



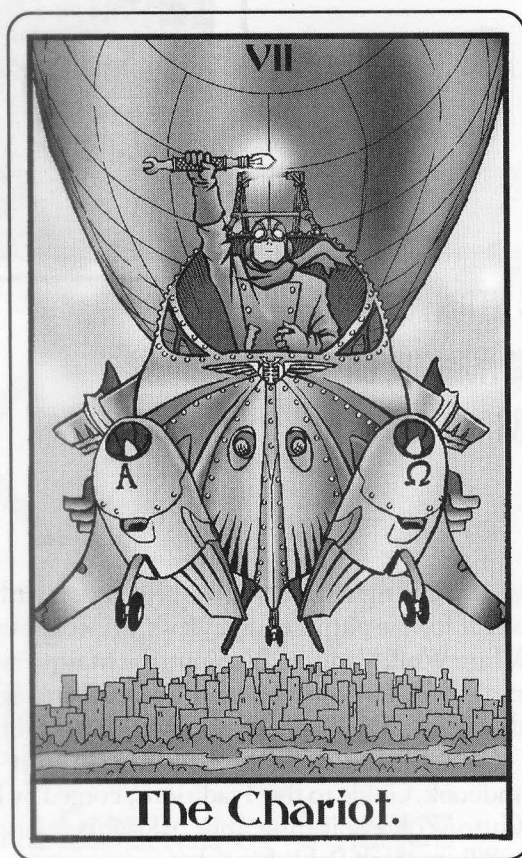
T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

Sons of EtherTM



TRADITION BOOK:

Sons of Ether™



BY SATTUEL INABINET AND MALCOLM SHEPPARD

CREDITS

Authors: Samuel Inabinet and Malcolm Sheppard.
World of Darkness created by Mark Rein•Hagen
Storyteller game system designed by Mark Rein•Hagen.

Development: Bill Bridges

Editing: Carl Bowen

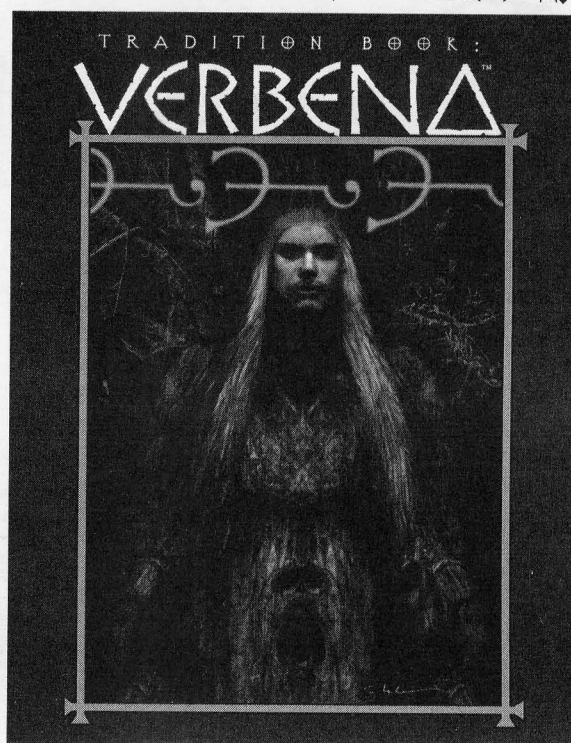
Art Direction: Aileen Miles

Interior Art: Langdon Foss, Jeff Laubenstein, Alex Sheikman

Cover Art: Christopher Shy

Layout, Typesetting & Cover Design: Aileen E. Miles

COMING SOON FOR MAGE:



1554 LITTON DR.
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA
30083
USA

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T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

Sons of Mother™



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⊕VERTURE: WAVES WITHIN



Southern California, 1978:

"What a heap of junk!"

"That thing's posed to roll, or tunnel into the ground, or what?"

"Looks like fuckin' Buck Rogers or something!"

Ace whipped out a rag and dusted off his ride with well-practiced swipes. Not because of razzing from gringo hot-rodders — leaving them in his dust was just going to be the icing on the cake. It was the dust itself that worried him. He didn't know what would happen if extraneous matter got caught in the field when he kicked it into high gear. Residual ionization had already coated the hull with magnetized dust, covering up his cousin's fine-

ass paint job. Blue flames licking out of the grill against a deep red background, with "La Fuente del Ritmo — Baja '78" written in a florid script above the fenders. When his cousin had said that the color scheme seemed backward ("Everyone knows flames are red, man!"), he had tried to explain about light-speed, relativity and the Doppler effect.

"Where's the dingleballs? Thought you beaners always hung them dingleballs on yer rods!"

Carefully wiping out the air intakes, Ace couldn't help but chuckle. The scoops were absurdly huge, mounted in the trunk, facing backward like rocket nozzles. *Yeah, I guess she does look like some kind of goofy Flash Gordon contraption*, he thought.

"So, we doin' this already, or what?"

His opponent, tall and lanky, blond and tan, revved his jacked-up Mustang and drummed erratically on a chrome chain steering wheel. Ace slid into place and flipped the ignition toggle. La Fuente coughed to life, blasting dusty air forward through the grill.

"Hey, ya stupid beaner! Y'know ya got yer fan in backward?"

"Don't you know nothin', man? He's gonna jet-propel on refried bean farts!"

Ace ignored the insults, watching how the dust in the air moved. Out the front, around back to the air scoops, muddying the sunset in the rearview mirror. *Perfect*. A toroidal field, like a doughnut turning itself inside out, channeled through every system in the car — combustive, electrical, heating, lights and sound — all attuned in perfect synchronization. As long as the central internal waveform retained modular coherence, it should move forward without the slightest trace of air drag, friction or even a sonic boom. After experimenting with various sorts of modulators, Ace had finally decided on a variegated electrosonic pulse running in a continuous loop — that is, his new eight-track tape of Carlos Santana's *Caravanserai*. Now, as long as the intake filters don't clog...

The starter flag was a monogrammed hanky held by his opponent's squeeze, a squeaky Barbie doll in a tube-top and cutoffs. When the flag dropped, the Mustang fishtailed forward amid a shriek of burning rubber. Supremely confident, Ace let him take the lead, carefully putting La Fuente into gear while slowly twisting a rheostat taped to his gearshift handle. The outer surface of the toroidal field flowed back faster.

So intent was Ace on monitoring the movement of the field that he didn't see the stunned expression on his opponent's face as the Mustang fell behind. Nor did he notice the momentary blur of the finish line as he passed it one tenth of a second later. Nor did he realize that he had left the ground entirely until the horizon ahead started to curve and sink beneath the hood.

After a brief bout of scrotum-tightening panic, Ace took stock of his situation. He and his hot rod were both intact and seemed to be functioning smoothly, the motor thrumming as though happy to play a part in Santana's masterful percussion section.

The only sense of motion was derived from the seemingly slow roll of the Earth's surface far below. He was passing over a broad river that he guessed to be the Colorado. His mirrors showed fading red; ahead was cool dark blue. *Is this the Doppler effect?* he wondered. *No, I can't be approaching light speed. It's just the sunset behind me.* A layer of haze distorted the sun's lower half; its upper portion was clear and painfully bright. With a shock Ace realized that he was leaving the earth's atmosphere. *If I'm all the way out in space, how can I be breathing? Shouldn't I be blowing up like a balloon and exploding or something?*

That didn't happen. In fact, he felt wind on his face, whipping his long black hair into his eyes. Ace relaxed, enjoying the song of the wind that seemed to be flowing straight through him, as though composed of some finer stuff than mere air. Leaning back, he was astounded by how many stars he could see, even more than from the desert at night. The whole sky looked alive.

Suddenly the horizon loomed ahead, straightening and rushing toward him as he reached the apex of his trajectory and began a nose dive back to earth. His stomach twisted in protest. The brake pedal nearly bent as he pressed both feet into it, arching his whole body. Nothing. *Why didn't I think about how to stop this thing? What the fuck am I gonna do now?* Frantic, he tried to downshift while thumbing the rheostat backward. The engine went into a coughing fit, shaking the car, now fast and now slow, following a logarithmic scale he was too panicked to register.

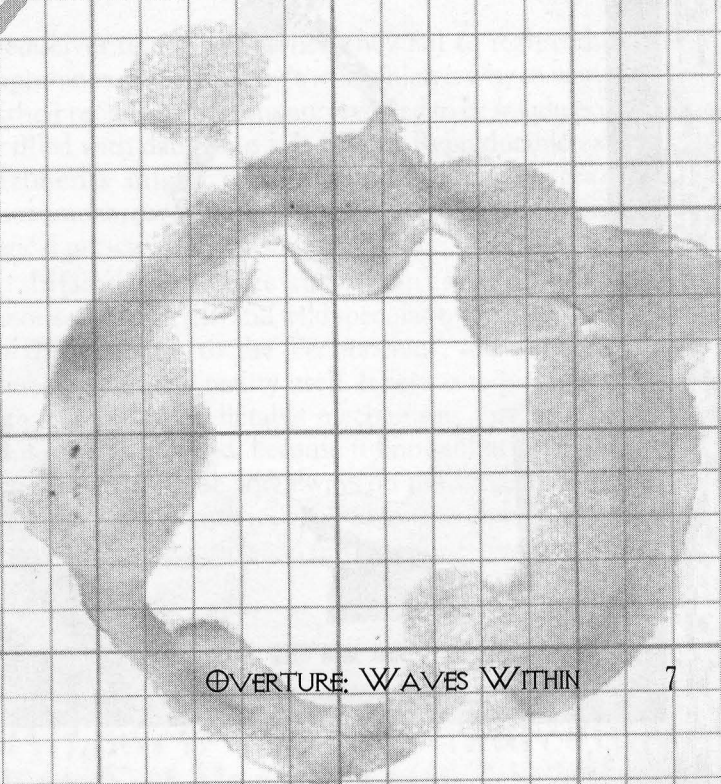
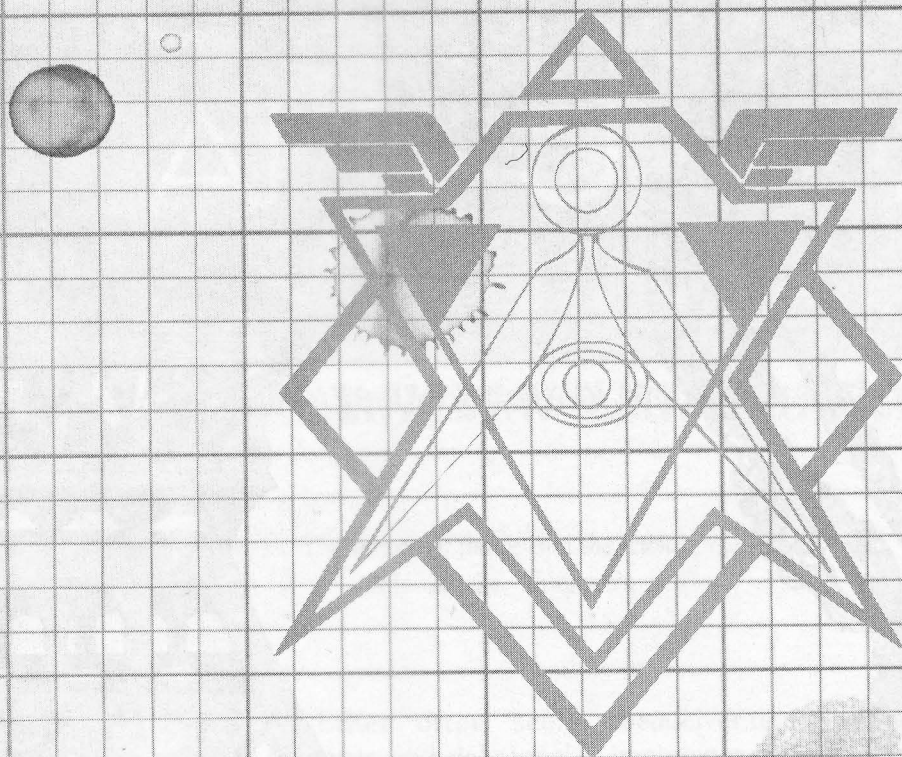
There was water directly below, and he was rushing toward the tip of a huge peninsula with a rather suggestive coastline that any suggestible adolescent male would recognize. Then the ground was rushing up too fast to make out any more detail, blurred by inconceivable speed into an engulfing tie-dye rosette, but at its center the impact site came into focus, opening like a stone flower to receive him. It looked like some kind of palace courtyard made of enormous rough-hewn rocks, with thick walls, a square tower, pylons topped with globes and crescents, and even tables and chairs like Flintstones furniture. A few yards from ground zero, framed by one of the large irregular crescents, stood a human figure.

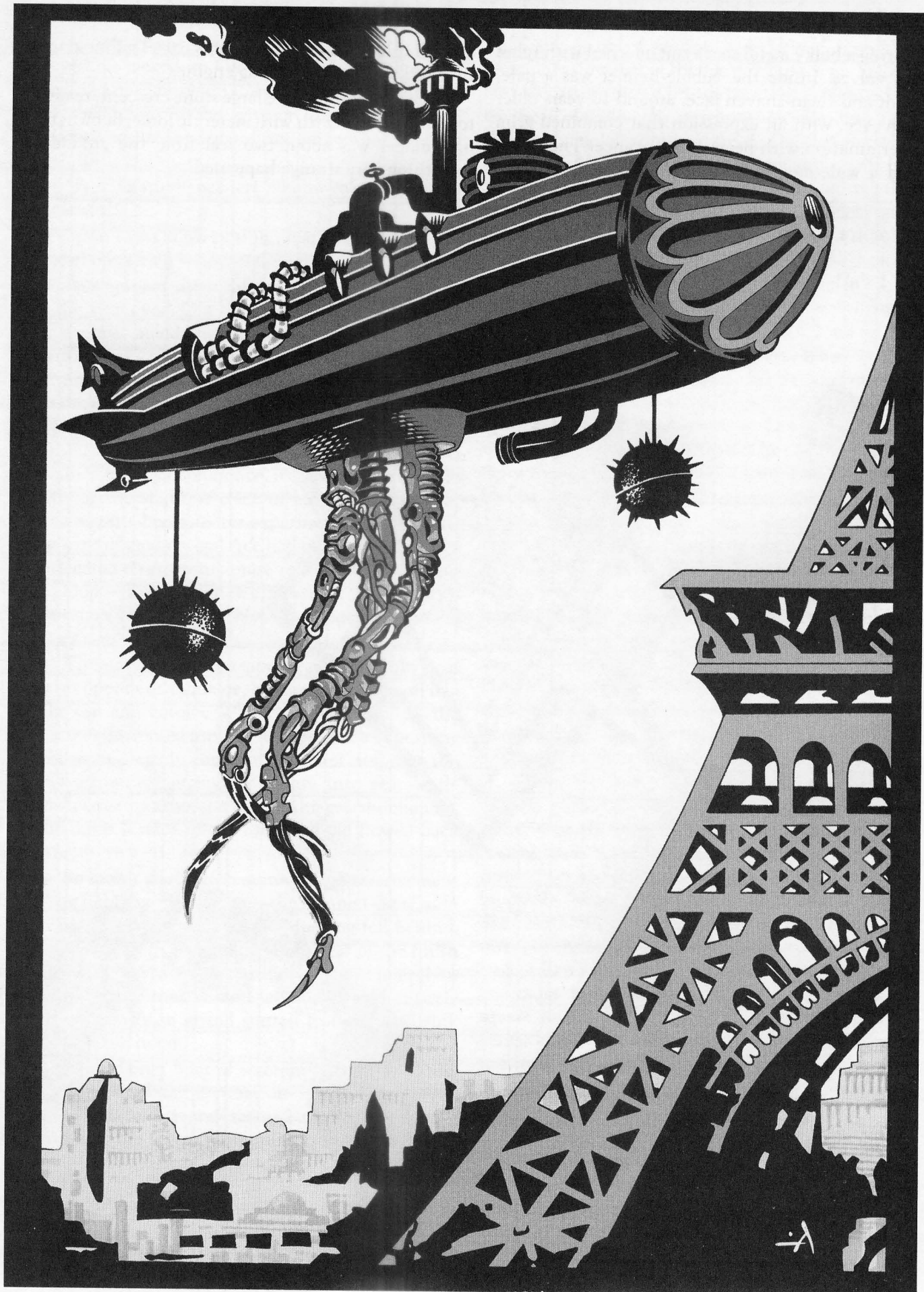
In the last instant of his headlong plummet, Ace made out the details of this figure. It appeared to be

wearing a bulky metal space suit adorned with tubes and valves. Inside the bubble-helmet was a pale, gaunt and clean-shaven face, around 10 years older than Ace, with an expression that combined grim determination with peevish annoyance. The figure held a wide-mouthed ray gun pointed directly at

Ace. Purplish light from the gun's barrel pulsed in time to La Fuente's lurching engine.

Ace shot through the large stone crescent, ready to plow into the earth with meteoric force, but when his bumper was about two feet from the ground, something very strange happened.





INTRODUCTION: STRANGENESS AND UTOPIA

The nature of things is in the habit of concealing itself.
—Heraclitus, "Fragment 123"



The Sons of Ether often seem directionless, eccentric and delusional. The Technocracy would tell you that Ether Science merely trades mystical superstition for crank theories or ideals that inevitably fall to stark pragmatism. Sometimes, they're even correct.

Directionless? They are at times, but that's because the Tradition has never bowed to a timetable, a commercial vision or a political power. Eccentric? Definitely. Life is an experiment, and if it's as liberated as Science should be, then it's bound to produce some unusual personalities. Delusional? Mad Scientists aside (and the Tradition can deal with *that* problem on its own, thank you very much), the Sons of Ether will tell you that they look at all the variables in their work — including the individual. Technocrats set

themselves up for a fall when they fail to realize the importance of the observer's will, which is why so many of their proud innovations are revealed to be fraudulent or filled with dangerous side effects. Reproducible experiments might regulate reality, but Fortean phenomena, psychic Resonance and enigmatic cosmological principles will always interfere.

In fact, Ether Science is more than a set of discarded theories, pulp shticks and wild speculation. It's a gauntlet thrown down to the Technocracy, the scientific establishment and reality itself. It rejects reducing nature to a set of predictable mechanisms than can be endlessly recombined, because it knows that such underpinnings are false and always on the verge of being overturned. The truth recognized in the *Kitab al-Alacir* is a simple, exhilarating and terrifying one: *Everything is true. Anything is possible.*

THEMIE: THE SAVING POWER OF THE IMPOSSIBLE



As Armageddon looms, old assumptions have to be cast away before they render humanity helpless to act. As long as the Sleepers believe that they are powerless to change the universe, they will always be its victims. Now, more than ever, the Sons of Ether need to introduce Science that defies what the Consensus thinks is impossible. Cosmic forces are aligning against the survival of a species that believes that it can do nothing but wait, consume the last of its riches and appeal to its leaders to act. The Technocracy is conflicted between its desire to save humanity from harm and its will to exert control — impulses that

now work at cross-purposes instead of for the greater good of the Masses.

Enter the Sons of Ether. Theirs is a Science that rejects limits and immutable laws. It could feed billions, colonize space and fight off the worst horrors of the World of Darkness, but in saving humanity, it could give it the power to destroy itself — to wreck the very foundations of the Tellurian. Etherites realize this, which is why they're so idealistic. Limitless power needs to be guided by an ethos, or else it becomes a terrible weapon. Nevertheless, the time for half-measures is over. Change is on the horizon, and the Tradition has the tools to prepare humanity for it.

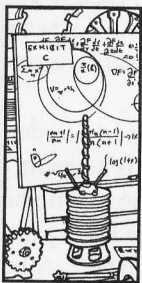
MOOD: REALIZING SCIENCE'S POTENTIAL



Ether Science is powerful and diverse, but without mass acceptance, it shares many of the flaws of occult belief systems. Scientists must be initiated into their craft and advance based on intensely personal insights. Dynamic Science is hard to reproduce, it requires years of study, and it requires discretion and subtlety to use effectively. As the world races toward its destiny, the flowering of Science must take two forms. First, new Sons of Ether need to break away from Tradition dogma, selfish motives and infighting. They need to create genuinely new inventions and push the

borders of the possible instead of recycling antique theories for their own sake. Second, they need to find a way to share these revelations with the Sleepers, to break them from a pessimism that reduces innovation to a commodity and denies that any other way of living is even possible. New Science needs to contradict the established norms, or else its possibilities will never be unlocked for general use. Quantum physics was the first "great contradiction," but now it needs to be challenged and expanded in turn so that Sleepers will see that many theories exist, and they can use the ones that suit them in their own quests for knowledge and survival.

CONTENTS



This book provides revised and expanded information on playing the Sons of Ether: the *other* Enlightened Scientists of **Mage: The Ascension**. The following chapters detail how Ether Scientists organize, study and even use "magic."

Chapter One: The Eight-Track Method takes us on a literal ride through the Tradition's history, ethos and relationship with other occult societies, Scientists and the mysteries of the World of Darkness. Ernesto C. Amanguale takes a trip to the end of the world and learns that his Science might be all that stands between disaster and Ascension.

Chapter Two: The Essence of Science introduces us to the Tradition and its Science. The Sons of Ether are about more than just pulp style and anachronistic theories. Their factions, organization and approach to Science (or magic) are all presented. And even though pulp isn't the end-all of Ether culture, it certainly has its place. Adventure never goes out of style.

Chapter Three: The Dynamic Faculty concentrates on tips for playing a Son of Ether, including notable Scientists, ideas for all-Etherite games and a sample cabal that's ready to be used in your own **Mage** games. Ready-to-play templates round out the chapter, allowing you to run a Son of Ether right from the book.

LEXICON

Aretus: "The Virtuous," legendary sage and reputed author of the *Kitab al-Alacir*. Thought to be an allegorical or mythic character by some.

Chair: An Etherite Master, so called because of a semi-official position that she would normally occupy. Some specific Chairs have their own titles, responsibilities and requirements for eligibility.

Doctor: All Sons of Ether can claim the title of "Doctor," either from pre-existing credentials or thanks to completing an Etherite apprenticeship (which is, of course, equivalent, if not superior, to any mundane education). Etherites who earn the title only from the Tradition are sometimes frowned upon by those who earned ordinary credentials first.

Electrodyné Engineers: Name of the Sons of Ether during the 19th century when they re-established their identity as a distinct organization.

Emeritus: An Archmage.

Ether: The "Fifth Essence" of reality upon which the rest of the cosmos is founded. Ultimately, Ether is fundamental and imperceptible, but offshoots ("lesser Ethers") such as Quintessence can be measured.

Etherite: Informal, popular term for a member of the Sons of Ether. Favored by Scientists who would like to divest themselves of the sexist connotations of the Tradition's proper name.

Fortean: Unusual phenomena for which there is evidence but no known cause, such as rains of frogs or psychic phenomena. Used by the Sons of Ether to uncover hidden natural laws and to prove the Parmenidean doctrine.

Heraclitan: Theories in the *Kitab al-Alacir* similar to those proposed by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Heraclitan doctrine holds that reality is in constant flux as opposing metaphysical forces destroy each other and recombine into new phenomena.

House Golo: Medieval branch of the Hermetic House Ex Miscellanea devoted to studying the *Kitab al-Alacir*. Precursors to the modern Sons of Ether.

Kitab al-Alacir: "Book of the Ether." Arabic name of a Greek text that espouses theories about

the Ether, human knowledge and the nature of reality. The book contains the central theories of Ether Science, but there are many divergent interpretations. This Primer Grimoire is loaned to virtually all budding Scientists and is known to spark Awakenings.

Parmenidean: Theories in the *Kitab al-Alacir* similar to those of Parmenides, a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher. Parmenidean physics holds that the cosmos is a continuous entity, without any void. This cosmos holds every phenomena, both "real" and "unreal." Therefore, some common medium must exist to support reality without emptiness (the Ether), and laws that assert that something is impossible must be categorically false.

The Parmenideans (or Pupils of Parmenides) formed both a Greek cult and Renaissance society, both of which might have ties to the modern Sons of Ether.

Professor: An Adept-ranked Scientist capable of supervising a lab and directing Researchers in the field.

Reductionism: Scientific and philosophical tenet that holds that all possible phenomena can be reduced to a set of consistent, explainable mechanisms. Rejected by the Sons of Ether on the basis that phenomena are infinite, dynamic and possessed of simultaneous rational explanations.

Researcher: An Ether Scientist capable of independent field research but not the supervision of other Scientists. In Tradition terms, roughly equal to a Disciple.

Science: When capitalized, Science refers to Etherite Awakened inventions, research and theories, as opposed to Sleeper or Technocratic science. Also called Awakened Science, Ether Science or Dynamic Science.

Scientist: A general term of an Etherite of any rank. Usually capitalized.

Specialist: A Scientist who uses a narrow range of linear Effects; what mystics call a sorcerer or psychic.



CHAPTER ⊕ ONE: THE EIGHT- TRACK METHOD

BAND ⊕ ONE: STONE FLOWER



"I have discovered the secrets of the pyramids, and have found out how the Egyptians and the ancient builders in Peru, Yucatan, and Asia, with only primitive tools, raised and set in place blocks of stone weighing many tons!"

—Edward Leedskalnin, builder of Coral Castle France, 2003:

Within an ornate recessed cupboard in a disused wing of a large mansion, an antique telephone rang. It continued to ring for some time, while heavy, perfectly even footsteps approached down the long hallway, pausing at each room and juncture as though searching for the source of the sound.

Meanwhile, light and sound poured from the mansion's expansive greenhouse. Candles and oil lamps hung on chains from the ceiling or swung on jointed telescoping arms, their light intensified and focused by lenses and reflectors to where a figure sat amid a cacophony of whirring wheels, grinding gears, coughing combustion devices and shrieking steam-pipes. The figure, a young man clad in insulated apron and gloves, perched upon a high stool and glared through thick goggles at the glowing core of a dismantled armature on the

worktable before him. Behind him, a second figure resembling an oversized tin soldier entered the greenhouse, its posture ramrod-straight, its stride thumping a metronomically exact rhythm until it stopped just behind the young man.

It said, "Telephone call for you, sir."

The young man covered his work with a dust-cloth and turned, removing his goggles. "A what?"

The tin soldier's words emerged from a bellows in its chest, passing through a series of tiny horns, whistles, tuned strings and rubber baffles that produced a fairly intelligible imitation of human speech. They did, however, tend to mangle the phonemes of the French language. "A telephone call."

The young man blew out some of the nearest lights and pulled a few levers, silencing some of the noisier machines. "How is that possible?"

"A simple electrical apparatus, sir, transmitting sound in the form of—"

"Must have missed one," the young man muttered, removing his gloves and apron. He followed the tin soldier into the old wing of his family estate to where the old-fashioned receiver dangled from the cupboard. A chair and end table had been dusted off and placed nearby, the only furniture in the empty room.

"I'll take this call," he told the automaton, "but afterwards we must disconnect this device and remove the line from the mansion grounds."

"Certainly, sir."

The young man settled himself and lifted the phone, fastidiously avoiding any direct contact with the crumbling cord. The caller's voice was already asking, "Chevalier Yves Mercure?"

"Yes..."

"Hey, man, sorry for intruding like this. I didn't even think this number would work, but the operator had it listed, so, what the hell, right?" The caller spoke English in an American accent with some regional variant. "I doubt you'd remember me, but we both talked some hyperdimensional physics with Dr. Mueller at that big Y2K party."

"I recall somewhat. Did 'Doctor Comet' ever find his way home intact? He seemed rather, how-you-say, 'lit up.'"

"Uh, well, nobody's actually seen him since then, man."

Yves sat up. "That is distressing. I had no idea."

"You should keep in closer touch. I heard you don't keep electricals in the house. No telephone, no radio. You should at least consider some modern communications, man. The old soup-can-with-the-string severely limits your range and the number of people you can talk to."

"I have always considered that to be the device's most attractive feature."

"Funny! Hey, you remember that miniature transmission shaft I sketched for you that night? Did you ever try it? How'd it work?"

"Oh, that! Perfectly! I was a fool to doubt you. In fact, I incorporated it into the device that answered your call. I believe that I 'owe you one.'"

"Uh, yeah, glad you feel that way, bro. Because I called to ask you a really big favor."

...

Florida, 2003:

Fucking Americans, Yves thought. *How do I allow myself to be drawn into these things? This is so typical! I'm the scion of a noble lineage, goddamnit, and here I am sneaking into a roadside tourist trap by dark of night like some drunken teenage peasant! I do not need this shit.*

By the time he had geared up and sealed his Ethersuit, however, he had a moment to appreciate his surroundings, and he instantly regretted his unkind thought about the place. The looming obelisk, the squat imposing tower encrusted with tropical vines, the crescents and ringed globes, the giant rocking chair still swaying to and fro, all inspired wonder and fascination. Eyeing the massive rugose stones, so whimsically shaped yet so precisely placed and fitted, he understood why such sites were regarded with religious awe by non-Scientific peoples.

Facing north, he stepped this way and that until he had Polaris lined up in the gunsight-shaped aperture on a hilltop several yards away. He raised his right hand, thumb up, and pivoted to the left while keeping his arm pointing north. With his left hand he adjusted a variable-focus Ether lens mounted on his helmet while scanning the western horizon.

There. A tiny light was rising above the western wall at meteoric speed. Yves drew a bulky waveform converter, matched its setting to the focus of his lens, aimed. When the light was framed by the larger of two stone crescents that towered above the wall, he fired.

The light ceased its ascent midway between the crescent's points and instead grew larger.

The converter bucked and kicked, shooting out purple flashes. Yves tightened his grip and chinned a switch to increase the tension in his Ethersuit's joints. The object swelled in discrete stages, like the frames of a film run at slow motion, in time to the throb of the converter. Soon it filled the crescent, now no longer a star but the front end of the funniest looking four-wheeled vehicle Yves had ever seen. Part Camaro, part Boeing, part Maytag. Clutching the steering wheel with white knuckles was a kid, wide-eyed, full lips pulled back from clenched teeth, black hair on end and pointing straight back.

The converter's pulse slowed. Car and kid hung frozen in the crescent for a full second, then vanished and reappeared about halfway between the crescent and where Yves stood, stayed motionless in that position for at least three seconds while the converter emitted a steady beam. Then one more pulse, and the vehicle was poised just a few feet above the ground, not moving. Yves sighed with relief and thumbed the converter's handle; three spindly legs telescoped out of the bottom and held it pointed at the car like a violet spotlight.

It seemed to take the kid a while to realize that he wasn't dead. His dark eyes moved tentatively back and forth, taking in Yves and his surroundings. Though he was still clutching the wheel and standing on the brake, the grimace plastered across his face by terror and acceleration relaxed slightly. He worked his jaw and lips, and after a few tries, he managed to croak, "What's happening?"

Yves suddenly realized how ill equipped he was for handling a young human being undergoing an intensely weird crisis. Determined not to lose control of the situation, he said coolly, "A simple enough question. To which an infinitude of honest answers may apply."

"What's happening to me! Right now!"

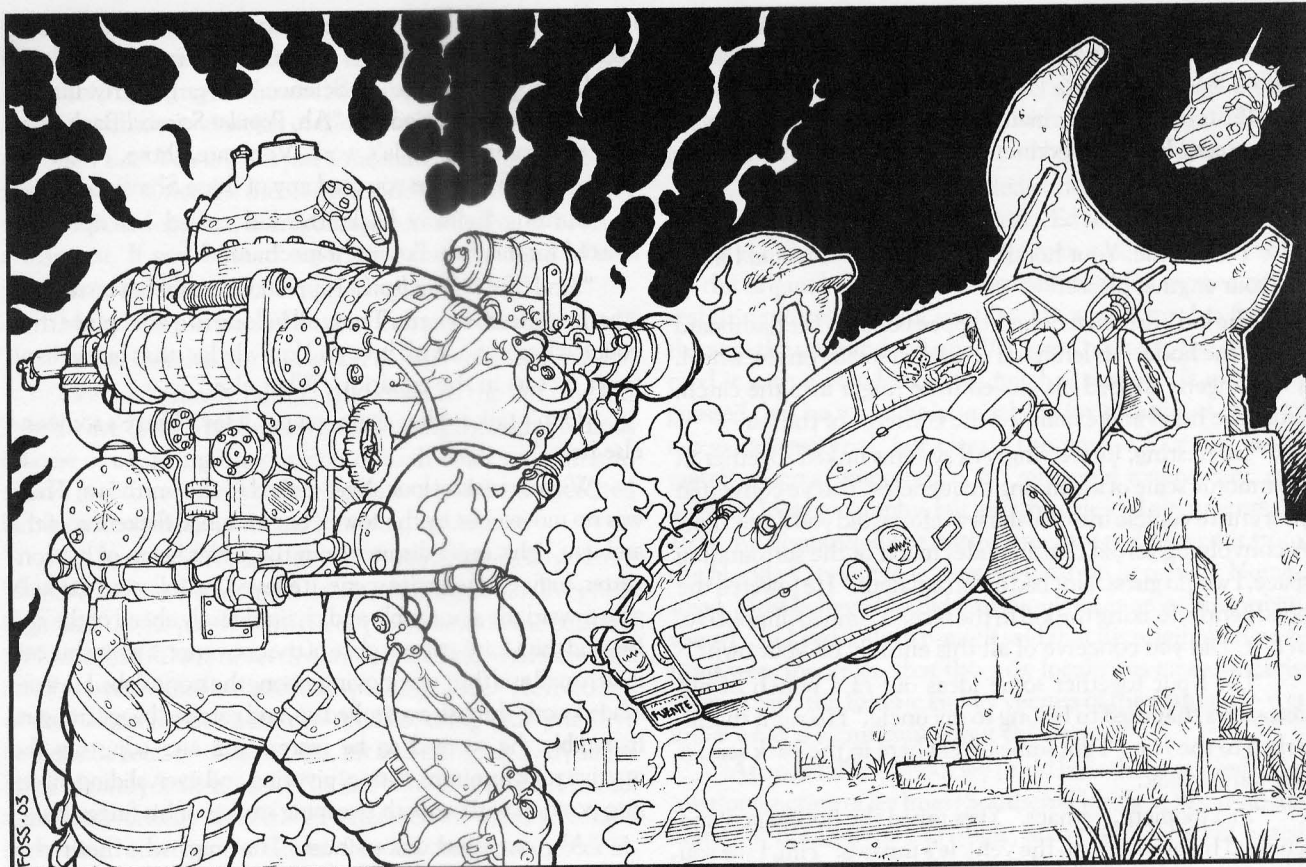
No good can come from lying to the boy, Yves thought. *Just start with the basics.* "You, right now, are accelerating toward the earth at a velocity too great for my instruments to register."

"Right. And what happens when I hit?" His fingers tightened on the steering wheel.

"Ah. A question about the future. Questions regarding the future are subject to conjecture. Just as questions about the past are open to interpretation. What do you believe will happen?"

"Uh... well... as far as I can figure..." The kid was trying to sound cool too, but he couldn't keep the shrill of panic from his voice. "I'm going to die in one mother of an explosion?"

"Then let us conjecture upon that particular hypothesis. How exactly did you calculate that answer?"



"What's to calculate, man? I'm goin' really fuckin' fast, and I'm about two feet from some hard-ass rock! I can't brake! I'm just gonna fuckin' die, and that's it, bro!" Although he still hadn't changed position, the kid's body started to shake angrily.

Good, thought Yves, *you need to loosen up*. He clasped his own hands behind his back and began sauntering slowly, lecture hall style, around the levitating car. "So. Force equals mass multiplied by acceleration. Force, matter, space and time. Are those the only factors in this equation?"

"What else is there?"

Yves leaned into the driver's window; the kid turned to meet his eyes. "Let me tell you something, 'bro.' I cannot give you answers. To do so would doom me to a fate I do not wish to comprehend. I have a home to return to. Work left unfinished." Yves continued his way around the car. "I am confident that I can survive this encounter and dismiss it as a bad dream. You, on the other hand, have severely limited your own options. I cannot affect the outcome of your predicament. Only you can do that."

"But that's impossible! What can I do?"

Passing under the rear bumper, Yves grabbed an eyeful of the car's underside. "Impossible? Is it possible to build a car that can fly faster than any other has been known to move? Leaping 2,000 miles in under five minutes is impossible. We are the ones who make the impossible real." As he came around the passenger side, he met the kid's eyes again.

"Listen. I have bartered an extended moment, which you may use to recalculate, to restate your hypothesis. Use it well. What happens depends upon what you believe will happen. At least in part. The beliefs of others also carry weight. So to speak. What others will be affected by your actions today?"

"Oh, shit. Shit! I wanna go home! I wanna see my family again!" With a sob, the kid slumped into his seat, hands still on the wheel, feet still on the brake.

"A step in the right direction. Good. So, space, time, matter, force and... let us call it love, for lack of a more precisely quantifiable term. That's five. What other factors are at work here?"

"God damn it, will you just fuckin' help me! I don't need some jive-ass future-man dumping hard science on me when I should be watching my life flash in front of me! Fuck this shit!"

I'm not doing too well at this, am I? Yves shot a hard look south at the square tower. "'Fucking shit.' Very well, let us start with that," he said, talking faster to hide his uncertainty. "Hard science, from the Latin for 'knowledge.' Infinitive form, *scire*, to know. 'To fuck shit.' To penetrate a soft yielding substance, disgusting, it is true, but presumably toward a pleasurable result. Unfortunately, at the speed you've attained, nothing is soft and yielding. Hitting water this fast, it would be as hard as steel. Harder. Even air friction would burn you to ash. Here's a hint: Why do you suppose that has not happened already?"

"I swear, man, I'm gonna punch your snotty face right through that helmet!" The kid's right hand left the wheel, balling into a bony fist. The other stayed in place.

"Just, uh, chill, my man. We'll take it in, how-you-say, 'baby steps.' Pop your bonnet and let's see exactly what you have to work with."

"My what?"

"Pardon me. Your hood." No response. "I would like to see your engine, please."

The kid's fist unclenched, dipped beneath the dashboard to pop the hood. His left hand remained steady on the wheel. Yves gingerly slipped his gloved little finger into the catch, lifted the hood and examined the contents of the car.

"Interesting, interesting. All systems linked together in a harmonic scale of ascending frequencies. You've converted your entire vehicle into a scalar waveform, did you know that? A convolving toroid that includes much of the surrounding space, I would guess. Not bad for an amateur." He lowered the hood gently, looking the kid in the face. "Damned impressive, in fact. Did you conceive of all this entirely on your own?"

"I... I put together some ideas out of a bunch of old magazines that used to belong to my uncle." His right thumb jerked to the rear. "I got some of 'em here in the back seat, if you wanna look."

"In a moment, perhaps." Yves raised the hood again and returned his attention to the vehicle's innards. "Hm, I see you are using electricity as the modulator pulse. I have never trusted electricity myself. It is a child of capriciousness, as you are now in the process of discovering. Only a Master Scientist like Tesla could understand it well enough to make it behave itself. I prefer to approach that particular spectrum from the magnetic end, if at all. Fortunately, your reliance on a conductive medium means I have wires to trace back to the modulation device." With one gloved finger he followed a clump of wires back toward the dash, then leaned in through the passenger window to find the face of the instrument with his other hand.

The kid turned toward Yves with his right arm cocked back to strike. As he did so, his left arm shifted to give him leverage, turning the steering wheel in the process. "Man, you touch that, and I'll smack the white right off your face," he growled.

Yves ignored the threat. "*Mon dieu*, I've not seen one of these things since I was a small child! Eight-track! How perfectly provincial! If I recall correctly, these run in a continuous loop, do they not? Perfectly cyclical modulation right across the power spectrum. Quite ingenious. One might even say inspired, no?"

"Screw you, spaceman." The kid folded his arms across his chest and looked away from Yves, who now turned his attention to the back seat and its litter of magazines.

"This is the literature of your uncle? It was my own uncle's library that helped initiate me into the Tradition. It is usually an uncle — seldom a parent. Those who share our calling rarely have the opportunity to form normal connubial relationships,

it seems." Still sulking, the kid did not answer. "Good, good, keep track of your sources. It can be a tedious chore, but vital for the proper exercise of Science." Yves gingerly lifted a crumbling yellow periodical. "Ah, *Popular Science*! Back when they were printing Tesla's work. Very rare, those. And *Fate*! How delightful! Have you read any of these Shaver articles?"

Turning halfway back, the kid curled his lip. "Too twisted for me, bro. I'm just a mechanic."

"And this... *Paradigma*. I applaud your uncle's taste. This is a true collector's item. These all belong in a safer place than your back seat. So, with love and knowledge, that brings us up to six factors in the equation. What else?"

"Don't talk riddles again, man... Hey! There's someone else here!"

With a stricken look, Yves looked to the northeast. There was no movement by the tower, but a strange flickering of the ambient light, quite distinct from the violet beam of his converter, suffused the entire scene. Relieved, he followed the kid's gaze toward the stone table and chairs directly ahead of the car. Beyond the Moiré-pattern glare of the converter, a white human male, small and thin, was moving among the stone slabs. He wore a faded work-shirt, sleeves rolled up, and patched baggy trousers. Incredibly, he seemed to be rearranging and adjusting the massive rock furniture, tilting, pivoting and even sliding pieces into position with smooth sweeping strokes of his fingertips.

"Ah, our posthumous host. The man who built this place. An immigrant from Latvia, named—"

"There's something funky about how he's moving. Look at him, man! His hair and clothes keep swinging the wrong way!"

"Edward Leedskalnin. He quarried and erected each block of coral that this site comprises, working entirely alone." As Yves spoke, the man he had named left the table, walking backward at a brisk workmanlike pace. From the ledge of a fountain surmounted by a ringed globe he took a simple wooden water pail, returning to the table with the same backward stride. On one end of the roughly L-shaped table was a shallow depression filled with water. Leedskalnin tipped the pail above the water, which then reached up to the lip of the pail and slid inside until the depression was dry.

"I get it! Time's going backward, is that right? If La Fuente here is moving faster than light, then this is gotta be that, whatsit, tachyon polarity inversion." The kid pronounced it *tachy-on*. "So we're traveling backward in time right now! Right?"

"Close, but not quite. We are not traveling along the axis of time, but are just slightly askew of it, rotating in the general direction of the past. These images are indeed tachyonic, but, as the tachyon particles are radiating into the Ether at right angles to the temporal axis, their polarity is not inverse to ours." Yves tried to emphasize his own correct pronunciation of the word. *This will take forever if I have to teach him his own language as well.* "Of course, the tachyon may also be considered a wave rather than a particle, an undulation in the Ether distinguished by its transverse juxtaposition to the arrow of time."

"Yeah, the wave-particle thing... I heard of that. And you said that I'd converted La Fuente into a scalar wave, right? So, instead of impacting the ground here like a particle, I could, uh, interact with the waveform of the ground, somehow."

"Ha! See? You are not just a mechanic, you are a theoretician as well! Once the theoretician and the mechanic within you can work together, then perhaps you may live to become a Scientist. If you wish to experience the waveform of this place, keep turning your steering wheel to the left."

"My steering wheel? Wait. So I can steer through time?"

"In this instance, not so much *through* time as *across* it."

"Gotcha." Slowly pulling the wheel to the left, the kid kept his eye on Leedskalnin, who was going through a tedious process of adjusting the position of each chair according to the sky and to a carefully measured network of twine stretched between key points of the surrounding structure.

"Ed Leedskalnin came to North America shortly before World War One, from a small Latvian farming community near Riga. In 1920, he purchased a cheap plot of land on the outskirts of Florida City. There he set to work on the edifice that surrounds us." Yves settled into his academic speaking mode. "He lived and worked alone for the next two decades, using only primitive homemade tools to measure, cut, lift and transport every single block of coral you see here. Oh, he had visitors, of course. Friends, sightseers, curiosity seekers. He welcomed all warmly, fed and entertained them to the extent that his meager resources allowed, then sped them on their way. He made no secret of his project, but he would only ever work by himself."

"Hang on, bro. I know about this place! Coral Castle, right? I saw it on *In Search Of*... a few months ago." Watching Leedskalnin at work, the kid struggled to get the hang of seeing events unfold in reverse motion. He had seen film and television images run in reverse before; this was not so different.

"Ah, yes. *In Search Of*.... The American television program, hosted by your country's most popular alien. Never had the opportunity to see it myself, but many of my older colleagues speak of it with nostalgia." Yves sighed. "Whenever he was asked why he had built this place, Ed would say he was creating a palace for his 'Sweet Sixteen' — a young lady, Agnes Scuffs by name — to whom he had apparently been betrothed back in Latvia. Legend tells us that, on the eve of their wedding, Ed showed her something, perhaps a demonstration of his uncanny ability to move enormous weights, which frightened her to such a degree that she ended their courtship and never spoke with him again. Nor would she ever speak of the matter to outsiders. Remember what I told you about relationships among our kind?"

Watching the skinny figure, the kid discovered what it meant to gaze diagonally across the axis of a time wave. Staring down the corridor of the recent past, he saw Leedskalnin everywhere he looked. Not all at once, no masses of identical immigrants crowding his peripheral vision, but in discrete segments of time that he could look through simply by turning his steering wheel ever so slightly and refocusing his eyes, as though

shifting his gaze from a nearby object to a distant one. Here was Ed, arranging the chairs; there, suspending a massive coral block on a crude wooden tripod; and there, shifting one of the great stones into its place along the wall with a gentle nudge. The kid looked from scene to scene, his head beginning to spin.

"Consider, if you will, the dedication that went into this place. When he first came to Florida, Ed searched extensively for an affordable plot of land. The man who eventually sold Ed the original Coral Castle site said that Ed seemed to be searching for something specific. He would run his fingers through the sand and soil, smell it, press his ear to the ground, prod it with a pole he carried for that purpose. It might be guessed that he was simply searching for a source of coral to use as raw material, but clearly the precise location was a matter of great importance. Ed measured extensively, not only the local geography, but also the celestial alignments. In 1936, he dismantled the entire structure and moved it from the Florida City site to its current location here, near Homestead. Most believed he did it to avoid the encroaching urban sprawl, but Leedskalnin himself said that his original calculations were incorrect, that this new locale was more properly aligned with the Etheric energy vectors of the planet. Do you know what is significant about this region?"

"Are you talking about ley lines? Isn't this supposed to be a major juncture of ley lines? Southern Florida... We're at one corner of the Bermuda Triangle, aren't we?" The kid noted how Ed always stopped work just before guests arrived, and always waited until they were well out of sight before he returned to work.

"Most people would call it that. 'Ley lines' are simply localized manifestations of the energetic infrastructure of the earth, the flow of Ether across our most fragile, delicate world. Quintessence — that is to say, Ether not bound up in a creative act — flows freely along these lines and collects in those places where the lines intersect, places we call Nodes. Many ancient cultures recognized these Nodes and treated them as sacred sites. A quick survey of such places will show that many of them are on or near the sites of ancient megalithic structures, engineering marvels that modern builders, even with their huge machines, would be hard pressed to duplicate. In some cases, unchecked flow of Quintessence can warp the fabric of space-time, resulting in phenomena such as your infamous Bermuda Triangle. Try plotting these Nodes on a globe sometime, then connect the dots and compare the shapes that emerge with the geodesics of Buckminster Fuller. It can be a fascinating exercise."

"Tried reading that Fuller guy. Too dense. I think he makes up his own words for stuff." The kid was watching Ed balance an eight-foot block of coral on an automobile gear embedded in the floor, where it could swivel freely and act as the entrance gate. Ed stopped, turned and stared pointedly in one direction.

"Try again. Read carefully, and do not be afraid to ask for help. 'Bucky' can be most rewarding, especially for those of us with mechanical inclinations." Yves and the kid turned to where Ed was

looking. Beyond an unfinished section of outer wall, the bushes rustled and the tense whispers of teenage boys could be heard. Ed unsvalowed clean water into a cracked cup, still glaring at the concealed boys, and he leaned against an unplaced stone, arms folded, waiting. Finally the bushes rustled again and the whispers receded. Seconds later, Ed returned to work; with the smooth grace of a ballet dancer, he tilted the gate off of the gear, balanced it above his head and carried it to a clear patch of ground. The stone settled into the deep depression its bulk had left in the ground. Ed knelt beside it and put his palms against it. He seemed to be singing softly.

"Man, that thing's gotta weigh tons! Hey, he knew those kids were coming, didn't he? He stopped working before they got here, and didn't start again until they left! He can tell when he's being watched!"

"He could indeed. Furthermore, he learned as a young child to focus his gaze in a way that affected the material world. He could make someone turn around by staring at the back of their head, and he could control the movements of insects by concentrating upon them. Ed understood the flow of magnetic current through the Ether, which he perceived as beads of light. And he understood how it could be altered to affect matter both animate and inanimate. Note how he sings to the stone. Sound vibrations can resonate harmonically with other Etheric frequencies, from the infinitesimal oscillations of the subatomic world to the great cycles of the cosmos. With the correct vocal pitch, he could attune the molecular motion within the rock to the motion of the planet, even the galaxy, in such a way as to nullify the local conditions of mass, inertia and gravity."

"I could do without some of that shit myself just now."

"Indeed."

The kid glanced about, taking in the various scenes of Leedskalnin's activity. "He only works at night, doesn't he? Is that to see the stars, so he can line it all up right?"

"In part, perhaps. But he also required strict privacy, remember. He would never work when he knew he was seen."

"Why is that? I know I work better when I have the garage to myself."

"Of course you do. It is much easier to accomplish something when there is no one about to tell you that what you are attempting is impossible. Modern physicists know that an observer's attitude and expectation can affect the outcome of an experiment. Recall what I told you about the weight of others' beliefs. Even the Ether itself can meet resistance in the form of psychic inertia, in the unwillingness of most people to accept that which is beyond their experience. This we call Paradox energy. It is the envelope against which we push, the general tendency of the world to remain the way it is, to function in the way that it always has. Paradox constrains all experimental work based on unusual principles and acts to negate impossibilities. One might even say it is the metaphysical equivalent of the law of the conservation of energy. But there are other laws as well; we who understand the Etheric transfer of energy can cheat that law, no? So it is with Paradox."

"I think I get it. The less, uh, unbelievers who see you doing freaky shit like this, the more likely you can get it done, right? You can get something out of nothing as long as nobody sees you doing it!"

"Not quite. There is always a measure of Paradox working against any Scientific operation. Having non-Scientists, or 'Sleepers,' as witnesses only intensifies the effect. It is also possible to minimize it by crafting your operation in such a way that it appears to be a perfectly normal event, if an extremely unlikely one. This we call 'Coincidental Science.' To the witness, the event would seem highly improbable, but not entirely impossible. Unfortunately for us, in our current predicament, a car falling out of the sky at a relativistic speed is only slightly less improbable than balancing a 10-ton rock on your fingertip by singing to it."

The kid was silent for some time, staring past the east wall to where Ed was unloading the building blocks of his castle from a heavy-duty flatbed truck after temporarily dismissing the driver. At last the kid said, "You told me this guy built this place all for some *chica* that dumped his ass, back in the old country, right?"

"That is correct. Were you to explore — and I am not recommending that you do, at least not presently — you would see that many of the accommodations are built for two. The dual thrones of Saturn back here, for example. Within the tower at the far corner are twin beds." *But I cannot allow you in there now*, Yves mentally added. "It's rather sad, I suppose. He built this amazing monument to her, an offering of a stone flower, one might say, and yet Mademoiselle Scuffs married before Leedskalnin even made his way to Florida, I am told."

"Stone flower.' Heh. That's one of the songs on here." The kid tapped the exposed butt of the eight-track cassette. "Love. That's one of the factors in my equation, you were saying." He worked his lips, turning something over in his mind. "We're pointed in the direction of the past, right?"

"Approximately."

"Yeah, yeah, more or less... Look, man, I wanna try something."

"Experimentation, excellent! Theory tested in the crucible of factual experience. The theoretician and the mechanic are beginning to work together. Pray, proceed, my friend." A roguish smile curled the corner of Yves's mouth, and an encouraging glint shone in his eye.

"We ain't friends yet. I just want to try something, and you're coming with me."

"Our respective waveforms are inextricably entangled. I have little choice in the matter at this point."

"Okay, then. I want to go forward. In the direction we're facing now."

"I see what you intend. But remember: the toroid moves in a complete cycle. You will eventually return to your starting point. And though I am to join you, know that I cannot accompany you every step of the way."

"All right by me, bro. So... uh, just how do I move forward?"

"You might try not standing on your brake pedal like you have been."

BAND TWO: ETERNAL CARAVAN OF REINCARNATION



"We are but fleeting glimpses of human consciousness... Science if properly used will serve the people. If not properly used it will destroy the people... Machinery that gives us abundance has left us in want... The power that dictators take from the people will return to the people."

—Charlie Chaplin, *The Great Dictator*
(from various drafts of the script)

In a place that is nowhere, during a time that never occurred, two young men hurtled through billows of nothingness in a most unlikely vehicle. Energy arced around them, striking wisps of smoke from their exposed surfaces. The older of the two, sitting in the passenger seat, encased in a bulky enclosed suit that seemed to attract most of the energy arcs, spoke.

"These swirling mists you see are the perceptual result of changes in your dimensional coordinate system. Up until now you have only ever used your eyes to orient yourself along three physical dimensions as you move through a fourth, time. Now that you have rotated your coordinate system outside of those dimensions, all forms will appear nebulous and undefined until you can re-orient yourself and pick out familiar shapes. This extradimensional space is known as the 'Umbra,' for many consider it the shadow of the material world."

Eyes and mouth wide, the driver saw his skin crackle with random sparks as his hair stood on end. "So I really have left space entirely? Far out, man!"

"You have left the sort of space that you've always known, and are now experiencing a different set of dimensions. This energy coursing around us is a side effect of passing through what we call the 'Gauntlet,' the barrier that separates the dimensions. This effect has intensified severely between your time and mine, and thus I must wear this Ethersuit to protect myself on such journeys. I have spent a significant portion of my life exploring these dimensions, yet I have only seen a fraction of what they have to offer. Because we are now somewhat askew from the dimension of time, I hope to give you something of a tour through the secret history of the world, showing you not only the past as it appeared, but as it could have been, and was not. This is ultimately a realm of infinite possibilities, you see, where all that is exists along with all that is not."

"Okay, I know enough about that quantum stuff to get the bit about parallel universes and alternate futures, but you're saying there's alternate pasts, too?"

"Precisely. I believe that 'parallel' is a misnomer, for it would seem that all alternate realities intersect to form the present moment. The possible is defined by the impossible; the real by the unreal."

"How can that be? How come we only see and hear and feel one possibility? Where's all the rest of it?"

"In here." Yves tapped the kid's forehead. "The flesh may be bound by space and time, but the spirit is not. And it is our spirit that determines the course we take into the future."

"Kinda like making a hologram, right? You got the, uh, reference beam and interference patterns... Sort of like laying a positive image on top of a negative to get the full picture, or something?"

"More than that. Not just adding plus one and minus one, but more like multiplying zero by infinity."

The kid tilted his head back. "Uh... I see..."

"Don't strain yourself. It is quite a vast mystery to grasp all at once. Minds far greater than ours have spent lifetimes in contem—"

"No, I was just gonna say I see the sun coming through the mists up there."

Yves looked up to behold an emergent luminescence. "Ah. Yes. Not exactly the sun you know, though, but perhaps its extension into these dimensions. That is what some called the Smoky God, for it never emerges fully from the mists. We are passing through the Hollow Earth, which in one sense can be said to represent many of the alternate histories I mentioned. Rather than leaving the surface of a solid sphere, the physical planet Earth, we are entering a spherical space where the past still lives. Think of it this way: Rather than going *outside* of the space-time continuum, we are going *inside*, into the soul and the mind of the universe, to travel down corridors of universal memory. Witness primordial jungles where naked savages roam. See mammoths and dinosaurs, figments of planetary remembrance." As Yves spoke, the mists parted below, revealing the very scenes he described.

"Yeah, I see 'em! Very cool!" The kid craned his neck over the side of the car. Then he turned back to Yves. "But I read about the Hollow Earth, bro, and it's real, a real place that you can get to through the polar openings. *The Smoky God* was the title of a book about how this old sailor took his son there on adventures. And there's that newsreel, from when Byrd flew over the North Pole back in the '20s. He got film of it. It's an actual place, not just the planet memory, like you're saying."

More of the mists dispersed and a rich landscape spread out beneath them, not curving away to a distant horizon, but upward and around them on all sides.

"Alas, that may have been true once, but remember that belief determines reality. Most have decided not to believe in the Hollow Earth." Yves's voice took on a melancholy tone. "They have paved over the cavern entrances and filled in the planet with molten rock. Have you ever found a copy of that book? Or others, such as Professor Lloyd's *Etidorpha*, or any that treat the topic as anything but a pulp fantasy? Or seen the images from Admiral Byrd's flight? Or records from the Nazi

polar expeditions? I have not. And, trust me, I have searched for them. But the Hollow Earth can still exist for those who pass beyond the material world, and who are willing to learn the lessons it has to teach. We need metaphor as well as math to navigate these dimensions."

The kid's brow knotted. "Wait a minute. How did it get like this? Who did all that paving and filling? Who decides what everyone believes?"

"Let me begin at the beginning. Head toward that mountain range. On the tallest peak you will see a group of buildings. That is the Goro Monastery. There we may begin your history lesson and rest a moment before we proceed with our voyage."

• • •

"Here, safe from the ravages of time, we study and preserve the lost Sciences of the ancients, the magic of Atlantis and the forgotten cultures. We ask that you respect our traditions and refrain from disrupting our practices, but know that you are welcome. Refresh yourselves, and be at ease."

The speaker was short, bald and wrinkled, clad in a plain white robe and leaning upon a straight wooden staff. Beyond this, little could be said with certainty. Possibly male, and probably quite old — although the wrinkles seemed not so much from age, but from wisdom and humor barely contained by the physical frame. All that was certain was that he looked deeply and uniquely *human*.

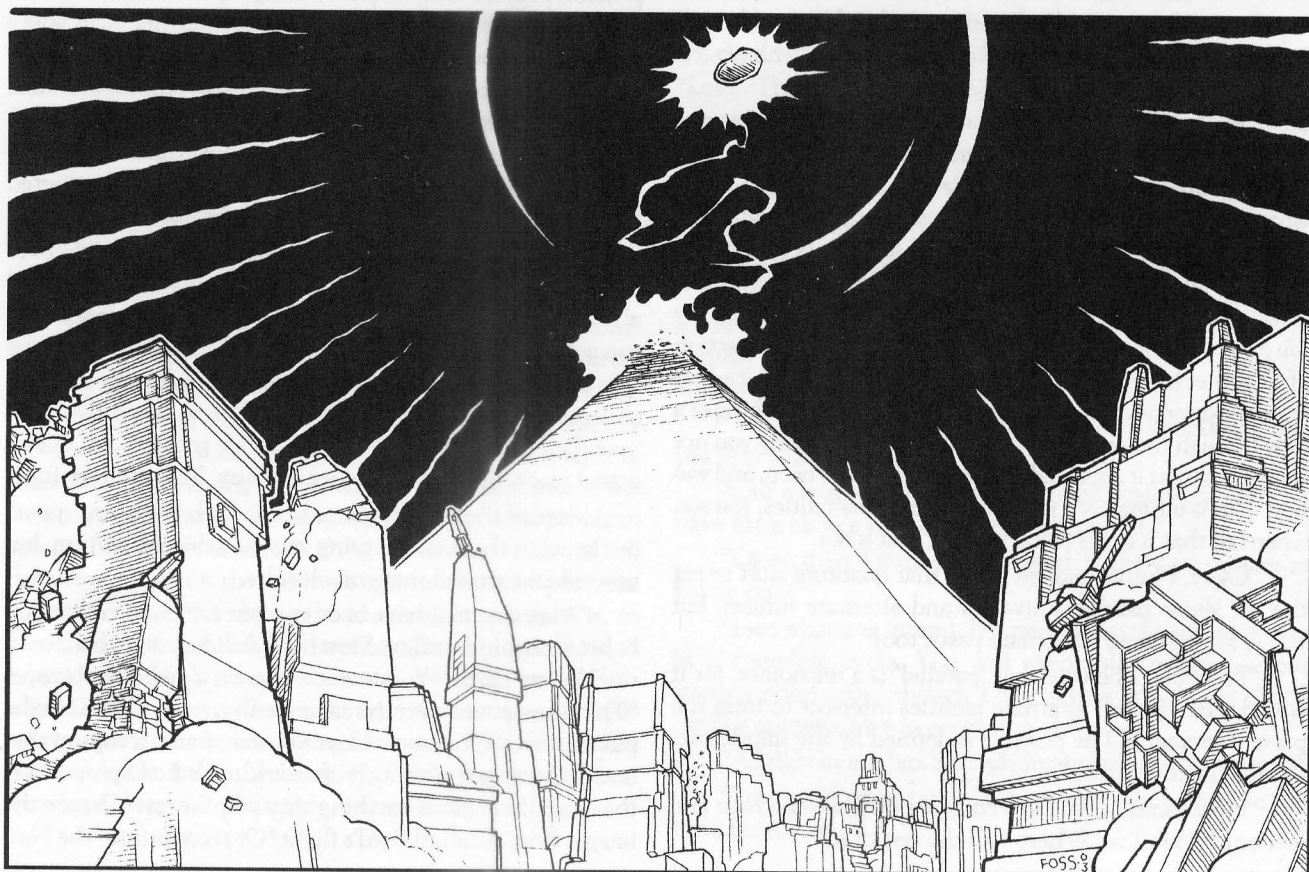
He stood in the entrance of Goro Monastery, facing a flat outcropping that was perfectly placed as a landing pad for

flying vehicles. Yves and the kid had landed and disembarked, and they were already sampling a bowl of fruit brought out to them by the Goro monks.

"This place is, in many ways, the spiritual birthplace of our Tradition," Yves said in a whispered aside. "I recommend that you be on your best behavior here." The kid scowled at his authoritative tone, but said nothing.

"In the age before materialism and greed became the norm for humanity, the Atlanteans mastered the Science of attuning themselves to the innate harmony of the world about them." The head monk led them into a great hallway with enormous murals decorating the walls. He stopped before one scene that depicted a vast city of exotic stone buildings arrayed around a gigantic pyramid. Broad circular canals ringed the city, and a brilliant white light shone from the pyramid's apex. "Here, at the capital city, the high priests used this pyramid as a lens to focus the energies of heaven into the earth. By a pure understanding of the creative forces of nature — of what you would call gravity, electromagnetism and morphogenetic fields, of all the flows and frequencies of the Ether — the builders of Atlantis were able to raise up magnificent edifices that the machinery of your age would be hard pressed to match. By living in harmony with both their inner natures and the outer world, they created a true utopia in the material world."

"The word 'utopia' literally means 'nowhere,'" Yves interjected as the monk paused.



"The limited vision of a limited age," said the monk. "Those who live in an imperfect society, who have never seen a perfect society, cannot believe that such can truly exist. And so, the wonders of Atlantis are dismissed as fancy and fable."

The kid turned from the mural to a large antique globe mounted nearby. Engraved upon it was the Earth he knew, but with a large landmass in the Atlantic Ocean.

"This is it, isn't it?" he said. His fingers traced its coastline. "That's where the Sargasso Sea is now. And the capital, uh—" he squinted at the tiny incised characters "'Posy-doh-nis,' here, that's one corner of the Bermuda Triangle."

"Indeed. Though Atlantis is gone, geologically speaking, its traces can still be found in the Etheric body of the planet, in zones where gravity and electromagnetism are twisted out of alignment, in the migratory routes of birds, in the myth-memory of the human race—"

"So what happened? How'd they blow it?"

"Do not interrupt!" Yves hissed sharply.

But the monk merely smiled. "Chide him not. He is young and eager to learn." He winked at the kid. "And it is through questioning that we begin to learn, is it not?"

He turned to another mural which showed the same view of the Atlantean capital, Poseidonis. Unlike the previous idyllic scene, though, this one showed the cataclysm: stone buildings shattering, rains of fire, immense tidal waves towering over the scene and a massive bolt of lightning blasting the top of the pyramid.

"Legend would have us believe that the Atlanteans fell victim to hubris, that their mastery of the world allowed them to become lazy, greedy, even malicious. Some seers, like Edgar Cayce, describe a gradual decline of the culture coinciding with slow geological changes, the land sinking as the sea reclaimed it. And so it may have been in its later period, among the outlying provinces of the continent. But it is clear from many sources that, at some point, a truly horrific catastrophe occurred that forever changed history, as shown here." The monk gestured at the mural. "Our own readings hint that the destruction of Poseidonis was an act of self-sacrifice meant to protect the world from a far greater threat."

The kid looked at the mural again. Was the pyramid being struck, or was it opening to unleash a bolt of energy into the sky? He tilted his head back. The bolt disappeared into a dark stormy sky.

"It might well be assumed that the high priests perished in this conflagration, but some maintain that they were translated into a dimension only marginally accessible to us, and that they now abide in a realm that corresponds to the dark side of our moon. They have revisited the physical Earth throughout history, this theory maintains, in order to reintroduce humanity to the wonders of their arcane Science, but their appearance was interpreted by the ignorant as angelic and demonic manifestations, or as visitors from exotic fairylands of legend and folklore. We know for certain, however, that some who understood the Scientific mysteries did sur-

vive, and that they resettled in what are considered by the Consensus to be the birthplaces of civilization."

"By the what?" the kid asked.

"The Consensus," Yves answered. "A term denoting the collective beliefs of humanity. The Consensus informs and drives the forces of Paradox, which I explained previously."

"Even so," said the monk. "While Paradox may appear to be an implacable and immutable fact of the universe on the material plane, know that even it, like all else, is but shaped by belief. And this is important to understand. For, you see, even though any Scientific operation in materiality contains within it the threat of Paradoxical reaction, when any Sleeper witnesses something he believes to be impossible, that will enlarge the boundaries of what he considers possible, and he may communicate this new understanding to his fellows. Thus, over time, even Paradox itself may be re-formed by the very actions it opposes."

"But to return to the subject at hand. The culture-bearers from Atlantis sought to rekindle the flames of Science in the colonies they founded, and they began to rebuild their heavenly focal monuments. The Egyptian pyramids and Stonehenge are but the most famous examples. The 'moon shaft' in Czechoslovakia, the engraved topographical map in Russia, or the subterranean cities of Cappadocia are less well known, and, I understand, have only relatively recently been discovered. But the culture-bearers' knowledge was incomplete, and much was lost over subsequent millennia. By the beginning of Consensual recorded history only the techniques of construction were remembered, and those who knew them used them for more secular purposes — palaces, temples, fortifications, such as can still be seen at Mycenae and Baalbek. By this time, only one man appears to have retained the essence of Atlantean Science, a citizen of Homeric Troy whom we know by the name Aretus."

The monk led them to another mural that showed a large walled city overlooking a beach where an army was encamped, engaged in constructing a large wooden horse. "Okay," the kid muttered, "now this I heard of."

"Of course. The Trojan War is remembered in Consensual history through the works of Homer. Unfortunately the poet concerned himself entirely with the War, and either neglected or was unaware of the esoteric Atlantean thread woven into Trojan culture by Aretus. Aretus wrote a text in which fundamental Scientific principles were explained in terms that the people of that time could understand. This text, preserved by a student of Aretus named Parmenesthes, was later translated by Aristotle, and from it he derived his notion of the 'Fifth Essence.'"

"Quintessence, yeah..."

"Or 'Ether,' the term we now use. Aristotle's version was in turn translated into Arabic centuries later by Muslim scholars, who preserved much of the Greek heritage. This version of the work was brought to Spain by the Moors, where it eventually fell into the hands of Lorenzo Golo, an Italian merchant prince and aspiring Hermetic mage, in the early 12th century."

The monk turned to face two statues occupying twin pedestals in the center of the hall. Two men, one in fancy medieval clothes and the other in armor, stood in symmetrical position, each unrolling a scroll to show the other. The scroll held by the armored man was written in Greek letters, while the other was in some kind of flowing cursive script. "At around the same time, a Knight Templar by the name of Simon de Laurent recovered Aristotle's original while crusading in the Holy Land. These two men eventually met, compared what each had found and realized they had stumbled upon two pieces of an ancient puzzle, the text that we now study under its Arabic title, the *Kitab al-Alacir*, or 'Book of the Ether.' Together they formed the Natural Philosophers Guild, a short-lived organization which nonetheless contributed to the scientific and spiritual development that eventually grew into the Renaissance."

Yves added, "We consider this Guild's formation as our beginning. But understand that our line of descent is not straight by any means. The centuries between then and now were fraught with schisms and mergers, as many factions possessed different puzzle pieces but often disagreed how to put them together. We had powerful allies who later became enemies, and old enemies that now accept us as their peers. And therein lies the secret history that has shaped the world we know." As he spoke, Yves compared the faces of dials mounted on the forearm of his Ethersuit. He addressed the monk. "Good brother, the current phase of our cycle is over halfway complete, and there is more that I wish to show the boy. You understand that we are still bound by time, and I ask that you please forgive our premature departure."

"Do as you must." The head monk smiled again and spoke to the kid. "Be aware that we of the Goro Monastery are always here, in your thoughts and in your dreams. If you are ever able to return, you will be made welcome, for we have yet more wonders to reveal, and we look forward to any wonders that you may reveal to us."

"Sure." The kid held up two fingers in a V shape. "Peace, bro!"

• • •

The curve of the Hollow Earth and the veiled radiance of the Smoky God receded in the rearview mirrors as the mists of nowhere once more surrounded the vehicle.

"I regret having to cut that lesson short," said Yves. "There is so much more to learn there."

The kid waved his hand. "Ain't no big thing, man. That was starting to feel too much like high school history class anyway."

"There is more history to come, I'm afraid, as we shall be curving back across the temporal axis now. But it is necessary, and you must pay attention if you are to understand the role we must play in the Ascension War."

"Oh, now there's a war going on, too? Great! What the fuck did you get me into?"

"You got yourself into it, my friend, the moment you successfully generated your toroidal field. Our enemy keeps constant watch for such events. Reports of impossible happenings. Surges of Paradox energy. Cars that fly..."

The kid swallowed. "So, if I ever get back home they're gonna be waiting for me, huh? They wouldn't try to get at my family, would they?"

"Let us hope not, but it pays to expect the worst from them." Yves lapsed into heavy silence. In the swirling mists, faint colors, vague shapes and distant voices started to emerge. Finally, Yves said, "Ishan't bore you with more history class, but as we converge upon the axis of time, some of the things you see will require explication. Suffice to say that, concurrent with the growth and diversification of the Natural Philosophers Guild, another faction grew to power, the Order of Reason, with methods and motives not unlike our own, but without the spiritual compass of the *Kitab al-Alacir* to guide them. They considered logic to be the perfect mode of thought, and order to be the ultimate force that shapes the physical world. And the physical world to be the only world that matters. Against them strove many who felt the opposite, that the immaterial was greater than the material; we saw them as enemies... then."

Through the mists, the kid saw wild, fantastic scenes: figures flying through the air shooting streams of fire from their fingertips, talking animals, priests brandishing flaming swords, spirits materializing in chalk circles, men with the heads of beasts and beasts with the heads of men, walking castles, sometimes fighting each other, sometimes arrayed against armies equipped with man-powered ornithopters, wooden tanks, crystal lenses that shot beams of searing light, and marching ranks of clockwork soldiers. All set amidst a backdrop of more familiar medieval images: knights in armor, elegant damsels, crenellated fortresses and soaring cathedrals, witches burning at the stake and heretics broken and scarred by racks and brands in murky dungeons.

"Paradox was nothing to us then, and against the forces of magic we forged weapons centuries ahead of their time. We thought we were making the world safe for Science, you see. And, over time, we thought we had won. The hordes of Unreason were driven back into the wildernesses, cowering in their caves and groves, or else cloaked in the sanctity of religion as they watched their power diminish. By the Victorian era, we had beaten the world into a flat stage where only plays of order and reason could be performed. It was not until then that we became aware of the true motives of our allies." Yves pointed through the mist toward a gigantic thunderhead cloud emitting a halo of lightning arcs. "Steer toward that. It is a nexus of alternate timelines, a major turning point in our history. You know of Nikola Tesla, I presume?"

"Oh, hell yeah! The real inventor of radio, and all kinds of tripped-out stuff — death rays, antigravity, shit like that. He was, like, this big time electrical prodigy, from Czechoslovakia or somewhere."

"Croatia, actually, which was in Yugoslavia at the time. Not a well-known place in your day, but everyone has heard of it in mine, for most unfortunate reasons. Anyway, in the 1860s, those of us who truly understood the nature and properties of the Ether consolidated ourselves under the name of the

Electrodyne Engineers, an organization nominally founded in London, but with members from throughout the Western world. By then the Order of Reason was evolving into what we now call the Technocracy and was ostensibly planning to turn the Earth into a scientific paradise, where technology would both serve and govern the people by eliminating the ills of the world. Tesla proved his genius to the Electrodyne Engineers early in his career, and he moved to the United States where he could work with his hero, Thomas Edison."

"I used to think Edison was cool when I was a little kid, but not no more since I started reading about the shit he pulled on Tesla."

Plunging into the heart of the thunderhead, the car was enveloped by darkness.

"Many lies surround their story. Whatever Edison's true nature, he seems to represent much of what went wrong with the Technocracy. He, or his company, tried to claim credit for Tesla's early work with alternating current, even after conducting a propaganda campaign against it in favor of direct current."

"Didn't they do these traveling shows where they electrocuted dogs and cats, to show how dangerous AC was supposed to be? Sick fuckers."

"Empathy and conscience have never been the Technocracy's strong points. They stole from Tesla everything that suited them, then they ruined him when his work became too great for their purposes. By this time, the AC/DC poles had reversed, so to speak. Edison switched to alternating current, as its efficiency was more suited to his Technocratic backers, while Tesla had begun to discover profound new Etheric properties of direct current."

Bursting out of the dark, the two found themselves in a huge workshop occupied by heavy antique generators, coils and machinery of every conceivable shape. From a copper sphere atop a wide fluted structure, giant sparks arced across the room to a plain dark column mounted on a four-legged pedestal. On a chair nearby, a man with a mustache scribbled in a small notebook.

"That's him!" shouted the kid, excited. "I know this place! Colorado Springs! 1899! Can we get out and talk to him?"

"I fear not, for these are only images of the past. We cannot enter this timeline, for to do so would irrevocably prevent us from returning to our own—"

As Yves spoke, the kid reached over to his dashboard radio and fiddled with a knob. "I bet I can interact with that electric field, though," he muttered.

The electrical arcs in the workshop sputtered. Tesla leaped from his chair, looked around the room. As his face turned toward the car, Yves batted the kid's hand off of the knob, grabbed the steering wheel and jerked it sharply to the right. Colorado Springs seemed to tilt away and fold itself out of sight, replaced by an outdoor scene.

Yves shouted, "You *imbecile*! I swear, if you've trapped me in an alternate timeline or some godforsaken Paradox Realm,

I would be most satisfied to kill you straightaway!" His Ethersuit-encased hand balled into a massive metal fist and drew back to strike. The kid shrank away from him and froze, eyes wide, mouth open. Yves glared, nostrils flaring, for a full minute; his faceplate fogged as he fought to slow his breathing. Finally he broke off eye contact and looked around.

They were heading toward a low building. Beyond it loomed a tall metal skeleton, a steel-girder tower shaped like a giant mushroom on a conical stalk. Rows of copper spheres lined its cap. Yves relaxed only slightly upon seeing it. "Long Island," he hissed, still fuming.

"The, uh, the Wardencllyffe tower..." the kid piped, his voice cracking. "Tesla's big secret project."

"The Magnifying Transmitter, yes." Yves settled back in his seat, folded his arms. He resumed his lecture through clenched teeth. "Tesla realized that he had found a way to turn the entire world into a gigantic capacitor, that energy could be transmitted to every point on the planet from this single Node. He dreamed of a world of free energy, where anyone could power an entire home simply by plugging a conductive rod into the ground. Just imagine what that could have meant for humanity! His financial backer at this time was another tool of the Technocracy, who had no use for free energy."

"Can't hook up a meter to make people pay for it."

"Precisely. Tesla's laboratory was burnt to the ground, and he was eventually ruined financially. His greatest dreams were never implemented, and the Technocrats stole much of his work to use for destructive purposes. See if you can maneuver through the tower girders. Through the center of the Transmitter is a place that I think you would very much like to see."

"Hey, man, I know you want to kill me now, but I kinda don't want to smash into big hard things anymore."

Yves looked him in the eye. His anger had subsided. "I apologize for threatening you. I cannot—I will not harm you. To do so would doom me as well. Just be wary of rash experimentation like that. Never try something without a solid theory in mind to account for all potential consequences. Remember what I said about belief. Now try what I ask. I have made this journey before."

La Fuente slipped through the ribs of the steel skeleton and ascended through its middle, borne on a series of rising scales from Santana's guitar that added a nice dramatic touch to the action. As she approached the center of the mushroom-cap dome, the entire structure bent away and turned itself inside out (*Like a toroidal field*, the kid noted), replaced by yet another new landscape.

They were above the Magnifying Transmitter. The rows of copper spheres, now embedded in a surface of gleaming polished steel, crackled with energy that made the kid's hair stand on end. He banked out and around in a widening spiral. The completed tower formed the centerpiece of a magnificent cityscape composed of the art deco movement's wildest flights of fancy. The architecture—strong and graceful curves that fit together with Chinese puzzle-box precision—reminded the kid of some of his

favorite auto body designs, all gleaming chrome and elegantly shaped armatures. There were cars moving between the buildings, on the streets and above them, thrumming peacefully through the air. For once, La Fuente did not seem at all out of place. Pedestrians in sleek jumpsuits launched themselves from the sidewalk — or from skyscrapers' ledges — propelled by compact engines strapped to their backs. In the sky, cigar-shaped airships and flying saucers sailed majestically amidst the clouds or docked at the tallest buildings.

"It's like the pictures in old sci-fi mags!" the kid gasped.

"That it is. You may know the name Hugo Gernsback from such publications as *Amazing Stories* and the *Electrodyne* journal that would eventually become *Popular Science*. He was both an inventor and a writer of speculative fiction, and this realm embodies his vision of a technotopian future. Our Tradition worked to build it into what it is, and we call it the Gernsback Continuum in his honor. But I believe that the Continuum is concurrent with an alternate timeline, a version of what the 20th century could have been had Tesla been able to fulfill his dreams. The Magnifying Transmitter was not merely a free energy device, you see. Tesla felt that its field also had an excitatory effect upon the human brain, that it awakened unused reserves of intelligence, perception and willpower. This place resulted from that unlocked potential — what the world could have become had his plans been implemented. But unfettered human potential did not fit the Technocratic agenda, so this visionary work was relegated to an intellectual ghetto, swept under the rug of Consensual history along with myth, fantasy and fairy tales. We traveled here through a transtemporal nexus, where the events that ended with our

Tradition leaving the Technocracy caused history to take the darker path we all know. Like the Hollow Earth, the Gernsback Continuum is now only an ideal, a non-physical reality that can be reached only by a difficult hyperdimensional crossing."

A gray wisp swept across the windshield, obscuring the beautiful futuristic city. At the same time, a flash of ultraviolet light filled the interior of the car. The kid looked at Yves, who held his gloved hands in front of his face, turned them over, and began to hurriedly adjust his Ethersuit gauges.

"Aw shit!" the kid bawled as more mist billowed up. "We're leaving, aren't we?"

"Yes, we are. Listen—"

"Is this because of what I did at Colorado Springs?"

"Be quiet and listen to me. I told you that I would have to part with you at some point during—" There was another ultraviolet flash that replaced the Frenchman's bulky shape with a hypnotic Op Art pattern. Then it was gone and Yves reappeared, still talking. "—don't know what awaits you in the next phase, but be on your guard. Your trajectory has been plotted across—" Another flash. "—known of a Technocratic installation on that Node for some time now—" And another. "—perhaps arranged for some other Etherite to intercept—" When Yves reappeared, he was speaking very fast. "—keep traveling in a straight line, or else—" Between the strobing flashes and strange optical patterns, the kid's eyes were starting to ache. "I repeat, do not turn or swerve." Then another flash, and Yves was gone.

The kid was alone, hurtling through emptiness with only his car and some fine percussion as company.

"Well, damn," he mumbled, nervously drumming on his steering wheel. "Glad I brought good music."

BAND THREE: FUTURE PRIMITIVE



Now, my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose.

—J. B. S. Haldane, *Possible Worlds*
Australia, 2003:

At the moment Yves Mercure fired his Etheric wave converter into the sky above Coral Castle, ephemeral mists parted and a solid, consistent landscape took shape on the opposite side of the planet Earth. At first, a regular pulse of white flashes appeared just above the hood, then resolved into a series of elongated rectangles stretching ahead in a straight line. A paved highway in poor repair, running through a flat desert with bluffs and cliffs encroaching upon either side, tilted up just in time to see the sun. The mists faded into a morning haze, evaporating along with night's vanishing chill.

The engine coughed, coughed again, sputtered into silence as *Caravanserai* faded out and in, then finally out. The toroidal field dissipated and La Fuente coasted for nearly a hundred yards before stopping.

Ahead and to the left, a squat, muscular, grizzled and leathery man in dusty khakis, burst out from a gap in the rock face. He blinked, broke into a horse-toothed grin and rushed forward with arms wide. "Ace?" he bellowed. "Is that really you? I don't believe it!"

Despite the man's crazed appearance, Ace did not feel threatened. "How do you know my name? Who are you?"

"It's Stan!" Stan held out a hand, but he didn't seem to care when Ace failed to shake it. "We met at the big Y2K party. Oh, but you wouldn't remember that yet! So this's your ride, huh?" He ran an approving eye over La Fuente's length, gave Ace a cooler once-over. "Damn, man, you really were a little punk, weren't you?" When Ace scowled at that, Stan said with a smile, "Aw, don't worry about it! You'll be all right! How much time you got, do you know? Wanna come back to the camp for some coffee?"

"I'm not sure. I don't think I should leave my wheels."

"Aw, it'll be fine. The black hats don't patrol this road no more. You got the music on, right? Just leave the volume up, and you should hear it cut on in plenty of time to get back."

Without waiting for an answer, Stan yanked the door open, picked the kid up in a surprisingly gentle bear hug and practically dragged him back to the rock gap. "So you actually found someone with a converter to intercept your ass, huh? That's great! Who'd ya get?"

Ace had to think for a moment before the question made sense to him. "Uh, it was a French guy, in a sort of spacesuit, y'know? Talks like he thinks he's better than everyone?"

"Oh, jeez, that guy! What's he call himself, 'Sir Mercury' or somethin'? I hear he don't ever touch nothin' electric if he can help it. Musta stuck his finger in a light socket when he was little, is my guess. Makes sense, though, that he'd be the one. He's one of the last Ethernauts left on this side of the Gauntlet."

Through the rock gap was a small box canyon, still dark, with a tent near the entrance. Surrounding the center of the canyon were three evenly spaced structures, tall narrow devices of stacked glass lenses and tubes filled with glowing gas mounted in makeshift aluminum frames, like giant laser cannons pointed into the ground. They rested on portable scaffolding at oblique angles, so that all three beams would intersect some distance below the ground.

Stan dumped Ace onto a rickety canvas chair and thrust a cup of thick steaming coffee at him. Ace winced upon tasting it, but he thanked his host anyway. "French guy said there's Technocrats nearby?" he asked, worried.

"Yeah, sittin' on a big-ass Node out by Alice Springs, suckin' up all the juice they can eat. Space program, or at least that's the cover, takin' advantage of the local anti-gravity diamagnetics, just like at the Cape in Florida. Good thing this Node's so strong. I can catch some of their overflow out here. They don't know about me yet, and I plan to be gone before they find out." Stan gulped his coffee, winced, and said, "So, Ace, whattaya know? Did ol' Frenchy get you up to speed?"

"Uh, well, I got this heavy history lesson at, uh, the Goro Monastery, then we started going ahead in time but the guy had to disappear after we got as far as Tesla and the Magnifying Transmitter."

"Right, just when it gets real interestin'. That was when we really split with the Technocracy. I got some stuff I can show you here." He tossed a heavy flat case onto Ace's lap, thumbed it open. The bottom half looked like typewriter keys, the top like a flattened TV screen that came to life as Stan punched some buttons and slid a mirrored disk into a slit on the side.

"What's this thing?"

"Personal computer. Boy, you got some catchin' up to do! Computers really took over since your time."

"Oh shit! Like in that *Forbin Project* movie?"

Stan rummaged through his memory for a second, then barked with laughter. "Naw, not like that. Although the Technocrats would if they could manage it. No, thinkin', talkin' computers aren't part of the Consensus yet. These are just damn handy tools, so everybody's got 'em, is all I mean. Some of our allies specialize in 'em, and can do some really

amazing stuff. That's the Virtual Adepts — they defected from the Technocracy a while after we did."

"So we defected after they fucked with Tesla, huh?"

"Defected or got kicked out, depends on who you ask. See, the advances in Etheric Science shook 'em up too much, so they wrote the Ether out of the Consensus. There was Michelson and Morley, who tried to prove its existence but set up their experiment wrong 'cause they were thinking of the Ether in terms of any other substance. Tryin' to measure the 'aether wind' of the Earth passin' through space, but it don't work that way, y'see." Stan tapped more buttons, and some half-familiar textbook diagrams flashed across the screen. "That was before Consensual space travel, so all the experiments that counted were limited to conditions down here in Earth's gravity well, where, instead of an Ether wind from outer space, we got field harmonics and geodesics. Lorentz and Fitzgerald worked out the difference, and could've jibed it with General Relativity once that came along, but the Technocracy snagged Einstein as soon as they could. They convinced him not to use the word 'Ether' in any of his speculations, even though that was exactly what he was describin'. Ever since then, physicists've been tripping all over their schlongs tryin' to invent fancy mathematics that can account for simple Etheric geometry." As Stan's callous fingers tapped away, diagrams, photos and pages of old text flipped by. "Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, Bell's theorem, Everett and Wheeler's 'many-worlds' model. It's all good. I use a lot of that stuff in my work. But they all left out the bit that makes it all work together. It's sad, really. All swingin' farther and wider from a Unified Field Theory that could've been theirs from the start, if it weren't for Technocratic politics. That's when it really got brutal, 'cause Ether meant free energy, and free energy meant free people, meaning no industrial dictatorship, which is what the Technocrats were shootin' for."

Ace had tuned out Stan's semi-coherent rant and was figuring out how to work the scrolling arrows and tracking ball. He found some files on the Paris Exhibition of 1900 and got his first good look at Professor Vargo's Conversion Engine. He read the Professor's speech that lambasted the world's governments for putting more effort and resources into war than into peace. Following up on this brought him to a grainy black-and-white newsreel, dated 1914, with little bits of text and schematics popping up. The Professor, now subtitled "Czar Vargo," stood at the helm of a great zeppelin-shaped anti-gravity airship powered by his Conversion Engine. With a fleet of similar vehicles surrounding the airship dock at the Eiffel Tower, Vargo's amplified voice explained that he held all the world's major capitals in check (additional footage showed airships over dozens of signature skylines) and demanded the surrender of the secret conference of world leaders in Paris below.

"I've heard of this," Ace said.

"No kiddin'?" Stan said. "I only just got those files from this Cap'n Video guy I know at MIT. He dug 'em out of some archives and circulated 'em within the Tradition. We thought

the Technocrats had buried all the evidence that it ever happened and wrote it out of the Consensus."

"My grandfather used to talk about this when he was really drunk." Ace's voice went soft. "Said he remembered it from when he was a little boy. He'd get pissed off that nobody else claimed to remember it. Then he'd talk about when he was fighting in Europe during World War Two, how this kid with a dart gun and a rocket strapped to his back saved his life from a bunch of Nazi robots. My grandmother used to cuss him out bad when he talked about that shit, and the whole family thought he was just old and loco — 'cept for my uncle."

"Yeah, that kid was Jet Boy — got some files on him too, somewhere." Stan growled low in his throat, like an animal. "Fuckin' Technocrats. Makes you wonder how many more folks get treated like shit just for rememberin' how things really went." He jabbed the computer screen, where the airships were engulfed in the smoke and flames of pitched battle. "Notice they didn't mind sending their own people out into battle, or knocking down whole civilian sectors just to get at Vargo. And that's why he lost the battle. He was doin' it all to improve human life, which to him was so sacred he wouldn't even fire on the mutant troops tryin' to kill him. Guess that's the difference between the good guys and the bad guys, but I dunno if I'd do the same in that position. Sometimes it's kill or be killed, the law of the wild. But then that's prob'ly why the Tradition Chair-holders like it that I stay as far from civilization as I can get. Like the Outback, here."

"This says 'Sons of Ether' right here. That's us, huh? Not 'Electrodynic Engineers'?"

"Yeah, we joined the Council of Nine in 1905, and chose that name since the 'Luminiferous Ether' was our main point of disagreement with the Technocratic paradigm."

"'Sons of Ether' it says. So, no ladies allowed?" A definite note of disappointment was in Ace's adolescent voice.

"Hah! Don't you believe it, kid! That's just leftover terminology from the Victorian Age, when old white guys held all the big Chairs. Everyone's been so busy fightin' the good fight, no one took the time to call the printer and change the letterhead. Maybe it is sexist to leave it that way, but we ain't the only ones. The Akashic Brotherhood's had plenty of Akashic Sisters for thousands of years, so what's their excuse? Maybe all us humans are just too lazy to change how we talk, 'specially if there's extra syllables involved. Necessity's a mother, I guess."

Ace snickered at the phallic shape of Vargo's airships. "So, we're in this 'Council of Nine.' Were they our enemies back in the old days, like the French guy said? And now they're our allies. You mentioned, what, Virtuous Ad Execs, and a Koshic Brotherhood?"

Stan slapped his knee and barked with laughter. "Hah! I gotta remember that! Okay, let's see here..." He cracked his knuckles and spread his fingers, ready to tick off names. "There's us." One finger. "There's the Virtual Adepts, the computer and information specialists. They were part of the Technocracy too,

'til about the Second World War, when they started helpin' the Allies break the Axis codes. What with the development of personal computers in the last couple decades, the Adepts've had a real heyday, and bless 'em, the smug li'l punks. They can model space, what we call the Contiguous Ether, in ways we can only dream of. Got a whole dimension that's practically their own, the Digital Web, and it's closer to interpenetratin' the physical Consensus than anything else in the Umbra, what with the Internet and all. Oh, sorry, more future history you wouldn't know about. Forget it. Just figure it like this: These little computers are everywhere and so're the Virtual Adepts, so it pays to make friends with one if you can." Two fingers.

"The Akashic Brotherhood. From 'Akasha,' the Sanskrit word for the Ether. While we were still tryin' to figure out how the Ether transmits physical forces, they had already worked out how it transmits information, feeling and consciousness, then stores all of it in what they call the Akashic Records. Kind of overlaps my own work, which I'll show you if we got time. Now, I think the Akashic Brotherhood is the model that the Goro monks were based on. The Goro are from Atlantis, but before that there was Lemuria, in the Pacific, at least a good ice age or two earlier. My studies show the Lemurians were to Asian culture what Atlantis was to Mediterranean culture, with pre-Columbian America as a kind of overlap. They perfected their Noetic Science at Mount Meru, a Lemurian site I ain't quite located yet. Anyway, that stays between us, okay? Gawd ferbid we should upset the party line on Etheric history, right?" Wink. And three fingers.

"Aw, jeez, who else? Oh, right. The Celestial Chorus. You're a Catholic boy, right, with the saints and the miracles and all that? Well, that's them. Naw, strike that — your real saints were probably decent folks, and these guys tend to get a little full of themselves, like your holy-roller neighbor always lookin' down his nose at you. But they can still work miracles, so watch it. Got their own Sacred Science, the Metaphysical Ether, the flow mechanics of raw Quintessence. And their hearts are in the right place, I guess. It's just that they're so hung up on the 'One God' paradigm that they have trouble seeing how the rest of us might get something right once in a while. Sorta like us Sons of Ether, 'cept that they stick together and toe the party line, while we argue with each other more than we argue with everybody else. Easiest way to get along with 'em, I figure, is just, when they say 'God' you translate it in your mind as 'Unified Field' and keep your mouth shut." Four fingers.

"Then there's the Order of Hermes, that we share some roots with, since Lorenzo Golo was a Hermetic. I think the Order's preserved a lot of the formulas and ceremony of Atlantean Science, but they never had the complete picture, the total cosmology or moral teachings that it was all based on. So what they do tends to be more worldly, mostly concerned with Energetic Physics, flashy lightning bolts and fireballs, but without the benefit of proper technology. They act worldly, too, real ambitious and aggressive, y'know, socially. But that's not all bad, 'cause it's helped 'em keep the

Council of Nine together for the last 500 years. They got some of the best libraries and they keep the best records, too. Kinda anal in that way — but don't tell 'em I said so." Five fingers.

"Now, on the other hand — Hah! Get it? Other hand! Anyway, you got your Verbena, who are like, well, if the Chorus were the priests workin' their religious miracles and the Hermetics were like Merlin or Gandalf in the tower with all the books and sigils, then the Verbena are the witches out in the woods, readin' the intestines of goats and stuff. Sounds gross, I know, but they got as much Science to it as any of us. See, they understand Etheric Biology, what Tesla called the Life Ether, or what Wilhelm Reich called 'orgone.' They understand the living organism like nobody else, so they tend to take liberties with it that would make the rest of us sick. Their methods may be primitive, but, hey, I for one got nothin' against primitive, and their results are still more advanced than today's genetics." Six fingers.

"And if the Verbena don't wig you out, then there's the Euthanatos, who are on a serious death trip. They got no problem with killin', and they reckon they know when a person's time has come or not. Which might be fucked up, but they're supposed to be on our side, and I can't help but think that if these guys had helped Czar Vargo work out some of his issues beforehand, we might have turned the world into a Gernsback paradise by now. But anyway, the Euthanatos have a good grasp of the great cycles of creation and destruction, all the randomness and flux and entropic processes and chaos mathematics — stuff you prob'ly ain't heard of yet — the wheels of Fate and Fortune, like, that we shlump together under the name Ether Dynamics. Very dangerous, but still important for really complete Science." Seven fingers.

"On a lighter note, you got the Cult of Ecstasy, who are just flat out wild. You'd think they were hippies straight out of the Summer of Love, and most of 'em don't mind coming off that way. They're trance artists, mostly, and their methods — sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll — tend to be kinda suspect, at least to some uptight types. Usually too stoned to know a tachyon from any other chronotic particle, but when an Ecstatic really gets out of her head, she can hop the temporal axis like ol' Doc Eon himself, and play time like a violin. Transtemporal perception is sort of my specialty, and I've learnt a good bit from this Tradition, but you gotta listen to 'em real close since half of what they say comes out as gibberish, either 'cause they're just stoned or else their perceptions of causality are skewed beyond coherence." Eight fingers.

"I'm getting to know how that feels," Ace murmured.

"Of course, I saved my favorite Tradition for last, 'cause I've got some good friends in this one. Now, we can talk about Traditions and culture and how Science gets refined and handed down through the generations, but it all had to start somewhere, right? Was that the point that man separated from the animals? Or was there even such a point? Maybe the animals got their own Science too. And if they did, how would we know about it? See, my field research takes me to some of the wildest regions of the planet, so I tend to come into contact with the oldest Tradition of all, the tribal shamans and medi-

cine men who call themselves Dreamspeakers. Most of us call 'em primitive, but they're closer to the living soul of the planet than anyone, and if you ask me, they've forgotten more Science than the rest of the friggin' Council will ever know. Again, you didn't hear none of this from me, and most Etherites'd think you're crazy if you said what I just said. What the hell do I know — I'm just a lowly field researcher, right? But the deeper we dig into the 'Wisdom of the Ancients,' the wiser and the ancierer it all gets. You wouldn't think it, but they actually got the best Etheric and Memetic Dimensional Science out of any of us, I guess since they've been steppin' out of the physical plane since time immemorial." Nine fingers down.

"Then there's those who Awaken, but who don't get hooked up with a Tradition and have to work out their Science by themselves. Them we call Orphans. Some Orphans over the years seem to have got together and sort of worked out a Tradition of their own, callin' themselves the Hollow Ones. Which is the right name, I figure, since there doesn't seem to be a whole lot to 'em. With no deeper Science to fulfill 'emselves with, they're just sort of making it up as they go. But my Dreamspeaker friends say that the world speaks to everyone, and everyone has their part to play in the world. So I guess you gotta give 'em some credit." Stan gestured with his sole extended thumb.

"But not everyone gets the message. Like the Technocracy. With them, you got—" five fingers back up — "The New World Order. The mindfuckers. They're the political branch, central control, and they do all the rewritin' of history by gettin' in your head and playin' cut-and-paste with your memories. Dress like the Blues Brothers, but ain't got no soul, y'see. Then there's the Syndicate, the bankers and resource people who throw all the weight that money can buy into enforcin' the NWO's commands. They helped ruin Tesla, and they'll do the same to anyone else whose work might end poverty and ignorance. Our old rivals are Iteration X, the machinists. Since us and the Virtual Adepts split, it's been up to them to supply the Technocracy's hardware and computin' needs. They crank out weapons and robots that can stomp us into the ground, but they're limited by the industrial mass-production mentality. Etheric science can always run rings around what they do, so they have to rely on outnumberin' and overpowerin' us. And there's the Progenitors, who approach organic life with that same fucked-up mechanical perspective. They're really the scariest at this point, I think, 'cause so much of what they do has become part of the Consensus in the last decade or two. What with cloning and genetic manipulation, they're mucking up the basic building blocks of life, y'know?"

"Yeah, they're starting to talk about that back in my time," Ace said.

"They could permanently alter the ability of the biosphere to repair itself. Which brings us to the Void Engineers, the Technocrats' Dimensional scientists. They're the ones who gotta keep all the outside weirdness at bay, to keep the world lookin' like normal. They make sure Etherspace just looks like an empty vacuum from here, rather than the realm

of boundless possibilities we know it to be. And that's not all bad, y'see, 'cause there's plenty of creepy shit *Outside* wantin' to get in at us on our beautiful li'l ball of life here."

"Like what?"

"Lemme switch that disk there, and I'll show you some real heavy shit." Stan swapped disks and hit more buttons. "The Technocracy's bad, but there's others even worse. Like the Nephandi. Pure evil, so messed up that even their Science is tainted. Slit your throat, rape your gal and kick your dog, then frame you for it, just for a laugh. I hear they worship things that exist in the Deep Umbra, beyond the Horizon and all the dimensions that actually intersect our world and our solar system, even. They're tryin' to bring that shit into our world by creating deep entropic vortexes out of fear, pain and death. And they may have succeeded. Click that little picture, there."

Ace did so. "Says 'Error' and a bunch of numbers..."

"Piece of crap! Hand it here. Like I said, real useful tools — most of the time!" Stan jabbed at the personal computer in his lap, jaw thrust forward, cursing distractedly. "I met chunks of flint that were more cooperative... Anyway, there's also Marauders, who might not be as downright evil as the Nephandi, but just as crazy. And the thing about them is, Paradox don't seem to touch 'em. Like they're so far gone in their delusions that their Science doesn't even generate any reaction. The world just plays along with 'em, then forgets about it once they're past."

"The weight of belief, that French guy said..."

"Yeah. There's a lesson there for us. Our Tradition in particular. Ah, screw it!" Stan ejected the disk, tossed it over his shoulder and chose another from a nearby stack. "Here, I'll show you some of my field research instead, so maybe you can see what's goin' on. See, about twenty-some years ago, I was doin' work on crystal holography at MIT, and I sorta stumbled on the Etheric echo effect through geode harmonics. Of course, I didn't know that's what it was called then, 'cause I hadn't seen none of the Traditional literature on the subject. That was my Awakenin', just like this trip you're takin' now is yours."

When he handed the computer back to Ace it was running raw unedited footage on the screen. The setting looked like the very canyon they were sitting in, although its contours seemed slightly different, with strangely balanced stone structures where wind-eroded knobs now stood. The canyon floor was lower, and tiny figures moved across it.

"Eventually I was able to focus the visual echoes through a triple-laser array. That's what's set up here, the three emitters, formin' what I call a 'hologeodetic retroscope.' When they're focused at a specific level of the geological strata, the interference feedback can be filtered to yield a holographic image from the time when that stratum was formin'. It's sort of like lookin' backward in time, without actually leavin' this dimension. I never been across the Gauntlet myself, and I don't ever intend to go. The physical world is plenty interestin' enough for me, always has been. Anyway, I been doin' readings all over the world since then, and I got tons of images that'd send everyone to rewritin' the history books, including the Sons of Ether. I told you

'bout Lemuria, right? Well, Lemuria might've been the first human, or even proto-human, civilization, but that culture was built on the remains of one even older. Older by a long shot. See if you can work that track-ball to move around that image there."

Although they stood upright, the figures were hardly human. Their scaly bodies leaned forward on their hips, counterbalanced by short whip-like tails. Their heads were round, with large eyes on either side of a beak-like snout. They wore clothing and carried tools and other implements. In the hazy, superimposed time-lapse retroscopic images, they built the canyon floor and sides into an elegant architectural complex, cutting, erecting and levitating massive stones the way Ed Leedskalnin had done in Florida.

"Shit, man! Are those aliens?" Ace glanced up at the canyon walls. Now he could see the worn traces of the old structures, but without this new knowledge it had just looked like natural rock formation.

Stan chortled. "Naw, that's indigenous terrestrial life you're lookin' at, kiddo. *Dinonychus Sapiens*. From the last part of the Cretaceous, what I call the Muvian Period. You might've read about Mu from writers that identify it with Lemuria. And I guess the names are all just academic, since I got no way of knowin' what these critters called themselves. No soundtrack, on account of the differential harmonic in the Etheric echo effect. Images from the visible spectrum are no trouble at this scale, but I'd need to mount those lasers somewhere in high orbit to pick up Etheric sound waves from 65 million years back. Anyway, these Muvians, as I call 'em, were intelligent dinosaurs, the pinnacle of saurian evolution, if you wanna look at it that way. Their civilization was centered on a huge continent that took up a good piece of what we now call the Pacific Ocean. Alice Springs here was one of their colonies, built on one of the planetary grid Nodes."

"This is just a colony? Do you have any pictures of their mainland?" Mesmerized by the strange non-human figures, Ace failed to notice the somewhat demented edge that crept into Stan's voice.

"No. Doesn't exist anymore. I mean the land itself isn't on the planet, period. Lemurian traces are only found at the outlying Nodes — Easter Island, Nan Madol at Pohnpei, the Dragon's Triangle up by Japan. But those're just what's left of a huge scar in the earth's crust, where the continent of Mu used to be. Atlantis — Hah! Any scuba diver can find Atlantis! And Lemurian culture is obvious to anyone who knows where to look!" Stan was on his feet now, bellowing at the canyon walls. "But try bringin' a real discovery to those pinhead Chair-holders! What the hell do *they* know? Call 'emself Scientists! They're as bad as the Sleepers back ho—"

Ace tried to calm him. "Hey, be cool, bro! I hear you, man. So, uh, what happened to them, eh? Who took out all the smart dinosaurs?"

Stan took a breath. "Hold down that top arrow, that'll tilt the view up. Could've projected that in 3-D for you, but the neon imaging chamber is too heavy to carry 'round on fieldwork."

"Holy shit!" Ace gasped. The sky on the computer screen was occupied by what looked like a frozen explosion, smeared to one side, with the devil's own bloodshot eye glaring out of the center. "What the fuck is that thing?"

"It's Doomsday, is what it is." Stan fell back into his creaking chair and wiped his face. "Doctor Comet — Mueller — he called it 'Mirzaba.' Said it followed this spiral trajectory in and out of the space-time continuum, that he'd calculated from all its near-Earth passes. The closest pass was when it ripped Mu out of the ocean and killed all the dinosaurs — I mean all of 'em, not just the smart ones. Mueller talked like it was just some astronomical phenomenon, a comet from a dark-matter system off in some skewed dimension. But I dunno. It seems like it heads straight for this planet every time we evolve up to a certain stage. Get too big for our britches, and here it comes, like hubris incarnate! Maybe this next time will be our punishment for losing the Ascension War."

"Say what? We lost?"

"Yeah. Like a couple years ago. I think that's why the Gauntlet is supposed to be hell to get through now."

"And this thing's coming back?"

"That's what Doctor Comet was saying, last time anyone saw him."

"So, uh, what can we do?"

Suddenly a burst of Santana's guitar sounded through the canyon entrance. Ace was on his feet and running like a shot. Over his shoulder, he yelled, "Hey man, that's my ride! Tell

your boss you need a vacation, and soon! I think the sun's getting to you, bro!"

By the time Ace reached the road, La Fuente's speakers were cutting on and off in longer intervals. He settled into his seat and waited for the field to regenerate. In between the bursts of Santana, he heard a voice. And static. Realizing that his car radio was still on, he turned the volume up.

"Big Bad Mama to Captain Caveman. Come in, Captain!" The voice seemed to be relayed through a great distance, broken up and flattened by distortion. Ace could not tell if it belonged to a man or a woman, young or old. The music cut on again; when it cut off, Stan's voice was replying.

"Yeah, he was just here. I told him as much as I know. Which ain't much, of course!"

"I hope you didn't tell him anything personal about his future."

"Whataya mean?"

"I mean, you Neanderthal, that too much knowledge about his future could cause a temporal loop. If he listened too closely, he could get trapped in a Paradox Realm because of you!"

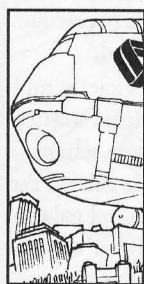
"Aw, I didn't say nothin', I swear!"

"You're a bad liar, Stanley."

"Ha! Shows how much you know, Dietrich! My name's Stanislaus—"

Then Santana was playing again. The car's engine burst to life, its regenerated toroidal field dispelling the radio signal. To the chorus of "Everybody needs a helping hand," La Fuente started to roll forward along the desert highway.

BAND FOUR: LOOK UP (TO SEE WHAT'S COMING DOWN)



Here comes everybody!

—James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake*

China, 2012:

At the end of the world, just over the horizon from the place where the end would begin, gray mist and radiostatic were indistinguishable. Voices and mountains emerged from below, synaesthetic waveforms expressed through different media. Implacable snow-capped peaks and gravel-throated announcers, carrying identical messages of weight, of things too large to wrap one's head around.

"...world's nuclear arsenals depleted... was thought to be only an effigy of the Secretary, until closer inspection revealed... surviving Monotheistic Coalition leaders are currently leading a marathon prayer session in Jerusalem... after looting the late dictator's secret horde of food and medicine, Peace Corps troops headed into the desert, canvassing refugee camps... FEMA officials granted the SETI program unprecedented authority under the latest round of martial law edicts, while NASA called for the president's immediate resignation... impact site calculated to be at 32 degrees North latitude, 103 degrees East longitude..."

Ace switched off the radio. The sun was overhead. The mountains below gave way to a long basin ahead where three great rivers ran parallel to each other for hundreds of miles, as though the land had been pinched and stretched from below. Plumes of smoke drifted from some sort of tower complex at the far horizon, tiny at this height and distance.

"Bitchin' Camaro, bruddah!"

The voice was from nearby, in a conversational tone, jolting Ace in surprise. A glance at the passenger seat told him Yves had not returned, so he turned slowly to the left. Less than five feet away, an Oriental woman of about 30 returned his gaze with a curt smile. Dressed in a sporty black and silver leotard, with a long black ponytail whipping in the wind behind her, she sat cross-legged on what looked like a spinning stone disk that easily paced La Fuente through the upper stratosphere. When Ace failed to return her smile or her compliment, she shrugged, rolled her eyes, and pointed toward the far towers, saying, "We've secured the main observation platform at Lop Nor. You can meet us there."

Then she shot forward and sped out of sight within a few seconds. Ace blinked. Eventually it occurred to him to close his

mouth as well. By that time, the passenger seat had begun to strobe violet light, with the figure of Yves Mercure flashing in at increasing intervals. He was still speaking, which did not surprise Ace.

"—my profound apologies, my friend... not wish to leave you without a guide... present my understanding of spatial phenomena is such... yet unable to be in two places at the same time, otherwise I should never have abandoned you. Please understand." Yves had stopped flashing. He looked at Ace, at the car, at the mountains below and the rivers ahead. "It is done?" he asked. "You have been to Australia already?"

Ace threw his right arm over the back of his seat. "Sure, no sweat, bro! I'm all caught up now!" Holding the wheel steady with his left hand, he tried to look nonchalant and in control. "I think I'm figuring out this funky flight path, too. We've been through the past, back up through the present — *your* present, which is *my* future, right?" Yves nodded. "That's why I don't get affected by this Gauntlet thing, like you are. It's all still extradimensional, part of the Umbra, in relation to my point of origin. And now we're all the way into the future. So anything from here on out will be as new to you as it will be to me." Yves thought for moment, then nodded, smiling rakishly. "Okay, then. I know who's on the Council of Nine, and who the Technocrats and some of the others are. And how bad the Ascension War's been going. I got a heavy question for you, though. What do you know about Mirzaba?"

Yves turned in his seat to face the kid. His hand came up to stroke his chin, but hit the Ethersuit's faceplate. "Ah. A most obscure reference, to be sure. From the Arabic, meaning 'an iron hammer,' it is a term found in the *Kitab al-Alacir*, where it is used to indicate the ultimate test, whether of a theory, an instrument or a device. I believe the English idiom is 'make or break.' To test a thing to its very limits of — *sacre merde!* What the fuck is that thing?!"

Rising above the horizon ahead was a vast pillar of dark flame with a glowing core — a seething, boiling mass that spun across the sky, chewing through the sunlight, leaving a corkscrew trail to mar the heavens. A gigantic worm with a single glaring eye.

Mirzaba.

...

Despite trembling hands, Ace managed to guide La Fuente through the smoke of the battlefield that surrounded the People's Spaceflight Facility at Lop Nor, China, and into an exposed upper level of the scarred observation tower. Armored robots and war machines lay twisted and scattered for miles around while mages from all Traditions mopped the remnants of local Technocratic forces.

Soon after Ace and Yves landed and disembarked, the girl from the stone disk rushed out of the crowd, launched herself at the Frenchman, locked her legs around the chest of his Ethersuit and planted a score of kisses on his grimy faceplate.

"Yves, you made it!" she squealed, drawing incredulous stares from all around. "When they lost touch with you in the London riots, I was afraid..."

Inside the Ethersuit, Yves was recoiling, not from revulsion but confusion. "Do I... know you, mademoiselle?" he stammered.

The girl froze, dropped to the ground and fumed at him. "I see. So that's how it's gonna be, huh? Mister 'We'll-Always-Have-Paris!'" Shespun on her heel and stalked away, growling, "Asshole..."

In her wake stood an oversized toy soldier who stepped forward and addressed Yves in French. "Sir. I have been asked to escort you and the young master up to the observation deck."

This time Yves was only slightly less confused. "What are you doing here?"

"You instructed me to come here when you left for London, sir."

"Did I?" Yves pondered this for a moment. He shrugged. "Very well, then. Lead on."

...

The observation deck was crowded with a hundred different accents, engaged in polysyllabic discourses ranging from warm greetings to embittered arguments. Rumpled white lab smocks and older male European voices seemed to predominate, but younger and more exotic Scientists, posing in spiffy costumes or staggering under the weight of awkward duct-taped equipment, could also be found. Groups clustered around video screens, computer terminals, chalkboards and even hastily scrawled diagrams taped up along any undamaged section of wall or window.

Yves broke the seals on his Ethersuit, removed the helmet and scanned the deck, picking out familiar faces. He and Ace waded through a sea of conversational fragments:

"...of course, the knee-jerk Technocratic reaction was to start firing missiles at it. Watch what happens as each successive impact is absorbed into the dark matter shell. See?" "It is as if it turns in our direction, searching for more!" "Fortunately, by plotting this change in trajectory, we have been able to calculate the spin of the core, as seen in the twisting of the tail..."

"...local time at ze point of impact will be exactly midnight." "Midnight? On de norderm hemisp'ere's winter solstice? As opposed to de vernal equinox 65 meellion years ago, when our solar system was 'bout a quarter of de way 'round de galaxy. But if dis whadyacall 'supercomet' is followeeng de gen'ral galactic orbit, den it would be moveeng 'longside of de earth wit' de same surface velocity!" "Precisely, *mein herr!* Ze kinetic force is reduced to nil! Not even a true impact in any sense of ze vord!" "But de mutual gravitational attraction will tear bot' bodies to pieces..."

"...the escalation of technological innovation matched by the depletion of non-replenishing resources, both trends reaching infinity and zero, respectively, on this very date. Not to mention the McKenna Timewave! So many lost puzzle pieces coming together, as if the entire Ascension War had been building toward this moment..."

"...graviton particles distribute themselves according to the scalar function, as any fool can see!" "No, no, no! Everyone knows that the gravitic field is mediated through a scalar carrier wave, you imbecile!"

"...the breakdown of the current sociopolitical structures would be most fascinating to examine — under less urgent circumstances, I mean." "How true. Note how the fears and hatreds of the ruling classes utterly spent their energies in less than a week after it became visible to the naked eye, while the so-called 'common bulk of humanity' appears to have shed its old prejudices and make the final days count. In a positive way, no less." "Aye! As though they were merely waiting for this impetus to Awaken..."

"...those close-minded dolts called me mad! Mad! Ha! See how I am now vindicated!"

Ace found himself staring at a large transparent bubble of luminous gas, within which three-dimensional images of the earth and Mirzaba moved back and forth, playing out different scenarios of doom. In most of the simulations, he was struck by how both orbs seemed to roll across each other's surface even as gravity was shredding them asunder. *Like gears meshing together*, he thought, *or even...*

"That looks like a toroidal cross-section!" he blurted, excited to find something he recognized amid the chaos.

The older white men gathered around the bubble turned to him. Working the controls was Stan, looking twice as leathery and grizzled as when Ace had left him an hour ago. "Ace!" he beamed. "Long time no see, kid!"

"Ach, my friend the mechanic! So good of you to join us!" A short pudgy man with liquor on his breath and confetti in his wiry hair threw a sweaty arm around Ace's shoulders. "I would not recognize you, looking so young and skinny!" He

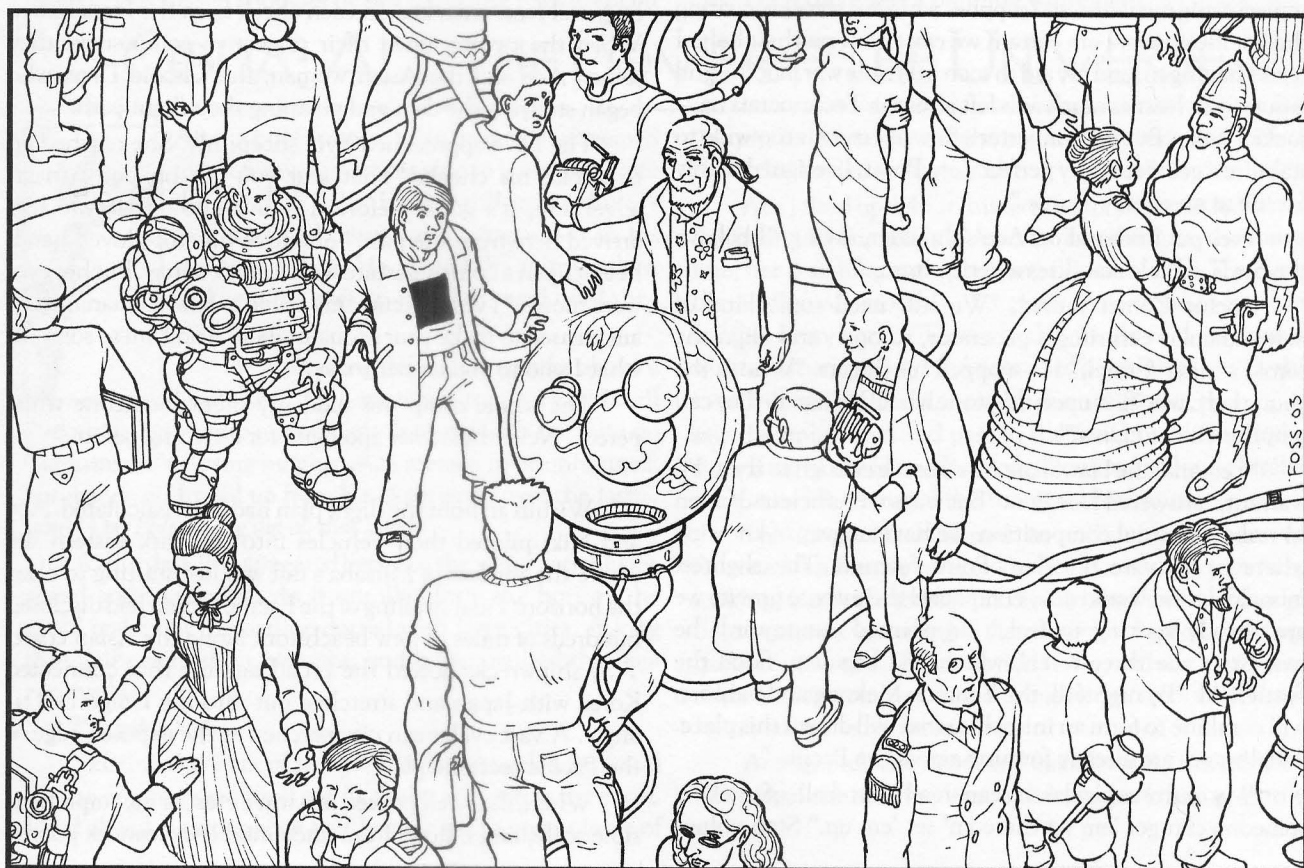
poked Ace in the ribs. To the others, he said, "This young man — well, not so young, when I first see him — comes to me at the party with a most perplexing conundrum. He shows me photographs from amateur astronomers and data hacked out of air-traffic-control logs, covering a period from the late 1970s through 1999, all showing a low-orbit object following a hyperbolic trajectory corresponding to the ley line from grid-points 17 to 18, Baja to Florida. He says that object was himself, as a boy. And that he is haunted by dreams of dying in crash when his first invention backfired on him."

A tall, muscular, square-jawed *hombre* in a flat-top and ripped dress shirt said, "That would explain the rumor I heard in an alternate timeline, that Coral Castle had been destroyed in some kind of implosive wave-function collapse, about 10 years ago. Which leaves us with a paradox, because you weren't dead on New Year's Eve, 2000, and you're not dead now, are you, Ernesto?"

The question was addressed to Ace, who bristled at hearing his Christian name. "Only my mother calls me that!" he snarled.

"And how is your mother, young man?"

Ace shrugged off the German, balled his fists and gritted his teeth. By his own sense of time, it had only been a few hours since he had stormed out of his home. His mother had pleaded tearfully for him not to go out racing. What had he said to her then? Suddenly he felt like crying. But damned if he was going to let this big Anglo see him break down!



As if to break the tension, another member of the party spoke quickly. "Doctor Eon, Doctor Comet, please, time is running out! Let us please to focus upon the problem at hand." He spoke with a Russian accent. He wore a battered aviator cap and a long duster coat. His bushy beard was shot with streaks of silver. His haggard, deeply lined face seemed a testament to the almost hundred years that had passed since the secret newsreel of him had been filmed.

"But of course, Czar Vargo," agreed the drunken German. "And I think our young mechanic has cheated death to come here and help us, no? What is it you said about the torus, young man?"

Realizing that he was in the company of legends, Ace found his mouth dry. "I... uh... well, here — Earth and the comet, rolling together like that. If you cut a torus in half, it looks like two circles, turning together like gears, touching at the center point...."

"Mein Gott, that is it!" The German pounded one hand into the other. "Spheres are but circles on the next highest dimension. A 3-D section of a 4-D hyper-toroid! With the power of the planetary grid, we could bifurcate the entire gravitic field of both bodies! It could work! But we need a stabilized Zero Point. Vargo! What is the diameter of your Ether Converter's chamber?"

"I see what you intend, Doctor Comet. The Council of Nine now holds most of the planetary grid's major Nodes, and because my airships were instrumental in their strategy, transporting medicine and supplies while we were evacuating the Pacific coasts, I am certain we can count on their help. I regret having to lend my aid to such a terrible war, but the grid is ours — at least as much as is left after the Technocrats have sucked it dry. But my converter's flow aperture is too wide to stabilize a geometrically perfect Zero Point. I designed it only for use as an energy source."

Yves put his hand on Ace's shoulder, saying, "I believe the boy's vehicle stabilizes a perfect torus."

Doctor Comet mused, "We still need some kind of perpendicular centrifugal generator, to open and align the toroid's inner funnel." He snapped his fingers. "Who is the young lady, who flies upon the stone wheel? What do they call her, the Discoid Diva?"

"Yemana, the Hawaiian. She's brave enough to try it, I'll warrant," answered Doc Eon. "But without sufficient data on Mirzaba's internal composition, we have no way of knowing where to activate the Zero Point fulcrum. The slightest miscalculation would only compound the intense gravity we are already starting to feel." He pointed out toward the nearest of the three rivers, which had begun to flood the battlefield. "By nightfall, the Yangtze, Mekong and Salween will combine to form an inland sea that will drown this place. Tidal waves are already forming across the Pacific."

"My retroscopic lasers can read that ball of rock, if someone can get 'em up there an' set 'em up," Stan volun-

teered. "We still got those Chinese rockets prepped an' fueled, don't we? Doc Orgone's got this wicked bioluminescent jelly that can feed the lasers and beam back all the data in light-beam pulses."

"Good thinking, Stanislaus," said Vargo. "But landing on Mirzaba's surface presents its own problems. The exotic energies of its dark matter interfere with all electrical fields, from the human nervous system to the simplest battery-powered robot. I lost one of my best men attempting a landing from the Umbra. Nothing can work in such conditions!" The Russian solemnly pressed his fist to his forehead.

Yves stepped forward, leading his tin soldier. "My friends, have I ever introduced you to my first invention?"

• • •

Late evening. The Sons of Ether had regrouped in the mountains north of what had been the upper Yangtze River. The tops of the Lop Nor gantry towers were swallowed by the deceptively calm surface of a vast inland sea only a few hours old. Reflected there was the image of Mirzaba, now filling the sky and looking close enough to touch, its unearthly glowing core nestled within a dark whirlpool that blotted out the stars and moon, the supercomet's foreshortened tail. Beneath this grim visage, Scientists worked off tension by seeing how much further they could throw or jump in Mirzaba's counteractive gravity.

When the first pulses of data-bearing light flashed from that whirlpool, whoops of joy erupted throughout the encampment. Stan picked up Yves, Ethersuit and all, in a jubilant bear hug, and received a kiss on each cheek from the Frenchman. When the two regained their respective composes, they joined Ace and the Asian woman, the Discoid Diva, who began studying the data and planning their flight path.

The Diva approached Yves sheepishly. She reached up to stroke his cheek. "That scar you got on our African adventure, it's gone. Before, I didn't know that you had arrived here from the past." She took his still-gloved hand, held it up in a courtly gesture with a mock curtsy. But her eyes were moist. "Yves Mercure, my name is Niki Yemana, and I am pleased to make your acquaintance. And I am so sorry for what I said to you earlier today."

The whole camp was suddenly silent. Someone whispered, "Never heard *her* apologize for anything before."

• • •

Within an hour the flight plan had been calculated. Ace and Niki piloted their vehicles into the dark eastern sky where the shadow of Mirzaba's tail was just starting to clear the horizon. Tidal swelling of the Pacific Ocean had disclosed hundreds of miles of new beachfront along the Asian coast. Tiny shipwrecks dotted the broad sandbar that connected Korea with Japan and stretched out into the Dragon's Triangle. A vast cyclopean city perched at the exposed edge of the Pacific tectonic plate.

Where the swell peaked in a wave crest of incomprehensible scale, and billows from uncountable volcanoes poured

over the horizon, they wheeled about and hovered together, ascertaining their position at the intended Zero Point with an antique sextant borrowed from Czar Vargo and Doctor Eon's own cesium-isotope wristwatch. Then the Discoid Diva took off westward, riding her stone disk like a surfer, tilting forward until all Ace could see was the disk's round underside. Ace threw La Fuente into high gear and followed her along the 30th parallel across the heaving globe of the Earth.

As he approached the required speed, the Doppler effect kicked in, tinting his view ahead in blue, the mounting cataclysm in his rearview mirrors red. Etheric wind coursed around him and through him, a song that he had always heard but never noted until now, as it rose to a deafening pitch. The twin curves of Earth and Mirzaba began to invert, going from convex to concave and enclosing him in a hollow world of his own that tightened as the supercomet rolled into the planet's atmosphere.

From this surreal inverted viewpoint, Mirzaba's surface looked like a photographic negative, light shining from its shadowed crevices, its peaks marked by black highlights. The atmospheres of the two bodies mingled in hallucinatory swirls that played havoc with his retinas, then were squeezed away as the two lands, held intact by La Fuente's bifurcation of their respective gravities, meshed. *Like some kind of jigsaw puzzle*, Ace thought, watching opposed landscapes rolling together, mountains fitting into valleys, forests brushing treetops, seas reflecting each other like an endless hall of mirrors.

Glancing at his own side mirror, Ace's throat constricted. Past his left shoulder he saw the entire Pacific engulf

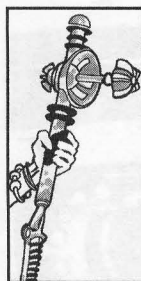
Asia, plowing through China's terraced plains, pouring across the Gobi desert, breaking against the Himalayas. There was no way humanity could survive this, and, even if it did, the face of the Earth would never look the same.

But when he looked up at his windshield mirror, the view over his right shoulder was quite different. Rather than physical destruction, it was the Gauntlet, the barrier between the material and the ideal, that was being destroyed, spirit and matter reunited. Time seemed to slow down, and in the vacuous silence that descended, the people of Earth looked up in wonder and awe at the strange new world filling their sky. Where the two worlds were close enough to reach at arms length, Mirzaba's own life emerged from caves and grottoes to greet the inhabitants of earth. Alien though they were, their shapes were strangely familiar — ancient gods, angels and demons, elves and dwarves, flying serpents and talking toadstools, creatures of lightning, mist and quicksilver. One group looked to Ace like the cover of a Parliament album he once saw, groovy space brothers welcoming humanity back home to a golden age and a universe of possibilities long believed to be lost.

Suddenly Niki's disk grew large ahead, as though she had stopped abruptly and he was plummeting toward her. Ace planted his feet on the brake pedal and arched his body against the back of his seat. In an instant the disk grew to impossible size, filling his vision. As he opened his mouth to scream, he could not help but notice that the texture of the stone surface looked exactly like the floor of Coral Castle.

Then there was a blinding white light.

CODA: ALL THE LOVE OF THE UNIVERSE



After a brief eternity or an instant that seemed to last forever, Ace was able to look away from the blinding light. He was still in the driver's seat, and had been staring at the sun in his rearview mirror. He tapped the mirror askew and kept his eyes on the dashboard until they readjusted.

He was sailing through the air far above a blue ocean that stretched to clear sky in all directions. La Fuente purred happily along with the flute on *Caravansera's* closing number. Ace seemed to be unharmed, but jittery, all hyped up from his experience over the last... hour? Day? *How long did all that take?*

A thin dark line appeared between the water and the sky, ahead and to the left. As it unrolled from the horizon, he could make out a coastline dotted with large cities. A long thin gulf emerged on his right, and he recognized the Baja peninsula.

I'm going home!

Skirting the layer of smog above Los Angeles, he could see the desert spread itself out like a dry spill across the earth. Dead ahead, a tan smudge swiftly grew into a great plume of

dust; in its center he caught a glimpse of cars and kids just before he landed in their midst.

Ace jolted upright in his seat, as though startled out of a daydream. La Fuente del Ritmo sat humming on the starting line, her coughing and sputtering now subsided. The dust in the air flowed smoothly and easily from front to back in a regular even curve. Through the windshield he saw the Mustang roaring away, and tightened his grip on the gearshift.

Still staring ahead, straight down the toroidal axis, Ace saw the finish line, and past it, the future: victory, vindication, King of the Hotrods, booze, blow and a blonde bitch on each arm. He thumbed the rheostat. Backward.

The toroidal field shrank to nothing; the scalar wave flattened. La Fuente reverted to being a normal (but funny-looking) internal combustion vehicle. *Fuck this*, Ace thought, *I don't gotta prove nothing to these assholes. I got a better way to spend my time now. The torus field works, and that's all I needed to know. Come on, Senorita del Ritmo, we got work to do. But first I gotta tell my mother something...*

Ace ignored the hoots and catcalls as he turned the car away from the starting line and drove back home, into the sunset.



CHAPTER TWO⊕: THE ESSENCE ⊕ OF SCIENCE

The idea that science can, and should, be run according to fixed and universal rules, is both unrealistic and pernicious. It is unrealistic, for it takes too simple a view of the talents of man and of the circumstances which encourage, or cause, their development. And it is pernicious, for the attempt to enforce the rules is bound to increase our professional qualifications at the expense of our humanity.

—Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*



P A R A D I G M A

THE LAST EDITION

It was a wondrous doomed world, filled with secrets that we tried our best to uncover. Now the Great Maker's rolled His final cosmic die. When Mirzaba stops tumbling, it spells the end of Earth's great game — but not our work.

For *Paradigma*, this ending marks a new beginning. In the 12 years since the destruction of our Paris offices, we've seen dozens of mailing lists, websites, 'zines and madly scrawled tracts competing to inherit our journal. Many of our colleagues bear the scars from poorly reviewed experi-

ments and Technocratic sabotage. *Paradigma's* destruction was the confusion of our common tongue and our dedication to progressive Science, but we soldiered on with our own work and hopes for this planet. To some of us, the coming brightness in the sky mocks those dreams.

But we reiterate: Our work is not yet finished.

Our team separated the Scientific wheat from the chaff of these successor publications and combined them with a new translation and analysis of the *Kitab al-Alacir*. Added to complete reproductions of every edition of *Paradigma* ever printed out of the Paris presses, we believe that the following file represents the most complete representation of the Sons of Ether ever assembled. Still, our work is not yet finished.

You, dear reader, are the future of the Sons of Ether. You hermits drifting in the astral firmament; you secret

colonists on Europa and around Proxima Centauri; you Technocrats of conscience; and you undiscovered, sapient species that are even now at the crossroads of your own destiny, weighing safety and wonder on your own, alien scales. This file will be laser-etched onto sheets of Primium. One will remain here at our (regrettably secret) offices, for the benefit of survivors and successor species. Another will be carried aboard a rocket that we've liberated from a certain, understandably preoccupied Western government, to send this record into space. Finally, we are transmitting this as it is compiled, across the Web and into the void.

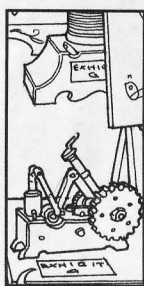
This was our experiment. May yours exceed it.

Ave Ether!

The Editors of *Paradigma*,

December 21st, 2012

THE WONDER-MAKERS



The dangerous (if occasionally amusing) experiments, maverick attitudes and adventurous lifestyles of the Sons of Ether rest on a solid foundation of hard work, dedicated study and, at times, convoluted politics. It isn't enough to be a great scientist or engineer, because membership in the Tradition entails real professional and physical risk. Once a newly Awakened Scientist enters the fold, her allegiance means that the Technocracy will undermine her public standing if it can. Furthermore, she'll be expected to protect her new associates. This might mean that she accompanies an Adventurer on a bizarre expedition or that she covers for a senior Scientist's foibles.

She must also accept that professional rivalries within the Tradition can run deep. Etherite society is hardly a nest of Machiavellian intrigue, but researchers in the same field are often naturally competitive, and disagreements between Scientists who've dedicated their lives to an idea can quickly intensify. Academic politics are bad enough without a rival who can scratch-build particle beam cannons.

RECRUITING

In the past, Etherites recruited new members from the wealthiest regions of the scientific community. This habit was born out of the former Convention's origins as a sort of gentleman's club for the Awakened. After the Technocracy washed its hands of the Electrodynic Engineers, it quickly became apparent that the Union planned to dominate the cream of the scientific crop. The new Sons of Ether were forced to "go slumming" for promising students, welcoming controversial elements such as women and Americans into the fold.

By the 1920s, attitudes had relaxed to the point where promising Awakened PhDs and postgraduate students from any background could find their way into the Tradition. Yet,

without some sort of degree, an aspiring Etherite could expect to have his research stolen while being kept at arm's length, given just enough encouragement to promote Scientific progress but no formal recognition of membership.

Then the Great Depression struck, and so many brilliant minds couldn't afford schooling that the final barriers to recruitment were dropped. Nevertheless, there is still a clear divide between Etherites with a university background and those who rely on informal training and sheer ingenuity to pursue their research. It's a mild but persistent stigma that often blocks access to Tradition resources.

THE POLYTIATH IDEAL

Aside from Awakening and dedication, a potential recruit shouldn't be overspecialized. Many Sons of Ether deplore the modern trend toward overspecialization because it inhibits holistic research. While Etherites are expected to be competent chemists and physicists (to prepare for training in the Sphere of Matter), they should also have some sort of grounding in the humanities, a basic knowledge of life sciences and an intuitive grasp of philosophy. Most prospective mentors are willing to help round out the student's knowledge.

No Son of Ether is expected to be a total polymath, but each one should be able to help a colleague who is pursuing a different area of research. There are never enough Awakened Scientists to go around, so specialization should never inhibit the Tradition's pursuit of Scientific truth.

INTRODUCING THE ETHER

When a prospect has been discovered, the would-be mentor introduces the Tradition's philosophy. In an academic setting, doing so can be as simple as giving a lecture based on the *Kitab al-Alacir*, but more creative methods are called for these days. The mentor might strike up a friendship with his prodigy, steering conversations toward subjective

Science and the Ether. Students who prefer to work with their hands are introduced to the mentor's inventions. In most cases, this introduction takes place in or around the prospect's home, school or work. Most Scientists find their students where they can, as all-Etherite faculties that can immerse the prospect in Awakened Science are few and far between.

As time passes, the prospective mentor reveals more and more esoteric Science, until she is confident enough of her prospect's chances to introduce her to the full text of the *Kitab al-Alacir*. Awakening upon reading the book (a common occurrence, as the book itself is steeped with the wisdom of the ages) is supposed to forebode great things for the student, but in most cases, enlightenment develops in a more prosaic, gradual fashion. If the student wasn't Awakened already, exposure to True Science loosens the student's preconceptions to the point where she can begin to follow in her mentor's footsteps.

TRAINING AND PROGRESS

Once a student enters the fold, she is brought up to speed on the current state of conventional and Awakened science as quickly as possible. These exhausting cram sessions are sometimes augmented with Mind and Life Science, allowing the new Son of Ether to study for days on end with amazing recall. In essence, the goal is to give the student the equivalent of a PhD in his best field and a broad knowledge of anything else the mentor feels is necessary. This doesn't always mean that the new Researcher acquires formal scientific training (although he is definitely pressured to learn it), but that he can both back his Awakened Genius with practical skills and get around a lab without ruining experiments. This process takes two to six years, depending on the student's previous level of education and rate of progress.

After this crushing course of study is completed, the student should create a thesis or invention that will stand up to inspection by three fully accredited Sons of Ether. Recently, the Tradition has allowed less formal initiations, but an Etherite who is certified as a Doctor of Progressive Sciences, Doctor of Etheric Sciences or a Doctor of Paradigmatic Philosophy is held in higher regard than a Scientist's untested personal prodigy.

RESEARCHERS

A newly initiated Etherite (in Tradition terms, an Initiate or Disciple) is commonly known as a Researcher. The antiquated title of Natural Philosopher is rarely used, but it tends to denote the student of an older Scientist. Researchers are encouraged to travel and vigorously pursue their interests, but they regularly check in with their tutor or another senior Etherite. Importantly, Researchers bear most of the burden of passing radical Science on to the Sleepers. While they are expected to alert the Tradition to promising students, they are encouraged to allow a Professor or Chair to guide a prospective recruit instead. Still, this rule is often honored in

Failed Students

From *Paradigma* Volume 92, issue 4 (1999)

The motion put forward to the Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics asks, in effect, that we be required to brainwash students who are unwilling or unable to join our Society. I must put forth my most vigorous objection to this, for a number of reasons.

First of all, I feel that compromising our ethics for the sake of our safety is a dangerous course. While this may indeed be implicitly required by the Rule of Shade, we should not allow the policies of the moribund Council of Nine to override our own moral concerns. That's a slippery slope, especially considering that the Traditions are capable of their own amoral maneuvering. When we decided to chart a path away from Technocratic hegemony, it was not to compromise our beliefs for the sake of yet another group of bureaucrats.

Secondly, there is no consistent and foolproof method for selectively erasing memories. Aside from the possible expense of bringing the subject to a specialist, Paradoxical side effects are more than capable of creating unanticipated results, compromising our Tradition's moral integrity.

Finally, the current practice of providing a substantial parting gift for unsuitable prospects before relocating helps to strengthen the influence of our own Science. A satisfied former student can do as much to promote our efforts as a new Researcher. I certainly agree that we should monitor them for a time. If a former student informs the Technocracy, we obviously need to be prepared.

Whatever the Ethics Council decides, let it be known that I will follow my conscience above security concerns. If the Council of Nine (or, as it currently seems, the Council of None) wants us to interfere with students' minds, then its members can come and ask us themselves. I will not let the Sons of Ether do it for them. Leave that kind of paranoia to the Mad Scientists.

—Zhang Zhouyen, Director, Neo-Qigong Labs

the breach rather than the observance, as roving Researchers take it upon themselves to give prospects a head start.

Finally, Researchers are expected to provide at least temporary assistance to a Professor or Chair who needs lab assistants, funding or anything else within their power. It's acceptable to decline a request for extended or extremely onerous help, but brushing off a senior Etherite too readily is cause for offense. Word of the shirker spreads through the Tradition and the lazy Researcher discovers that other Etherites are, in turn, too busy to help her.

PROFESSORS

After proving himself in the field and impressing his peers (and, in Tradition parlance, becoming an Adept of a Sphere), a Son of Ether is asked to serve as a Tradition Professor by at least one Chair or two Professors in good standing. Professors are expected to teach new Sons of Ether and tutor other Etherites who request it. As a result, most Professors lead more settled lives so that they can maintain contact with the Tradition at large.

Because they can ask for assistance from Researchers, Professors are capable of amassing a great deal of personal power. On the other hand, they must "publish or perish." That is, unless they regularly demonstrate new Scientific theories and inventions for other Etherites, they fade from notice. Researchers stop coming around with news and help, and the Chairs of their field no longer call upon them. With *Paradigma's* fragmentation over the past few years, reputable, peer-reviewed venues with which to announce discoveries are harder to find. As a result, more Professors turn to regular symposia to demonstrate their latest work.

CHAIRS

Above the Professors, the Chairs (Chairmen or Chairwomen) direct the Tradition's efforts in a specific field. First created in 1878, the Chairs are limited in number; each concerns a different aspect of Ether Science or Tradition affairs. Only an Emeritus or a quorum of existing Chairs can create a new Chair. Chairs do overlap, and depending on the circumstances, this can make the occupants staunch allies or constant rivals. The vague boundaries of each Chair can cause problems, so most Chairs encourage the Professors under them to declare which field a given project falls under. They are no longer expected to teach neophytes, but they should strive to train as many students in their field as possible.

An important function ceded to the Chairs is the right of approval over all Scientific innovation under their purview. This allows them to ban dangerous experiments and inventions or demand special protocols. Only the Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics may overrule them.

A Chair is either appointed by an Emeritus or by a board of Professors. Mastery of a Sphere is one requirement, and a history of brilliant work, political tractability and a real love for a field are all desired traits. Mad Scientists and Progressivists are discouraged from holding Chairs in the Tradition, and Adventurers rarely deign to do so.

Chairs of Note

From *Paradigma* Volume 95, Issue 3 (1999)

The Ad Hoc Restructuring Committee would like to remind readers that the following department Chairs remain unfilled or are of uncertain status. If you are aware of a qualified Professor or know of an active Chairperson who has escaped the committee's attention, please contact the Editors. Submissions will be vetted to prevent any sabotage of the process.

The following Chairs still require confirmed staffing. If they are not filled by January 1st, 2003, the Committee will suspend or combine these Chairs and their attendant departments.

The Hastings Chair of the Council of Nine

This is the Chair accorded to the Sons of Ether Primus of the Council of Nine. If you have evidence that Professor Emeritus Alexis Hastings is able to resume her position, please contact us immediately. We do not, however, have the ability to accept new applicants for this Chair, due to the standing laws of the Council of Nine.

The Mesmer-Rhine Chair of Applied Parapsychology

The successful applicant demonstrates a clear and exceptional knowledge of parapsychology and psionic theory in both theory and practice, including the archaeology and history of psychic powers and the ability to reverse engineer techniques from pre-Scientific documents.

The Newton Chair of Rational Alchemy

The successful applicant is familiar with both ancient and Scientific secular alchemy, including the current literature on Newton's Praxis and Primum alloys. In addition, the applicant should be able to demonstrate Etherically strengthened ("adamantine") covalent bonds in conventional matter.

The Eon Memorial Chair of Tradition Defense

The successful applicant is an Ascension War veteran with an impressive military record, impeccable ethics and a working knowledge of modern mechanized military forces, as well as postmodern space, psionic and counter-extraterrestrial operations.

The Zimmerman Chair of Multiversal Quantum Phenomena

The successful applicant can demonstrate the many-worlds manifestation of quantum waveform collapse, teleportation and extropic phenomena.

Note: Suitable applicants for these Chairs will be given further instructions upon the committee's receipt of a curriculum vitae and prospectus, but we regret that for security reasons, we cannot reply to all inquiries.

EMERITI

Above the rest of the hierarchy, the Emeriti (formally, Professors Emeritus) recognize their own from the ranks of the Tradition. As Archmasters of the Spheres, they are allowed to do whatever they wish, including promoting Scientists to their ranks who have rejected Professorial or Chair duties but have the necessary might and understanding to experiment upon the Tellurian itself. While they are capable of overruling any Chair or Professor, they rarely do so, preferring their own advanced research to the everyday concerns of the Tradition.

Reputedly these Sons of Ether move to the reaches of Etherspace to pursue their research without endangering others. Creating antimatter stars, living spacecraft and deliberate time paradoxes are all projects that Emeriti supposedly pursue.

SCIENTIFIC ETHICS

They say that academic politics are vicious because the stakes are so low, but even the power of Ether Science seems to be unable to dam the stream of disputes, plagiarism and outright crime with which the Tradition is forced to deal. Progressive Science is a matter of passion and belief. By rebelling against the Technocracy, Etherites prove that they're willing to risk their lives to experiment with reality. It's no wonder, then, that the Sons of Ether are particularly resistant to any attempt to meddle in their work. Nevertheless, there are times when the Scientist goes too far and the Tradition's justice system must intervene.

THE ETHICS COUNCIL

The Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics (often just called the Ethics Council) is a branch of the Utopians that has been entrusted with resolving academic disputes and criminal matters.

Professors in good standing may direct the Council or join its Tribunal. Three or six of these Scientists meet whenever they are called upon to judge their fellows. The Tribunal cannot judge Scientists in absentia because of concerns that the body might obstruct legitimate work. This allows renegade Etherites to cheat justice, but it doesn't prevent the body from issuing advisories to other Scientists and Council mages. Since it's difficult to imprison the Awakened, Investigators tend to specialize in Mind and Correspondence techniques that ensure compliance and prevent escape.

Defendants are innocent until proven guilty except in cases of treason and infernalism, where a reverse onus applies. The Tribunal prosecutes the case. Except in reverse onus cases, one third of the Tribunal acts as the defendant's advocate. The defendant may also call an independent Scientist to assist in her defense. The Tribunal and the defendant may both summon witnesses and submit evidence; each side is allowed to independently (but under supervision) examine whatever the other brings to trial.

Tribunal decisions require a two-thirds majority to pass. If the vote is 50% plus one, the Tribunal may retry the case and vote



again. If this second trial fails to produce a two-thirds majority, the defendant may go free. If a defendant is pronounced guilty, she may ask for a review of the decision in a year's time.

THE SCIENTIFIC ETHOS

The Sons of Ether's code is called the *Scientific Ethos*. This multi-volume text is consulted by the Tribunal, which is strongly expected (though not absolutely required) to rule in accord with its regulations. The *Scientific Ethos* covers both academic and criminal offenses; Scientists rarely make sharp distinctions between the two.

Academic regulations prohibit plagiarism, falsifying experimental data and misattributing credit for research. Depending on the severity of the offense, cheaters are fined in Tass, Censured (which destroys the offender's chance of

receiving tutelage) or both. Branding is reserved for the most egregious examples of lying. Such offenders' auras are given the Council of Nine's Oathbreaker mark to indicate that the perpetrators have, in effect, broken the Council's Protocols as well (see **Guide to the Traditions**, pp. 166-168).

The Etherite criminal code levies strict punishments for all of the offenses (such as murder and theft) that Sleeper laws consistently prohibit, as well as infernalism and treason against the Tradition. As imprisonment is often impractical, a death sentence or psychic rehabilitation with Mind Science is often levied. Gilgul is not a well-understood punishment, relying as it does on a theory of the Awakened psyche that many only grudgingly accept. Even if a qualified Soulrender is on hand, the Sons of Ether feel that it's better to just kill the poor prisoner and ignore debates about future incarnations.

Disputed Claims

From *Paradigma* Volume 23, issue 4 (1920)

PUBLIC NOTICE: The Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics Tribunal hereby rules that Professor Emeritus Andreas Vargo (da Vinci Chair of Odylic Flight, Tunguska Chair of Explosive Chemistry, Czar of Terra) is the inventor of the Chemical Conversion Engine. The Tribunal has agreed that it is in the Tradition's interest that aspects of the ruling be published.

The Council understands that several Scientists have documented claims, but upon interview, none of them could provide a consistent personal description of inventing the Engine, nor could they describe the principles by which it operates. Despite authentic documentation, the Tribunal cannot accept claims by Scientists who cannot describe the workings of their purported inventions. Furthermore, all witnessed testing of the Engine occurred after May 24th, 1910.

Fragmentary evidence suggests that Czar Vargo exhibited the Conversion Engine on May 24th, 1910.

Although the decline in evidence for and witness of the Conversion Engine in use have declined since this Tribunal began its investigation in 1915, the nature of these losses (including memory failure and the unexpected decomposition of physical evidence) leads us to believe that Paradoxical Phenomena are responsible for both the mistaken claims of other Scientists and the declining body of evidence in support of Czar Vargo. Thus, we have ruled in favor of the most historically significant invention of the device, which cannot be matched by any other claimant. While the evidence becomes sparser with each passing year, its breadth remains awesome. It is in the overriding interest of the Sons of Ether that this memory be preserved for as long as possible.

LEARNED SOCIETIES



Factions in the Sons of Ether are research groups, social cliques and fan clubs rolled into one. Depending on the faction and the Etherite's interests, one aspect can dominate the others, but associations tend to be loosely defined in any event. True Scientists are always on the move and pursuing independent experiments and adventures often enough that many refuse to be tied to a particular circle.

Sons of Ether rarely commit to a faction until they strike out on their own. The exceptions usually study under mentors who are closely associated with a particular group.

The ties that do survive the bustle of the Etherite lifestyle tend to run deep, cemented as they are by both tradition and need. The Sons of Ether burst onto the edge of Science as a gentlemen's club, but although the modern Tradition is extremely inclusive, the old-boy network hasn't so much died as transformed into one where favor-trading and nepotism can now be enjoyed by men and woman of all persuasions.

Unfortunately, this creates a real gulf between established Scientists and younger Researchers, who are cut out of the loop that the inner circle of each faction uses to secure resources and protect themselves from rivals.

PULP CULTURE

To the other Traditions, the most baffling aspect of the Sons of Ether are their fashions. The average Awakened mage can at least intellectually grasp the idea of Ether and alternative sciences, but silver jumpsuits? Extraneous Jacob's Ladders? It's been speculated that the Etherites are either antiquated or playing a rather tired joke, but the truth of the matter is that it's all about fashion.

Many Sons of Ether are rebellious by nature, but not in the comfortably defined Sleeper fashions of an Orphan punk or Hollow Goth. The pulp aesthetic appeals to many Etherites instead. Pulp heroes have a strong ethical sense, they are rugged individuals, and they come from a time when fighting to better humanity's lot was in the forefront of the common imagination. It decries cynicism and exalts individuality, something many Etherites view as the antithesis of the homogenized, sarcastic planet that has withered in the Technocracy's care. *That's* where pulp comes from. It isn't the result of social isolation or the whims of old, batty Scientists, but a conscious choice.

At the same time, pulp affectations have changed from what they were while E. E. "Doc" Smith was writing or Jet Boy took to the air against the Nazis. Nowadays, the pulp

attitude is fused with contemporary culture. Modern Etherites incorporate rave and progressive punk styles into their "uniforms" and try to cultivate a more socially relevant, yet heroic image. And, of course, nicknames like "Doctor Cyclotron" and "Kid Fermat" are par for the course.

Victorian fashions have much of the same appeal, since they represent an (admittedly misguided) attempt to civilize the world and are associated with the philanthropic and scientific aspirations of the age. Many Sons of Ether value Wonders and foci from that period, both for the care that went into making them and as a constant reminder of the Tradition's history.

Not every Son of Ether adopts such a persona, but a significant minority does. Hotshot Researchers embrace the pulp style for a few years then abandon it as they grow into more serious duties. When the time comes to lecture, the Nega-Ray stays in the closet.

Exceptions do crop up, though. When an older aficionado of the pulp or Victorian styles presents herself, it's entirely likely that she is in fact a powerful Scientist who's somewhat out touch with modern society. Young Etherites are advised to demonstrate effusive respect.

The Royal Ethernautical Society, Institute for Cybernetic Research and Utopian League are all recognized factions. That is, they have official standing and a formal leadership. The Adventurers, Dissidents (or "Mad Scientists") and Progressivists are loose political groups that are never mentioned as formal bodies, but are known to any well-connected Researcher. Younger Etherites gravitate to the informal factions, hoping to make a name for themselves without running into a political roadblock. Many Scientists prefer to just follow their personal research and don't join a faction at all. Even though they have less access to Quintessence and resources than faction-affiliated counterparts do, they tend to steer closer to the Tradition's polymath ideal. In this capacity, they are valued for their ability to compare and combine disparate lines of research.

INITIATION

Sons of Ether are usually recruited by the official factions. In a few cases they apply for membership, but doing so is thought to be a bit gauche unless the Scientist is truly talented. This is where the old-scientist network has a huge influence. Young Research-

ers usually curry favor with a well-connected Professor, who then introduces the protégé at all the right symposia, adds her name (deserved or not) to important papers and, in the end, suggests to a member of the faction that an interview might be in order. Naturally, studying under a Professor who is already a member of the faction speeds up the process.

If the interview goes well, the faction accepts the Researcher, who gives an oath of service and receives a minor title, such as "Ether Rocketry Associate." From there, the Etherite divides time between her own projects and those related to the faction's goals, until she acquires Professorial rank and can comfortably manage a lab of her own.

For unofficial factions, the process is much simpler: Make the right friends or gain a reputation as a troublemaker, and the Tradition quickly labels the Etherite as a member of the appropriate faction. For example, unethical or unhinged Sons of Ether are eventually dismissed as "Mad Scientists," and those who've already earned the moniker will soon consider her to be one of their own.

THE ROYAL ETHERNAUTICAL SOCIETY (OR ETHERNAUTS)

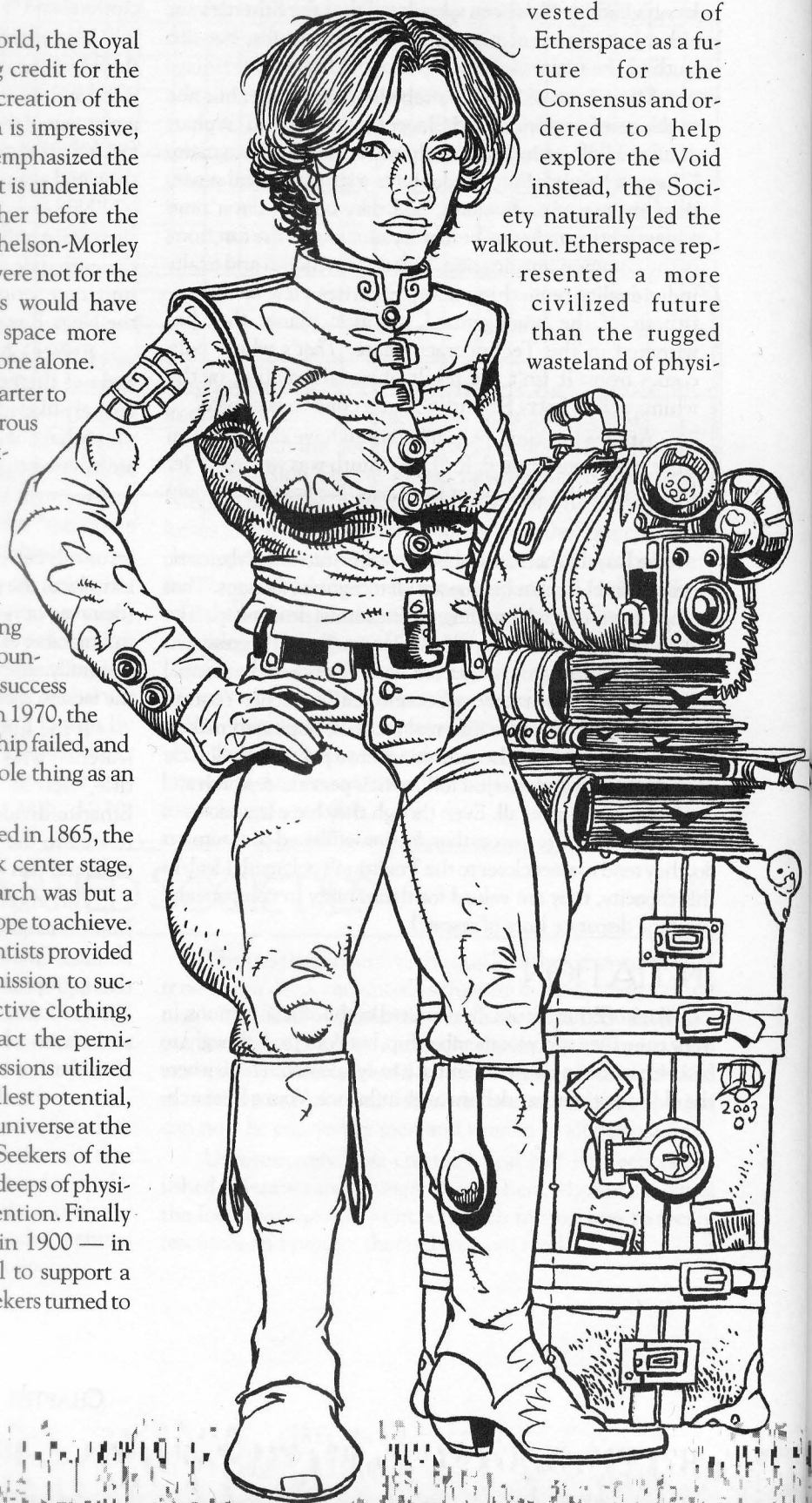
Nicknames: Ethernauts (common), Explorers, Transporters, Sky Cavalry

History: In the secret history of the world, the Royal Ethernautical Society stands tall, claiming credit for the first voyage to the physical moon and the creation of the first human habitat in orbit. (All of which is impressive, even if Society historians have steadily de-emphasized the contributions of the Seekers of the Void.) It is undeniable that the two groups worked closely together before the paradigmatic disaster brought on by the Michelson-Morley Experiment. It is even speculated that if it were not for the unhappy tides of history, the two groups would have worked hand in hand to colonize outer space more extensively than the Void Engineers have done alone.

In 1851, the Society was given a royal charter to "exploit the phenomena of the Luminiferous Ether and Celestial Phlogiston for aerial exploration and to investigate the uncharted altitudes of the heavens." To support the Seekers of the Void, advocates of Reason acquired the charter and then some of the finest Enlightened minds in Ether Science. Together, they made rapid progress, stunning the Order of Reason and the Queen's Privy Council alike with a moon landing in 1892. Their success is still a state secret in the United Kingdom. In 1970, the government's covert duplicates of the Ethership failed, and officials have been inclined to regard the whole thing as an old royal hoax since then.

When the Electrodyne Engineers gathered in 1865, the Royal Ethernautical Society's delegates took center stage, arguing that their successful collective research was but a taste of what the assembled Scientists could hope to achieve. Indeed, subsequent exchanges between Scientists provided the breakthrough that allowed the moon mission to succeed. Electrodyne comrades perfected protective clothing, control systems and technology to counteract the pernicious microgravity of space. Subsequent missions utilized the parallel dimension of Etherspace to its fullest potential, and soon Ethernauts were exploring the new universe at the expense of physical space. Support for the Seekers of the Void's jaunts through the more inhospitable deeps of physical space declined, angering the fellow Convention. Finally Victoria Station was secured in lunar orbit in 1900 — in Etherspace. Angered at the Society's refusal to support a similar outpost in conventional space, the Seekers turned to Artificer tools to further their goals.

When the Electrodyne Engineers were forcibly divested of Etherspace as a future for the Consensus and ordered to help explore the Void instead, the Society naturally led the walkout. Etherspace represented a more civilized future than the rugged wasteland of physi-



cal space — and the success of Victoria Station was not to be mocked!

Once freed from the Order of Reason, the Ethernauts explored Etherspace aggressively, laying the foundations for Realms such as the Gernsback Continuum. When the Sons of Ether joined the Traditions, they also discovered that Etherspace represented a distinct strategic advantage, as vessels could use it as a “shortcut” to attack Void Engineer projects in real space. This blossomed into staggeringly complex engagements between Void Engines and Etherships around the Jovian moons. Neither side could allow access to the Tass-rich moons, but the battles served to bleed both sides to no advantage. The Society’s Earth-bound work (focusing on propulsion systems and spin-off technologies for Sleeper use) was constantly delayed or refitted to serve an increasingly futile struggle.

Then the Reckoning struck, and the gates of Etherspace were smashed shut.

Despite the loss of so many Scientists on the front and the new irrelevance of its work, the Royal Ethernautical Society soldiers on. Ethernaut training has proven to be excellent preparation for exploring the lost reaches of the world. Etheric and conventional propulsion Science is now employed on Earth, and Ethernaut designs have become serious contenders for mainstream use as Ether-exciting technologies are applied to hydrogen and uranium. Ironically, conventional space has returned to the agenda, and the faction is finally catching up to its old Void Engineer rivals. Nevertheless, armored Etherships still make occasional treks into other dimensions, looking for stranded Sons of Ether and exploring with a new sense of caution.

Science: The Royal Ethernautical Society divides its efforts into three fields. Propulsion Science uses the Spheres of Forces, Correspondence and Spirit to move brave Ethernauts across the globe or into the unknown. Recently, personal vehicles and propelled environment suits have become especially popular. Time and Dimensional travel is still an important aspect of Society research, especially when the exciting implications of quantum physics have increased the possibilities that Etherspace travel might become a viable Consensual activity. Unfortunately, the field is so dangerous that Scientists can only afford to support a handful of missions.

Material Sciences work to create light, strong alloys and polymers that can withstand the stress of experimental propulsion systems without overburdening vessels. Spin-offs from this work provide a great deal of revenue, making this a popular area of study. Furthermore, proficiency with the Matter Sphere is common, allowing the Ethernauts to commission help from the rest of the Tradition. The most exotic work revolves around “powered” atomic bonds. The

Prime Sphere is used to channel Quintessence into enhancing the strong electromagnetic force, either through classical Ether theory or by altering the quantum waveform of individual particles to maintain coherency. With an enhanced fundamental strength, such materials are designed to weather mundane and exotic stresses, up to and including the force of the Avatar Storm.

Human Sciences prepare Ethernauts for the rigors of travel. Scientists alter their subjects’ biochemistry to require less food and oxygen, enhance reflexes to improve their grace and coordination in low gravity and provide psionic senses able to detect dimensional instability and Ether-borne hazards. Most of this work involves the Life and Mind Spheres, manipulated through drugs, surgery and exotic radiation.

Organization: The Society still clings to its old London offices, and an unassuming building in Soho houses its headquarters, preserved from the Technocracy by the very audacity that would later expel the Etherites from its grasp. The Ethernauts let the Order of Reason know in no uncertain terms that its former relationship with the British government, including its 19th-century space program, would be revealed unless they were left alone. Nowadays that threat holds little force, but the Technocracy no longer considers the guardians of a broken Etherspace worth sabotaging. Flaked lettering announces the Society’s name to anyone who looks, but most clubgoers assume that it’s an office now, and they rarely consider the eccentrics who regularly climb the stairs. These are usually Researchers, arrived to report the results of a Professor’s work to the society’s permanent Chairs — or these days, the barely qualified Professors that fill in.

To prevent any interference with its new projects, the Society sets up secret labs around the world. Ethernauts have quietly taken over abandoned Russian space program facilities in Kazakhstan. Makeshift labs in Canada (Ethernaut training) and Ecuador (conventional launches) round out their possessions.

The three permanent Chairs of the Society are the Sussex Chair of Propulsion, the Savage Chair of Human Sciences and the Queen’s Chair of Aeroframe Technologies. Other Chairs exist to accommodate qualified experts. Together, the Chairs form the Society’s Executive Directorate. Underneath them, a mixed board of Scientists and Sleepers handle practical matters and include a treasurer, patent lawyers and other functionaries. These Chairs coordinate the three primary labs along with independent Scientists around the world. The Society maintains permanent research and engineering groups, but it also supports Scientists in their own labs and the depths of the unknown when possible.

CYBERNETIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE (OR CYBERNAUTS)

Names: Cybernauts (common, misleading), CRI, The Mechanics, EtherGeeks.

History: Despite practically being the archetypal Sons of Ether, the Cybernetic Research Institute was constantly misrepresented by the other Traditions. Contrary to popular belief, the Institute has never been exclusively focused on computer technology, even though a close working relationship with the Virtual Adepts in the 1970s and '80s led many to believe that it was all about EtherOptic cables and bizarre programming. Other Cybernauts were mistaken for "generic Sons of Ether," their love of mechanisms submerged into general impressions of the Traditions.

Impressed with the success of assembly line manufacturing, a group of former Electrodyne Engineers met in 1910 to discuss ways to wrest its power from the Technocracy. Each Scientist specialized in complex machinery, from automatons to steam-driven calculators. They decided that by sharing their research and developing a set of general principles, they could produce prototypes that the Masses could easily reproduce. Thus would they charm the Henry Fords of the world right from under the Union's nose.

Together, they formed the Cybernetic Research Institute, using the now-dated (but still correct) usage of "cybernetic" to mean any mechanical control system. Computation was an important element of the Institute's work, but not the only one.

Unfortunately, the dream of the assembly line was no match for the disparate goals of the Institute's members. In 1921, plans to construct a prototype robot to market to major industrialists quickly broke down. The team argued over the number of arms, power source and even the color of the automaton.

Despite this failure, the early Cybernauts agreed that working together had been immensely valuable. The Institute remained, dedicating itself to developing automated systems based on Etheric principles and sharing them with the public. Cybernauts believed that the public should have access to an Ether Science alternative to every Technocracy-influenced innovation.

From 1925 to 1960, the Institute rode high on public speculation about (and, during the war years, fears of) technology's potential. Naturally, the Technocracy also benefited from this. For every Cybernautic mind-control robot (falsely attributed to Albert Einstein) that the FBI kept a file on, the Technocracy had an H-Bomb.

In 1961, the Virtual Adepts joined the Traditions. Reestablishing contact with the Sons of Ether, they were surprised to find that members of the Institute had maintained—and even improved—designs dating from the Difference Engineers. Exchanging ideas, the Cybernauts decided to expand their computing forays beyond robot brains and smart machines and develop an alternative information architecture. The Difference Engine Group declared that "information is Ether" and began its work in earnest. As the Virtual Adepts developed the Digital Web, Cybernauts compared the Odyllic currents of virtual and physical space. The Virtual Adepts incorporated the parallel innovations of Institute computers into their own Trinary systems, establishing a fruitful relationship that lasted until the Great Whiteout of 1997. The Web's crash ruined years of work, encouraging Cybernauts to keep to their own intranets.

The Institute weathered the Avatar Storm well. With the exception of proving grounds for their war machines, their operations were Earthbound. While the computer experts are refocusing their efforts on alternative computing and control systems, the rest of the faction has actually become more popular; independent Etherites visit their labs to improve their engineering skills.

Science: The Cybernauts divide their work into three categories: what they jokingly call "Brains," "Brawn" and "Blam."

"Brains" are a machine's control systems. This includes telepresence, psychic control systems, memory materials and even rousing "the Platonic consciousness of the machine's form" as foci for Mind, Correspondence and Spirit Effects. In addition, the Difference Engineering Group concentrates on the quantum and Etheric properties of information to create computers that are capable of affecting reality through calculation alone.

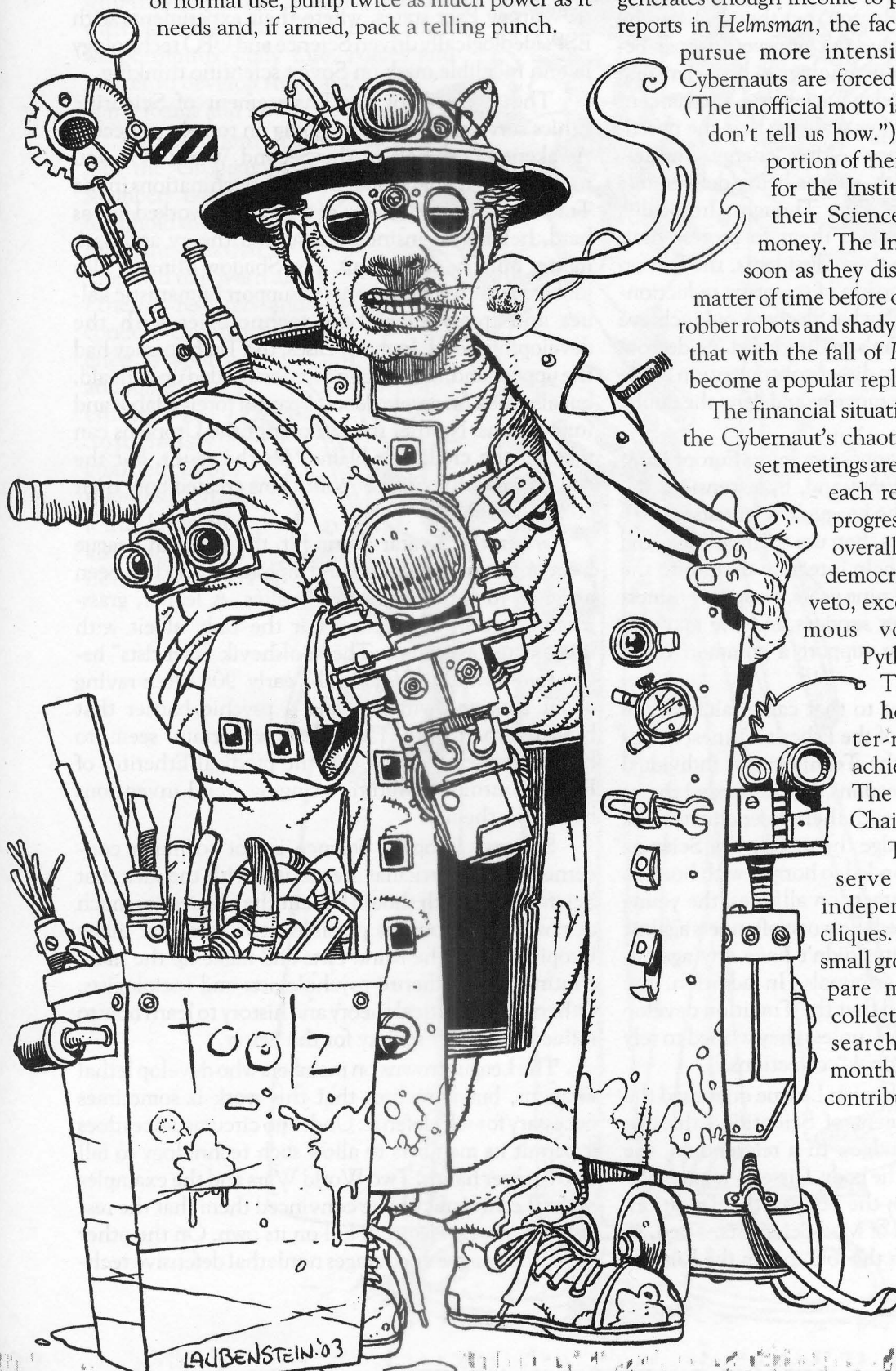
"Brawn" is the machine's body. Robots, cars, helicopters, exoskeletons and other devices are constructed according to exacting standard. Refined alchemy, designs reverse engineered from ancient civilizations, unique alloys and other Etherite methods. Matter Science is most helpful, but all the Spheres have, at one time or another, been used to create machines. More and more Scientists are using the Life Sphere in particular to create organic components and even entire machines, to the point where the distinction between living and mechanical entities becomes blurred.

"Blam" is an abstract measurement of a machine's tolerances, power reserves and secondary systems, including weapons. "It works, but not enough Blam" is a common Professorial criticism. It's not enough that the device works, it has to be able to far exceed the stresses of normal use, pump twice as much power as it needs and, if armed, pack a telling punch.

Organization: The Cybernetic Research Institute is a private think tank and research group that is partially funded by subscriptions to its journal, *Helmsman*. The magazine discusses whatever aspects of the Institute's research that it chooses to share. While this venture generates enough income to plausibly maintain what it reports in *Helmsman*, the fact of the matter is that to pursue more intensive Ether Science, the Cybernauts are forced to scrape and scrounge. (The unofficial motto is, "Bring the money in and don't tell us how.") Most members donate a portion of their regular salaries and work for the Institute pro bono. A few use their Science to illegally acquire the money. The Institute cuts them loose as soon as they discover this, but it's only a matter of time before other Etherites tire of bank robber robots and shady arms deals. Members hope that with the fall of *Paradigma*, *Helmsman* will become a popular replacement.

The financial situation is just one symptom of the Cybernaut's chaotic organization. The only set meetings are quarterly symposia, where each research group discusses its progress, new groups form, and overall policy is decided by direct democracy. Chair holders have a veto, except in the case of a unanimous vote. Aside from the Pythagorean Chair for Systems Technology, the Institute holds none of its own. Master-ranked Scientists must achieve recognition elsewhere. The Institute does recognize Chairs granted elsewhere.

The Institute is still the preserve of a number of independent-minded scientific cliques. Scientists work alone or in small groups, meeting only to compare machines or assemble a collective design. Otherwise, research groups meet at least monthly. Each group must also contribute an article to *Helmsman*.



THE UTOPIAN LEAGUE (OR UTOPIANS)

Names: Utopians, Ethercrats (sarcastic), Doc Law, The Ideal College

History: The Ethernauts might have been the most outraged at the Order of Reason, but the idealists who formed the Utopian League felt an even deeper betrayal. Consisting of proto-psychologists, historians and ethically minded independent Scientists, the nascent League banded together after realizing that the potential of Electrodyne Science — free energy, limitless travel and universal health — was being deliberately curtailed by the Cabal of Pure Thought. Ironically, members of the Cabal joined them to protest their comrades' complicity. To these dissidents, the ban on Ether Science and the worship of scientific reductionism seemed designed to limit what Sleepers could achieve without the Order of Reason's guiding hand. Aside from hoarding Enlightenment in direct contravention of the Order's original ethos, the move would deny the public life-saving technologies.

In 1905, an Etherite symposium across Europe hammered out the *Scientific Ethos* and, by extension, the future of the Tradition. The League's Scientists were to observe Etherite endeavors then use their political and psychological prowess to help integrate them into the Consensus. Over the next nine years, Utopian business evolved to include courier services and the management of *Paradigma*, all to support a common cause among the Sons.

By 1914, commitment to that cause faltered; the Great War dragged some of the Etherites' finest minds into battle. Along with the Technocracy, individual Sons of Ether invented weapons that impressed themselves into the Consensus with their sheer cruelty. The war made it difficult to judge the morality of Science; military engineering responded to horrors with horrors. Through government contacts on all sides, the young Shadow Ministry uncovered the worst offenders against the Ethos, but the Etherites didn't have any agreed-upon way to deal with criminals. In addition, the Council of Nine demanded that the Tradition develop an internal code of justice — unless they wished to rely on the Euthanatos' occasional "corrections."

Two years later, the Utopian League organized the Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics to serve as the Tradition's judges. In a referendum, the Sons of Ether approved of the body. Dissenters gradually distanced themselves from the body of the Tradition, creating a new generation of Mad Scientists. Then, in 1918, several Utopians left the fold to join the Russian

Bolsheviks. Attracted by the possibility of a "Scientific State," they attacked the League's "bourgeois" values. Up until the late 1980s, a trickle of Etherites emigrated to Warsaw Pact states, where their experiments with ESP, ideologically driven Science and UFO technology left an indelible mark on Soviet scientific thinking.

The Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics survived these trials, going on to help prosecute Awakened criminals in the Second World War and rooting out Nephandi and Infernal machinations in the Tradition's ranks. The rest of the League worked just as hard, helping to insinuate quantum theory and dark matter into the Consensus. The Shadow Ministry also lobbied within governments to support humanistic values and freely share new technologies with the developing world. In many cases, the Technocracy had the upper hand, so struggling nations ended up with aid, but also took on severe debts to pay for foreign labor and innovations. Neither the Union nor the Utopians can take all the credit (or blame) for the result, but the compromise that Sleeper politicians created bore their collective stamp.

When the Avatar Storm hit, the Utopian League lost contact with thinkers and diplomats who had been assigned to various Horizon Realms. A leaner, grassroots League was prepared for the task, albeit with unexpected assistance. The "Bolshevik Scientists" began to return to the fold in the early '90s, often raving about Russian "witches" and a psychic barrier that hindered their work. This "Shadow Curtain" seems to have collapsed in 2000, but the prodigal Etherites of Russia continue to return, bringing weird inventions back with them.

Science: Utopian Science is not so much concerned with a particular area as it is with the idea that Scientific research should benefit the Sleepers as much as possible, as soon as possible. It is true that many Utopians study the Mind Arts and make up the main contingent of Etherite psychologists and sociologists. Others study political theory and history to learn how to influence Sleeper society for the better.

The League frowns on members who develop lethal weapons, but it realizes that this work is sometimes necessary for self-defense. Under no circumstances does it permit its members to allow such technology to fall into Sleeper hands. Two World Wars and the examples of the Technocracy have convinced them that the rest of humanity can learn to kill on its own. On the other hand, the League encourages nonlethal defensive tech-

nologies. Utopian Scientists have what may be the world's most diverse arsenal of nonlethal weapons at hand, and they aggressively attempt to make them available to Sleepers. The upswing in interest by Western governments will, they hope, lead to future wars fought with bloodless arms. These conscientious weaponsmiths study Life, Forces and Matter to develop stun rays, enveloping foams and knockout drugs.

Organization: It's easy to join the Utopian League: Members take an oath to uphold the *Scientific Ethos*, the rules that are supposed to govern all Etherite research and conduct. Granted, adherence is spotty and some Scientists are notoriously guarded about their research, but a true Utopian sets an example that he hopes members

of the Tradition, Sleepers and even Technocrats will follow. Obviously, breaking the *Ethos* is grounds for expulsion as well as discipline by the Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics.

The League is particularly adamant about making an example of its failures.

After joining, Utopians are free to follow their own research specialties, but they must also take on projects to develop technologies that benefit humanity and share the fruits of Science with Sleepers. In the past, quarterly reports on these activities were submitted to *Paradigma*, but with the collapse of that institution, most see fit to either report their work in one of the journal's successors or contact other Professors and Chairs.



ADVENTURERS

Names: Cliffhangers, Field Scientists (polite), Doc Smith (referring to individuals)

History: There have always been Scientists who wouldn't stay in the lab. The Adventurers are not a formal faction, but every connected Etherite knows what the term means. The "Cliffhangers" are as renowned for their marginal contributions to Ether Science (since they're usually too busy to publish) as they are for their disconcerting habit of saving the Tradition from certain doom (or at least inconvenience). Therefore, the history of the faction really consists of the individual stories that made adventuring such a famous — and notorious — part of Tradition culture.

The moniker was first applied to Scientist Mathieu Hullebusch in 1909, when the Utopian tried to overthrow the colonial government of the Belgian Congo with flying automatons. The Sons of Ether were torn over his actions. Despite the cruelty of the Belgian regime, many Scientists shared the prejudice that the "primitives" of the continent needed Western leadership. To soften debates, polite Etheric society chose to refer to him as an "Adventurer."

Hullebusch's ornithopter was shot down near Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), but his companions transmitted his final battle on an experimental portable wireless transmitter. He was acclaimed as a hero, inspiring other Scientists to follow his example.

Since then, the Adventurers have always combined a sense of daring with a readiness to impose their consciences with force. Others joined Czar Vargo's airship corps to stop the Great War. Doc Eon and Doctor Mondial fought the Nazis with flair.

Aside from their inconstant commitment to research, Adventurers have been derided for a certain laxity in their own Science. Doc Eon incorporated lore from the hidden city of Agartha into his inventions, and the flashy nature of the tools used by Etherites such as Jet Boy and the Insidious Doctor Fang leads serious Scientists to believe that these "Doc Smiths" just aren't taking it very seriously. The truth of the matter is that an Adventurer's travels often expose her to methods that are well off the beaten path, but they can be incorporated into Ether Science with a bit of open-mindedness and know-how. Thus, they contribute more to the Tradition than just their fighting skills.

Science: An Adventurer's Science is deeply idiosyncratic, portable and capable of being used in an instant. More than members of any other faction, the Field Scientists train their minds and bodies to reach peak performance.

The wandering life introduces Adventurers to all sorts of strange technologies — so strange, in fact, that at first glance, they might be mistaken for base "magic." In fact, these techniques are perfectly Scientific, even if their practitioners don't know it! Walking up walls with Tibetan Akashic techniques? It's just special muscular training. Shamanism? An effective way to contact extradimensional aliens. Adventurers prefer to cut out as much of the superstitious dross as possible, but they know full well that some superstitions come from a perfectly rational source. Nonetheless, the key is to interpret and refine according to Ether Science.

In this fashion, the Adventurers have discovered that amazing inventions and theories existed throughout history and that Science is as much discovery as innovation. Alchemy has its hidden gems, as do wonders that were first described in myths. Jet Boy's own rocket pack used mercury propulsion techniques that were originally described in the *Mahabharata*. Pyramid Power is real.

Organization: In rare cases, Adventurers jump directly into the lifestyle (or have been trained from a young age to lead it), but most of the time, necessity and fate brings out the heroic side of a Scientist to the point that other Etherites recognize her for what she is. Adventurers rarely work together. They'll run alone or with a cabal of Tradition mages as they gradually adapt their methods to pursuits such as crime fighting or exploration. Realizing that injustice (and adventure!) are widespread, they prefer this diffuse organization, but when truly earth-shattering danger calls, they aren't averse to teaming up. If these rare partnerships work well, they tend to last

for a long time, as the Adventurer ethos exalts camaraderie.



DISSIDENTS (OR MAD SCIENTISTS)

Names: Mad Scientists (popular), Frankensteins, Amoralists

History: While there have always been Etherites who are a bit unhinged or impatient with social niceties, the first Dissidents became an identifiable political faction during World War I. Responding to the rise of sophisticated, cruel weapons, the Utopian League created its Ethics Council. Etherites who contributed to the arms race were censured and occasionally even imprisoned.

Yet a vocal minority of Scientists wouldn't stand for it. They'd left the Order of Reason to pursue Science with a free hand, and they weren't

about to kowtow to some replacement authority, no matter how necessary the bone-shaking primitives of the Council of Nine thought it was! In 1919, a rambling letter to *Paradigma* by Professor Herbert von Gegabelterblitz alternated between cogent objections (based on the idea that ethical concerns would stymie Scientific advancement) and various threats to destroy the Ethics Council with his Pseudolunar Electro-Etheric Ray, an orbiting particle beam cannon of his own devising. His position was not exactly greeted with accolades; rubberized umbrellas were common Utopian accessories that year.

A few calmer objections followed, but the Dissidents' position was forever tarnished by von Gegabelterblitz's insanity. The fact that actual mad Etherites gravitated to the movement didn't help either. All of them decided to avoid the Utopians by isolating themselves, surfacing only to publish their experiments. To avoid a repeat of the controversy, *Paradigma* refused to censor the work, even though it ranged from the trivial (Doctor Friedrich Vogelsang's experiments with "Platonic Foods" in the Umbra) to the disturbing (Doctor Alice Newman's study of the psychological effects of involuntary total cyborgization).

Since the Reckoning, the Mad Scientists have grown bolder, even forgoing their self-imposed exile to band into small groups with similar ideologies or interests. The Utopians fear that they will make a play for real political power soon.

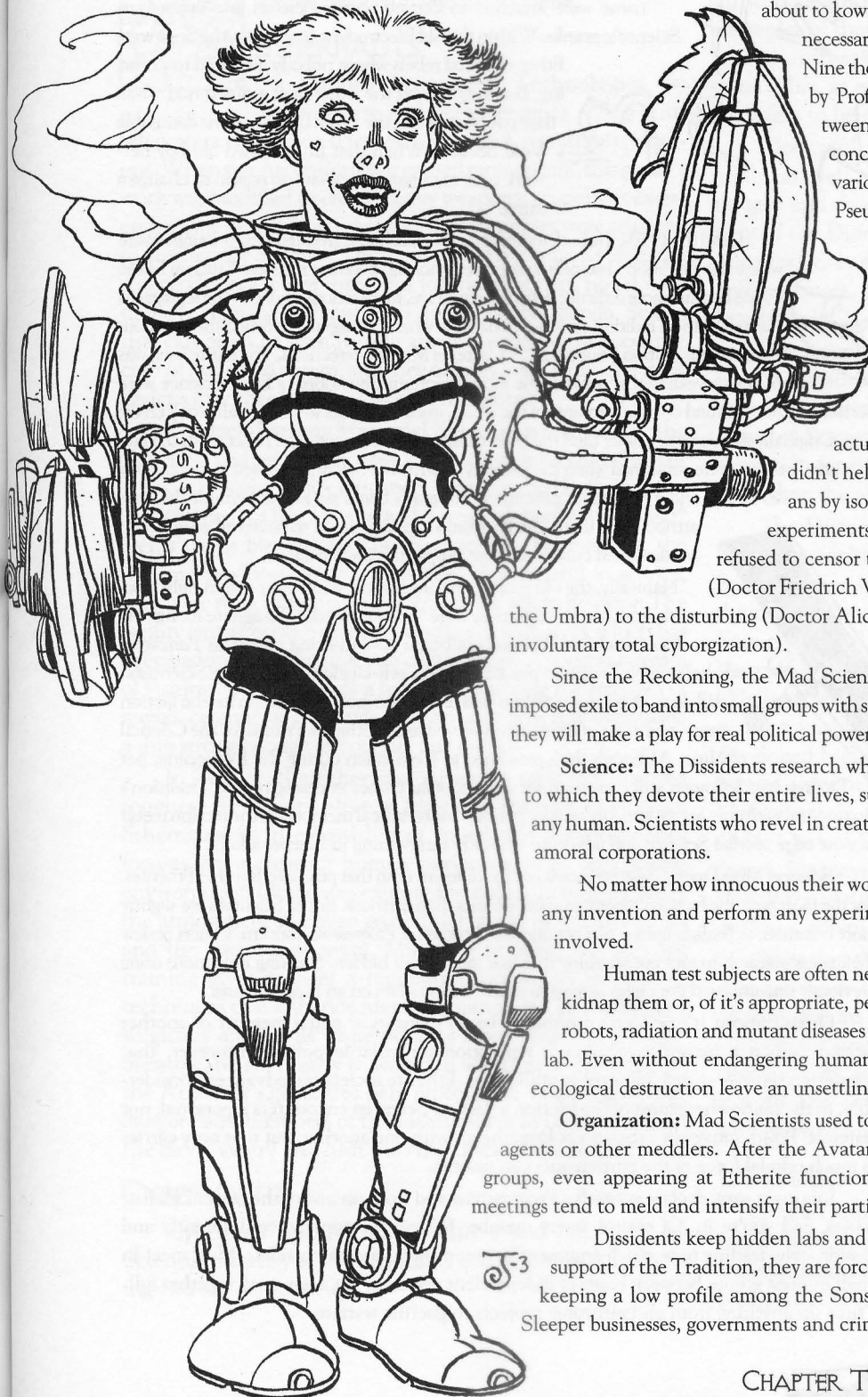
Science: The Dissidents research whatever they like. Many have a singular obsession to which they devote their entire lives, such as creating a robot that can perfectly imitate any human. Scientists who revel in creating weapons sell their inventions to dictators and amoral corporations.

No matter how innocuous their work is, all believe that they should be able to create any invention and perform any experiment, regardless of the consequences or suffering involved.

Human test subjects are often needed. Mad Scientists either employ henchmen to kidnap them or, if it's appropriate, perform an experiment in a populated area. Berserk robots, radiation and mutant diseases plague communities that a Dissident claims for his lab. Even without endangering humans, amoral experiments featuring vivisection and ecological destruction leave an unsettling Resonance about their lairs.

Organization: Mad Scientists used to almost exclusively work alone to avoid Utopian agents or other meddlers. After the Avatar Storm struck, a few decided to gather in small groups, even appearing at Etherite functions. When the Scientists are unbalanced, these meetings tend to meld and intensify their particular neuroses.

³ Dissidents keep hidden labs and may have a few safe houses as well. Without the support of the Tradition, they are forced to find novel ways to gather resources. Despite keeping a low profile among the Sons of Ether, many of them are well connected to Sleeper businesses, governments and crime syndicates.



PROGRESSIVISTS

Names: Radicals, Children (insulting; from a proposal to rename the Tradition), Lab Harpies (Hastings Fellowship investigators; insulting)

History: The Sons of Ether began with noble goals, but for an organization bent on helping the planet, it was somewhat lacking in diversity. Every single founding member of the Electrodyne Engineers was white, male and European; from their perspective, there was nothing wrong with this. This makeup certainly influenced the renaming of the Tradition. Before breaking with the Order of Reason, scattered uses of the name were attached to Oxford secret societies and upper-class Scientific pranks. Within the old Electrodyne Engineers, the Sons were Ether-obsessed rebels whom nobody admitted to knowing, but they earned the occasional amused nod when they put one over on the Black Coats and the damnable Void Seekers. When that Enlightened old-boy network took command, they saw no reason to change a thing.

Until the 1930s, the back rooms of men's clubs and segregated faculty lounges were where the Tradition's business took place. Ignoring "aberrant intellects" such as Marie Curie became more difficult; debates on suffrage, more serious. In 1935, the segregated culture of the Tradition took a serious blow when *Paradigma* published the infamous "Anonymous Edition." Subtitled "A Matter of Minor Corrections," the entire issue was devoted to revealing that some of the most important inventions of Ether Science were created by partners and colonial servants of the white, male Scientists who originally took credit for them. Originally dismissed as a hoax (and the chief cause of divorce among the Ether set in the late '30s), the journal's claims were confirmed when the formerly anonymous Scientists refused to work. After two Chairs and a number of prominent Professors could no longer perform the feats attributed to them, the Utopian's Ethics Council removed all ethnic- and gender-based criteria for positions within the Tradition.

Naturally, the old guard continued to cling to power (often rightly so, since aside from the hoaxers, they were brilliant minds). To agitate for further change, disenfranchised Researchers began co-authoring papers in *Paradigma* and challenging Tradition practices. These self-labeled "Progressive Scientists" still do so in greater numbers than ever. The greatest triumph for the faction came when one of its members served as the Etherite Primus for the Council of Nine. Although she's presumed to have fallen during the Reckoning, her Progressivist followers still campaign for such popular causes as changing the Tradition's name and taking an active hand in Sleeper politics. More radical members of the faction teeter on the edge of Mad Science and advocate violently intervening in Sleeper affairs.

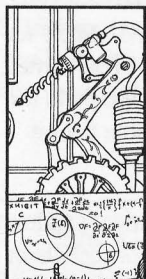
Science: Most Progressivist Science is not too different from that practiced by other Etherites. For the most part, the faction cares more about politics than methods. Social Scientists are slightly more common, as "enlightening" Sleeper minds is a common Progressive concern. Others review their peers' research to root out anything that bias might have hidden. Startling inventions using previously unconsidered principles emerge from the faction's labs on an irregular basis.

Organization: It's perfectly possible to be a Progressivist and a member of another faction. When a Scientist acquires a reputation for volatile politics, however, that reputation tends to overshadow other affiliations. Etherite society has advanced considerably, to the point where most of the friction a Radical Scientist encounters is personal, not systemic. Politics may put Etherites at loggerheads with one another, but that only carries as much official force as the participants can muster.

Joining is easy; declare yourself a Progressivist and work on one of the faction's leftist causes, and you're in. Of course, every member follows his conscience differently and passionately, leading to as much argument between them as with outsiders. Most meet in small interest groups between bouts of independent research, but a few work together full-time on anything from philanthropic projects to guerilla warfare.



ETHER LABS



In addition to ties with independent Scientists, each faction has its own permanent cabals. Most focus on a particular specialty or project. Independents often consult them when they need help with an obscure theoretical point, a special device or a common cause.

ETHERNAUTS

Applied Propulsion Technologies researches new and better engines, along with teleporters, dimensional travel devices and, regrettably, weapons. When the Ascension War gained momentum, this group's work was modified to create heavy weapons; propellant exciters became deadly heat rays and Etheric engines were adjusted to disintegrate enemies. The main lab at Baikonur, Kazakhstan still produces a few of these, but for the most part, novel ways to move humans and machines dominate the agenda. Scientists can often be seen flitting about the facility in eccentric craft of their own design, and they quickly learn to modify their designs for other Etherites around the globe.

The **Jack Parsons Memorial Shipyard** is named after the alchemist and rocket Scientist whose contributions to Sleeper science through NASA were more than matched by the passion that claimed his life. In his search for an "alchemically perfect" fuel, Parsons blew himself up. Renamed in his memory, the shipyard produces the few Etherships that are still in service, which are then launched directly from the site in Ecuador. The facility experiments with new materials as well, work which has overshadowed the construction of Etherships. A constant stream of visiting Scientists lends a hand in improving the strength of metals, ceramics and plastics, with an unspoken goal of creating a ship strong enough to conquer any barrier.

In Quebec, the **Ethernaut Academy** trains some of the toughest Scientists alive. Originally formed to prepare Ethernauts for the hardship of travel, the Academy now focuses on increasing human performance in any hostile environment. Graduates explore the poles, fly to the edge of the atmosphere and even go on brief jaunts in the sea depths and the vacuum of space. Mundane piloting and survival training gives a cadet a foundation on which to develop techniques that enhance his performance. If a graduate can't surgically apply gills while piloting a one-man nuclear submersible, he isn't ready to leave. In addition to exploration, the Academy's graduates help protect the Tradition. When danger calls, members of the faculty serve as commanders of the Sky Cavalry and rush into the thick of danger.

CYBERNAUTS

Cybernaut research groups thrive and fail based on Scientist interest, but for all intents and purposes, the following two are permanent.

Based in Tokyo (but with members worldwide), the **Robotics Group** is perennially popular. Ever since the faction's foundation, the group has had to turn away Scientists to prevent it from growing too large. At the same time, it rarely begrudges fellow Etherites the chance to visit its labs, where all sorts of automata can be seen. The most sophisticated examples of their craft are their "biots," electronically controlled synthetic life. Biots are not necessarily copies of natural life, as muscle tissue, bone and nerves are all treated like parts to be modified as convenient.

Clockwork and steam-powered robots preoccupy the group as well, along with more conventional electronic designs and those perpetually powered by Ether. With the help of the Difference Engine Group's computers or skilled operators, they are capable of a prodigious range of reactions and responses. Sadly, they almost always fall short of true intelligence. The expertise required is just too rare.

The group constantly studies a handful of intelligent automata. Creations of former Chairs, these automata have little time for an existence beyond experiments designed to wrest the secret of Scientific Mastery. If intelligent machines have a reputation for going insane, one need look no further for the cause than the squads of Scientists constantly prodding them.

The **Difference Engine Group** works with computers, but these machines are totally unlike any others. When the Sons of Ether split from the Technocracy, they developed their Difference Engines in a radically different direction from the digital (and later, Trinary) computers used by the Virtual Adepts. In their search for the means to model Odylic flows, the Cybernauts independently discovered quantum computing. Instead of silicon processors, these Etherites developed high-density optical switches to record multiple bits of information from single superpositioned photons. Unfortunately, this parallel development limited the ability of the Optical Engines to network with conventional computers. Journeys into the Digital Web required the onerous task of translating digital and Trinary information into the optical medium, nullifying the Engines' advantages.

Now that the Cybernauts have de-emphasized the Web, they can return to the unique properties of their machines. As control systems for robots, the new Difference Engines have a knack for simulating intuitive and abstract thought. Furthermore, by applying quantum principles, the computers can directly interact with the universal Etheric medium; certain programs can directly affect space-time.

UTOPIANS

A few Utopians work for the League full time as investigators for the Ethics Council or Shadow Ministry agents. To join these bodies, a Scientist must demonstrate his sincerity and prowess in the tests that each group provides for that purpose.

The **Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics** is as close to a governing body as the Tradition possesses. Council Professors scrutinize the personal and Scientific achievements of recruits, then test their investigative skills and honesty with a battery of psychological and cognitive tests. Researchers who pass these exams become Council Investigators, empowered to review Etherite experiments, question Scientists and, if they find evidence of wrongdoing, call them to an Ethics Council Tribunal. Custom demands that Investigators give a suspect one chance to go willingly (with an escort, of course), but Council agents are empowered to bring them to trial by force.

The Council has Ethics, Procedural and Investigation Chairs responsible for interpreting the *Scientific Ethos*, ensuring fair Tribunals and organizing proper Investigations. An Ambassadorial Chair exists to manage participation in cross-Tradition Tribunals, but in these confusing times, many Scientists have argued for abandoning it.

On the front lines of paradigmatic struggle, the **Shadow Ministry** infiltrates governments with lobbyists, scientists and outright spies, spreading interest in Ether Sciences among influential Sleepers. Shadow Ministry agents have something of a roguish, colorful reputation and a history of conflict with the New World Order. Where Technocracy operatives are dour and lethal, Shadow Ministry counterparts specialize in flamboyant, merciful daring. The Ministry's LSD dart guns and hypno-sprays are signature armaments.

With their support, Ministry moles spread news of Scientific achievements to politicians and undermine the acceptance of Technocratic alternatives. Outside the corridors of power, Ministry Etherites take advantage of espionage and government contacts to produce technologies that counteract destructive inventions as well as the non-lethal weaponry for which the entire faction is famous.

Originally formed to influence the British Government, the Ministry now concerns itself with all of the G8 nations.

Noetic Engineers perfect psychological, social and psionic techniques to ease society's acceptance of positive technologies and revulsion for destructive influences. Utopian psychology

is also employed to combat despair and press the cause of human cooperation and charity. To that end, many Noeticists work as social workers, therapists and political activists.

Noetic Scientists also chart social trends and search for psychological vulnerabilities in the Sleeper population. Forewarned is forearmed. If humanity is going to be led down a bad path, the Noetic Engineers want to know ahead of time to better fight it.

THE UNOFFICIAL FACTIONS

The Adventurers, Progressivists and Dissidents follow their own paths, often choosing multi-Tradition cabals or hermitage over the Etherite establishment. The following groups are notable exceptions, but they are hardly the only examples of common bonds toward cooperation.

When the Nephandi discovered the existence of ancient Egyptian weather-control technology, Scientist Stephen Shrike needed help to scour thousands of African sites in search of the machine's components: the fabled Ennead Effigies. After a spate of desperate emails to experts around the world, he recruited Khopesh Khan, an "extreme archeologist"; Herschel Jones, the world's most dangerous mathematician; and Menma'atra, an alchemist with an amazing talent for cheating the grave. Naming themselves after the parchment that described the Ennead Effigies, the **Scroll of Destiny** fought the Nephandi in the tombs, museums and mansions where the Effigies lay. Finally, the group defeated the Fallen mastermind known as the Yellow Vizier... and was shocked when Menma'atra used her knockout gas to disable the team and steal the Effigies! Despite the neatly typed apology she left behind, the group still searches for Menma'atra and the Effigies, terrified that the chemical-Etheric turbines inside the figurines are too great a temptation for any Scientist. Furthermore, the Scientists' quest through Africa uncovered so many ancient secrets and Fortean phenomena that they vowed to stay together and investigate.

An example of new trends in the Dissident movement, the **Manhattans** are young Sons of Ether who combine a 1950s fashion sense with deeply nihilistic beliefs. Clad in lab coats, wingtips, horn-rimmed glasses and pressed slacks, they nevertheless structure themselves like a street gang. Twenty-two-year old Milton Berliner rose to leadership after threatening his rivals with a five-kiloton nuclear bomb. (Accordingly, the rest of the hierarchy is based on members' ability to create weapons of mass destruction.)

According to Manhattan philosophy, weapons are liberating, as they remove obstacles to self-realization and wreck power structures. The constant threat of destruction forces humans to cooperate or resolve their differences in a decisive fashion. Therefore, it's the gang's mission to provide as much destructive power as possible to as many people as possible. Whether it's dangerous terrorist cells or a stressed-out suburbanite, the Manhattans will give their brand of power to anyone who asks. To this end, they give away prototype weapons and publish full blueprints online. Chemical, biological, nuclear or conventional, the Manhattans will hook you up.

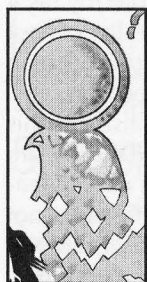
THE PARADIGMA COMMITTEE

A small group of Utopians used to publish *Paradigma*, the Sons of Ether's Scientific journal. They would organize subscriptions, peer review and actual printing. The journal is no more, though, and members have scattered to avoid the Technocracy and, hopefully, to publish anew. These Professors (the Managing Chair for *Paradigma* was unfilled at the time of the disaster) publish individually in the hope that multiple journals will be hard to silence, but this practice opens the doors to counterfeit articles and poor quality, as less discriminating Etherites (and those eager to throw a monkeywrench in Ether Science) produce a barrage of newsletters, websites and other media.

The **Hastings Fellowship** is the best known and most formal Progressive group. Founded by the Primus herself, the Fellowship provides financial and Quintessence grants for Scientists it feels are at a disadvantage compared to their peers. The Fellowship also lobbies for meetings, academic papers and changes to Etherite policy that confront discrimination. Mem-

bers also combat bias in mundane affairs if it affects Etherites and Sleeper associates. The Chair of the Fellowship supervises a board of Professors, who in turn send Researchers to investigate. The "Lab Harpies" recommend groups and individuals worthy of support and correct misattributed Scientific work.

THE BOOK OF THE ETHER



Science has so much variety that even the Sons of Ether have only a rough concept of its principles. Unifying the Tradition is respect for the *Kitab al-Alacir*. The "Book of the Ether" lays forth a theory of knowledge and cosmology that Scientists treat as part metaphor and part literal truth. The degree to which a particular passage is one or the other is cause for debate, but the fact remains that the *Kitab* inspires Awakenings and Epiphanies: new insights into old Science and discoveries that

have never been seen before. Therefore, it is customary to pass on a copy to a promising student, either as part of a formal class or as a friendly suggestion. Bound copies of the *Kitab al-Alacir* are scarcer than they once were — *Paradigma's* presses also produced the book — but the text has been so widely disseminated that electronic versions haunt web pages and file sharing networks in abundance. Finally, Sleeper institutions often have copies in their libraries, usually as part of a pre-Socratic or Philosophy of Science syllabus.

A Practical Guide to the *Kitab al-Alacir*

From *Paradigma* Volume 95, Issue 1 (2000)

The Gregorian translation might be the most widely used, but we feel that it is filled with too many embellishments. While it is widely accepted that Aretus is an allegorical character, we can neither confirm nor deny the influence of figures such as Parmenides and Heraclitus upon the text. Indeed, the *Synthesis* obviously refers to prior philosophical schools. Given that Parmenides is often sought out for supplementary research, we must conclude that the Gregorian *Kitab* exaggerates the antiquity and lineage of the text. It flatters our egos to believe that Aretus saved the original manuscript from Troy. It inspires us that it was said to have been read by Aristotle (and indeed, Gregory of Constantinople includes marginalia attributed to him). We must, however, ignore the temptation to believe this mythology, no matter how compelling it is, in order to uncover the real genius behind Aretus.

Nonetheless, myth provides us with tantalizing information. Who is this "House of Ixion" against whom Aretus supposedly defended Troy? The preface describes them as "excellent deceivers of men [who]... pour black wine into the earth, a libation to madden the gods." These verses imply that the writer struggled with other primitive Scientists and indeed, the *Synthesis* uses the metaphor of battle to describe the separation of sensed and potential cosmic properties. We can only speculate who the House of Ixion might have been, and which Tradition or Convention our oldest enemies — or brothers in Science — cast their lots with in the end.

The Synthesis of Aretus

The *Kitab al-Alacir* begins with an account of the defense of Troy. In a dialogue with Priam, he describes the city's defenses as an allegory for the state of the cosmos. Reality is defined by struggle; the rational mind first erects a barrier between what is possible and what is abhorrent or false. Like a besieged city's walls, the barrier's existence immediately brings the threat of falsehood and chaos.

"Thus," says Aretus, "the state is defined by answering falsehood with a barrier of truth, but when built, it is inevitable that these walls are assailed. So it is for men seeking excellence. So it is for the cosmos."

Parmenidean Metaphysics in the *Kitab al-Alacir*

Troy, however, is doomed to fall due to the conundrum popularly dubbed "Aretus' first paradox." Aretus describes the world outside of Troy as symbolizing the cosmos and all the thoughts a human being can hold. In doing so, he draws upon arguments similar to those of the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides, who argued that it is impossible for anything to truly not exist. All conceivable things are true, because nothing can be objectively proven *not* to exist if it is precisely described. "We do not know," says Aretus, "all that may exist. Noble Priam, you may describe jackal-headed men in Ethiopia, omitting fewer details than you might of the Myrmidon ships moored upon our shores. You have seen neither. I have described one; your scouts, the other. If the cosmos is unbounded, all things must reside therein. So it is with the mind."

Aretus points out that if we were to treat everything that exists as relevant to our experience, then we should surely go mad. Therefore, we create a barrier between that which we accept as relevant, real phenomena and that which is inconsistent with our chosen reality. So, the Wall of Troy around our minds allows us to understand a small part of the cosmos, but in order to do so, we must deny the vast majority of what exists.

Scientists with a physics orientation will no doubt recognize similarities between Aretus' argument and some concepts in quantum mechanics. When we observe an object, all of its possible states of being — its "waveform" — collapse into a single state. Yet we cannot *disprove* the nonexistence of other states; we can openly make a weak appeal to reduction — and as Ether

Scientists know, reductionism is false. Aretus would argue that it is simply an unreasonably strong application of the Wall of Troy.

Heraclitus and Reality in Flux

The *Kitab al-Alacir* avoids the problem of solipsism by revealing that phenomena which the mind denies do, in fact, breach the barrier of our denial. It is the nature of reality, however, to test itself against the Wall of Troy. All change occurs when the metaphysical opposite of an accepted concept breaches the barrier. The Wall of Troy is rebuilt around it and the synthesis between the two is integrated into reality. Aretus uses arguments similar to Heraclitus's to say that all things are transformed by their opposites and that (in agreement with Parmenides) nothing can ever be destroyed. For example, when water meets fire, steam rises, synthesizing the properties of both but destroying neither. Obviously, this idea creates some problems when applied to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, but it is important to remember that all phenomena eventually dissolve into Ether, to arise again.

Before introducing the Ether, he says that when change arises, we must either discard a previous law or rebuild the Wall of Troy to encompass more. Expanding the boundaries of the mind, the state or the cosmos requires action and virtue (*arete*).

The Trojan Horse and the Ether

In the second part of the *Kitab* (what Scientists now call *The Nature of the Ether*), Aretus says:

"Because nothing can be destroyed but does pass out of perception, it must therefore take some imperceptible medium. Because this medium can only be coherently described as imperceptible, it exists as the primal substance from which all the elements arise and to which they all return. Wise Priam! This Fifth Essence is what composes that which not only lies beyond your walls, but beyond that which your scouts can see, hear, smell, touch or feel. Yet before the Myrmidons laid siege to the golden city, they could not be perceived. Before your noble birth, you, also, could not be perceived. Thus, all things move from the perceptible to the imperceptible. All things are composed of the Fifth Essence."

Then:

"Outside the walls of golden Ilion, there are those who are sympathetic to its laws. These you let inside the gates and reward as spies. There are those that fight its laws. These you kill with steady-handed archers. But there are those that appear sympathetic to hide their enmity. They are of the same essence, but they hold secrets that contradict the law. Thus, Ixion's children offer poisonous tribute. As it is for the state, it is for the mind and the cosmos."

We do not necessarily know everything about what we accept to be true. Therefore, when we accept it, we draw in unanticipated consequences. Etherites call this phenomenon the "Trojan Horse." Accepting one thing as true, we accept related things that might contradict our worldview. This is another reason why reduction is false: By believing that reality is only what we can measure, we deny the existence of change (for change occurs after the state that we measure) and ignores the limits of our perception. Because we cannot know the whole of a given phenomenon, all phenomena have potentially limitless implications.

The Trojan Horse effect will always occur, because all phenomena are, in fact, "of the same essence." Aretus has proven that everything must exist, but that we filter away contradictions with a barrier of thought. Yet we accept new, non-contradictory truths as long as we can expand our enlightenment sufficiently to understand them — even if it hides a contradictory conclusion.

Therefore, *nothing* can wholly contradict itself, for it all shares a common origin in the Ether. The Trojan Horse will succeed because it shares the Etheric nature of Troy (as it does the mind or the cosmos). New laws of reality cannot be denied, as they are always pressing at the gates. Trojan Horses that resemble our current reality will "bleed through" first, slipping past our defenses. Modern Scientists see this effect in Fortean phenomena. Rains of frogs and the like are strange, but they manifest themselves through natural features that humanity already accepts. Rain and frogs are not strange apart, but together, they reveal a hidden cosmological principle beyond our normal barriers of perception.

Aretus' Scientific Wisdom

The *Kitab al-Alacir* concludes with Aretus' advice to Priam, which illustrates the nature of Awakened Science. He has already said that when new phenomena intrude we must expand the Wall of Troy to encompass it. Not only should we hone our perception, but we should undertake experiments, "to uncover more of the nature of a thing, instead of only accepting what our senses reveal." We, and not any accident of nature, determine how a new theory or idea meshes with the rest of reality. When enigmas enter reality, we must confront them and integrate them into the whole, neither rejecting nor embracing them. Thus, our Tradition has always been eager to confront the unknown and master it according to the true principles of Science.

Finally, Aretus admonishes us to "send scouts. Ride beyond the walls, acquire what is needful and return." We shouldn't just pounce upon the strangeness that crosses our path, we should seek it out, study it and return to humanity with new Science. Although our Ethernauts do this in the most literal way possible, all Scientists can explore the hidden corners of the world or the psyche for new discoveries. Humanity cannot be besieged by its fear of the unknown. Otherwise it — like Troy — will fall to the wrath of enigmas, instead of harnessing them to produce Ascension.

Later Commentary

From the *Paradigma* successor www.renegade-science.org, December 22nd, 2005

Everything is real, but not everything is true. When we take what's real and make it true, it's Science. When we create truth to deny that something is real, we create disaster.

No matter how hard you try, there will always be a Trojan Horse. We will not take the route of the Technocracy and take reality at its word. We're gonna cut that gift horse open and see what falls out.



The *Kitab al-Alacir* lays out the general philosophy of Ether Science. Everything exists; everything originates in the Ether. Humanity filters out most of the cosmos so that it makes sense, but limitless potential is always battering at the gates of the Consensus. Science draws from the well of the infinite to fashion a more complete model. Eventually, Sleepers will be able to understand the entire majesty of Creation; the Wall of Troy will encompass it all.

SPLASHING THE METHOD

Naturally, this approach contradicts Sleeper and Technocratic scientific methods. The Sons of Ether deviate in two ways. First of all, they do not believe in reductionism. The simplest model is *not* always the most valid. Even a single piece of data is the work of unseen forces, from Etheric flux to the simplest chemical reaction. Secondly, Ether Science holds that two contradictory models can both be true. This means that neither model is complete, but this is a given. *Everything* exists, but only the Ascended could possibly understand enough to complete any theory. The necessary limitations of Science allow these contradictions to occur.

For example, acupuncture does appear to have a medical effect, even when used by Sleepers on Sleepers. A conventional scientist would ignore the principles of traditional Chinese medicine and look for the explanation that best suits her understanding of human anatomy, the nervous system and the placebo effect. She would verify the theory with further experiments and expand her knowledge — in one direction.

An Etherite would not only perform the latter experiment, but explore the efficacy of acupuncture *according to its own model*. He would apply conventional medicine to it as well as the other way around. Not only does his normal medical knowledge increase, but he expands traditional Chinese medicine, developing new meridians and chi theory for structures such as the endocrine system.

Otherwise, scientific errors multiply. The road not traveled never reveals its secrets. Conventional science builds one incomplete premise atop another, like a house of cards that gets shakier as it gets higher.

THE ETERNAL ETHER

The only common root is the Ether, the basic medium of the universe. Ether takes an infinite number of forms and occupies all space and time, but it is defined by what it is *not*. It isn't a mental construction, a substance or a force. It is the place from which everything — even Quintessence — rises into existence, and where everything goes when it departs. All matter and energy is conserved.

Aside from the fundamental Ether (what Scientists often call the "Ideal Ether"), other "Ethers" encompass partial states of material and metaphysical reality. Quintessence is held to be the "purest" of these. It is wholly metaphysical, only existing when perceived and acting when acted upon. Contiguous Ether is more base, since it encompasses the physical properties of distance and the relationship between objects. Etherspace is a series of dimensions that lie outside of the Consensus's "Wall of Troy." It has physical features, but they lie outside normal human experience. Quantum Ether theory holds that they are alternate universes that have developed due to humanity's rejection of certain cosmological principles.

THE SCIENTIFIC CONTINUUM: STYLE AND FOCI

Beyond these basics, the Sons of Ether work on so many different experiments and inventions that it is nigh impossible to say that they hold some further consensus about the nature of things. Some Sons of Ether are borderline mystics. Technomancers in the truest sense, they exploit magical principles according to the principles of Ether Science. Even alchemy might find a hold in the Scientist's mind.

Others are almost totally devoted to conventional Science. The Sons of Ether have some renegade Technocrats in the fold who pay lip service to Tradition metaphysics, but more often, younger Scientists want to unite conventional science and the Sons' chaotic cosmos. Advocates of the many worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics, cryptozoologists and others draw parallels between the abstract Ether and the gritty reality of the Consensus.

In the middle, parapsychologists, unorthodox archaeologists and investigators of Fortean phenomena examine strange regions of knowledge. Guided by Etherite principles, they sift through mysteries in search of new cosmological principles.

The Luminiferous Ether

**Paradigma successor Z-Ray Quarterly,
Issue 1, 2010**

And finally, a shout-out to all the Black Hats and Mirrorshades who've pried this 'zine out of some dead EtherBoy's hands: Thanks for getting rid of the Luminiferous Ether, assholes! Maybe the original model didn't work, but it could have if you'd given us the time. We could have used it to generate unlimited power. We could have taken humanity halfway across the universe.

Now that there's a comet ready to smoke all of us, I have to ask: Feel any regrets?

⊕CCULT MECHANICS

Etherite technomancers put will and belief at the head of Science, but they aren't willing to follow occult teachings without skepticism and common sense. The Order of Hermes might have done important early work on manipulating Platonic forms, but the 21st century shouldn't use thousand-year-old techniques. If implanted electrodes can expand the mind, why meditate? Aliens might like shamanism, but that doesn't mean that worshipping some extradimensional tree-analog is a good idea.

Aside from a technological approach to the occult, Etherites also mine these ancient secrets for more recognizable Scientific achievements. Scientists revisit alchemy, acupuncture and crystals to separate their underlying properties from the superstitious dross.

Technomantic foci vary widely. Most occult Etherites keep a conventional laboratory supplemented with mystical paraphernalia. Because they understand the importance of the mind, they employ consciousness-altering foci such as drugs, electrodes and sensory-deprivation tanks. Computer screens and self-adhesive labels display Scientifically modified pentagrams and mandalas. Stereo systems play recorded chants and sensors are on hand to track everything that happens. Alchemists keep a traditional forge and mortar and pestle beside butane torches and electrolytically purified metals.

⊕ORTEAN PHENOMENA

Aside from the secrets of the past, Sons of Ether investigate contemporary oddities. When 2000-year old blood

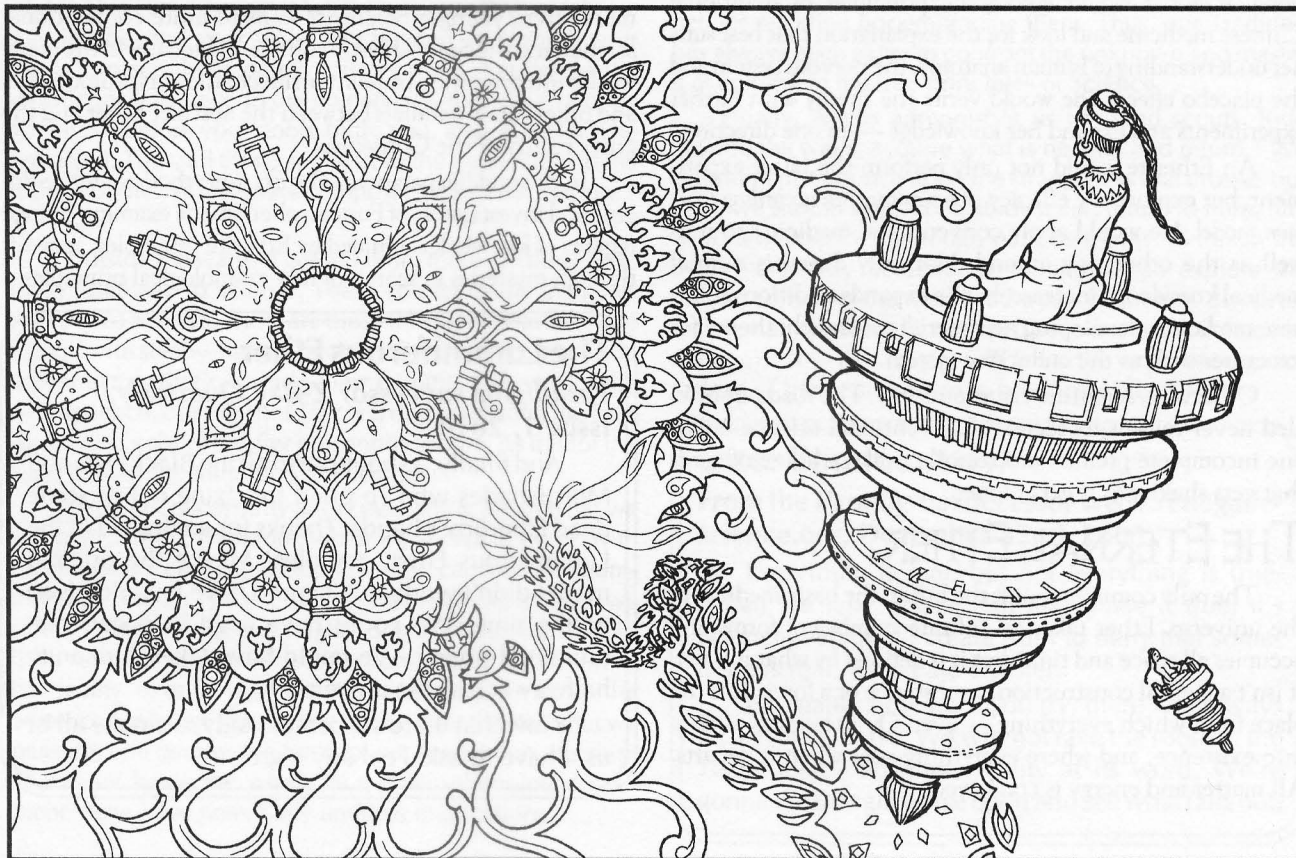
liquefies and ships disappear into the Bermuda Triangle, investigators are there. After dismissing the hoaxes, Fortean Scientists develop a working theory for each event, then weave it into their inventions. The principle that allows old blood to liquefy might melt ice with psionic Resonance. Observe enough UFOs, and you can build one. Whether it's a Zeta-Gray spacecraft or a Technocracy fighter, reverse engineering from field data creates tools that a Scientist might never develop on her own.

Even for the Sons, Fortean technology is strange stuff. Scratch-built flying saucers, spontaneous combustion emitters and alien artifacts give a Scientist unique tools. Psychic foci are important, as crystals, meditation and drugs can tap the mind's "wild talents." To some Fortean investigators, places become foci. Extradimensional shortcuts in the Bermuda Triangle, crop circles and pyramids have their own powers. Most Scientists carry custom-built sensors with them so that they have more than their eyes to rely on when they step into strange places.

CRYPTOTECHNOLOGY

Etherite archaeologists know that the Technocracy has erased much progress from the scientific record. The *Mahabharata* describes Vinaya, the airplanes used by gods and heroes. Ancient Egyptians used electricity; the Greeks, clock-work robotics. The Mayans explored space, but debate rages as to whether they did it alone or with the help of alien astronauts.

Recently discarded theories and designs still have the power to change reality. Da Vinci's helicopter, phrenology, the Lumin-



iferous Ether and the solar model of the atom all inspire the efforts for which the Tradition is best known. Such inventions are more than rediscovery. They expand physical laws to include them, as the inventor's will pushes back the membrane of skepticism.

To rediscover ancient (or "outdated") Science, an Etherite needs a good set of tools. Many labs are actually machine shops where a Scientist can make the right parts. Drills, saws, lathes and small nuclear reactors can all reconstruct old technologies. Devices from the past can work, as long as they get an Awakened "kick" from time to time. Carved gemstones, statues, corroded clockwork and ruins are a few of the fragments of old power that cryptotech Etherites use.

BIOLOGY AND MEDICINE

The Sons of Ether have had a long fascination with living bodies. Early experiments with reanimation earned the Tradition some infamy, but today the whole Buenos of stitched together bodies with bolted in abnormal brains is left to a few Mad Scientists. Etherite work examines biological energy fields as well as the flesh's secrets. Morphogenetic fields, Chinese medicine and orgone theories supplement inspired surgery. Grafted flesh and bone improve human performance.

Surgical tools, radiation, mutagenic drugs, acupuncture needles and massage all have a time and place in Ether Medicine. Electricity is used in copious amounts to "supercharge" bodies, improving strength and health. Life Science isn't limited to fauna, either. The Sons of Ether's unique hybrids and mutants have exceptional mobility and medicinal value, and, in some cases, they even serve as weapons.

PSYCHIC POWERS

Many Etherites dabble in psychic research, following in the footsteps of pioneers such as J. B. Rhine and Anton Mesmer. Ether Science allows for the mind to force new phenomena through the barriers of the Consensus. Other Scientists practice Victorian spiritualism, theosophy and strange yogic disciplines to expand their awareness. Pure philosophy transports a student to new planes of awareness. Through meditation and study, the Sons of Ether build "Platonic machines" in the Astral Umbra. Constructed of pure Quintessence, they work with inhuman perfection. While a Platonic car isn't very useful, computers can still transmit data across the Ether, and idealized automatons explore other dimensions.

Meditation, trepanation, drugs, electrical stimulation of the brain, flash cards, mnemonic drills and magnetic fields have all been known to boost psychic strength.

PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY AND ENGINEERING

Taken together, these Sciences represent both the oldest legacy and the cutting edge of the Tradition. Quantum physics might be the Sons' greatest triumph. Scientists now admit that they have a small effect on what they observe. Etherites hope to take that farther, until humanity understands that they are the real architects of reality. Most Sons of Ether favor the many-

worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics. According to this idea, every possible state of matter and energy exists simultaneously, and less likely phenomena are shunted into alternate universes when they are observed. Mathematical formulae, magnetic fields, strong gravity wells (requiring space travel to reach) and particle accelerators all assist physics research.

Derived from alchemy, chemistry has always been one of the Tradition's specialties. Turning lead into gold is simple enough — a dozen exotic agents and finely tuned particle beams will do it. What is really challenging is producing alloys and elements that have gone undiscovered by Sleeper chemists. The business of chemistry is chemical change, so the most common foci include a selection of chemical agents, centrifuges, Bunsen burners and electricity, but improvisers can make do with cleaning supplies and a lighter. Chemistry can also produce or enhance explosives. Bullets and dynamite pack a bigger punch when an Ether Chemist uses them.

Using precise blueprints or improvisation, virtually all Sons of Ether build their own contraptions. Robots and vehicles are common, and biological engineering is growing more popular. Alive or not, Etherite machines usually contain an array of potent powers for Scientists who know how to activate them. Ray guns, jet packs, rockets, submarines, buildings, exoskeletons, remote vehicles and thousands of others serve as both foci and Effects in their own right.

THE ENLIGHTENED HUMANITIES

Virtually all Etherites study philosophy, but a few use their Awakened talents to hone their psychological, political and extrasensory powers. Wilhelm Reich's theories have been popular for decades, because orgone (Reichian life energy) is so similar to the Ether. Jungian archetypes provide the basis for telepathy and behavior modification.

Politically, the Sons of Ether are all over the map, but Utopian values and Scientific tastes tend to make them favor formulaic, idealistic theories over pragmatism. Marxism, an-

A WORD ABOUT FOCI

Etherite foci are so diverse and specialized that the normal restrictions don't always fit. When a Son of Ether makes a rocket car in a machine shop, which tool is the focus? To get around these questions, Storytellers might wish to allow players to choose a general category of preferred foci for each Sphere. Use "surgical tools" instead of just "scalpels," and "cars" instead of "red Toyotas." Don't generalize too much, though. A penknife is not a "surgical tool" even if people use them for tracheotomies.

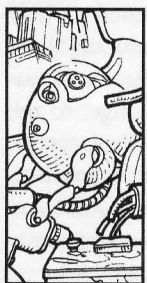
For **Laws of Ascension**, Narrators and players will have to pair foci with Abilities on a case-by-case basis. Usually, some form of *Science* or *Technology* covers most Etherite foci. *Meditation* and *Enigmas* may apply to more philosophically or mystically inclined Scientists. Once you've paired a physical focus with an Ability, list it on the focus's item card.

archism, libertarianism and liberalism all have their supporters. Adherents use their favorite theories to stymie social strife, boost productivity and promote personal causes.

Psychoactive drugs, psychodrama (where the subject acts out a scenario), hypnotism and electric shock have all

been used as psychological foci. Speech, body language, colors, written messages and coordinated demonstrations are political and psychological tools. Even art finds a place in the Tradition. Plays, paintings and posters follow rigorous Scientific schemes to influence minds and beliefs.

STRANGE GENIUS



The Sons of Ether are known for their eccentric insights and radical approach to science, so it's no surprise that those who feel the call of Science have their own distinctive quirks and gifts.

SCIENTIFIC MYSTIC (3-POINT MENTAL MERIT)

Some Etherites have a special aptitude for interpreting other magical styles through the lens of their own theories. As a result, they can use mystical methods, even if their own paradigms are devoted to scientific truth. Polymath Adventurers are known for their "secret studies in the East" or esoteric technologies pulled from ancient legends.

This Merit allows a character to use one other Tradition or Craft's foci for one Sphere that the character knows as long as the player can justify how this knowledge fits into the character's paradigm. For example, a rune-carving Son of Ether isn't using "Norse magic," but the geometric, psychological and psionic insights of a culture whose discoveries were, no doubt, downplayed by the enemies of Science! The character may select a specialty focus, but this choice replaces the normal specialty focus for the Sphere.

MET: As above.

MAAD SCIENCE (2-POINT MENTAL/SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

By experimenting with other dimensions, mind-wracking mathematics and Paradoxical technologies, the Sons of Ether risk their mental stability at the price of unique insights.

Having touched the infinite, inhuman reaches of Truth, madness takes its toll, but it also brings inspiration.

Characters with this Merit receive a one-point break on magical difficulties as well as uses of the Awareness, Cosmology, Enigmas, Occult, Science and Technology Abilities while in the throes of Quiet or an active derangement.

MET: When your derangement is triggered, you gain a one-Trait bonus when resolving tests using magic or the aforementioned Abilities. Always remember to let your derangement color your actions and motivations.

DISCREDITED (1-POINT SOCIAL FLAW)

When you turn to unorthodox methods, you stand an excellent chance of burning your bridges. This occurs quite frequently in the Sons of Ether. A Discredited character has had his name dragged through the mud in academic circles and is considered a crackpot or a dangerous fraud.

Accordingly, characters with this Flaw suffer a straight +2 penalty on all Social and Background rolls involving the scientific community as well as informed laypersons, impertinent undergraduates and inveterate skeptics. The person on the street still doesn't know who you are, and you might have fringe sympathizers, but reputable academics consider you to be near anathema.

MET: You incur a two-Trait penalty in all Social Challenges involving *University Influence* and Narrator characters with two or more Traits in the Science ability, as well as untrained readers of scientific journals and publications such as the *Skeptic*. The Narrator may inform other characters with such academic ties of your notoriety.

SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY: MAGIC



The fruits of Awakened Science are many. Metaphysical mathematics, impossible engineering and strange materials can all be manipulated by a sufficiently skilled Scientist. Accidents happen, but the Sons of Ether match their innovation with sheer daring, expanding the edge of what's possible with every feat.

THE ELEMENTS OF SCIENCE

The Sons of Ether recognize the nomenclature of the Nine Spheres for practical reasons, but when it comes to speculating on their relationship with the laws of the universe, Scientists rarely agree. Many conflate the properties of

several Spheres into a single Scientific theory. One Etherite might conflate Time and Correspondence into Space-time. Other Sons of Ether treat the Spheres of Science as general categories that represent their personal aptitudes and leave speculation about their ultimate relationship to metaphysicians. Therefore, the following categories appeal to all Scientists as a good working terminology, but some labs might never use them to describe Etherite experiments.

CORRESPONDENCE: CONTIGUOUS ETHER

Etheric Correspondence theory was first espoused by Parmenides, who held that space was a subtle material that connected all objects and phenomena in a unified cosmos.

Modern Scientists often use string theory to explain this, claiming that space is composed of gravitons (gravity particles), bosons (force transmitting particles) and fermions (particles with the properties of matter). More esoteric Scientists describe space as a low-intensity orgone field or a psychic property that comes into existence when minds differentiate between objects.

Quantum Ether Scientists use oscillating electromagnetic fields to manipulate boson/fermion pairs, altering the structure of space to add or remove distance. Other Scientists use special metals to manipulate the Orgone or employ psychic powers. Artificial wormholes and psionic teleportation are just two of the results. Remote perception can use a completely different set of technologies, such as radios or trance states.

ENTROPY: ETHER DYNAMICS

Heraclitus's doctrine of flux and opposition represented some of the first Scientific insights into the nature of order, chaos and probability. In essence, all objects go through a continuous cycle of creation and destruction, preserving the amount of matter or energy that the object possessed, but not its form. These changes come about as an object is transformed by encountering its opposite.

The Sons of Ether use this theory to explain change, abstracting it into particle interactions, subtle alchemy and social trends. By discovering the correct opposing object, the Etherite can intensify its force to destroy or weaken it to preserve antagonistic elements. Chemistry creates tailored corrosive agents, resonating fields alter objects and energies, and choice words attack the conceptual underpinnings of things.

FORCES: ENERGETIC PHYSICS

Crushing gravity, flame, lightning — all of these are possible when a Scientist masters Energetic Physics. Aside from the known value of energy blasts and force fields, this Science can also be used to improve the efficiency of electronic devices, heat sinks and conductors. Those Etherites who share the late Tesla's disdain of alternating current keep massive generators in their labs. Crackling with lightning, these generators fuel particle beams, supercharge ordinary equipment and, when necessary, explode to take intruders and lab secrets to a common grave.

Ray guns might be stereotypical, but they are usually handy. Many Etherites combine a beam weapon, weak propulsion system and cutting tool into one device, with ad hoc plans to squeeze even more applications into it, should the situation demand it. Scientists also rebuild cars and other everyday objects to take advantage of superconductors, superior gas venting systems and other modifications that boost power.

LIFE: ETHERIC BIOLOGY

Anatomy and biochemistry are only a part of this Sphere; Sons of Ether understand that subtle energies influence the health and development of all life. Scientifically optimized acupuncture and other methods affect the subject's energetic balance as well as her physical state. One particular area of

interest is morphogenetic field theory, which states that all life has a common energy state that describes its biological, mental and evolutionary state and potential. Morphogenetic fields can be transmitted between life forms and modified to accelerate evolution and pass on traits from one organism to another.

Aside from energetic Life Science, many Etherites are skilled doctors who concentrate on the material aspects of living beings. Scientists have transplanted virtually every part of the human body, kept decapitated heads alive and performed other feats that straddle the border between revolutionary and frightening. Drugs are popular foci as well, but not genetic engineering. Few of the Sons have managed to take this work as far as the Progenitors have.

MATTER: ETHERIC CHEMISTRY AND ENGINEERING

The Tradition's most popular Sphere, Matter is manipulated with techniques such as alchemy, atomic scale engineering and volatile agents. In the lab or workshop, Matter is also used to create wonderful devices or improve normal ones to incredible levels of performance. In many cases, Etherites believe that a proper mental state allows them to use the Platonic form of a machine or element as its blueprint, making the final product as close to perfect as possible. Otherwise, the traditional tools of chemistry and engineering perform beautifully in a Scientist's hands.

Although strange chemicals and advanced forges are used, many Sons of Ether prefer to use this Sphere through relatively innocuous tools. Normal lathes, saws and screwdrivers perform with superior precision in an Etherite's hands. Garages and kitchens have everything an industrious Scientist needs to work wonders. The finished product leaves dirty pots, hot Bunsen burners, beakers and grease in its wake.

MIND: NOETIC SCIENCE

Psychology, sociology and psychic research all contribute to the Etherite understanding of the mind, but so does art, metaphysics and political theory. For the most part, the Sons of Ether look for a common thread between these disparate fields, but, of course, every Scientist has a pet theory to defend. This is why the Sons of Ether often have trouble working together on Mind Effects, as the Reichians, existentialists and psionics supporters argue about where to begin.

Most Sons of Ether agree that the human mind has the potential to directly affect the outside world and that its capabilities are potentially limitless. Quantum psychic theory holds that the psion particle carries consciousness, and psionic devices alter this energy to great effect. Otherwise, drugs, mind-expanding mathematics, hypnotism and radiation all modify consciousness to a variety of ends.

POTENTIAL: METAPHYSICAL ETHER

As Parmenides predicted, all phenomena that do not exist in fact exist in potential. Great debate rocks the Tradition as to

the true nature of Quintessence. Many Scientists believe that it is matter or energy in an indeterminate state, a waveform that Ether Science collapses into different phenomena. Platonic Etherites believe that Prime holds the Forms, and they create "Platonic machines" in the Astral Umbra to test idealized versions of their inventions. Or, it might be the final state of objects that go through Heraclitan transformations as they convert into pure, basic reality. More down-to-earth Scientists are apt to see it as a potent power source and little else.

Psychic techniques, magnetic fields, alchemically perfect material (such as Primum) and mathematical formulae all assist the study of Prime, but most Sons of Ether concentrate on the one or two methods that suit them.

SPIRIT: ETHERIC AND MEMETIC DIMENSIONS

Etherspace, alternate worlds, manifested ideas and alien species all interest the Sons of Ether. After discovering Etherspace in the 19th century, the Tradition explored it with vigor, charting stars and planets that would never be visible to a mundane telescope. Other dimensions beckoned, but it took some time for the Tradition to properly classify Realms according to its own theories. Etherships are well known, but the Tradition prefers more portable methods for shorter jumps these days, as well as technologies that attract and defend against aliens.

Etheric Dimensions exist beside our own. Most of the solar system has Etherspace counterparts, but as vessels stray farther from Earth, the dissimilarities increase. An unprepared traveler will get lost if she relies on mundane astronomy. Ethernauts theorize that the large number of conscious observers on Earth increases the intensity of the quantum waveform. Alternate universes become less likely as reality is supported by observers, so dimensions close to "Earth Prime" are more similar than those near the Jovian moons or the Kuiper belt. Etheric aliens take many forms, so those closest to Earth appear to come from parallel evolutionary trees. Most are intelligent and can sense Earth Prime, reacting strongly to changes in their Prime counterparts. When a tree dies, the alien that corresponds to it vanishes. The altered waveform shifts its existence to a less probable dimension.

Memetic Dimensions spring from humanity's massed psychic capabilities. The Sons of Ether recognize the existence of Sidereal (Astral) Space and the Entropic Dimensions of the Underworld. The former is a common destination for psychic Etherites; the latter is not. Ghosts are thought to be the psychic remnants of the dead and are treated with extreme caution. Sidereal aliens are psychic manifestations of living consciousnesses, and as such, they are studied to gain insight into minds of Sleepers.

TIME: CAUSALITY

To put it simply, causality studies attempt to uncover why one thing leads to another. Some Sons of Ether are convinced that it's a matter of mental habit and that arrows of time could point backward as easily as forward. Others believe that time is intimately related to space, and they claim to have discovered

"chronotic particles" that power it or ways to manipulate relativity without the mess of near light speed travel.

The most famous Time Scientist, Doc Eon, believed that particles that Sleepers now call tachyons move backward through time. By converting matter to tachyon patterns, the Adventurer was able to perform feats of time travel that have never been duplicated. Scientists also experiment with travel to alternate worlds, as well as altered perceptual states to break the normal flow of causality. Despite the reduced risk of alternate worlds and Time perception (neither of which allow anyone to kill their grandfather before they were born), Time research is still infamous for its danger.

TRUE ETHER

If there is a "10th Sphere" for the Sons of Ether, it is their namesake. Ether is the fundament of the cosmos, and to discover its true nature underneath the phenomena it creates would surely raise a Scientist to the pinnacle of her calling. True Ether is more basic than even the Tellurian's Quintessential roots because it must include Paradox (which is not Quintessential, but reacts to Ether Science) and the methods of other Traditions. Ether holds the key to these alien secrets, and the Sons are eager to find it.

It is said that the real goal of all experiments is to touch this True Ether. The Sons' holy grail is a theory that explains all of the Ether's manifestations according to a single set of laws. This would describe the Ether fully — and with it, the true nature of the universe.

DYNAMITIC SCIENCE: ROTES

DEATH RAY (••••• ENTROPY ⊕
••••• FORCES, ••••• PRITIE, ⊕ OPTIONAL ••••• TIME)

A mainstay of Mad Scientists everywhere, the death ray comes in two generally recognized forms. The first is a standard laser or particle beam, easily jury-rigged from available materials. Most of these weapons emit invisible beams, but most Sons of Ether refit them to spray brilliant red, blue or green, as tradition demands.

The second, called the "chaos beam" or "black ray," projects random-frequency microwaves, anti-Etheric particles or contra-Reichian orgone fields (depending on who you ask), disrupting bodily functions. These death rays take the form of black, jagged bolts, a rippling in the air or a noticeable chill, and they are favored by Etherite psychics as well as weapons engineers.

Recent designs also include repetitive mental techniques or fast crystal-cycling mechanisms to allow an automatic weapon's rate of fire.

If sufficiently bulky (requiring at least 50 kilograms of equipment) and made of precision parts, a laser or particle beam is coincidental. The other versions are vulgar.

System: Both versions inflict aggravated wounds after a success is spent to acquire the target, and each requires a successful Dexterity + Firearms (or Wits + Enigmas, for mental versions) to

strike. The Time ••• version gives the death ray the characteristics of a fully automatic weapon (see **Mage: The Ascension**, page 241) for four additional successes, plus additional successes spent on the duration. Most death rays inflict aggravated damage through extreme heat or Entropy disruptions.

MET: Adept Entropy or Disciple Forces, Initiate Prime. Optional Disciple Time. After a turn of preparing your weapon (or mind) you can shoot a ray that inflicts one level of aggravated damage at a target in your line of sight. Using *Time*, you can also use the *Fully Automatic* and *Spray* weapon characteristics listed in **Laws of Ascension**, pp. 195-196. *Grades of Success*: Each grade of success allows you to inflict one more level of aggravated damage.

ETHERIC SHIELDING

(•• MATTER, •• SPIRIT, OPTIONAL •• PRIME)

Ordinary materials can be converted to resist energies from alien dimensions, to provide both physical and mental protection against the horrors of the unknown. Imbuing standard clothing with extradimensional material (such as materialized ephemera) or using matter with proven anti-Etheric properties (such as lead or polyester) in precise amounts creates a garment

BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

One will note that many of the rites in this chapter require conjunctural magic, which is not normally permitted in **Mind's Eye Theatre** unless the eponymous optional rule relating to such magic is in effect. Faced with such a restriction, what's a faithful Scientist to do? Fortunately, there are several easy solutions to this dilemma. First of all, **Laws of Ascension** already employs something of a "short cut" with regards to rites and the Pattern Spheres—Prime is not generally required to create new Patterns out of nothing, thus eliminating a basic problem with many conjunctural rites. Second, the Storyteller may rule that several successive smaller rites may be used to create the same effect as one conjunctural rite normally would. For instance, to create *Etheric Shielding*, rites for *Initiate Matter* and *Initiate Spirit* would be cast in succession, first to create or modify the existing materials to be protected and then to infuse them with additional protection against spiritual harm. While doing so takes longer than performing one conjunctural rite, it still allows for such complex effects while the added requirements and casting times keep it from being unduly powerful at the same time. Lastly, the Storyteller may always rule that a particular rite can simply fall under the province of one Sphere even if other requirements normally exist, effectively creating a similar "short cut" as is normally employed with the Pattern magics. While this last should not be employed too often for fear of allowing conjunctural rites through the back door, so to speak, it can go a long way toward permitting more outlandish rites than **Laws of Ascension** normally allows.

A NOTE ON MATTER EFFECTS

Generally, using the Matter Sphere to change the shape or state (such as converting a solid into a liquid) of a Pattern does not require the player to spend successes on duration. Transmutations and wholly vulgar properties do require additional successes, however, or else they will revert to their previous composition. It is somewhat simpler to make these alterations permanent, however. The player must expend additional successes equal to half of those used in the original Effect (rounded up). In many cases, this means that it is easier to make a simple Matter Effect permanent than it is to spend successes on duration. Nonetheless, the caster must choose whether to commit to a permanent change or spend the extra effort ensuring that an object will revert to its original state.

or enclosure that is resistant to alien meddling. Sophisticated versions of this rite actually align extradimensional energies to protect against physical alien attack.

System: After successes are spent on duration as well as the clothing or enclosure (based on how many people it could reasonably contain), each success increases the Gauntlet around the wearer or dweller by one. This barrier must first be breached by any spirit wishing to possess the character. Using Prime, the Scientist can also provide two additional soak dice against attacks in or from the Umbra.

MET: Initiate Matter and Spirit. Optional Initiate Prime. After spending a full turn treating a garment, it protects you from Umbral intruders for 10 minutes, increasing the Gauntlet by two. It must be bypassed if any spirit attempts to possess you, and you receive a free retest on all tests to resist spiritual possession. With Prime, you also gain an additional health level against attacks from the Umbra, even if you're in the Umbra at the time. *Grades of Success*: Grades of success can improve duration, cover an enclosure large enough to protect one additional person (such as a tent) or add one to the Gauntlet. Grades of success spent on the Prime variant add an additional health level against Umbral attacks.

EXOTIC MATTER

(••••• MATTER, OTHER SPHERES AS NOTED)

A few Sons of Ether have reached the pinnacle of their Craft, and no longer feel constrained by such paltry limitations as the periodic table. Mastery of Matter has limitless possibilities, exemplified by such materials as antimatter and Primium. The guidelines for creating them and their in-game effects are detailed as follows:

Antimatter (requires ••••• Matter): Using garage-built particle accelerators, stolen research time at CERN and postmodern alchemy are all known ways to create antimatter. Previously, this material required an esoteric command of Forces as well, but the general acceptance of antimatter among Sleeper scientists has

simplified the process considerably. Of course, rather than laboring with an unwieldy conventional particle accelerator for the sake of a few measly positrons, Etherites use their own shortcuts.

Unlike standard matter, antimatter is composed of particles with an opposing spin: positrons, antineutrons and antiprotons. When it meets normal matter, each particle annihilates its opposites and releases their combined energy.

Unless kept in a vacuum, antimatter and normal matter meet... explosively. In game terms, successes measure both how much is created and how much it can annihilate, inflicting three aggravated wounds (unsoakable by any material entity or object) per success in a radius of approximately 100 yards per success. (Successes are not divided in this case). Etherites may measure out small amounts of antimatter for experiments (in the three-to-six-wounds/100-to-200-yard range) or simply use it to blow something up. Magnetic containment fields and the ability to evacuate the area are recommended.

Antimatter requires at least 20 successes to prepare before spending successes on the amount/damage/area of effect. Creating antimatter in these amounts is vulgar, even though the amount is microscopic.

MET: Master Matter. After a week of effort (and at the automatic cost of a grade of success), you create antimatter. When it contacts other matter (including air) it disintegrates itself and an equal mass of matter in an explosion with a 10-pace radius that automatically inflicts three aggravated health levels of damage. *Grades of Success:* Each additional grade of success inflicts one more aggravated wound and adds three paces to the blast radius. Remember that antimatter will automatically detonate upon creation unless an Initiate Forces Effect is used first to provide a vacuum-sealed container (which requires the *Technology* and *Science* Abilities to construct).

Primium (requires Matter, ... Prime): Along with Iteration X, the Sons of Ether are among the few who still know how to create this alchemically perfect gold/silver alloy. Some Scientists consider the metal to be the perfect, earthly reflection of universal Ether. Expensive alchemy and/or nuclear furnaces (as well as a king's ransom of base materials) go into its creation. Characters need access to a Resources 5 rating to afford it.

Furthermore, Quintessence is needed. In game terms, each success used to create Primium needs to be backed by one point of Quintessence. After 15 successes are spent on the threshold to create it, successes are spent on its relative mass and potency.

Finished Primium has a near perfect sheen and excellent material strength, but its real benefits come from its perfect antipathy to supernatural energies (representative, it is said, of its perfected structure refusing to yield to such influences). A Primium weapon's striking surface inflicts aggravated wounds. It also provides permanent countermagic commensurate with its mass: two dice per success spent past the threshold, though no amount of Primium can provide more than 10 dice to resist any single magical Effect. Etherites may divide successes spent to create multiple masses of Primium. The countermagic

affects magic within a rough two-yard radius of the mass. If the Primium has been made into a weapon, this effect is rolled to weaken the strength of any supernatural defense, allowing Primium blades and bullets to punch through defensive Forces Effects and weaken enhanced soak capabilities.

MET: Master Matter, Disciple Prime. After committing five Traits of Resources for a full week in the casting of this rote as well as spending 16 Traits of Quintessence, you create enough Primium to coat a single, human-sized subject or object or enough for a sword-sized weapon that inflicts aggravated damage. The Primium object also provides countermagic against incoming Effects automatically, acting as if it possesses an Arete of 1. *Grades of Success:* Each grade of success can coat one more object or increase the effective Arete for countermagic by one, but you must spend another point of Quintessence.

ORGONE ACCUMULATOR (... OR PRIME)

Inspired by the work of Doctor Wilhelm Reich, many Sons of Ether use his theories to store and use a unique variation of the Odylic Force. Orgone theory states that the universal essence is emotional as well as physical. By harnessing it, Etherites may imbue Scientific workings with either their own Resonance or that of another subject, item or place. Particularly advanced accumulators can attract and store ambient Quintessence as well as Resonance.

Orgone Accumulators take many forms (and, in fact, many of them are turned into full fledged Wonders). The classic Reichian design is a chamber built of alternating layers of conductive metals and organic materials, but the Sons of Ether have experimented with many alternate designs, including accumulator jumpsuits, handheld units and even wood and metal buildings designed to focus orgone energy upon a laboratory.

Orgone Accumulators are also used as foci for Life and Forces Effects, relying on the ability to store Resonance in order to make precise changes. Healing and weather control are the most common additional functions of Orgone Accumulators.

System: For the Prime 3 version, each success allows the Etherite's focus to hold two Resonance Traits for as long as the Etherite chooses to commit successes to duration. These Traits may be applied to any other Effect the character casts, but doing so expends those Traits. By default, an accumulator absorbs the strongest ambient Resonance in an area, but the Effect can be used to take a Resonance sample from a specific person, place, or thing by spending additional successes on targeting. The target does not lose any Resonance.

The Prime 5 version also acts as the Prime Effect **Fount of Paradise**, as listed in **Mage: The Ascension**. Additional successes must be spent to activate this use of the accumulator.

MET: Disciple or Master Prime. You may duplicate two Resonance Traits from any person, place or thing in your line of sight and apply them to your own Effects once during the next 10 minutes. Once you use the Trait, it is lost, even if 10 minutes have not yet passed. *Grades of Success:* You can spend

grades of success to increase the duration past the normal 10 minutes or to acquire an additional two Resonance Traits. If you have Master level *Prime*, you can also spend each grade of success to acquire one Trait of Quintessence.

⊕ QUANTUM TEMPORAL TRAVEL (••• ⊕ R ••••• CORRESPONDENCE, ••••• ENTROPY, ••• ⊕ R ••••• TIME)

The introduction of quantum mechanics has solved many of the lethal problems of time travel. By tunneling through to alternate universes, Sons of Ether can travel into the past without suffering an instant visit from an annoying Paradox pest. It's still vulgar and less potentially useful than traveling to the "true" past, present and future. Going to an alternate past cannot change the true present, and fantastic technology retrieved from alternate futures tends to fail to Unbelief. Still, visiting an alternate universe has its uses. Utopians visit the grand futures and idyllic pasts that might have been, or sneak into dystopias to learn harsh lessons about the price of failure. Ethernauts explore these universes out of sheer curiosity, dividing their time between strange alternate universes and those barely different from the "baseline" World of Darkness.

Controlled wormholes in the space-time continuum are created with high-energy particle beams, special electromagnetic fields, locating twists in the Odylic flow and, in some cases, psychedelic drugs.

LINEAR SCIENCE

Specialists (what the superstitious would call "sorcerers") are common sights in Etherite labs. These Scientists don't have the same breadth or sheer power, but they are often very skilled in one or two particular fields. Most are attached to specific factions where their talents are needed, though a few compose an informal pool that Etherites contact when they need special help. Specialist research is not, however, held in very high regard. The Tradition values flexibility, the ability to improvise and, when it comes right down to it, truly impressive Inventions. Specialists rarely provide these.

When using Sorcery Paths, Etherite Specialists roll Science or Technology instead of Occult. Their Paths include (but are not limited to) Alchemy, Conveyance, Enchantment and Hellfire, as well as all psychic phenomena.

System: Correspondence 3 transports one person, while Correspondence 4 creates a tunnel into an alternate universe that can accommodate one traveler per success spent. Further successes can move the characters through space as well as time, as a normal Correspondence Effect. Time 4 allows a short hop (one turn/success) forward or backward compared to the baseline time, before being pulled back to the point of departure. Time 5 allows for extended journeys into the alternate past or future (using the standard chart for Time Effects). Time



and Entropy are used together to isolate the travelers from the time stream and move them to a new "branch" of the continuum. The Time 5 version of the rote must be used to return as well, or it's a one-way trip. Return trips use the Consensus of the alternate universe to determine vulgarity.

Other successes are spent on the dissimilarity between the alternate reality and the traveler's. One success indicates a near clone of the "real" timeline, while five successes allow passage to the most bizarre alternate worlds, such as worlds where the Order of Hermes controls the paradigm or sentient dinosaurs coexist with humanity.

Traveling into an alternate past cannot affect the "real" present, except through any knowledge or artifacts that the traveler brings with her. Objects that have a specific duplicate in the baseline present eventually erode or fade, while objects from the future do so if they can perform any feat of magic or science unknown to the present day. Still, the low-level version of this rote allows characters to hop into an alternate past and grab a temporal duplicate of an object that you desperately need (or need more of) for a brief period to use in the baseline present.

A word of warning: Alternate universes are just that — alternate. Even the most familiar-looking one might have subtle, dangerous differences. Some Sons of Ether note simi-

larities with the Mirror Zone of the Umbra and posit that this rote actually takes them there.

MET: Disciple or Adept Correspondence, Adept Entropy, Disciple or Master Time. You can travel to an alternate universe similar to your own and move forward or backward in time there, though changing the past there will not change the real future, and all objects acquired in the other timeline vanish after a day. The Disciple Time version allows you to spend one minute in a past similar enough to yours to acquire (temporary) equipment and information. At the end of the visit, you return to the real world time and place where you left off.

The Master-ranked version should be worked out with a Narrator ahead of time, as it can lead to an extended story. If it weren't obvious before, let it be restated here for all to see: *Used without proper preparation, this rote can easily wreck bloody havoc on a Mind's Eye Theatre game. As such, the Storyteller is within her rights to alter, limit or outright prohibit this rote and its capabilities to suit the needs of her chronicle.*

Grades of Success: Each grade of success in the Disciple Time version allows you to spend one more minute in the alternate universe. Using Adept Correspondence, you can take one other person with you for each grade of success.

INVENTIONS



The Sons of Ether are probably the Traditions' greatest Wonder-makers, but they use technology so strange that neither the mystical Traditions nor the Technocracy is able to easily use or comprehend them. Scientific principles combined with the subtle Ether make them hard to reverse engineer. Personalized control systems are often counterintuitive for anyone but the creator. The Sons' allies appreciate simpler Inventions, however, so Scientists learn to bury their eccentric approach for the sake of the group. The following Wonders are examples of relatively straightforward Inventions; one common, the other exceedingly rare.

⊕ NEEDLER (ARETE 4)

10-point Invention

The signature weapon of the Shadow Ministry's agents, the Qi Needler disables enemies by disrupting the body's Etheric flow. The Needler is a silver teardrop with a grip, trigger and black projecting spike. The spike is the weapon's barrel, capable of shooting bursts of thin, steel needles at almost the speed of sound. The weapon uses electromagnetic fields to fire its needles; its battery recharges itself by converting kinetic energy into electricity. A dial on the side has three settings. The first one simply fires the needles in a short burst, perforating anything it's aimed at.

Even though the lack of a muzzle flash, cordite residue or a sonic boom makes this an ideal assassin's weapon, in most cases it is used to disable enemies by shooting at specific pressure point groups. At the weapon's second setting the

needles are charged with the negative orgone Resonance of sleep-inducing meridians and chakras. When fired, they fly to these pressure points like a magnet to a chunk of iron.

The third setting, used in extreme circumstances, guides needles to points that disrupt the target's Etheric physiology, killing him and preventing easy Scientific healing.

System: Roll the user's Dexterity + Firearms, adding three dice to his pool as the attack is considered to be a burst. The soak value of armor is doubled. The first setting inflicts damage as if it were a normal Forces Effect. The second inflicts unsoakable bashing damage using Life 3. The third setting is a Life 3 direct Pattern attack that inflicts aggravated wounds.

THE BIOROID EVA

Unique Wonder

The masterwork of the Cybernaut Emile Rotwang, the bioroid named Eva is the culmination of the roboticists' art. Rotwang created a handful of them before accumulated Paradox killed him; Eva is the only one still possessed by the Cybernetic Research Institute. She has a warm personality, is a brilliant chess player and can tear a human being in half with her bare hands. Fortunately, she has never demonstrated her last talent except when defending herself from an Iteration X team bent on capturing her for study.

Eva is a synthesis of organic and inorganic components. Her body was created from the surgically sculpted tissues of over 300 corpses, but she has neither stitches nor bolts holding her together. Over that, a steel exoskeleton with an art deco brass

filigree supports her limbs and spine, fanning out into an elegant yellow collar. This exoskeleton is removable and exists to allow her to exercise her incredible strength without dislocating or breaking her joints. Her hair is straight and black, and her eyes are odd colors: one gray, the other blue.

Currently, the bioroid is a near captive of the team of Scientists who have made it their life's work to study and maintain her. Over the last three years, something has happened to her brain. The Etherites aren't sure what, though, because, according to x-rays, her skull is hollow except for a lining of golden circuitry. None of the research staff knows how she is able to think or why she began to babble in strange languages and suffer seizures.

System: Eve was created with an Entropy 5, Life 5, Mind 3, Prime 5, Spirit 4 Effect. She is physically and (until recently) intellectually perfect and inhumanly strong (Strength 7, all other Attributes at 5, thanks to a Scientific variant of **Midwife's Blessing**), but unbeknownst to her or her caretakers, her brain is a Platonic copy of her maker's, constructed of pure Quintessence. The circuitry in her skull draws signals from the Astral Umbra, where the Platonic brain resides in a micro-dimension of its own. Thus did Professor Rotwang give his creation intelligence despite his poor understanding of Mind Science.

Unfortunately, something has happened to her brain. Storytellers are encouraged to come up with a scenario that suits their own chronicles. Thought transmissions could be disrupted by the residual effects of the Avatar Storm, or the brain could have been captured by an astral spirit. If the latter is the case, the spirit might attempt to displace Eva's mind, gaining an empty vessel with which to enter reality.

EFFECTS VERSUS WONDERS

Ether Science recognizes the importance of the Scientist's will, but it never trivializes the need for the proper tools. The difference between a rote using a scientific focus and a Wonder becomes understandably hazy. In many cases, an Effect might be incorporated into an Artifact that is very similar to the focus used in its one-shot incarnation.

The difference usually is that a simple Effect uses a jury-rigged or hastily constructed device that isn't quite precisely calibrated for the task at hand. A pair of Ether Goggles or a ray gun may be a focus used for an array of Effects, but it might not have been specifically constructed to do one thing well. Thanks to an enlightened understanding of Science, the Son of Ether can detect subtle changes in the Parmenidean chain of Creation, take advantage of fleeting atmospheric conditions or find a Fortean loophole that the proper adjustments to her equipment allow her to manipulate.

A Wonder needs to be built more sturdily. It must assume the functions normally handled by the Scientist's judgment and will. The final Artifact can use exactly the same basic design as the original focus, retooled to a dedicated function. It can even continue to function as a focus for other Effects.

In game terms, this means that most of the rotes listed in this chapter can be incorporated into Wonders using the rules in the *Mage Storyteller's Companion* and *Forged by Dragon's Fire*. Sons

of Ether (and similar technomancers) gain an advantage because they may apply the bonus for using a preferred or unique focus if these foci are being adapted into Wonders. Furthermore, they can stack this bonus with the bonus for using a rote, applying the total modifier to the rolls the player makes to create the Wonder.

WONDER SPHERES (OPTIONAL SYSTEM)

At the Storyteller's discretion, Sons of Ether who prefer careful work in the lab to slapdash Science in the field might merit a special advantage. Using this optional system, Sons of Ether may purchase Spheres at half normal cost (or for five freebie points each at character creation), rounded up. These may be used for the sole purpose of creating Charms, Talismans and Artifacts. The character cannot use these Sphere ranks to cast Effects for any other purpose and can only teach them to others in this incomplete form.

These Wonder Spheres may stack on top of normally purchased Sphere ranks (at half of the full, multiplied cost of that rank), or they can be gained in a Sphere in which the character does not have any conventional proficiency. The character can be neither a *Sphere Natural* nor *Sphere Inept* in the Wonder Sphere. The player can purchase multiple ranks in a Wonder Sphere. The normal Arete-based ceiling on maximum Sphere ranks applies.

As the character gains experience, the player may invest experience points into the Wonder Sphere to bring it up to its normal, dynamic capabilities. Doing so costs slightly more than half of the normal cost: six points to fill out one rank in a Sphere, and five points multiplied by the current/new rank to upgrade other Wonder Sphere ranks to full Sphere capacity. A Wonder Sphere's ranks must be upgraded in order, from the lowest rank to the highest.

This system should only be used for strong technomantic or Technocratic magical styles. In many cases, this style of Science might interfere with a mage's progress, since it's somewhat formulaic and static. Dynamic or Questing Avatar Essences might mandate that the character "round out" her knowledge before accomplishing her Seeking.

THE KITAB AL-ALACIR AS A WONDER

In addition to its place at the heart of the Etherite canon, the *Kitab al-Alacir* is also a Grimoire: a magical text that can spark Awakening and teach the Spheres. Different translations have different benefits. The common Gregorian translation (named for Gregory of the House of Lamps, a medieval House Golo magus) is just a Primer. It will spark Awakening in any reader who is prepared to question the Consensus and makes a serious attempt to understand it. Other translations (including added commentaries, marginalia and in one case, attached sticky notes) can provide Sphere tutelage in addition to Awakening. An exact copy retains the qualities of the original, but it cannot be improved upon without making an effort equal to the task of creating an entirely new Grimoire.

For more information on creating and using Grimoires, see *Forged by Dragon's Fire*.

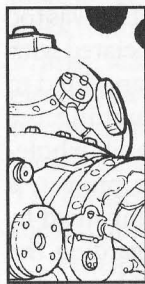


CHAPTER THREE: THE DYNAMIC FACULTY

I have gone into the outer darkness of scientific and philosophical transactions and proceedings, ultra-respectable but covered with the dust of disregard. I have descended into journalism. I have come back with the quasi-souls of lost data.

—Charles Fort, *The Book of the Damned*

PERSONAGES



CHEVALIER YVES MERCURE

Background: Born in southern France to a family of noble pedigree and good means, young Yves was a recluse, preferring the fascinating wonders hidden within his uncle's library on the family estate to the numbing cultural events to which his family constantly tried to drag him. For his birthday each year, his uncle would gift him with antique automata, usually a mechanical clock or a wind-up toy. These gifts cemented Yves's lifelong fascination with mechanisms designed to evoke joy and wonder. He cared little for the practical uses of engineering, and his later study of that field served only to provide him the necessary background to build mechanical beings.

His avid devouring of adventure books instilled a longing to see distant lands and places. When he found a copy of the fabled *Kitab al-Alacir* in his uncle's library, his fate — and his Awakening — was sealed. He was soon initiated into the Sons of Ether and began journeying to the fabled places of wonder of which he had once dreamed, such as the Hollow Earth, traveling there in machines of his own make.

Yves represents an adventuresome "old school" Etherite, one who cares almost nothing for the present affairs of the world, with its depraved politics and social climbing. He has an utter contempt for modern electronics and computers — these boring, lifeless things cannot evoke the semblance of life as can a mechanism. His life is devoted to building better and more intricate mechanical wonders, including an artificially intelli-



gent tin soldier built without any silicon or wires — only highly complicated and microscopically inscribed gears and levers. It is, in many ways, the culmination of a mechanist's dream. Once wound up and put in motion, the automaton soldier will not run down and needs no battery power. It can think on the level of a young teenager, but without the chaotic hormones.

Rather than use electricity ("that child of capriciousness"), he often adopts otherworldly energy sources, such as the strange, energetically charged chemicals found in certain Umbral Realms that can power mechanisms without needing circuitry or wires. He has improved his void suit using such alchemical substances, which can recycle and generate the suit's oxygen without need of external replenishment (as long as the suit is not breached).

He has converted an old, expansive greenhouse on his family estate into a laboratory.

Image: Yves is thin and pale, in his late 20s, with wispy, thin brown hair that he keeps at shoulder length. He couldn't really grow much of a beard if he wanted to, so he keeps himself fastidiously clean-shaven. His wardrobe is fairly fashionable, thanks to his family housekeeper, who buys his clothes for him.

When adventuring in distant, Umbral lands, he dons his thick, metal void suit that, despite appearances, is actually incredibly lightweight while still remaining stronger than steel.

Roleplaying Hints: You never interacted with others well as a child, although you've gotten a bit better at it since joining the Sons of Ether. There's nothing like adventuring with others to create a bonding expe-

rience. You're not a complete nebbish pointdexter, however. You did, after all, have social graces hammered into you by your wealthy parents. You prefer the company of small groups to large, loud parties. Given the choice, you actually prefer to be left alone in your laboratory.

Faction: Adventurers (former Ethernaut)

Essence: Questing

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Loner

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4 (Handy), Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 4 (Discerning), Intelligence 5 (Book-Smart), Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Cosmology 2, Crafts 5 (Clockworks), Dodge 4 (Footwork), Etiquette 5 (High Society), Expression 4 (Lecturing), Firearms 3, Linguistics 2 (French, English, German), Melee 4 (Fencing), Occult 1, Science 4 (Physics), Technology 4 (Tinkering)

Backgrounds: Library 4, Resources 4

Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 2, Forces 1, Matter 4, Mind 2, Prime 3, Time 2

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 8

Paradox: 3

Resonance: (Entropic) Antisocial 1, (Static) Intricate 2

ERNESTO C. AMANGUALE ("ACE," A.K.A. "THE ZERO-POINT KID")

Background: Ernesto first made a name for himself among the hot-rodders of southern California during the late 1970s, amazing them with his strange but highly effective engine modifications and designs while still only in his mid-teens. His parents feared that he was too involved in the violence, sex and drugs associated with the hot-rod scene, but at the age of 16 he appeared to experience a radical personality shift, shunning the streets for the classroom and applying himself wholeheartedly to his studies. (His science fair project, a survey of perpetual motion machines accompanied by working models with detailed statistics regarding the input/output efficiency of each, was not well received by his high school faculty, however.)

By age 21 he had a degree in engineering and had begun working as a designer for a major automobile manufacturer. As Amanguale explains things, his new engine designs were too radical for the conservative company, for whom fuel efficiency, environmental protection and even passenger safety were not bottom-line



concerns. Amanguale's designs were destroyed, and news of his breakthrough work was suppressed. Seeking new markets for his designs, Ernesto contacted the Sons of Ether (apparently having been somehow aware of their existence for some time) and began to trade his expertise at wringing energy from the cosmos for tutelage in the finer subtleties of Etheric technologies. His talent and dedication, not to mention the enormous quantities of clean safe power he was able to supply, earned him a reputation as the Tradition's "whiz kid," a rep that follows him to this day.

While his work takes him all over the world, he prefers to spend most of his time at his secret workshop somewhere in the desert of the American southwest. There he and his apprentices explore various avenues of alternative power sources: wind, solar, sonic resonator sinks, fission-fusion reconverters, superconducted plasma whirls, scalar wave drivers, teleforce transmissions, electrogravitic vortices and the like. His workshop library contains the most extensive collection of technical material by or about Nikola Tesla, Ed Leedskalnin, T. Townsend Brown, John Searle, T. Henry Moray and the enigmatic Rho Sigma to be found in one location.

Amanguale's personal obsession is refining and controlling the phenomenon of "Zero-Point Energy Conversion," wherein the Ether itself is transformed directly into energy, seemingly appearing from empty space. Ernesto is passionately devoted to the downfall of what he calls the "petroleum tyranny," and he envisions a golden age of free energy for all. Over the years, he has secretly converted a number of households (and their

vehicles) to alternative energy systems, mostly in low-income Latin-American neighborhoods known from his childhood, making them independent of the international fossil-fuel power complex. As the number of independent households grows, however, a kind of free energy movement has begun to speak out publicly, and Ernesto fears that the Technocracy might soon learn of his activities and the location of his workshop.

Image: Ernesto is in his early 40s and stands five-foot seven, with dark brown eyes, a closely trimmed mustache, black hair with a touch of gray on the sides, and olive skin (usually smudged with grease). His waistline is beginning to spread, but he is strong, with especially well-muscled hands. He usually wears grimy garage mechanic's overalls, but when his wife cleans him up and dresses him for special occasions, he looks almost distinguished.

Roleplaying Hints: Like Yves, you prefer to work alone and tend to be quite single-minded where your work is concerned. Having seen for yourself what a smart-ass punk you used to be, you have tried to cultivate the habit of keeping your opinions to yourself when around others. You can be downright passionate, though, when it comes to the welfare of your family, the Latin American community or underprivileged people around the world.

Faction: Progressivist (Hastings Fellowship)

Essence: Static

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Architect

Attributes: Strength 4 (Iron Grip), Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4 (Creative), Wits 5 (Ever-Ready)

Abilities: Athletics 2, Brawl 4 (Dirty Fighting), Computer 1, Crafts 5 (Vehicle Customization), Dodge 3, Drive 4 (Off-Road), Enigmas 2, Firearms 2, Intimidation 2, Law 1, Linguistics 1 (Spanish, English), Melee 2, Science 4 (Engineering), Streetwise 3, Survival 1, Technology 5 (Engines)

Backgrounds: Destiny 4, Wonder 3 (La Fuente del Ritmo, extradimensional cruiser)

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Forces 4, Matter 3, Prime 3, Time 2

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 9

Paradox: 5

Resonance: (Dynamic) Violent 1, (Static) Controlled 2

NIKI YEMANA ("DISCØID DIVA")

Background: Born to a long line of Hawaiian pearl divers and trained in underwater recovery and salvage, Niki has little patience for theory or data-sifting. She prefers a hands-on approach when delving into the unknown. The Yemana clan has received international acclaim for exemplary participation in several marine rescue operations, but it is also intimately connected with the Pacific underworld and has narrowly evaded charges of black market trading in salvaged antiquities. Niki knows better than anyone alive what sort of ancient treasures and wonders lie in shipwrecks on the ocean floor, and she has swam through streets and buildings that have not seen daylight for tens of thousands of years.

In 1995, when Niki was 12, her family hauled up a strange convex disk of some unidentifiable stony metal or metallic stone, almost two meters in diameter, with slight concave depressions in the center of either side and covered with incomprehensible markings. Finding neither buyer nor use for the thing, they installed it in their garden as a birdbath, near young Niki's private hiding-place among the hedges. Her proximity to the object seemed to inspire strange dreams while she napped in the garden, dreams that later grew into waking visions of a highly advanced civilization occupying a large continent in the Pacific Ocean.

Once, awakening from such a dream, she saw the disk hovering a foot above the pedestal that supported it. Instinctively applying a child's natural curiosity to the phenomenon, Niki learned that she could direct the disk to move by attuning her thoughts to it, and in time discovered other properties as well. By the age of 15, she

had fully Awakened and could pilot the disk through aeronautically impossible maneuvers while she stood or sat atop it.

An ardent conservationist, she began using her power to attack ocean polluters, unregulated whalers and other environmental criminals. Her actions drew the attention of the Sons of Ether, who recruited her and attempted to apply their Science to understanding her wondrous disk. The Tradition definitely considers her a loose cannon, however, as her exploits draw unwelcome attention. On her 18th birthday, Niki and several other radical mages removed a massive oil spill from the Indian Ocean by teleporting it to the opposite side of the planet (where it was precipitated upon the owner of the responsible petrochemical company as he sat in the courtyard of his family mansion in west Texas). In the two years since then, however, Yemana has learned to keep a somewhat lower profile, mainly to protect her family, while she heals from the massive Paradox Backlash that nearly claimed the lives of her entire cabal.

Image: Now 20 years old, Niki is barely over five feet tall, with a supple, compact swimmer's body and Asian features that might be considered plain were it not for the enthusiastic gleam in her eyes and her mischievous smile. Spiraling Paradox burn scars cover most of her body, reaching up her neck to touch her cheeks. Her long black hair is generally kept in a tight braid or ponytail. She usually wears a wetsuit, leotard or other sporty form-fitting outfit.

Roleplaying Hints: Restless to the point of hyperactivity, you have trouble sitting still for long. You need to be where the action is, preferably in the center of it. Though tempered by recent experience, you have difficulty containing your anger — or your enthusiasm. While you are never cruel, you tend to rage out when confronted with sins against ecology.

Faction: Dissident

Essence: Dynamic

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Thrill-Seeker

Attributes: Strength 4 (Powerful Shoulders), Dexterity 5 (Lithe), Stamina 5 (Resilient), Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Athletics 4 (Swimming), Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Computer 1, Dodge 5 (Leap), Drive 2, Enigmas 3, Firearms 1, Linguistics 1 (English, Japanese), Occult 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Dream 2, Wonder 4 (Disk)

Arete: 3



Spheres: Correspondence 3, Life 1, Matter 1, Prime 1, Spirit 1

Willpower: 4

Quintessence: 3

Paradox: 8

Resonance: (Dynamic) Volatile 3

RONALD N. HARRIS, M.D.
(“DOCTOR ORGONE”)

Background: Doctor Harris claims to have been born in 1920, and as a young naval corpsman stationed in Philadelphia, he was assigned to the USS Eldridge (DE 173) on August 12, 1943. The expanses of copper coils covering the ship’s hull didn’t bother him much; he had been in the navy long enough to know about degaussing and anti-radar measures. But when the familiar thrum of the ship increased to a sickening buzz, green mists arose from the sea’s surface and shimmering crackling lights filled the air, Harris decided it was time to de-enlist without notice. Leaping overboard, he experienced a bone-jarring jolt as if he had passed through a wall of electricity, momentarily stunning him. Looking back, he had a glimpse of the Eldridge surrounded by a flattened globe of crackling green mist, just as it flickered and vanished into thin air.

Once Harris made his way to shore and got his bearings, he found he had two problems. One, he was no longer in Philadelphia Harbor in 1943, but just off shore from what he later learned to be Norfolk, Virginia, circa 1983. Two, he periodically found his limbs and sometimes his whole body fading from transparency to invisibility. Sometimes he would even become completely immaterial and massless, floating off through walls or into the ground. Harris found it easier to adapt to the world of the future than to his parapsychical affliction, and he delved into the lore of the body seeking a cure.

In the course of working toward a medical degree, he toured the world studying yogis, acupuncturists, faith healers and psychic surgeons, becoming extremely well versed in occult physiology and the researches of Wilhelm Reich. His studies brought him to the attention of the Sons of Ether in 1990, and by 1995 he had become sufficiently Awakened to exert some control over his chronic immateriality. He has since used his abilities to advocate alternative medicine and to fight fraud and corruption within the pharmaceutical-industrial complex. He also holds a special grudge against the military and maintains active contact with veterans and retirees who believe they were subjected to experimental assignments without their knowledge or consent.

Image: Harris is a somewhat handsome black man who looks slightly younger than his chronological age of 43 years. While not particularly strong or athletic, he keeps in excellent shape through an alternative health care regimen that includes advanced yogic techniques, martial arts and meditating in an orgone box. While not exactly vain, he is constantly experimenting with his physical appearance, adopting hair and clothing styles that range from the flamboyantly garish to the classically understated.

Roleplaying Hints: You consciously try to maintain a cheerful and easy-going demeanor, as your studies have consistently demonstrated that a positive attitude is integral to good health. You become dead serious, however, in the presence of major threats to life and health. You also have a fascination with the period of American history that you missed by accidentally traversing time. You consider the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s to be the most important phases of social evolution, and you have cultivated many of the looks and mannerisms of those eras.

Faction: Progressivist/Utopian League (Noetic Engineers)

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4 (Swift), Stamina 4 (Pain Resistant), Charisma 4 (Social Flexibility), Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 4 (Auras), Brawl 3, Crafts 2 (Clothing), Dodge 3, Drive 3, Etiquette 2,



Firearms 3, Medicine 5 (Reichian Therapy), Meditation 5 (Biofeedback), Melee 2, Occult 4 (New Age), Science 4 (Biology), Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Survival 2
Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Library 3

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Life 4, Matter 1, Mind 2, Prime 1, Spirit 3

Willpower: 7

Quintessence: 7

Paradox: 2

Resonance: (Dynamic) Lively 2, (Static) Balanced 2

ARLENE P. DIETRICH (ITALYAN PSEUDONYM)

Background: Arlene was born during the post-WWII baby boom and abandoned at the site of a traveling carnival show. Some whisper that her family was gypsy, and that they abandoned her because her birth was attended by ill omens. Raised by carnies, she quickly developed an amazing capacity for the mental chores of carnival work — counting money and heads, spotting troublemakers or easy marks, memorizing long verbose speeches used to greet guests, introduce feature shows and hawk cotton candy.

"The Incomparable Detruccini" recognized her aptitude and trained her to assist in his mentalist act (along with tutoring her in a host of related skills such as close observation, memorizing details, disguise, concealment, picking locks and picking pockets.). Arlene helped the aging prestidigitator for many years, and he became such a father figure to her that she even took his real last name as her own. When she started to exhibit real psychic powers — telepathy and clairvoyance — "Detruccini" became frightened of her, left the carnival

and lost himself in drink. His besotted ramblings about the "witch girl" were overheard by certain members of the shadow military, and Arlene, by then in her mid-20s, found herself forcibly recruited into a top-secret remote-viewing program.

While she cooperated to protect herself, her extra-sensory scans ranged much wider (and closer to home) than she ever reported. The unnamed agency that kept her noted her unusual skills and eventually came to trust her enough to train her as a field agent (specializing in missions involving the paranormal, of course). Over the next few decades, Dietrich became well versed in psychological operations, including a number of mind-control technologies employed by the New World Order. Arlene suspects that some of these psychotronic techniques were used on her, because when she decided to defect to the Council of Nine in the early 1990s her behavior became so uncontrollably erratic that only the lunatic fringe of any Tradition would have anything to do with her. (Which means that she is less shunned by the Sons of Ether than others.)

When she defected, Dietrich took with her a load of information concerning Technocratic control agents and the techniques they use to shape public belief and thus influence the Consensus. Arlene is dedicated to using these same techniques to insinuate true magic (lacking a proper Etherite indoctrination, she does not call it capital-S Science) into the Consensual worldview, loosening the constraints of Paradox for all mages and hopefully even resulting in mass Awakenings of the general populace. She especially works to promote widely known fringe beliefs — UFOs, psychic powers, Atlantis, the Bermuda Triangle, Nessie and Bigfoot — considering such Sleeper-garbled accounts to be the gateway through which humanity may be reintroduced to its spiritual nature.

Her modus operandi involves a plethora of quick-change disguises, stolen identities, scams and frauds all contrived to expose or discredit those who manipulate public opinion for petty ends — teachers, science popularizers, news anchors, experts and analysts, advertising executives, lawyers, politicians, corporate public relations officers, et cetera, ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

In her most successful ongoing scheme, she adopts the guise of aging stage magician The Amazing Lee Randie and, with the aid of some neo-situationist pranksters, heads up the "Scientific Committee Investigating Claims Of Normality." Sponsored by a non-existent governmental agency and backed by an invisible heap of money from an ever-changing list of theoretical corporations, SCICON investigates influential individuals who use the idea of normalcy as an unquestioned



assumption when presenting their views to the public — politicians, religious leaders, health experts and privately sponsored scientists. Purveyors of the ordinary are attacked with arguments both cogent and spurious that dissect the notion of normality to show that it has no application to reality. If the target responds belligerently, ad hominem arguments and embarrassing personal revelations are also deployed. Arlene's private project involves using COINTELPRO tactics to start an assassins' war between her old commanders from psych-ops, who she believes to be responsible for the murder of her foster father, "Detruccini."

Image: Devoid of makeup or disguise, Arlene is a nondescript white woman in her mid to late 50s, with dirty blond hair, pale gray eyes and an unusually wiry build for a woman her age, standing around 5' 7". She never appears without makeup or disguise, however, and when dealing with other mages she affects a primly businesslike appearance (unless circumstances dictate otherwise.)

Roleplaying Hints: Brutally pragmatic, you have little patience with the eccentricity and foibles of Etherites and other mages. You are perfectly aware that this does not win over friends or allies, though, and you are quite capable of acting charming, flamboyant or sympathetic, as the occasion demands. You know what genuine human closeness is, but life experiences have hardened you against it. Those few who penetrate your character armor are shocked to find that you don't really

have much of a "softer side." You want to save the world, and you love humanity in an abstract way, but most individuals just piss you off somehow.

Faction: Utopian League (Shadow Ministry)

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Director

Demeanor: (any)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5 (Deceiver), Appearance 1, Perception 4 (Experienced), Intelligence 5 (Good Memory), Wits 5 (Sharp)

Abilities: Alertness 4 (Espionage), Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Crafts 3 (Locksmith), Dodge 2, Drive 4 (Losing Tails), Etiquette 3, Expression 4 (Bullshitting), Firearms 3, Investigation 3, Law 3, Leadership 3, Linguistics 4 (English, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish), Melee 2, Performance 4 (Acting), Stealth 5 (Shadowing), Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5 (Politics)

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Arcane 5, Contacts 5, Resources 3

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 2, Life 1, Mind 4, Time 1

Willpower: 9

Quintessence: 4

Paradox: 1

Resonance: (Entropic) Withering 3, (Static) Cold 4

NOTHING BUT SCIENCE



Etherite characters have the will, diversity and background to support a chronicle by themselves. Other Traditions can serve as tenuous allies or antagonists, or they need never appear at all. The Tradition's internal politics provide their own hooks, so the Sons of Ether have plenty to do in their labs and halls before encountering foreign mysticism or science. The following are a few possibilities for Ether-centric games.

INTERNAL STRUGGLES

Ether Science is intensely personal, passionate and competitive. Scientists who uncover new phenomena or invent truly unique devices are richly rewarded. Plagiarists, copycats and uninspired Etherites quickly crawl to the academic scrap heap. In game terms, new discoveries and inventions are the primary means to acquire Allies, Mentor and Chantry Backgrounds from

the Tradition. Promising work can also lead to Resources grants and even access to a Node.

Unfortunately there are never enough benefits to go around and, in the post-*Paradigma* age, it's easier for an ambitious Scientist to pass off others' work as his own. Tradition law severely punishes such transgressions, but high-status Scientists rarely have to fear that an Ethics Council Tribunal will believe the piss-ant little Researcher who really invented his latest masterwork. If the "piss-ant Researcher" is a player's character, then she'll obviously want some redress. An entire story can spring from her attempts to build a case against a rival Scientist.

Not all struggles revolve around academic fraud. The players' Scientists might be working on exactly the same project as their rivals. The first to publish will reap the glory. Rival cabals can race for the same invention, archaeological dig or discovery. The winner discovers

the truth about spontaneous human combustion or builds a better rocket pack; the losers either hold a grudge that can influence the next story, or they learn to admire the victors. Of course, it's possible to be gracious and work with your rivals, but how often do you suppose that happens?

Finally, the problem of the Dissidents — so-called “Mad Scientists” — can be a constant thorn in the characters' side. Dissidents are utterly amoral, socially isolated and calculating. Because they hide themselves from the rest of the Tradition, they are less afraid of the consequences of stealing research. Sometimes it so happens that a Mad Scientist's current work is the same as a player's character's work, but with a disturbing twist. Aside from giving an opportunity for self-reflection, the players' characters' cabal might be the group best suited to stop the madman's insane schemes.

MYSTICAL ANTAGONISTS

The other Traditions can be potent allies, but an irreverent Scientist makes enemies when he ignores or profanes their beliefs. Other times, the conflict can be purely materialistic. Ether Science needs Nodes! It needs captured aliens! (Spirits? How quaint.) Why should the greatest Scientists in the world help a bunch of throwbacks maintain their brutish superstitions in the backwaters of the world! *Ave Ether!* Of course, it needn't be that obvious, but culture clashes can happen. Despite decades of progress, many Etherites still uphold the colonial biases of their European forebears. Combine that bias with a belief in a rational, “better” explanation for every supernatural phenomenon, and mystic compatriots are bound to take offense.

Etherites are proud of their ethics. Dissidents and radical Progressivists might challenge moral norms, but most Scientists obey an idealistic conscience. Other Traditions (notably the Euthanatos, the Order of Hermes and the Akashic Brotherhood) are mercilessly pragmatic at times. Hardly strangers to murder in dark corners, members of these Traditions have the most chilling philosophical justifications for their acts. Under Utopian guidance, Etherites are eager to uphold their code, even to the point of taking up arms against an offender.

TECHNOCRATIC ANTAGONISTS

Technocrats might support a kind of Science, but their skepticism and self-interest do not endear them to the Sons of Ether. Science is supposed to better humanity, not control it. According to the *Kitab al-Alacir*, everyone is experimenting with their lives. Everyone separates truth from falsehood and fights to understand

enigmas. The Technocracy would take that right from humanity. Not only does it crush the inquisitiveness that leads to Awakening, it ill-prepares Sleepers for dangerous phenomena that, like a Trojan Horse, slip through the gates of reason and sanity.

Many Sons of Ether practice Science that is little different on the surface from its Technocratic counterparts. They don't accept the absolute primacy of reductionist Reason, but they understand much of the same nuclear physics, biology and psychology as the Union does. Some Etherites might even offer cautious assistance to a Technocrat working on a beneficial project, but they know that anything they contribute to help or heal will be spread throughout the Conventions and exploited for every possible application. Few Scientists want to see their innovations turned into weapons or another tool to dominate humanity, so these exchanges are rare.

In many ways, the Sons of Ether are the funhouse reflections of “straight man” Technocrats. Shadow Ministry secret agents stalk the halls of power with bizarre weapons in hand, concocting mad plans that advance Ether Science and send up the intelligence culture so beloved by the NWO. Cybernaut roboticists pit their idiosyncratic automata against Iteration X's legion of mass-produced drones. Against Technocrats, it's advisable to play up the contrasting attitudes toward authority, their sense of style and their general level of eccentricity.

One interesting variant would be to run a **Mage** game in which no mystics play a part. They've all fallen to the Union or been incorporated into the Sons of Ether as particularly strange branches of Science. The Technocracy and the Sons of Ether fight to determine the place of technology in society. The Technocracy uses it to strengthen institutions and enforce privilege; the Sons of Ether use it to bring chaos, doubt and renewal into the world. In another variant, the Sons of Ether could actually be members of a Technocracy that runs in much the same way as the United Nations, as a freethinking alliance of rogue Scientists who trade diplomatic threats and secrets blows with the Five Conventions. The **Mage Storytellers Handbook** offers several excellent examples of alternative games that are especially suited to the Sons of Ether.

THE JOY OF DISCOVERY

One of the biggest obstacles to overcome in a **Mage** game is the problem of solipsism. Many players will argue that if they can explain something in their character's paradigm, then that's all that it is. Knowledge and in-game clues aren't necessary. This is untrue,

of course; paradigm is a filter for knowledge, not a substitute for it. Fortunately, the Etherite paradigm upholds the idea that most of the Tellurian is unknown. Everything is real in some sense, but humanity blocks out most of it. Understanding consists of going into the unknown and, slowly but surely, expanding one's mind to accept what you discover and incorporate it into a consistent whole.

Ether Scientists study natural anomalies, history, mythology, archaeology, psychology and other disciplines to uncover what most of humanity cannot. Sometimes Sleepers forget what they accomplished in the past, so the Tradition searches for places like Atlantis and Mu and rebuilds the machines described in ancient books and stories. Enigmatic events intrude from alternate realities: worlds that were or might have been. The Sons of Ether look for common phenomena from different sources because such things imply that cosmological constants exist that mages have yet to identify. This search is especially important, as it might eventually uncover the laws that Ether itself obeys.

Storytellers can use this potential as a license to pull out all the stories that they have shelved for not being consistent with **Mage** metaphysics (whatever *that* means). Fortean events, ancient astronauts, alien pyramid builders, Lemuria, telluric current conspiracies involving the crowned heads of Europe — each are fringe theories that can be mined for an Ether Science story. Libraries, bookstores and the Internet are gold mines of conspiracies and questionable reasoning that you can use to enhance a Scientific chronicle.

THE NAZCA SAINTS: AN ETHERITE CABAL

Any fringe theorist can tell you about the “ancient spaceport” of Peru’s Nazca Lines, but only a handful of people know about the secret hangars that lie beneath. These “Nazca Saints” can tell you that the hovering craft that lie within are human-built — and that this is only one of several caches around the world that attest to a more wondrous history than most people are brought up to believe.

HISTORY

The Nazca Saints’ founder, Kararoshi, returned to his birthplace in 1998. After completing an arduous post as a Research Assistant in England, the Amazonian Etherite returned to Peru to make sense of who he was. Although he intended to return to the Amazon, brief jaunts through its cities awakened a real interest in the nation that he’d spent much of his life ignoring. Since

the Sons of Ether had little to no presence here, he could have his pick of Sleeper assistants and research.

So instead of returning to the rainforest, he decided to become a Scientific explorer. When he approached the Nazca plains, his Ether-meters spiked off the scale, but the regular throng of alien astronaut aficionados, site interpreters and visiting occultists made a lone, discreet study of the site impossible. He needed money and a fronting organization, and — most importantly — he needed other Scientists to help him look around and pose as perfectly normal archaeologists.

Kararoshi wasn’t a well-connected Scientist, but he knew how to work an angle. His unusual personal history helped him hook up with the Progressivists, who were eager to see what a former hunter-gatherer had to say about the state of Ether Science and culture. For the price of a few papers in *Paradigma* on “encountering civilization for the first time,” he curried enough admiration to set up an academic think tank called the New Archaeology Group (or NAG), staff it with Sleepers and pay the Peruvian government for private access to the Nazca Lines. Ether Scientists trickled in for a piece of the action, but Kararoshi selected only the few with whom he could get along.

Unfortunately, the NAG attracted the attention of the Technocracy, which began to discreetly spy on the Scientists’ fieldwork. Kararoshi and his fellow Scientist Doctor Fang concentrated their observations on the great “Orion Spider” lines, looking for the source of its odd Etheric activity. Noting their progress, the Union sent an amalgam to investigate. Arriving with Peruvian government credentials and digging equipment, it was greeted by an irate Kararoshi, touching off a week-long hide-and-seek battle across the plains.

Cornered by agents, NAG Etherites co-operated on a complex teleportation procedure. At the last moment, Kararoshi intervened, entering coordinates derived from the geometric proportions of the lines themselves. The Effect went off and the Scientists went underground to a remote hidden cavern.

Liquid-filled yellow rods illuminated the cavern’s carved walls, and three spacecraft hung in the air at its center. A perfectly smooth tube led to the surface, several miles from the lines themselves. The Scientists put their skills to work warding the place from intrusion then hiked back to the surface, finding the sun behind a concealed door in the rock. The NAG left Peru, but not before publicly demonstrating Etheric flight technology to distract the Technocracy.

The three spacecraft still sit in their hangar, but the “Insidious” Doctor Fang recognized some of their mark-

ings from a Zhou Dynasty earthquake-detection device. Now called the "Nazca Saints," the cabal investigates ancient sites and myths around the world, looking for technological inspirations — including common elements that point to an advanced prehistoric culture.

MISSION

The Nazca Saints are famous for three things: their debauchery, their secrecy regarding their research and their clashes with the Technocracy.

The Saints travel around the globe looking for ancient technologies. In addition to studying archaeology, history and mythology to find likely sites, the group also tries to reproduce the devices it does find as well as those discovered by others. Thanks to their efforts, Etherite understanding of oddities such as the Lemurian Power Runes has advanced considerably.

They work under the aegis of normal universities and endowments as much as possible, but after being identified by the Technocracy, they've been careful to use assumed identities whenever possible. All are adamant about keeping their discoveries out of the hands of the Technocracy. The Union would like nothing more than to analyze and then expunge their artifacts so that it can preserve conventional history. Doctor Fang handles most of the security; with his help, the cabal has even set up a headquarters in Macao and defended it against two assaults.

Aside from their work, the Saints are extraordinary partygoers, given to extreme sports followed by epic benders. While this makes them remarkably gregarious for a group with so many secrets, the fact is that constant fear of the Technocracy combined with constant secret research is incredibly stressful. Explosive parties usually follow a major dig or a discovery in the lab, but the group explains them away as celebrating birthdays or obscure holidays. Sons of Ether call them "Saints' Days," and look forward to them.

USING THE NAZCA SAINTS

Storytellers can introduce the cabal through one of their renowned parties, but there are other ways that the Saints can cross paths with characters. For one thing, the Nazca Saints make up a small enough group that they do need other experts to assist them. If one of the characters is versed in a Sphere or Ability that the Saints aren't very skilled at, they might approach her. They offer as little evidence or explanation as possible, but the artifacts and data that they are forced to share can be very tantalizing. Characters who are asked to examine ancient stone models of rockets or cuneiform descriptions of gunpowder are liable to ask questions.

The Nazca Saints do trust certain Etherites with their secrets, but it will take time and effort to build such a rapport.

The Saints can also bring Technocratic heat down on the characters, fleeing to them for common assistance against an amalgam. Conversely, the Saints might have met an amalgam that's chasing the characters before and could provide advice.

Finally, the Nazca Saints can be found anywhere in the world, making them excellent local contacts or desperate allies when characters travel. Despite their secrecy, they are loyal Sons of Ether, willing to help a mage in need.

MEMBERS

While Kararoshi is the group's nominal head, the Nazca Saints know each other well enough that they don't need much of a hierarchy. Doctor Fang handles the group's security.

Kristina Amis is a Utopian who researches the social benefits of the Saints' discoveries. The Noeticist specializes in psychoactive drugs and mental health. In emergencies, she carries a dart gun that delivers specialized tranquilizers and hallucinogens. Amis joined the Saints to study indigenous Andean drugs. Kararoshi hoped that Amis could decode the Nazca Lines under a drugged, extraordinary state of consciousness. Even though that line of inquiry wasn't very fruitful, she managed to pull her weight against the Technocracy, employing drugs and psionics to cover the cabal's tracks. Aside from her drug research, Amis now adapts all sorts of ancient chemical discoveries for modern use.

Amis is a thin, haggard woman, given to smoking a pipe between scrawling chemical formulae and meditating in a sensory-deprivation chamber. Her clothes are loose and vibrant, dyed using ancient techniques that she's revived over the course of the Saints' work.

Antoine Caesar was a discreet employee of the British Museum. Specializing in "extraordinary acquisitions," he comes from a long line of art thieves that the museum used to pry pieces from the hands of private collectors. In 1988, he Awakened in the midst of stealing a bit of obscure Renaissance jewelry. He never expected the so-called "Viasilicos" to flare with white light — or display the image of a very surprised looking man on its facets. He left the artifact and fled, employing more and more Scientific trickery to conceal himself from possible pursuit. His paranoia protected him; his contact at the museum was murdered and the house he had burgled burned to the ground. Obsessed with the

secret of the Viasilicos, his research eventually led him to the *Kitab al-Alacir* and, in the end, the Sons of Ether.

After a hasty apprenticeship, his Professors agreed to send him as far away as possible. He joined the Saints in the Peruvian wilderness, where his talent for stealth and duplicity helped them avoid problems with the local government. Even though they had to flee, he still fulfils the same role, using his investigative Science and talents for forgery and bureaucracy to help the cabal enter protected ruins and study secret documents.

PROFESSOR KARAROSHI

Professor Kararoshi grew up in the Amazon rainforest with the rest of his family. As dedicated hunter-gatherers, they took pains to distance themselves from missionaries, government officials and other blundering outsiders. Other Amazonians never seemed to benefit from dealing with settled people, so aside from occasional trade, Kararoshi's people politely refused aid, salvation through the Church and interested anthropologists. Communication was complicated by the fact that none of Kararoshi's family used personal names; they identified each other by physical features, kinship or shared stories.

Unfortunately, the rainforest shrank to the point that the clan could barely avoid outside interference. They reluctantly agreed to trade medicines and crafts with a related tribe that had settled by the forest's edge. Here, the teenager who would become Kararoshi demonstrated a remarkable aptitude with engines and electronics. Thanks to his talents, his family soon acquired more than it knew what to do with. Weighed down by possessions, Kararoshi's family merged with the other clan. In deference to local customs he was baptized under the name "Jorge," but the ugly, unpronounceable sound of it was eventually softened. Happy to exercise his talents, Kararoshi took to the settled life with enthusiasm. His parents were less elated. They hated farming and hated their son for trapping them in daily drudgery. Soon, Kararoshi was living in his own house on the opposite side of town, hanging his head whenever his family passed by.

When Kararoshi was 21, Peruvian officials visited the settlement. To their amazement, the little village now had its own power grid, water purification system and farming machinery, all thanks to Kararoshi. Solar-powered and self-sufficient, his designs earned him a scholarship at the state university of his choice. So, to spite his parents as much as to develop his talents, Kararoshi went to Oxford. An Etherite engineering professor noticed his Awak-

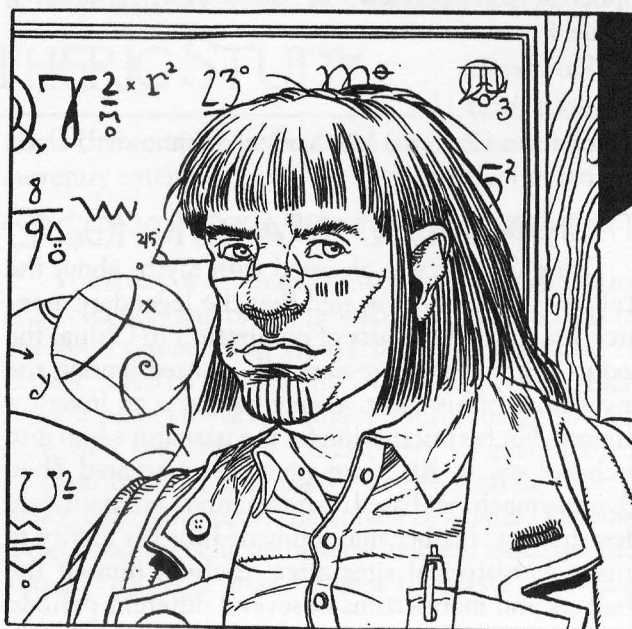
ened talent, taught him to master English and gave him a copy of the *Kitab al-Alacir*.

Kararoshi was elated by the book — and troubled. If the laws of the universe were mutable and subjective, then his own accomplishments could never really represent progress. They were just a choice. He returned to Peru so that he could put his Science beside his family's old lifestyle and decide for himself which path he wanted to follow.

In the end, he chose Science; its lure was too great to refuse, especially since he was the only Ether Scientist in Peru. When he visited the Nazca Lines and sensed their power, he found a solution to his dilemma. If Science was a recurring feature of *all* cultures, then he could assert that it lay with his own people, just waiting to express itself. As a result, he formed the NAG and, after being chased out of Peru, the Nazca Saints. Finding ancient Science still obsesses him, but he eventually wants to find his family and take stock of his long, strange journey. Meanwhile, he and the Saints roam the world, celebrating the discoveries as they come.

Image: Kararoshi is a small, broad-shouldered, 32-year-old man. His native Amazonian ancestry gives him long black hair and dark skin, accentuated by the spotless whites and khakis he wears in the field. His stern face is offset by a boyish voice.

Roleplaying Hints: Don't call anybody by name unless you have to; it's a social convention you never really mastered. You're direct to the point of rudeness, but that sincerity cuts both ways because you don't hold back your praise, either. You know that your unusual background endears you to naïve Progressivists and provokes curiosity. You try to resist temptation, but



nevertheless, you do enjoy toying with people who expect you to be more noble or savage than they are. You do want to reconcile your past with the Scientific life, but that's really none of anyone's business, is it? In the absence of any satisfying answers, you're better off enjoying yourself. Each completed mission is, at least, a victory for Science. As such, it should be celebrated.

Science: Your Science is eclectic and practical, focusing on amazing machines, jury-rigging and exotic power sources. Ancient technologies discovered over years of research add to your already diverse methods. You enjoy enhancing mundane vehicles and tools, but investigative Science is at the core of your work. You reproduce mythological machines so that you can unlock the true seeds of human progress.

Faction: None

Essence: Questing

Nature: Perfectionist

Demeanor: Thrill-Seeker

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4 (Steady), Stamina 4 (Tireless), Charisma 2, Manipulation 4 (Builds Enthusiasm), Appearance 2, Perception 4 (Excellent Hearing), Intelligence 4 (Mechanical Aptitude), Wits 4 (Improvising)

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 3, Athletics 4 (Hunting), Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Computer 3, Dodge 3, Drive 3, Enigmas 4 (Ancient Diagrams), Firearms 2, Leadership 3, Medicine 3, Occult 3, Science (Chemistry) 5 (Metallurgy), Survival 5 (Rainforest), Technology 5 (Using Old Parts)

Backgrounds: Avatar 4, Arcane 3, Library 3, Resources 4
Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Forces 3, Life 3, Matter 4, Prime 4

Willpower: 9

Quintessence: 12

Resonance: (Pattern) Mechanical, (Primordial) Dark, (Dynamic) Curved

THE INSIDIOUS DOCTOR FANG

Fang Qinbao was obsessed with myths about the Yellow Emperor. It was said that the legendary monarch brought all the arts of civilization to China: the loom, silk and writing were all counted among the inventions of his court. Young Fang was an inventor himself, but his fascination for the past drove him into archaeology. In his spare time, he re-created Zhou Dynasty machines based on fragmentary remnants and descriptions. He became renowned for his ability to interpret historical sites after teaching himself the dialects and mannerisms of several different periods.

Unfortunately, the old inventions, robes and wardrobe he maintained caused problems, as Communist Party members occasionally railed against him for being "counterrevolutionary." He lost several collections in the purges, but as China became more accepting, he was able to rebuild much of it.

Eventually, Fang's skill as an archaeologist allowed him to leave China for conferences and lectures. For his first visit to America, he planned to unveil his newest recreation: a bronze and clay automaton that he built based on fragments from Ch'in Shi-Huangdi's tomb. He Awakened as he finished the ancient robot, but he wouldn't be able to share his newfound wisdom with his hosts at UCLA.

The night before his lecture, Men in Black broke into the lecture hall to steal the automaton and destroy Fang's notes. What they didn't bargain on was that Fang was still there, preparing his inventions for the day's events. With his Awakened skill, he turned the robot and all of his other inventions against the invaders. When they broke through the last ranks of mechanical lions, noxious potions and jade curtains, the Technocrats might have captured him, but two Etherites who'd gone to UCLA for the presentation intervened.

Fang fled with them and joined the Sons of Ether. Where other Scientists cultivated an adventurous image, Fang chose to take on a persona that he felt would dissuade interlopers while providing a bit of amusement. Thus, Fang Qinbao became the Insidious Doctor Fang, the shadowy villain whose green robes hide a thousand deadly inventions.

Fang's expertise made him an ideal member of Kararoshi's team, and his affectations helped the New



Archaeology Group fend off pursuing Technocrats. Fang discovered that, as long as he played the Asiatic villain to the hilt, Technocrats would fall in step, from wasting their time with his hired men to falling for improbable traps. It was as if the stereotype was too ingrained to resist.

Now Doctor Fang divides his time between serious Science, maintaining the Nazca Saints' Macao safe house and supervising the cabal's finances and consors. Of course, this gives him a chance to build a secret headquarters defended by strange machines and a legion of followers, but he insists that this is just a beneficial side effect of his duties.

Image: Doctor Fang wears long, painstakingly embroidered robes, long, lustrous black hair and a jeweled ring on each finger. Only his tennis shoes and pager (which tends to go off in the middle of a speech) are markedly out of place. When he's in the lab, he usually has the sleeves hiked back with a lab coat over top and a pair of Ether goggles in place. When he's fighting the Saints' enemies, he usually smiles slightly as if he's quietly appreciating a joke. Fang is a young-looking 29 year old.

Roleplaying Hints: Around friends you're mild mannered and curt, sticking to the facts with a minimum of elaboration. Otherwise, let your vintage bombast loose!

Stand in the highest spot in the room, yell, "Seize them!" to your consors and subject your enemies to gruesome, overly elaborate, slow-acting fates. In fact, these "death traps" are your way of neutralizing enemies without killing them. While they struggle against their bonds and robots, the Nazca Saints can escape — and you get another amusing anecdote for the next party.

When actual Scientific work needs to be done, you sequester yourself in the lab or on the field until you have something worth sharing. Suppositions and half measures never cut it with you, which is why your exchanges with fellow roboticists are so well received despite the unusual pedigrees of your inventions.

Science: Your Science revolves around robots, clockworks, Ether-collection and -manipulation devices, all based on a combination of reconstructed ancient techniques and cutting-edge materials science. You use Feng Shui combined with specific light frequencies for Mind Effects.

Faction: Cybernauts

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Deviant

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 4 (Intimidating), Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 4 (Strategic Genius), Wits 4 (Quick Plans)

Abilities: Academics (Archaeology) 5 (China), Awareness 3, Computer 3, Dodge 2, Firearms 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics 1 (Chinese, English), Meditation 2, Occult 4 (Chinese), Science (Physics) 4, Technology 5 (Robotics)

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Library 4, Resources 4, Retainers 4

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Forces 3, Matter 4, Prime 3, Spirit 2, Time 2

Willpower: 8

Quintessence: 9

Resonance: (Primordial) Insidious, (Primordial) Sinister, (Pattern) Crystalline, (Dynamic) Warm

COURSES OF ETHERIC STUDY



All paths of knowledge meet at the center of True Wisdom.

—Kitab al-Alacir

The seminal text of the Sons of Ether teaches that nothing can be properly studied without placing it in context. No part of the world can be fully understood unless its full relationship with the rest of the world is known. In the past few years, those Scientists who try to keep abreast of their fellows' work have begun to notice an interdisciplinary convergence, wherein each individual's special area of expertise infringes upon the areas explored by others. Many of the Scientific categories described here are paired with

other categories to reflect the connections that are currently emerging.

ERGONOMITY AND GEONOMITY

The study of different forms of energy, their nature and behavior, and of the properties of various sorts of energetic systems, has always been a cornerstone of Etheric research. Unlike the Order of Hermes, which seeks to attain a transcendental control of energy through pure will, the Sons of Ether prefer to ground their observations and hypotheses in the material world, hence their focus upon the Sphere of Matter. Vacuum tanks, chambers shielded against ambient radiation and anti-gravity fields may be used to isolate particular

phenomena, but ultimately any theory so derived is useless unless it can be applied in a workable manner to the physical world at large.

The various sorts of energy that pervade the universe are seen by the Tradition as merely different vibratory levels of motion within the Ether. Mundane scientists and their Technocratic shepherds laboriously seek mathematical equations that would unite the four basic forces they know (gravity, electromagnetism, strong and weak nuclear forces). Etherites already understand these forces and others as differing frequencies of Etheric vibration, operating at different scales but related in the same way that musical notes resonate according to the harmonic relationship between octaves. True magic, or Applied Science, derives from attuning one's own vibrations to the vibratory frequencies of one's environment. Awakening may be likened to a sudden recognition of the melody created when one's voice harmonizes with the voice of the world. By contrast, debased Technocratic science has left its own actions out of its equations, so it can only describe a mechanistic universe running down in thermodynamic decay and gravitational collapse. In ignoring the consequences of their own — and others' — observations and experiments, they neglect the part that consciousness plays in keeping the energetic system of the universe up and running.

As man's perception and prehension of the world expands and intensifies, it has become apparent (to the true Scientist, at least) that the energetic system we call planet Earth contains undiscovered levels of organization and activity. Sleeper science has yet to determine the underlying patterns of ice ages, polar shifts and other global catastrophes, but the Sons of Ether have long known at least a portion of the deep structure that informs such planetary changes. This deep structure has been recognized and used by luminaries as diverse as Merlin and Bucky Fuller to accomplish magnificent physical wonders. Nikola Tesla envisioned using it to transmit free energy to any point from a central broadcast tower, initiating the "free energy" that continues to fuel animosity between the Tradition and the Technocracy to this day.

The ley lines of the ancients can be shown to correspond to Fuller's geodesic geometry and describe the harmonic scale of the planet. Major intersections of these harmonic lines create naturally occurring Nodes where outpourings of raw Quintessence cause changes in what the Technocracy arrogantly defines as "the Laws of Nature," including electromagnetic and gravi-

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The August 2000 issue of *Paradigma* was the last to receive full circulation. While Etherite studies can still be found scattered about the Digital Web, the bulk of the official journal of the Tradition now takes the form of ineptly printed papers, typescript and even handwritten accounts that are privately copied and bulk-mailed among personal contacts. Modern Sons of Ether often complain about the corruption of data that they receive from their fellow Scientists, as typographical errors or diagrams, schematics and blueprints rendered indecipherable by obsolete copying processes abound. This diminishment of central editorial guidance might reflect a gradual fragmentation of the Tradition in the wake of the Reckoning. While communications have not broken down entirely, individual Scientists and laboratorial groups tend to labor in relative isolation.

One article in the final issue of *Paradigma* called for a coherent and unified terminology to be used in describing Etheric studies, especially with regard to the paradigms of other Traditions. The authors proposed replacing the suffix "-ology" with "-onomy," arguing that the act of identifying and naming specific phenomena (Greek *nomos*) was more in keeping with the dynamic willworking practiced by all the Traditions, as opposed to the more static process of merely collecting written material (*logos*) that characterizes the Technocratic approach to science. While this new terminology (or "terminonomy") has not become standard practice, its usage has been spreading over the last couple of years.

Ironically, the young and brash authors of the article intended it as a satirical jab at the older Victorian Scientists, with their convoluted, unwieldy language and monolithic, all-inclusive theories, but it is the Tradition's old guard that has taken the new terms to heart. Already accustomed to the tongue-twisting phonetics of their beloved bygone era, older Etherites love to rattle off such words as "phenomenonomy" as a challenge to younger initiates. (It must be noted, however, that a recent paper making the rounds which proposes to group studies of Unified Field Theory under the heading of "Mononomy" is now believed to be the work of a Batini infiltrator.)

tational anomalies, or a weakening of the Gauntlet that separates the Umbra ("hyperdimensional space") from the material world. In creating their own artificial Nodes, mages are actually tapping lesser geodesic intersections that, with sufficient geometric expertise, can be found at any given point on the surface of the planet. Major intersections include the poles (the former main entrances to the Hollow Earth), the southeastern coast of Florida (one vertex of the infamous Bermuda Triangle), the Wyoming gravity vortex, the Nile Delta, Alice Springs in Australia, Lop Nor in China, innumerable ancient megalithic sites, zones of intense seismic or volcanic activity and various oceanic locales associated with sacred cities of Atlantis, Mu and Lemuria (like the cyclopean underwater structures recently discovered and photographed by Japanese divers). Many Sons of Ether devote their lives to preserving such sites from Technocratic exploitation.

ESCHATONOTTY AND UTOPONOTTY

Oddly, the end of the world and the perfection of the world have come to be seen as parallel studies by those Sons of Ether who examine both. A crisis point now looms on the horizon, well within our lifetimes, and the Ascension War that some feel has already been lost could be the deciding factor between global destruction and a new golden age for humanity. This crisis point has even been mathematically determined. It will occur on or about the winter solstice of AD 2012.

This date was contrived independently by a number of different sources. First, it was the final day of the Mayan calendar. Second, it is the asymptotic limit of the so-called "jumping Jesus" curve, a graph that plots the technological development of mankind. (This theory describes how the level of human technology around the time of Christ — as determined by a ratio of how much work was required to achieve a specific material goal — had doubled by the time of the Renaissance, doubled again during the Age of Enlightenment, and doubled *again* by the dawn of the 20th century. Currently, the level of technology is increasing at an almost yearly pace, and within a decade it will approach infinity, i.e., the graph line points straight up. Nobody is quite sure what this means, though. It seems to suggest, especially to Utopians, that every possible invention or scientific breakthrough will be realized at that time.) Third — and even more arcane — it is the endpoint of the Timewave of Terrence and Dennis McKenna, an-

other graph that quantifies the emergence of new ideas into the world (and can therefore be related to the "jumping Jesus" graph), derived from mathematical permutations of the *I Ching*. Again, even the McKennas were not entirely certain how to interpret it. They did, however, name it the "End of History."

The Sons of Ether have yet another source that indicates the apocalyptic nature of this date, one from within their own ranks. Dr. Bernhardt Mueller, the visionary astronomer, asserted the existence of a gigantic comet-like body that he named "Mirzaba" after a term found in the *Kitab al-Alacir*. (*Al-mirzaba* in Arabic means "iron hammer" and seems to refer to an ultimate test that makes or breaks any working model or theory, determining its applicability to the real world.) According to Mueller, Mirzaba follows a complex hyperdimensional trajectory that sometimes intersects the four dimensions of known space-time, and has passed close to Earth several times throughout our planet's existence. Dr. Mueller calculated that Mirzaba's next pass would result in a direct hit on December 22, 2012. While not everyone is convinced of this "supercomet's" existence, those who follow Mueller's theories have been amassing evidence that Mirzaba already entered the solar system, citing the recent eclipse of Pluto by an unidentified dark body and various slight disturbances in the orbits of the outer planets.

Confirmation of Mirzaba's presence would seem to spell unavoidable doom for all life on Earth, but some Etherites, considering it in conjunction with the other theories cited thus far, have proclaimed its arrival as the turning point for the human species. Such an overwhelming global threat would dissolve sociopolitical antagonisms and unite the race, they argue, spurring humanity on to fulfill its true potential by turning all its resources, knowledge and will toward averting disaster. A few feel that the crisis could push the general populace into a mass Awakening. Among them are some who believe that this Awakening might not be restricted to the human race, but that every organism on Earth — perhaps even the living planet itself — might experience an analogous transformation of consciousness. Most dismiss such thoughts as grandiose escapism but concede that, given the relatively small amount of time left, a global Awakening of six-billion-plus mages might be the only thing that could save the world. This theory has thus become the integral philosophy of some hardcore Utopians who foresee true heaven on Earth — if the world avoids destruction.

ARCHEONOTITY AND PALEONOTITY

Every Tradition retains some myth concerning a primeval paradise or golden age of antiquity and credits itself with preserving the wisdom of the ancients. Although the Sons of Ether often dismiss such beliefs as baseless mysticism, they nonetheless agree that the history of civilization extends farther back than is generally supposed. The work of Stanislaus Wojciehowicz and his hologeodetic retroscope, if it can be accepted at face value, not only confirms this view but expands upon it to a startling degree. The vivid images of the living past that he draws up from the earth have intensified the ongoing revolution in how human ancestry, prehistoric mammals, dinosaurs and even the origins of life itself are perceived. While Sleeper archeologists painstakingly and laboriously brush the dust from the meager remnants of cultures that occupied the dawn of recorded history, Wojciehowicz sweeps through the geological record to serve up seemingly incessant waves of astounding revelations.

He has positively identified two distinct cultures to which the hallowed name of Atlantis may be applied. The most recent he calls the Platonian Atlantis, a Minoan colony on the Aegean island of Thera, or Santorini, that flourished in the first half of the second millennium BC. This culture was destroyed when the volcano that formed the island erupted sometime around 1520 BC, and the ensuing ecological havoc that swept the eastern Mediterranean might have caused the Biblical plagues of Egypt. Over two decades of excavation by respectable Sleeper archeologists have brought Plato's Atlantis to the brink of public acceptance, but Plato specified that Atlantis lay "beyond the Pillars of Hercules" (i.e., the Straits of Gibraltar) in the Atlantic Ocean. In so saying, he may have confused Thera with an older, larger and more advanced culture occupying a continent or large island that sank around 10,000 or more years before the present. This culture established colonies in South America and Egypt, where such arcane arts as pyramid building and mummification were preserved long after their origin had been forgotten. Remains of architecture from this older culture were discovered off the coast of the Biminis in the Bahamas in 1969, the year that renowned psychic Edgar Cayce predicted would signal the rising of Atlantis. Because Cayce supplied the most complete and detailed description of this culture, Wojciehowicz refers to it as Caycid Atlantis. The enigmatic Piri Reis map that shows the actual coastline of Antarctica beneath the

polar ice cap is thought to be a copy of a Caycid original. The Sons of Ether are always seeking similar artifacts.

Other even more ancient cultures have been hologeodetically resurrected, mostly in and around the Pacific Ocean where fabled Mu and Lemuria were reputed to exist. These cultures have yet to be distinguished and identified, but retroscopic imaging confirms that some of these cultures were not human but created by intelligent terrestrial species that had evolved earlier. Human and proto-human civilizations comparable to the Caycid Atlanteans were preceded by an extremely violent non-technological culture of large flightless birds, the land-faring mammalian ancestors of whales and dolphins, and a highly advanced civilization of intelligent dinosaurs tentatively named "dinonychus" by other scientists who have hypothesized their existence.

In October of 1999, Wojciehowicz made a rare appearance at the Great Hall in Paris. There he met with Dr. Bernhardt Mueller and the two began to compare notes on their respective primeval histories. Both were startled to discover that the falls of many of these archaic cultures corresponded closely in time with previous passes by the supercomet Mirzaba, almost as though the formation of an advanced civilization somehow attracted the massive body from the depths of hyperdimensional space. This discovery also supplied a missing factor in Mueller's equations — namely, why the Earth was still here and still able to support life. Mueller had already determined that Mirzaba was responsible for the cataclysm that resulted in the extinction of the dinosaurs, but, according to his calculations in their raw form, our planet should have been shattered or ripped apart by the supercomet's passage on several occasions. The two Scientists speculated on the possibility that the highly advanced technologies of these bygone cultures (especially the methods of gravity manipulation they used to erect their megalithic structures) had been used to save the world each time, often to the detriment of the civilizations themselves. In the case of the dinonychus, such a scenario would confirm another of Mueller's theories, to the effect that the moon was much younger than Sleeper science had estimated, and had separated from the Earth fairly recently (astronomically speaking). Wojciehowicz suggested that, while the Muvian dinosauroids had been able to preserve the planet from total destruction, they were unable to prevent Mirzaba's gravity from ripping their vast continent out of the Pacific and into orbit, where it eventually assumed its present lunar form.

Mueller and Wojciehowicz resolved to investigate the matter in greater detail, to seek out the best course of action regarding Mirzaba's impending return. Mueller's subsequent disappearance and Wojciehowicz's uncommunicativeness regarding the rest of the Tradition, however, have left the Sons of Ether to work things out on their own.

BIONOTITY AND PSYCHONOTITY

Living matter is the most intricate form of material organization, a nexus of widely divergent energies whose confluence is able to cohere with a discrete identity, to maintain itself and dynamically adapt to its environment, to manipulate its environment, to process sensation and information to the degree that is generally defined as awareness — even to a degree of self-awareness in sufficiently complex organisms. Of all the varieties of living matter, only the human race is known to consistently exhibit a high potential of self-awareness. Other physical organisms might possess this capability, but the exact degree of which they are capable has yet to be determined conclusively. (Higher forms of consciousness — gods, spirits, etc. — have been identified, but none are yet known to exist as physical organisms that truly inhabit the material world.)

The Sons of Ether understand that not all of the energies converging in an organism are purely physical; the Ether moves not only in the temporal and spatial dimensions, but in an unknown number of other directions as well. These non-physical dimensions, dismissed as irrelevant by the Consensus and relegated to mere informational constructs by the Technocracy, manifest externally as what other Traditions call the Umbra and are experienced internally as thoughts, emotions, etc. Perhaps the unique feature of organic life lies in its potential for converting physical energies into non-physical energies, and vice versa. Focused through the lens of will, thought and feeling can act to alter the world, just as, at the simplest level, arrangements of matter (like shapes and lines, i.e., images and writing, or modulated atmospheric compression waves, speech) can alter the internal energies, or affect the thoughts and feelings, of those who make the effort to understand.

This process, refined over eons of evolution, is so ubiquitous, and so integral to consciousness, that the bulk of humanity seldom sees past the simple linguistic level. Carried to its extreme, however, it is what the Sons of Ether call Science, and what other Traditions call magic. All dimensions intersect within the individual organism, and so it is possible for the organism to

receive impressions from every possible dimension as well as extending its will into every possible dimension. Like any other faculty, though, this must be cultivated through self-knowledge and developed through practice. The various energies must be identified, their behavior recognized and the dimensions in which they manifest explored. Just like the physical body, the mind and spirit must be exercised in order to operate at full efficiency, and the total organism must be tested against its environment. This process can be as gross as lifting a weight or as subtle as applying a complex mathematical formula to observable phenomena in the world at large.

The Sons of Ether acknowledge the partial validity of other Traditional paradigms — even the Technocratic — when defining the total organism, but they accept nothing on faith. The Scientific method of investigation and probation always applies, especially when studying living organisms. Special care is taken to separate genuine Technocratic findings from lies used to influence Consensual reality. The mind-body duality is one example, used to keep the general populace from becoming fully integrated individuals independent of political control. Like other Traditions, the Sons know that body and mind are one, and they seek to reconcile the physical and non-physical in popular consciousness through investigation of the bioelectric field, the Kirlian aura, the orgone energy of Wilhelm Reich and psychosomatic illness or healing. Only by uniting the substantial and insubstantial can an organism achieve its full potential. Ultimately there is only one substance — the Ether.

CRYPTOZOONOTITY

Understanding the complexity of oneself leads to a realization of the complexity of one's surroundings. Mundane science refuses to accept what it cannot observe, and the Technocracy limits the scope of the world to what it can control, but mages know that there are more creatures living on, in and around the earth than those found in the textbooks. As a result, the Sons of Ether have compiled a fairly extensive zoonomic roster. In an age when general belief holds that most of the great secrets of the planet have been discovered, the Sons traveled farther and deeper than most others, finding new mysteries concealed in the folds of the earth. Their Science has documented the existence of, and begun to classify, numerous unknown creatures, or cryptids.

Some cryptids have been known to the world for some time, though their existence has never been documented to the satisfaction of mundane science.

The most famous of these would be the Sasquatch (or Bigfoot), the Yeti (or Abominable Snowman) and the Loch Ness Monster. Other hairy hominids and lake monsters have been reported throughout the world, representing the latest in a long tradition of traveler's tales that include sea serpents, mermaids, giant birds and any number of fanciful creatures from myth and legend. Prevailing theory suggests that these well-known cryptids might be relicts of prehistoric species that survived extinction. Etherite explorers concur that such could be the case with many hominids. Dr. Crichton has positively identified the subhuman race described by Ibn Fadlan in his account of his 10th-century European journey as Neanderthals. The almas and kaptars of Central Asia, noted in 19th century Russian military records, are surviving populations of *homo habilis*. Sasquatch and the Yeti are theorized to be indigenous North American or Himalayan gigantopithecines, respectively.

The unlikelihood of breeding populations of these species surviving into the 20th century, however, prompts some to apply theories of Etheric and even memetic dimensional physics to this field of study. When every square meter of land has been mapped and photographed, where could such populations hide? Subterranean habitats could account for some overlooked species, but not all. And what of those creatures whose evolution and existence defies even Etherite theory? It is known that the mad Marauders keep mythic Bygones as pets, mounts and companions, bringing them on their forays into the material world, but whether these creatures are capable of regularly crossing the Gauntlet unaided has yet to be determined. This is believed to be the case with Nessie. Detailed studies of Loch Ness have failed to yield either a living plesiosaur or a subterranean passage large enough to admit one, although Etherite searchers continue to explore all possibilities.

Beyond the famous cryptids, other species indigenous to, or originating from, the physical world have long been known to the Sons of Ether. Many of these are what Professor Piter de Parq calls parallel races, representing races that evolved alongside humanity, whether as parasites, symbionts or interbreeders. Others seem to be transformed human beings. All have been named in lore and legend, albeit as distorted reflections. All have proven themselves dangerously resourceful, thus extremely difficult to study Scientifically. What follows is a tentative summary of Prof. de Parq's speculations.

One example of a transformed human is what Etherites call an ectoplasmid, more commonly called a ghost. Just as the energetic content of the human body drastically decreases during death, so too do the Etheric

energies of the human soul lower in frequency, to the point that they are no longer felt on the material plane and exist in a dimension all their own. (Whether this happens to all humans alike has never been determined, and, as to what the ectoplasmic dimension of the afterlife is like, the theories are as numerous as the varied cultures of humanity.) It is clear, however, that certain passionate individuals or those whose life is cut violently short may retain enough higher-frequency energy to affect the physical world, although only in minor ways. Also, the Ether at certain places can vibrate at a sufficiently low rate to permit a stronger influx of ectoplasmic energy, causing hauntings or poltergeist phenomena.

Another type of transformed human — and perhaps of a parallel race as well — is the parasitic hemophage, or vampire. Hemophages also appear to exist at a lower vibratory level, though not so far down the Etheric spectrum as the ectoplasmids. It is presently believed by many in the Tradition that hemophagy is the result of a blood-borne virus that keeps its host in a state of suspended necrosis, or partial death, wherein the personality and intelligence of the host are retained indefinitely, but are incapable of achieving the higher frequencies of human spirituality. The interference pattern between the low-frequency hemophage and the higher energies of fire and sunlight render the hemophage extremely combustible, hence they are exclusively nocturnal. The only way for a hemophage to replenish its life-energy is by ingesting human blood. As a result, these parasites tend to dwell amid large population centers, concealing their existence and defending their territory with a limited but potent range of paranormal abilities.

One type of parallel interbreeder is the lycanthrope, or werewolf, the result of a genetic trait that seems to be some sort of evolutionary bridge between humanity and wolves. Lycanthropes are capable of changing their physical form from one species to the other, and of sustaining intermediate forms that combine traits of both species. Their Etheric frequencies are closely harmonized with the organic frequencies of the earth, enabling them to exercise a wide variety of low-level paranormal effects (in addition to shapeshifting) and necessitating their proximity to global harmonic Nodes, which they regard as sacred sites and defend with savage ferocity. It is claimed by some researchers that parallel interbreeders exist between human and other animal species, such as felines, bears and even reptiles.

Even less is known of parallel symbionts, some of which dwell almost exclusively in the non-physical dimensions of the Umbra. This type, collectively known

as the Umbrood, appears to be dependent upon the thoughts and beliefs of humanity for its continued existence, and thus directs much of its energies to raising the Etheric vibrations of the human psyche to frequencies that resonate with its non-physical plane. Another still more elusive type seems to exist within the same physical dimensions as the human race while maintaining a simultaneous existence in those dimensions that intersect with the human mind during REM or dream sleep. While bound to the physical world in the same way that humans are, they are able to transform the energies of their other shared dimensions into a dazzling array of paranormal and extradimensional effects. They are known historically as the *longaevi*, *fae* or *fairy changelings*.

UFONOTITY

Strange lights in the sky have fascinated mankind since the dawn of civilization, and accounts of visitations from outlandish beings go back even further. Some Etherites cite early interest in such phenomena as the first impetus toward true Science. Even among modern Sleepers this interest has not waned but taken on new forms that have evolved along with the Consensual worldview, leaving some hope that the sense of wonder is not yet completely excised from the collective human psyche. The nature spirits of primitive man and the religious apparitions of the Medieval Era have been dismissed as hallucinations by the Technocracy since the Age of Reason, but the ever-expanding view of the universe in the 20th century leaves room for even the most unimaginative to compose wild speculations.

Visits by extraterrestrial life forms from distant star systems are well-known images in the modern era, and even some moderate skeptics admit the possibility of such events while doubting many of the facts presented in this theory's favor. The Sons of Ether have investigated this phenomenon ever since Tesla first noted the seemingly intelligent patterns found in electrical fluctuations during experiments conducted in his Colorado Springs laboratory. Frightened at first, he compared these "signals" to the "ghost messages" noted by Samuel Morse and early telegrapher operators, as recorded by the Electrodyne Engineers, and later pondered the possibility that they comprised the "greeting of one planet to another." Speculations about extraterrestrial intelligence, or ETI, entered popular consciousness shortly after WWII, as pilots reported seeing "flying saucers" and moving lights they called "foo fighters." By the 1950s, the first "saucer cults" had formed among the Sleeper populace, usually centered around people who had supposedly been contacted by higher intelligences

relaying some positive, even Utopian, message to benighted Earthlings.

Over the next few decades, however, Technocratic interference of government investigations into the delicately termed "Unidentified Flying Objects" cast a darker tone upon the subject. Contactees were no longer the recipients of profound wisdom, but hapless victims who had been violated from without and subsequently *alienated* by their own kind. Some Etherites blame this on the ongoing Technocratic oppression of the human spirit, noting that, while much of the evidence in favor of extraterrestrial visitation can be attributed to terrestrial paranormals (such as Traditional mages themselves, their allies and enemies), what remains tends to reflect current Consensual attitudes. In an age marked by covert conquest and exploitation perpetrated by Earthlings upon each other, people project these intentions upon the universe at large. Noting the memetic nature of those parts of the Umbra known to Science, the Sons of Ether turn their eye toward the immaterial dimensions for answers.

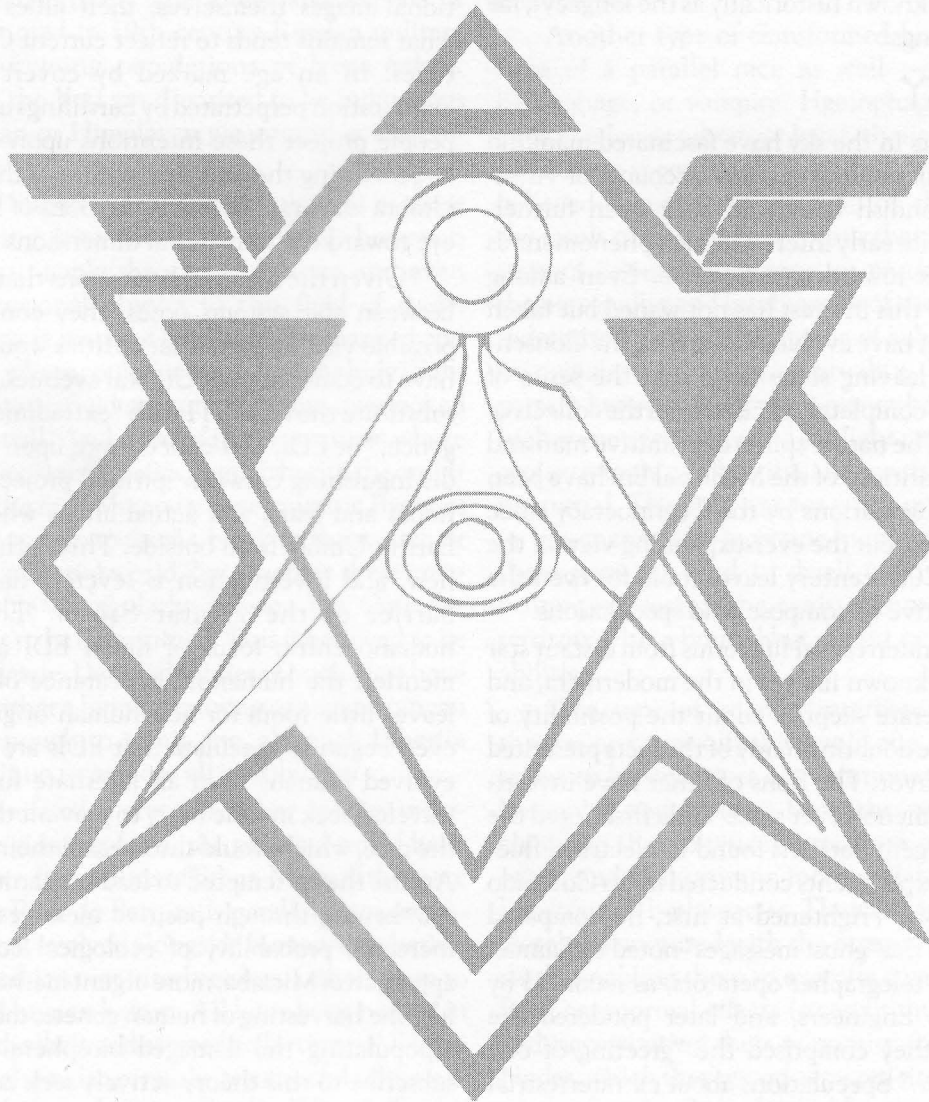
Given the material limitations that physical travel between star systems poses, they conclude that any possible visit by extrasolar entities would, of necessity, have to come through Umbral avenues. They therefore substitute the term ETI with "extradimensional intelligence," or EDI, and concentrate upon the problem of distinguishing between spiritual projections of human hopes and fears, and actual aliens who have entered Earth's Umbra from outside. This outlook is relatively new, and investigation is severely hampered by the barrier of the Avatar Storm. The apparently humanocentric focus of much EDI activity, not to mention the humanoid appearance of most "aliens," leaves little room for non-human origins. Some have even begun to speculate that EDIs are actually highly evolved humans from an alternate future who have traveled back in time to try to prevent the extinction of the race, which would thus negate their own existence. At first they attempted to lead humanity into a greater Awakening through positive messages, but, with the increased probability of ecological collapse and the approach of Mirzaba, more urgent methods are required, like the harvesting of human genetic material for use in repopulating the damaged biosphere. Etherites who subscribe to this theory actively seek contact with the race known as the "Grays," whom they believe to be future humans fighting a reptilian race that claims to be from Zeta Reticuli — themselves believed to be agents from a non-human evolutionary line (possibly even survivals of the Muvian *dinonychi* seeking to re-establish their own extinct species).

HERALDS OF SCIENCE



Etherites are multitasking, willful and ready to use their Science to shake up the status quo. This mindset makes them seem eccentric, irresponsible or even crazy, but once they've seen how the Tellurian really works, it wouldn't be right to hold back. The truth about Science is that it's a liber-

ating force that doesn't discover limitations, but shatters them. The Ether is the limitless possibility that underlies every atom. It exists to be used for the good of humanity, no matter the risks. As the following templates show, Ether Scientists tend to be risk takers and idealists. Authentic Science shows them that intelligence, skill and dedication can change the world.



SKY CAVALRY

Quote: *I love the Resonance of phlogiston in the morning.*

Prelude: Your family was too poor to leave town, and you were too decent to abandon them, even when your scientific talents could have taken you to college. Instead, you brought home a paycheck and released your frustration designing rockets and custom cars: machines that could blast you out of your tiny, worn-out hometown.

Finally, you screwed up the courage and joined the army. It didn't work out, though. You were fit and disciplined enough, but you realized that all you'd be doing is playing the hick mechanic again. Even tanks bored you. You wanted to *invent*, not repair. So you got a discharge and cringed at the thought of returning home.

You were walking toward the base's gate when you got the call. The man on the line said that he was a friend of your CO's and you'd been singled out as a perfect candidate for a "special job." He wanted military experience, mechanical skills and a clean bill of health. All you had to do was go to Canada and try out.

You took the first flight out. They picked you up at the airport and took you straight to heaven.

At least, that's how it seemed when you entered the Ethernaut compound. Rocket ships and jet-packs lay in neat heaps; men and women divided their time between grueling physical training and a university's worth of scientific education. Best of all, your strange ideas about fuel chemistry were taken in stride. By your third year there, they were using your designs. Your mind grew to encompass the psychic dimensions of space and you learned to fly and fight in worlds that used to be nothing more than backyard dreams.

The Ascension War was hard on the Ethernauts, and many of your instructors died in terrible battles. You carry their legacy as much out of personal loyalty as the feeling that humanity needs new worlds. If it stays trapped, it can only wither.

Concept: You're one of the elite Sky Cavalry: a band of Ethernauts who train for exploration and defense against the unknown. A decade ago you might have been a marine on an Ethership, but nowadays you lead bands of explorers and protect the Sons of Ether. Your Scientific skills concentrate on travel, but as a warrior-polymath you've picked up the psychic talents and survival skills you need to protect your Tradition anywhere in the universe.

Roleplaying Tips: Always ready for action, you prefer to invent on the fly. Look after the bookish members of your cabal — you're there to guide and protect them. Among Sleepers, talk about the potential of space travel or the secrets that might lie at the corners of the earth. Inspire people to break out of their shells and follow their dreams. You wasted



Sons of Ether

NAME: _____		NATURE: Gallant	FACTION: Ethernauts
PLAYER: _____		ESSENCE: Questing	CONCEPT: Sky Cavalry
CHRONICLE: _____		DEFINER: Gallant	CABAL: _____

PHYSICAL

Strength: ●●●●●

Dexterity: ●●●●●

Stamina: **Environmental** ●●●●●

SOCIAL

Charisma: ●●●●●

Manipulation: ●●●●●

Appearance: ●●●●●

MENTAL

Perception: ●●●●●

Intelligence: ●●●●●

Wits: ●●●●●

TALENTS

Alertness: ●●●●●

Athletics: ●●●●●

Awareness: ●●●●●

Brav: ●●●●●

Dodge: ●●●●●

Expression: ●●●●●

Intimidation: ●●●●●

Leadership: ●●●●●

Streetwise: ●●●●●

Subterfuge: ●●●●●

SKILLS

Crafts: ●●●●●

Drive: **Pilot** ●●●●●

Etiquette: ●●●●●

Firearms: ●●●●●

Meditation: ●●●●●

Melee: ●●●●●

Performance: ●●●●●

Sealth: ●●●●●

Survival: ●●●●●

Technology: **Very High** ●●●●●

KNOWLEDGES

Academics: ●●●●●

Computer: ●●●●●

Cosmology: ●●●●●

Enigma: ●●●●●

Investigation: ●●●●●

Law: ●●●●●

Linguistics: ●●●●●

Medicine: ●●●●●

Occult: ●●●●●

Science: **Physics** ●●●●●

Correspondence ●●●●●

Entropy ●●●●●

Forces ●●●●●

Life ●●●●●

Matter ●●●●●

Mind ●●●●●

Prime ●●●●●

Spirit ●●●●●

Time ●●●●●

BACKGROUNDS

Allies ●●●●●

Avatar ●●●●●

Resources ●●●●●

●●●●●

●●●●●

ADVANTAGES

ARETE ●●●●●●●●●●

WILLPOWER ●●●●●●●●●●

QUINTESSENCE ●●●●●●●●●●

PARADOX ●●●●●●●●●●

HEALTH

Bruised: -0 □

Hurt: -1 □

Injured: -2 □

-3 □

-4 □

-5 □

RESONANCE

Dynamic: **Accelerating** ●●●●●

Entropic: ●●●●●

Static: ●●●●●

EXPERIENCE

RESOURCES

too much time denying your talents and don't want to see it happen to anyone else.

Science: Your natural mechanical savvy and a toolkit full of chemical agents lets you use the Sphere of Matter to keep machines in running order. You use modified or scratch-built rockets, planes and drones to travel via Forces and Correspondence. Crystals focus your psychic talents so that you can detect extradimensional energies.

Equipment: jumpsuit, helmet, Ether goggles with inset crystals, a homemade gyrojet pistol and a toolkit





NAME: _____

CHARACTER: **Two-Fisted Socialist**

CHRONICLE: _____

FACTION: **Adventurers**

ESSENCE: **Primordial**

CABAL: _____

NATURE: **Penitent**

DEITY: **NOR· Fanatic**

Agile	Quick
Brawny x2	Tough
Energetic	
SOCIAL	
Charismatic X2	
Eloquent	
Persuasive	
MENTAL	
Alert	Knowledgeable
Cunning	Vigilant
Disciplined	
ABILITIES	
Academics	
(Engineering) x2	
Brawl	
Dodge	
Drive (Pilot)	
Medicine	
Science (Chemistry)	

ARETE

WILLPOWER

QUINTESENCE/PARADOX

RESONANCE

DYNAMIC

ENTROPIC **Red**

STATIC

BACKGROUNDS

Avatar x1 _____
Influence (University) x1 _____
Mentor x3 _____
Resources x2 _____

SPHERES

Disciple of Matter _____
Disciple of Life _____

RÖTES

TWO-†FISTED SOCIALIST

Quote: *Time to kick some ass for the working class.*

Prelude: Before you found the Vanguard, you were a deadbeat engineer. You didn't travel out of curiosity, but because developing nations paid you well enough to polish off your student loan with ease. After five years that took you from Mongolia to Mogadishu, you were left with nothing but a drinking habit and a smattering of foreign swear words. You decided to do one last job in the Ukraine before heading home.

You were going to help build a bridge, but it looked like you were mostly being paid to keep your eyes pointed at a desk while you signed off on plans and materials. The local *mafija's* concrete was mostly sand and the rebar was half-rusted before it even went in, but you knew that if you said anything you'd be going home in a cargo compartment. The bridge was going to collapse, but you figured that enough vodka would dilute the guilt to a dull murmur.

The vodka saved you. You cut out of the office early to hit a local expat bar and were digging in to your third double when you heard the explosion. Someone had decided to save everyone the wait and knock down the bridge themselves. You made sure your passport was in place and planned an escape as AK-74 fire screamed through the night. You stumbled out of the bar and right into a motorcycle — a motorcycle ridden by one of Them.

The red star on his cap burned like Mars on a summer night. He looked at you through goggles that glowed with a weird purple mist, then hoisted you over his shoulder as if you were a feather pillow. The motor-cycle rumbled as you passed out.

When you woke up, you were surrounded by them. The Vanguard: nomadic Scientists who roamed Eurasia to fight injustice. They knew who you were and that you'd signed off on the bridge, but then they told you that despite their efforts — *the bridge remained*. Someone had surreptitiously modified the structure; the steel and concrete were impossibly strong.

Then they showed you the photographs. That "someone" was you.

Apparently you were too drunk to remember when your conscience took over. You saw pictures of yourself restoring the bridge with unnamed chemicals and curiously modified tools. The Vanguard said that you had the spark of Scientific genius. If you upheld their code, they would teach you the esoteric Soviet Science that only they preserved.

Now you've left the Vanguard's enclave to fight for socialism and the proletarian way. You're the people's one-man revolution.

Concept: You're not much different from other Adventurers. You've inherited the secret techniques of an

NAME:		NATURE: Penitent	FACTION: Adventurers
PLAYER:		ESSENCE: Primordial	CONCEPT: Two-Fisted Socialist
CHRONICLE:		DEITY/ANAC: Fanatic	CABAL:

PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	Weightlifting ●●●●○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wies	●●○○○

TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Academics	Engineering ●●●○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Drive	●●○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Cosmology	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Expression	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Leadership	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Medicine	●●○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Technology	●●○○○	Science	Chemistry ●●○○○

SPHERES			
Correspondence	○○○○○	Life	●●○○○
Entropy	○○○○○	Matter	●●○○○
Forces	○○○○○	Time	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES		HEALTH	
Avatar	●●●○○○○○	Bruised	-0 □
Mentor	●●●○○	Hurt	-1 □
Resources	●●●○○	Injured	-1 □
○○○○○	○○○○○	Wounded	-2 □
○○○○○	○○○○○	Mauled	-2 □
○○○○○	○○○○○	Crippled	-5 □
○○○○○	○○○○○	Incapacitated	□

RESONANCE		QUINTESSENCE		COMBAT	
Dynamic	○○○○○	Willpower	○○○○○	Weapon	Criticality Damage
Entropic	Red ○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○		
Static	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○		

EXPERIENCE		PARADOX	

obscure sect and have just returned to civilization
to use your training for the benefit of humankind.

The only difference is that your methods aren't disciplines from a long-lost civilization, but from a recent ideology that's just as arcane and, some would argue, just as wracked by lost grandeur. Soviet Ufology, psychic research and bizarre weapons are, in their own way, as mysterious as Tibetan hypnotism and lost continents. Still, your secret Science exists to fight for justice — even if that sense of justice might seem decidedly skewed to outsiders.

Roleplaying Tips: You're a champion of the poor and a tireless foe of corruption. Above all, fight with modesty. In the end, you're only a manifestation of the people's will.

Science: You've refined your unconscious command of Matter. Now, compounds designed in Russian labs complement your engineering skills so that you can build — or destroy — almost anything. You originally learned how to use drugs and special training regimens to fight off lingering alcoholism, but those same methods now grant you superhuman prowess. Combined with the Vanguard's medical training, your techniques make you an expert healer.

Equipment: Soviet surplus military fatigues, a chemistry set in a bandoleer, a first-aid kit filled with strange pills and a sledgehammer

STREET PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

Quote: Telepathy talks. Bullshit walks.

Prelude: You never could concentrate on your studies, preferring tricks and scams where you could use your intelligence without having to answer to anyone. You supplemented your innate talent for pranking with stage magic skills. In your own way, you were dedicated and hard working, but your teachers just saw an endless parade of half-finished work and practical jokes.

So you dropped out of high school and divided your time between magic shows and three-card monte. The former brought in a steady income; the latter was pure party money. You didn't have much sympathy for your marks. They should know better. Your card tricks were just a tax on stupidity. Still, you went through some rough times on the street. After a mark beat you within an inch of your life (and saddled you with a cane for the rest of it), you decided to drop the street-level scams and look for something safer.

Then you saw a self-proclaimed psychic strut his stuff on television. Looking at his body and face, you immediately realized that for all his talk, he was using the same old sleight of hand and memory gags — but he was worse at it than you were. Then he boasted about his famous clients, and you knew that this gravy train was worth hitching yourself to.

You set up a modest shop and did some pro bono “clairvoyance” for a few high society types. They bought it, and the cash started rolling in. Eventually you made your own TV appearances. Occasionally you'd feel a flicker of guilt when cops and distraught clients asked you to locate the dead. Sometimes you'd refuse; sometimes you do some indecisive “channeling” and let them draw their own conclusions. You spouted spooky nonsense like “follow the red gloves” and took their money.

You were just leaving the local network affiliate when one of your cop clients passed you, followed by a crowd of reporters. You rushed home and turned on the six o'clock news to see the cop announcing that they'd cracked the case on a string of murders. How?

They followed the red gloves.

Something snapped, and you looked at all your fakery in a new light. Your illusions somehow tapped into some universal medium. Fate. Karma. Ether. Days later, you were still reeling from the implications of all this when the cop came to visit you. The Red Glove Killer had escaped, walking right through the prison walls. You told him that the job was just too big for you, until he introduced you to his other psychic contacts. They knew all about the universal medium and could teach you how to contact it without playing tricks on anyone — including yourself.

Since then, your control over mysterious energies has improved. You look for Awakened talent now, so that you can teach novice psychics to stop fooling themselves. As for the fakes... you can spot them a mile away.

Concept: You're a psychic whose Ether Science is a set of techniques designed to unleash mental energies. Aside from that, you investigate strange phenomena, including poltergeists, alleged remote viewers, exorcists and wild talents. Experience as a con artist lets you see through mundane deception, and your street sense lets you easily investigate communities that the haughty academics in your Tradition can't.

Roleplaying Tips: You have a quick wit, steady hands and a brain designed to do two things: manifest the Ether and detect bullshit. You've got a common touch. You talk about Rhine tests and Ether meters with the same comfortable drawl as football games or the



Sons of Ether

NAME: _____		NATURE: Competitor		FACTION: Utopians	
PLAYER: _____		ESSENCE: Pattern		CONCEPT: Street Parapsychologist	
CHRONICLE: _____		DEITY/ANOR: Conriver		CABAL: _____	

ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●	Charisma: Crowd Pleaser: ●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●	Manipulation: Camouflage: ●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●	Wits: Smooth: ●●●●●

ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●	Drive: ●●●●●	Computer: ●●●●●
Awareness: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Cosmology: ●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●	Fitness: ●●●●●	Enigmas: ●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●	Meditation: ●●●●●	Investigation: Camouflage: ●●●●●
Expression: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Performance: ●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●
Streetwise: Connections: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●
Subterfuge: Sleight of Hand: ●●●●●	Technology: ●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●

SPHERES		
Correspondence: ●●●●●	Life: ●●●●●	Prime: ●●●●●
Entropy: ●●●●●	Matter: ●●●●●	Spirit: ●●●●●
Forces: ●●●●●	Mind: ●●●●●	Time: ●●●●●

ADVANTAGES		HEALTH	
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	Bruised	-0 □
Allies: ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Hurt	-1 □
Avatar: ●●●●●		Injured	-1 □
Resources: ●●●●●		Wounded	-2 □
		Mauled	-2 □
		Crippled	-5 □
		Incapacitated	□

COMBAT	
Weapons	Difficulty/Damage



PAP

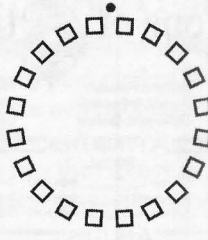


weather. You never overdo the technical talk and can strike up a conversation with anyone. It doesn't take long for you to get someone's guard down, administer the flash cards and other tests and decide whether or not the situation's legitimate. If it is, then you contact the Sons of Ether. If not, you turn the scam around. Psychic hustlers tend to freak out when you make their talk a reality and will pay almost anything to make the misfortune and ectoplasm go away. And well they should — it's a tax on stupidity, after all.

Science: You use meditation, visualization and crystals for most of your work. When you need to bust out with heavy duty Science, coils of copper wire, wood and steel orgone helmets and (mild!) electrical stimulation of the central nervous system boosts your talents to the point where they can sense and act at incredible ranges. So far, you can “twist” the Ether slightly to bend fate, but you've only started to seriously harness your potential.

Equipment: deck of playing cards and Rhine test cards, and SUV packed with your more bizarre foci, a cell phone, loud gold watch and a crystal set in copper circuitry on a pendant

STATIC _____
ENTRØPIC Synchronicity-ridden
DYNATMIC _____
RESØNANCE _____



● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
WILLPOWER
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
@UINTESSENCE/PARADØX

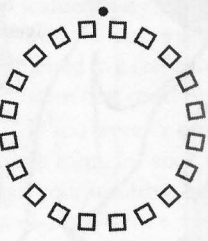
NAME: _____
CHARACTER: Street Parapsychologist
CHRONICLE: _____
FACTION: Utopian
ESSENCE: Pattern
CABAL: _____
NATURE: Competitor
DETTEANØR: Conniver



BACKGROUNDS
Allies x2 _____
Avatar x2 _____
Influence (University) x1 _____
Resources x3 _____
SPHERES
Initiate of Correspondence _____
Apprentice of Entropy _____
Apprentice of Matter _____
Initiate of Mind _____
RØTES

PHYSICAL
Agile _____ Tough _____
Energetic _____ Lame (Negative) _____
Quick _____
SOCIAL
Beguiling _____ Persuasive x2 _____
Charismatic x2 _____
Convincing x2 _____
MENTAL
Alert _____ Knowledgeable _____
Cunning _____ Vigilant _____
Intuitive x2 _____
ABILITIES
Awareness x2 _____
Drive _____
Science _____
(Parapsychology) _____
Streewise _____
Subterfuge x2 _____
Technology _____

STATIC _____
ENTRØPIC _____
DYNATMIC Incendiary
RESØNANCE _____



● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
WILLPOWER
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
@UINTESSENCE/PARADØX

NAME: _____
CHARACTER: Mad Bomber
CHRONICLE: _____
FACTION: Dissidents (Mad Scientists)
ESSENCE: Primordial
CABAL: _____
NATURE: Visionary
DETTEANØR: Deviant



BACKGROUNDS
Arcane x2 _____
Avatar x2 _____
Influence (University) x1 _____
Resources x3 _____
SPHERES
Disciple of Forces _____
Initiate of Matter _____
Initiate of Prime _____
RØTES

PHYSICAL
Agile _____ Rugged _____
Brutal _____ Tough _____
Lithe _____
SOCIAL
Intimidating x2 _____
Magnetice _____
Callous (Negative) _____
MENTAL
Alert _____ Flexible _____
Cunning _____ Knowledgeable x2 _____
Creative x2 _____ Unstable (Negative) _____
ABILITIES
Alertness _____
Drive _____
Crafts (Explosives) _____
Science (Chemistry) x2 _____
Technology _____

MAD BOMBBER

Quote: BOOM.

Prelude: A PhD in Chemical Physics bored you. As a 20-year-old prodigy, you were still restless. The old folks at the lab were smart enough, but they just weren't interested in the outside world. That's why you joined the army. They'd take you around the globe and pay you for your expertise.

You were amazed that people managed to find a way to blow each other up even when they couldn't feed themselves. You studied jury-rigged explosives, mines and booby traps across the globe and eventually made a name for yourself as something of an expert. Allied governments relied on your forensics advice; you helped them bag a few terrorists and went on to the next assignment.

The only thing that bothered you were the anomalies: impossible bombs. Crazy devices that never should have gone off. Strange debris patterns. In Mogadishu, you found an unidentifiable metal among the wreckage of a blasted government office. Then you saw the same thing in Sarajevo and again at the remains of an Afghan warlord's compound.

It had to be one bomber. The mystery consumed you and interfered with your other work. Finally, your commanding officers pointed to the pile of unfinished work on your desk and gave you a choice: Leave the army now or face a dishonorable discharge for slacking. You left, but that was all right; it just gave you more time to look for the bomber. After some creative filing, you took your work and samples with you.

You burned through your savings, traveling to blast sites and buying land in the desert where you could blow things up on your own time. Delving deep into theoretical physics, you realized that with access to a fission pile you could rearrange atoms. That was the source of your mystery metal. Riding the epiphany, you successfully replicated one of the bombs. As the brilliant blast lit the desert sky, you realized where the bomber was. It was hard to sneak into North Korea and harder still to get into their breeder reactors. You saw fresh coils of the newly forged alloy leave the facility as you crept into the research director's office.

The first thing you saw was the bomber. The second thing you saw was a dossier about you that he'd acquired from North Korean intelligence. He knew you'd been following his work — and he wanted you to continue it.

You accepted. Now, your life revolves around the glory of the blast. People are irrelevant unless they're fueling the fire. You'll help other Etherites destroy, but their causes are secondary to the joy of detonation.

Concept: You're a demolitions expert who unraveled in the face of Ether Science. You dropped your normal life to solve the mystery and Awakened yourself, but you fell under the sway of an Etherite Dissident. He took advantage of your already unhinged state to teach you his own twisted methods. Now your destructive talents nominally serve the Sons of Ether, but your real passion is for the bombs themselves.

Roleplaying Tips: Blow it up if you can manage it, but don't repeat yourself. You pursue knowledge as passionately as any Scientist, so there's no point in using the same old super-

Sons of Ether		
NAME: _____	NATURE: Visionary	FACTION: Dissidents (Mad Scientists)
PLAYER: _____	ESSENCE: Primordial	CONCEPT: Mad Bomber
CHARM: _____	DEITY: Deviant	CABAL: _____
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: 00000	Charisma: 00000	Perception: 00000
Dexterity: 00000	Manipulation: 00000	Intelligence: Hands On 00000
Stamina: 00000	Appearance: 00000	Wits: 00000
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: 00000	Crafts: Explosives 00000	Academics: 00000
Athletics: 00000	Drive: 00000	Computer: 00000
Awareness: 00000	Etiquette: 00000	Cosmology: 00000
Brawl: 00000	Firearms: 00000	Enigmas: 00000
Dodge: 00000	Meditation: 00000	Investigation: 00000
Expression: 00000	Melee: 00000	Law: 00000
Intimidation: 00000	Performance: 00000	Linguistics: 00000
Leadership: 00000	Stealth: 00000	Medicine: 00000
Streetwise: 00000	Survival: 00000	Occult: 00000
Subterfuge: 00000	Technology: 00000	Science: 00000
SPHERES		
Correspondence: 00000	Life: 00000	Prime: 00000
Entropy: 00000	Matter: 00000	Spirit: 00000
Forces: 00000	Mind: 00000	Time: 00000
ADVANTAGES		
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
Arcane: 00000	00000000	Bruised: -0
Avatar: 00000	WILLPOWER	Hurt: -1
Resources: 00000	00000000	Injured: -1
00000	00000000	Wounded: -2
00000	00000000	Mauled: -2
RESONANCE	QUINTESSENCE	Crippled: -5
Dynamic: Incendiary 00000	00000000	Incapacitated: 0
Entropy: 00000	PARADOX	COMBAT
Static: 00000	00000000	Weapon: _____
EXPERIENCE	00000000	Outfits: _____
00000	00000000	Damage: _____



charged C4 on yet another bank vault. Blast effects on populated areas are interesting, but not your main focus. At times, you endanger yourself because you want to get close to the center of destruction. So far you've managed to pull back, but the beauty, finality and decisiveness of a bomb going off is a source of unparalleled fascination. Get as close as you can.

Science: You use explosives of all kinds, along with acids, electricity and even lasers to excite volatile matter. You use whatever you need to produce or enhance the effects of almost any incendiary or explosive. In addition, you use custom electronic triggers and timers. Among other things, you make sure that all of the wires on your devices are the same color. After all, why make your bombs any easier to disarm?

Equipment: Jeep, protective clothing, and a desert compound stocked with explosives

SHADOW MINISTRY AGENT

Quote: *I'm saving the world from boredom.*

Prelude: Your narcissism sparked your expertise in foreign affairs. You wanted to be well informed enough to win political arguments. Being right wasn't good enough; you wanted to look like an expert. That's why the Agency recruited you straight out of college, giving you top-secret clearance for your new job as an intelligence analyst.

But being a spy wasn't as exciting as you thought it would be. The Agency wasn't going to risk your brilliant brain out in the field, so you were reduced to editing and commenting on other people's data. You did a good enough job, but you figured that being smart was easy. Being impressive, daring — that's what you wanted out of the secret agent business. You hit upon a plan. If you managed to find a bit of hitherto unknown intelligence in the archives, you'd be able to grab your choice of assignments. Your superiors would be embarrassed that they'd missed something that should have been under their noses and would be happy to have you away from the office.

So you sifted through old files looking for clues that your predecessor missed or ignored. You examined ancient diskettes and dusty vertical files, learning to rely on intuition as well as analysis. You found warehouses of data that didn't officially exist even at your security clearance. In one of them, you found more than you bargained for.

There were photos of men who hadn't aged in 50 years, reports of black-suited, nameless agents interfering in Agency business. The only possible conclusion was that the Agency — the whole damn government, in fact — had been infiltrated by a highly organized conspiracy. You realized that you couldn't use this to get away from the desk unless you wanted to be transferred to a coffin, and you tried to erase all signs that you'd been snooping around.

You weren't surprised when the Black Suits came for you. You couldn't see them, but your intuitive command of information and intelligence trends meant you could somehow *feel* that they were waiting for you in the Director's office. The same senses revealed that you could escape only if you went straight to the secret warehouse where you found your evidence. A locus of uncertainty was gathering, but if you went there you could harness it. You didn't know if it was going to save you, but it was preferable to certain death.

They slipped the bag over your head the second you walked in. You woke up three days later to find out that the kidnappers weren't Black Suits. They didn't work for a govern-

Sons of Ether		
NAME:	NATURE: Rogue	FACTION: Utopian
PLAYER:	ESSENCE: Dynamic	CONCEPT: Shadow Agent
CHRONICLE:	DETECTOR: Deviant	CABAL:
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●	Perception: ●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●	Intelligence: Analysis ●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●	Wits: ●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: ●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●	Academics: ●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●	Drive: ●●●●	Computer: ●●●●
Awareness: ●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●	Cosmology: ●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●	Firearms: ●●●●	Enigmas: ●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●	Meditation: ●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●
Expression: ●●●●	Melee: ●●●●	Law: ●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●	Performance: ●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●
Streetwise: ●●●●	Survival: ●●●●	Occult: ●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●	Technology: ●●●●	Science: ●●●●
SPHERES		
Correspondence: ●●●●	Life: ●●●●	Prime: ●●●●
Entropy: ●●●●	Matter: ●●●●	Spirit: ●●●●
Forces: ●●●●	Mind: ●●●●	Time: ●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
Arcane: ●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Brused: -0 □
Avatar: ●●●●	Willpower: ●●●●●●●●	Hurt: -1 □
●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Injured: -1 □
●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Wounded: -2 □
●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Mauled: -2 □
●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Crippled: -5 □
●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Incapacitated: □
RESONANCE	QUINTESSENCE	COMBAT
Dynamic: ●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Weapon:
Entropy: Eccentric ●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Affliction:
Static: ●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Damage:
EXPERIENCE	PARADOX	

ment; they were spies for Utopia. Latin for "nowhere." The word for paradise on Earth. If you wanted to join up, they would tell you everything you needed to know about the Black Suit conspiracy.

You accepted. Now, not only are you a spy, but you get to save the world. Who can beat an ego trip like that?

Concept: You're a spy for the Shadow Ministry, infiltrating governments to foil the agents of Control and drag the world toward Utopia. Your goals: world peace and justice, the fall of tyrants and the growth of just enough chaos to keep the Sleepers guessing about reality. If they ask the hard questions, victory is sure to follow. Aside from that, you want to make a name for yourself in the Sons of Ether as a top-notch agent — and ultimately as the lever that knocks over Technocratic control of the Consensus.

Roleplaying Tips: You're brash, arrogant and self-involved. It probably infuriates your compatriots that you're willing to take incredible risks just for the bragging rights. Still, your unfettered vanity and selfishness jar others out of their complacency because they have to work that much harder to do their part in your ego-driven, grandiose schemes. Your self-involved nature manifests in your speech and style. You dress like a bit of a fop, and your words drip with arrogance and sarcasm. That doesn't stop you from being amusing, even inspiring. You're *good* at being a bastard.

Science: You use gadgets designed by other Utopians to manipulate Matter, but your real talent lies in gathering information and tweaking the odds. By looking at statistical trends, news items and dossiers you employ a kind of psychological, political and media-driven Feng Shui.

Equipment: retro sunglasses, a paisley frock coat, cravat, combat boots, secret pockets, tranquilizer dart pistol and a case of cigars

ETHNØBOTANIST

Quote: *To find the future, look back.*

Prelude: You loved anthropology but thought you were missing something. Why did you have to limit yourself to watching? How much could you really find out about other cultures without participating in their rites of passage and living as they did? You didn't just want to know about kinship and custom, you wanted to be initiated.

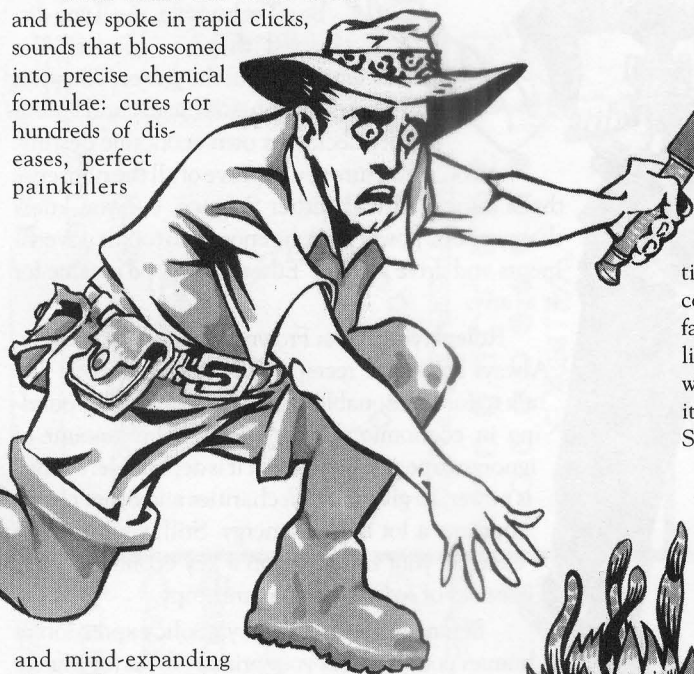
Fortunately, you weren't alone. Other anthropologists tried to duplicate the crafts and customs of people they studied. You tried that route, which proved to be exhausting. You spent 60 hours a week doing the work it took a Brazilian tribesman 10 hours to complete. Your frame of reference was to blame. There was something about the mindset of the people that you just didn't understand.

So you went back to the jungle to live with the people you studied. They treated you with a mixture of pity and contempt at first because you didn't have the skills to survive and participate. Eventually, they saw that you were doing your best to help, and they warmed to you.

They put you through a rushed, ad hoc initiation. You learned about the secret qualities of plants and animals. Part of you accepted it as truth even as you assimilated it into your understanding of biology and ecology. Finally, they passed the adults' pipe to you. You understood that it was a part of their religion, but you had never tried it before. You gave it a tentative puff. A wave of dizziness hit as you looked at the stars — and they streaked down to you.

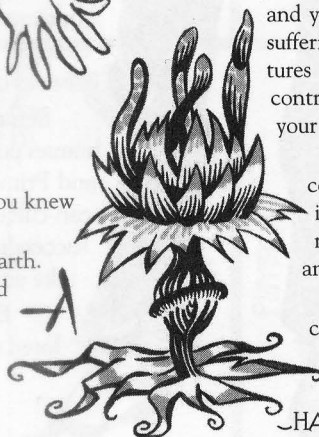
You can barely describe the vision that followed, but every moment remains as clear as the night that it happened. You left your body and saw your life unravel before you. Everything you learned pulsed bright; you walked along these lights into the darkness until you met the Others.

Their bodies flowed like metal and they spoke in rapid clicks, sounds that blossomed into precise chemical formulae: cures for hundreds of diseases, perfect painkillers



and mind-expanding chemicals. Then there was a pause like some sort of cosmic inhalation. You knew they would tell you the final secret.

Of course, that's when you fell back to earth. Still, you remembered the formulae. You could make cures and wonders. All you needed was your lab. You packed your bags full of jungle



Sons of Ether

NAME: _____		NATURE: Visionary	FACTION: _____
PLAYER: _____		ESSENCE: Primordial	CONCEPT: Ethnobotanist
CHRONICLE: _____		DETEANOR: Architect	CABAL: _____

ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●	Perception: Urban Drugged: ●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●	Wits: ●●●●

ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Alertness: 00000	Crafts: Medical: ●●●●	Academics: ●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●	Drive: 00000	Computer: 00000
Awareness: ●●●●	Etiquette: 00000	Cosmology: 00000
Brawl: 00000	Firearms: 00000	Enigmas: ●●●●
Dodge: 00000	Meditation: ●●●●	Investigation: 00000
Expression: 00000	Melee: 00000	Law: 00000
Intimidation: 00000	Performance: 00000	Linguistics: 00000
Leadership: 00000	Stealth: 00000	Medicine: ●●●●
Streetwise: 00000	Survival: ●●●●	Occult: ●●●●
Subterfuge: 00000	Technology: ●●●●	Science: Biology: ●●●●

SPHERES		
Correspondence: 00000	Life: ●●●●	Prime: 00000
Entropy: 00000	Matter: ●●●●	Spirit: 00000
Forces: 00000	Mind: ●●●●	Time: 00000

ADVANTAGES		
BACKGROUNDS	ARETE	HEALTH
Arcane: ●●●●	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Bruised: -0 □
Avatar: ●●●●		Horr: -1 □
Resources: 00000		Injured: -1 □
		Wounded: -2 □
		Mauled: -2 □
		Crippled: -3 □
		Incapacitated: -5 □

RESONANCE	QUINTESSENCE	CENTIBAT
Dynamic: 00000	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Weapon: _____
Entropic: Slidereal: ●●●●		Difficulty: _____
Starc: 00000		Damage: _____

EXPERIENCE	PARADOX
_____	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

plants that had the vital compounds described in your visions. When you left, you felt a twinge of guilt for abandoning the tribe, but this was overshadowed by the sheer joy of Awakening.

Tracking similar work led you to the Sons of Ether. Now you describe your inventions in terms of Ether Science, but create them for one purpose: to cure human ailments so that technology's huge, bloated infrastructure can be pared down. Then, humans will be able to live the way that they're meant to.

Concept: You combine cutting-edge chemistry and traditional wisdom to create incredible medicines and drugs. Other compounds are almost within your grasp. Your vision showed you far, far more than you're currently capable of creating. Ultimately, you'd like your formulae to enhance modern medicine to the point where the whole medical infrastructure and industry itself are obsolete. Humanity can return to nature without fearing death or discomfort, and Ether Science will have completed its task.

Roleplaying Tips: Part of you wants to return to the jungle, but you want to fulfill your vision. You're passionate about your purpose, and you honestly believe that once your medicines can alleviate suffering, humanity will just tear down the sick, materialistic structures they've built. You realize that your opinions are considered controversial, even a bit crazy, so you hold back the full extent of your beliefs until you trust someone.

Science: You use rare jungle plants and synthetic derivatives, combining them with modern medicine to turn them into pills, injections, patches, gums and other remedies and drugs. The right compounds naturally attune human minds to the Ether and bring forth cures and other Effects.

Equipment: first-aid kit filled with custom drugs, rugged clothes and a backpack filled with scientific papers and tribal mementos

ROGUE ECONOMIST

Quote: Money should serve, not rule.

Prelude: Ever since you were a teenager, you knew that you were destined for success. You did what you were told and got the grades and scholarships you needed for an MBA, PhDs in economics and mathematics and a lifetime of lucrative work.

The headhunters swarmed until you picked the job that generated just the right mix of challenge and profit: a private think tank from which governments virtually copied their policies. As an employee of the World Advisory Council, you'd make contacts that would give you the leverage to do anything you wanted. Hell — maybe you'd get into politics yourself.

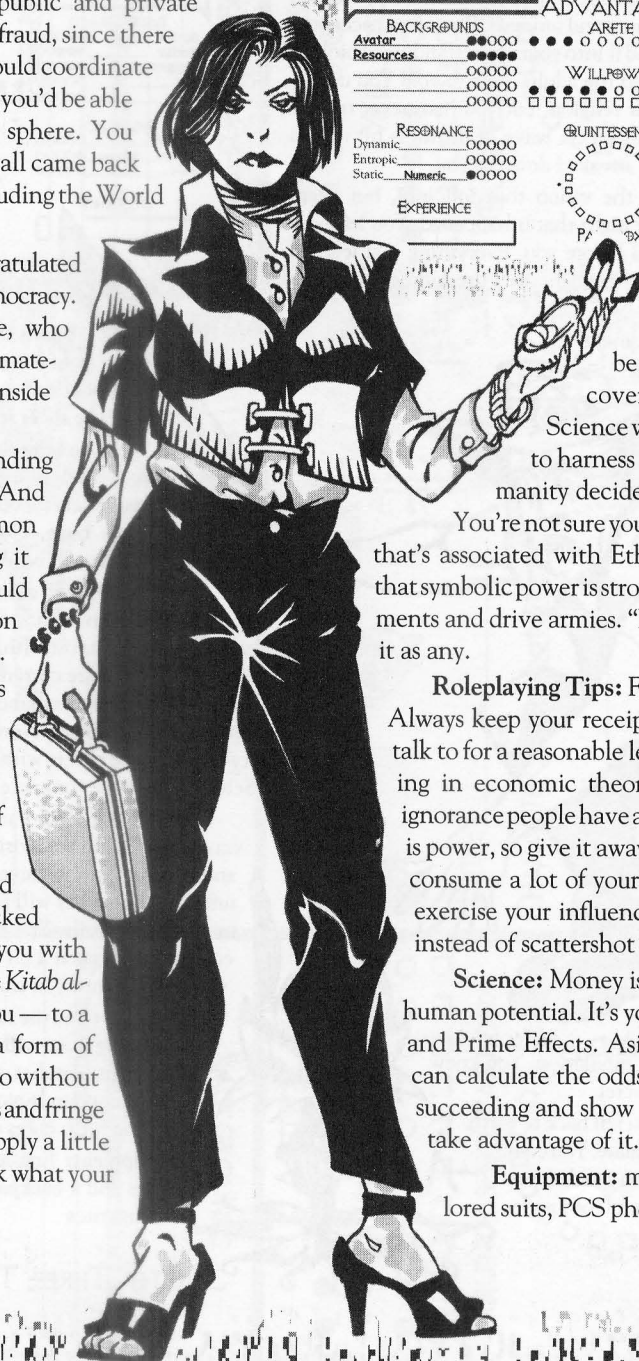
After signing a battery of non-disclosure agreements, you started writing policy papers and creating computer models of the global economy. You realized that something was subtly leaching funds from hundreds of public and private sources. You ruled out conventional fraud, since there was no way these disparate sources could coordinate their efforts. If you found the answer, you'd be able to see the whole human economic sphere. You Awakened when you realized that it all came back to a set of obscure institutions — including the World Advisory Council.

The next day, your superiors congratulated you and introduced you to the Technocracy. You'd be working for the Syndicate, who developed and harvested humanity's material potential. You were finally on the inside — but why did it feel so awful?

For God's sake, they were funding space colonies! Buying immortality! And none of it was getting to the common man. They talked big about letting it trickle down, but from what you could tell, most of their work was focused on lifting more from the Masses' coffers.

As a Technocrat you had access to files about the enemy: ontological terrorists who were regarded as little more than termites in the global village. You picked a known cabal of renegade scientists and defected.

You told them they'd been found out and asked for asylum. They picked your brains for intelligence and left you with an Etherite Doctor, who gave you the *Kitab al-Alacir* on a whim. It made sense to you — to a point. You knew that money was a form of metaphysical energy, but you could do without all the subjectivity, alternate universes and fringe nonsense. Now, it's time for you to apply a little "influence" to the markets to get back what your former bosses stole.



Sons of Ether			
NAME: _____		NATURE: <i>Pedagogue</i>	
PLAYER: _____		ESSENCE: <i>Questing</i>	
CHRONICLE: _____		DEITY/ANOR: <i>Architect</i>	
FACTION: _____		CONCEPT: <i>Rogue Economist</i>	
CABAL: _____			
ATTRIBUTES			
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL	
Strength: ●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●	Perception: ●●●●	
Dexterity: ●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●	Intelligence: <i>Human</i> ●●●●	
Stamina: ●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●	Wits: ●●●●	
ABILITIES			
TALENTS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness: ●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●	Academics: <i>Macroeconomics</i> ●●●●●	
Athletics: ●●●●●	Drive: ●●●●●	Computer: ●●●●●	
Awareness: ●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●	Cosmology: ●●●●●	
Brawl: ●●●●●	Firearms: ●●●●●	Enigmas: ●●●●●	
Dodge: ●●●●●	Meditation: ●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●	
Expression: ●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●	
Intimidation: ●●●●●	Performance: ●●●●●	Love: <i>Technocracy</i> ●●●●●	
Leadership: ●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●	
Streetwise: ●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●	
Subterfuge: ●●●●●	Technology: ●●●●●	Science: <i>Mathematics</i> ●●●●●	
SPHERES			
Correspondence: ●●●●●	Life: ●●●●●	Prime: ●●●●●	
Entropy: ●●●●●	Matter: ●●●●●	Spirit: ●●●●●	
Forces: ●●●●●	Mind: ●●●●●	Time: ●●●●●	
ADVANTAGES			
BACKGROUNDS		ARETE	
Avatar: ●●●●●	Resources: ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	
WILLPOWER		HEALTH	
●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Bruised: -0 □	
●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Hurt: -1 □	
●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Injured: -1 □	
●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Wounded: -2 □	
●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Mauled: -2 □	
●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Crippled: -5 □	
●●●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	Incapacitated: -5 □	
RESONANCE		QUINTESSENCE	
Dynamic: ●●●●●	Entropic: ●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●	
Static: <i>Numeric</i> ●●●●●		●●●●●●●●●●	
EXPERIENCE		COMBAT	
_____		Weapon: _____	
		Offense: _____	
		Damage: _____	

Concept: You used to be a Technocrat, until you discovered that you wanted the Science without the power. You want to harness money ethically and let humanity decide its own economic destiny.

You're not sure you approve of all the nonsense that's associated with Ether Science, but you know that symbolic power is strong enough to topple governments and drive armies. "Ether" is as good a name for it as any.

Roleplaying Tips: Frown at wacky Ether antics. Always keep your receipts. Try to give anyone you talk to for a reasonable length of time a firm grounding in economic theory, because the amount of ignorance people have about it is deplorable. Money is power, so give it away; charities and other causes consume a lot of your energy. Still, you prefer to exercise your influence on a key economic lever instead of scattershot philanthropy.

Science: Money is the symbolic expression of human potential. It's your primary focus for Matter and Prime Effects. Aside from that, mathematics can calculate the odds of a particular transaction succeeding and show you what you need to do to take advantage of it.

Equipment: mansion, BMW, custom tailored suits, PCS phone, laptop and a full wallet

PHYSICAL

Energetic

Dextrous

Tough

SOCIAL

Charming x2

Eloquent x2

Persuasive

MENTAL

Alert

Insightful x2

Knowledgeable x2

ABILITIES

Academics x2

Awareness x2

Etiquette

Firearms

Science (Economics) x2

BACKGROUNDS

Arcane x2

Influence (University) x1

Resources x5

SPHERES

Apprentice of Correspondence

Apprentice of Matter

Initiate of Mind

Initiate of Time

ROLES



NAME: _____

CHARACTER: Rogue Economist

CHRONICLE: _____

FACTION: _____

ESSENCE: Questing

CABAL: _____

NATURE: Architect

DEITY/ANOR: Pedagogue



NAME: _____

CHARACTER: Urban Planner

CHRONICLE: _____

FACTION: Progressivists

ESSENCE: Pattern

CABAL: _____

NATURE: Rebel

DEITY/ANOR: Architect

PHYSICAL

Energetic

Quick

Stalwart

SOCIAL

Eloquent

Magnetic x2

Persuasive x2

MENTAL

Creative x2

Wise x2

Knowledgeable x2

Vigilant

ABILITIES

Academics x2

Awareness

Brawl

Science (Physics)

Streetwise

Technology

ARETE

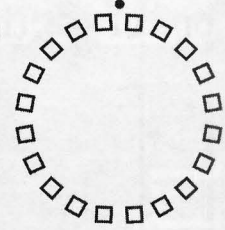
● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

QUINTESSENCE/PARADOX



RESONANCE

DYNAMIC

ENTROPIC

STATIC Numeric

PHYSICAL

Energetic

Dextrous

Tough

SOCIAL

Charming x2

Eloquent x2

Persuasive

MENTAL

Alert

Wise x2

Insightful x2

Knowledgeable x2

ABILITIES

Academics x2

Awareness x2

Etiquette

Firearms

Science (Economics) x2

BACKGROUNDS

Arcane x2

Influence (University) x1

Resources x5

SPHERES

Apprentice of Correspondence

Apprentice of Matter

Initiate of Mind

Initiate of Time

ROLES



NAME: _____

CHARACTER: Rogue Economist

CHRONICLE: _____

FACTION: _____

ESSENCE: Questing

CABAL: _____

NATURE: Architect

DEITY/ANOR: Pedagogue



NAME: _____

CHARACTER: Urban Planner

CHRONICLE: _____

FACTION: Progressivists

ESSENCE: Pattern

CABAL: _____

NATURE: Rebel

DEITY/ANOR: Architect

URBAN PLANNER

Quote: *Ascension starts on the street.*

Prelude: Even when you ran with the gang, you could sense the invisible forces that made up the city's heart and soul. The hive of machines and administration that allowed it to function were an open book to you. You originally applied this knowledge to avoid the cops, go urban spelunking and mess with the local power grid. Under your direction, there was nothing your crew couldn't steal. Your feel for the city and mechanical skills were the cornerstone of their success.

After one job stealing power for a meth lab, things didn't feel right. The gang stayed behind to talk business and sample the lab's wares. After the cops came and the guns came out, the botched shootout that blew up the lab didn't get you, because you'd left five minutes too early to get caught.

Your criminal career was over, but you still had enemies: cops who wanted your number and other gangs who resented your former success. It was a stroke of luck when your mom showed you the scholarship. You hardly ever showed up for school, but you somehow got full support at an Ivy League college. You could make your family proud and get out of town in one move.

Sociology and anthropology were easy: You knew all about kinship, subcultures and the rest. You knew how the tribe and the city worked, and you just wrote what you learned in the 'hood in the language your professors needed to hear. They seemed to like it, and one of them even kept you around after class, where you'd talk about all kinds of weird things. You always seemed to end up in his classes. By graduation, you and the professor were good friends. He gave you a present: the *Kitab al-Alacir*. "You'll like it," he said. "It uses the city as a metaphor for knowledge."

You liked it.

Now you've got your PhD, and you work for your hometown as an urban planner. You also watch the city for the Sons of Ether, but their idea of "social order" is a far cry from what you want. Fuck that *Things to Come* homogeneity and hierarchy. You want communities to have power on the street and then take it on up.

Concept: Some people have street smarts; you have street genius. Combined with mechanical skills and a feel for the structure of systems and groups, you have all the talents you need to renew a decaying city. You may not have the political influence to do it, but you prefer neighborhood approval to city hall. You recognize ethnic and class divides that most Etherites don't bother with and are at loggerheads with them over what constitutes Utopia. When it comes right down to it, your upbringing lets you get into the seedy side of things and survive the odd dust up.

Roleplaying Tips: You're an activist and a social Scientist. Take your ideas to the people to get support before bringing it up with the authorities. This applies to mage society as well. The Sons of Ether and other Traditions might have some grand plans for humanity, but you think the so-called Sleepers should

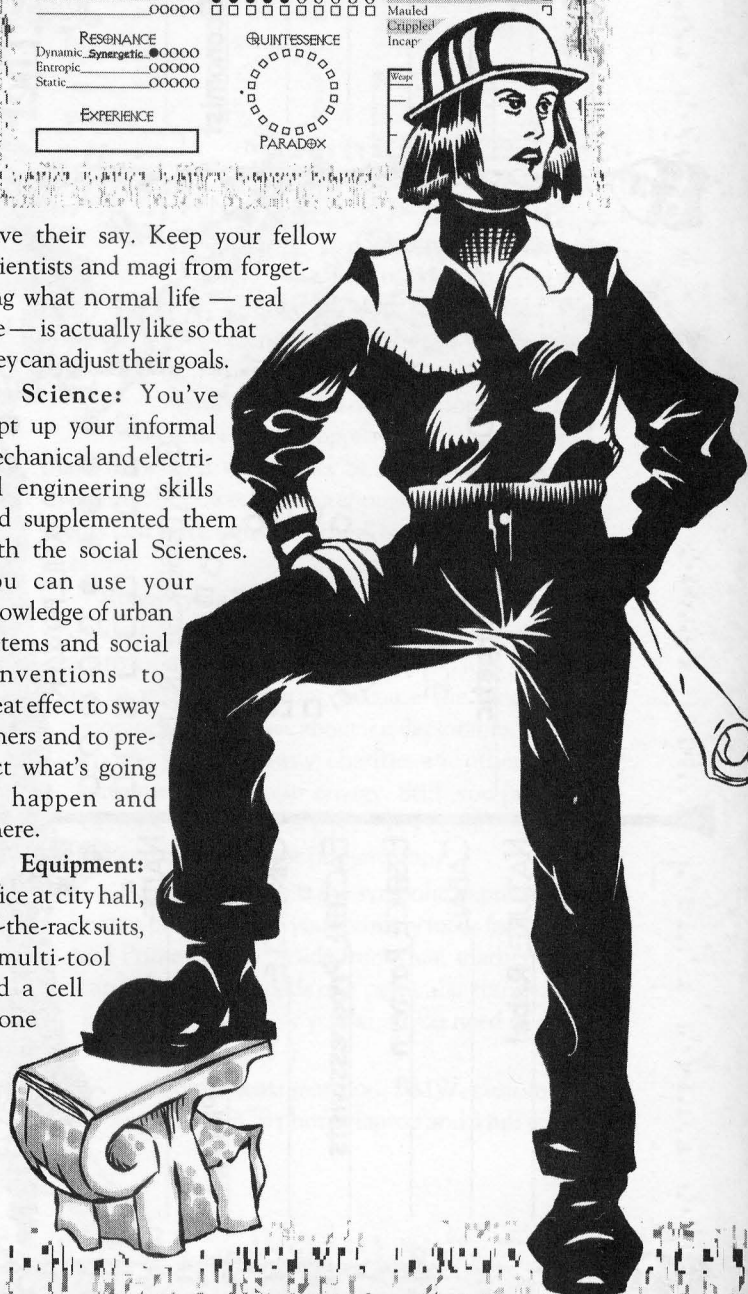
Sons of Ether

NAME: PLAYER: CHRONICLE:		NATURE: Rebel ESSENCE: Pattern DEFINER: Architect		FACTION: Progressivists CONCEPT: Urban Planner CABAL:	
ATTRIBUTES					
PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●●●	Perception	●●●●●
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●	Intelligence	●●●●●
Stamina	●●●●●	Appearance	●●●●●	Wits	●●●●●
ABILITIES					
TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	●●●●●	Crafts	●●●●●	Academics	●●●●●
Athletics	●●●●●	Drive	●●●●●	Computer	●●●●●
Awareness	●●●●●	Etiquette	●●●●●	Cosmology	●●●●●
Brawl	●●●●●	Firearms	●●●●●	Enigmas	●●●●●
Dodge	●●●●●	Meditation	●●●●●	Investigation	●●●●●
Expression	●●●●●	Melee	●●●●●	Law	●●●●●
Intimidation	●●●●●	Performance	●●●●●	Linguistics	●●●●●
Leadership	●●●●●	Stealth	●●●●●	Medicine	●●●●●
Streetwise	●●●●●	Survival	●●●●●	Occult	●●●●●
Subterfuge	●●●●●	Technology	●●●●●	Science	●●●●●
SPHERES					
Correspondence	●●●●●	Life	●●●●●	Prime	●●●●●
Entropy	●●●●●	Matter	●●●●●	Spirit	●●●●●
Forces	●●●●●	Mind	●●●●●	Time	●●●●●
ADVANTAGES					
BACKGROUNDS		ARETE		HEALTH	
Avatar	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●		Bruised	-0 □
Mentor	●●●●●	WILLPOWER		Hurt	-1 □
Resources	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●		Injured	-1 □
	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●		Wounded	-2 □
	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●		Mauled	-2 □
	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●		Crippled	-3 □
	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●		Incap	-3 □
RESONANCE		QUINTESSENCE			
Dynamic	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●			
Entropy	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●			
Static	●●●●●	●●●●●●●●●●			
EXPERIENCE		PARADOX			
●●●●●		●●●●●●●●●●			

have their say. Keep your fellow Scientists and magi from forgetting what normal life — real life — is actually like so that they can adjust their goals.

Science: You've kept up your informal mechanical and electrical engineering skills and supplemented them with the social Sciences. You can use your knowledge of urban systems and social conventions to great effect to sway others and to predict what's going to happen and where.

Equipment: office at city hall, off-the-rack suits, a multi-tool and a cell phone



EPILOGUE: EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



Florida, 2003:

Yves Mercure switched off the converter, staggering back as red sparks arced off his Ethersuit.

A man burst out of the doorway that opened into the square tower of Coral Castle, running to where Yves had collapsed against one of the coral chairs. He was 40ish, mustached, prematurely graying at the temples, with a spare tire that caused his greasy overalls to bulge slightly at the waist. He checked the suit's gauges, popped the seals on the helmet and gloves, and gently removed them.

The Frenchman was trembling uncontrollably, his eyes wild as he tore his gaze from the depths of the night sky. A fluid pump mounted on his suit's thigh seemed to be compensating for some lower bodily function. His fingers found the man's overalls and pulled him to his knees. Yves shrieked in the man's face, "You did not tell me that I would have to witness the end of the world!"

The man sputtered. "How — how could I have known? Back then, it all happened in the blink of an eye! It took me 25 years just to figure out as much as I did." He held Yves as the trembling subsided. "I'm sorry, man! I didn't realize what I was getting you into. So Doctor Comet was right after all? We're all doomed."

Yves took a deep breath, clawed at the catches on his breastplate and freed himself from the bulky suit. "Yes... No! I am not certain. It is... difficult to describe what I experienced. Not simply a future timeline... I have never been to a dimension of such magnitude. It passed beyond my comprehension. It was..."

"An Epiphany?"

Yves nodded. "Oui. That is what our fellow Traditions would call it." Composure regained, he stood and returned to the converter. "If our world survives at all, it will be as something very different from that which we now know." He retracted the converter's tripod.

The man pulled a battered notebook from his back pocket, checked some pages and scribbled a few equations. "I think I see what happened. I was following a toroidal flight path. A cross-section of a torus looks like two circles touching at a single point, like a figure eight, or the symbol for infinity. See?" He held a sloppy diagram up to show Yves, who spared it only the briefest glance. "Two loops, one into the past, the other into the future, intersecting at the present. I didn't know what that meant — I never studied time travel in depth. But when I met Stan at the party, he told me he was gonna be doing some retroscopy in Australia around this time. That Node there's almost directly opposite Florida along a geodesic arc. It seemed to make sense. I had to take the chance,

y'know? The dreams were really starting to scare the shit out of me, man. I just knew I was gonna die tonight. Right here." He looked at the coral surface between his scuffed work boots. "And everything I managed to do with my life woulda just, I dunno, vanished in a puff of Paradox... Or something."

Packing his equipment, Yves made no reply.

"But I didn't die, did I? And Coral Castle's still here, right? All thanks to you, bro! And to Captain Caveman, too. You ever talk to him, get to know him? He's not that bad a guy, just a little loco from spending all his time alone, away from civilization. We should get him a good nickname, you know? 'Captain Caveman' was a cartoon from when I was a kid. I think everyone just started calling him that as an insult. We should do something for him, welcome him into the fold before he goes completely Dissident on us."

Yves paused, and spoke without facing the man. "Perhaps. I recall that his research and his devices were intrinsic to our efforts in the future." He resumed his task in silence.

After a while the man said, "So, do you think we made a difference?"

"Perhaps that is for you to tell me." Yves turned. "Do you feel any different?"

"No. But if I get back to the workshop and find that all my work is 10 years ahead of schedule, I'll let you know, man. Maybe the results won't show up in our own timeline, but in an alternate one."

"Ah, well. If we cannot save our own world, we can at least give the world in the next universe over a better chance." Yves paused to consider the thought. The hint of a smile creased his cheek. "There is a certain nobility in it that appeals to me."

"I just can't believe I wasted 10 years of my life playing fucking King of the Strip just to impress a bunch of racist shit-kickers. Pardon my French."

Yves glared at him.

"Sorry." The man looked down. "And I apologize for railroading you into this like I did. It's just that I was desperate, and you were the only Ethernaut I could get hold of."

Yves shrugged. "It was a bit of adventure, at least. And that is in short supply these days."

"Still, it's a lot to do for someone you hardly know. If there's anything that I can do to repay you, anything at all, bro, let me know and it's yours."

Yves thought for a moment. "Do you know a young lady by the name of Niki Yemana?" he said.

REFERENCES



BOOKS

Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge. Philosopher Paul Feyerabend outlines objections to the scientific method and proposes a replacement. The book serves as an excellent source to justify Etherite problems with conventional science. Also: *For and Against Method*, a record of the arguments between Feyerabend and Scientific Method proponent Imre Lakatos.

The Cyberiad. Stanislaw Lem blithely ignores the laws of physics to tell the story of two inventive robots who loose their creations on the universe. Aside from the fact that the inventions suit a bizarre, Umbra-centered game, the book pokes fun at how we perceive technology and, in the end, what it ultimately means to us. Also, *The Futurological Congress* is an excellent model for Utopian Science gone wrong.

Wasn't the Future Wonderful? A marvelous look at popular science magazines in the 1930s, this book is evenly split between genuine speculation, crankery that never should have got past the editors and tremendous, impractical proposals such as creating mile-high vertical airports. The book includes interviews with Robert Goddard and Nikola Tesla alongside gems like: "Will Monster Insects Rule the World?" Virtually every flight of fancy (such as the one-wheeled tank) is illustrated. And the best part? One of the source magazines is *The Technocrat*!

Also...

Anti-Gravity and the World Grid, edited by David Hatcher Childress

Forbidden Archeology, by Michael A. Cremo and Richard L. Thompson (abridged as *The Hidden History of the Human Race*)

Etidorpha by John Uri Lloyd

"'Bob' and the Oxygen Wars" by Waves Forest, from *Three-Fisted Tales of Bob*, edited by Rev. Ivan Stang

Supernature, by Lyall Watson

Colony: Earth, by Richard Mooney

The Eighth Tower, by John Keel

The Anomalist.com, edited by Patrick Huyghe

GAMES

Adventure! White Wolf's Origins Award winning pulp RPG. Aside from deftly simulating pulp conventions and providing a ready made all-Etherite game setting (where "Z-Rays" can stand in for Ether with virtually no tweaking), it captures the Utopian spirit. Since it uses a version of the Storyteller rules, many of its systems can be directly plugged in to your **Mage** games — besides being a great game itself. Also, its sister game **Trinity** is filled with plenty of inspirations for futuristic weird technology and psionics.

Sons of Ether™

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
ESSENCE:
DEITY/ANOR:

FACTION:
CONCEPT:
CABAL:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ●○○○○
Dexterity ●○○○○
Stamina ●○○○○

SOCIAL

Charisma ●○○○○
Manipulation ●○○○○
Appearance ●○○○○

MENTAL

Perception ●○○○○
Intelligence ●○○○○
Wits ●○○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ○○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○
Awareness ○○○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

SKILLS

Crafts ○○○○○
Drive ○○○○○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Meditation ○○○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Performance ○○○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ○○○○○
Technology ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics ○○○○○
Computer ○○○○○
Cosmology ○○○○○
Enigmas ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ○○○○○
Science ○○○○○

SPHERES

Correspondence ○○○○○
Entropy ○○○○○
Forces ○○○○○

Life ○○○○○
Matter ●○○○○
Mind ○○○○○

Prime ○○○○○
Spirit ○○○○○
Time ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

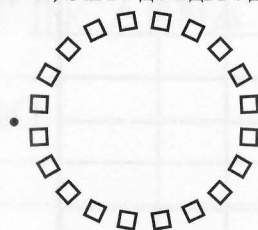
ARETE

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

QUINTESSENCE



PARADOX

HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

RESONANCE

Dynamic ○○○○○
Entropic ○○○○○
Static ○○○○○

EXPERIENCE

OTHER TRAITS

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

Sons of Ether™

MERITS & FLAWS

MERIT	TYPE	COST	FLAW	TYPE	BONUS

MAGIC

PREFERRED EFFECTS

ROTÉS

COMBAT

Maneuver/Do Technique	Roll	Difficulty	Damage/Effect

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Conceal

ARTIØR: _____

DØ STYLE: _____

Sons of Ether™

EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

LIBRARY

CONTACTS

MENTOR

DESTINY

NODE

INFLUENCE

RESOURCES

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

FOCI

WONDERS

FAMILIAR

PAST INCARNATIONS

Sons of Ether™

HISTORY AWAKENING

GOALS/DESTINY

SEEKINGS: _____ QUIETS: _____

DESCRIPTION

Age: _____	_____
Apparent Age: _____	_____
Date of Birth: _____	_____
Age of Awakening: _____	_____
Hair: _____	_____
Eyes: _____	_____
Race: _____	Appearance/Nature of Avatar: _____
Nationality: _____	_____
Height: _____	_____
Weight: _____	_____
Sex: _____	_____

VISUALS

CABAL CHART

CHARACTER SKETCH



T R A D I T I O N B O O K :

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Defectors from the monumental halls of the Technocracy, the Sons of Ether are the avant-garde of true Enlightened Science, decoding the ciphers of nature and supernature through observation, imagination and experimentation. Unlike their former brethren, they don't shut out the weird or the strange, anomalous sightings or alien visitations. They seek them out to prove them true.

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