt the crackling, that little buzz of static electricity that I always feel when dealing with other mages. That meant that I probably wasn't going to be able to stand up to this group no matter how I confronted them. I ran back to the town to get help but something froze me in place where I was.

The Bacchantae fell upon the couple with a motion both brutal and sexual. The Bacchantae tore chunks of their flesh in fierce bites. The Bacchantae's lurid shrieks and hoots seemed even worse than the screams of the dying couple. I closed my eyes but it was worse to listen to the chorus of slurping mouths accompanied by the characteristic sound of tearing wet linen that flesh makes when rent. As I ran, the image of jolly Bacchus from *Fantasia* riding a wave of wine came to my mind, but now Bacchus rode a wave of blood instead.

## THE GOLDEN ONES

Within the context of Mage, the golden race could refer to several different groups. The Order of Hermes tends to interpret these legends as a previous race of people who achieved Ascension as a culture. The distinction between gold and silver possibly indicates different paradigms. Alchemically speaking, gold is the metal of purity and energy so some sort of purity of mind and body might have been involved. This also implies the possibility of achieving Ascension as a race.

Some in the Order have a darker interpretation, and it has become more popular since the end of the Ascension War: There was no Ascension involved in the passing of the golden and silver ages. These previous

cultures were "paradigms" from which the silver age usurped the golden age and iron usurped silver. Some further postulate, although always unofficially, that the Technocracy's defeat of the Traditions promises an age more brutal and dark than the last.

This all leads to the question: Where is the golden race now, if they were supposed to look after the affairs of humanity? Some believe that the Oracles (of the Umbra, not Delphi) are the new guardians. Others believe that the golden ones have somehow become lost or locked away. There is even a rumor of a cabal that entered the Deep Umbra in a quest to find these beings. Judging by the current state of humanity, though, it seems unlikely that these golden protectors have returned.

Members of the golden and silver races could show up in the spirit world as idealized beings, entities of light or pure metal. Surely they command formidable magical powers. Why they ever left Earth is a mystery for a troupe to examine... a golden or silver one could also speak to a mage in an attempt to offer advice, perhaps fulfilling its role as a guardian. Doubtless, their culture was a magical one, so a mage could learn much from such an entity.

Treat a golden or silver one as a spirit. Since it has transcended human understanding, only an Adept or Master who used some real trickery has a chance to injure or trap it. A good plot thread might center around a wounded golden one and its need for mortal intermediaries to stop some baleful plan on Earth, or to fetch it the means to heal itself and stop something that no human mage could fight.

## CENTAURS

A savage race, the centaurs follow the pattern of half-beast, half-man creatures common to Greek myth. Centaurs are attributed to Ixion, a cunning king who murdered Eioneus while stealing away his victim's daughter for his wife. He was cursed with insanity, cured by Zeus then subsequently indulged his lust for Hera, Zeus' wife. The centaurs sprang from this union.

With the body of a horse and the torso, arms and head of a man, a centaur can be majestic, but is more likely terrifying. Perhaps the centaur myth simply came from the first encounters of early cultures with men mounted on horses — wouldn't the Technocracy like *everyone* to believe that? Centaurs were said to be arrogant and short tempered in the extreme. A few rare exceptions did exist, but most centaurs were creatures of the wilderness who avoided humanity.

Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Willpower:** 5, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Kick for 6 dice

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Dodge 2, Melee 3, Survival 4

## CYCLOPES

Somewhere in the Aegean Sea there is an island where those cursed by the gods now roam. Once they were the blacksmiths of Olympus, but now they are nothing more than barbarians huddled around fires. The curse of the gods prevents them from ever leaving the island and all but the most unwary travelers from ever finding them.

Created by Uranos, the first three cyclopes were named Brontes, Steropes and Arges, and they wielded the powers of thunder, lightning and light, respectively. Later, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus meets and fights

## BLOODY BASTARDS

Some of the monsters in this section also appear in *The Bygone Bestiary* or in other source books. The descriptions here are not revisions but alternatives. There could be different species running around, the monsters could have changed. Besides, this is a **Black Dog** book where we can show how these creatures *really* are. Why these differences exist, or if they exist at all, is up to the Storyteller.

Polyphemus, son of the god Poseidon and another cyclops; how many more of these creatures might have lived remains a mystery. Certainly the old ones are lost in the mists of time, but there may well be uncharted isles in the Mediterranean Sea where a lost sailor could stumble across one of these formidable entities.

A cyclops grows to be about four stories tall. However, the most remarkable feature of the cyclops is the presence of only one eye in the center of its head. Though the cyclops has limited depth perception, it is tremendously strong.

Polyphemus, at least, had a taste for the flesh of men... the cyclopes are often painted as dull witted and quick tempered, but nevertheless dangerous. It's unlikely that cyclopes form communities, but no one knows for sure. Still, a mage who encounters even one certainly has a tale to tell for the rest of her days.

Strength 7+, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6+

**Willpower:** 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Strike for brawling damage; some cyclopes may use huge clubs or spears, inflicting Strength + 5 damage.

**Abilities:** Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Melee 4, Survival 3

## ERINYES

Little could inspire more dread in a man than a glimpse of one of the Erinyes — the Furies sent to punish those who had not gained absolution from the gods or whose crimes were so heinous that they demanded retribution. A trio of sisters, the Erinyes were born of powers that came before even the Greek gods and thus had power that even the gods could not deny. Cloaked in black, winged, serpent-haired like the Gorgons and carrying instruments of torture, the Erinyes pursued men even to the gates of death to exact punishment. The Erinyes are cunning, unstoppable and deadly; they can communicate but grimly set about their cosmic task without negotiation. Since their tasks have

drawn them to many corners of the cosmos, they surely know great, hidden secrets, but a Fury never divulges such knowledge. A mage might learn much by watching how one of the Erinyes stalks and dispatches a victim, but using one of these spirits of vengeance in such a fashion is surely not healthy.

The Furies are appropriate as Paradox manifestations or spirits who trouble mages in the Umbra; however, they do not act frivolously. Most often, they come to avenge murder, and may well kill their victim in the process. Only the advice of the gods can allay the Furies, but even gods cannot stop them. Fate help a mage who attracts their baneful attention — because Heaven surely won't.

**Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5**

**Willpower: 10, Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated**

**Attack:** The Erinyes lash out with torches, daggers, scourges and serpents for 5 dice of lethal damage. Even if disarmed, the Furies can always produce another weapon from the black folds of her cloak.

**Abilities:** Alertness 6, Athletics 5, Awareness 6, Brawl 5, Cosmology 5, Dodge 6, Enigmas 5, Intimidation 5, Melee 6, Occult 5

**Notes:** Even if incapacitated, a Fury is not defeated. They cannot be killed conventionally. The Erinyes cannot be reduced below Incapacitated and automatically heals two levels of *all* kinds of damage every turn. Thus, a Fury who is brought low simply rises again the next turn, all the more determined to punish her victim.

The Erinyes have an automatic five dice of countermagic. So determined is their pursuit of vengeance that no magic can dissuade them from their task; only the death of the victim, or proper penance, can stay their hands.

## GORGONS

In legend there were three Gorgons, sisters with the power to turn men to stone — Stheino, Eurayle and Medusa. Half-sisters to the sirens, the Gorgons supposedly gained their hideous appearance and petrifying powers due to Medusa's impertinence in approaching the gods with lust in her mind (stories conflict: She may have been a lover to Poseidon or a priestess who defiled the temple of Aphrodite). Regardless of origin, the Gorgons had hair of snakes and hideous countenances. Medusa was slain by the hero Perseus, but her sisters' fates remain unknown.

The Gorgons lived in a cave, sequestered from humanity. None know where this cave might be today. A mage might stumble across one of the Gorgons in the Umbra, or in some far corner of Greece. It's possible that the Gorgons had offspring; after all, their counte-

nances only petrified men who looked upon them; lovers in the dark may have avoided their stony glare. **Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2**

**Willpower: 5, Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated**

**Attack:** The Gorgon's gaze petrifies an onlooker. Roll the onlooker's Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6); a *successful* roll (or botch) indicates that the target is turned to stone! (Use a Life/Matter Effect to undo the petrification, or you've got a new lawn statue.) At close range, a Gorgon's snake-hair can bite for two dice of lethal damage, and it is also highly poisonous (causing one level of lethal damage per turn for the next ten turns or so).

**Abilities:** Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 3, Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Occult 1

## HARPIES

Half bird, half woman, these creatures were sent by Zeus to punish those who had dishonored him and to eat and defile the victim's food so that he would starve to death. Initial myths paint them as a trio of sisters (common in Greek myth) born to a giant and a nymph, but later tales indicate that there may have been more. Jason and the Argonauts freed Phineas from starvation by the harpies, but the harpies themselves may have survived the encounter.

Since the harpies are relegated to myth in the modern world, a mage is most likely to encounter them in the Umbra after offending the Greek gods. Harpies might even manifest during certain Paradox backlashes. Typically, the harpies do not attack; rather, they simply steal or ruin their victim's food before he can eat more than a scrap, so that the victim starves to death. Freed from the shackles of their mythical role, though, harpies might well attack unwary intruders in their domains.

Note that the harpies described in **The Bygone Bestiary** are actually a little closer to the Erinyes in temperament, but if you can keep your players guessing, so much the better....

**Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4**

**Willpower: 5, Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated**

**Attack:** Claw for 5 dice

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4

## MINOTAURS

A singular creature of legend, the Minotaur was another result of hubris. King Minos of Crete prayed for a worthy sacrifice to honor the gods, but when Poseidon sent a white bull from the sea foam, Minos set the bull to grazing with his herd as a trophy instead of properly sacrificing it. Enraged at this presumption, the gods set

the bull loose, and inflicted Minos' wife with an overpowering lust for the creature. Divine sway ensured that the rutting resulted in an unnatural child: a man with a bull's head. Horrified and enraged, Minos ordered the construction of a great maze, where he imprisoned the bastard monstrosity. From his subject kingdoms Minos demanded a tribute of men and women and hurled them into the maze. The sacrifices wandered haplessly through Daedalus' Labyrinth until the Minotaur caught and ate them. The Minotaur was finally slain by the hero Theseus.

Minos demanded sacrifices of young men and women for the Minotaur and for several years sent them into the maze... perhaps the men sated its hunger while the women sated other appetites. Generations of brutal, flesh-eating minotaurs could well have survived in some Umbral maze.  
Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

**Willpower:** 3, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Gore for 8 dice; bite for 5 dice; a minotaur can also use weapons.

**Abilities:** Alertness 5, Brawl 4, Melee 3, Survival 3

## SATYRS

Satyrs are a strange phenomenon in the modern world. Most believe that satyrs faded away with the disappearance of the Mythic Age; others believe that they all died in a war against some great enemy. Most Tradition mages agree that the satyrs were hunted to extinction by the Technocracy. However, of all the creatures that reportedly died during the Mythic Age, there are few accounts of the re-emergence of griffins or dragons, but there have been occasional sightings of those with satyr blood, or possibly satyrs themselves.

Satyrs consorted with Dionysus, poured his wine and played musical instruments (syrinx, flute and cymbals). Mages lost in the forest might stumble across a small band of satyrs, which could also mean that maenads are nearby.

Of course, if you use **Changeling: The Dreaming**, satyrs survived by becoming part of human dreams. Whichever version you use, satyrs are likely to be interested in dragging mages into their carnal pleasures and comfortable laziness. Satyrs might hold useful information or Artifacts that mages need, though. When threatened, satyrs tend to run, and most can scamper quite quickly; it's better to bribe or humor them instead.  
Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

**Willpower:** 3, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Kick for brawling damage

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Dodge 3, Expression 4, Performance 4

## SIRENS

Half-sisters of the Gorgons, the sirens were nymphs cursed by Demeter when they failed to protect Persephone (Demeter's daughter) from the attentions of Hades. Thereafter, the sirens had the upper bodies of women but the lower torsos of animals — first birds, later fish (as the stories changed with time, or Demeter altered her curse).

Haunting the waters near Sicily and Italy, the sirens used their songs to compel sailors to run aground on nearby islands. The unfortunates drowned in the waters or were devoured by the sisters of the sirens upon the islands. Orpheus managed to pass the sirens by using his own music to keep his sailors focused, while Odysseus heard their song but gave his men strict orders not to let him loose from the ship's mast where he was tied. (Odysseus' sailors stopped their ears with wax to drown out the music; sailing in dangerous water without being able to hear orders was quite a feat.) Once a mortal had heard their song and passed by alive, the power of the sirens' music was broken — or was it? The sirens threw themselves into the deep seas, perhaps to resurface later and continue their hypnotic song.

Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

**Willpower:** 6, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** The siren's song causes insanity — use the siren's Manipulation + Performance in a resisted roll against a subject's Willpower. An overcome victim tries desperately to reach the sirens, but they lead him underwater or into the grip of other monsters. If a siren were somehow captured, she could conceivably fight ineffectively as an untrained human.

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Expression 4, Performance 5

## PLACES OF EPIPHANY

Mystic places dot Greece and Rome, all significant to human culture in some way. Unlike the primeval lands of Africa and South America, Greece and Rome's locales of power have been tamed by human hands, but their magic remains strong.

Ironically, the vast wealth of Greek and Roman literature has diluted the strength of these places. Tourists come to see old ruins; They soak up the tourist-bureau cultural interpretations while they relegate the old stories to myth and legend. This disbelief, in turn, weakens the power of these places.

## THE ORACLE AT DELPHI

The Oracle at Delphi was perhaps Greece's most valuable treasure. Kings came to see if they should go to war, priests came to learn the will of their gods, and the occasional hapless farmers who just wanted to find out what was going on made their obligatory appearances. All of them came to Delphi.

The Oracle was always consulted before coronations, before going to war, before every major decision made by the government. This was a fairly universal practice across all of ancient Greece and part of the cultural tradition that united the Greeks. The basic process was simple: An inquirer traveled to Delphi to give tribute to the monks, who then investigated the traveler's question. A young virgin was then subjected to sulphurous fumes, and she babbled in a matter only comprehensible to the monks attending the girl. With

the coming of Christianity, like so many other things, the Oracle at Delphi was banned and supposedly lost forever.

Today, the Oracle is no longer used for prophecy. Now it is just another landmark for tourists to add to the list of things they've seen.

But few things can be lost forever. About one hundred years ago, the Order of Hermes informed the Council of Nine that it had discovered a group that claimed to be the same order of monks that had always attended the Oracle. Over the years they had provided their services to a select group of Greeks whom they deemed worthy. In order to continue their operations, they now kidnap the virgins they use in their ceremonies. Some suspected that the Order of Hermes knew all along that this group existed, but kept the secret to themselves. Members and associates of the Council of Nine decried the practice as inhumane, but new prob-

## MAKE YOUR OWN MYTH

Of course, you may be one of those sorts who looks at this possible angle for the Oracle at Delphi and murmurs, "That's absolutely stupid." Perhaps you've looked into the myths and when you look at the rites, you think, "Damn, that's really demeaning to what should be a fantastic and marvelous power."

You're absolutely right.

In the context of your own **Mage** game, you want to capture a specific atmosphere, flavor and mood. No two games are alike, and though **Mage** books can assume certain standards, they can't address specifically what people are going to like or dislike. So come up with your own mythology and decide how you want things to work in your World of Darkness, as appropriate to your game.

Maybe you think the Oracle at Delphi should be inviolate, a manifestation of some unknown principle that channels its will through hidden followers and exists even in the modern world, sequestered away from gawking tourists or overzealous mages. Or maybe the Technocracy did its job all too well, and the Oracle now exists only in legend, lacking even imitators. You need a good handle on your game's thematic elements, so that you can fit in legends where you want them. Here are a few ideas on how you can make your own myths:

- If you're running a rollicking, high-adventure **Mage** chronicle, then secret conspiracies and horrid monsters are your normal fare. Give your players puzzles with secret masters, hidden cults and mooks! Mooks! Mooks!
- Of course, **Mage** chronicles can also be heavily cerebral and symbolic. If you go for such scope, you want myth and legend to remain unscathed — the power of their archetypes is strong enough that they persist in the modern

day, albeit hidden from normal sight. To mages, though, such events are clear as day. Maybe the Oracle really has some greater power channeled through a sort of priesthood, though the priesthood might not resemble anything out of old Greek myth anymore; Avatars might resemble the creatures of myth, or perhaps the players' mages embark on a journey that's metaphorically similar to the Odyssey.

- Abandon the old themes and use strange convolutions unfettered by the way that people normally connect ideas. You can just use legends and myths as a thin veneer. You wave your hands and let the players *think* that they see something familiar, but behind the curtain lurks something different. Perhaps the players stumble across a conspiracy that *looks* like it's the remnants of the Oracle at Delphi, but when they really investigate, there's something totally different at work — the Oracle cult is actually some *other* supernatural agency, or the prophecies come from a giant computer or some equally freakish implausibility. This sets up the players' expectations then knocks them down, confounding (and hopefully entertaining) the group.

Remember, a myth is just a starting place. It can be as metaphorical or as literal as you want. Take an element and nail in your favored (or hated) little corner of the **Mage** game — perhaps the Order of Hermes didn't infiltrate the Oracle, but the Dreamspeakers did. Or the Void Engineers — who knows what *they'd* do with it? Is the facade of the myth genuine, or is it just another mask? Maybe your Oracle began as a diviner and soothsayer, but now her cryptic pronouncements mean something else — insight into the soul of the visitor, or just random babbling that people still foolishly try to interpret.

Make the myth your own. It's your game.



lems surfaced every day in Queen Victoria's Technocracy, so the Council somehow swept the issue under the rug indefinitely — until recently, only those mages who asked the right questions to the right people even found out about the Oracle.

The truth is somewhat more sinister. The original monks of Delphi were either driven off or killed by the Christian emperors of the Roman empire. In the 19th century a cabal of Hermetic mages of House Fortunae discovered writings they believed to be records of the monks of Delphi. They decided to recreate the order themselves and informed their superiors within the Order of Hermes. What the Hermetic officials were not told by the cabal, now called the Cabal of Delphi, was the exact process by which the magic was performed.

Everyone sees the open part of the ceremony and few question what happens behind closed doors when no one is visiting. Supposedly, the sulphurous fumes of the spring are infused with a rare vein of energy (or Quintessence for those who insist on using such formalized terms). This energy inspires the Oracle's predictions, which then can be interpreted by the monks according to the ancient guidelines of the language of the gods. The mystical quality of the Oracle's cave is self-evident to Awakened visitors who realize that they are entering a Node.

In reality, the monks involved pool their Arete and Quintessence, using the Oracle as a conduit. The Oracle screams because of the painful mystical energies flowing through her. As she screams, the monks come to an intuitive understanding of the prediction and then meet afterward for an "interpretation" only to maintain the facade of what they are actually doing. Virgins are required for this ceremony so that the monks may come to a physical union with them in order to establish a stronger mental link. The monks sometimes rape the kidnapped virgins to enhance their connection to the Oracle.

The current monks are actually the descendants of the original Cabal of Delphi. They claim to recruit new monks at birth and train them for life to be keepers of the Oracle. Actually, new monks are born to Oracles then raised by the group they are meant to succeed. The presence of a pregnant Oracle would have undermined the claim of the Oracle's virginity, which led the group to keep multiple Oracles around so that one could always be able to perform the ceremonial duties.



# CHAPTER FIVE: THE TOP OF THE WORLD — THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

## THE WINTER YEAR



I've visited Greece and Africa in search of old knowledge. I've dug up things that time has systematically stamped out. It's rough, sometimes, knowing that my predecessors and even some of my contemporaries would be pleased simply to eradicate all of the knowledge I've tried to gather.

In the case of the Arctic, they've done the job well.

I suppose it's because colonialism never really came to the Arctic reaches. Exploration of the polar lands happened only as an adjunct to things like the search for the fabled Northwest Passage or the drive to reach the North Pole. European ideas conquered the Americas long before they spread to the frost. So, by the time that Western civilization made it to the Arctic, it'd gotten very, very good at wiping out anything that didn't fit its worldview. Western explorers had already dealt with shamans among the American natives; the church and state knew how to eliminate them.

That makes it tough. Like African lore, much of Arctic cultural history comes down from word of mouth. Unlike Africa, though, this isn't history from ten thousand years ago passed through varied stories. It's history that was fresh just a few decades ago, yet it's been so thoroughly modernized and crushed that it might as well have been millennia.

The Innu themselves say that they've been in areas of Canada and Newfoundland for well on to seven thousand years, and some archeological evidence backs this up. When American, French and English explorers first met up with them, they lived in the bush, hunted, trapped and used stone axes and bows. Governments came in, established borders and exploited the Innu for trade. Early settlement companies traded food for furs and made tremendous profits from the Innu's labors. Just like the other native peoples of the Americas, the Innu's centuries of life meant nothing to the newcomers looking for wealth.

This may sound preachy, like one of those look-how-we-abused-the-natives speeches, but the fact is that the Innu and Inuit lifestyles were run over by colonization. The Arctic peoples got railroaded into modern educational systems, which required towns and schools, which in turn meant a settled lifestyle. For a people who centered their livelihood and even their spirituality around hunting, this was devastating. In just a couple of generations many of their practices were wiped out.

#### A Talk with the Old Man

One can't just walk out into the bush and expect to run into Innu hunters. Some do still go out there but it gets rarer with each generation. Besides, there's a lot of territory in the tundra; though I probably could've prayed for a little guidance then set off in the right general direction, it was simpler just to head to one of the government-built towns like the old hunting grounds at Davis Inlet.

I've found and spoken to a few old timers. These days, even the old ones can only relate tales that they remember handed down from their fathers and grandfathers. One old man in particular had much to say.

With bitterness, the old man told me many things. He told me that his people cannot hunt anymore, because too many places have been taken over by governments. Jets fly overhead for military practice, factories pollute the landscape and geologists swarm about the mountains in search of uranium, oil and gems. Many of the animals are gone. Even if the people wanted to return to their lives as hunters, they could not. The old ways have been made impossible.

The old man tells me that the shamans do not practice nowadays. When the Jesuits came, they instructed people to gather together. The missionaries broke the hunters of their old ways and relocated them to government settlements to "save the savages." Church organizations

shut down practices like the shaking tent, the way that Innu commune with the spirits. They relegated monsters to superstition, so people may not be stalked anymore by cannibal spirits or water spirits, but now they can't talk to animal masters or helper spirits either. Missionaries replaced bows with rifles and canoes with planes, so that hunters could depopulate entire ranges for no reason without respect, the animal spirits withered.

The Innu trace much magic to hunting; a hunter who treats animals with respect is favored by the animals and has good hunts. Now, they cannot hunt. The natives buy their food from supermarkets. Where people would still hunt, the animals are gone, having been scattered, killed or forced into other habitats. The hunter's craft has become only a legend.

Spirits also wander the ice, and many are not friendly. The Innu say that they have spirit helpers, *mishtapeu*, who intercede and translate for humans on behalf of spirits incomprehensible to mortals. Inuit speak of *tonngak*, disembodied helper spirits that sometimes manifest and heed the wishes of shamans. Scientists tell people that these are not real, that there are no spirits and that the myths of creation are nothing more than tales. Christianity tells them that their animal masters are demons and that the shaking tent is black magic. Only those who go far into the bush and pay heed to the old ways can safely commune with the spirits. As fewer and fewer people remember these ways, more spirits abandon humanity.

I can't find answers in the heated, prefabricated walls of the government communities. I have to go out into the bush, in the waste where the cold is everything.

### Into the Bush

It's hard to write - ink freezes just like water and numbed fingers are not very dexterous. Channeling just a little heat into the area is difficult, and perhaps the best magic is just to build a fire. Living things are warm. This land is hostile to warmth.

I've brought some supplies but I have a sinking feeling that they're not going to be enough. I need to get into the right mindset, to see this place with the same wonder I saw Greece with before I'll see the land of the spirits. That means that I have to let the land in. I have to learn to survive with what she offers.

My parka is made from caribou hide; I suppose that I can keep it. The snowshoes, too, are handmade. I have a knife and several pages of trap pictures, and I suppose I can make a spear... I don't know about a bow. But what if I starve to death here while I wait to see something that may be long gone?

I'm beginning to think that survival is magic.

## Tshishtashkamuku?

The Innu say that there's a small land bridge to Tshishtashkamuku, the world of spirits. They place it roughly somewhere to the southwest, but it's obvious that direction is a subjective concept out here. My compass froze and cracked; I hadn't thought to get one designed for this sort of weather. I think I can find the general way back but I feel lost in this vastness....

It's said that a great whirlpool swallows those who try to cross the sea to reach Tshishtashkamuku. I don't have a canoe, and I'm glad I don't, or I might be tempted to try. What little water is out here is deceptively calm. I'm told that the water can hide ice floes and grinding rocks, even when it looks quiet. That's what sunk the Titanic, after all.

I have a sense that the world is endless, yet it's only a small piece of something greater. It's the same sort of sense that one has when looking to the spirit world. But out here it's all around you. You find secluded places, maybe with a little shelter from the wind, and then you look out across the white-brown plains forever.

There are ways to Tshishtashkamuku, I'm sure of it. But I'm not sure I want to find a land more hostile than this.

## Blood

My own food has run out and I have relied on my notes to learn to hunt and cook. I'm clumsy, but a little prayer and guidance helps. Tiny bits of foliage and wood can be dried and coaxed into a small fire. Birds sometimes flock near water, and there are fish in the deeper lakes. I'm not used to it - I feel repulsed but hunger makes me continue. I've come to terms with this place. In eating the animals here, I am inviting the land in. I think the spirits may respect my effort, but they remain aloof. They may decide that I am insignificant and leave me to starve even as they nod and say "That was a respectable man."

## Danger

It is said that the missionaries banished them, but I fought for my life today against something that the old man swore was gone. I thought I saw another person today and I approached. He wore a skin parka like mine and he was hunched as he held it tight against the cold. When I approached, I saw that he was large, well over six feet tall, but his short strides and hunched posture concealed his size. I felt oddly queasy after having been without human company for so long, but perhaps that was some other instinct. When he finally looked up at me I thought that he was grinning or snarling - but he had no lips. I am no shamani. I had no shaking tent in which to hide. I shoved my spear into him. He bled like a human though he did not smell like one.

I left my spear in the body. It will be harder to hunt until I can make a new one, but I know that to eat of his flesh is to invite atsheni in.

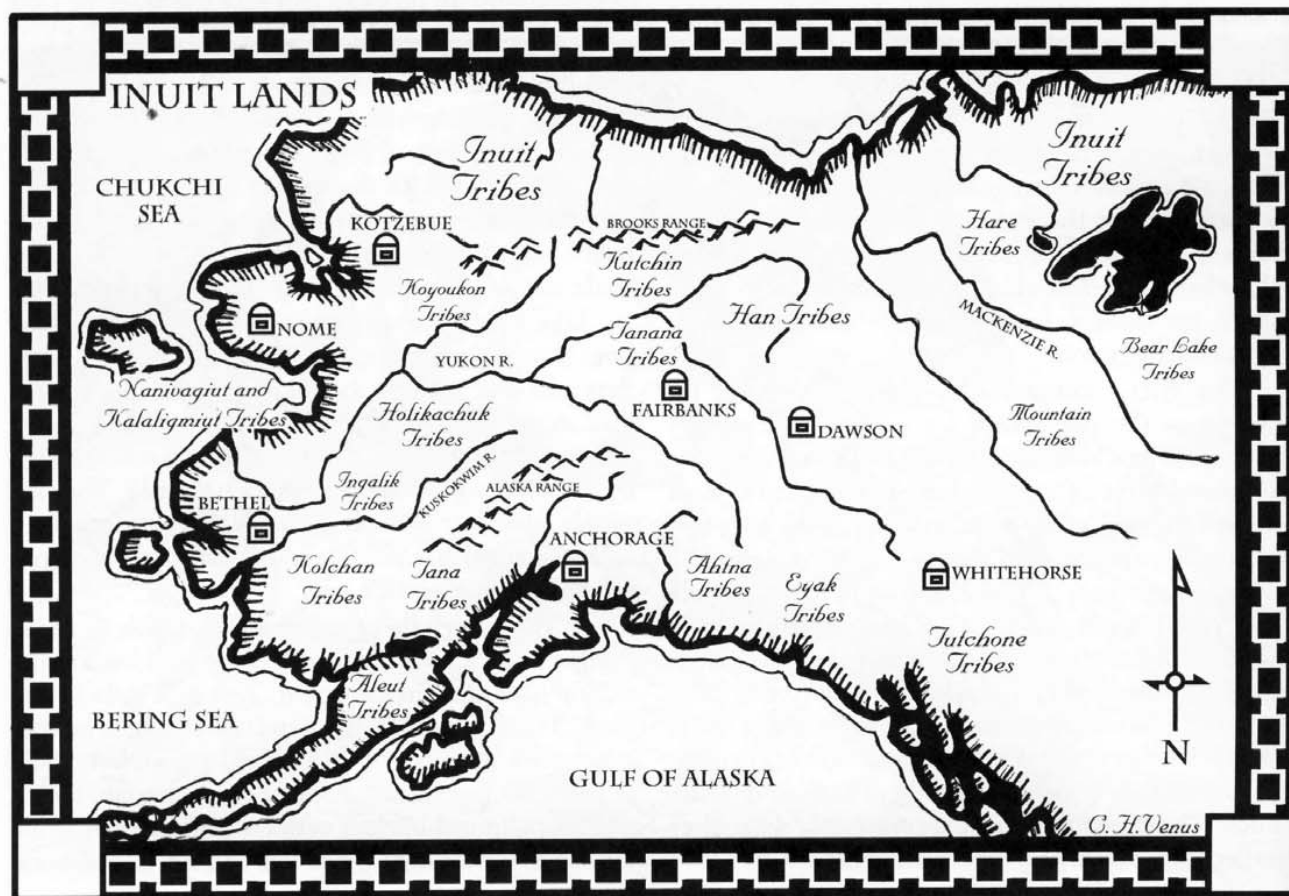
## Cold, Cold, Cold, Cold, Cold

Snow has covered everything. It is so white that I can hardly see. Even the paper looks bright in my hands. The sun lives in every flake of snow. The sun is cold, not hot.

My symbols make little sense. I must head back. Writing takes time, it is not survival. It is dangerous here. Things watch me scribbling and know that my symbols are chains to put them into categories and trap them in descriptions. I have my prayers to hang on to, but I waste my body's warmth with their utterance. This place is too dangerous for man. I must get back.

I hear the rattling in the trees now. There is no shaking tent left but sometimes Caribou Master and the animal masters talk to one another. Sometimes they talk about this white-skinned man who has come so close to their world. I can't understand the words but I know that I do not have the shaman's protection. The shaking tent is not around me, protecting me, insulating me from their world and them from ours.

If I lose my senses I will die. I must go back.



# MANY CULTURES, SIMILAR ROOTS



The Arctic Circle is home to many different cultures: Inuit, Innu, Yupiak, Inupiat and others. Despite their separation, they share common traits. After all, when living in perpetually frozen lands with only simple tools, survival is the first priority, and there are only so many ways to survive. Since mere existence is difficult at best in the Arctic wastes, the various peoples developed similar methods. With seven thousand years to do so, they naturally arrived at the most efficient means of living with their scant resources.

Arctic societies tended to be nomadic hunter-gatherer cultures. Though the Eskimos and company spent their lives in igloos, they relied on stone axes, spears and knives for hunting. Seals, polar bears, caribou and fish made up a diet supplemented by the occasional migratory bird and a few wild berries. Some groups had slightly different diets — a few cults didn't eat berries, while religion forbade some Innu from eating seal, but in general there wasn't much choice. Packing fat in ice preserved it for later consumption, and hides remained good for a while. Communities survived simply on the basis of their hunting and trapping skills and the vagaries of animal migrations.

As for travel... when you can't herd animals or grow crops, there's little reason for settlements, other than to care for the sick and elderly. Many Arctic communities moved from place to place as needed to follow caribou herds, whale migrations or the like. No horses, no camels, just snowshoes and sleds, with kayaks for the water.

The Arctic communities didn't have time for luxuries or the population for warfare. A carefully stitched caribou skin parka passed for finery, while the occasional stint of cannibalism made for the most extreme incidents of human conflict. With such values, these cultures didn't have use for things like money or property. They had simple foods, simple tools, simple goals and varied tales for the cold, cold nights. This isn't to say that they were terribly primitive; the harpoons used by the Inuit showed remarkable technical innovation, the igloos used for emergencies were incredible works of engineering with unconventional materials and the kayaks were both simple and sturdy. These people subsisted on exactly what they needed, but were by no means uncivilized.

Late colonialism hit the Arctic cultures hard. As the French, English and Germans expanded into the northern Americas, and as Russia slowly overtook the northernmost reaches of Siberia, the inhabitants ran afoul of the technologically advanced Europeans and their colonial ideas. Moravian priests converted much of the Inuit while Jesuits stamped out the shamanism of the Innu. Stone axes and knives, while fine for hunting seals, were no match for the rifles and metal weapons brought by the Europeans; though warfare was uncommon, the native people often traded for these superior tools, in the process losing their old skills at hunting. Settlements became the norm, with food transported in from more fertile regions. And like native peoples across the Americas, they suffered condescension, confiscation of land and the diseases brought by European travelers. By the time the West had finished colonizing the North, the Arctic tribes had lost seven thousand years of history.

## ARCTIC MYTHOLOGY

The myths of the survival-oriented people of the Arctic Circle are often simple. Their tales are plain, with little embellishment or detail. Of course, modern historians often lump all such tales into one group. The tellers have a different approach — they classify stories according to their origins. Innu divide *tipatshimuna* from *atanukana*, with the former being actual history and the latter being myths and legends. Scientists might call them all fiction, since the *tipatshimuna* include stories of spirits and magic. Mages know better.

Like nearly every human culture, the Arctic natives have varied creation stores. To them, it is natural that men and animals should participate in creation, that story and myth should be more than a literal account. If there's truth, it's a truth that is not obscured by any strict adherence to logic or necessity. They are simply tales to answer questions. When a curious mind looks for answers, each tale offers a truth, though not necessarily an objective one.

In the Inuit tale of creation, Tulugaak (a beak-headed man) accidentally creates the world as a child; as land rises up from the ocean, Tulugaak stabs it into place. Though only Tulugaak and his father and mother inhabit the first bit of land, the world spreads from there as mankind propagates. From there Tulugaak, bored, pierces an animal bladder with his beak one day while his father is out; light pours out and his father, upon

returning, is forced to bring the bag outside so that it doesn't fill their hut with light. Even so, the sun and moon don't come until later: A girl kisses a sooty-faced boy at a dance, only to later discover that it's her brother. Out of embarrassment, she grabs a torch and flees, while he chases after her. They run so fast that they fly into the sky and become the sun and moon, always chasing one another, with the soot on the boy's face concealing the moon's features. The moon's phases come from the boy's absent-mindedness as he forgets to eat and grows thinner and thinner, finally disappearing for days while he eats at last.

Inuit and Innu myths may seem simplistic, but they explain their world to the satisfaction of a people who had no need or desire to delve into science, philosophy and religion. They are matter-of-fact answers for a harsh world.

## THE POWER OF THE ANIMAL MASTERS

Magic, to the Innu and their contemporaries, seems divided into three sorts: spirit magic, where a shaman talks to the *mishtapeu* and the animal masters; hunting magic, by which a hunter gains good prey (or is cursed with bad luck) for his observance of

simple hunting rites; and charm magic, by which a hunter protects himself through the use of special charms, bags and jewels.

*Kamantushit* perform spirit magic, often through the office of the shaking tent. Once the shaking tent was a common sight in the bush. A conical teepee-like construction, the shaking tent provided a place for the shaman to speak with the spirits by isolating himself from the rest of the world. The *kamantushit* went into the tent and called for the intervention of the animal masters. However, the spirits are strange and dangerous, so the *kamantushit* must rely upon the assistance of a *mishtapeu* helper spirit to translate. Using the shaking tent is a dangerous practice: If the spirit becomes displeased with the shaman or escapes the tent, it can wreak havoc across the material world. Thus, the shaman must be cautious with the spirit and not overreach his capabilities by calling on beings too powerful for him to handle.

Normal hunters also use magic, but not through the intervention of spells and spirits. Rather, the animal masters are said to oversee their charges, and a hunter who treats them with respect can garner the favor of the masters. Hunters therefore use many special routines in their trapping. The hunter must be humble when speak-



## LEXICON

Most of the specialized words in this chapter come from Inuit and Innu lore, but there are a few terms here and there from other cultures. A certain amount of cross-pollination happened among Arctic groups, so many of the cultural icons bear similar roots.

Anikunapeu: Toadman, the spirit of Toad.

Anningan: The Inuit boy who became the moon. The dirty, pocked facade of the moon is attributed to his having soot on his face.

Ashkui: A large area of open water like a lake or the ocean, important for fishing and hunting birds.

Inua: The spirits present in all things.

Kamantushit: An Innu shaman.

Kakushapatak: A Innu shaman who uses a shaking tent to communicate with various spirits.

Kuekuatsheu: Wolverine, said in some Innu myths to be the creator of the world.

Malina: The Inuit girl who became the sun.

Makusham: A feast of many Innu families.

Manitushium: Magic.

Matshishkapeu: Fart Man — the Innu spirit of flatulence.

Mishtapeu: Giant spirit entities that live in a separate realm but sometimes commune with humans. Some are good, some are evil.

Mupimanu: A drum dance held at a makusham.

Nimushum: Grandfather.

Nukum: Grandmother.

Nutshamet: The countryside. The tundra and hunting lands.

Papakashtshihku: Master of caribou, thought to be one of the most powerful animal masters.

Tupilak: Inuit term for spirits like the mishtapeu of Innu tales; also a term for a figurine used to deliver the anger of the caster with the help of the spirit inhabiting the object.

Tulugaak: Inuit name for Raven, a beak-faced man who figures prominently in myth.

Tshishtashkamuku: A hostile world where the *mishtapeu* reside, along with giant animals and monsters.

Uanaikan: A wooden deadfall trap for hunting.

ing to the animals and thankful for the flesh. He must check traps often to ensure that an animal's sacrifice was not in vain. Those who hunt merely for pleasure, not for survival, or who allow scavengers to eat from the traps where animals give up their lives for men, show disrespect and thus gain the disfavor of the animal masters. The hunter's success depends as much upon observance of ritual as it does upon his skill.

Many Inuit and related cultures also use charms of various sorts: fishermen, hunters and gatherers carry

bags or furs for good luck. Inuit fishermen attach a small charm bag of skins to their canoes to divert the attention of hostile spirits, while the forbidding *tupilak* figurines threaten sickness and death for their creator's targets. Figurines and furs could be used to create animals or borrow their shapes.

Note that these magics were not restricted to shamans. Anyone could invoke these powers, inherent as they were to natural things.

# STORYTELLING IN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE



The *nutshamet* seems like a dead land: icy, barren, with only a few hardy hunters and scattered grasses braving the cold. However, that very separation from the familiar civilized world works in a mage's favor. The Gauntlet is often surprisingly weak out in the frozen bush where one can't see houses or cars. Sites where spirits dwell and animals run about with the energy of life, more so than the dead shells of war zones or city ruins.

Obviously, the first concern in Arctic climes is survival. Few people remember the ways to hunt for game, to make warm clothes from furs, to trap martens and foxes, to dig sheltered huts that keep in warmth for the long nights. Increasing modernization has suppressed these practices, as nations prospect for oil or minerals, lease out land for military exercises and exterminate native animals.

Mages who show up in the Arctic probably have good means for survival on hand, with their cars, synthetic clothes, and magic. However, those who want to contact the old spirits, awaken lost magic or hunt for places of power need to go into the bush. That means leaving many trappings behind and facing the Arctic winter with only wits, simple tools and a little bit of judicious magic.

Storytellers who want to play up the barrenness of the Arctic should emphasize the harsh cold, the lack of amenities and the sudden hostility of nature. This means more than just cold toilet seats: Mages risk freezing or starving to death, going insane from snow blindness or monotony (especially those modern types like Virtual Adepts). Even simple Forces Effects have trouble overcoming this much inertia. A mage needs more than one success to keep herself comfortably warm!

For Storytellers more interested in the sublime, mages can get around the dangers of the Arctic with a little effort. Being largely barren areas that people don't inhabit or systematically explore, large swaths of the Arctic are connected to the Umbra. Indeed, the Innu speak of walking straight across a land bridge into the spirit world. Of course, they don't recommend it — the things there sometimes kill humans — but it's at least theoretically possible. Once a mage is dropped into the middle of a snowy waste with nothing but scattered scrub and the occasional bird or fox, her mindset must

change to accommodate this new world. Once *that* happens, the mage is seeing reality through a different lens, which in turn opens the door to new magic.

Of course, it can be simpler just to toss in a little magic in an ongoing chronicle. The Dreamspeakers in particular have an understanding of and appreciation for the Arctic mysteries. Most of the surviving rituals rely on hunting or spirit magic, but a clever and innovative mage can find ways to adapt them to modern life. After all, if a figurine protects you from malign influence, then does it matter if you carry it or put it on your apartment's windowsill? If eating a certain food brings luck, then what stops you from having it for dinner if you can get it at a specialty supermarket or through the mail?

Storytellers might try any of the following story hooks:

## ATSHEN REBORN?

According to legend, the *atshen* cannibals disappeared after the arrival of the Jesuits among the Innu. Where did they go? Perhaps they've migrated to other climes. Maybe the *atshen* have discovered that they like warmer lands with more plentiful food. What if a cult deliberately hopes to bring back *atshen* in an attempt to direct them against their enemies — or even turns captives into *atshen* by forcing them to eat of human flesh? The players' mages need to scramble to do the research necessary to find out what *atshen* are, how to stop them, and perhaps even how to change someone back.

## SHAKING TENT REVIVAL

The shaking tent has not been seen for some time in Innu lands. However, many elders have discussed the possibility of holding a shaking tent once more, especially as more and more disaffected natives look for a return to their old culture. However, under the consensus of the modern world, the shaking tent has power only if a mage oversees communion with the spirits. The elders may know the ways, but they need someone with power, someone who is known to the spirit world. They approach one of the characters for aid in talking with the spirits. The elders want to know how they can return to the old ways and throw off the yoke of modern governments that have carved up their homelands. The characters may get dragged into politics or even into the Arctic Umbra.



## TUPILAK UNBOUND

A rival mage has unleashed a tupilak on the players' characters or on one of their allies or family members. This works especially well if it hits a mortal relative or friend who doesn't have Arete and thus can't defend herself as easily. The power of the tupilak is slowly killing the victim, and the mages must find out how to stop it. To do *that*, they need to know how it works. Then, they have to discover who sent it, lest another one follow.

## FROZEN MAGIC

Like other forms of iconic magic, the spells of Innu, Inuit and similar peoples often blur the lines between object and caster. Though kamantushit commune directly with spirits and perform blessings, there are many minor charms that can be enacted by hunters or that come by eating lucky foods and adhering to certain practices. Thus, there is a wide practice of rituals that has slowly died out as Technocrats "educate" people into disbelieving their efficacy, but a few talented mages can still perform such magics. The same holds true for objects of power: Though not as common as they once were, dedicated mages can still create such things, and some objects have power all their own which did not come from man. The animistic roots of this tradition honor the spirits of all things — the *Inua*, as the Inuit call them. Thus, objects, people, the land itself all have power, in addition to the potent spirits that live outside them.

## ATITSIAK (•••• LIFE, ••• SPIRIT)

Before Christianity replaced many Inuit practices, children were commonly named after the most recently deceased person in the community. The child was thought to inherit characteristics from that namesake, or *atitsiak*.

**System:** The *atitsiak* ritual lets an individual take on the characteristics of one of the deceased. Cast on young children, the ritual may cause the child to grow up with better abilities or talents like those of its namesake. Scoring several successes on this rite might ensure that the child develops the positive characteristics of the decedent.

Also, a mage can briefly adopt the name of a dead person by means of this ritual. This version is a recent Tradition adaptation. The mage's successes allow him to channel into himself the physical characteristics of a deceased person whose name he knows. The Life magic augments natural capabilities while the Spirit magic draws on the spiritual remnants of the deceased for power and a Pattern.

Note that the name borrowed from a deceased person by means of this ritual must come from someone truly dead — a name cannot be borrowed from a ghost or vampire.

Of course, the **atitsiak** ritual doesn't allow a mage to easily borrow a subject's phenomenal prowess with just a simple success or two. A good rule of thumb is that each dot gained requires one success on the Effect. Additional successes are allocated to duration. An Effect of this sort can't be made permanent, but it can be useful as a tendency — that is, if a child is given the **atitsiak** of someone very strong, then the child may also grow up to become strong. This is a good justification for a character to improve with experience points.

### CONFUSING APISHTISS (•• FORCES OR •• MIND)

Innu hunters often favored the flesh of the brant, a migratory goose, which they called *apishtiss*. Unfortunately, the brant no longer fly over the Innu homes, but people still tell of the magic. Entire villages of Innu once shouted as the geese passed overhead, and thereby confused the birds and caused them to fall from the sky. Hunters gathered them up for later feasting. Often, a good harvest of *apishtiss* was call for a *makusham*, or large feast, and many groups met to share the goose's flavorful meat.

**Confusing Apishtiss** allows a shaman to tremendously magnify his shouts at a target, thus disorienting the enemy. The mage jumps up and down, hollers and slaps his hands together to make as much noise as possible.

**System:** Successes on this Effect disorient an enemy, causing him to suffer from distractions, raising all his difficulties for the duration of the Effect by up to 3. If the mage scores more successes than the target's Willpower, then the subject is actually stunned and unable to act for a full turn.

### MUKASHUAN (••• LIFE; OPTIONAL ••• SPIRIT)

According to legend, Caribou Master was once a human, but he lived so long with the caribou that he became like one of them. He ruled over them and allowed people to hunt caribou without fear of reprisals from the spirit world. The caribou were important not only to food and clothing, but to medicine as well. Caribou Master made sure that there were herds for the people to hunt, and that they used the caribou's many parts. Caribou marrow is seen by the Innu as having healing power. Combined with the intervention of Caribou Master or a shaman's helper, the marrow can halt the onset of death or disease and heal grave

wounds. A feast of marrow, or *mukashuan*, soothes both injury and depression.

**System:** Successes on this Effect heal the subject. Like many other coincidental healing Effects, this speeds the rate of the subject's healing instead of miraculously curing all wounds and symptoms at once. With the aid of Spirit, a helper spirit can be induced to help, or Caribou Master himself may intervene — this vulgar form of the rote heals instantly.

### QAYAQ'S FISH (••• LIFE, ••• MATTER)

The hero Qayaq is a staple of many Inuit legends. In one legend, Qayaq seeks to cross the sea so that he can be reunited with his family. A friendly spirit creates a magical giant fish out of wood, which Qayaq rides across the waves.

**System:** The mage carves an animal out of pieces of wood and puts them together. Through the enchantment, the animal comes to life and becomes real, at least for a small time. Successes on the Effect determine how long it lasts and how large an animal the mage can create. Obviously, this Effect is highly vulgar.

### SEDNA'S BLESSING (•• CORRESPONDENCE, •• MIND)

Once a vain mortal woman, Sedna was given in marriage to a lone hunter because her family could not afford to feed her. Much to her dismay, her new husband turned out to be Tulugaak in disguise; Sedna shouted for her father to rescue her but in the process fell into the icy sea. The Inuit attribute seals and whales to her creation and say that she lies at the bottom of the ocean.

Inuit shamans dive into the sea to comb Sedna's hair — to wade through the brambles and kelp of the ocean — in order to soothe her vanity and give her company. In return, Sedna sends her creations to the supplicant. Then the shaman and his friends can hunt seals and whales for survival, with her blessing.

Modern mages have naturally found many uses for this simple summoning: A few tweaks can let it call other sorts of animals, and most mages capable of this spell can also soothe the creatures and perhaps rely upon them as allies, not simply as food.

**System:** With enough successes, the Correspondence of this Effect allows the mage to send his calming impulses over a wide area. Mind magic calls to the animals — seals and whales, in Inuit magic, but possibly others for a modern magician who alters the Effect. Successes are used primarily to expand the affected area, since the caster usually only needs to call one or two animals.

## SHAKING TENT (••• SPIRIT)

The dangerous communion ritual of the Innu, **Shaking Tent** is a spectacular display of spirit communication. The shaman enters the cylindrical tent and calls to the spirits through his *mishtapeu*. Because the spirits live in *tshishtashkamuku*, it is not always safe for them to come here; indeed, giants and spirits in that land are said to have slain and driven out humans from those places. The animal spirits often come and communicate by knocking, rattling and making other such sounds, which the *mishtapeu* interprets for the shaman. In return, the shaman sings to the spirits, and the *mishtapeu* interprets the song for the spirit. People outside the tent can sometimes hear the wailing and rattling, but they never understand it.

Spirits called by **Shaking Tent** negotiate with the shaman, who may try to garner information from them or persuade them to help in some task. There is always the risk that a spirit will exert its power to punish the shaman or decide to play a little trick on the hapless mortal. For some potent spirits, a little trick may mean dragging the shaman off to *tshishtashkamuku*, flaying his skin off or telling him secrets that leave him a gibbering fool.

Once in the tent, a shaman opens himself to communion with the spirits by drumming and singing. Instead of letting the spirit possess him, he calls the spirit into the tent itself. Often, the spirit does not waste its power to materialize, but simply makes its presence known by manipulating objects and rattling the tent. The shaman speaks with a lesser helpful spirit to intercede. The longer the shaman drums and sings, the more powerful a spirit he can summon; but this also increases the risk that a dangerous spirit will decide to play with him.

It is dangerous in the extreme to open the tent during the ritual, as the spirit may escape to wreak havoc across the living lands.

**System:** Successes generated for this ritual are used as for **Call Spirit**, as described in *Mage Revised* (p. 187). However, instead of directly calling a greater spirit, the shaman calls a *mishtapeu* and asks it to intercede on his behalf.

## SHISHIPAT'S FAVOR (• LIFE)

At a *makusham*, after successful hunt, an elder brought a container of stored caribou fat and rubbed it into the meat of the *shishipat*. Hunters ate as much of the fat-covered boiled waterfowl as they could, and the hunter who ate the most had good luck hunting in the following season.

**System:** A mage calls upon **Shishipat's Favor** through the old tradition: A feast of boiled goose with

caribou fat. The subject of the magic must actually eat the goose. This rote is a form of hunting magic, in which the subject draws favor by properly respecting the value of the goose. Done correctly, this Effect helps in later hunting: The rote allows the mage to gain bonuses to Survival and Athletics rolls, as per *Magic Enhancing Abilities* (*Mage Revised*, p. 155), and is almost guaranteed a successful hunt when stalking game. The hunter seems to know where to go to find the animals, and easily tracks and traps them. Modern mages have modified the rote a little — the key is to draw on the favor of the hunted subject in some fashion. Animal spirits of various kinds can be appeased through the song and dance accompanying a proper feast, where the animal is given appropriate station. Hunting people is a little tougher, and might require cannibalism....

## SING TO THE WHALES (•• MIND)

Through ululating songs, some Inuit fishermen sang to the whales to draw them near. Arctic peoples used the whales for blubber, meat, oil and other sundry necessities. Through various ascetic practices, the fishermen lent power to the shaman's *torngak* (another type of helper spirit), which in turn gave him the power to draw the whales closer.

**System:** The caster of this ritual must observe one sort of taboo for at least a week, as must anyone who assists in the casting — to the Inuit fisher cults, common taboos were no use of fire, no sewing or no eating berries. Modern mages might make similarly harsh taboos, such as abstaining from the use of electricity. With ululating chants, perhaps something resembling whale songs, the mage draws them closer; similar animal noises might draw forth other creatures as well. The successes generated give the animals an impulse to approach the caster.

## TULUGAAK'S HARPOON

(••• FORCES, ••• MATTER, •• PRITIE)

One Inuit legend tells of how the waters of a great flood threatened to cover everything. Though many people tried to stop the flood, none could succeed. Tulugaak, unsure of his skills, nevertheless hurled his harpoon at a mound of soil, which exploded outward to push away the water.

**System:** The mage hurls an object — traditionally a harpoon — at a target, which strikes with great force and causes the object to explode outward. The magic causes the fragments to multiply and scatter over a wide area. The successes on this Effect can be used both to create the force with which the object explodes and to multiply its size as it covers the area.

## ICE STALKERS

Arctic tales are not always terribly descriptive about hostile creatures, which ironically makes them all the more terrifying. Inuit and Innu tales mention monsters and spirits that can break through sheet ice, flow through rock, hurl debris at people and their tents, or even stalk humans as prey. Even the normal creatures of the Arctic are dangerous to the unwary: Seals pack a lot of weight and polar bears have been known to deliberately hunt humans. This is not a place to be caught without a weapon and knowledge of the terrain.

### ANIKUNAPEU

One Innu legend relates how Toadman hibernated in the muddy banks of a river, but awakened to grab a passing village girl as a wife. A misshapen toad-man hybrid, he was not actively hostile, but he certainly knew what he wanted. A villager who struck at Anikunapeu's arm was startled to see that the wounds healed so quickly that the blows had no effect. Toadman finally took his new wife down into the mud below the river, but the Innu had a practice of taking multiple wives and Anikunapeu might well have done the same. What if he had children?

Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Willpower:** 7, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Anikunapeu grapples opponents if pressed, but is more likely to retreat into the mud.

**Abilities:** Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Survival 3

**Notes:** Anikunapeu automatically regenerates one health level per turn.

### ATSHEN

Cannibals sometimes stalked the tundra, and since they were as cunning as any other person, they could be quite dangerous. Those who indulged in cannibalism were said to be tainted by the eating of human flesh. Those who indulged in too much cannibalism became atshen: giant, hungry monsters who could feed *only* on human flesh. atshen were larger than other people, fierce and strong. An atshen also had no lips and a patch of hair over the heart. In theory, an atshen could masquerade as a large human with a hooded parka, but in general they were not believed to be cunning enough — shamans sometimes tricked atshen into running in circles or falling into traps.

The atshen disappeared after the coming of Christian missionaries, but then, the Inuit and Innu people abandoned the wilderness and settled into government



housing. Today, atshen could very well remain in some far corners of the tundra.

**Strength** 4, **Dexterity** 3, **Stamina** 4

**Willpower:** 4, **Health Levels:** OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Atshen can brawl as normal, or bite for Strength + 1 damage if it grabs an opponent.

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Survival 4

## MATSHISHKAPEU

The "Fart Man" of Innu myth, Matshishkapeu is the most powerful of spirits, which he proved after a legendary argument with Caribou Master. The great spirit didn't want to give him any food, so Matshishkapeu cursed him with constipation. Since the caribou were essential to Innu survival, any spirit that could wreak such havoc on Caribou Master *had* to be potent!

Matshishkapeu figures in various bits of humor, of course. When you survive mostly on greasy meat and stored fat, flatulence becomes a way of life....

**Age** 5, **Gnosis** 7, **Willpower** 7, **Power** special

**Charms:** Matshishkapeu, like many of the master spirits, cannot materialize but can otherwise perform a great many tricks at the Storyteller's discretion. Instead of assigning him a static list of Charms and Power, it's best to assume that he can perform all manner of tricks. These days, he generally can't do much to people on the material side of the Gauntlet other than cause gas, but his tricky nature means that he knows much and might help a shaman convince another spirit to assist in some task.

## MISHTAPEU

The mishtapeu are helpful spirits that exist in tshishtashkamuku, the spirit world. They intercede to help shamans and sometimes to answer questions, and also to translate between the animal masters and humans. Mishtapeu come in a variety of shapes, often larger than humans. They eat the blood-rich organs of prey and nothing else.

Mishtapeu can be benevolent or hostile. Sometimes they fight against one another — a shaman protected by one has a potent defense against hostile or mischievous spirits.

**Age** 4-7, **Gnosis** 4-7, **Willpower** 4-7, **Power** 10-30

**Charms:** A given mishtapeu could have any number of powers. Most often, they can translate for other spirits, walk through tshishtashkamuku, divine the future and sometimes inflict disease or death on the living. The Storyteller should assign powers as needed.

## KAJUTAIJUK

A small nomadic group once left an encampment behind. When the people of that camp moved to a new one, they inadvertently unearthed a potent demon while searching for food.

Kajutaijuk is a female spirit taking the form of a giant head with two legs with three-toed feet. Pictured with breasts on her face and genitalia on her chin, this spirit is, like so many creatures of the spirit world, hostile to humanity. How she managed to get a physical form in the material world nobody knows, but she crushes people, destroys homes and devours food supplies out of malice as much as animal rage. Kajutaijuk does not speak but sometimes makes eerie noises. Her footsteps echo across the tundra.

**Strength** 6, **Dexterity** 3, **Stamina** 6

**Willpower:** 4, **Health Levels:** OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, -5, Incapacitated

**Attack:** Trample for 8 dice; bite for 6 dice. Kajutaijuk sometimes swallows unlucky opponents whole.

**Abilities:** Alertness 2, Brawl 3

## WENTSHUKUITISHITEU

Water spirits are a constant danger to Arctic hunters. The sea is choppy, icy and risky enough on its own. But hunters who aren't careful also risk the wrath of invisible spirits that live on the other side of the barrier between air and water. These spirits have been said to toss rocks, capsize boats and scare away fish.

**Age** 8, **Gnosis** 5, **Willpower** 5, **Power** 20

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Materialize, Tracking

## SNOW CHARITIS

### I'NOGO TIED (1-PT. CHARIT)

A "house of the sprits" works much like a medicine pouch. It's a simple charm: a bit of seal fur encased in blubber. Like other charms of this sort, the i'noGo Tied brings luck to the holder, but gets rather worn with time.

Much like a Traveler's Charm (p. 32), the i'noGo Tied offers the holder's player the chance to reroll any three dice rolls for tasks other than magic.

### TUPILEK (4-PT. ARTIFACT)

When a magician desires to kill someone, the tupilek serves as a focus for that emotion — and may, indeed, carry out the murder. A tupilek typically looks like a small carved figurine with a monstrous face and stunted limbs sculpted against the body. Tourists consider them simply grotesque little statues, but a mage



can activate the tupilak. If the magician is powerful enough, the tupilak seeks out and kills the victim.

Activating a tupilak requires an Arete roll (difficulty 8). The magician sings to the tupilak then places it in water. The statue animates and seeks out the mage's target. Once it arrives, the subject has one chance to resist — if the target is also a magician he may be able to turn the tupilak back against its sender. An active tupilak goes to the victim and causes spiritual malaise. The subject takes one level of aggravated damage per day for eight days. However, if the subject can beat the sender's successes with an Arete roll of his own, he can send the tupilak back to infect the original sender, and the first sender cannot turn it away. Subjects without Arete get one Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to cancel the tupilak's damage; each success soaks one level of damage.

Once a tupilak reaches its victim, it becomes quiescent. It need not attack or follow the target — it simply delivers the message, so to speak.

## PLACES OF POWER

Since the Inuit were nomadic, they only rarely attributed power to specific locations. Legends of important places, then, stand out all the more.

### THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

Not so much a place as a phenomenon, the aurora borealis is well known to most. What's not so well known is its significance in Inuit mythology. To the Inuit, the aurora's lights come, naturally, from the spirits — some say from spirits playing a game with a skull, perhaps even a *human* skull. Whistling is said to bring the lights closer while clapping causes them to recede. Of course, if the lights truly are the haven of skull-tossing spirits, who would want them to come closer? Perhaps someone who has need of such fierce spirits.

As much as science tries to explain the northern lights as magnetic storms or atmospheric diffusion, they do sometimes appear at unexpected places and times. A

mage who sees dancing lights on the tundra is advised to be careful of any sound he makes, lest he attract unwanted attention.

## MARBLE ISLAND

Stories say that Marble Island began as ice but magically turned into marble over many years. Though otherwise indistinct, the island became the final resting place for southern whalers who shipwrecked and died there. As they were not part of the frozen lands, the whalers' spirits remained to haunt the island. It is said that any who come to the island must not step on to it walking, so instead people crawl onto it to avoid offending the ghosts. Those who don't might well find themselves the recipients of some unfortunate spiritual attention.

## TSHISHTASHKAITIUKU

The spirit world of Innu legend has natural ties to the Umbra. A wanderer who travels into the furthest reaches of the tundra and becomes lost risks stepping into tshishtashkamuku. In the tundra, this reflection is hostile to human life. Great spirits wander through here, and they recognize that humans do not belong. They are likely to devour or wantonly kill people, and tshishtashkamuku does not have much to recommend it to tourists. Then again, a mage looking for a given spirit, perhaps trying to find out what may have happened to a missing animal master, may have no choice but to risk this endless and barren spirit reflection.

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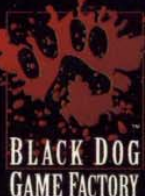
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