

# SH N C T U M H N D S I G I L

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MAGE  
THE AWAKENING

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Since the times of the Exile and dispersion from that great polis  
have the Awakened formed together in unity and purpose.  
These cabals are the cornerstones of our society,  
the blocks from which shall be built a new city.  
Each sanctum is a part of this shining, dispersed city,  
each Hallow a jewel in its treasury.

Let it be known that no man,  
spirit or creature  
shall violate such sanctity.  
At the price of death.

— Simon Magnus, Silver Ladder warlock,  
illuminator of the Lex Magica

This book includes:

- Details on the Protocols and Great Rights of mage cabals, and the laws of the Lex Magica presided over by the Consilium.
- Expanded rules for the sanctum, Hallows and ley lines, including new Merits and spells.
- Information on Seers of the Throne pylons and Banisher cults, including sample groups.



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**MAGE**  
THE AWAKENING

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It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Ian could feel the Realm of the Celestial Spheres flow through him. Angelic symbols, the *Imago* of what he wished to cast, scrawled themselves in front of his eyes, preparing to unleash divine fury against Ian's attacker.

Then he felt the flat slap of a fist on his stomach, stealing away needed breath. Ian vomited up bile onto the sidewalk. He tried to whisper a prayer to finish the rote and set it in motion; a raspy voice responded, "Don't try it, pendejo. You are far away from home." Ian choked back a sob as he felt the other willworker's power tense and react to the still-forming curse. Ian knew his magic would fail him. He was beaten.

"Take his sigil," suggested a voice behind Ian, a woman's voice, soft and out of place amid the violence. "Bring it to Xjilé and let her decide what to do."

The raspy voice grunted in assent. Ian saw a steel blade appear, and a knife slashed down, cutting the thong carrying the sigil that represented Ian's cabal. While Ian was forced at gunpoint toward a beat-up old van, the man jumped onto a motorcycle and sped off.

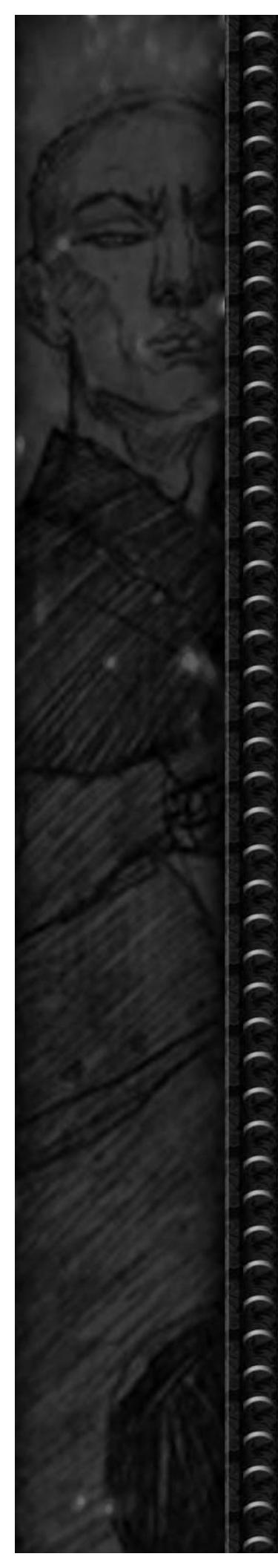
Hope vanished into the dying light.



The heat of the place was overwhelming.

Ian dreamed of cool New England summers while sitting on a ratty, off-green couch. White paint peeled slowly off the walls. Outside the dirt-smeared window was the hellhole of suburban Los Angeles. Even at night, the temperature was high enough to wring sweat off the body. The streets were devoid of life, save a trickle of cars with air-conditioners cranked to the max. Inside the cars, Sleepers chattered mindlessly on cell phones. Ian hated this place.

But Rachel had loved it — when she needed help, she came here, to the Jaguar's Paw cabal instead of to her own people. And even after she died — no, worse than dying, for how else does one describe the desecration of one's mind, body and soul? — even after she ceased to be a person, her final wishes were the ones that brought Ian here.



Ian shifted uneasily on the couch and felt the box next to him. At least the local Doorwarden hadn't taken it from him; theoretically, it was the warden's right to "examine" enchanted items brought into his sanctum. Thankfully, few mages followed that part of the code anymore.

Ian heard the crack of a cane on flesh and turned around. A profoundly odd, old woman was beating the Doorwarden Ian had fought with earlier.

"Didn't I tell you he was coming?" she screeched, her terse anger shredding the mage's dignity.

"But, Xjilé, you said he was supposed to arrive during House-Skull-Reed, not in the time of Vulture." The man received another whack with the cane.

"Reed, Vulture, who cares?!" she responded. "You've still got eyes, don't you?" With a final smack to drive him off, the old lady turned her attention to Ian. As she looked him over with white, blank eyes, Ian noted that she was blind.

She tossed Ian's sigil to him with uncanny accuracy. Ian caught it.

"So Bright Wing went to your cabal," she murmured. "It seems our little bird did well for herself."

Ian felt a sharp pang. The woman was talking about Rachel.

"Come with me," Xjilé said. Then she turned around and left. Ian snatched up the box and scrambled after her. She led him out back, ducking through a dilapidated fence to enter a large vacant lot behind the house.

"Can't believe no one remembers Hospitality anymore. You're a théarch, yes?" she asked.

Ian nodded. "Yes."

"I've been blind since birth," the old lady commented. "I never saw no damned Watchtower, even when I Awakened. Wouldn't know what it looked like anyway."

"Then what did you see?"

The old lady grinned, showing off a gap-toothed mouth. She pointed up. The stars overhead spun brilliantly, brighter than they had a right to be in this partly lit suburban enclave.

"I can feel them moving," the old lady whispered. "I hear them sing."

Ian flinched as he felt her cane whistle over his head, missing him by inches. The cane spun around once, twice, three times, and Ian was suddenly plunged through a portal into darkness.

A sonorous voice spoke. "The Assembly will see you now."



"In the beginning was Aztlán, and all was Aztlán. La Raza, the Race, lived within its bounds and were content. But Queztalcoatl ascended Heaven's ladder too soon, and the world has fallen into darkness. So it was and so it must be in this time, the Fifth Age of Motion."

Ian looked around in astonishment. He was in the depths of a pyramid, a Mayan one if he remembered his only anthropology class in college. The deep voice intoning the history echoed from an indistinct source.

"Now we are a light in the dark. We follow his star until he returns."

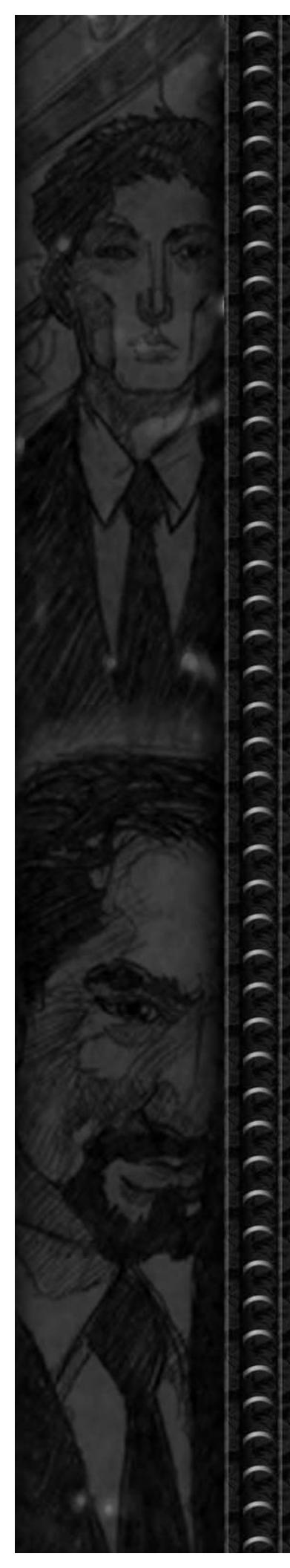
"Until he returns . . ." responded a chorus of other voices.

"Where am I?" Ian asked.

Xjilé appeared by his side. "In the ghost of a building, one that was or perhaps will be. Listen carefully. The Assembly approaches."

A stream of about a dozen people filed into the room. Dressed in white robes, they were a strange lot — thin, fat, tall, short, with a mix of skin colors that went from bone-pale to rich chocolate. On their faces were richly adorned masks, decorated with animal and human features, mixed so that you could barely determine what species was represented, let alone who was behind the mask.

"We now convene the Assembly of la Ciudad de Nuestra Señora la Reyna de Los Angeles. Before we proceed with the business of the Five Suns, we recognize the member of the cabal of the White Rose, Herald of the Consilium of the Therion Annex. Brother, what brings you here?"



Ian tensed with anticipation. From his sigil, they knew who he was. "With respect, syndics, I was charged by Oath to return this possession to you." From the box, Ian withdrew a small obsidian statuette.

One of the syndics stepped forward to examine the object. Ian could feel the pulse of the syndic's magic, examining the item. "It is as you say." The syndic returned to the group and, for a moment, they discussed something quietly. Ian bit back the urge to cast a rote to listen in. He waited. A syndic turned and quested out toward him with magic. Ian opened up his senses to examine the intent. There was the smell of the grave about the spell, but it was not harmful. It was looking for marks on his soul.

"He may be the vessel or not," said the sorcerer. "It's difficult to tell."

"As intended," replied another syndic.

The first syndic to address Ian sighed. "Then we will find another way." He turned to Ian. "We accept your words, but we cannot accept this item at this time. Your Oath is unfulfilled."

Ian was shocked. He had been taught that Oath-quests were rarely refused.

"Challenge." He blurted it out, without thinking.

"Second," said a female syndic in a mask that mixed owl with feline features. Ian recognized the voice as the soft-voiced woman from the fight.

"Stay out of this, Maya," the forward syndic replied.

"We require consensus to refuse an Oath-task, Quiche. Remember that," said Maya.

"You do not know the details of this situation," Quiche responded.

"Then why doesn't our visitor enlighten us?"

Ian felt bitterness well out of him. "My oath-friend — she was a lictor who served as my cabal's Doorwarden. She came here for help against a Tremere lich. The statuette was gifted to her by the Jaguar's Paw. It was supposed to help her! But instead, it made her helpless. When the mage she was hunting attacked us, she was unprepared. He . . . he took her soul from her. And she . . ."



He quickly choked back a rush of emotion.

“And now she’s gone,” Maya said softly. “Quiche, I withdraw my Second.”

“What?” Ian burst out. “Why?”

“I believe you are the one.”

“The one what?”

“In time. Give us time. Quiche didn’t say we wouldn’t help you. Just not now.” Maya tried to sound reassuring. “Trust us.”

“Give me one reason why I should,” Ian snapped back.

Maya’s eyes locked with Ian’s. “She did.”

Ashamed, Ian looked away. The Assembly grew silent, as if waiting. Xjilé rapped Ian gently on the leg with her cane. “Come on, Herald,” Xjilé said. “They’ll come get you when they’ve got something more to say.”



They were fighting outside.

Ian had been taken back to a simple, bare room with a cot to rest on. They provided him with a plain meal and left him to his own musings. Then, the shouting began.

“Are you out of your mind? The Eastside Rail Project will cut across at least two ley lines. We have to stop it.” The voice sounded like one of the other syndics.

“Our people need the jobs!” That was Quiche. “You can’t sacrifice their health for a damn magic spigot.”

“They’re both right.” Ian jumped. The old woman, Xjilé, was right behind him.

“How did you . . . ?”

“Me and Pandemonium, we’re close.” She replied laughing. “And this was once my room. But don’t worry. I haven’t been spying on you. I just came to tell you the Assembly came to a decision.”

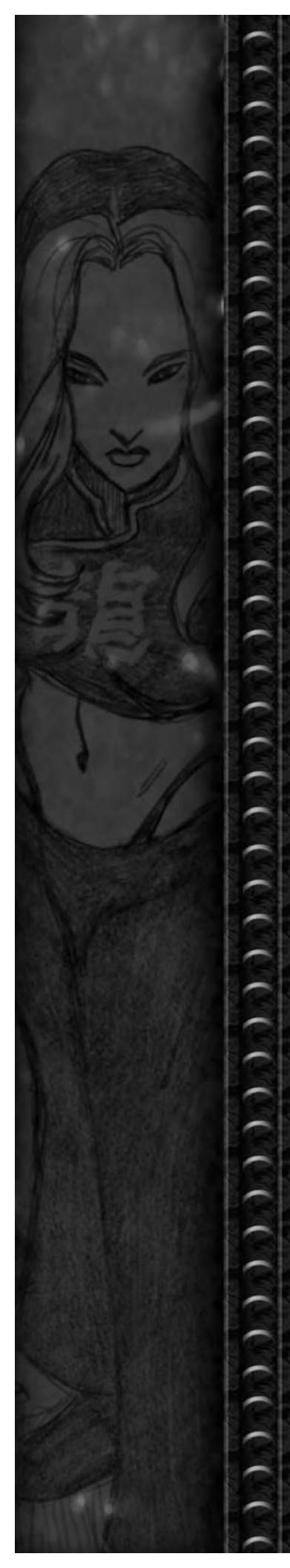
“What did they say?”

“They’ll accept your statue if you do them one favor first, as a sign of good faith.”

Ian tensed. “What is it?”

“Well, Herald, we want you to run a scam.”





The green-and-white coffee shop was clean and corporate; it could have been set in Seattle, New York or any other major urban center, and no one would have noted any difference. The staff was curt and quick, showing as little overt emotion as possible. Service here meant producing product, not making people feel good.

In the corner, a stunning businesswoman sipped a double-mocha latte and gazed over a set of reports with cool, detached interest. Consumed by her work, the woman was startled when a young businessman sat down across from her.

“This table is taken,” she said crisply, leaving no doubt of her irritation.

“Yes, it is,” Ian replied. “By people who share a common agenda.”

That peaked her interest. “And you are?”

“Jack Holmes. SFV Tetrarchy, Ministry of Pornography and Perceptions.”

“I don’t recognize that one.”

“If you did, I wouldn’t be doing my job.”

The woman leaned back in her chair and analyzed him. Ian could feel the probings of her power wash over him. Let her, he thought. He had his defenses already prepared. The Assembly chose him for this because he wasn’t local; in the LÀ scene, mystery was everything. He also exuded the confidence a deacon of the Silver Ladder was expected to have. In essence, Ian smelled of authority, an unknown authority that was just the bait needed here.

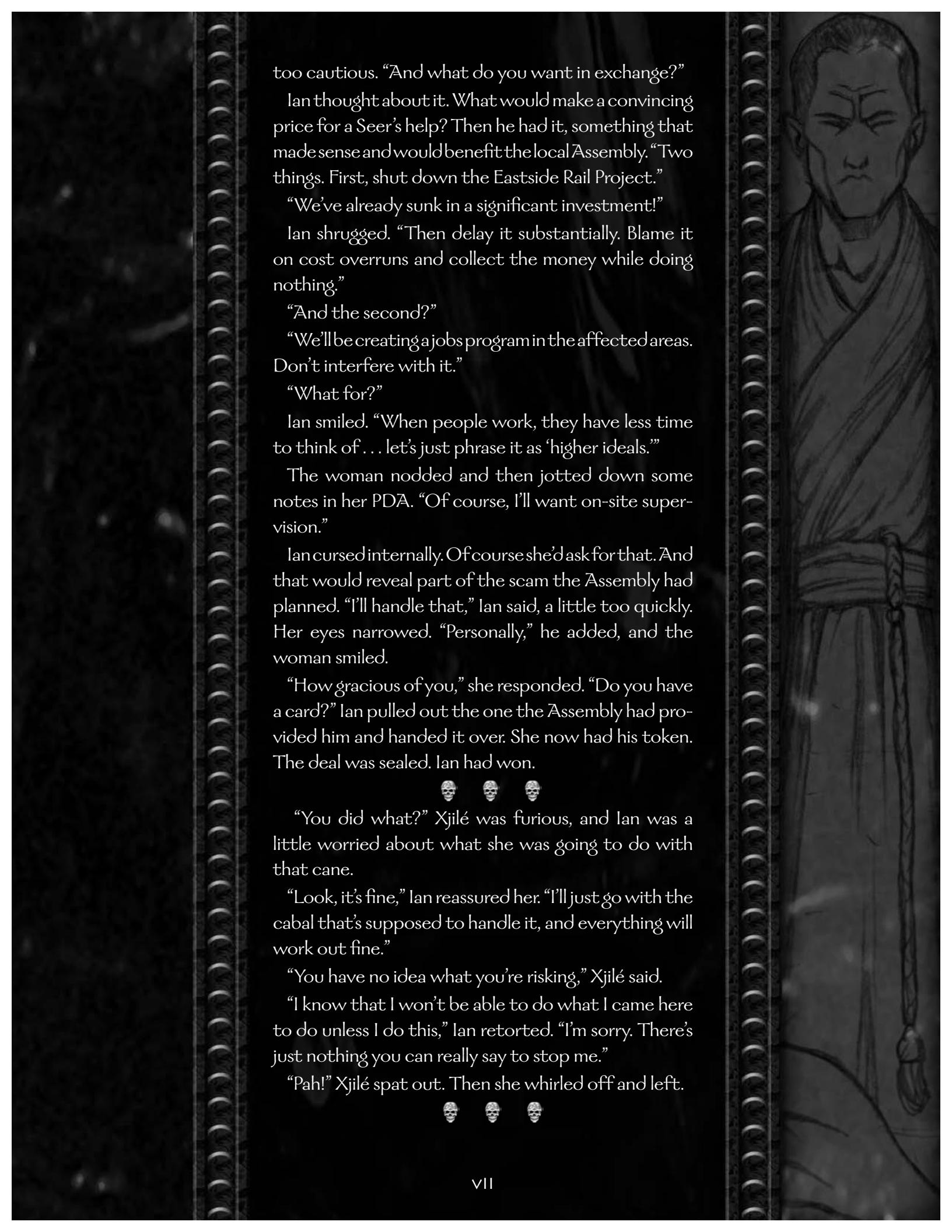
“You’ve got five minutes.”

“We’ve heard about your problems at LAX,” Ian replied.

“What problems?”

“The blackouts, power grid failures, costly ‘repairs to infrastructure.’ The near-collision between two technically parked airplanes.” Ian watched as the woman flinched. He’d hit a nerve. “We’ve been ordered to lend you a hand.”

Ian could see it in the woman’s face — she wanted so badly to know who gave him the orders. But she was



too cautious. "And what do you want in exchange?"

Ian thought about it. What would make a convincing price for a Seer's help? Then he had it, something that made sense and would benefit the local Assembly. "Two things. First, shut down the Eastside Rail Project."

"We've already sunk in a significant investment!"

Ian shrugged. "Then delay it substantially. Blame it on cost overruns and collect the money while doing nothing."

"And the second?"

"We'll be creating a jobs program in the affected areas. Don't interfere with it."

"What for?"

Ian smiled. "When people work, they have less time to think of... let's just phrase it as 'higher ideals.'"

The woman nodded and then jotted down some notes in her PDA. "Of course, I'll want on-site supervision."

Ian cursed internally. Of course she'd ask for that. And that would reveal part of the scam the Assembly had planned. "I'll handle that," Ian said, a little too quickly. Her eyes narrowed. "Personally," he added, and the woman smiled.

"How gracious of you," she responded. "Do you have a card?" Ian pulled out the one the Assembly had provided him and handed it over. She now had his token. The deal was sealed. Ian had won.



"You did what?" Xjilé was furious, and Ian was a little worried about what she was going to do with that cane.

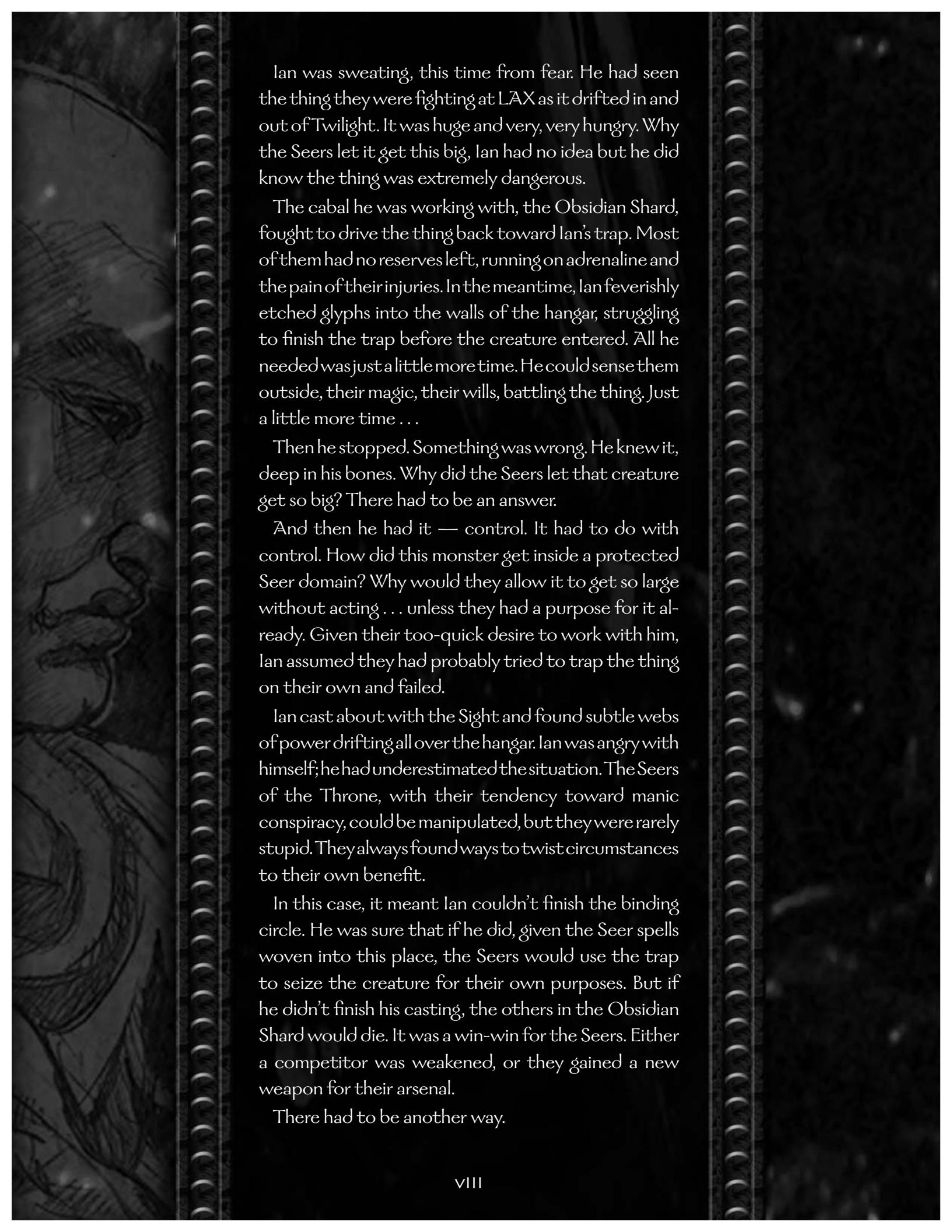
"Look, it's fine," Ian reassured her. "I'll just go with the cabal that's supposed to handle it, and everything will work out fine."

"You have no idea what you're risking," Xjilé said.

"I know that I won't be able to do what I came here to do unless I do this," Ian retorted. "I'm sorry. There's just nothing you can really say to stop me."

"Pah!" Xjilé spat out. Then she whirled off and left.





Ian was sweating, this time from fear. He had seen the thing they were fighting at LAX as it drifted in and out of Twilight. It was huge and very, very hungry. Why the Seers let it get this big, Ian had no idea but he did know the thing was extremely dangerous.

The cabal he was working with, the Obsidian Shard, fought to drive the thing back toward Ian's trap. Most of them had no reserves left, running on adrenaline and the pain of their injuries. In the meantime, Ian feverishly etched glyphs into the walls of the hangar, struggling to finish the trap before the creature entered. All he needed was just a little more time. He could sense them outside, their magic, their wills, battling the thing. Just a little more time . . .

Then he stopped. Something was wrong. He knew it, deep in his bones. Why did the Seers let that creature get so big? There had to be an answer.

And then he had it — control. It had to do with control. How did this monster get inside a protected Seer domain? Why would they allow it to get so large without acting . . . unless they had a purpose for it already. Given their too-quick desire to work with him, Ian assumed they had probably tried to trap the thing on their own and failed.

Ian cast about with the Sight and found subtle webs of power drifting all over the hangar. Ian was angry with himself; he had underestimated the situation. The Seers of the Throne, with their tendency toward manic conspiracy, could be manipulated, but they were rarely stupid. They always found ways to twist circumstances to their own benefit.

In this case, it meant Ian couldn't finish the binding circle. He was sure that if he did, given the Seer spells woven into this place, the Seers would use the trap to seize the creature for their own purposes. But if he didn't finish his casting, the others in the Obsidian Shard would die. It was a win-win for the Seers. Either a competitor was weakened, or they gained a new weapon for their arsenal.

There had to be another way.

Ian took several precious moments to examine the monster they were fighting, and then he saw the opportunity he needed. He quickly formulated the changes needed to the spell. Not much time left . . .

The fight from outside spilled into the hangar. The creature was almost physically manifest; it had a twisted man-shape with a bull's horn. The creature roared as the others slammed spells against it, and it opened its hinged-jawed mouth to try and consume them. "Now!" someone shouted, and Ian screamed out the final incantation. What was meant to be a binding was transformed by Ian's will into a siphon for the thing's Essence. The siphon squeezed the monster like a pimple, and energies the creature had devoured came pouring out. Everything electrical surged to life and exploded, plunging the hangar into darkness.

The blackness around Ian was suffocating. He risked a small invocation to create a ball of light. Snarling, the now much-smaller monster lunged at the new source of power. Before Ian could react, one of the Shard mages appeared and blew something into its face. The thing recoiled back with amazing speed, sneezed and then faded away. The mage turned to Ian. "Weren't you just supposed to trap it?" he asked.

Ian managed half a smile. "I promised them I'd take care of the situation. I didn't say how." The mage scrutinized Ian for a moment and then grinned.

"It's time to go," the Eye of the Obsidian Shard said, as a Sleeper security team raced toward the hangar. The other cabal members joined Ian, and they faded into the night.

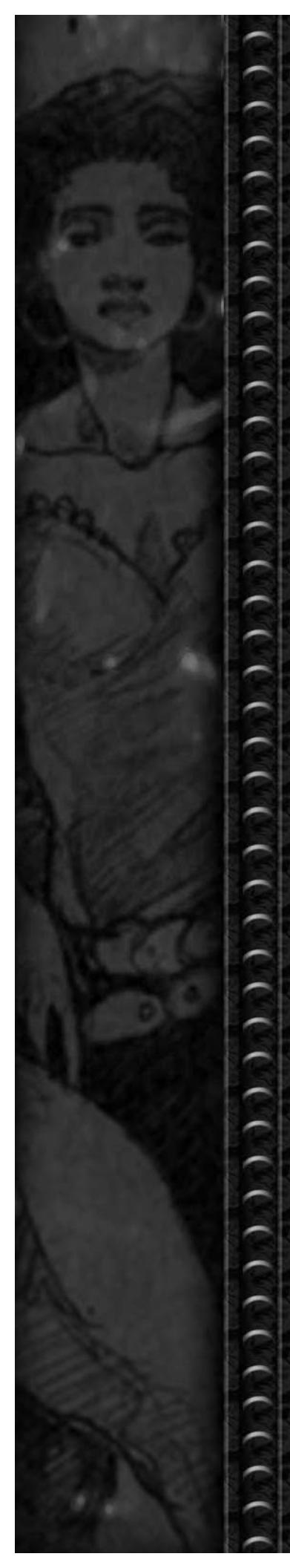


"Did you get what you needed?" Ian asked the Assembly.

Maya nodded. "While the Seers were watching you, we 'liberated' several powerful artifacts kept at the university."

"So you'll take the statuette, now?" Ian pressed.

"No," replied Quiche, and Ian's heart sunk. "But in a moment, you'll know why."



Maya stepped forward and motioned for Ian to hand her the statuette. Ian felt a sudden odd wrenching as he handed it to her. "You cared for her, didn't you?" Maya asked.

"Oh yes, Ian thought. "She was a member of my cabal," he said.

"Rachel knew what was coming. So through this artifact, she placed something she valued into someone she cared for."

The statuette started glowing. Maya offered Ian back the statuette. He held it in his hand for a moment and stared at the glow. It was so warm, so beautiful. It reminded him of her. Of her . . .

"Her soul," he said.

"And those pieces of her mind she didn't want to lose," Maya gently added. "Held in trust, unknowingly, inside you."

"That's why we couldn't take it from you at first," said Xjilé. "We had to make sure you really were her vessel and not some trap set up by that asshole she was fighting."

Quiche snorted. "We certainly didn't expect you to go running off to play hero."

"But what did the Tremere take . . . ?" Ian asked.

"What the artifact gave him," Maya smiled. "An illusion. The seeming of a soul."

"I imagine that Tremere puta is going to be surprised when he finds out what's really inside him," Xjilé cackled.

Ian thought of Rachel, beautiful Rachel back home in the care of others, soon to be drawn out of the pale, listless state she was in. Tears came to Ian's eyes.

"With this . . ." he couldn't finish the words.

"Take the statue back," said Quiche. "Go to her. Wake her up again, and then both of you bring it back. We'll accept it then with no ties attached."

Xjilé slammed her cane into the ground, and the Assembly dissolved, leaving Ian and her back in the vacant lot. She whirled on him with surprising speed. "And this time, tell her you love her!"

# SHNCTUM HND SIGIL™

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# SHNCTUM HND SIGIL

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## Table of Contents

Prologue	1
Introduction	14
Chapter One: The Polity	16
Chapter Two: Pride of Place	74
Chapter Three: Pylons and Cults	102
Chapter Four: Storytelling	118

# INTRODUCTION

*Home is a shelter from storms — all sorts of storms.*

— William J. Bennett

*Home is not where you live but where they understand you.*

— Christian Morgenstern

For Sleepers, as the cliché goes, “home is where the heart is.” For the Awakened, it is so much more. The stereotypical images of a wizard’s sanctum — the dark tower on a foreboding cliff, the alchemical lab filled with bubbling potions, the eerie brownstone manor wedged between skyscrapers — are not unknown in the World of Darkness, although the weight of time and supernal ideals have twisted these images into an amazing diversity of forms. The sanctums of the Awakened can be found in ancient cathedrals, creaking under the weight of Gothic architecture; in wooded glens or caves shaped by the hands of worshipers over millennia; in sterile laboratories crackling with the power of quantum uncertainty; and in abandoned buildings thick with the stench of death and decay.

As important as the sanctum is, equally important are those who dwell within it. Since the fall of Atlantis, mages have gathered together in tight-knit cabals. It’s in these fundamental groups that the Awakened guard against the darkness of the Abyss and the ever-present curse of the Quiescence. These cabals form the core of mage life and the center around which all Awakened politics turns. From the cabals arise the Consilia, Assemblies and tetrarchies that overshadow Awakened society.

## *Laying a Foundation*

A mage, by definition, has discovered that she can alter reality as she wills. So why stay at home? Because home defines a person; it gives her a place to fight for, a place that she understands and that understands her. What would Frodo be without the Shire? Or Harry Potter without Hogwarts? Or John Murdoch (in the movie *Dark City*) without Shell Beach? Where do the heroes return after all the adventures are done? What were they defending when they went out to battle?

Aside from the physical creation of a mage’s home, what forces shape it? Will chthonic forces bubbling up from the Earth’s depths drive its formation? Will the supernal energy raining down from a Hallow lend a special tinge to the sanctum’s resonance? What happens when a sanctum is built beside a Verge or, more dangerous yet, built near a locus favored by horrifically powerful creatures? If ghosts flock to the Awakened

soul, how does this affect something like the day-to-day operations of a sanctum in a Stygian Demesne?

Think of how you’d feel if the bricks of your home’s walls were alive. What would it be like to tread halls that burned with magical power? Mages exist in this kind of world every day, a world separated from Sleepers by perception and power.

## *Places of Refuge*

Besides the mage’s own life, a home defines others as well. If a mage works magic, if she quests for any reason, she will sooner or later disrupt others’ lives. There are consequences to this kind of meddling, and, in the world of the Awakened, if she does not have a sanctuary to flee home to after a confrontation, she’d best get one soon.

Ever since the fall of Atlantis, more and more mages have found sanctuary with others in common cause. These cabals, forged by bonds of magic and oath, are the heart of Awakened society. That doesn’t make living within them any easier. Interpersonal rivalries, tensions between Paths, conflicting agendas between a cabal and one’s order — all of these lead cabal members in alarming directions. Murders in the night, Duels Arcane, sabotage and betrayal are all possible within the intricate web of cabal politics.

Then there are the external threats. Other cabals work their wills out in the world, jealous of new power, concerned that neighboring cabals may be overextending their reach. They may appear to be friends in word, but they might stab you in the back when you least expect it.

On the other hand, what if the cabal has developed some true and powerful allies? What happens when those allies call for aid, dragging the cabal into a fight they didn’t want to get involved in? Will the cabal risk a wizards’ war, or suffer the potent spirits that sometimes avenge oath-breaking by those who refuse the call?

Other worldly threats put pressure on a cabal as well. Enemy apostates, Abyssal entities and open Verges — such threat offers new and unique perils, all within a stone’s throw of the cabal’s sanctum.

Then what happens? The sanctum starts out as small and weak, but, through the actions of the mage and her cabal, the sanctum swells with power. But nothing in this world

or in the Realms Above operates in a vacuum. Deals must be struck, favors exchanged. Sigils and Protocols must be established within the sanctum. Perhaps the cabal forms a Demesne using pieces of their souls. Many enemies lurk out there — what once started as an exercise in safety has taken a mage to a whole new level of political intrigue. The once-solitary mage's life is transformed forever.

To deal with many inter-cabal struggles, cabals submit themselves to the rule of a Consilium, but this doesn't change any of the issues listed above. It simply formalizes them. Fierce politics simmer just below the surface in every council meeting, offering a tense and often confounding landscape of political landmines for the unwary Awakened.

The cycle doesn't end there. Take it to the next step — no cabal lives forever and no sanctum, either. What happens when the founding cabal dies and their creation carries on after them? Imagine what could be found in those ancient halls, once filled with enchanted items and throbbing with the willworking of potent mages. What treasures — or horrors — await those who find the last remnants of the sanctum's power?

## *How to Use This Book*

**Sanctum & Sigil** starts with the permutations of Awakened politics, from the inception of a cabal and the inter-cabal politics of a Consilium right to the mage's home — the sanctum. This book provides details on the inimical opponents that move to hinder such institutions and the magical resources that are used to protect the sanctums.

- **Chapter One: The Polity** is split into three parts. The first covers the institution of a mage cabal and the various forms it takes, from single-order cabals to the more modern multi-order cabals. This chapter also examines the Protocols, the rules that bind members to promises made when joining the cabal or during individual missions, and the sigil, the symbol of a cabal. The second part deals with the Consilium, the governing body that tries to navigate the dangerous waters of inter-cabal politics. Finally, the Lex Magica, the laws of the Awakened, are examined.

- **Chapter Two: Pride of Place** describes the sanctum, expanding upon the meaning of sanctum security and providing suggested magical defenses. Then, the voice of the land is heard, from Hallows to ley lines to Demesnes.

- **Chapter Three: Pylons and Cults** looks into the homes of the enemy and discusses Seer pylons (and how they relate to the Ministries) as well as the paranoid workings of Banisher groups.

- **Chapter Four: Storytelling** gets into the details of running mage politics, as well as describing guidelines

on using Consilia to draw the players' characters' cabal into trouble. This chapter also includes an in-depth look at three sample cabals that can be placed into any chronicle: a Pentacle cabal, a Seer pylon and a Banisher cult.

## *Suggested Reading & Viewing*

It's strange to think that so much inspiration for mystical sanctums already exists in the world. One could start by looking up the Coral Castle in Florida, or perhaps taking a virtual tour of Chichén Itzá. Veering off from that, one could look into the chapter houses used by the Order of the Golden Dawn or the incredible Buddhist temples in Laos. And exactly what are those Masonic lodges *really* used for?

Among novels, good inspiration comes from the *Dresden Chronicles* by Jim Butcher. Dealing with Harry Dresden's mythical Chicago is interesting enough, but Butcher's description of a one-mage sanctum is wonderful. For things that leak into the modern world, try Simon Green's *Nightside* series, where something much like a Verge in London lets all sorts of nasties roam about the land.

The field may have been mined to death already, but *The Invisibles* by Grant Morrison produces a wellspring of ideas, whether it's the Invisible College that exists just shy of reality in a Twilight state or in the Shadow, or the revelation that the Harlequinade's sanctum exists more than a decade in the future.

If you're looking for conspiracies and politics of a more mundane type, try *The Temple and The Lodge* by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh. This book tracks the link between the Templar Knights and the Freemasons across history but does it in a way that shows the impact that small conspiracies with (relatively) similar agendas have, as opposed to one big overarching Conspiracy.

Other sources include *Beyond Civilization* by Daniel Quinn (applying tribal wisdom to magical society) and *Truth or Dare* by Starhawk (for consensual government).

The silver screen has its share of ideas a Storyteller can borrow. The movie *Thir13en Ghosts* shows what kind of fun a Mastigos Scelestus can have with a sanctum, set up with its own potential portal to the Abyss. Cheesy though it may have been, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* the television series had a group of heroes chasing down a vault full of wonders that never should have been let out of the sanctum.

Then, there are gems like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (the TV Series), which goes to show you all the trouble you can get into if you live anywhere near a tainted Hallow or Demesne. And, for a chilling look into what could be Consilium politics, try the movie *Conspiracy*; it covers a day-long meeting between factions of the Nazi government and shows just how brutal the manipulations of politics can be.



# CHAPTER ONE: THE POLITY

*Maya couldn't take another step. Grunting with effort, she leaned her two stunned companions up against the alley wall. Macha looked as ashen as white clay. Quetzal, with a Paradox scourge across his face, wasn't doing much better.*

*Maya touched the gash on her side. She felt a flash of ice-hot pain as her hand pulled away sticky and red. Over half the cabal was dead or dying – things were not going well.*

*A noise sounded out from the woolk-wet end of the alley – clacking sounds. With any luck, it was Sleepers who might go for help. However, if luck was against her, the thing Maya hunted would find them first.*

*"What waits within, Brother Sariel?" came a woman's voice down the alley.*

*"A Shaman," hissed a man's voice, "with two oath-bounds at her side . . ."*

*Maya felt a chill creep across her. They were Awakened and, from their attitude, at least one of them was the cabal's Fist. Brother Sariel came into the light and raised a gun.*

*"Wait!" Maya rasped out. "We claim the Right of Nemesis. We invoke . . ." Her breath caught as she heard the click of the gun being cocked. "Hospitality."*

*Maya closed her eyes as the gun roared, but she wasn't hit. Instead, Brother Sariel hit the ground, writhing in pain. He had been grazed in the shoulder.*

*"Forgive my Brother," the woman in the darkness said, and then came out to face Maya. "He has a good heart," she explained, "but he's young. I won't risk breaching Protocol just for him."*

*The woman helped Maya with her companions. "Per the Right of Hospitality, you are now our guests. I'll take you somewhere safe."*

OVER THE CABAL HAS DEATH OR  
DYING THINGS WERE NOT GOING WELL

**There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success,  
nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new order . . .**

— Niccolo Machiavelli

## *Cabals*

Once upon a time, as all good legends start, humankind stood as a shining beacon of hope against the horrors of the world. And then, their great city fell, casting the elite back into the darkness.

In those savage places after the Fall, certain facts held true. Humanity is a social creature; for the most part, people want to live together, whether it's in families, tribes or villages. But Awakening separated mages from their Quiescent kin. For the first time since Atlantis, mages were wholly and completely alone.

Some of them fell to madness, others to fatal hubris as they fought against the growing power of the Abyss and Paradoxes. Other mages actively sought the quiet of the Sleeping Curse, becoming Banishers when their desires to Sleep went unfulfilled.

This forced the smartest Awakened to find allies wherever they could. They forged bonds out of mutual need rather than the refined Supernal connections that had once united mages in Atlantis.

These groups of mages became known as the *oath-bound*, creating traditions inspired by the glory of Atlantis while also contending with the basic needs that kept them human. What these mages created eventually evolved into the cornerstone of modern mage society — the cabal.

Although the tradition of the cabal arose after Atlantis, the cabal's rules and standards bear the unmistakable stamp of Atlantis' ancient institutions. Modern mages who follow the Atlantean model find a wealth of information available on the topic throughout history. Most of the orders hold opinions on what they believe makes a strong cabal, from records in Mysterium libraries to encoded Guardian rituals.

## *The Supernal Connection*

Cabals are an active, collective force of Awakened wills. Traditionally, to achieve this force, cabal members chose a symbolic theme to represent a common thread within their group. This theme may be based on mythology, magical practices, member composition or even whimsy.

These themes represent a Supernal resonance that willworkers seek to maintain with the higher realms. In order for these connections to work, mages forming a conventional cabal often consider some of the factors described below.

### *Cultural Issues*

In order to work together, the Awakened within a cabal must have a common language. This isn't meant literally — Mind magic can overcome mundane linguistic barriers. Instead, the idea of a common culture reflects the assumption that each *culture* within the Fallen World is different and may reveal a facet (however debased) of the Supernal World.

Because of this, mages choose a theme that is either appropriate to their common culture or one that crosses culture barriers. As an example, the term *mi-ko* applied to the women of the cabal may mean nothing to outsiders, unless they are familiar with Shinto practices or Japanese anime; then they'll know it applies to a female priest, usually one who works with spirits or ghosts. This illustrates how a theme can transcend nationalistic boundaries to be embraced by different people.

**Use in Play:** When mages first gather to make a cabal, they take some time to talk about themselves, their lives and their interests. Often, Mentors or other respected sorcerers oversee the event, steering the discussion so that cultural elements can be drawn out and considered as possible themes.

### *Meaningful Themes*

Choosing a theme that ignores a cabal member's resonance — or worse yet, mocks it — cheapens both the individual mage and the unity the cabal is trying to build. Thus, it is important that mages choose a theme that holds significant meaning for them.

Part of this process involves taking apart the symbolism and making sure the mages are all speaking of the same thing. The following is a case in point: in an elemental-themed cabal, the sign of fire could represent passion to one mage and the burning power of intellect to another. If the mages don't decide (or compromise) on a unified perception, the entire meaning behind their theme could become hopelessly muddled, leading to confusion and a breakdown in cooperative rites.

**Use in Play:** If the theme appears to be working poorly or the characters are no longer supporting its symbolism, then, at the Storyteller's discretion, the cabal could lose the casting bonus normally associated with a symbolically themed cabal. (See p. 129 in *Mage: The Awakening*.)

## *Political Undercurrents*

Cabals understand that, sooner or later, they have to deal with other cabals. What most fail to grasp is that the theme they choose affects those dealings.

The most effective example of this is from Boston. The White Putnams and the Ebon Noose thematically offer very different ends of the theological spectrum. If not for the Secret Concord, the two cabals would likely be at odds (or even war) — and many of their members still question whether the price of the peace they have now is worth it.

Without some sort of machinations to stop them, themes with opposing tenets clash, even if the individual mages could have gotten along otherwise. Goetic cabals have fought with Christian ones, techné cabals have clashed with mystically minded ones — the list goes on, but the thread is the same.

That's not to say that mages have to choose themes based on political motivations. In fact, it's healthier for mages to make their selections based on metaphysics, meaning and culture. The cabal members just have to be aware of the potential consequences they create with their choices.

**Use in Play:** At the Storyteller's discretion, mildly opposed thematic cabals could start with a -1 to all Social rolls concerning the player's cabal. Dramatically opposed themes could conceivably go up to -3.

## *Testing Resolve*

There comes a time in every cabal's history when something rises to challenge the cabal's beliefs. In fact, some mages claim that a cabal truly isn't a cabal until this conflict has occurred at least once. Once the mages have been stripped down to their core values and have survived, the Awakened community knows the cabal can last.

Unfortunately, many cabals don't survive this: they lose faith and they lose members. At that point, the remaining mages have to decide whether they want to regroup under another theme or part ways forever.

**Use in Play:** A cabal that breaks tends to create Solitaries and, sadly, these aren't ones other mages tend to trust. Damaged by what these abandoned mages have been through, they can fall prey to fringe legacies or other dangerous groups.

Because Mentors worry about such occurrences, they often manufacture circumstances to test the cabal's beliefs. This has caused rifts between Mentors and apprentices, if the charade is uncovered.

## *Unity or Diversity?*

In the early centuries following the fall of Atlantis and the creation of the first cabals, cabals were mostly com-

posed of members from a single order. Most of the time, this happened because that's all that was available in the region. This also made designing a cabal easy — everyone had a common frame of reference to work from.

As methods of travel improved and cities grew larger, access to different orders became more common and multi-order cabals arose. Their strength came from diversity, and they slowly overtook single-order cabals as the norm in Awakened society.

Some of these multi-order cabals are very egalitarian, with their structures reflecting their divergent origins. Most, however, take on the "flavor" of whatever order makes up the majority; if there is no majority, they may sway toward the policies of their chosen leader. For example, the Nemean, who runs the Ebon Noose in Boston, is a Silver Ladder mage; his multi-order cabal consistently leans toward the traditions and precepts of that order.

A few scholars have argued that multi-order cabals are actually a detriment to mages. By giving up the vision of a single order, the mages place themselves in the same cultural isolation that followed the Fall. In defense of this argument, the scholars point out that the loose wording required to accommodate diverse members leads inevitably to in-fighting, especially when one's order demands that a mage participate in something that violates his cabal's ethics.

## *Mutual Benefit*

Mages forming a cabal first search among their peers. Even when an established cabal needs some fresh blood, they root among those with comparable mystical abilities.

An interesting side effect to this has been a spate of "matchmaking" between Mentors trying to set up their apprentices up with a new cabal. With the wider (theoretical) access to other mages in the modern world, this practice has become especially fierce.

Sometimes, young apprentices find themselves in the middle of some arduous and dangerous task together with strange mages they've only just met, only to discover it was a test by their masters to see if the team worked well enough to justify becoming a cabal.

## A Penchant for Arcane Systems

Mages like to categorize things. They've been doing so since the days of ancient Atlantis.

In various places at various times, different systems of categorization for various aspects of Awakened life have come in and out of vogue. A few standards, however, have survived through-

out the years into modern times. Although these systems' expressions change with each new generation, they can be counted on to convey a degree of consistency throughout time, from (perhaps) ancient Atlantis to the 21st century.

Among those systems still in use among many cabals are the Titles of Duty (which define a mage's role in his cabal), the Protocols (which define the cabal's mission and behavior among themselves and toward others) and the sigil (the crest that represents the cabal to both Awakened society and the Supernal World).

## *Bound by Duty: Titles*

Mages may try to aspire to higher ideals, but they must also deal with the realities of living in the Fallen World. While modern mages take certain services for granted, in the past they had to rely on Sleepers for basics like food, water and shelter. However, mages couldn't live and practice magic around them for long without invoking Paradoxes.

A rare few managed to strike a balance between the Sleepers and their own needs. Most mages, however, had to maintain a certain level of isolation. This meant that the Awakened were perceived as anti-social (a very relevant problem in times of small villages and the occasional witch hunt) and often crazy. With the rare exception of "acceptable" anti-social places, like monasteries, this perception also made mages a target if anything bad happened in the surrounding area. A local mob would show up to "burn the witch" whether that mage caused the trouble or not!

As a result, self-sufficient cabals, in which mages handled their own needs "in-house," became an important tool for survival. Self-sufficient cabals enabled mages to lower their profile among the Sleepers by not having to go into town for supplies and to adapt more quickly to bad circumstances (like the aforementioned mobs). Ultimately, the wisdom among the Awakened was that if you wanted to rely on anyone, look first to your own.

For practical reasons, mages identified a series of essential jobs needed to make their cabals autonomous. The original job "titles" were written in High Speech script to try and add some mystical weight to the tasks, but the system persevered simply because it was practical. The traditional titles are followed by the more modern versions in parentheses, preferred by cabals who prefer not to stand on ceremony.

**Farseeker ("Scrounger")** — The mage whose chief duty is to gather needed resources for the cabal. Another common name for this position is the "Hand."

**Doorwarden ("Bouncer")** — The mage whose chief duty is to protect the cabal. Mages also call this position the "Fist."

**Hearthmaster ("Guide")** — The mage tasked with maintaining (and perhaps even finding) the cabal's sanctum. This position is sometimes called the "Heart."

**Lorekeeper ("Scribe")** — The mage in charge of keeping the cabal's history and knowledge intact. He is also known as the "Head" (which sometimes results in a spate of predictable jokes).

**Edgetender ("Hexer")** — The mage who nurtures the mystical resources of the cabal. The Edgetender is also called the "Eye."

## *Farseeker*

Hunter, middleman and/or resolute shopper, the Farseeker, also known as the Hand, takes care of the cabal's physical needs. Sometimes this is as simple as being the one who calls for takeout. Other times, taking care of the cabal's physical needs involves long and complicated hunts for tass sources. But, as with any of these oath-bound "professions," this job is not usually a solo mission. Farseekers work best with others. A number of stories, for better or worse, start when the cabal's Hand drags everyone into a task he "knows" will benefit the whole cabal.

Mages who follow the Acanthus Path, because of its affiliation with Fate and the knack for finding things, often find themselves tapped as Hands. Of all the orders, Free Council members seem to enjoy the job the most, since acting as Farseekers really lets their affinity with the modern world shine.

## *Doorwarden*

The term "Doorwarden" originally came from a position given to the mage who guarded the sanctum door. Her job was not to protect the mages from all danger; it was only to divert dangers from entering the mages' home. This defensive position quickly earned the mage the nickname of "Fist."

Fists deal with outside threats, internal conflicts and even occasional madness. You can find a Doorwarden watching over a mage whose mind travels Astral Space as easily as you can find a Fist patrolling the sanctum. In fact, it's the internal conflicts that usually require the Fist's closest attention.

Given the challenges involved, members of the Adamantine Arrow often choose the role of Doorwarden, especially those on the Moros Path. The ability of the Necromancers to recognize the stench of impending death and then prevent it makes them valued guardians.

### *Hearthmaster*

More than one cabal has been thankful for a Hearthmaster. Many mages claim that the Hearthmaster is the "Heart" of the cabal, hence the common nickname. The Heart serves as the person who bandages the wounds, fixes the meals, keeps the house clean and listens to "confessions." The Hearts are usually the first to see trouble coming and the first to try and fix it, tapping cabal members to assist them. Sometimes, the leader of the cabal, if there is one, has been or is a Hearthmaster.

Hearthmasters work side by side with both the Far-seeker and the Doorwarden, coordinating activities for the betterment of the cabal. It's not unusual to see emotional bonds develop between a Heart and either a Hand or a Fist, though this sometimes leads to unintentionally difficult situations.

Members of the Silver Ladder, with their penchant for order, are a natural for the position of Heart. They have a tradition of grooming leaders

by having them take the position even if it's currently filled. It's also not uncommon for mages who practice the Thyrus Path to take up Hearthmaster positions, using their unique insight into Life to help the overall health of the community.



## Story Hook – Job Stress

Due to some nasty Consilium politicking, the Farseeker of an allied cabal is chosen to find the Abyss-tainted Black Thorn artifact. In order to obtain it, she goes through several gruesome experiences, including unintentionally releasing a plague. Her husband, the Hearthmaster, is horrified and pushes to have her exiled from the cabal.

Will the characters let these allies fall apart, or will the characters intervene to patch things up between the Hand and the Heart? And what of the artifact itself? Is it truly warping the Farseeker as some (including the Hearthmaster) claim? Or is she simply the victim of political backstabbing?

## Lorekeeper

Many mages claim that the Lorekeeper is the practical center around which the cabal turns; after all, it's the Lorekeeper's responsibility to ensure mages keep to the cabal's Protocols (see p. 25). Lorekeepers also embody the living history of the cabal, which has earned them the nickname of cabal "Head."

Lorekeepers are also responsible for the library of the cabal (however small or big). They make sure that the library's stores of information are available when needed and not locked up in some individual's lab.

Some Heads literally *are* the library, using spells to seal information inside themselves (see "Living Library," below). This technique is often found among Shamans, and they argue that certain spells and concepts cannot be written down — a living soul must be used to contain it.

Obviously, the Lorekeeper's position appeals deeply to members of the Mysterium, especially those who follow the Mastigos Path. Mind and Space Arcana can be powerful allies when you want to keep rotes and potent tomes safe.

## Living Library (Mind ●●●, optional: Matter ●● or Forces ●●)

With this spell, the mage seals knowledge inside his own or a chosen target's mind. The target does not necessarily know this knowledge herself; it is merely stored in her mind until the spell expires.

**Practice:** Patterning

**Action:** Instant and contested; target reflexively rolls Resolve.

**Duration:** Prolonged

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

On a successful casting, a mage imparts certain knowledge to an unconscious corner of his own or a target's mind. Using Mind 4, the mage can impart knowledge that he himself knows. With Matter 3, words on paper can be copied into thoughts and then stored. (Neither the mage or the target needs to read the words.) Forces 3 allow bytes of data to be copied into thoughts. (With Matter 4 or Forces 4, the information can be *transformed* into thought, removed from its source and stored in the target's mind — leaving the book or data sector blank.)

The amount of information that can be stored depends on the successes gained:

### Successes      Information Stored

1 success	A paragraph
2 successes	One short book
3 successes	An encyclopedia
4 successes	A 10-volume encyclopedia
5 successes	An entire library

Note that this spell does not allow the mage to understand or process this amount of information; he merely moves it from one source into a portion of the mind for storage. When the spell expires, the stored information is erased (unless Matter 4 or Forces 4 was used, in which case the information is transferred from the mind back into its original form, as words or bytes; a storage medium is still required for it — a blank book or disk — or else it is then lost.)

The target cannot access the stored information herself, unless she can cast a Mind 3 version of the Mind 4 "Read the Depths" spell upon herself, to read her own subconscious.

By adding Fate 2 for a conditional duration, the caster can choose a keyword that, when spoken by or to the target, unlocks the spell, releasing the information. (If only Mind was used, the information is released as a telepathic burst; Matter or Forces copies the information back into the form it was copied from — if no blank book or disk space exists, the information will overwrite whatever is handy.)

**Mysterium Rote: Hall of Records**

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Academics + Mind

While this is highly frowned upon, the Mysterium routinely stores fragments of wisdom in Sleepers who serve their needs. The Mysterium keeps lists of such "chapters," as they call them, for retrieval later and often inserts the Sleepers back into mundane lives to

protect them from magical threats. Some people believe that if the chapters are left alone too long with their forbidden knowledge, it changes them, but no one has definitively proven this.

### *Edgetender*

Also known as “gardeners” or “Eyes,” the Edgetenders tend to the mystical landscape that the cabal occupies, dealing with Hallows, ley lines, Verges or Demesnes, wherever the mystical events occur. Unlike the Fist, who is meant to protect against such things, the Eye’s purpose is to cultivate the mystical landscape so that the cabal can fully take advantage of the magical energies. The Eyes also takes care of any tass or enchanted item that the Farseeker brings in.

More than once, this work sets the Edgetender against the Doorwarden, forcing the Heart to step in before too much damage (social or otherwise) is done. Edgetenders have also been known to take things without permission in order to fulfill their duty, especially when time is of the essence. This leads, naturally, to more conflict for the Hearthmaster to handle.

The Guardians of the Veil often adopt this role because it places them in a position to monitor and suppress any mystical flare-ups that widen the Abyss. Acting as Edgetenders also lets them police the members of their own cabal. Followers of the Obrimos Path, through their connection to Forces and Prime Arcana, also find themselves drawn to the challenge of being the Eyes for their cabals.

### *Wearing More Than One Hat*

Just because these five “roles” are common doesn’t mean the cabal is limited to five people. Often mages work in more than one position within their groups. The most successful cabal to pull this off was composed of only two people — a master and an apprentice. The master worked as Hearthmaster and Lorekeeper. His apprentice pulled triple duty as Hand, Fist and Eye.

Cabals often work in significantly larger sizes. In that case, the mages share positions to lighten the workload. One of the largest known cabals was composed of 13 members, boasting several Hands and multiple Fists (on a rotating schedule), three Eyes and two Heads.

The key to any cabal’s success lies not in the number of people involved but in how these basic tasks are performed. Some cabals decide not to perform the tasks at all, instead relying on modern services (like security systems or computerized libraries) to substitute for their own talents.

However, many mages find that the dangers of the modern world force them to take these tasks back into

their own hands, at the very minimum enhancing what can be bought or taken from others.

### *Story Hook — Gremian*

For those cabals considering life without a Doorwarden or an Edgetender, the security that protects their sanctum begins to malfunction when the gremians come to visit. These wicked little creatures (see below) are adept at manipulating machines to usually foul ends. It’s akin to having roaches in the wall, difficult to kill and frustrating to live with, except this time the roaches can reprogram your refrigerator and make your toaster into an implement of death.

What happens if the gremians sabotage the security before an attack? What if they turn the sanctum against the cabal itself? If this infestation has thoroughly settled in, how does the cabal get rid of them?

### *Gremian*

#### **Quote:** (Maniacal laughter)

**Background:** The term *grémian* comes from the Old English words for “to vex” or “to anger.” In this regard, these creatures certainly live up to their name. These chaotic entities are drawn to mages who break their word. The gremians then squeeze through the Gauntlet (becoming ephemeral spirits in Twilight), set down a fetter (usually in the target mage’s quarters or among his personal possessions) and then take a perverse joy in messing with the complex relationships that make up a mage’s life, using poltergeist-like Numina to disrupt his most important activities.

They take an extra pleasure in subverting technology for their own use; the modern world has become a rich playground for them. Whenever possible, they will try and re-work a device to make it lethal for its owner to use. This rarely kills mages, but it can be hell of a shock to those people not ready for it.

Thankfully for the rest of the world, gremians usually stick close to a mage’s sanctum, though in dense urban settings they can wander a little.

Nobody knows exactly what summons these creatures. It’s not just breaking one’s word or even violating vows backed up by Fate magic, although these factors certainly increase the odds of attracting gremians.

**Description:** Gremians appear as inch-high warped versions of the mage they target, the one who broke his oath. Generally, they appear in batches of seven to 10 at a time. Bad infestations can get many more of these creatures.



**Storytelling Hints:** The presence of gremians will usually first manifest as random small occurrences in a sanctum: glasses break, mages experience cold spots, pictures on the wall look like they're staring at people. Then, as the gremians get bolder, appliances start acting strange. Near-fatal accidents occur. These escalate until either the gremians are chased out of the house or everything mechanical is broken (or removed from the premises). Once either of these conditions is met, the gremians' fetters disappear, forcing them back across the Gauntlet.

**Rank:** 1

**Attributes:** Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Essence:** Max 10

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 16 (species factor 10)

**Size:** 5

**Corpus:** 7

**Influence:** Technology 2

**Numina:** Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Magnetic Disruption, Spirit Sign (as "Ghost Sign," p. 211 in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**; dice pool 6), Telekinesis (1 Essence; dice pool 6)

**Ban**

Gremians can only use their Fetter and Gauntlet Breach Numina near mages who have broken oaths or gone against their sworn word. What's more, gremians can only successfully use their Numina once in the same year near the same mage.

*Until Death Do We Part*

Cabals rarely outlive their founders. Instead, upon the death of the majority of the members, cabals disband. The survivors either join existing cabals, form new cabals or become respected Solitaries in the mage community.

A rare exception is the *lineage cabal*, in which the name, sigil and accompanying political power of a cabal is transferred to the next generation of mages. There are many reasons why a cabal might try this (most notably to preserve a Legacy) but, in reality, most lineage cabals fail after only a couple of generations.

The reason for this is the oaths that bind the cabal—the Protocols (see below). People often unintentionally insert the cultural biases of their particular place and time into these oaths. As times change, these older Protocols become difficult to maintain and the very traditions that unified the original cabal fall apart.

More commonly, cabals will claim to be *heritage cabals*, preserving some traditions of their “parent” cabals while embracing new members and habits. Boston’s Sanguine Laurel (see the **Boston Unveiled** sourcebook), with its line of distinguished predecessors, is an example of a heritage cabal.

Heritage cabals can make legitimate claims on their parent mages’ possessions, including sanctums and artifacts. Whether the heritage cabal actually gets to keep said items depends on the power of the cabal, the strength of their claim (i.e., how closely they copy their predecessor’s practices) and any precedent set by the local Lex Magica.

## *Bound by Oath: Protocols*

The core of an Atlantean cabal lies in its *Protocols* — mutually sworn oaths that ensure the cabal works with a unified agenda. Properly crafted Protocols can be more than words on paper; some Protocols include mystic enforcement of their terms.

While the format that these oaths follow varies across cabals, these parallels can be found in those prepared by traditional cabals:

- **Creed:** This segment answers the questions of what, who and how: What are the mages’ goals? Who do the goals benefit? How will the cabal members achieve them?

- **Duties:** This details the day-to-day tasks of the cabal and what roles certain members are expected to perform. It usually involves an oath each member must take upon joining.

- **Directed Protocols:** These are important pacts mages make among each other regarding their common behavior. The Directed Protocols are primarily broken into the *Great Rights* (ones common to all Atlantean cabals) and the *Lesser Analogues* (oaths tailored to the needs of the authoring cabal).

- **Interdicts:** This portion deals with activities banned by the cabal.

- **Addendums:** These cover anything added after the Protocols are set in place.

Protocols are recorded in a document, usually in a book, a framed poster or, more rarely, a computer file. Once the document is complete, the cabal signs it with its name and a specially prepared *sigil* (for more details on sigils, see pp. 34-37).

Some mages have found, much to their surprise, that well-woven, magically enforced Protocols survive the death of their founders. A few times, mages searching abandoned sanctums accidentally broke oaths they

had no idea were still enforced. In these cases, it takes a well-coordinated effort to determine which Protocols were broken and how to abort the curse being inflicted on the violators.

## *Creed*

A creed spells out the goals of the cabal and may be as brief or prolific as the cabal’s members desire. The creed usually sets out lofty goals, whether or not they can be realistically accomplished. The point here is to declare the cabal’s intent to the Supernal World, to sanctify the cabal’s purpose. Whether the creed later becomes manifest in the Fallen World is a separate matter. Of course, the cabal’s members are expected to adhere to the creed; otherwise, they are betraying an oath they made to their own souls.

The following sample creed comes from the Protocols of the Chosen of Avalon, from the Victorian era. (See also the “Daedelus Elect” cabal, p. 127-137.)

*We, the Chosen of Avalon, set upon ourselves the task to uncover the secrets of this world and the next, to gather the lore to our home, the sanctum known as Diogenes’ Lantern, there to set it up before our community as an Athenaeum so that they may unravel its mysteries beside us.*

*And may we, through our actions, lead our kind to a new renaissance and the rebirth of that which we hold in our hearts, the true home of all mages, Atlantis. In our lifetimes may it rise again.*

*As we pray, so must it be.*

## *Duties*

From this section comes the membership oath that all mages take before becoming a part of a cabal. Most of these oaths are fairly standard: the mage swears her loyalty to the cabal and its goals and defines what she will do and provide for the cabal in exchange for something in return. After that, she details any punishments for betrayal. Often mages give their real names in this oath, to add weight to the proceedings.

### **Sample Membership Oath**

*I, Rachel Louise Llourdes, known among the Awakened as Angela Bright Wing, swear to honor and defend the sorcerers of the Jaguar’s Paw, and to faithfully serve my brothers and sisters among them. I vow to perform any task demanded of me by my brothers and sisters, should they be of one mind on what they ask.*

*In exchange for this service, I expect nothing more than shelter in our common sanctum, food of a simple and uncomplicated nature and access to no more than 14 measures of Mana for each cycle of the moon.*

Should I void my oath, let my lying tongue be stilled, and my thoughts be scattered, my bones broken and never reset and my back crushed under the weight of my guilt.

So swear I, Rachel Louise Llourdes – Angela — on this day and forever more.

## *The Great Rights*

The main bulk of any cabal Protocols are the *Directed Protocols*. In Atlantean tradition, these consist of the Great Rights, Lesser Analogues, Interdicts and Addendums. The Directed Protocols cover a series of pacts that mages agree to for the good of the cabal.

The *Great Rights* emerged when Mysterium scholars noticed a common thread weaving through their Protocols. Some scholars argue that this thread came from Atlantis; others believe it was inspired by the Supernal World. A few rant that the Great Rights were created by the Exarchs to enforce their own warped vision.

### **The Great Rights**

- **Right of Crossing:** Let no borders stop an Awakened with a clear heart.
- **Right of Emeritus:** Those who have earned respect must be treated with respect.
- **Right of Hospitality:** Those who request hospitality must be granted it.
- **Right of Nemesis:** When vengeance is declared, let none stand in its way.
- **Right of Sanctuary:** Protect your home, and let no action cause it harm.

Students of human behavior note that, even in Sleeper society, the Great Rights appear in different variations throughout recorded history. It is a virtual certainty that at some point a mage will experience them — in fact, most mages may have to break one or more of them.

Violations of the Great Rights are usually judged and punished “in-house,” as a matter within the cabal. If another cabal is involved, however, one of the injured parties might take his grievance to the Consilium, which could invoke the *Lex Magica* to resolve the issue. See “*Lex Magica*,” p. 55.

## *The Right of Crossing*

Also known as the Traveler’s Right, this Protocol allows a mage to pass through another mage’s territory unmolested. This Protocol is quite specific in its application — the traveling mage must refrain from practicing offensive magic in the territory he is passing

through. The traveling time is expected to be succinct — usually no more than one full day is standard, though this may change depending on the size of the territory and the mode of travel.

This Protocol prevents unnecessary conflicts between mages of competing orders, reducing the strain to reality that this produces. As long as the “invading” mage lies low, other mages have no excuse to attack him without risking the censure of the Protocol. Because of the way this Protocol works, some believe that the Guardians of the Veil originally designed it.

Ultimately, this evolved into the Protocol that Consilium Heralds operate under. Most of them know the various ways it manifests and keep on the lookout for the signs, mystical or mundane, that show the safe path through a territory following the Right of Crossing.

Mages following this Right are not expected to guard their entire territory; this would be a waste of time and resources for most cabals. Instead, the most common way cabals fulfill the Right of Crossing is through the creation of several “safe paths” through isolated territory that allow the cabal to safeguard the traveling mage and monitor his progress. Cabals who can’t afford to do this simply mark parts of their territory to show travelers that they adhere to the Right.

Cabals with the appropriate resources use guards, fences, cameras or other mundane equipment to monitor the path. Others build tunnels, waterways or sidewalks deliberately reserved for mages.

In all cases, the paths (or overall territory for poorer cabals) are marked with an appropriate symbol. It can be an Atlantean rune (the one for Space is frequently used), the stylized Atlantean pentagram or even the ichthys (more colloquially known as the “Jesus fish”), which once marked secret places in Rome. Some cabals use a simple cross, though commonly this is enchanted so it cannot be mistaken for a mundane symbol.

Sometimes, cabals work with their Consilium to link paths through multiple territories. Such paths are clearly tagged with the Consilium’s chosen symbol as well as the cabal’s. The intent is to let the visitor know that if he violates the Right, the Consilium’s wrath will be visited on him in addition to any other punishment levied by the host cabal.

Other cabals use the Space Arcanum (especially a 2-dot variant on “Finder,” the Space 1 spell) to keep mages on the proper route. Some sorcerers set up spells with conditional triggers (Fate 2/Time 2/Prime 1) on well-traveled routes that go off when a mage casts magic in the area. Which spell is triggered is up to the host cabal, but it is usually punitive in nature.

Cabals that find mages off the safe path are, under the terms of the Right, supposed to give the mage an opportunity to get back on the path. If the cabal continue to find him straying or they encounter him doing hostile magic, all bets are off.

#### Order Variations

Adamantine Arrow cabals are among the strictest followers of the Right of Crossing. Beyond forbidding offensive casting, they firmly hold that weapons should remain sheathed or hidden as a sign of respect during the crossing. They react to violations of the Right with profound physical force, hoping to make an example of the offender for the next mage willing to cross.

Free Council cabals may create a safe path but just as commonly do not. As long as cabal property isn't destroyed by the visitor's passage, they're satisfied that the letter of the law is being obeyed. Violators are seized and forced to do restitution, in a manner deemed appropriate by the cabal.

Guardian and Silver Ladder cabals like the Right of Crossing but abhor the idea of "safe paths." Their enforcement of the Protocol is simple: force the person

back from where she came and then make sure she can't re-enter the territory for a while.

Mysterium cabals frequently install mechanisms to detect a traveler. They then intercept her to offer a trade of information as a gesture of goodwill. If the person seems intent on violating the Right, both Lore and Wisdom cabals pass along information about the offender to her rivals.

#### Story Hook — Fatal Crossing

The players' cabal is asked by an ally to find a Herald who disappeared a week ago. He was following the markers of an established safe path when he left, but he never arrived at his destination. The ally wants to find out whether one of the cabals involved in the mess has deliberately violated the Right of Crossing.

Though it initially looks like one of the cabals did violate the Right, someone actually changed the markers, taking the Herald into an isolated spot where he was then murdered. But who?



## *The Right of Emeritus*

Originally, this Protocol referred to the practice of respecting one's elders, a common theme in many ancient cultures. Yet, as time and society changed, the meaning of this Protocol evolved into something broader. Now respect is given to those who have accomplished something worth respecting.

How does one measure respect? Usually, this comes about "through word and deed." The person's actions must have a direct, substantial benefit to the cabal. The person might be very knowledgeable, or he might be someone who fights monsters. The person may even be a mage who is hated by other members of the Consilium, so long as his ultimate impact on the cabal (as determined by the majority of the cabal) is positive.

People may also be respected by benefit of position, though this is more popular among the Silver Ladder than other orders. An example of a worthy position would be promotion to lictor or membership within the Consilium.

Depending on the cabal, this Right could include mages competent enough to take an apprentice. Unfortunately, some abusive Mentors have used this Protocol to lord their desires over the will of their students.

One question that apprentices ask regards how one pays respect back. First, a mage is expected to defer to the respected mage's words. Second, if the higher-status mage needs something done, the apprentice is expected to step up and do it.

In neither case does the mage have to follow these suggestions. He could disagree with what's being said or not follow the other's requests. But, in all cases, he would be questioned by his peers about his decision. It would then be up to his peers to decide whether or not he had acted appropriately.

Those "respected" mages who seek to abuse this Right find out quickly that respect is a fluid thing. Anyone abusing his station sees his credit among his peers dry up fast. Free Council members, for example, rarely stand for someone acting like a dictator. And no mage, accustomed to changing reality itself, will stand to be another's servant for long. If the respected mage's actions start to be more disruptive to the cabal than the positive effect of his achievements, the Right of Emeritus no longer applies.

Mages who enter the territory of a cabal that follows the Right of Emeritus would do well to watch their hosts for a while. That way, the traveling mages see how people treat each other and should quickly notice who is of "higher status" than the others.

One thing that may be confusing for novices is that cabals following the Emeritus Right sometimes have several tiers of respect, in which different people are respected for different things. One mage may be deferred to as the expert on the Mind Arcanum; in that field, everyone treats him well. But when they want to know about Verges, everyone turns to the Shaman and treats her well in turn.

This "rotating respect" may be intimidating at first, but the reason why it works is it lets all the members of the cabal showcase their talents. This reduces the opportunity for mages to become abusive.

Mages who follow the Right of Emeritus generally signal their intent either through a scroll icon on their sigil's foundation (see p. 36) or through prominently displaying the Atlantean rune for wisdom on the door to their sanctums. Some mages don't advertise the Right at all; you have to infer its use from their actions.

Those who violate the Right receive verbal reprimands from the offended party and others of higher station. Repeat transgressions may even result in the denial of privileges (i.e., access to the library). If the cabal is well connected to the local Consilium, the offender might find himself getting pressure from other cabals or the local orders.

The more mystically minded use the Mind Arcana (the Mind 2 "Emotional Urging" spell) to "suggest" that the mage avoid the behavior that is offensive to the superior. Some mages with low self-control find it easier to impose this spell on themselves.

Time mages sometimes use the Time 2 "Augury" spell to alert themselves to the offending person's actions before they escalate. Curses like the Fate 2 "Evil Eye" spell ensure that a mage committed to breaking the Right will regret it.

### **Order Variations**

Different types of cabals show respect toward different things. Adamantine Arrow cabals often show the most respect for those battle hardened or experienced, especially those fighting in a similar cause to their own. Violators of the Right can expect public ridicule.

Free Council cabals appreciate the artistically gifted; they also are prone to punish violators by publicly destroying something the offender values.

Guardians of the Veil cabals respect those who have learned to follow their ideals. It seems like just punishment to them that someone who ignores Emeritus should have her dreams and desires ignored as well.

Mysterium cabals, who respect the book-learned, turn on offenders by cutting off their access to information sources.

Silver Ladder cabals give their highest respect to politically oriented mages. This proves to be a powerful motivator not to abrogate the Right, since offended Silver Ladder cabals will try to wreck someone's career.

### *The Right of Hospitality*

This powerful Protocol exists across cultures, both Sleeper and Awakened. In brief, when this Protocol is invoked, a cabal must provide food and security to a visitor so that she may rest and recuperate.

This Protocol clearly evolved from a time when travel was more dangerous, but the Right still applies to the modern era. Mages share their world with other supernatural denizens. More than once, a traveling mage has found himself far from home and afoul of the local nasties. That's where Hospitality really comes in handy.

Cabals often benefit from being good hosts; it can net them allies or information from grateful guests. Some mages have been willing to go beyond the normal hosting duties, offering excellent accommodations and food, advanced healing, access to libraries and sometimes even tass. In cases like that, their guests may find themselves owing favors to the people who took them in.

That's not to say this Protocol is without risk; some mages have used Hospitality to help them deal with the effects of a Paradox. One noted incident involved a mage invoking the Right just after slipping into Bedlam. The hosting cabal felt obligated to take care of him until he recovered.

The Right of Hospitality protects a mage for a visit approximately over a week in length — basically the time between three phase changes of the moon. During this time, he is to be protected from threats (both internal and external), given a roof over his head and fed at least the bare minimum to keep a human adult alive. Serious, life-threatening wounds are to be treated, but only to the extent that the mage's health is stabilized, not necessarily cured.

Many mages, due to their culture as well as their order, take this Protocol very seriously, going well beyond the minimum dictates required. As far as breaches of the Right, there are no provisions for the guest's behavior — that is covered under the Right of Sanctuary. However, most people expect the guest to behave in a respectable manner.

The breaches that most mages deal with are violations on the host's part. In some cases, one or more of the cabal members, feeling antagonistic toward a guest, takes out his aggressions on the guest, either directly or through withholding life-saving resources. This can

result in both punishment from within the cabal and a wizard war with the guest's home cabal. In fact, a number of inter-cabal conflicts have started because of perceived lapses in upholding this Protocol.

Cabals can show that they follow this Protocol as they do other Protocols: by marking their sigil or territory with a symbol. More traditional cabals use an Atlantean rune for "safety." Other cabals use the more recognized and simpler symbol of a cup. Just finding the symbol, though, isn't enough — the Right to Hospitality is not invoked unless the guest asks for it.

Mages who are afraid the Right will not be honored often leave notes with their home cabals, along with instructions on what to do should they fail to return.

A few hosting cabals try to alleviate this fear by offering up valued items as collateral to the visitor. This assures the visitor that the Right will be respected, or she can destroy the item. If she decides to take advantage of the situation and leave with the item, her actions invoke the Right to Sanctuary (see below). This causes a whole new level of problems for her, starting with Hospitality being revoked.

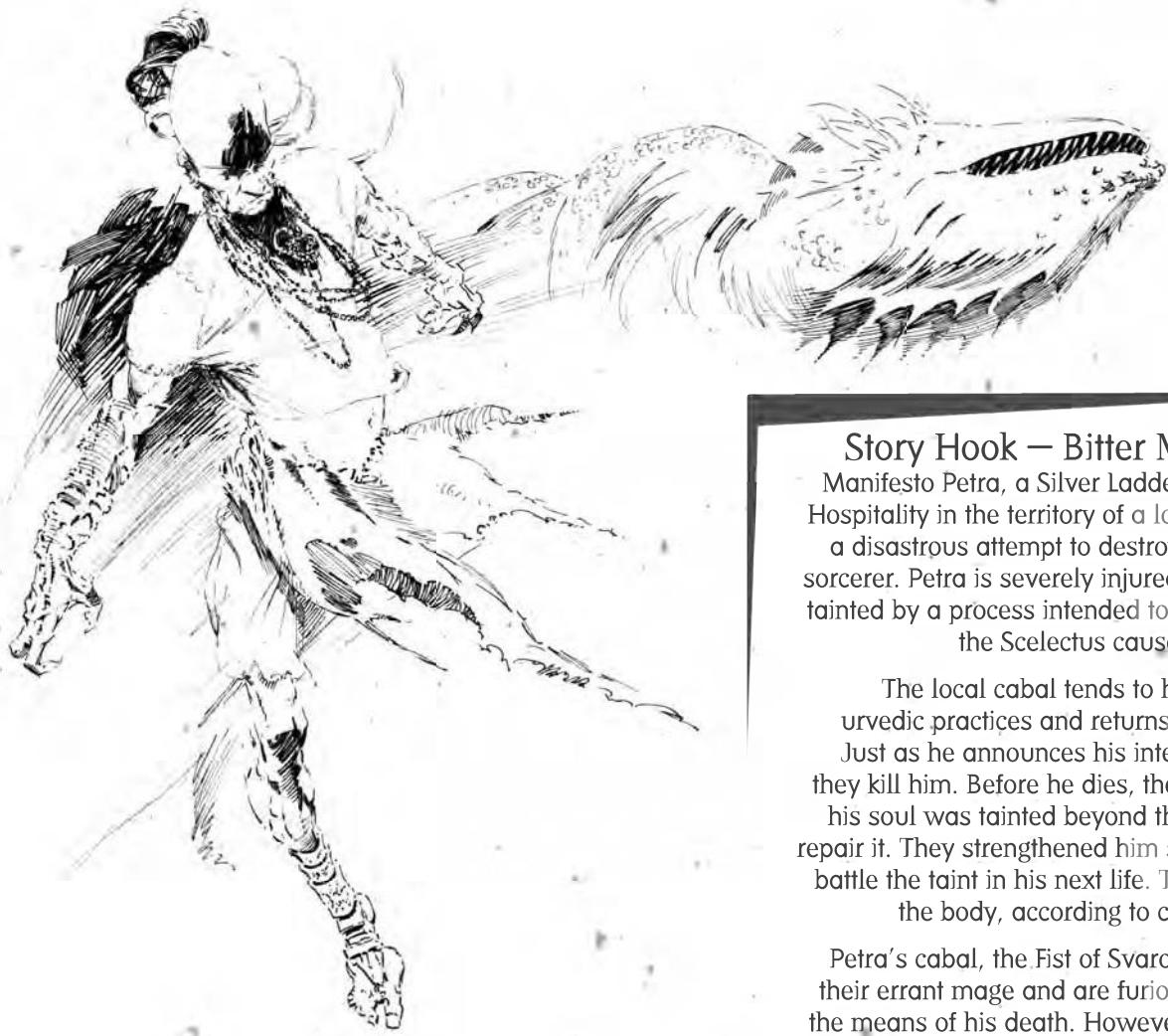
In order to smooth out relations, some mages invoke Hospitality when visiting rivals so that they can discuss terms without the usual expected discord. If the mage is on reasonable terms with the Consilium, he often informs the Consilium first, before the visit, so that the Consilium can take any appropriate measures if the Right is violated.

Some hosts use the Fate 1 "Winds of Chance" spell to ensure that all parties involved are satisfied. Other hosts use the Spirit Arcanum (such as the Spirit 2 "Lesser Spirit Summons" spell) to summon up temporary servants to ensure the guests' needs are met; the spirits listen for requests and fetch someone physical to actually perform them (if it can't do so itself using Numina).

### **Order Variations**

When hosting, Adamantine Arrow cabals request that all weapons be "checked at the door." As a courtesy, they also check their own weapons at the door when visiting other cabals. Unruly guests are usually incarcerated for the time of their "stay," which technically still fulfills the terms of Hospitality. Cabal members who violate the Right are usually publicly punished, often by physical means.

Free Council cabals show artwork to their guests to put them at ease and give tours of the public rooms. Like Adamantine Arrow cabals, Free Council cabals have no qualms about incarcerating unruly guests. For in-house violations, Free Council cabals demand that the offenders offer up something valuable in recompense.



Guardians of the Veil cabals offer the guest a game to break the ice. Given that magic is frequently involved, this often leads to amazing results; some Guardians of the Veil cabals pride themselves on the intensity and complexity of their entertainment. When forced to deal with breaches of Hospitality, they usually throw the offender out, guest or cabal-mate alike. The only difference between the two is that the Guardians of the Veil will consider letting the cabal-mate back after the cabal-mate offers some sort of penance.

Mysterium cabals often engage their guests in small talk on trivial matters to make the guests feel at home. Poorly behaved guests have their movement restricted but are not jailed. Offenders have their access to any source of information cut off until the cabals find ways to sort out the mess.

Silver Ladder cabals turn off all communication devices (including phones, radios, computers and TVs) to demonstrate that their full attention is on the guest. They are likely to treat violations by guest or host equally seriously. In both cases, they turn to the wronged party to set the terms for punishment. It is usually equal to the harm inflicted.

### Story Hook — Bitter Medicine

Manifesto Petra, a Silver Ladder lictor, invokes Hospitality in the territory of a local cabal after a disastrous attempt to destroy a Scelestus sorcerer. Petra is severely injured and has been tainted by a process intended to convert him to the Scelestus cause.

The local cabal tends to him using Ayurvedic practices and returns him to health. Just as he announces his intention to leave, they kill him. Before he dies, they explain that his soul was tainted beyond their means to repair it. They strengthened him so that he could battle the taint in his next life. They then burn the body, according to custom.

Petra's cabal, the Fist of Svarog, traces down their errant mage and are furious to discover the means of his death. However, their call for revenge at a Consilium hearing goes unheeded. The Protocols were not broken since the "offending" cabal healed their guest in time-honored ways and were, by their own standards, successful.

As members of or at least parties to the Consilium, how do the characters react to this? Do they show support for the Consilium's decision, or do they assist the Fist of Svarog in gaining a measure of vengeance? What if the local cabal is the characters' ally? What if the characters recommended that Manifesto seek aid from the healing cabal in the first place, unaware that they were sending him to his death?

### *The Right of Nemesis*

This Right of Nemesis covers overt violence between mages. Its basic message is "stay out of the way of fighting mages." When mages clash with a passion, those who get caught in the crossfire get hurt.

Realistically, the Right is often expanded to include Duels Arcane and covers the etiquette for those battles. Specific addendums to the Right may allow Duels to

the death or forbid them. An addendum may specify a location. An addendum may even set the details under which a mage can Duel.

Most mages, though, under even the simplest version of this Protocol, hold that no Awakened should interfere with the feud unless it becomes a direct threat to them, their Demesnes or any Sleepers under their care.

The Nemesis Protocol is never undertaken lightly; when cabals invoke it, it is expected to stay in effect until the issue is resolved. Those actively involved in a Nemesis Protocol should expect to see their lives consumed with fulfilling its goal.

If the goal is a Duel, then they should be preparing for the Duel. If the goal is a war, then they should be actively working toward that goal, either confronting their nemesis directly, obtaining resources for the fight or gathering intelligence.

Mages often use the shield of the Right of Hospitality when declaring the Nemesis Right, because Hospitality gives them time to set the parameters of the fight or, more hopefully, to settle the issue first before it goes to combat.

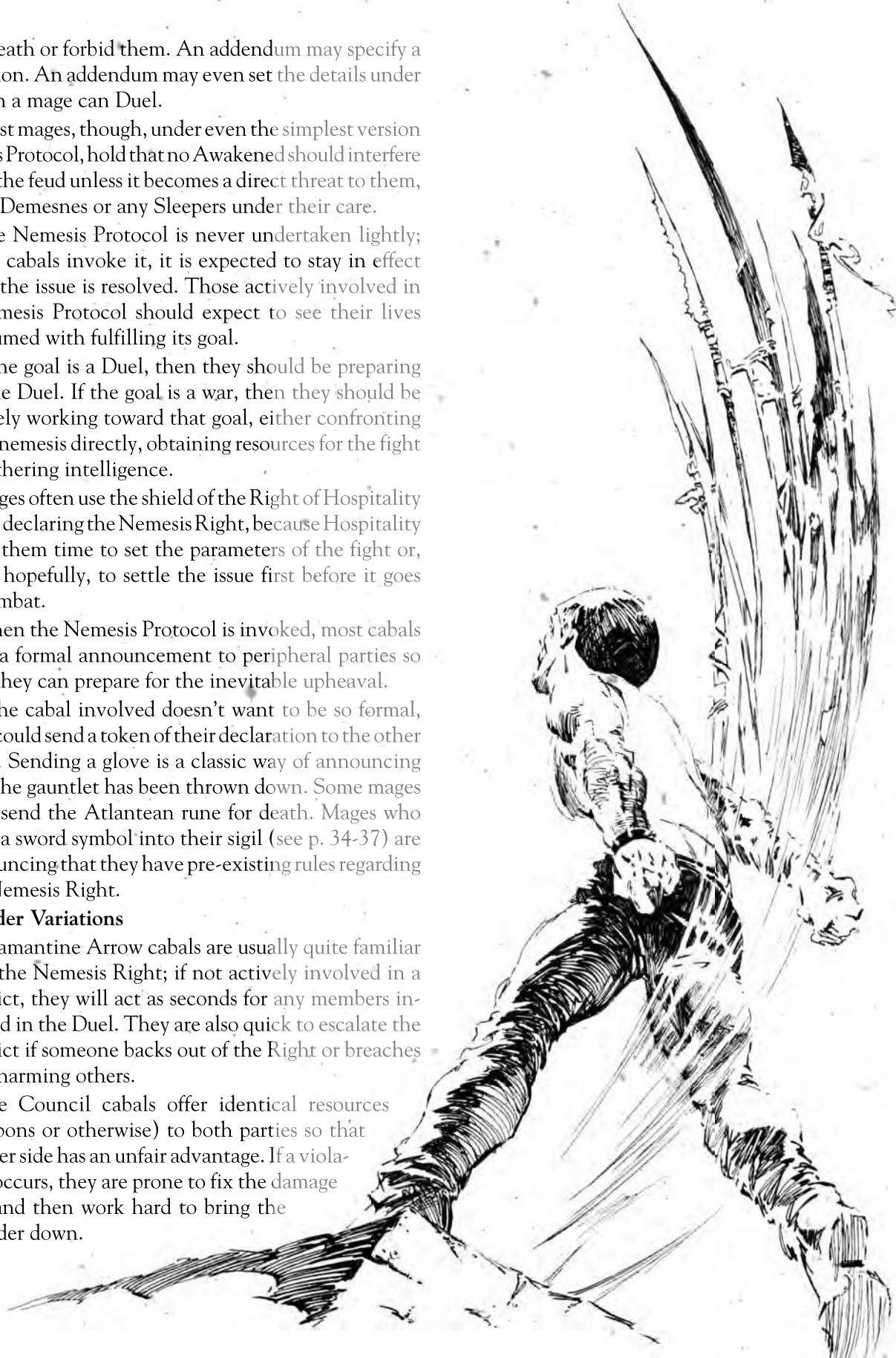
When the Nemesis Protocol is invoked, most cabals issue a formal announcement to peripheral parties so that they can prepare for the inevitable upheaval.

If the cabal involved doesn't want to be so formal, they could send a token of their declaration to the other party. Sending a glove is a classic way of announcing that the gauntlet has been thrown down. Some mages even send the Atlantean rune for death. Mages who work a sword symbol into their sigil (see p. 34-37) are announcing that they have pre-existing rules regarding the Nemesis Right.

#### Order Variations

Adamantine Arrow cabals are usually quite familiar with the Nemesis Right; if not actively involved in a conflict, they will act as seconds for any members involved in the Duel. They are also quick to escalate the conflict if someone backs out of the Right or breaches it by harming others.

Free Council cabals offer identical resources (weapons or otherwise) to both parties so that neither side has an unfair advantage. If a violation occurs, they are prone to fix the damage first and then work hard to bring the offender down.



Guardian and Silver Ladder cabals concern themselves with getting people out of the way. Silver Ladder cabals deal with violations by manipulating others into taking the opposition out. Guardians of the Veil cabals lure the offenders into dangerous situations that handle the punishment for the cabals.

Mysterium cabals concern themselves with monitoring the details of the Right, ostensibly for posterity. They are usually the first to notice when things are going wrong. They then try to isolate the offender, ending the situation with a show of force after they are alone.

### *The Right of Sanctuary*

While the cabal is security to the mage, the sanctum is security to the cabal. A safe home, especially one relatively free from the baneful eye of Sleepers, is a tremendous boon in the Fallen World.

The Right of Sanctuary states that cabal members or those under their care should do nothing to compromise the safety of their sanctum.

This is first applied as “do no harm.” Normal wear and tear as well as accidents to the sanctum are acceptable, but if a mage wants to knock down a wall to increase his lab space, he’d best check with the rest of the cabal beforehand.

The rule is applied more loosely to resources. Obviously, if a Hallow sits within a sanctum, compromising the Hallow violates the Right. But if the source of tass sits outside the sanctum, things become less distinct. Some cabals hold that a threat to *any* resource that supports the sanctum constitutes a direct danger to the sanctum. Other cabals are more forgiving, holding that only resources vital to the sanctum fall under the Right.

The Right gets even more indistinct when applied to betrayal. Yes, mages are often vital to a sanctum’s security, but does harming one of them constitute a violation of Sanctuary? Most mages solve the situation by claiming that only external threats constitute violations of the oath. “Invite no harm” becomes the catchphrase summary.

In essence, if the squabble is an internal one, it does not fall under the Right. If one of the mages is acting under external orders, then he is violating Sanctuary.

Guests who come under the auspices of the Right are treated like new members of the cabal. That means the guests are commonly cut some slack regarding Sanctuary violations, but not much.

Most cabals go beyond these basic definitions and lay out exactly what implies a breach of the Right of Sanctuary. Practically all cabals that write this into their Protocols agree that if two-thirds or more of their

members consider the Right broken by a member’s actions, then the Right of Sanctuary has been violated.

Mages who practice Sanctuary usually announce this by mounting a shield or a shield-shaped symbol somewhere in their entry hall. Mages who have small sanctums without a distinct entry hall will put the symbol in the first room that visitors enter. The mages may also use the High Speech rune for “home,” though this is less common.

The only set way to monitor adherence to the Right is surveillance. Some cabals invest in modern security systems. Others spend their time checking the premises and associated resources. When a breach occurs, usually the Fist is immediately involved, followed by the Hearthmaster, who calls in other members for help as needed.

The Space 1 “Spatial Map” spell is the easiest mystical way to keep track of a sanctum’s status, although Space 2 “Scrying” is also useful.

### Order Variations

Adamantine Arrow and Mysterium cabals protect their home with fervor and are likely to have already established some serious security measures to deal with external threats. These security measures are easily adapted for monitoring inside the sanctum as well, with the Heart making sure that the Right of Sanctuary is followed. Violators will be punished in some manner related to the damage that they caused.

Free Council cabals take the opposite approach, respecting privacy but frequently checking on the sanctum’s status. A breach is followed by an immediate investigation. The offender is fined in direct proportion to the damage caused.

Guardians of the Veil cabals pay the least attention to damage to a sanctum, but they often react the hardest when they finally do take notice. Offenders find themselves up against a violent cabal, either through the Duel Arcane or the Right of Nemesis.

Silver Ladder cabals examine the problem from a political angle. What benefit did the offender derive from harming the cabal, and how can that benefit be neutralized? Harm, in this case, is judged by the cabal’s observation of their sanctum and a communal agreement that damage has been caused.

### Story Hook – Deadly Compromise

At a caucus, one of the character’s orders demands that the character procure tass and artifacts from his home cabal immediately. At stake is the order’s dominance of the region, and if the character fails, the Seers might press an attack as well.

The problem is that the character's cabal needs that tass too. Does he take the tass, compromising his cabal (though not permanently) and violating the Right of Sanctuary? Or does he risk censure from his order and the possible end of their position in the area?

## *The Lesser Analogues*

The Lesser Analogues cover any vows not contained in the Great Rights. The Atlantean format for Lesser Analogues is most easily described using the conditional statement "if, then." *If* Event A happens, *then* Event B happens. The first part usually covers what the member wants, and the second deals with what the cabal wants. Mages also list within the statement the punishments for breaking these Protocols.

For example, the cabal may require its members to attend certain rituals each year (in accordance with their chosen symbolism). As long as the members do, the cabal ensures that they receive access to the library.

Protocols with Lesser Analogues commonly require mages to renew them annually; this is usually accompanied by a ceremony invoking the Protocol and re-binding all parties to it. These ceremonies are mostly performed at auspicious times of the year or after major events.

Most of these ceremonies are mundane events molded to remind the attendees of their responsibilities. Some ceremonies involve mystical import, with spells like the Fate 1 "Sybil's Sight" spell to check if people have been following the Protocols and stronger spells (like Fate oaths woven with Fate 4) to ensure loyalty until the next ceremony.

## *Interdicts*

The Interdicts cover behaviors that cabal members are banned from doing. Some of these Protocols get very specific and very strange. For instance, a cabal may forbid its mages to wear the clothing made from animal hides because the cabal believe animal-hide clothing will adversely affect their chosen symbolic theme. The punishments for breaking Interdicts range from a slap on the wrist to expulsion (or even death, in the case of some extremist cabals).

Using the Interdicts, a number of mages try to get their order's traditions into the contract. This rarely works out well in multi-order cabals, since Interdicts highlight the differences between orders, sometimes to the detriment of all the mages involved. Still, many Awakened do it anyway, only to find out later that the

minority members of a multi-order cabal must break the Interdict through deference to their own order.

## *Oath-Breaking*

So, what happens when someone within the cabal breaks one of the Protocols? In addition to any specific punishments explicated in the Protocol itself, the first and most immediate consequence is a social one — if the other mages find out what you've done, they won't trust you. Mundane punitive damages may be inflicted as well, usually a pawn of tass or greater, depending on the offense.

A broken oath can also result in one or more challenges, with Duels Arcane getting more and more severe in nature. Truly spectacular violations of Protocols can result in exile from the cabal or death.

## *Addendums*

While mages author the Protocols with the best of intentions, it's only a matter of time before they encounter a situation not covered in the original documents. After the situation is resolved, the cabal usually constructs an Addendum to the Protocols to cover that unanticipated eventuality. Once an Addendum is written, it becomes part of the Protocols and is subject to any Interdicts or punishments leveled within.

Addendums never change existing Protocols — the Addendums just clarify the Protocols or expand on new situations. To actually change one of the founding Protocols, the entire cabal must unanimously vote to eliminate it; this may cause the cabal to change their sigil as well, which is a significant event.

## *Sample Protocol*

The Founding Protocols, excerpted from the Archives of the Chosen of Avalon:

*We recognize, as one body, the Great Rights of Hospitality, Emeritus and Sanctuary and endeavor to strive toward them as the ultimate ideals of civilized society.*

*If a member in Good Standing wishes to remain in Good Standing, he will attend an open meeting at least once a month, at which he will share stories of adventures and fine riddles with patrons of our society, both Sleeper and Awakened alike, with the intent of setting them on a path to uncovering new mysteries for the cabal and for the world.*

*If a member in Good Standing wishes to remain in Good Standing, he will host a gathering once a year for the local Awakened community, at which he will entertain with*

stories of adventures and fine riddles, including examples of artifacts he may have gained along the way.

If a member in Good Standing wishes to remain in Good Standing, he will attend the All Hallows rite presided over by the Edgetender.

If a member in Poor Standing wishes to rise in standing, he may do so by obtaining a novel artifact or new knowledge that the Lorekeeper may add to the Hall of Wonders.

If a member is to loan things of a magical nature, the recipient owes the member both favor and respect for such an honor.

Only members in Good Standing may be allowed access to those artifacts held in the Hall of Wonders.

Only members in Good Standing may be permitted to petition the Lorekeeper as he sees fit.

Do not loan out that which you have borrowed.

When conversing with less-Awakened intellects, do not lead the conversation where they cannot follow.

As an Addendum, members of the Chosen may not loan Stygian artifacts to the Scythe of Ceres cabal or any of its allies, upon pain of death.

## Supernal Justice

Mages, like any human beings, break the law at times. The Protocols are man-made laws, as open to interpretation as any human institution. Of course, magical enforcement, such as through Fate oaths, lends the Protocols a certain inviolability, but even that is simply the work of a mage.

A mage's oath, however, even when not backed up by a spell, is a powerful thing. Ancient teachings profess that such an intention, when ritually stated by an Awakened will, has a Supernal obligation — a heavenly mandate of sorts — that binds the mage even without the direct casting of magic. This cannot be proven through any Mage Sight or higher Arcana insight; it is a matter of faith among mages who believe in the old teachings.

Those who break their oath-bound word are treated with more than normal suspicion — they are treated with superstitious caution, for they supposedly carry with them a ticking Karmic time bomb that could take them down at any time, through the machinations of Supernal justice. Oath-breaking is not just a betrayal of others, if is a treachery against one's self, a taint on the soul that, although invisible even to magic, is still believed to impede one's connection to the Supernal Realms.

## Sigil

Mages throughout history have usually adopted symbols to represent themselves or their cabal. For the most part, these were crafted from individual, idiosyncratic ideas on what constituted a proper symbol, or the sigils followed a system used by local orders or even Sleepers. Of course, Atlantean precedents have been claimed for various systems, although few achieved widespread recognition. Until the 15th century, that is, when Western mages became enamored of the elaborate systems Sleepers used to signify royalty. If the practice of magic was not the most "royal" of pursuits, what was? Why shouldn't mages — whose very souls were seeped in Supernal symbolism — not also adopt their own ritual means of signifying themselves, and so proclaim such affinities to the Supernal World through force of sympathy and repetition?

Many experiments in ritually codifying symbolism sprang up, most of them far too elaborate and detailed, requiring an expert just to read them. As other mages tired of the fad, some tried to defend the core idea behind such efforts: a means of communicating, quickly and efficiently, to other mages the basic principles and rules that a cabal followed. By clearly identifying friend or foe, and helping to foster understanding, these mages sought to quell the conflicts that all too often arose due to misunderstandings, which in turn often led to contests of the Duel Arcane.

From this period, Western mages eventually adopted a rough consensus for cabal iconography, called the *sigil*, adopted first in Consiliar courts, which then pressed their member cabals to follow suit. The sigil is an icon that wordlessly communicates information about the cabal to other mages.

Traditional sigils once served to identify a mage to others. As unique as fingerprints, the sigil could be used to mark important documents or be given to a proxy to act as the voice of the mage when she could not attend a gathering.

Few modern mages see the benefit in making individual sigils, but most cabals devise one. Heralds or ambassadors carry cabal sigils as an introduction to the people they meet, for a properly constructed sigil isn't just an artistic showpiece. Like the knightly coat-of-arms, a sigil transmits fundamental information about the cabal: its experiences, its values and its intentions. Many claim that a sigil is more than a physical object — it represents Supernal concepts, actualized by the force of the cabal's collective will.

## Story Hook – Nasty Surprises

Needing to activate an imbued item, the characters' cabal must find the sigil that belonged to the item's makers, a long-lost cabal. After serious searching, the characters finally garner enough clues to locate the cabal's abandoned sanctum and in it they find the *sigil-mark* that produced the sigil. There's a problem, though: the sigil has been defaced with an "x," a sign that someone thought the cabal practiced a left-handed legacy.

Should the cabal still decide to use the sigil, it activates the artifact perfectly – and then unleashes a viral plague of madness onto the Sleepers nearby. The Guardians are willing to come in and kill everyone involved. The madness has also attracted the attention of the Banishers. And the sigil mark is now missing.

Was the sigil-mark cursed? Or did it simply embody the will of the mad mages who made it? Will the characters be able to halt the sigil-mark's horrific effects before the bloodshed starts?

Modern cabal sigils are used in most official transactions. At Consilium gatherings, a person carrying the sigil acts as a *de facto* voice for the cabal. When the bearer travels to another's territory, the sigil shows that the bearer is a sanctioned representative of the sigil's cabal. (This presumes that the sigil is magically produced and protected; see "The Seal of Approval," below.)

Sigils conventionally come in two forms: the *crest* and the *banner*. The crest is the simple form used in signets, seals, badges or even letterhead; the crest consists of only the cabal's emblem (see below). The banner is more elaborate, used for ceremonial or formal occasions; it consists of the cabal's emblem, honoraries, representative orders, a *foundation* below displaying the Great Rights honored by the cabal, an *arch* above displaying the cabal's notable deeds and a motto representing the cabal's creed.

### *Crest Sigil*

#### **The Emblem**

The emblem is the key icon that represents the cabal, the image that other mages think of when they think of the cabal. The idea here is not too different from the images used for corporate logos or sports teams, although the cabal's has esoteric significance.



A cabal can choose any image it likes, from a boar's head, a charging lion, a raised fist, a tree, a Ferrari or even a musical instrument. There are no traditional standards for emblems; they are particular to a specific cabal. Although another cabal somewhere in the world might share the same image, it is rarely depicted or drawn in exactly the same manner.

### *Banner Sigil*

In addition to the cabal's emblem, a banner hosts features that communicate certain elements of the cabal's makeup to others.

#### Honoraries

The number of cabal members, called honoraries, is depicted with stars: one star (usually five-pointed) per member. These are either arrayed in a geometrical configuration (encircling the emblem, in an arc above or below it, as a chevron, etc.) or are simply scattered throughout the field of the sigil. Sometimes, flames or embers are used instead of stars. Other alternatives are leaves, eyes or coins.

#### Orders

The symbol for the cabal's leading order usually crowns the emblem. Any images of other orders represented in the cabal's membership usually appear around the emblem along the points of an invisible pentagram. For instance, a cabal led by the Mysterium would depict that order's symbol above the emblem, as if at the top of a five-pointed star. If the cabal also has members of the Adamantine Arrow, that order's symbol might appear to the right of the emblem, as if on the right tip of a five-pointed star.

#### Colors

Sigil crests are black-and-white, capable of being drawn on paper with pen or pencil. A banner is usually displayed in color, because it communicates the cabal's mental or emotional tone. This traditionally follows a color code based on the colors of the human aura, as seen with the Mind 1 "Aura Perception" spell. See the "Aura Signifiers" chart, p. 206, in **Mage: The Awakening** for details. For example, a yellow-and-silver emblem would indicate an idealistic past, altered by a tragic (sad) incident.

#### Foundation

Below the sigil's body is the *foundation*. The Great Rights that the cabal has chosen to follow in its Protocols are arrayed on a single line. The common iconography for the Rights is the following:

Great Right	Icon
Crossing	Crossroads
Emeritus	Scroll

Hospitality	Chalice
Nemesis	Sword
Sanctuary	Shield

By placing these icons on their sigil, cabals communicate to other mages that they can invoke such Rights before the cabal. A cabal that does not have a Right listed is under no obligation to heed invocations of that Right. Cabals that have no Rights inscribed on their sigil are considered to be practically rogues, unworthy of Awakened society.

Cabals may also choose to place other signs representing the Lesser Analogues or Interdicts that they follow, but these pictures vary from cabal to cabal. When confronted with an unusual symbol, it's usually best to ask the cabal what it means.

#### Arch

Arrayed in a half-circle arc above the emblem are small iconic symbols that indicate achievements recognized by others. Not all cabals use them, since use of arch icons traditionally requires recognition from the local Consilium. A cabal that incorporates arch icons of their own choosing is considered presumptuous and arrogant.

Some examples of traditional arch icons are the following:

Deed	Icon
Defeating an enemy	Skull
Reclaiming lost knowledge	Book
Meting out justice	Scales
Leading others to enlightenment	Torch or lantern
A Sentinel is a member of the cabal	Mace
A Herald is a member of the cabal	Horse
A Provost is a member of the cabal	Crossed staves
A Councilor is a member of the cabal	Tree branch
The Hierarch is a member of the cabal	Ring

#### Motto

The last touch to any sigil banner is a pertinent saying, hope or creed that is precious to the cabal. In modern times, this motto is often in a common language, although, traditionally, it is inscribed in the High Speech. The motto may be placed on the bottom or the top of the sigil, as the cabal wishes.

Not all cabals adopt a motto. Some cabals prefer to remain silent, letting the sigil's iconography speak for itself.

### *The Seal of Approval*

Sigils are merely mundane representations of a cabal. Although mages believe that sigils carry a degree of Supernal weight, as ritually created objects of a cabal's

enlightened will, the sigil itself is merely writing on paper, or woven fabric, engraved metal, etc. — whatever form the cabal wants to use to depict it.

Unless, of course, magic is used.

A sigil can be enchanted with the Prime 2 “Sigilization” spell (see below), or produced with a *sigil-mark*, an imbued item that makes stamps or seals of the sigil bearing a mage or cabal’s unique resonance.

Such enchanted sigils are called *imbued sigils* or seals, to differentiate them from *inert* or mundane sigils.

### *Spell: Sigilization (Prime ••)*

This spell imposes upon an image or object (not a living creature) the caster’s own aura, or that of a group of people, such as a cabal of mages. Mages use this spell most often to create a *sigil*, an image or object that bears their personal mark.

**Practice:** Ruling

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** None

Successes are applied to the sigil’s Duration:

Successes	Duration
1 success	One scene/hour
2 successes	Two hours (24 hours with Prime 3)
3 successes	12 hours (Two days with Prime 3)
4 successes	24 hours (One week with Prime 3)
5 successes	Two days (One month with Prime 3)

This magical aura does not extinguish the object’s own resonance, but the aura does make it harder to scrutinize the object: anyone studying the object with Mage Sight must first collect a number of successes equal to this spell’s Potency before the natural resonance can be discerned past the mage’s imposed aura.

If this spell is cast as a group ritual, the auras of all the mages involved are imposed upon the target object. In this manner, cabals can mark items with their own group sigil.

With Prime 3, the mage can sigilize his aura upon living creatures, covering up their natural auras with his own. Some mages have been known to do this to “brand” their servants or even their apprentices.

When cast in combination with the Prime 2 “Transform Aura” effect, this spell can sigilize items with an aura other than the mage’s own. It is not easy counterfeiting other mage’s auras, however. The mage first has to examine the aura to be copied, using Mage Sight and the rules for scrutinizing resonance (see p. 277-279 in *Mage: The Awakening*). If he’s trying to copy

a cabal’s sigil, he must do this for every aura involved in the sigil. Once he’s done this and made the fake sigil, his copy can be scrutinized to see if it’s a forgery. Examiners make an extended action Intelligence + Occult roll (10 minutes per roll) with a target number equal to the concealing spell’s Potency.

### **Mysterium Rote: Seal of Authority**

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Expression + Prime

Of all the orders, the Mysterium is perhaps the most obsessed with cataloguing things, including personal property. The Mysterium’s members use this rote to mystically mark things as theirs. Like other orders, they also use this rote in official communiqués, to prove that a letter or item comes from them.

### *Imbued Item Merit: Sigil Mark (••••• or ••••••)*

A *sigil-mark* is an imbued device that can reproduce a specified sigil — a rubber stamp, a notary public’s stamp, a laser printer, etc. Each sigil “seal” the device produces bears a mystical stamp that is very hard to mar or alter.

The following spells are imbued into the *sigil-mark*: Prime 2 “Sigilization” (see above) and Prime 3 “Magic Wall,” to protect its seals from magical tampering (a 3-point Magic Shield armor effect on each seal). The “Sigilization” spell must be imbued as a group casting with every member of the cabal; otherwise, its seal will not truly represent the auras of the entire cabal.

It costs at least one Mana to make a seal with the *sigil-mark* (to give it one Magic Wall charge), but that seal is then protected from magical tampering (such as a Transform Aura spell) by the Magic Wall spell. Even if magic does penetrate this protection and alters the seal, others can scrutinize the seal to detect such magical tampering. If a seal bears any sign of magical trickery, other mages will refuse to accept it as a legitimate emblem or proxy of the mage or mages it represents.

The mark is contingently activated with a spoken word (the word is determined by the *sigil-mark*’s creator), and the user rolls a dice pool equal to his Gnosis plus three dice (for the highest Arcanum used); successes are applied to the seal’s Duration. (Once the Duration expires, the seal still exists, but it is no longer magical.)

For a cost of six dots, the *sigil-mark* can hold up to 12 Mana points.

*Sigil-marks* make it possible for a cabal to not have to be present every time a new seal for the cabal’s sigil is made. (Otherwise, they’d had to participate in every Sigilization spell.) However, *sigil-marks* do open up the possibility of theft. Smart *sigil-crafters* weave other spells

onto the sigil-mark with a Fate 2 + Time 2 conditional trigger that goes off when the wrong person tries to use it. The simplest protection is a Space 2 "Apportion" spell that teleports the sigil-mark to a specific location if it is handled by anyone other than the cabal. Some sigil-crafters install a Death 3 "Destroy Object" self-destruct spell if the sigil-mark is misused; others just go after the offender himself.

### Story Hook — An Inside Job

Jack Ketch is a poor excuse for a mage. For years he's been siphoning off tass from others and stealing artifacts to quietly sell to the Awakened community. He never expected someone to push him to steal his cabal's sigil-mark, but someone did and, weak fool that he was, Jack took it. Now a counterfeit of his cabal's sigil has been used to lure someone to her death.

Jack is frantic, and he turns to the characters' cabal for help. They're enough outside of normal channels that their assistance won't be immediately noticed. The sum he's offering for their services is substantial. Included is a cache of tass and an enchanted item.

Will the players take Jack up on his offer, or will they turn him in for his crimes? Who commissioned the theft, and what was the ultimate purpose for framing Jack's cabal?

## Rites and Practices

All human cultures have rituals. In this manner, cabals are no different. While mages are familiar with rituals in a magical context, in a social context, ritual practices are the glue that binds a cabal together and repairs those bonds when they threaten to fall apart.

A ritual might be an intense hazing for a new initiate or a rite to settle an argument between two members. In all cases, these rites encompass and celebrate human experiences, weaving together a stronger community.

The rites and practices of a cabal may be as public or as private as the members wish. The key is that, at a minimum, the rites involve most of the members of the cabal in the activity. A number of cabals hold a certain number of public rites each year so that they can deliberately involve their neighbors. This allows a perfect time for politicking and garnering favors for use later in the year.

Each type of cabal brings its own unique flavor to their rites. The following is an overview of what to expect in a given cabal ritual, based on the leading order in the cabal. (Of course, different rituals might be presided

over by members of different orders. A cabal that is led by a Mysterium mage might nonetheless yield to its Guardian member when performing certain rituals.)

**Adamantine Arrow** cabal rites are confrontational. They are designed to test the limits of a mage or cabal with ritualized Duels, debates or competitions.

**Free Council** cabals make their practices informal but relatively consistent, fostering a sense of community through a common agenda. Innovation is harnessed through a spirited review by one's peers.

**Guardians of the Veil** cabal practices involve unravelling an enigma meant to enlighten a certain aspect of life. Their focus is directed at concepts larger than the mage, instilling a sense of awe.

**Mysterium** cabals encourage introspection. While this may seem strange for a social setting, mages find it refreshing; it allows time for themselves but also gives them a venue to be among friends.

**Silver Ladder** cabals have events that are intensely social in nature, designed to generate a lot of energy in a short period of time, although usually with everyone fitting into a specific role. Social gatherings of this type can be very liberating, if that's what one wants.

### *Fostering*

Some times, a mage enters the community without enough peers to form a new cabal. Usually, this situation occurs just after the new mage has Awakened. In this case, a cabal can choose to *foster* the new mage, taking care of her needs temporarily until she has the opportunity to join a new cabal.

The basic rights for a fosterling are common among all cabals. The cabal is expected to protect her, train her in the basics of magic and instruct her on mage laws.

The traditions behind fostering are also very clear on one point — the mage is not part of the old cabal or privy to its secrets. She is only a guest.

Beyond these rules, how cabals use their fosterlings varies widely.

**Adamantine Arrow:** Arrow cabals choose fosterlings who can either remain calm in a crisis or who have had some sort of combat experience. Arrow cabals don't do this to gain new recruits but to ensure that, if the cabal gets into trouble, they won't have to worry about the new guy.

Unfortunately for the new fosterling, Adamantine Arrow cabals often use him for all the grunt work. While it is true that this toughens up most fosterlings for later, it's equally true that they get the worst jobs, and no mage enjoys being a servant. The one upside is that, should the fosterling get into trouble, Adamantine Arrow cabals are usually ready to help.

**Free Council:** Council cabals prefer fosterlings who are creative but, barring that, the cabals will take reliable ones. Similar to Adamantine Arrow cabals, they foist off a fair load of grunt work to the fosterling, but they are also apt to train the fosterling better as well. What the Free Council cabals aim for is a mage who can flex her creativity in a practical, channeled fashion.

**Guardians of the Veil:** Guardian cabals look for two types of fosterlings: one who is highly inquisitive or one who is taciturn. The inquisitive fosterling will be lightly trained but well protected, to see how well he figures things out on his own. The one who asks no questions will be well trained but lightly protected. The Guardian cabal expects nothing great from the mage, so it will fulfill its requirement but devote more energy to finding the fosterling an appropriate cabal.

**Mysterium:** Mysterium cabals are apt to take just about anyone as a fosterling. These cabals are also the least likely to protect that fosterling should he get into trouble. Training varies from cabal to cabal, but, generally, Mysterium cabals allow excellent access to training for the novice mage. While she may not learn much about the practice of magic, she will learn a lot about the lore of magic.

#### **Wisdom Cabal Fostering**

**Silver Ladder:** Ladder cabals keep an eye out for practical fosterlings but, like Mysterium cabals, will take almost anyone. Most Silver Ladder cabals do their best to protect and train the fosterling, hoping she will be an ally in the future. They tend, however, to be more restrictive than most of fosterling's rights. New mages often find their movements watched and their use of magic monitored. Ladder cabals claim they do this so that if the fosterling turn against them, they'll understand their new enemy.

#### *The Rite of Requite*

People do favors all the time. But how do you repay a favor to a person who can change reality?

To get around this, mages created a tradition of exchanging minor oaths that basically say, "I'll pay you back." Over time, this culture of exchanging favors became so strong it was ritualized and mages made it a key tenet of their society — the Rite of Requite.

In fact, this rite has become such a common feature of cabal life that many of the mages maintain lengthy lists of whom they owe favors to and why.

The basic form for the Rite of Requite is the same across cabals. One person requests a favor, the other sets the terms for payback. When both agree on the terms, the person receiving the favor seals the deal with a personal token.

The giver of a token is taking the risk that the receiver can use sympathetic magic against him via the close connection — which is the very reason for giving the token out. If the mage doesn't deliver on his promise, retaliation can occur. If it's a big favor, the token may be a recent photograph (nowadays taken on the scene by a camera-phone). A lesser favor would be something that the giver has used. When enemies exchange favors, the whole exchange is downplayed. The token might be nothing more than a handshake or little more than an exchange of words.

**Adamantine Arrow:** Arrow cabals begin the rite with both hands open and at their sides, showing they have no weapons. Once the terms are stated, Arrow cabal members rarely haggle unless they perceive a gross inequality in what is asked for what was given. They pay back promptly, when requested.

**Free Council:** When possible, members of a Free Council cabal confer with their peers before even starting the rite. They officially open negotiations by choosing a token. This indicates immediately how much they feel the favor is worth.

**Guardians of the Veil:** Guardian cabals begin the rite by drawing a cross. The horizontal line of the cross indicates the connection between the parties involved. The vertical line shows the link made between the Supernal World and the Fallen World — a sacred promise has been created. Guardian cabals rarely alter the terms of repayment but may negotiate what happens if they are late to pay back the favor.

**Mysterium:** Mysterium cabals open the Rite of Requite with the phrase "My word is my bond," spoken in High Speech. They always make sure the terms of repayment are clear and concise, and spend much more time clarifying rather than negotiating.

**Silver Ladder:** Ladder cabals start the rite with a handshake. They find solid practical ways of making the terms of the repayment equitable (or at least seem that way) for everyone. They have no problem negotiating the terms of repayment, including a time limit on demanding when the favor is fulfilled.

#### *Banishing Rites*

Cabals use banishing rites to get rid of bad luck or bad influences. While Mage Sight can identify obvious source of supernatural affliction, it should come as no surprise that mages are often *more* superstitious than most Sleepers. Mages know that the strange undercurrents of the occult are often so subtle as to be invisible, even to Mage Sight. Hence, they often perform minor rituals for banishing these subtle influences. Banishing



ceremonies can also be social cleansings, so that any cabal members with issues against one another have a chance to air their feelings in a safe context.

**Adamantine Arrow:** Arrow cabals deal with their bad luck by burying or destroying it. Each of the mages go to allies and other members of the community and gather things they feel might be invoking the misfortune, perhaps an unusual item, a memento associated with a loss or simply an inauspicious item. They then break the object. Depending on the cabal, they may take the pieces and complete its destruction (usually through crushing it to a powder or burning it) or place it in some sort of container and bury it.

This rite helps cleanse a mage's feelings through *catharsis*. By placing his emotions into the items being destroyed, the mage can symbolically destroy his issues as well.

**Free Council:** Council cabals blame bad luck or misfortune on tangible things. Depending on the culture, it might be the fault of the persons involved, an external source or both. Free Council cabals try to rid themselves of that bad luck by turning to local superstitions for inspiration. They might start putting up horseshoes over doorways or throwing salt over their shoulders.

As quick as they can, they spread their ideas to the entire community, getting everyone (both Sleeper and Awakened) involved until the bad luck goes away.

This style of rite works to "clear the air" around troubled mages through the mechanism of *play*. By working together on these somewhat silly goals, the mages regain a sense of the positive effects of working with each other.

**Guardians of the Veil:** Guardian cabals treat bad luck by inviting friends and allies to the mystical equivalent of a "prayer vigil." The social interaction allows an opportunity for others to try and figure out alternate solutions to the cabal's problems. The vigil itself consists of what mages euphemistically call "shouting it out." It might be prayers, song, a gathering of Prime energy or even just shouting, but the mages focus their energy at the source of the bad luck and then try to scare it away.

This banishing works through the mechanism of *cooperation*. Mages set aside individuality for the moment to focus on a single, energetic task.

**Mysterium:** When persistent bad luck haunts members of a Mysterium cabal, it means the flow of energy has been blocked. In order to unblock it, they often do a "spring cleaning." Many of the old and useless items

in their sanctum are swept away, replaced by things more suitable to the cabal's current needs. Allies are contacted as part of the process, to take away the old stuff. Being asked to participate in this rite has surprised newer cabals, because it always leaves them with donations from the hosting cabal.

Mysterium cabal banishings work through *purgung*. Having fewer items means less to worry about and a forced reprioritization of one's life. Mages often find through this process that what they thought was a major issue proves to be smaller than they believed.

**Silver Ladder:** When a Ladder cabal finds itself involved in a run of particularly bad fortune, the members band together in a kind of occult "group therapy session" to discuss their darkest fears. Sometimes, they'll even create representations of those fears, which they will combine together into a large cabal "bane." Some cabals even take the opportunity to bring these creations to life, allowing the cabal to directly fight their fears and hopefully banish them.

Success in this rite comes from synthesis, through the mages sharing their fears and learning their common strengths and weaknesses together. Combining their powers to defeat those fears helps reinforce the idea that cabal-members are never alone.

### *Celebrations*

People hold celebrations as a good excuse to get together. The stodgiest of mages may hold highly ritualized dinner gatherings. Others throw the wildest bacchanals imaginable. Each celebratory rite has a purpose, though — it must be for something tangible.

The most common reasons given for a celebration are a specific time of year (a celestial event like a solstice, birth of a deity, in honor of a time when evil was defeated), a great achievement (finding a new source of Mana, winning a wizard war, opening up negotiations with a new cabal) or in combination with any other rituals listed.

**Adamantine Arrow:** When the members of Arrow cabals relax, they have a strange sort of "anything goes" policy. Much of this stems from the very real possibility that some of their members may die in the conflict that drives the cabal. During the celebration, there are limits, though. Nothing must be done that can cause any lasting harm to the cabal, its sanctum or its possessions. Guests who get aggressive will find themselves facing a suddenly unified, very angry cabal. Cabal-members who step over the line will quickly find themselves confined, at least until the party ends.

**Free Council:** Though not all Council cabals do these twisted holidays, some are famous for theirs. The cabal

takes a local celebration, duplicates it and then pushes it to the extreme. Attendees of a formal ball may find themselves in a sudden (and non-lethal) recreation of the Masque of the Red Death; a classical concert may devolve into a Jim Morrison-inspired orgy. The sole defining feature is that things start out normal (at least according to Sleeper society) and then go awry. People who "go with the flow" and play along with the theme are treated well. Those who repulsed by it but don't leave quickly enough find themselves ejected from the party.

**Guardians of the Veil:** Guardian cabals hold civilized affairs imbued with an atmosphere "properly" festive within the bounds of decorum set by society. The festivities last until a certain time (often midnight), and then the cabal-members disperse. Guests who want to act with any sort of propriety usually talk to the Lorekeeper or Hearthmaster before the party to understand the rules of etiquette. Offenders are not asked to leave; they simply are not invited back to another event until they find a way to atone.

**Mysterium:** While the actual details of a Mysterium cabal party change with the culture, each mage is expected to share something — a memory, a story or an anecdote — related to the theme set by the cabal. The most respected storytellers go last, whether they are Awakened or not.

Perhaps the rudest thing any guest can do at one of these events is to interrupt a story. Violators generally receive one of two responses: a dead silence until they leave the room, or they are shouted down until they become quiet.

**Silver Ladder:** Ornate rituals bind Ladder cabal festivities, steeped in lore and tradition. They may include masques, balls or banquets, each grand in scope. The symbolism of the hosting cabal is rife through the entire proceedings.

A Lorekeeper is always on hand during the event to help guests acclimate to the rite. Guests who break etiquette find that their transgressions are discussed openly. This public humiliation is used to bring offenders back in line (or drive them from the party).

### *Internal Disputes*

When mages argue, the results can be devastating to a cabal. Every type of traditional Atlantean cabal has evolved basic rites to deal with this situation with a specific intent to heal the social fabric of their community. This means that most of the rites dealing with internal disputes are skewed to satisfy the community, not the individual mages, a fact that motivates mages to solve

the problem themselves before involving others.

In all internal disputes, if the guilt of one party is clear, then the remainder of the cabal gathers together and decides punishment. The offended party is usually instrumental in proposing the scope of the reprimand while the others carry it out.

The rites detailed below only apply if guilt has not been established or an emotionally charged situation between two mages cannot be resolved.

**Adamantine Arrow:** Whether it's an insult or an actual crime, if an Arrow cabal decides they need to intervene in a situation, they use an endurance trial. It might be immersing a hand in boiling oil, swallowing poison or being buried alive.

These options or others are performed on both accuser and accused. Usually, harmful magic is added to the process so that the parties involved cannot overcome the trial using their own casting. By involving both accuser and accused, the ceremony ensures that neither one tries to gain advantage through deceit. A person can always back out of the trial by admitting to guilt or to lying.

The reasoning behind this is brutal and practical; in the worst case, the strongest member of the cabal will survive the trial, proving her worth to "win" the argument. In the best case, especially when the Fate Arcanum is used, the guilty party will be "revealed" (if only by backing out before the trial begins) and then appropriately punished.

**Free Council:** Justice among Free Council cabals is familiar to those living under a modern criminal system. The court holds the offending mage while advocates and prosecutors prepare their case. A jury of the mage's peers or a judge chosen from the ranks of the local Assembly oversees the case and weighs the evidence. Unlike trials in the real world, verdicts in this kind of trial are swift and final. The punishment usually consists of the loss of a physical resource (tass counts in this regard, as do enchanted items). Mages convicted of the worst offences find themselves exiled and branded with a symbolic reminder of their crime.

**Guardians of the Veil:** Guardian cabals are often masters of the art of interrogation, separating out the people involved and subjecting them to a number of harsh, concise questions. Everyone in the community (except other suspects) can join in and use magic if they desire. The person being interrogated is free to cast spells (or any other tool) too. If he's caught doing it, however, he risks summary judgment against him. After all, why would an innocent man have to "cheat?"

Judgment from a Guardian cabal is often harsher than

other types. A mage is typically incarcerated or exiled for a period of time (rarely permanently).

**Mysterium:** Justice among a Mysterium cabal boils down to a tribunal. Unlike a trial, the tribunal examines the mage's entire contribution to her cabal. This usually ignites a fierce dialogue between cabal members, as they argue about which contributions are worth recording. In the end, either the mage's contribution is recognized as great enough to prove her innocence (or mitigate her crime), or she is turned over to her accuser for punishment.

**Silver Ladder:** When dealing with an internal dispute, Ladder cabals force the people involved to re-dedicate themselves to the ideals of the cabal through an ever-escalating series of tasks.

Both the accused and accuser are expected to exhaust themselves proving their loyalty not to the cabal but to the concepts it holds dearest. Uninvolved mages may interfere or support the parties through magical or mundane means. The involved mages must work together, even if they hate each other. Once the cabal considers the task finished, the incident is "forgotten."

### *External Disputes*

Serious inter-cabal disputes are handled by the Consilium, but a lot of political battles occur with covert violence that doesn't attract Sentinel attention.

**Adamantine Arrow:** Arrow cabals are often already engaged in some form of conflict. When a new one appears, they react quickly, first severing all contact with the offending cabal. If the infraction is a minor one, the Adamantine Arrow cabal will then perform a curse rite. Cabal-members find something that represents one of the offender's goals, and each member, in turn, describes how she'd like to do to stop the offender from reaching that goal. If magic is involved, the cabal-members will then channel their power toward that end. On a mundane level, members may take their friend's suggestions to heart and actively go out to sabotage the other cabal's efforts.

If the incident involved is more severe, the cabal may try to take something directly from the cabal or from someone close to it. That may mean stealing an item or hurting someone, but, in either case, the purpose of this attack is to clearly say, "We can get to you."

**Free Council:** Council cabals look first to their loss. What was taken away from them must be replaced. If this is a physical item, they'll try to retrieve an equivalent item from the other cabal. If it's something intangible, like somebody's dignity, then they will try to inflict an equal loss on their opponents. Council cabal curses

involve the mages going into the violator's territory and leaving an item that symbolizes their ill wishes somewhere where the offenders can find it.

In larger disputes, Free Council cabals will find something dear to the other cabal and then destroy it; then, like their curse rite, leave the destroyed item somewhere it can be easily found.

**Guardians of the Veil:** Guardian cabals hit back, as quickly and as effectively as possible. If the infraction is something small, they hit the violator with a curse or get into a fistfight with him. If the infraction is big, they hit the other cabal where it hurts. If the Guardian cabal can't actually get at the offending cabal, they will "count coup" by getting something the offender values.

Curses center around ways to exploit and expose the offending cabal's weaknesses so that the offending cabal-members are publicly revealed. On a grander scale, if the offense is too great, the Guardian cabal-members will try to stage something compromising that will tear the offending cabal apart.

**Mysterium:** The most effective way Mysterium cabals have been able to strike back at enemies is through "chatter." Mysterium cabals find ways to mess with the streams of information, occult or otherwise, that the opposing cabal uses. In the event of a larger issue, Mysterium cabals use active misinformation to guide their enemies into dangerous situations or to turn other cabals against them.

In both cases, Mysterium cabal-members gather together to ritually whisper their cursed information into things that will "hold it," like bottles, which they then bury in or near their enemy's territory.

**Silver Ladder:** Ladder cabals strike back at their opponents through public ridicule. The ultimate intent for such humiliation is to provoke a reaction from the offending cabal, which can bring the wrath of the Consilium's Sentinel down on them. In cases in which this is unlikely to be effective, Ladder cabals attack their enemies through their ideals. Silver Ladder cabal-members manufacture incidents in both the mundane and non-physical worlds to test the enemy cabal's resolve.

## *Consilium*

In the time after the Fall, not all mages were solely concerned with survival. Some fragments of willworker society struggled hard to re-establish the old ways of Atlantis in the new and terrible world wrought by the Exarchs.

To do this, these mages had to find a way to channel the energy and ambition of the Awakened. They began

going from place to place, recruiting people to build "councils of the wise," whose firm judgments would help steer the sorcerers toward a better tomorrow.

The intention of these mages was for these local councils to merge with their neighbors into a complex bureaucracy over which the "wisest of the wise" would ultimately rule.

By their standards, they failed. There never arose any sweeping bureaucracy of councils or a "wisest of the wise" to shape the destiny of mages. In fact, control of the councils always remained localized, set in the ways of the cabals that helped form them.

The remnant of those mages' work remains, though, imbedded in the institution known as the Consilium.

## *The First Council*

The first proto-Consilii consisted of cabals' Hearthmasters gathering together to talk. They usually remained within either cultural or geographical limits, to keep communication and travel time easy.

Under the auspice of the Right of Hospitality, they'd discuss the problems between their cabals, at least to the extent they were comfortable with (since other uninvolved cabals were present). Then, the group as a whole would come up with ways to resolve the problems.

The body of precedents set down by their decisions were recorded by Lorekeepers and codified into the Lex Magica, although each Consilium developed its own lists of precedents as the basis of its laws. This proved, in some mages' estimation, to be a misstep, in that it soon became unnecessary for a Hearthmaster to be present. Now anyone with access to the Lex Magica and enough political savvy to be declared "wise" could petition to be a part of the Consilium.

As the politics of power shifted, the mages involved with these experimental Consilii decided it would be best if, instead of relying on ever-growing codes of laws, they could mirror the only constant in their lives—the Supernal energies flowing from the higher realms.

In order to do this, the first Consilium mages proposed that a "proper" Consilium would possess at least one representative from each Path. In each case, that representative would be the most skilled and experienced mage in the region.

The five "Councilors" would then act as the voice of the Supernal Realm, as channeled through the Watchtowers. Their Arcane connections would portray a glimpse of the higher realm's vision of what "true" justice should be.

Those Consilii without representatives for each realm would, according to this model, lack a full Supernal mandate, making their laws more susceptible to challenge by individual cabals. Only when a full Consilium of Paths was present could proper laws be respected.

After these changes were made, the Consilium ideal began to spread, successfully proselytized by Silver Ladder mages who believed themselves the most capable of running these Consilii.

### Preaching to the Choir

The Silver Ladder did a superb job in shaping mages' opinion toward the Consilium. It was somewhat of a shock to Silver Ladder members that, in the end, other mages did not automatically see them as the wisest choice for leadership.

Even today, some théarchs remain angered. They see every open Consilium seat as an opportunity for a challenge. Others are more subtle. They undermine other orders' Councilors, showing to the world that these other orders are not worthy of respect.

Of course, it's more likely that other mages will use the théarchs as scapegoats for their own plans. One famous incident involved a Warlock mystagogue inflaming a novice théarch over tales of the Silver Ladder being "wronged" by the foolish Consilium. The théarch then threw the court into chaos with a set of ridiculous challenges. Another time, the théarchs were blamed for the political assassination of a Provost when, in fact, no such conspiracy existed. The real culprit, an Arrow Shaman, used this diversion to cover up his own political ambitions. Through this diversion, he rose to Councilor, and the original investigation was quickly abandoned.

Positions within the Consilium began to change as well, as mages started to reflect on their Consilium duties and their relationships to the Paths.

The Councilors were always the heart of the Consilium. Shamans began suggesting ways to hone their tasks and agendas into a more practical form. From their advice, Councilors took the *Tree* as a symbol of their position, suggesting a strong core rooted in the work of others, branching into the wisdom of the Realms Above.



PRIDE 05

Mages from the Obrimos Path proposed that the Consilium elect one of their own to act as the voice of the Consilium. The Theurgists went so far as to suggest that this voice should be the wisest of the Consilium, its *de facto* leader in spirit if not in practice. They chose the *Ring* as a symbol of the Hierarch, representing the unity of the Consilium bound around one person.

The Warlocks quickly reasoned that the Councilors would need help, and, for those Councilors, the Warlocks created the Provost position. Each Councilor retained the right to choose her own personal Provost. The Councilors often selected someone close to them, such as cabal-mates. The Provosts decided that the Staff would best represent the Provost's position, as a strong support to the Consilium.

Followers of the Acanthus Path understood someone needed to carry the proclamations of the Consilium throughout its territories. So, the Enchanters created the Heralds, beholden only to the will of the Consilium. The Enchanters used the *Horse* to represent the journey of the Herald, not only for its speed but for also for its constancy and loyalty.

Finally, the Consilium foresaw it would need protection against threats and a strong hand to punish those cabals who refused to listen to reason. The Necromancers took up the call to suggest the position of Sentinel. The Stygian mages decided on a *Mace* as the Sentinel's badge of office, forged to deliver punishment, but whose will to strike came from the will of the Consilium.

The influence of the Paths continues to the modern day. Whenever a Consilium's seats are filled by mages with "inappropriate" Paths, it's only a matter of time before someone will try and quote "Atlantean tradition" as an excuse to challenge them for position.

## Original Charter

Consilii were formed to deal with overt violence between cabals and clear threats to the Awakened community in general. What constitutes a "clear threat" or "overt violence" changes from area to area. Some Consilii consider oath-breaking a violent crime. Other Consilii focus only on incidents as dramatic as Duels Arcane. Add to this the fact that many mages bring their own political agenda into the position, influencing Consilium decisions according to their own power and purpose.

Given this variety, members of a Consilium soon found it necessary to write down their purposes and expectations. Although not every Consilium has a charter, many have found one necessary at some point in their careers.

## The Declaration

The Declaration is the simplest part of the charter and generally covers why the Consilium got together and what its boundaries are. Some Declarations even include a list of the original cabals who comprise its jurisdiction.

It is the custom of some Consilii to have one of their Councilors perform a Time 3 "Divination" on the Consilium, to see what sort of future the Consilium has. The Seer then seals the declaration with an Atlantean rune that in some way symbolizes what he saw. Traditionally, the actual vision itself is rarely discussed.

## Story Hook — Dire Omens

The characters are on hand for the creation of a new charter. After a lot of hard politicking, the document is put together and a Councilor on the Acanthus Path begins her divination.

She grows pale and looks straight at the characters. Then she seals the declaration with the symbol of Death. Despite intense prompting from her peers, she refuses to say anything more, citing tradition as her reason to stay silent.

Astonished mages are quick to reassure everyone that such bad omens are rare and don't necessarily involve the death of the Consilium. Maybe the omen simply means a great change is coming.

What does this imply for the characters? Are they responsible for the death of someone in the Consilium? Do they stand as a threat that will tear the Consilium apart? Or do they face a challenge that could destroy the Consilium?

No matter which vision of the future is correct, the characters are now in the spotlight. Other cabals will use this incident to politically manipulate the characters. Some cabals will even see the characters' cabal as a threat. Perhaps it is this conflict, one sparked by the symbol itself, that sets the stage for the dark incidents to come.

## Rights

The section on Rights covers the responsibilities of the Consilium. This section also details under what circumstances the Consilium is empowered to act and the scope of the punishments that they can levy. Thorough mages also outline how these punishments are carried out.

It's a given that most Consilii intervene when conflicts occur between cabals. Most Consilii also work to keep

the Great Mysteries away from Sleepers. What is not advertised is that many charters contain provisions to deal with problems before they become blatant.

These provisions are justified by claiming that threats from enemies or taints from within (such as Scelesti and Tremere) mandate a certain tolerance for the Consilium being a little invasive. These sections are never invoked by most cabals, but more politically minded Consilii do use these provisions; using these provisions requires strength in numbers (of resources or allies) on the Consilium's side, and these sections are rarely over-used. After all, nobody wants to feel like they're next on the list.

As far as punishments go, the Hierarchy declares them, based on the Lex Magica's body of precedents. See "Lex Magica," p. 55, for a more thorough discussion. Short of formal rulings with the Lex Magica, the Consilium will usually first extract favors from the parties in dispute, declaring that the offended party is owed a favor by the offending party, by way of the Rite of Requite (see p. 39). Sometimes, the Consilium gets a favor as well.

### *Duties*

While the Rights segment of the charter covers what the Consilium does for its constituents, the Duties section talks about the constituent cabals' responsibilities to the Consilium. At the very least, this section asks that the cabals respect the Consilium's edicts. Without this, the Consilium would be forced to try and strong-arm every decision, a situation that will wear down anyone over time.

More active Consilii ask for a levy, usually of favors for which they can request repayment over time. Tass can also be requested, or access to libraries or other lore.

The Duties segment also spells out the details of the Consilium's gathering space, often a *sanctum* maintained by one or more of its member cabals.

Like the Rights section, this portion of the charter covers some punishments for not performing one's duties. This starts out with the simplest reprisal—removal of the Consilium's protection—and then moves to more complex penalties like forced service or seizure of resources. Again, most punishments are declared based on the complex (and often conflicting) body of precedents built up around previous rulings of the Lex Magica.

### *Rewriting a Charter*

When a shift of power occurs in a Consilium, sometimes the members choose to revise their charter. Revising a charter is considered a sizeable event in the

Awakened community since it opens up the opportunity for new input into the document.

Traditionally, the Hierarchy announces the decision to revise the charter at the beginning of the process. Theoretically, the Provosts then go out to the cabals to gather any ideas for the modification. The main purpose behind this is a social one; the cabals believe their voices are being heard, even if their ideas are not implemented.

It's rarely that easy. It's within the Consilium's best interest to keep the changes hidden until the last possible moment. Some of the more authoritarian cabals don't let others see the charters at all until they're done.

### **Story Hook – March for Freedom!**

The local libertine cabal approaches the characters with a proposition: the cabal has found out that the Consilium is planning on modifying the charter without telling the majority of the cabals.

The libertines plan to march on the Consilium's *sanctum* and demand a voice in the revisions. The libertines want the characters to back them up when they get there. In exchange, the libertines will recommend one of the characters for a Consilium position when the new order is established.

### *Styles of Justice*

No matter what charter they create, Consilii are most profoundly affected by the types of cabals that make up their hierarchies.

This has led to a loose system of classification of Consilii, based on their relationship with the cabals.

### *Common Law*

The term "common law," when it applies to will-worker society, means that the Consilium looks to local precedent and customs to determine how to judge a conflict. Punishments are levied by calling on society in general, in this case a strong unified bloc of cabals, to enforce it.

Some believe that the first official Consilium convened as a common law organization. Common-law Consilii are the most likely not to have a written charter, though it's guaranteed that they have access to a long history of collected precedents in the area.

Typically, a Consilium emerges in this form when an older, more authoritarian Consilium falls apart. A

common-law Consilium can also occur when a charter is revised or revoked.

Traditionally, common-law Consilii restrict themselves when it comes to judging other cabals, acting primarily as mediating bodies. A politically minded mage can turn a common-law institution into a loose fiefdom, as long as he has a solid base of mages to support him and no need to overtly control the agenda of his fellow Awakened.

Common-law Consilii often do not have the power to collect dues or re-allocate resources. Sentinels rarely act proactively, instead responding only to real or perceived threats. Provosts, on the other hand, share a commensurately larger share of responsibility, as their Councilors expect them to keep the Consilium abreast of any changes in customs. A Provost must also intimately know past precedents so that he can judge whether a situation is worthy of the Consilium's attention. Since common-law Consilii rely more heavily on their member cabals, temporary Heralds and Sentinels are often needed.

Mysterium cabals favor the common-law system because these cabals are often the ones who possess and store information about past standards. Guardians of the Veil cabals, whose members generally make excellent Provosts, scour their neighbors for potential new traditions and precedents that can be used to break or modify the current practices.

### Story Hook – Uncommon Law

While researching an unrelated topic, a character comes across a history book relating the experiences of the Consilium decades ago. Much

to her shock, she finds out that not only are the current Consilium members breaking their original rules, but they are also taking deliberate actions they know will ultimately lead to violent confrontation between the cabals.

The book may be accurate, or it may be some sort of elaborate setup. Some of the Councilors are new. Do they know understand the consequences of what they're doing, or is one of the older Councilors leading them astray?

### Civil Court

The Silver Ladder claimed they wanted the Consilium to be as fair and impartial a setting as they could get in a world where mages shape reality and change the rules. To meet this goal, their preferred Consilium is a "civil court." In this form of Consilium, mages de-

velop precedents to reflect different crimes and then fit any cases directly to those precedents, regardless of individual circumstances. This makes judgments quick and to the point.

As a result, Consilium members spend much of their time designing or manipulating precedents to a form that they feel would be fair in most given situations. Charters are often rewritten to reflect this, though it's unfair to present this as a common event; most rulings last for years, if not decades, before the mages decide to re-examine them for clarity and impartiality.

A civil Consilium must rely on a small levy in order to be successful, since the Consilium cannot always depend on popular support for its decisions. The Consilium enforces the levy through the Provosts, who first try to extract it from reticent cabals through bargaining, usually by using the Heralds.

In fact, Heralds form the most useful tools a civil Consilium has. During their off-time, Heralds are expected to be as social as the Provost in trying to get to know the constituent cabals. When called-upon for initial inquiries into a crime, the Herald then acts as investigator, using information from his social experience to facilitate his official task. Because of this social aspect, Heralds are often chosen from among people the cabals trust. Sentinels, if used, act as the Herald's "backup" when bringing criminals to justice.

It's not uncommon for a Herald to bring others into the investigation, especially if a targeted cabal is unwilling to give up one of its members. Often, Guardian Interfactors serve the Sentinel position, playing "bad cop" to a Herald's "good cop."

While Heralds and Sentinels may be tools of the investigation, only Councilors or their Provosts can actually declare that an investigation is in progress. Many of these cases end in a fine of some sort, limited to a temporary service in the form of a favor (sealed using the Rite of Requite) or a few drams of tass (payable immediately).

A civil-court Consilium often gathers at least once a year to review its body of precedents — its Lex Magica — for any changes. The Hierarch must approve legal changes, supported by a simple majority of the Consilium members. In some cases, if all the Councilors except the Hierarch want the change, they can vote to override his wishes with a two-thirds majority.

Silver Ladder cabals enjoy the ideals that a civil court aspires to and are often the ones to propose revisions to existing laws. Nonetheless, these cabals embrace the political dynamics within the system and are often dedicated to exploiting laws for their own benefit.

## Story Hook — Deputized

Just after the characters complete a happy, productive meeting with a new ally, they are contacted by a Herald. The Consilium has put that ally under investigation and needs the characters to help keep watch on them.

Things get more complicated when the Herald who delivered the message dies. The Consilium claims they didn't send the Herald, but that may be because they suspect the characters murdered the Herald to derail the investigation.

## Tribunal

The tribunal marks the point where the Consilium tradition starts to change. Usually in response to some crisis, mages voluntarily give up limited control over their resources. The Consilium then allocates the resources as it sees fit for the greater good. The Consilium may also set aside some resources for its own use.

It's at this stage that many Consilii build sanctums and, often as companions to that process, Demesnes. The Consilium is quite potent in this incarnation, as are the Sentinels, who ensure that resources are "properly dispatched." Heralds serve primarily as messengers, coordinating the delivery and pickup of various items; they are commonly picked from the newest cabals, as a test of the cabal's loyalty.



As time goes on, or as crises keep occurring (some may even be manufactured), some Consilii revise their charters to formalize their powers over other cabals. Less coercion occurs than one might think — mages may charter a tribunal Consilium because they believe it's better to give up freedom in return for security.

Tribunals are quite dynamic, and there's a constant pull between the rights of the cabals and the rights of the Consilium as a whole. Revolts or assassination attempts occur frequently when things get bad. When things are good, mages rarely pay attention to what the "inner circle" is doing, allowing politically savvy Awakened to get away with a lot.

When things are bad, well-run Consilii manipulate member cabals through resource manipulation and assigned tasks, keeping the cabals too concentrated on the crisis to consider changing the status quo.

Tribunals are commonly well organized and react quickly to threats, which can make the difference between survival and a painful annihilation by occult forces.

Politically, a tribunal doesn't have to poll its constituents for advice after being chosen. However, in practice, the ruling Consilium rarely enacts any legislation that it feels would be opposed by the majority of the cabals.

Sentinels become the hammer that the Hierarch uses to maintain order and often take on much larger roles than in other types of Consilii. Depending on the crisis, they may also act as Consilium "lieutenants,"

ordering cabals to perform various tasks or to fight for the “greater good.”

Newer cabals in this position are often placed as front-line troops for smaller events; older cabals jockey for increased power and political clout by taking on events with larger strife.

Adamantine Arrow cabals favor a tribunal. They are often able to manipulate this style of Consilium to achieve their own aims. Guardian cabals appreciate the streamlined application of resources — as long as they have a say as to where those resources go.

### Story Hook — Witch Hunt

After a protracted period of peace, a panicked Consilium tries to destroy a neighboring cabal, accusing it of falling prey to an acamoth. Other cabals quickly marshal against the potential threat, and, soon, the Consilium is transformed into an effective tribunal. The Consilium begins searching for any further “outbreaks” or links to the Abyssal spirit.

The characters then discover that one of the cabal members still lives. He claims there is an acamoth out there but that it’s claimed the Hierarch. He has no proof of his claims but believes evidence may be found in the Hierarch’s sanctum.

## Rules of Order

There are some common customs that serve to help keep a cabal in the good graces of the Consilium.

### Give Support, Get Support

New cabals, to ingratiate themselves with the establishment, must first openly show support for the Consilium *without* expecting favors in return. By tradition, a cabal is never expected to perform more than three tasks without some sort of recognition or recompense from the community. Older cabals sometimes do this as well, to show their continued commitment to the Consilium.

### Favors Are King

Cabals should never refuse to repay a favor upon request unless the request is ridiculous or they have an extremely pressing need of their own. To keep the peace, Consilii have leveled punishments against cabals that refused to fulfill boons or didn’t pay them back in a reasonable manner.

### Support Those in Need

Consilii expect mages to help their own, especially Awakened who have proven themselves. This applies

most liberally to Solitaries from established (but now disbanded) cabals. Some of these Solitaries may even go on to join the Consilium. Practically speaking, cabals help by offering services without demanding favors in return.

### Beware of Outsiders

If the cabal isn’t already a part of the Consilium structure, the cabal is a potential threat. It is watched until it proves itself or breaks the local laws. The same criterion is used for mages who become Solitaries by choice (rather than those who have lost their cabals). Universally treated with suspicion, Solitaries have to work hard if they want even the begrudging respect of other cabals.

## Consilium Duties

The average activities of a Consilium can be complex or extremely simple, depending on the makeup of the various cabals. The following section describes what the standard officers of a Consilium do.

### Liegeman / Liegewoman

This role is not an official Consilium position; rather, it describes a mage who has proven his or her loyalty or helpfulness to the Consilium on a noted occasion or in a consistent public stance. Although a liegeman has no official placement within the Consilium structure, he is widely watched by the current office holders and might be groomed for his potential to earn a higher post.

Most liegemen (and liegewomen) who seek higher positions petition a sponsor — a Councilor or Provost who watches over their progress. At least every couple of months, they either meet with their sponsors or perform tasks that aid the sponsors’ causes.

### Sentinel

Under ideal circumstances, the Sentinels only patrol the Consilium’s sanctum or Demesne. In practice, they are the enforcers of the Consilium’s wishes, ensuring its policies are followed by the member cabals.

The first time a cabal meets a Sentinel on official business is usually when the cabal has overstepped its boundaries, intentionally or unintentionally, and violated Consilium mandates. In virtually all of these situations, the Sentinels reflect the general policies of the Consilium; if the Consilium relies on aid from their member cabals, the Sentinels may provide more of a polite warning. Otherwise, the Sentinel acts as a strong arm, letting the cabal know in no uncertain terms that it has tested the limits of the Consilium’s patience.

Except for Consilii at war, there are usually no more than a couple of Sentinels working at any given time.

If there is an opening, a candidate mage must first attract the attention of the Consilium by dealing with an inter-cabal dispute while a member of the Consilium watches. The candidate must then be brought before the Hierarch, who ultimately chooses whether the candidate should be a Sentinel or not. The Hierarch can theoretically appoint as many Sentinels as he wants, though the Consilium, with a two-thirds majority vote, can override him if needed.

Sentinels are sometimes allowed to deputize other mages to work alongside them. Because of the sporadic nature of their work, Sentinels are required by the Consilium to be on-call for use at any time against a violator of its edicts. The rest of the time can be spent with the Sentinel's original cabal or dealing with inter-cabal disputes.

The Sentinel position often wears on mages, because it often exposes them to conflict. Some burn out in a few years. Others (especially Arrow mages) seem to thrive on the conflict. In all cases, acting as Sentinel changes the mage involved and can distance him from his fellow mages.

### *Herald*

A Herald is often the first Consilium member a cabal encounters. It is the Herald's responsibility to pass along news from the Consilium. In fact, a Herald acts most frequently as the contact person between constituent cabals and the Consilium.

Heralds are meant to be the ambassadors of the Consilium, and, therefore, their behavior is supposed to be above approach. The Consilium looks for a candidate with a cool head, one who can communicate the desires of the Consilium in a clear and erudite manner. When searching for candidates, the Councilors often look first among cabals that have proven themselves, especially ones that have proven their loyalty. The Hierarch chooses the Consilium's Heralds, although candidates can be nominated by Councilors. As the voice of the Consilium to different cabals — even different Consilii — the Herald is often chosen for her loyalty to the Hierarch above the Consilium.

Once a Herald has been chosen, she can be dispatched by the Provost, though the Consilium can override those duties to impose its own. During an average month, Consilii assign Heralds perhaps two to three tasks, usually dealing with a couple of cabals at a time. The Herald is expected to check back in with the Consilium once each of her tasks is finished. If there is more than one Herald in the area, the Heralds usually try to find time to get together outside of the Consilium and compare notes.

### *Provost*

Mages know that they've made a good progress in Consilium politics when they've got the number of one of the local Provosts. While this connection lacks the punch of someone who makes the decisions, cabals that have a Provost as a member or know a Provost can potentially influence how those decisions are carried out.

Those cabals without such connections rarely have dealings with a Provost; instead, they encounter the fruits of his work through Sentinels and Heralds. Those cabals that do interact with a Provost risk putting themselves in a position where the Provost can use them to complete a task. This can be either a good thing or a bad thing, depending on what the Provost wants done.

A Provost acts as the Seneschal for a Councilor, and is personally chosen by that Councilor. Both now and in the past, romantically involved couples sometimes take these positions, with one as Councilor and the other as Provost. Sometimes, the romance happens after the job starts.

The Provost attends monthly Consilium meetings as well as audiences with Sentinels and Heralds as needed. Next to the Hierarch, of all the positions, the Provosts are the most involved in Consilium business on a consistent basis.

### *Councilor*

Once a Councilor is established, it's not easy to dislodge her; only the most experienced mages credibly compete for the seats. The politics surrounding the Councilors are extremely fierce, as various cabals vie for the Councilors' attention to present their agendas. Most Councilors rely on their personal Provosts to filter out the wheat from the chaff.

Theoretically, mages can always see the Councilors in open meetings that take place once a month (or once a quarter for more lax Consilii). Many times, though, cabals don't take advantage of this. Sometimes, local Consilium rules limit the access that mages and cabals can have. (These rules are usually implemented to save time at meetings.)

Next to kissing up to the Provost, the easiest way to access a Councilor is by getting in the good graces of the Councilor's cabal. This generally results in owing a favor or two to the cabal, which is one reason that cabals love getting a member selected for the Consilium.

When a seat comes open — usually because a previous Councilor retires, willingly steps down, dies or falls from favor with the rest of the Consilium — heated politics

commence to fill the seat. While the seat is determined by a simple majority vote among the Councilors (including the Hierarch), few Councilors are selected who are not approved by the Hierarch.

Can a new cabal get a member elected to the Consilium? Absolutely, if that the cabal's candidate is better suited to the position than its current holder and can get along with the Hierarch.

Councilors, regardless of their actual power to enforce their decisions, hold monthly meetings to discuss issues relevant to the Awakened. The Councilors may hold more gatherings, if necessary, and frequently meet with each other and their Provosts informally. For all intents and purposes, the Consilium forms its own informal cabal, with the Hierarch as its leader.

### *Hierarch*

It has been argued that the Hierarch is the most important position on the Consilium; after all, it is her will that influences the entire direction of the Consilium.

Audiences (other than the monthly Consilium meetings) are rarely granted, but it is a rare Hierarch who doesn't hold a number of casual meetings with her constituent cabals. At the very least, she makes her presence known through the Heralds and directed messages.

To become a Hierarch requires the majority's support in the area and a lack of effective opposition from the rest. Hierarchs bear a lot of responsibility, so it is rare that new cabals achieve this lofty title, though it has happened.

The Hierarch spends most of her time at her own or the Consilium's sanctum, dealing with the details of Awakened life. She is generally the most knowledgeable about the local supernatural community and ready to react to its intricacies at a moment's notice.

### *Other Positions*

Consilii have been known to create other positions within the Consilium as needed. The most common have been interrogators (usually Guardian Interceptors) and occult investigators (théarch lictors). These temporary slots are filled with specialized mages and chosen for both practical and political means.

### *Internal Matters*

The Provosts ensure that the will of the Consilium is enacted, once all judgments, laws or edicts have been made. However, each Councilor imparts his own "flavor" on how the job should get done.

Once a Councilor presents a matter before the Ruling Council and the Consilium votes to deal with the matter, then the Councilor's Provost takes up the project and coordinates the Consilium's resources toward it. While Heralds and Sentinels are usually appointed by the Hierarch, they are wielded by the Provosts to achieve the Consilium's goals.

### *By Force*

Sadly enough, most Provosts overuse this tool, and it's the one that costs the most resources. First, a Provost assesses the amount of resistance he will receive. A good Provost commonly has access to the best gossip and information on the state of the cabals, usually through people trying to curry favor with the Consilium. Such information comes to play now. It's just as frequent that a Provost has to turn to another Provost to compare information; in this case, favors are usually exchanged.

In some cases, when the Provost has no easy access to the information she needs, she can press a cabal to act as her spies. Often this is done for favors; sometimes it's done under the threat of a Sentinel looking into the cabal's affairs.

After the Provost has procured the necessary intelligence, the Provost elicits help from other cabals, especially ones connected to the Sentinels. Sometimes new cabals are used as backup or cannon fodder with especially taxing problems.

With this strength to back his move, the Provost comes down hard on the offenders, first inflicting a mild punishment for disobeying the law and then threatening the felonious cabal with more dire consequences if the cabal-members still refuse to comply. Allies who assist the Provost in this endeavor are paid with favors or confiscated resources.

### *Story Hook – Payback*

A former Sentinel rises to the position of Provost through a combination of relentless drive and ruthlessness. A tough, accomplished martial mage, he bends a number of cabals to the Consilium's decrees and kills those cabal-members who outright defy the edicts. Cabals outside and inside the Consilium's territory fear his name.

The characters are approached by one of the current Sentinels, who, along with his cabal, wants to enact some payback on the new Provost for his past activities. They ask that the characters break a minor edict, something just large enough to attract the Provost's attention.

If the characters help out, the Provost does get involved and then, walking into a well-executed trap, is killed. The Sentinel publicly claims that the Provost's death was accidental, just a simple matter of being caught in the crossfire. He recommends that the character's cabal be let off with a metaphorical "slap on the wrist" and be restored to the good graces of the Consilium.

How do the characters handle this? Do they reveal the Sentinel's crime or let a hated Provost's murder go unrevealed? If they do expose it, what will the Sentinel do and who is pulling his strings? The Hierarch? Or someone pushing to be the next Provost?

### *By Friend*

It's a Herculean task to maintain friendships between cabals, especially if they have differing ideals or orders. Because of this, it's rare that a Consilium uses the bonds of friendship alone to try and resolve disputes.

That being said, when mages do make the attempt, Provosts call the oldest cabal in the Consilium or the youngest into action. The oldest cabal has the advantage of experience, with knowledge of local cabals and a good idea of the Consilium's needs. On the other hand, new cabals are often non-threatening. They can enter the situation fresh and suggest novel ways to resolve it.

In all cases, the involved mages put peer pressure on the offenders to make them comply. If this doesn't seem to be working, the Consilium might decide the offenders aren't worth the trouble and "shun" them. This is akin to the Amish practice in which the entire community ignores the offenders' presence. Common resources are kept away from them, and they are unwelcome at any public function. If, even after the shunning, the offending cabal agrees to mediation, the Provost is the one who accepts the offer (or not) and completes the negotiations.

Heralds, with their superior knowledge of the social landscape, usually spearhead a friendly resolution. Provosts finish the process, making sure everything is resolved to the Consilium's satisfaction.

### *By Compromise*

As a matter of course, smart cabals keep long lists of whom they owe favors to; any decently run Consilium has its Provosts find out this information through gossip or by levering favors of their own. Provosts use these lists to pressure reticent cabals by practicing *realpolitik*, a term meaning governance based on practical terms. Provosts who excel at *realpolitik* place aside the ideals

of Paths and orders and always rule strictly on the side of sensible considerations. For the most part, *realpolitik* is about compromise: when both sides feel like they've come out ahead, the Provost's job is successful.

Sometimes, *realpolitik* takes the form of a threat; favors are called due to threaten the targeted cabal's goals. The Provost could pull in allies who refuse to support the cabal in their current need until the cabal deals with the Consilium's charges.

In other times, *realpolitik* emerges as a treat: owed favors will be wiped away, the debt erased. For example, if the offending cabal owes favors to other cabals, the Provost could go and collect those tokens (see the "Rite of Requite," p. 39), offering them up in exchange for compliance.

Provosts also use favors to force pressure on the orders. Favors are offered on behalf of the Consilium to an affiliated order. The order then offers a "carrot" to the offending cabal, perhaps the teaching of a new rote or a bit of lore. In exchange, the cabal complies with the Consilium's wishes.

In these situations, newer cabals may be called in either by the Provost or an affiliated order to "sweeten the pot," doing favors for the targeted cabal in exchange for favor with the Consilium. This is a tempting offer for many newcomers and hard to turn down.

### *External Disputes*

Heralds sometimes refer to the *Rule of Three*, which states that connections are important up to three steps away from the center. This means that Heralds may take an interest in an ally or enemy of a local cabal, even if that association comes from a force outside of the Consilium's territory.

The reasoning is that outside forces can draw the local cabal into a conflict. The local cabal will then tax its allies, which then takes a toll on the Consilium.

The center is, of course, the Consilium itself and the cabals that directly make up the Councilors and Provosts.

The first step consists of those cabals with Consilium Status; they may have Sentinels, Heralds or liegemen among their ranks, but they're known to the Consilium and are important to its plans.

The next step consists of those cabals that live within the Consilium's territory but have no status or actively defy the Consilium's wishes.

The final step consists of any external allies of the cabals living within the Consilium's territory. These must be significant allies, willing to do considerable favors for the cabal in question.

## *Alternate Governments*

A Consilium is not the only model for governance. The most famous alternative is the Free Council's Assembly, but different models also exist across the world.

### *Assembly*

The Free Council, through its study of modern and ancient practices, has come up with a model to liberate all mages from the ruthless oppression of those with superior magic. Or has it?

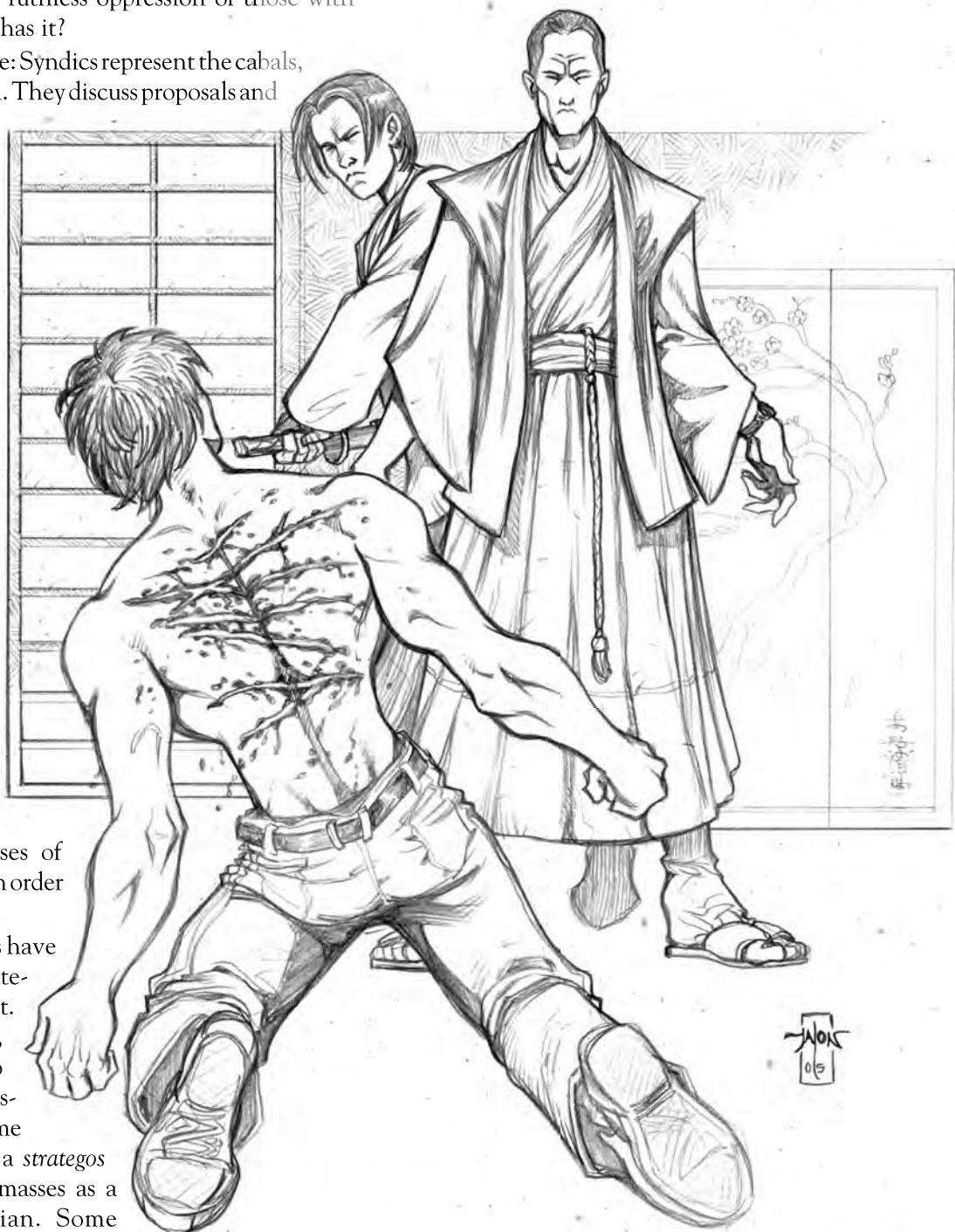
The setup is simple: Syndics represent the cabals, one syndic per cabal. They discuss proposals and then return them to their cabal for ratification. Once all of the cabals agree, the proposal becomes law.

The process, though, is excruciatingly long, usually requiring multiple meetings per month. Cabals with opposing agendas have also been known to "salt" the Assembly with poor representatives just to gum up the works. Sometimes, the cabals even use proxy cabals to do this, manipulating new cabals with promises of favors or resources in order to sway their votes.

Even if the cabals have similar goals, ultimately, conflict breaks out. In severe instances, when cabals go into open warfare, the Assembly must become a Column, run by a strategos selected from the masses as a competent tactician. Some

strategoi, tempted by power, turned their Assemblies into weakened versions of ruling Consilii, maintaining power through constant fear of outside threats.

Of all the models presented, though, the Free Council Assembly is still the only one that virtually ensures that every mage's voice can and should be heard. Because of that fact alone, the Assembly endures as a rival to the Consilium model of government.



## *Celestial Court*

The Celestial Court emerged out of the need of certain fundamentalist sects to have a more defined legal structure and evolved from there. While the Celestial Court bears a resemblance to the Consilium model, there are several differences.

For the Celestial Court, all matters begin with the Watcher, a position roughly corresponding to a cabal's Doorwarden. The Watcher investigates any issue involving a constituent cabal or its neighbors and determines whether a violation has occurred according to a common legal code.

This code, equivalent to a cabal's Protocols, is kept by the Celestial Court and divided up into two sections: "General Principles" and "Specific Offenses." The Watcher must have a specific idea of which code has been breached before deciding punishment.

If he does decide a crime occurred, the Watcher tries to elicit a confession from the criminal. No punishment can be meted out without a confession. Torture is allowed, especially using Life, Forces or Prime magics, which leave fewer lasting marks. Mind magics, unless supervised by a higher official, are frowned upon because they may taint the evidence.

The Watcher passes reports of the crime (and the possible confession) to a Magistrate, the local equivalent of a Sentinel, chosen from several connected cabals. The Magistrate investigates the charges as well, gets the confession (if the Watcher couldn't) and decides what the punishment is. The only allowed reprisals are: death, permanent exile, forced labor, a heavy beating or a light beating.

If the situation warrants a beating, the sentence is carried out immediately. Any number of magics can be used to inflict the punishment, although a Death rote is commonly used. A light beating might only be painful, but leave no enduring wounds; a heavy beating might seriously injure the criminal. The beating may also be applied to a mage's resources instead of his physical being, with tass or Mana typically stripped away.

In case of a greater sentence, the Magistrate pushes the issue to the Prefect. Prefects are selected for their affinity to various Paths and rule accordingly. A Prefect reviews the case thoroughly before passing judgment, often investigating it again to be thorough. A Prefect might assign forced labor, determining exactly what that means for the mage involved.

The Board of Punishments, which involves five mages, handles death or exile, once the Magistrate has finished investigating. Most of the time, they rubber stamp the Magistrate's work and then decide if the

crime deserves a worse sentence or leniency. While they may agree with a death sentence, they can only force a mage to be exiled.

The Voice of Heaven, the pinnacle of the Celestial Court, hears capital cases only. She may rule on a case immediately or kick it back down to a lower court. She is considered to be above the law and can make law, override current laws and overturn any lower court's decision.

When the Board and the Voice of Heaven must be replaced, a secret lottery is undertaken and six candidates chosen. These candidates are masked and then vote on who among them they wish to be the Voice of Heaven. The winner is then crowned by the previous Voice or by the full Court — their identities are never publicly revealed.

There are courts that use this model in ways similar to a tribunal Consilium — they simply phrase all of their edicts as law and disperse them through the Magistrates into the system. The Watcher makes sure the cabals follow the edicts and gains greater political clout for succeeding.

## *Circle of Elders*

Among several indigenous groups, one is more likely to find a Circle of Elders than a Consilium. In essence, a person becomes an Elder if he or she is old enough, undergoes a rigorous test to prove his or her experience (often a magical one or a Duel Arcane with an existing elder) and severs all ties with his or her peer group, either by leaving his or her cabal or being forced into becoming a Solitary.

The Circle of Elders make decisions for its constituent cabals to follow, but it has no intermediaries; it instead chooses cabals to do that work on a case-by-case basis. Clever Circles of Elders make sure that every cabal has a chance to work for them, ensuring that the social capital within their area flows smoothly.

## *The Scales of Aletheia*

This shadowy alternative to the Consilium was named after its first proponent and her sense of justice in balance. The Scales of Aletheia is differentiated from normal Consilii because it actively seeks to understand and balance all the forces of the Awakened world. The Aletheian Council is perhaps the rarest form of Awakened government, although some claim the Scales of Aletheia to be the most enlightened. Its critics (a majority of mages) accuse it of being the most naïve, foolish and unsustainable of governments, little more than a pipe dream occasionally put into practice in certain places for short periods of time.

Each Aletheian Council is composed of 10 members, divided into the Right Hand and the Left Hand. On the right-hand side are the Paths and orders of the Atlantean traditions; on the left-hand side are mages who represent the Seers of the Throne, apostates, the Shadow Realm and Astral Space. Sometimes, this means that one or more actual Seers serve as Councilors. When the Seers refuse to participate, one or more mages are chosen to represent them instead, charged with doing their best to portray the Seers' interests. An apostate represents that "faction" of individuals, while a mage versed in the Spirit Arcanum stands for the Shadow Realm and a mage experienced in astral journeys speaks for the Inner Reaches.

The Aletheian Council works on policies that balance those energies already existing in the area. If one Hand looks like it's gaining ascendance, the Aletheian Council moves to balance its power with the other Hand. By fostering balance socially, these mages hope to heal the metaphysical rift in the Tapestry.

### Story Hook – The Voice of Dark Waters

A deranged Seer is captured by Consilium Sentinels. He claims that the "Voice of Dark Waters" stranded him there as part of a punishment. After further investigation, Mysterium scholars find text references in books from the 1940s claiming that the "Voice" was a Consilium variant that united mages in territories bound by water. Masters of the Spirit Arcanum, these Voices made all of their decisions in the Shadow Realm and then dispatched powerful spirits or allied mages to deliver punishments.

When no new compelling avenues of exploration open up, the Mysterium files away the entire incident and moves on. Certain mages, however, begin to complain of hearing voices from the darkness, commanding spirits to harass them. When pressed for specifics, the mages find they can't remember enough details to aid a more thorough investigation.

What's going on here? Are these voices the first sign of an incursion from a secret, Shadow Realm government that aims to undermine the Consilium?

### *Lex Magica*

Magical law is a labyrinth of tradition, as it is built on a set of precepts and precedents that can be traced (its

main proponents claim) back to the legendary days of Atlantis. Organized and respected orders of mages refer to their system of law as the *Lex Magica*. As the name suggests, it's not merely formed by the laws of magic, but from the very language of magic. In theory, "the Lex" is supposed to prevent mages from using magic without wisdom or restraint. In practice, the *Lex Magica* is a language of power, defining authority and formally acknowledging when others challenge it.

Make no mistake: there are times when the *Lex Magica* defines decisions that are just and good, but justice must come from those who use it, not the tools they use. Magical law is not a set of absolutes. It does not function like the laws of Sleepers. The biggest distinction is that mages don't limit themselves to debating what is *legal*; their Consilii strive for judgments that are *wise, just and moral*. Such ideas are subjective, of course, so that they can't simply be summarized as "you must do this" and "thou shalt not do that." Mages learn the basic *precepts* of the law from their Mentors and masters, but these precepts are merely summaries and principles. Lacking strict rules, magical law is based, more than anything else, on *precedent*.

Save for the more radical innovations of the Free Council, much of magical society depends on understanding and recreating the past. Some traditional mages insist that the very reason a "society" of mages exists at all is because they can all trace their origins back to the time of ancient Atlantis, including the precedents that society set. By tradition, the true measure of whether an action is right or wrong can be measured by comparing it against the examples of the past.

As masters pass on what they have learned to their students, elder mages remind initiates that much of what they are learning has been studied for many generations before. This is a dangerous notion, one that naturally leads each new generation to question and challenge what has come before them. As initiates investigate, those who challenge the law find precedents that seem outdated or unfair. Mages aren't required to repeat the bad mistakes of the past, but, by the same token, convincing a Consilium that a past ruling was unjust or unfair isn't easy. A mage can challenge the precedents of the Lex, but doing so challenges the very structure of society and those who rule it.

If mages had limitless wisdom, intellect, knowledge and memory, their system of law would work perfectly, but anyone less powerful than the Oracles themselves inevitably falls short of its ideals. Young mages cite the events of the recent past, skewed by politics and interpretation. Master mages dredge up guidance from

the distant past, but their visions of history are not crystal clear. When abused, the law becomes nothing more than an excuse to prop up those in power, yet the same system that gives a would-be tyrant strength can suddenly and swiftly take it away. As we shall soon see, the dialogue of the Lex has been conducted since the Fall of Atlantis . . . and many of the same discussions enacted then still rage on now.

## *The Letter of the Law*

Magical law is not a set of carefully worded instructions shared by all Consilii everywhere. Nor is magical law a list of rules that can be deconstructed and semantically debated. The law is a series of judgments handed down by a city's Ruling Council, the Consilium, based on what has happened before. The law is as much a social framework as a legal document. There is no massive moldering tome containing a set of pronouncements that can be obeyed to the letter. The law is more like a language, a dialogue of every transgression that has been acknowledged and punished.

Textbooks of law do exist, although, typically, they are more compilations of history, precedent, opinion and perspective than books of rules. The writings of history's luminaries are cited and referenced by scholarly mages during trials, but these writings serve only as examples. The Hierarch of the local Consilium may decide to write down, transmit, proclaim or discuss what he sees as the law, but he cannot force all of his Councilors to agree with him. Of course, a Consilium would be wise to simplify its instructions into a set of guidelines, but most Consilii prefer not to limit their authority by strictly following a set of rules.

Many cities have a library (and several mages with the Library Merit) compiling volumes of legal lore, but searching through them can be time-consuming and risky. A researcher may find a precedent he thinks fits his case perfectly, but a Councilor's bias against the order, Path or methods of a former Consilium may affect his opinions. Many master mages also compile elaborate histories of a Consilium's judgments, but diatribes are rarely effective reference works. Some are encrypted by magical means to keep them from falling into the hands of the uninitiated, but the more the truth is concealed, the harder it is to disseminate.

## *The Spirit of the Law*

A city's Ruling Council serves as the judge and jury of the Lex Magica.

The main purpose of this Ruling Council is to adjudicate issues that come up in mage society, including

disputes between cabals. A mage or a cabal can petition the Consilium for mediation if they can't resolve the conflict on their own — the discussion that results is a preliminary hearing. If that's not enough, particularly when they believe traditions have been compromised, the Consilium invokes the Lex Magica. Conducting trials, passing judgments and entering the precedents into the Lex Magica is the Consilium's formal application of its role as a governing body. The Consilium doesn't need to invoke the Lex every time that others consult them, but when a conflict is not easily resolved, or the Consilium believes the transgression breaks with tradition, it is formally debated and entered as precedent.

Whenever a Consilium speaks on behalf of the Lex, the Ruling Council conducts a trial, complete with a modest amount of ceremony and accompanying rituals. Just as the Lex echoes the precedents of the past, the trial that results begins with a set of ceremonial rituals based on old traditions. A trial's rituals exist not only for legal reasons, but for spiritual ones as well. Mystics insist that the trial incarnates a Supernal ideal or activity, making a sacrament of that event. As part of a highly ritualized process performed by the Awakened, the Consilium's pronouncements are made more sacred (or for the non-religious, more Platonic or ideal). In a very true sense: the pronouncement becomes more *real*.

Actual instruction in the law does not originate from a city's Consilium, as one might expect. Instead, teaching the law is the duty of Mentors. Any mage who doesn't have a Mentor should receive instruction from a master of his or her order. Any mage who doesn't have a Mentor or order is an apostate, for whom the very concept of legality is very different. A responsible Mentor (or elder of an order) has an obligation to speak to his charge about the Consilium's previous punishments. He advises the younger mage on how the Consilium has ruled in the past, warning her when her actions might draw the censure of the Consilium again.

Save for a few basic pronouncements that can be summed very quickly — such as "hide the existence of magic from Sleepers" — learning the Lex takes time. Many masters sum up a series of precepts or principles that define the most important issues to the local Consilium (including some detailed below). These aren't laws, but they're the best examples a mage has for earning the respect and support of his elders. Naturally, different mages and orders stress different issues and ideas. In addition to common precepts, the works of famous legalists and philosophers in the past can also influence Councilors or be used as arguments in testimony.

The system of law in magical society requires participation from both the governing and the governed, since there are always alternatives to obeying those in power. Refusing to accept the Lex is really a rejection of the most powerful and influential mages in the city, which means an initiate mage who defies the Consilium has no one to turn to for protection or guidance. Any mage with a Mentor (and the Mentor Merit) has an even greater obligation to this system if his Mentor recognizes the Consilium's authority. There are always alternatives to the Lex as well — such as forming a separate society with a separate Consilium, petitioning the Free Council for an Assembly or even withdrawing from society and becoming an apostate — but, in most cities, the Lex is the bedrock on which a magical society is built.

## Common Precepts

While minor transgressions can lead to lengthy discussion in Consilium chambers, there are a few points the Lex always emphasizes. Mentors typically create a list of precepts: simple concepts that explain how a Consilium may rule in their city. The Ruling Council is not bound by these precepts, of course, since they are more advice than law. They function more as guidelines for initiate mages, who tend to stray if principles aren't detailed for them. Each order has its own additional precepts (varying from one master to the next), but a few of them are nearly universal: the precepts of Secrecy, Recognition, Protectorate, Hubris and War.

## Illumination

While a city Consilium does not rely on rulebooks that can be cited chapter and verse, the shadowy history of magic includes many luminaries who have written extensively on concepts of justice. When precedents are cited, a Councilor may choose to reference the writings of a noted luminary. Of course, many Councilors prefer to cite luminaries who are either exemplars of their own order or followers of their same Path.

Any Mentor or master of a particular Path or order should be able to tell initiates about the precepts he values most. In the same way, each Path or order includes a few notable luminaries who have written on these same precepts. Since no one system of law unites all Consilii, exemplars must light the way. Collectively, such works are referred to as *illumination*.

Each set of precepts listed below includes some opinions from the luminaries of the past.

Only a few voices are represented below, but any mage educated by a particular order or who walks along a certain Path should expect to hear from others. A young or inexperienced Councilor might seem to act on whim or personal opinion, but a wise and experienced Councilor cites the precedents of luminaries when defending these same positions. Questioning the words of luminaries is like questioning history itself.

### *The Precept of Secrecy*

First and foremost among the precepts is Secrecy: the existence of magic must be kept secret from those who do not practice it. If a mage practices magic openly before Sleepers, and another mage witnesses it, that witness must decide whether to report what happened to the Consilium.

Any act that causes a Paradox demands additional mention, as does any act that harms a Sleeper directly. When the Consilium convenes, the witness usually recites his testimony, only resorting to a formal trial if the accused contradicts his evidence. In some cities, instances of these transgressions are simply noted in hearings, and then formally recited at a later trial. Many times, the actual "punishment" for violating this Secrecy may seem relatively light, but the consequences can be severe. Repeated violations are noted in the Lex as well, leading to greater punishments.

A mage who is blatant enough to defy the Precepts of Secrecy is one who masters will not trust, and such judgments influence their future decisions. A careless mage cannot be trusted with knowledge or teaching, lest he betray it. In any dispute between two mages, the one who fails to respect the Precept of Secrecy is automatically at a disadvantage in future cases, as his carelessness is a testament to his weak character and lack of wisdom.

The danger of the violation defines the degree of punishment (as we'll soon see), but this is solely at the discretion of the Consilium. Typical violations include the following:

- casting vulgar magic before Sleeper witnesses
- casting vulgar magic before witnesses who tell others
- leaving evidence that magic has been performed
- speaking of the Mysteries before Sleepers
- teaching Sleepers the Mysteries
- betraying Arcane knowledge to other supernatural societies (such as vampires or werewolves)

Saying that someone has violated the Precept of

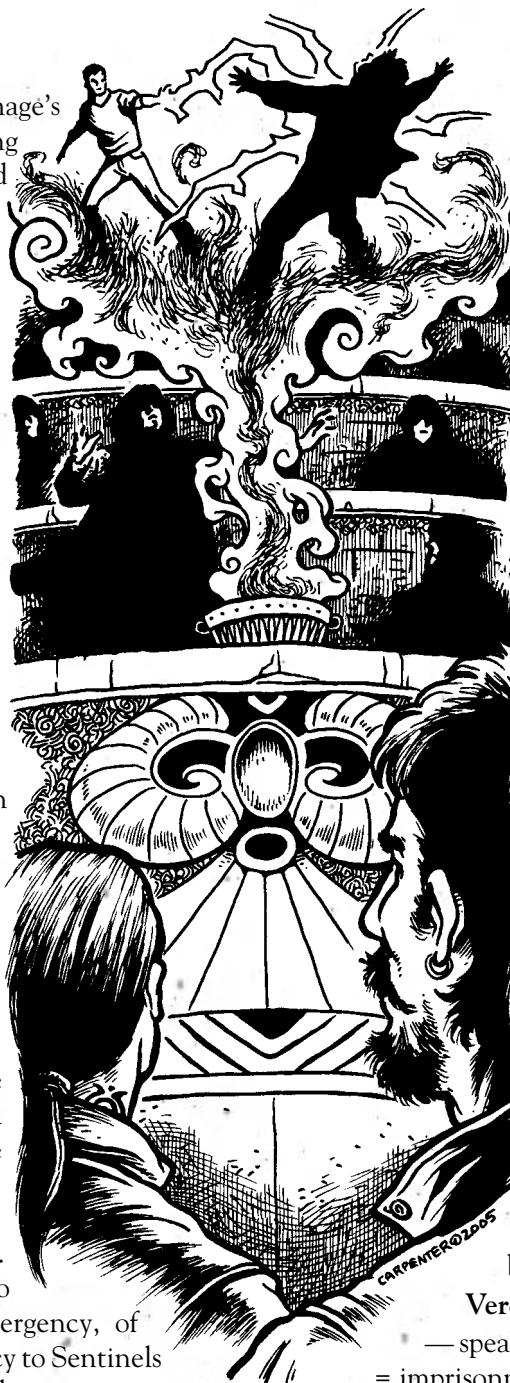
Secrecy is a black mark against a mage's reputation, so merely announcing that the precept has been violated is usually sufficient. This also avoids tedious disputes over whether an act of magic is really blatant, resolving whose version of events is correct, and so on. In cities where accusations increase, most mages respond by being more subtle until the disputes stop: in a sense correcting the problem themselves. A mage who repeatedly accuses others of violating this precept may soon be ignored; a mage who is repeatedly accused looks suspicious. In some cases, the only real test of whether an act was blatant is whether there's evidence of a Paradox — in which case, the crime comes with its own punishment.

A mage's punishment can be more severe depending on the amount of danger in the city. By tradition, a Ruling Council can decide to gather the masters and Mentors of a city to warn them when great dangers are present. Such declarations are a warning: anyone who defies the Precept of Secrecy should expect harsher punishments than ordinary until the crisis is resolved. Would-be tyrants are known to declare continual states of emergency, of course, even as they show leniency to Sentinels and allies who break these same laws.

### Illumination

*Simon Magnus, Silver Ladder Mastigos:*

"Vulgar acts of magic are their own punishment. A reckless mage invariably deviates from the world around him, becoming prone to Paradoxes and suffering wrought from his own spells. The very world around us has forces that balance the scales of reality, originating from the most fearful places in the cosmos. A Consilium would be wise to announce when a mage has performed an impossible act in the presence of the innocent, but simply recording the transgression should be sufficient. Let karma and the cosmos correct the mistakes of the wayward."



### Verdict:

- casting vulgar magic before Sleepers = major reprimand
- casting vulgar magic before witnesses = minor penance
- casting vulgar magic before witnesses who tell others = major penance

*Dawn-Striking Light, Mysterium Thyrus:*

"Knowledge is our greatest treasure, and our greatest weapon. Our very survival depends on the preservation of our secret orders, and speaking of our deepest secrets to the uninitiated vitiates that strength. Within our city, the Silver Ladder would hand the very flame of Prometheus to the masses, but it is inevitable that they will burn themselves, destroying all around us in the conflagration. Furthermore, the shadows around us hide monsters, and any who speak to us kindly this year may become our enemies the next. We dare not risk cooperation with others on Arcane matters, so betraying our secrets to them is the greatest possible act of betrayal. If traitors among us forsake our secrecy, we must forsake them. Let us revile them. If that is insufficient, let us banish them."

### Verdict:

- speaking of the Mysteries before Sleepers = imprisonment
- betraying Arcane knowledge to other supernatural societies = banishment

### The Tetragrammaton

Most Consilii can summarize crimes by "10 degrees" of punishment. The most common method of referring to them is by the 10 letters of the tetragrammaton. Both concepts are defined later in the chapter.

Minor Reprimand

Major Reprimand

Payment of Debt

Minor Penance
Major Penance
Severe Reprimand
Incarceration
Banishment
Spiritual Scourging
Spiritual Oblivion

### *The Precept of Recognition*

Few Consilii can force their will on other mages, unless tyrants and their Sentinels are especially powerful and vigilant. Every Consilium must have a way of deciding who falls under the auspices of their laws and who does not. Mages who are “recognized” by the Consilium should naturally expect greater scrutiny than those who are not.

Because a trial’s rituals make its pronouncements more “real,” formal declarations of recognition and accusation carry more weight. A mage who commits a minor offense may find his actions mentioned at the next gathering of the Consilium, even if there is no actual punishment for the act. The act has also been “recognized,” so that it can be remembered in whatever form the Consilium prefers. Some Consilii document all transgressions; others either summon spirits to bear witness, trust to their own memory and the Mind Arcanum or employ a representative of a particular magical order to record transgressions. When the mage approaches the Consilium again, the precedent of the action influences the Councilors’ further decisions.

“Recognition” is a recurring concept in the Lex. A mage who is recognized must abide by the rulings of the Consilium. A sanctum that is recognized is no longer secret, but its standards are accepted by the Consilium. And a crime that is “recognized” has been noted as precedent. Even if the crime is not punished, the transgression has been noted, and others may choose to treat the criminal differently as a result.

This is also a critical concept when a crime has no precedent. One possible precedent often cited is the express lack of a ruling in a similar case. If the Consilium failed to judge a previous similar case, a defendant could try to claim that, as precedent, the current case is beneath or beyond jurisdiction. Until someone can advance a precedent to the case, the trial proceeds, but with higher standards of scrutiny. (For a start, any vote for punishment requires two-thirds of the Councilors to convict, instead of a simple majority.) In such cases,

the Hierarch merely “recognizes” the crime without punishment, setting the crime as a precedent for the next time it occurs.

Unrecognized mages include rivals who answer to another Consilium in the same region, Solitaries and apostates. Renegade mages (such as Seers and Banishers) would fall in this same category. The Consilium must decide which transgressions require the Councilors to punish those who do not acknowledge their own authority.

### **Illumination**

#### *Dawn-Striking Light, Mysterium Thrysus:*

“When a mage arrives within our city, we must not only formally introduce him to our Consilium, but to the spirits as well. When we invoke the Lex, we summon spirits of wisdom and knowledge to bear witness to our proceedings. Thus, when an initiate asks to be placed under the auspices of our Consilium, we perform the same ritual we would use for invoking the Lex, asking for a simple declaration of his shadow name, the Path he has walked, a brief description of the journey, the name of his Mentor and the name of his order. When I was initiated, it was also a tradition for each Councilor to ask one question of the initiate. So it was when my master taught me; so it must be with this Consilium.”

### *The Precept of Protectorate*

The Consilium is usually aware where a city’s sanctums are found — at least, those that are publicly declared. A mage does not need to declare where her sanctum is hidden, but, as with other such omissions, hiding such knowledge from a city’s Councilors means that she’s rejecting their help with future catastrophes, when her sanctum would normally require assistance.

A mage who shares such information with her elders, on the other hand, can expect a certain degree of protection. In times of trouble, the city’s masters may offer to visit the local sanctums, so that they can cast additional rituals on their surroundings, but never, ever without the permission of the mages who share a sanctum nearby. Any recognized sanctum falls under the auspices of the Precept of Protectorate. Typical violations of this precept include the following:

- approaching the sanctum of another mage unannounced (if such Protocols are set)
- causing a Sleeper investigation near another mage’s sanctum
- testing the wards or limits of another mage’s sanctum
- entering another mage’s sanctum without formally granted permission

— a magical attack against a sanctum

Every city has traditions about how and when a mage can approach the sanctum of another. Small sanctums typically have very little formality — a Solitary who meditates each day in the spare room of an apartment, for instance, shouldn't be surprised when another mage knocks on the front door of her house.

More elaborate sanctums develop more complex codes of etiquette, which can vary greatly from one to the next. A sanctum formed to watch over a dangerous neighborhood, for instance, might take offense at another mage even passing within a block or two of the front door. A very traditional mage can insist that visitors announce themselves with a formal letter before paying a visit, even as a more pragmatic and modern mage insists on a cell phone call or an exchange of e-mails.

Because systems of etiquette can vary widely from one sanctum to the next, it is even more important that the Consilium should be aware not only where the sanctum is, but how it operates. Mentors and masters follow such disputes carefully, since it never hurts to know how to properly approach others who can help or hinder you.

In cities where supernatural activity is abundant, the Consilium can declare specific areas of the city or areas of influence to be the "territory" of a specific mage. Mages don't have elaborate battles over influence as certain other supernatural beings do, but mages have a vested interest in making sure their sanctums are kept safe, particularly when soul stones are used to create Demesnes within them.

Having a system that defines who does what and where can also reduce conflict with renegade mages. For instance, any mage moving to Boston quickly learns that places like Harvard University and Danvers Asylum are known haunts for other powerful practitioners not formally recognized by the city's Consilium. While the Consilium feels no obligation to actively protect such places, of course, the Councilors take a keen interest in initiates who insist on stirring up trouble there — since such actions can have deadly consequences.

### **Illumination**

*Simon Magnus, Silver Ladder Mastigos:*

"Civility is the hallmark of our society. One should not expect a petitioner to approach the Consilium for redress every time a trespasser from another magical order walked through his neighborhood. Nor should a mage take offense every time a mage approaches his door and merely knocks without sending a proper introduction. Yet the most grievous violations of this precept absolutely must be brought before the Consilium. We

should call initiates to task for approaching the sanctums of their elders without good reason or proper decorum. Such insolence begins by appearing unannounced. It inevitably proceeds to acts of surveillance and intrusion, which must be harshly punished."

### **Verdict:**

— approaching another mage's sanctum unannounced = minor reprimand

— testing the limits of another mage's sanctum = minor penance

— entering the sanctum of another mage without permission = incarceration

### *The Precept of Hibris*

Learned thinkers have written treatises on the roles of law and justice in their own magical orders. As one would expect, many such works address topics of philosophy, religion, morality and ethics. Every magical order has legends of mages who have fallen from grace, showing the results of incautious magic or immoral activity. Sleepers often flippantly remark that you "can't legislate morality," but that doesn't prevent mages in their own shadowy societies from passing judgment on what is right and wrong.

Few cities are strict enough to actually monitor immoral behavior, much less enforce it. Nonetheless, a very established Consilium can still insist on at least recognizing when a mage has performed an immoral act. The examples listed below are the most commonly cited. Some Consilii punish only the most grievous acts, while others make formal declarations of where and when an initiate has gone astray. The Consilii cannot catch all such violations, but those mages who are brought to light serve as object lessons to others. Typical violations include the following:

— casting a curse

— forcing an unwilling transformation

— binding another's soul

— magical attacks on others (unless performed within the Duel Arcane)

— aiding spiritual possession

— exiling others to the Shadow Realm

— using magic for murder

— soul theft

In some cases, distinctions are made between crimes committed against mages and the same crimes enacted against Sleepers. According to many luminaries, performing the same crime against a Sleeper is unremarkable and often not worthy of consideration under this precept — unless the crime violates the Precept of Secrecy.

Certain luminaries, however, argue the opposite, stating that crimes against Sleepers must always be answered with harsher punishments than crimes against mages.

### **Illumination**

*Simon Magnus, Silver Ladder Mastigos:*

“Let the battlefield decide right and wrong. When one mage attacks another, turning to the Consilium for arbitration is obviously a cowardly act of revenge. Paradoxes plague failures, and the weak must learn to bow before the strong. Curses, forced transformations and even channeling spirits are all tests of magical might, and prowess must be respected—we must acknowledge and recognize when they happen, but punishment would only be further violence. Unless death is the inevitable result, we must let events take their course.

“Taking such actions against Sleepers, on the other hand, is contemptible. By this, I do not mean merely clouding judgment or playing with illusion, but actually causing physical harm. Such actions threaten the Precept of Secrecy, and they should be swiftly stopped. The wounds and scars that result often act as evidence that blatant sorcery is quite real, a force to be feared.”

### **Verdict:**

— casting a curse, forcing an unwilling transformation, binding another’s spirit, magical attacks on others or aiding spiritual possession = against a mage, minor reprimand; against a Sleeper = major punishment

### *The Precept of War*

The Consilium exists as a way to peacefully resolve conflicts between mages in the same city. When the system works, both parties agree with the outcome of their trial. One side accepts a punishment, and the other accepts that the issue has been redressed. If one party is dissatisfied with the outcome of the trial, there are further methods for appealing the decision. When the system doesn’t work, a mage has other options, such as withdrawing from the Consilium or turning to the Free Council. Despite this, there have been times when mages have been so outraged by judgments of the Consilii that they have taken matters into their own hands. When this happens, one cabal progresses from a campaign of intrigue to one of magical warfare.

A few cities accept Precepts of War for the resolution of these disputes. Many cities do not, simply preferring to demand that both sides appear before the Consilium to defend their actions, regardless of how far the dispute has progressed. In martial cities, a formally declared magical war is a way to legally threaten another cabal while attempting to limit the escalation that follows. It starts with a representative of the cabal appearing

before the Consilium, petitioning the Councilors to accept her cabal’s temporary withdrawal from their system of law. By tradition, the mage then testifies to the actions that the rival cabal has taken against her cabal. The Consilium can then decide to formally proceed by invoking the Lex. If the Councilors don’t, they’re basically warning the petitioner that no matter what she claims, they’re going to treat her like any other mage in the city, passing judgment on her actions if anyone files a complaint against her.

If the city has precedent for magical war, the cabal would then be wise to announce the limits of their aggression. In feudal Japan, it is said, warlords distinguished between high war and low war, being careful to distinguish when they were honorably engaging on the battle field — and carefully timing the moment when assassins moved into position and all honor was abandoned. In the same way, a cabal can declare its “rules of engagement” when it temporarily withdraws from the Consilium. If the Consilium can’t prevent the war, the Councilors can at least limit it. The Consilium might decide to dispatch Sentinels to break up the fight, but some cities act as intermediaries for the inevitable conflict. Typical rules include the following:

— *Street Warfare*: The cabal announces that it will attack but not violate the sanctity of its rivals’ sanctum.

— *Spiritual Warfare*: The cabal announces that they intend to use open magic in the Shadow Realm, an invitation to “take the fight outside,” so Sleepers needn’t witness it.

— *Sanctum Warfare*: The cabal confides in the Consilium that it intends to strike back at its rivals’ sanctum. The cabal-members do not expect any redress or compensation for the retaliation that must inevitably follow.

— *Shadow Warfare*: The cabal chooses to confide that they are striking against another supernatural society. They acknowledge that they alone are responsible, and they must personally bear responsibility for the backlash that follows.

— *The Duel Arcane*: The cabal wants to send a champion against their rivals’ champion to conduct single combat, so that greater bloodshed can be prevented.

Consilii that allow magical warfare then turn their backs on the fighting that follows. A cabal that limits the rules of engagement expects the Consilium to step in if the fight escalates, as long as both sides agree. In spiritual warfare, for instance, the cabal is giving its rivals a chance to save face by resolving the fight away from the innocent. There are consequences, as in any war, but the Precept of War attempts to limit it. If both

sides agree to the terms, the conflict can be resolved in a way other than letting all hell break loose.

The very notion of a Precept of War is a controversial idea, to say the least. Some Councilors reject the idea utterly, swiftly punishing the first sign that rivalry has escalated to direct magical attacks. After all, that is the very reason why Consilii exist. More liberally minded mages accept that if they don't make an attempt to limit conflict, mages will desert their Consilii instead of negotiating, turning to the Free Council or (even worse) forming their own councils of war with no authority to back them up.

Accepting war is a slippery slope: a cabal that approaches its Consilium to petition for war is setting a precedent. The first time the petition is accepted, the Consilium is allowing war to occur whenever the law breaks down — unless the consequences are so catastrophic that both sides appeal to make sure that war never happens again. When this rare circumstance happens, both sides face the music, accepting all of their actions during the period of war as crimes, and accepting heavy punishments for their transgressions.

### **Illumination**

#### *Dawn-Striking Light, Mysterium Thrysus:*

“Warfare in the world of Sleepers is completely unacceptable. Our highest mandate is the Precept of Secrecy, and open magical war can compromise that secrecy. Actions in the spirit realm may have consequences in the realm of flesh, but if we have no recourse but to use open demonstrations of magical might, that dimension is far better suited for those who believe might makes right.”

### **Verdict:**

— spiritual warfare is acceptable with an open declaration, but violating the Precept of Secrecy is not, even during magical warfare

## *Judgments*

The Ruling Council can (at any time) pass judgment on the actions of a mage within its city. Whether the mage actually accepts that judgment is another matter, of course, but if he wants to continue benefiting from the aid and advice of Mentors and masters, he would be wise to take his lumps. Repeatedly defying the Consilium can force the Councilors to change a minor punishment to a major one.

Every punishment has a specified duration, usually called a *stigma*. By tradition, a stigma usually corresponds to natural or mystical phenomena: from dusk till dawn, the phase of the moon or a lunar cycle, the movement of a star or astrological sign and so on. More modern mages

are content to use more precise terms for stigmas, such as calendar days, weeks or months. Serious crimes may be punished by the workings of Fate, held in abeyance until a prophesied event not only occurs, but does so in a way that the Consilium recognizes. This may seem severe, but in many older records of precedent, these are the most traditional applications of stigmas.

Most cities recognize 10 degrees of punishment. Particular mystics assign these increments to various astrological signs, numerological symbols, ancient alphabets or major arcana of the Tarot. The most common sequence among Western mages, however, is the tetragrammaton. Typical punishments include the following (listed in degrees of severity):

### **Minor Reprimand**

This is little more than formally stating that what the mage did was wrong. This formally expresses to other mages in the city that the Consilium considers the act a transgression. (Refer back to the Precept of Recognition for further details.)

### **Major Reprimand**

The Consilium instructs other masters to limit their assistance to the mage. In some cases, the Councilors may even warn other cabals or mages against helping the criminal.

### **Payment of Debt**

The mage must pay a debt, usually in the form of a favor, act or deed. Cabals and orders trade favors, as do masters. If the mage belongs to a society — such as a cabal or order — she must pay on a debt that her society owes another.

### **Minor Penance**

The mage must atone for her act by performing a service for the city's mages. This may be something as simple as re-organizing the contents of a library, standing guard with agents of the Adamantine Arrow or serving as a lone watchman for a few nights.

### **Major Penance**

The mage must perform a risky or dangerous act for the benefit of the city's mages. This could involve scouting an area known for supernatural activity, undertaking a spiritual journey or retrieving a powerful artifact. Note that this punishment actually hints that the mage has potential, since a fool would not be trusted with such an important mission.

### **Severe Reprimand**

The Consilium states bluntly that no one (not even initiates) may aid or assist the offending mage, clarifying the duration of the reprimand. Offering assistance merits the same punishment, “tarring” the collaborator “with

the same brush." The mage is then either instructed to meditate in seclusion or abstain from practicing magic. Failure to comply leads to incarceration.

### Incarceration

The mage is magically confined, surrounded by powerful wards that cripple his magical power. He must meditate on his actions. In many cases, this is done because the mage is dangerous enough that he has risked exposing or seriously weakening the city's mages, and the Consilium needs time to recover while repairing the damage that's been done.

### Banishment

This is rarely effective, but sometimes used as an alternative to incarceration. The mage is given orders to leave the city, sometimes for a specific period of time. If she returns during that time, she faces incarceration or worse. The stigma can include further details of where the mage must go or what she must do before she returns.

### Spiritual Scourging (Confinement or Banishment)

This punishment is rarely performed more than a few times each decade. A master of Death (using Death 5) can steal an Awakened soul. When carrying out a sentence of spiritual confinement, the master of Death binds a mage's soul in a protected place for the duration of a stigma before restoring it to its owner. When performing a rite of spiritual banishment, the master sends the soul far away. This may involve hurling it into the Shadow Realm or instructing a Sentinel to carry it to another city. Spiritual banishment often results in a quest, as the mage must either chase down the soul herself or find allies who can do so for her.

The Death mage who performs this rite must be thoroughly convinced that the crime is worth such a dire punishment, since he is making a sacrifice to perform it: performing this rite is an act of hubris (requiring a Morality check).

### Spiritual Oblivion

This punishment is rarely performed more than once or twice a century. The mage's very soul is destroyed, rendering him incapable of performing magic. Sentencing a mage in this fashion — and actually performing the spiritual execution — always tests the hubris of the mages involved. In addition to this moral risk, very few mages know of reliable methods for performing such an execution. There have been instances when a mage's soul has been fed to horrible creatures who feast on such delicacies. No matter what the method might be, such an act invariably has serious consequences.

In many cities, a Consilium that has no resort but to call on this final and horrible punishment must

step down, as an admission of their failure to resolve the problem another way. Those Consilii that do not have this principle are typically tyrannies, and such extreme actions are taken as call to war for the criminal's allies.

### The Duel Arcane

No matter how learned or scholarly a city's Councilors may be, initiates are known for occasionally finding their own ways to settle disputes. Before they consider forsaking one Consilium for another or turning to an Assembly of the Free Council for guidance, passionate mages resort to more immediate solutions. The Duel Arcane is the most common of these resolutions: a trial by magical combat, usually involving specified parameters of magic. See "The Duel Arcane," pp.

286-289, in *Mage: The Awakening*

## *The Mechanisms of the Consilium*

Interpretation of the Lex is left to the Consilium. These individuals aren't necessarily chosen simply because they are powerful; it is often said that a mage must be wise and moral to gain Gnosis and wisdom. Serving on a Consilium is a testament of character. Councilors must resist the temptation of interpreting the law for their own benefit.

The ideal Lex is a system in which the wise resist this opportunity. In reality, a powerful Hierarch with several influential Councilors supporting his rule and a handful of Sentinels to enforce it, can make life hell for those who do not conform to his ideals. Despite all the fine rhetoric about magical enlightenment bringing wisdom, manipulative mages who seek power over others must contend for such positions with rival paragons of magical prowess.

The societies of other supernatural beings have their own codes of law, of course, but they are often predicated on a threat of force or the pain of punishment. Magical law is presented as a reflection of enlightenment, despite a few who use it for personal or corrupt reason. Most Councilors would claim that fairness usually wins out over blatant self-interest. The ranks of the Free Assemblies of the world are filled with those who would disagree.

Unless conspiracy or collusion is at work, a Hierarch cannot rule the Consilium without the support of her advisors. She may have secular influence and secret wisdom, but, in most cases, she cannot govern through simple threats and intimidation. Tyrannical Consilii are

rare, although they do exist. They require the Councilors to be absolutely obedient to their Hierarch, and their factions must be the strongest in the city. Even then, such Consilii are doomed to fail if others actively resist their pronouncements. There are always alternatives to tyranny when the Lex is abused.

As interpreted by the local Consilium, the Lex Magica can vary greatly from one community to the next. Human memory being what it is, recent and local events thus tend to skew the legal interpretations of the Consilium. Even a mage who lives in a city for only five or 10 years can remember who has stood before the Councilors, and what she did, as long as he has been active in his secret society. As one would expect, Silver Ladder mages tend to remember transgressions in great detail, Mysterium mages dredge up obscure precedents, the Guardians of the Veil know of many cases that were never brought before the Consilii and Free Council mages often ignore Consilii that either don't affect them or that involve minor transgressions beneath their notice.

While interpretations of the Lex may vary, its primary role still functions: the Lex Magica allows the masters of a community to recognize which actions have challenged the law. This is one reason why many minor transgressions may seem like a "slap on the wrist": a punishment may not seem severe but recognizing the occurrence brings it to the attention of the city's masters. The repercussions extend far beyond any mere punishment or censure given in a Consilium chamber.

The Consilium does not routinely hand out judgments to correct unwanted behavior. The most important aspect of a punishment is that the city's masters and Consilium acknowledge what has been done and who is responsible. A public admonition may seem to be little more than words, but master mages have long memories. A younger mage who routinely takes foolish actions, invokes the wrath of the Consilium or threatens the security and secrecy of his magical order will not be trusted as much as one who stays out of trouble. The younger mage's reputation suffers, and he loses the benefits of "belonging" in mage society.

A clever mage can work this system to his advantage. He takes careful note of who censures his actions and who defends them — it is possible for him to gain the patronage of one Councilor while he isn't trusted by others. (It is even possible to use that leverage to change the law.) Such games are dangerous, and a master would be even more foolish to risk his own reputation helping out a reckless young mage. This is what playing politics in a city is all about: judgments aren't just

a simple pronouncement, but insight into where each of the Councilors on a Consilium stand.

When the politics of a city change drastically, one Consilium may replace another, and the precedents of the old council of law become an issue of debate. (For instance, in the city of Boston, the Stone Assembly's body of precedent was thrown out and mostly ignored when the Ebon Noose and White Putnams declared a new Consilium.) A Councilor may cite instances from the previous Consilium to support his stance, but the Councilors must decide whether to continue with such conventions or break with tradition.

Young, newly established Consilii are often weak because they lack precedent. They must typically show that they are taking the same actions that older and wiser Consilii have taken, unless the new Consilii are popular enough to defy the past. The longer a Consilium is in power, the more examples it can cite from recent history. Some mages will always hold grudges about previous judgments, but the success and survival of a Consilium reinforces its judgments.

## *Variations*

A Ruling Council does not have to represent every magical order and Path in the city; in fact, Consilii with token representatives from minor groups tend to get very little done. For the purposes of the law and politics, which orders and Paths are represented can be critical. A mage appearing before a Consilium would be wise to tailor his testimony, evidence and arguments to the Councilors he wants to influence.

In most cities, any mage may witness Consilium meetings at which the Lex Magica is discussed; while, in others, the only witnesses are the other mages of the defendant's cabal. Some business conducted by the Consilium is discussed without any witnesses at all, particularly where the Guardians of the Veil are concerned. Guardians do not have an obligation to disclose all their secrets to a city's masters; instead, Guardians usually wait to admit what they have done until they have ironclad proof that what they have done is right.

One of the most controversial ideas concerns the status of the Free Council, which often proposes alternatives when the system breaks down. The Consilium convenes councils, performs rituals and conducts trials recognized by the established masters of a city. The Free Council holds additional gatherings called Assemblies, which may rely on their own laws, depend on the whims of the underground or degenerate into anarchy, depending on local politics. Some Free Councilors actually insist that

these alternatives are part of the law, so any discussion of the law should include them.

In some cities, the Consilium may even consider pleas for assistance or help after legal cases are brought before them. After reviewing which actions have merited punishment, the Consilium address how the city deals with the consequences of such actions. This is only really possible when rivalries between masters are at a minimum. When the law is obeyed, or accepted quickly, Councilors review the issues most important to the city (as expressed by mages of specific orders): what supernatural threats endanger the city (the Silver Ladder), what knowledge can be recovered (the Mysterium), how intrigue threatens their city (the Guardians), what unseen dangers surround the common populace (Adamantine Arrow) and how individuals are exploring alternatives to the system accepted by the status quo (Free Council). In such cases, the Council may even call a cabal the Councilors trust before them to resolve or investigate one of these problems. Such utopias are rare, but they do exist.

And then there are the cities in which a Consilium's reach exceeds its grasp: a circle of masters who think they have the strength to enforce their own beliefs. They investigate and act against weaker mages with the support of higher powers. Such tyrannies do not tend to last for long, but they do exist. A Silver Ladder tyrant may appoint others of his order representing the five Watchtowers, or a Free Council master can insist that his accepted Council only address the greatest dangers in the city. A Free Council Assembly may openly defy precedent, but the Free Councilors' rule only extends to the degree to which it is recognized. A true tyrant may find the ranks of the Free Council swelling, encounter resistance from renegade cabals who ignore his Council or find himself confronted by many apostates who are oblivious to his pronouncements. If the city's mages reject the help of their Councilor masters, then those mages have no need to answer to the law. Those who have the support of other powerful mages pursue alternatives.

Tyrants and egotists can find themselves opposed by other masters — leading to schisms within a city, and even magical warfare. A city where the orders are divided may have more than one Consilium, possibly including one that the Consilium does not recognize. And yet, since a governing body only has power when someone accepts its governance, a tyrant may claim power and hold the support of those above, an egotist can surround himself with like-minded practitioners, while a rebel has the support of those below. Mages are

powerful enough and willful enough that they resist systems that do not benefit them.

## *The Trial*

In most cities, Consilium trials are conducted in the same way. Most cities have a few exceptions, but even these have been created as precedent through trials of the Lex. A trial starts like this: Any recognized mage can bring a transgression before the Ruling Council. A mage must abide by the precepts of the local Consilium and accept its judgments to be recognized. By this time, he has no doubt received instruction from his Mentor (or an elder of his magical order) in the city's precepts, and so has some idea of the transgressions that merit punishment. When Sleepers have been victimized by a mage's actions, any recognized mage can start a case against the offender. If a mage has been victimized (and survived), the Consilium typically requires the victim to appear before the Consilium.

After an initial hearing, the Councilors decides whether they must rely upon the Lex Magica to resolve the issue. Minor transgressions may only warrant a warning or a formal announcement of culpability, but relying on the Lex means that the transgression and its punishment will become part of the city's precedents. Any further transgressions committed by a guilty mage must be evaluated in the light of this transgression, and punishment (if any) can become precedent cited in the punishment of similar crimes.

The hearing begins with a dialogue between the Councilors, usually nothing more than a discussion of whether similar crimes have been punished under the Lex before. A truly unique crime could lead to a trial if the city has never seen its like, but the opening dialogue acknowledges that the trial may be proceeding without precedent — which gives everyone involved a little extra time to search for any precedent or illumination that may affect the outcome of the trial. A simple majority vote of the Consilium is required to begin a trial under the auspices of the Lex.

If a simple majority of the Councilors cannot agree that the case is worthy of a trial, the Hierarch can start one nonetheless, but such a decision is risky. A Hierarch who forces a trial his Councilors do not want will have a harder time convincing them that the crime merits punishment. In most cases, the Consilium will wait at least a full day before convening a trial, and some Consilii wait until they have several trials to conduct at once. On rare occasions, a Hierarch can force a trial immediately after the accusation is made, but, again, he will have a harder time convincing the Councilors



to side with him if he does. In some cities, “forced trials” also involve higher standards for votes: a motion that normally requires a simple majority to pass now requires a two-thirds vote instead.

The Consilium then considers the nature of the trial. In cases involving the city’s Sentinels or the Guardians of the Veil, the trial could be held in secret, particularly if the evidence should also be kept secret. Either the Hierarch or a Guardian Councilor is empowered to hold a secret trial. The mage who brought the case to trial — referred to as the “petitioner” — can also choose a Councilor to represent him, usually called an *advocate*.

The advocate doesn’t really serve as a lawyer, but if he accepts, he has certain responsibilities to the petitioner. First among them concerns witnesses: if the petitioner requires witnesses, the advocate decides the means by which they are brought before the Consilium. In many cases, failure to appear before the Consilium is taken as a rejection of the Consilium, along with its justice and protection. In cases involving serious crimes (the sorts that luminaries would consider worthy of punishments beyond a major penance), Sentinels may actually bring in witnesses against their will.

If the trial is not conducted immediately, the advocate then decides how to approach the accused and summon her before the Consilium. Refusing to appear before the Consilium can have consequences as severe as banishment. The trial may proceed anyway without cooperation from the accused, and the outcome will probably involve either temporary banishment or ostracism (since that would normally be the punishment for rejecting the will of the Consilium). That being said, the accused may instead turn to the protection of a Free Council Assembly or another Consilium in the region. This is more the exception than the rule — the accused usually consents to appear before the Consilium that recognized her.

Many cities allow the accused or a petitioner to bring in a “factotum” from her magical order to speak on her behalf. Acting as a lawyer to a Consilium trial is a rather ignoble role — but a clear sign that a magical order has an interest in either the welfare of the petitioner, the fate of the accused or the outcome of the trial. Each magical order has specialists in the Lex Magica, often educated in the teachings of the order’s luminaries. In controversial cases, the outcome could very well set further precedent for how a transgression is punished,

so a magical order often has a reason to advance its own agenda in the punishment of that crime.

A trial can require the petitioner, accused and factotums to attend. The trial can require only some of them to attend. The trial might involve none of them, as a trial held in secrecy. Once the particulars are arranged and the mages are in the same Consilium chamber, the trial begins with a ritual invoking the Lex. Two particulars can vary greatly here: the type of chamber used for the ritual and the ritual itself.

Most trials are convened in the Consilium's normal chambers, usually the place where the Consilium traditionally meets. Such places typically have good defenses, especially against scrying, along with a number of other wards. Some trials, however, are held within another mage's or cabal's sanctum; choosing which one can be a very political decision. The Hierarch has the final say on this location, but will often defer to the advice of her Councilors. Although few cases are resolved using powerful applications of magic, the Hierarch can decide to hold the hearing in a Demesne, so that truly powerful magic can be cast with less risk. Some cases are held in a sanctum dominated by a neutral order — that is, one where the accused and petitioner's orders don't hold an undue amount of influence or authority. There have also been cases in which the trial is not held in a sanctum at all. Perhaps the Hierarch wants to conduct a ritual at the scene of the crime, for instance, or the resolution is best performed at a secret locale away from all witnesses, and so on.

The ritual that begins the Lex often seems like a formality to the newly initiated, but some mages consider this ritual to be more serious than any other aspect of the trial. In the broadest sense, most rituals bridge the gap between two worlds: the secular and the sacred, the world of the "Lie" and the Platonic realms closer to mystical "truth." The Consilium collectively casts this opening ritual, drawing on the Arcana they have mastered. Some rituals include a few pragmatic incantations. The Mind Arcanum can preserve memories in all participants of what transgressed, the Spirit Arcanum could summon a force to bear witness to the results, the Time Arcanum aids the Councilors in seeing possible outcomes of their decisions, and so on. The opening ritual can involve particular spells, or it can simply be a way to make a sacrament of the proceedings.

From this point, the Hierarch becomes the "judge" of the proceedings, and the Councilors become the "jury," although the Hierarch can vote on the jury as well. (If the Hierarch began the ritual without support from the majority of her Councilors, however, most

cities insist that the advocate take this role instead.) At the bidding of the trial's judge, the petitioner and the accused proceed with their testimony, calling upon witnesses to present evidence.

In thoroughly modern Consilii, the sequence of events that follows resembles a typical courtroom drama, although a Consilium can insist on a separate sequence similar to what was done in a previous century, era or civilization. Some Consilii conduct trials purporting to follow the example of Atlantis; others call upon courts of spirits to attend, observe the rituals of ancient secret societies, rely upon Socratic dialogues or enact stranger variations. Simple cases require nothing more than giving the petitioner and accused a turn to speak. The Hierarch might call upon people to speak one by one, or the mages present may actually be civilized enough to hold an unstructured dialog.

No matter what the format may be, many of the same particulars are observed. Both the petitioner and accused state their case. Either one can invite a factotum to step forward and elaborate. Each side has the opportunity to bring witnesses before the Consilium, which has already decided whether such participation is voluntary or mandatory. By this point, the Consilium has already announced whether other acts of magic can be performed during the trial (during the initial hearing); if the Councilors accede, the Hierarch offers the opportunity to perform them. The trial then draws to a close as each Councilor has the opportunity to cite luminaries and precedent that should influence the decision. Once each Councilor has had a chance to present this opinion, all the Councilors retire to decide the verdict.

On most Consilii, the Councilors then each decide whether the accused is without fault or whether he must be punished. Unless the Hierarch has called a trial without the assent of her Councilors or she has forced through a trial the same night the petitioner approached the Consilium, a simple majority is required to punish the accused. Otherwise, two-thirds of the Councilors must agree. Any Councilor may abstain from this vote. The Hierarch can vote as well, but in the case of a tie, the Hierarch's vote is removed. If the accused is to be punished, both sides then have a chance to suggest what punishment they feel is just.

If punishment is levied, the Consilium then decides whether the act merits "recognition" — merely a minor reprimand stating that the accused has broken the law — or whether stronger punishment is necessary. In this second vote, each Councilor cites what punishment she thinks is just. The quickest method is merely citing the

degree of punishment (such as the corresponding letter of the tetragrammaton). In more controversial cases, the Councilors elaborate by citing further luminaries and precedent.

The Consilium then returns to face the assembled mages, including the accused and petitioner (if they are present). The actual punishment is left to the Hierarch to decide and enforce. A light sentence is left to the Provosts to document and supervise; harsher sentences are enforced by the city's Sentinels. The Consilium assigns someone (usually a Provost) to verify that the punishment is performed, and the closing rites of the Lex conclude the trial.

### *Giving Testimony*

A mage who gives testimony before the Consilium is given an opportunity to speak in his defense, present evidence and even refer to witnesses. Most trials for minor transgressions are relatively casual, giving a mage the chance to simply state as he chooses the evidence that supports or disputes the petition. More serious trials, such as those that require factotums, have a system for cross-examination. After the testimony, each advocate (or each Councilor) has a chance to ask follow-up questions.

Actually lying during testimony is possible, but dangerous. Councilors are allowed to cast spells to detect truth or falsehood, but whether a master mage relies on such tools is a matter of personal preference. Some Councilors eschew all such methods, either because they know such methods have a chance of error or because they prefer not to use such direct applications of magic to define truth.

Presenting magic as evidence is even riskier, since magic is (by its very nature) capricious and unpredictable. Any evidence that relies upon magic is treated with skepticism, although older mages tend to have enough insight to see through magical fabrication. (An elder's Mage Sight tends to win out over an initiate's minor spells.) Powerful mages brought before trial have a greater chance of convincing the Consilium if they rely only upon words and witnesses instead of mudras and incantations—someone accused of a crime involving magic stands on slippery ground if he tries to use magic to resolve it.

Mages from different Paths and orders have different standards for whether evidence is admissible. A Moros mage, for instance, might have little objection to standing before a ghost appearing as a witness at a trial, while a Thrysus mage might welcome the opportunity to speak with a summoned spirit. Such mages'

enlightened insight (and Mage Sight) would give them a better frame of reference for reviewing the testimony, after all. It is rare for a Consilium to actually refuse testimony, but it's left up to a Councilor's discretion whether to listen to it or honor it.

### *Appealing the Law*

To initiate mages, the Lex Magica may seem overly elaborate. For a young Consilium, trials are sometimes longer than they should be, as the Councilors deliberate issues for the first time and establish their positions. In cities with more experienced Councilors, the most obvious infractions have happened before, and the city's masters are well aware of how different Councilors stand on the law before anyone voices an opinion. Precedent speeds trials. A cabal that appears before the Consilium is usually there to either acknowledge that what they have done is wrong or defend their actions by citing what has happened before. When a crime defies what has happened in recent history, the law becomes more personal and more arbitrary.

When an arbitrary ruling is in dispute, a mage or cabal can appeal the decision. Appeals require a bit of tenacity and research, as the mage or cabal attempt to clear their names. Research in an occult library, a consultation with a Mentor, revelations from a mystical dream (using the Dream Merit) or even a journey into the Shadow are all commonly used methods of finding evidence for appeal. If a cabal can find an event in the past that mirrors what they have done in the present, they may find a disparity between the judgment handed down recently and the one issued before.

The next step is to bring the issue before a Councilor, convincing her that the issue is worth revisiting. If she refuses, the mage or cabal can proceed to another one. Done correctly, the very act of submitting this evidence puts the defendant in a good light—he has contemplated his wrongdoing enough to meditate on what is right and wrong. Actually reversing a judgment, however, is far more difficult.

As one would expect, there are also cases in which a petitioner brings a false trial before the Consilium, and the accused wants redress for being falsely accused. In this case, an appeal is a short trial with the roles reversed, as the accused becomes the petitioner. The accused has to prove to one of the Councilors that his rights and privacy were violated, since he had to subject his life to scrutiny when he defended himself before the Consilium.

Merely suffering the inconvenience of appearing before the Consilium is insufficient, since it's an obligation

expected of any recognized mage. In fact, a “frivolous accusation” can be a difficult case to prove, since many Consilii believe they have a right (or obligation) to know everything that happens within their domain. It’s in their best interests to conduct the trial, however, since the alternative often involves the mage running off to an Assembly of the Free Council. Some Assemblies are quite vocal about a defendant’s rights, if only to attract more outraged defendants to their gatherings.

A Councilor places her own reputation on the line if she supports an appeal. This prevents unnecessary appeals from taking place. In some cases, the nature of the evidence can persuade a Councilor from a certain path, such as bringing forth testimony from the spirit realm to a Thrysus mage. The defendants approach the Consilium again, setting forth evidence of a similar event in legal precedent.

The Consilium then reviews whether the initial judgment was wise, either accepting or rejecting it. If the precedent is accepted, the case casts light on what the accused has done. Records are amended, masters reconsider their opinions and the accused is exonerated. If the appeal is rejected, however, the Councilor who brought forth the appeal loses face. While this may seem trivial to initiates, the event makes it harder for a Councilor to appeal further cases. Needless to say, the Consilium does not entertain appeals unless one of the Councilors feels very strongly.

### *Points of View: Orders*

When a Consilium of mages passes judgment on a difficult case, each Councilor may bring forward an entirely different precedent. The youngest call attention to events of the recent past, while Shamans and Enchanters recall hazy revelations of ancient, primordial times or portents from the spirits. Theurgists can summon up chapter and verse from religious texts, while Warlocks cite events that support judgments that somehow benefit them. To further distort the nature of truth, the Lex Magica depends on the points of view of those who have been chosen to interpret it. For instance, the orders of magic can have very different opinions on what constitutes “precedent”:

— The Silver Ladder typically argues that the orders are united because they all have their origins in Atlantis. When it suits the Silver Ladder mages, they argue that this common birthright does not place one mage above any other — unless mages collectively promote a mage to status on the Consilium. Success is evidence of a mage’s worth, and status can sway the opinion of a Silver Ladder Councilor. After all, the

resolution of today’s trial can affect political intrigue tomorrow. Despite this, Silver Ladder mages can often be impressed by a presenter’s force of character instead of his reasoning.

— The Mysterium holds extensive records of magical orders throughout history. Listening to legal arguments, Mysterium mages are often capable of summoning up obscure cases from the distant past or even from distant places. They don’t do this merely to show off their knowledge or lengthen Consilium meetings. They do, however, have a remarkable ability to find precedents that justify whatever it is they want at the time. The few surviving tales of Atlantis hold the truest measure of what is right and wrong. Some Mysterium mages will only accept more recent precedents when older, historical precedent is incomplete.

— The Free Council holds the strongest opposition to this view, usually stressing events in the recent past as precedent. After all, if someone received a judgment five years ago for a crime, and someone else receives a different judgment for the same crime today, the precedents of ancient history are irrelevant — the pronouncement is unjust. Some Consilii have a “Free Councilor” who critiques recent judgments; although, in some cases, he may not actually hold power, save for the alternative of proposing an Assembly when the Consilium has failed.

— The Guardians of the Veil do not always hold with the idea that justice must be openly acknowledged. Correcting a problem before it comes before the Consilium is another resolution to the problem. Guardians sometimes withhold evidence and testimony they have gathered until they are sure the order’s plea for justice will be heard. Or until they can justify their actions with success. Or until they can fix the outcome. Many cities empower the Guardian Councilor to declare a trial secret, sharing this authority with the Hierarch.

— The Adamantine Arrow is usually focused on external threats, evaluating actions on how much they compromise the city’s security and secrecy in the here and now. Arrow mages judge actions that affect their safety more harshly than many other crimes. Safety and security are more important to this order than any other issue, so the Arrow tends to push for stronger punishments for such crimes. Luminaries of the Arrow have justified harsh punishments for violations of the Precept of Secrecy, scoffing at any notion that such a crime can be merely “recognized” and dismissed.

The obvious test of this diversity is what happens when Councilors hold very different opinions on whether an action should be punished. In most cities, the Hierarch

bases his decision on the majority opinion within his Consilium. Again, he cannot really rule without the support of his Consilium. He is within his rights to pass judgment contrary to the view of the majority, but if he does, he undermines his own authority.

### *Points of View: Paths*

While each Path guides diverse views of magic, a few ideas on the concept of magic recur. Some apply to how magic is used to seek or enforce justice. Using magic to blatantly solve problems is often considered unwise, particularly since any spell can fail, replacing truth with falsehood. Yet for every Arcanum of magic, there are masters who insist it is the sharpest tool for cutting through a difficult problem. Proponents speak of Alexander cutting the Gordian knot; skeptics answer with the story of Solomon cutting a child in two.

— *Acanthus*: Enchanters may use Time magic to observe past events or predict the outcome of a certain judgment. Such outright demonstrations of magic invite criticism, since they replace an individual's moral judgment with a brute-force application of magic. For similar reasons, magical curses and bans are rarely invoked except under the most extreme circumstances. A Consilium that uses Fate magic to curse someone who defies the Councilors' authority should be prepared for magical retribution — and possibly magical warfare.

Some mages from other paths are wary of the Acanthus, however. An Enchanter might use Time divinations to foresee the result of a particular verdict or punishment, judging its effect not on the defendant but on the Consilium or the Acanthus Councilor. Hence, he might judge based not on justice or wisdom but the practical outcome for the defendant, the Consilium or himself in the future.

— *Mastigos*: Warlocks often demand that rules be defined and quantified for others, even as they themselves argue that they are outside such limitations. The most dangerous are those Warlocks who insist on using Mind magic to pry the truth from a reluctant defendant. Most Consilii reject such forceful tactics, unless the majority of the Consilium or a tyrannical Hierarch can advocate them with minimal opposition. As one would expect, Warlocks proficient in Space magic tend to be more forgiving of evidence gathered by scrying than other mages — even as the Warlocks cast powerful wards on their own sanctums to prevent magical spying.

— *Moros*: Necromancers are willing to entertain testimony from the deceased to sort out the truth, although such applications of magic are often treated with skepticism. Cynics make accusations of sham or

fabrication, no matter how terrifying the testimony may be. Mages who shun Death magic simply claim that "the dead cannot be trusted."

While it is certainly tempting to frame such issues in black-and-white, Consilii that give considerable power to Moros mages must eventually deal with the "Rashomon defense": speaking to a ghost or other spirit that has witnessed a crime. It should be noted that many spirits of the dead cannot be summoned; in many cases, the trial must be held near one of the spirit's anchors. This makes such testimony difficult to gather, since actually figuring out what the anchors are requires further investigation. A Councilor who refuses to listen to the testimony of a ghost has no shortage of precedent and illumination for refusing it. Mages who can use the Death Arcanum to scrutinize dead witnesses are more willing to listen, but actually convincing other Councilors that such testimony is truthful can be extremely difficult. Whether the spirit is telling the truth is sometimes left to the mage's spells, so the Councilor's trustworthiness comes into question.

— *Obrios*: Clever factotums attempt to sway Theurgists by citing concepts from the religions they practice or lofty ideals they espouse, but it's a dangerous tactic. Not only does it rarely appeal to Consilii that do not share their beliefs, but it also can seem quite patronizing if their interpretation is different than that of the Councilors. Forces magic has little impact on trials, of course, but Prime magic is useful for examining enchanted items and resonance.

A Theurgist is typically either wary of manipulating Mana during the course of a trial or all too willing to incorporate such spells. A Theurgist Councilor who senses that magic is being used in a trial may either mention it or turn a blind eye, depending on how it may affect the outcome of the trial. She may also either request a recess for oblations or deny such a request if she wants to influence the use of magic in a Consilium.

— *Thyrsus*: Ecstatics and Shamans often seek guidance outside the so-called real world we know. Revelations in altered states of consciousness or from the spirit world may guide their decisions, even if what they experience cannot be quantified in precise legal terms. Dreams and visions can be more compelling to the Thyrsus mage than cold logic. Using such testimony is risky, though, since most who do not walk that Path would consider such evidence invalid in a trial.

Using magic as evidence is risky at best, no matter what a mage's past. Masters of the Arcana are most likely to accept evidence gathered with magic from their own Arcana, but they're often aware that evidence can

be false, misleading or even wholly fabricated. Magical evidence may seem like Consilium chamber theatrics, and many masters treat it as such, taking what they learn under advisement, but doubting whether what they see and hear is really true. Yet when a mage needs to convince a particularly reticent Councilor that what she has done is right, it is very tempting to rely on testimony created specifically to sway that one Councilor's opinion.

### *The Others*

The law works best with consent, but a Ruling Council cannot completely ignore those who reject its authority. Apostate mages are rarely brought before these Consilii, except when they commit truly grievous transgressions. The Lex cannot really be applied unless those it applies to choose to accept it. That doesn't mean the actions of outsiders cannot be discussed and reviewed, however. Most Consilii have enough to do discussing the mages in their area, and the Councilors don't have limitless time to discuss every supernatural phenomenon that occurs. Yet they have an obligation to review the actions of other groups. If the Councilors do not discuss such matters at all, there are consequences.

Because a Consilium cannot fully review everything that happens within its domain, mages sometimes react by taking the law into their own hands, particularly where outsiders are involved. This is a risky choice, but, in some cases, a necessary one. When a cabal acts against those who exist outside their society, the cabal-members must be able to justify their actions. Mages who use magic to harm others — or, in more extreme cases, use violence to kill those they consider

a threat — are usually called before the Consilium to justify what they did.

Some Free Council cynics describe this as a policy of "blast first, answer questions later." You can enforce what you think is right without consulting the city's masters, but don't be surprised if they ask you after the fact to explain what you did and why. The Guardians of the Veil hardly find this remarkable, since they do

their best work in secret. Their rivals

claim that the Guardians only bring their cases openly before the Consilium when they succeed, or at least make sure they have prepared a scapegoat from their own ranks to take the blame when they fail.

In a sense, accepting the actions of a mage who "took the law into his own hands" is often more effective than convincing the highest echelons of power that someone should be punished. Cities that recognize the Precepts of Law have their own traditions for dealing with this. In cities that don't, some initiate mages take

the precaution of speaking to the city elders before acting, just in case.

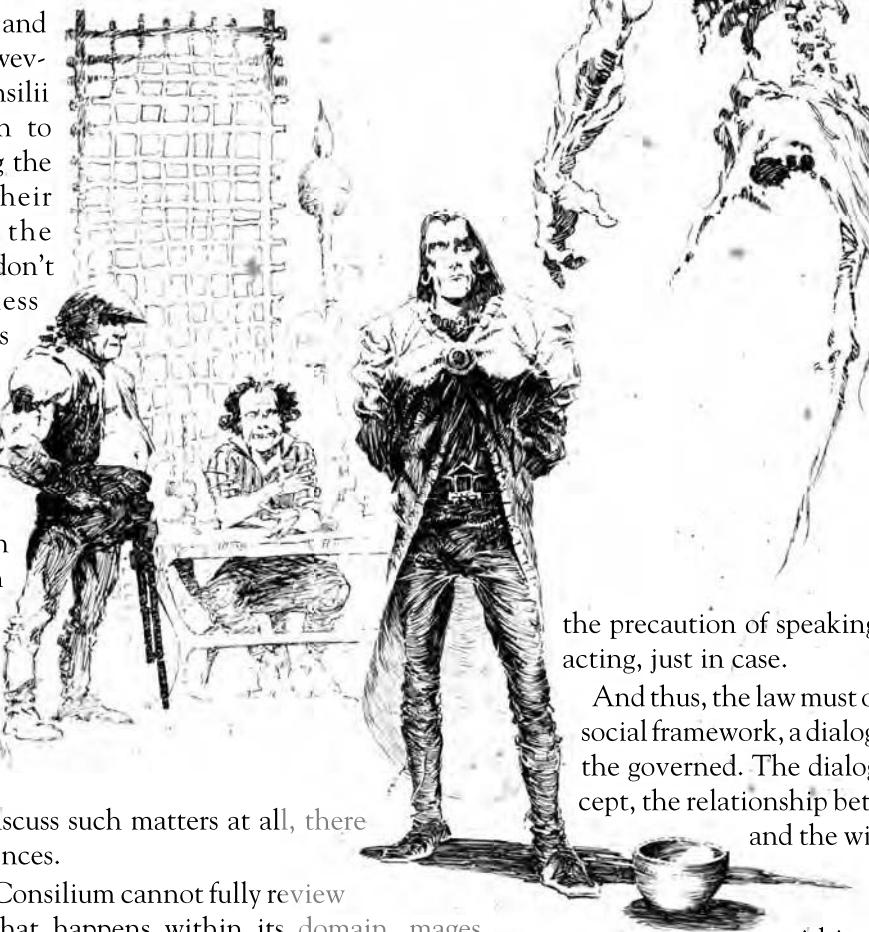
And thus, the law must once again come down to a social framework, a dialogue between the rulers and the governed. The dialogue of precedent and precept, the relationship between Mentor and initiate

and the wisdom of carefully selected

Councilors all define the Lex Magica for the mages within a given realm.

### *Storytelling the Lex*

When the Lex works well in a story, it lends a sense of history to the chronicle and some depth to the personalities on the local Consilium. When the Lex doesn't work out, rulings seem arbitrary, and players



are left feeling as if the Storyteller is judging them on his own whims. The best way to avoid this outcome is with some preparation. One of the reasons this system does not rely on absolutes is so that you can adjust your chronicle to the various standards of ethics, morality and justice. The Councilors in your chronicle can represent very different points of view, and, from there, judgment and punishment become elements in your story, instead of merely methods of bludgeoning characters into submission.

The easiest way to introduce the Lex into a story is to involve the characters in a trial. Give them a chance to become witnesses in a dispute between mages, one in which a mage violates the Precept of Secrecy, by using magic in an attack, or endangers an innocent. Then have one mage petition the Consilium for redress. The characters should be brought before the trial to give testimony, long enough to see the opening arguments of the hearing, the rituals that commence the ceremony, the length of a simple ceremony and the closing arguments, in which luminaries are cited. Justice should prevail in this first case, unless you're really dealing with themes of injustice or corruption in your story. Along the way, the cabal might have some insights into the stances of various Councilors, clarified by Skills like Empathy, Politics or Subterfuge.

Once you establish how a mage brings a case before the Consilium, the characters should be ready to either bring forth a case of their own or stand trial for their actions. Minor transgressions should have short trials; major ones are best saved for later in a chronicle. If the Consilium is relatively inexperienced, events in the chronicle could very well set precedent. For an experienced Consilium, each trial is a chance to detail a little more of the history of your city.

Two of the most difficult aspects to run in this system are precedent and the writings of luminaries. Both can be as detailed or as minimal as you require. For instance, you can refer to a case from 50 years ago in passing ("an Adamantine Arrow mage stole an artifact from the Guardians, but paid for his crime by guarding their sanctum for a month"), or you can develop a more elaborate story, one in which the characters must consult a Mentor, master or Councilor to hear the whole story. The Dream Merit, Investigation rolls or even the Time Arcanum could reveal further details. When a Councilor cites a luminary, she might simply mention the verdict ("according to Simon Magnus, the punishment for breaking into a sanctum is incarceration") or you could actually pace the room for a bit, speaking in the persona of the luminary. For

extra credit, consider writing some journal entries for various luminaries, so you can actually read excerpts for your next trial.

Since the Lex requires some preparation from the Storyteller, you might decide to simply write down the crimes listed in this chapter and the punishments you think are proper. That doesn't mean you should show the list to your players, however. Consider this instead: Assign that list to one of the city's Councilors (or the Hierarch). If your characters research that Councilor, instead of telling them her verdict on specific crimes, tell a few anecdotes about how she's ruled in the past. With a little thinking on your feet, you can develop some history in your chronicle instead of simply stating a set punishment for each crime.

Another approach is to take one crime you think will come up as part of your chronicle and then list how you think each Councilor would punish it. Then keep it secret from your players! Let them present their evidence and testimony, giving them a chance to speak and a chance for the Councilors to respond. The Councilor they appeal to most can then define the verdict that emerges at the end of the trial. In a chronicle in which the characters' actions can shift the balance of power — such as when they're helping one Councilor act secretly against another — the Councilor who wins out in that conflict could have the deciding verdict in the trial. Granted, it's the Hierarch who pronounces the verdict, but the Councilors still advise him on which outcome to declare. This approach works well if your story contrasts truth with pragmatism, idealism with reality or justice with politics.

### *Quorums*

In a group that must vote on an issue, a quorum is the minimum number of voters who must be present for the vote to take place. For Storytellers preparing to use the Lex, a quorum is a simple list of how you think Councilors might vote on an issue — think of it as the minimum preparation you'd use for a trial. Here's an example: Your players have petitioned the Consilium to judge a rival cabal. They have testimony that the rival cabal members have raided their sanctum. You decide to list your Councilor's opinions on the matter at the start of the trial. The Consilium has one mage for each of the five Paths. You write down:

*Mastigos*: Violating the sanctity of a sanctum should be punished by *incarceration*. Cites Simon Magnus.

*Thyrsus*: Violating a sanctum should be repaid by a *major penance* of guard duty, so the criminals know the value of property.

**Moros:** Violating a sanctum should be recognized as a crime, but passing judgment will only invite retribution. The Moros Councilor has a grudge against the Thrysus Councilor and is looking to initiate a magical war. He'll downplay arguments from the Thrysus.

And so on. Consider several different punishments for the crime. There are then several ways you can decide which one to use:

— Use the verdict of the mage the characters appealed to the most. If their arguments and suggested verdict fit strongly with the Mastigos, for instance, then run with that judgment.

— Use the verdict of the Councilor the mages have taken as a rival or enemy. The crime is still punished, but the characters have another reason to work against that mage.

— Use the verdict the characters suggest, but only if they roll well with a specific Social dice pool. Make a contested roll against the Councilor who disagrees with them most. The crime could be punished, but differently from what they argued.

— Roll a Social dice pool for each of the Councilors deliberating in chambers. Use the verdict of the mage with the most successes.

— Use the verdict the characters would want most, but have them indebted to the Councilor who supported it.

— Use the verdict you yourself think is just, but only if the characters achieve a specific goal as part of the trial.

— Let the players act out the roles of the Councilors. Side with the mage you think is the most convincing.

— If you're really industrious, conduct the trial with Mind's Eye Theater rules, casting the roles of the different Councilors.

— Refer to the list of punishments you wrote for the Hierarch, but have the Councilors plot against each other based on the quorum you wrote.

### *Pacing the Trial*

Trials don't have to be spontaneous. If a mage formally states that she's petitioning the Consilium, everyone involved should have time to prepare. If the petition and the trial occur in different game chapters, that gives you some time to consider how the Councilors might rule. You should also give the characters some time to do research, creating precedent and history they can discover to present at the trial.

Trials don't have to be elaborate, either. They might be nothing more than a quick scene or excerpt at the end of a chapter of the story. If someone has cast vulgar magic, a short trial in which the Consilium does little more than "recognize" the transgression gives the characters another chance to learn who the Councilors are. You don't need to dwell on all the details of such trials; instead, establish the basics of how they work so the characters feel comfortable appearing before the Consilium.

One of the most dramatic things you can do later in a chronicle beyond that point is to either replace one of the Councilors or even the Hierarch. Once the players' characters have figured out the personalities on the Consilium, put in an unknown. The characters may leap to conclusions about how he'll rule based on his Path or order, and they might fall back on appealing to the Councilors they know well. This can make for some great drama, as the players' characters research this new element. How did he come to power? Has he ruled on a Consilium before? And does the departure of the old Councilor suggest how the new Councilor might rule?

A well-run trial places the characters in the middle of a conflict between powerful mages, giving it some political intrigue. Knowing how the Consilium has judged cases in the past gives your chronicle some history. By using investigative and social skills, the characters can tip the balance of power between Councilors, turning a simple recitation of events that happened earlier in the chronicle into a chance for complex roleplaying and Storytelling.

You should also give some thought to how often you want to use the Lex in your story. You could decide to save the Lex until a major crime happens in your chronicle, but this works better if you've already run one or two quick trials beforehand. Some chronicles are actually "anchored" by the Lex. If your story is organized into chapters, for instance, each chapter could end with an appearance before the Consilium. Over time, the personalities of the Consilium will develop and the amount of precedent the players' characters know will increase. Some groups of players thrive on political intrigue; others would just as soon avoid it and get back to investigation, conflict or combat. Knowing where your players lie along the spectrum is the surest indicator of how often to invoke the Lex Magica.



# CHAPTER TWO: PRIDE OF PLACE

Jasmine stepped out onto the roof and caught her breath. The flow of Mana assailed her enchanted senses. Though it was a little past midnight, an urgency similar to what she felt during a metropolitan rush hour set her heart pounding and nerves firing. Big city Mana with big city resonance.

She spotted Loken, as fidgety as a 10-year-old forced to sit through his younger sister's piano recital, leaning on the ledge of the building. Excessive exposure to the Hallow had that effect on even the most stalwart of mages, and they didn't come more stalwart than Loken.

Jasmine resisted the urge to speed walk. Instead, she took measured steps until she joined him at the building's ledge.

"You've been up here too long. Best get downstairs."

"This isn't our sanctum anymore." The frustration bordered on road rage. "Somehow, we lost it, and it's pissing me off!"

"Loken, c'mon. Let's —"

The moment her hand touched his shoulder she knew it was a mistake. He spun on his heel and flung her back with a snarl. His use of the Forces Arcanum to augment the shove added injury to insult.

"We've lost our home!" he ranted. "This used to be a Hallow of cooperation and understanding, Jas. We used to be able to come up here as colleagues and hash out our issues like civilized people. What happened to that, Jas? Tell me, what happened to all of that?"

His eyes smoldered and his hands shook uncontrollably. Here, Jasmine recognized, was a mage who could literally go nuclear.

She ignored the false anger threatening to consume her emotions.

"Bad neighbors, Loken. That's what happened."

The answer took him aback. "What?"

Jasmine reached into her pants pocket and withdrew a handful of business cards. As she read them off, she tossed them to the ground at Loken's feet.

"Putnam Advertising. Spurfield & Sons Brokerage. Westing International Bank. Harrison Life. All of these companies are high-powered corporations that now call our building — our sanctum — home."

"So?"

"When was the last time we did background checks on their activities, their clients, their holdings? There's more to what's in our building than personnel, Loken. If we're going to fix this, we need to look deeper."

Loken's glare softened. "There's no way we can check everything, you know that." Jasmine nodded. "What do you suggest?"

She let a touch of anger bubble through. "Evict much?"

*The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said, "This is mine," and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society.*

— Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse Upon The Origin and The Foundation of The Inequality Among Mankind*

## *Sanctum Sanctorum*

The world is a hostile place, particularly to practitioners of magic. Masses of humanity are fearful of forces they do not understand, especially those that defy their narrow definitions of what “reality” really is. Witnesses are everywhere, and monsters prowl the night, preying upon the unwary. Even mages plot and scheme against their brethren, coveting carefully guarded artifacts, nexuses of magical energy and the secrets of rival sorcerers. The safest and surest refuge against this unkind world lies in a mage’s sanctum, the sacred space where he is strong, secure and most importantly, cloaked in secrecy.

### *Size and Security*

If your character (or one in your chronicle) has put points in the Sanctum Merit, you already know the sanctum’s two most important traits: Size and Security. From these two particulars, you can either define what’s inside the sanctum in general Storytelling terms, or you can use the details provided in this chapter to define its rules further.

In general, a sanctum’s Security rating defines how easy the sanctum is to defend, while its Size rating defines how much is inside the sanctum. Its Security rating gives a rough idea of how difficult it is for intruders to get inside it, scry or spy upon its interior or otherwise interfere with its contents. A sanctum’s Size rating is more than simply the numbers of rooms the sanctum has — this rating extends to any resource that does not directly affect the sanctum’s defense.

Before we proceed, here’s a quick point of clarification: with the additional mechanics in this book, a mage who assaults a sanctum with a specific Security rating shouldn’t expect the same level of resistance as another sanctum with the same rating. Just because you’ve made a sanctum more secure doesn’t mean it’s secure against *everything*. All defenses are not created equal. For instance, mages who rely on powers of invisibility, teleportation, mind control or remote domination may have clever ways of getting around very specific defenses — or even the best defenses. In *Mage: The Awakening*, the Security trait simply subtracts dice from dice pools related to breaking into the sanctum; this chapter includes optional rules for

additional defenses. This is the very reason why a mage may want to be more articulate about the safeguards surrounding his haven. His world isn’t just dangerous — it’s full of the unexpected.

### *Defining a Sanctum*

Before the story of a mage begins, the time you spend on a prelude can define many details about that character that aren’t reflected on his sheet. Designing and defining a sanctum works the same way: Instead of just leaving the details to the number of dots you have in that background, you should ask yourself about all the elements that make up the sanctum’s interior and exterior. What does the sanctum look like on the outside? What’s its security like? How is the sanctum protected physically, magically and spiritually? When Sleepers pass by, what do they see? When visitors are welcomed inside, what’s waiting for them in the entryway? Like any good design, creating a sanctum is easier when you imagine how it works in the story first, and then work with your Storyteller to describe how the sanctum’s rules work.

When a chronicle begins, you don’t necessarily need to detail every nook and cranny of this refuge. The beginning of your story shouldn’t really depend on how many square feet are inside the sanctum or how it all looks on graph paper, but the first time your Storyteller sets a scene inside a sanctum, you should be ready to describe what that sacred space looks like. Early in a chronicle, of course, the focus of the story should really be on the characters, not the architecture. Later in the chronicle, though, you should be ready for the first time mortal investigators start snooping around on your doorstep or the terrifying moment when you find evidence that witch hunters or the thralls of the Exarchs have broken inside. (You may even want to map out rooms and areas, particularly if you’re using rules in which a spell’s area of effect is important, but this isn’t critical.) As the story progresses, you should then elaborate on the resources and defenses your sanctum has and the ones you’re adding. How you define your sanctum with the ideas in this chapter is only the beginning.

If multiple mages are sharing the same sanctum — a topic we’ll address at the end of this chapter — describing these details is even more important. Just throwing

everyone in the same condo or warehouse makes for a weak story. Take the next step and describe *why* they are in the same sanctum. As we'll soon see, any sanctum needs a purpose and reason for existence, from the appearance the sanctum has on the outside to the true purpose it serves on the inside. Mages in the same sanctum are more than mere roommates—they're part of a cabal—so building a sanctum should be more than just describing physical space. Mages defy reality with mere thoughts and gestures; in the same way, the place where your mage is at her strongest should be empowered by her desires and needs.

### *Storytelling Sanctums*

In return for all this additional contemplation the players should pursue, Storytellers should give careful thought to the role the sanctum plays in a chronicle. For new players, consider keeping the sanctum as a refuge where their characters really can be secure. The world outside that refuge is full of the unknown—dangerous and deadly. Without the Life Arcanum, healing takes time; however, an initiate mage can only use the Life Arcanum a limited number of times each day. (This Arcanum requires Mana). When a mage first discovers the dark world outside her sanctum, nothing is more terrifying than the threat of the unknown. While a mage is learning the limits of her craft, balancing the risk of powerful magic against the threat of a Paradox requires a bit of experimentation. The sanctum is safe in more ways than one, centering a mage who is newly initiated. If the mage is sharing a sanctum with others, the safety of that sanctum is also essential to the stability of the cabal. When all hell breaks loose (and it will), the sanctum is the one place where they can recover, plan and restore their morale.

Then things change. The first time the safety of that sanctum is compromised is almost a violation. The rules have changed, and mages need to use more caution as they proceed. They're no longer untouchable, but they can respond by increasing their security and vigilance. The owner of that sanctum will want to step up her security, so you'll need to be prepared for when that happens. In game terms, the number of dots in the Size and Security of the sanctum won't change, but with some effort (and the expenditure of experience points), the mage can add additional defenses and resources. When a sanctum's defenses fail, or circumstances change, a mage can attempt to move to another sanctum—or even relocate her sanctum—but not without a price and the consequences that comes with it.

If a chronicle proceeds to the point of magical warfare, the particulars of a sanctum become even more

important. Rivals scheme against the defenders of Atlantean traditions, as Banishers, Seers and stranger antagonists track the heroes to where they live. Even other Atlantean mages can become enemies. This type of conflict is best saved until later in a chronicle, once you've had many sessions to develop (with the players) what the sanctum looks like and how it's defended. Leading a raid on another mage's sanctum is a challenge to the laws of the local Consilium, so a raid typically isn't attempted without a very good reason. A raid can make for a dramatic high point in a chronicle, as long as your players have a reason to think the points that they've spent on the Merit were worth it.

Since stories can include antagonists like Seers, Banishers, Goetic mages, rogue mages or violent apostates, the sanctums the characters' rivals inhabit should be as thoroughly considered as the ones your cabal has. Once the players' characters are ready to attack another sanctum, the characters in your chronicle should be ready for the night when their enemies strike back in revenge. Just as Newton's Third Law tells us that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, a cabal lashing out at their enemies with deadly intent should be prepared for retaliation. Much of the information in this chapter is designed to lead up to that cathartic moment: when the doors give way, and every defense of the sanctum is tested to destruction.

### *The Facade*

If a mage must keep his activities hidden, then the sanctum that conceals him must maintain a mundane, innocuous appearance. When your mage chooses a sanctum, he'll need to decide what appearance it presents to the outside world. The exterior could relate to the mage's style of magic—such as a church for a religious mage or a dojo for a martial mage—or the sanctum could present a false front that's very different from the secret activities performed within it. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

### *Houses and Homes*

The most common style of sanctum is one hidden in a mage's home. Magic is a very private and personal practice, after all, so many mages prefer to set aside an area in their homes where they can focus, meditate, study and center themselves. (In game terms, a 1-dot sanctum is ideal for this type of refuge.) Solitaries rely upon such places, although they may abandon them later when they join a cabal (as often happens at the start of a chronicle). The sanctum sanctorum doesn't need to be anything more than a spare room, attic or walk-in closet with a sturdy door and a good lock. A

small sanctum is easier to ward, since a vigilant mage can focus on routinely using magic on its limited exterior to block out spells that detect, scry or intrude.

### *The Workshop*

Sanctums can be refuges for meditation and introspection, but some mages actually intend to get work done inside them. Any mage who needs to imbue an item, add an enhancement to a mundane item, summon and bind a spirit or animate a servant would probably prefer to perform such a difficult task in isolation, so that the watchful eyes of Sleepers don't complicate the process. If a sanctum includes a Demesne, complete with a soul stone, casting vulgar magic without risk of Paradoxes is an added advantage. Any workshop is only as good as its tools, so the mage who creates this type of sanctum must choose her resources carefully.

If your mage has a specialization in the Craft skill, it wouldn't hurt to include the tools she needs to practice her favored craft. A weaponsmith, armorer, artist and mechanic each has different requirements for the work he or she does. Anyone with this degree of skill can consider opening part of the workshop to Sleeper customers. For instance, there's no better cover for enhancing modern technology with magic than hav-

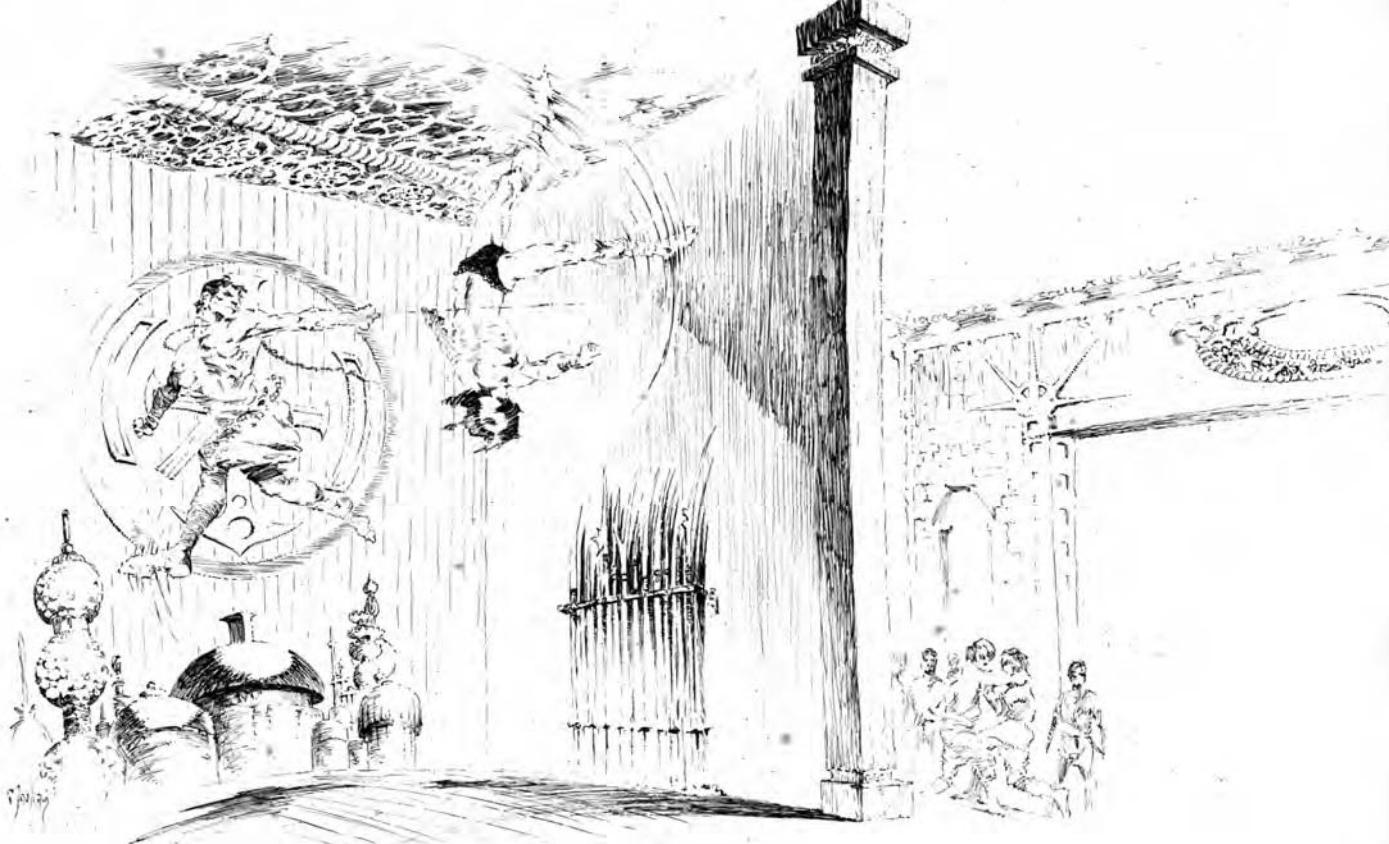
ing a workshop in which you make a living with other people's computer parts and electronics stashed around your workshop.

### *The Dojo*

Magic and martial arts blend exceptionally well, particularly when mages practice deadly martial rotes. Any mage who has pushed the limits of the Athletics, Brawl or Weaponry skills — or anyone reaching for that fifth dot in a Physical trait — probably spends a considerable amount of time training and working out. A dojo is an excellent cover for anyone who needs to train obsessively for long periods of time or routinely practice the impossible. Dojos work even better for mages who train Proximi or other mortal allies as recruits for their martial sanctums. The Adamantine Arrow doesn't always have enough mages to handle their patrols and watchguard positions, so a dojo is a natural choice for training additional guardians.

### *The Secret Society*

The Guardians of the Veil attract audiences of initiates and Sleepers hungry for mystical knowledge. Mages who rely on such loyalty should consider where such societies meet and how they appear to the outside



world. Mundane society has plenty of benevolent, public organizations that bring disparate people together. In the locked chambers of any meeting hall of the Elks, Kiwanis or Freemasons, insightful investigators might find the enlightened few who suborned the local members of that society for their own ends. The world is also filled with fringe religions that meet regularly to discuss arcane matters the modern world blatantly disregards.

This type of sanctum is really designed to inculcate, condition and prepare Proximi and Sleepers for advanced applications of the Mind Arcanum. The sanctum doesn't have to be anything more than a meeting hall, but the sanctum must be secretive and secure enough to block out all innocent witnesses once the doors to the hall are locked. Some sanctums include recreational areas for the society's initiates to mingle and relax. When meetings are called, the initiates come forward to report on their activities—including some the legal authorities of Sleeper societies shouldn't know about.

### *The Unassuming Warehouse*

If you pay your rent and don't break any obvious building violations, you can set up almost anything in the copious space of a warehouse. It's nondescript, isolated on the fringes of town and typically far away from anyone who could stumble on what you're doing. A warehouse makes an even better sanctum if you actually control a business that ships goods into and out of it.

### *The Mystical Bookstore*

Knowledge is power, and magical knowledge is even more powerful. This type of refuge typically has a clear delineation between its public facade and its private sanctum. The front of the store has knowledge suitable for Sleepers to peruse, but, deeper inside, guarded by the inhabitants, secret knowledge and guarded mysteries are reserved for the Awakened. The bookstore concept works particularly well for Mysterium mages and (of course) anyone with voluminous access to the Library Merit.

### *Places of Worship*

Many mages can tie their magical practices to religious belief, particularly (but not exclusively) those of the Thyrus and Obrimos Paths. If religion is an integral part of a mage's life, an obvious facade for a sanctum would be one that allows and protects worship. In many countries, formally declaring a refuge as the center of a recognized religion offers all sorts of opportunities. In America, tax-free status makes manipulating money easier, and, in some cases, a religion may even have a

chance to rationalize or legally defend some of its more eccentric activities.

This type of sanctum could easily have services available to the public, along with some private services for the truly faithful. That may sound somewhat sinister, but it doesn't have to be. The sanctum could even openly practice a mainstream religion while privately conducting rituals best performed without the presence of the unAwakened after the doors are locked at night.

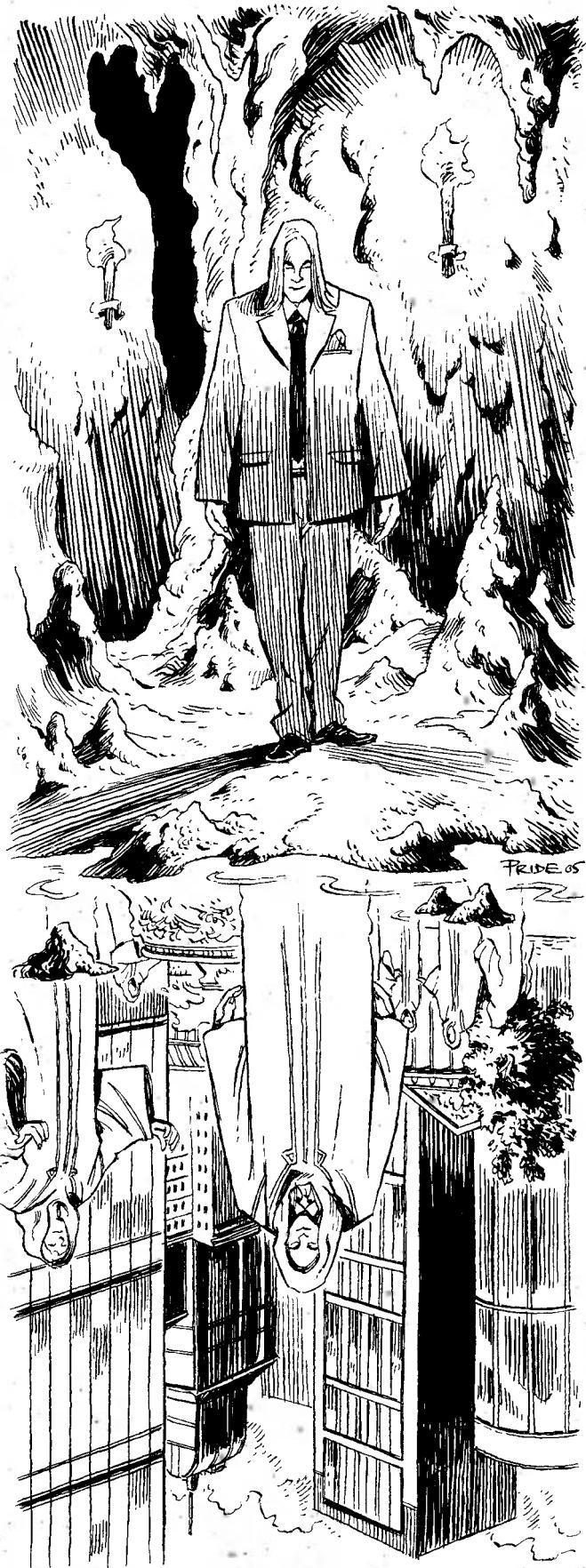
### *The Cave or Tunnel*

Crude but effective, this type of refuge requires remarkably little to maintain, needing only defenders willing to protect it. Its entrance could be on the surface, cloaked in Space wards and protected by Bans from the Forces, Mind, Matter and even Life Arcana to discourage casual entry, or the sanctum could be deep underground, accessible only with Space Arcanum portals. Natural underground places are extremely valuable when the forces of the unknown can be contained within them. Under the largest cities of the world, evidence suggests that urban legends may be real. Just as metropoli attract humans above ground, metropoli can also hide supernatural societies below ground. Mages may choose to conquer these hidden places, but other things hide from the light as well.

Some spiritual mages practice their arts in areas only accessible by lowering or crossing the local Gauntlet with Spirit magic. A few mages even prefer the rarefied conditions of a Verge, retreating to places where the boundaries between worlds are thin. Perhaps there was a time when practitioners of shamanic magic could gather in secluded glens and other natural spaces, but the world has become much smaller since then. The few sacred spaces tied to the natural places of the world are precious, and, in some cases, coveted by other supernatural forces and societies.

### *Estate*

To those who can work magic, wealth and power lie within grasp, for those who have the will to seize them. A powerful mage with the proper Resources Merit could make his home in an estate large enough to serve as a formidable sanctum. So much power often corrupts, of course, making this type of sanctum well suited to less reputable mages. The Seers of the Throne and certain Banishers sometimes use their insight and connections to acquire valuable real estate, but there's no reason why Silver Ladder and Mastigos mages couldn't walk the same path. (Guidelines for the Resources Merit and real estate are presented later in this chapter.)



## It's What's Inside

The size and area covered by a sanctum's facade should give you a rough idea of its Size dots, but a sanctum is more than just square footage. Size also serves as a guideline to the resources available inside. As a rough guide, a sanctum slightly smaller than its Size rating could have some exceptional resources not reflected by other backgrounds. Perhaps the sanctum's electrical system relies on an internal generator that keeps going in the event of a blackout. Maybe the sanctum has a stockpile of emergency supplies for desperate circumstances. Size dots don't have to just define how big the sanctum is; they can also define what actually fits inside it.

## *Tunnel Running*

Most sanctums are aboveground, but some of the largest secret kingdoms are hidden underground. Many of the largest cities in the world have vast networks of tunnels underground, relics of bygone ages. Not surprisingly, supernatural creatures on the fringes of the known world are drawn to these tunnels as well. Any Storyteller ready for mages who hide from the light should be prepared to populate this treacherous and terrifying world. World of Darkness books like **Antagonists** and **Mysterious Places** can help.

Underground sanctums must (by necessity) require a few rules clarifications. For a start, their exterior walls aren't really reflected by the Security Merit: they're usually solid rock. (See "Elements of a Sanctum," p. 83-84.)

Such places are also typically lacking in basic amenities, unless the inhabitants go out of their way to provide them. Such things do happen, of course, even in real life: a recent police raid on the Paris underground found evidence of squatters. They not only managed to tap into local electricity grids and water mains for free, but constructed numerous recreational areas, including a secret underground movie theater. Hidden beneath our cities, neglected areas remain isolated from all but the most intrepid visitors. Unfortunately, these areas are usually decrepit and dangerous. At any moment, one of the desperate homeless or some more feral creature can descend on a normally undisturbed area — not all threats are supernatural.

Mages have additional tools for securing underground space, including (of course) magic. The Forces Arcanum can divert electricity, the Matter Arcanum can divert

water and the Mind Arcanum can discourage rare passersby from accidentally finding minor anomalies. Some of these tricks are explained later in this chapter.

When a mage chooses his sanctum, he can decide to build one underground, but, for every advantage, there's a drawback. His isolation ensures solitude most of the time, but it also isolates him from emergency services like police and fire departments. He's on his own in a crisis, since others can't get to him without considerable effort. He'll have less contact with random strangers, but the few individuals who might drop by tend to be ruthless, hiding from the law and the light as much as he is. In the same way, it is unlikely that a representative of the Consilium will go out of her way to drop by without a good reason. The tunnels attract ruthless supernatural creatures that expect to get away with murder, both figuratively and literally.

If you're a mage living in an underground sanctum, the good news is, you're on your own. The bad news is, you're on your own. Prepare accordingly.

## *Sanctums and Experience*

When mere description isn't enough, the Storyteller can assign more precise traits and rules to a sanctum. The guidelines in this chapter define several features of a sanctum, including the Durability of its structures, the magical spells that bolster it, the Retainers who remain on duty to defend it and others. For most of these categories, there's a default listing given based on the sanctum's Security or Size dots. See "Elements of a Sanctum," below.

Mages can intensify their defenses and expand their sanctums beyond these starting features; the more a mage has invested in this refuge, the better her chances of survival will be in the World of Darkness. For this reason, adding on features to a sanctum beyond those given with its Size or Security dots requires the expenditure of experience points.

As a mage grows more experienced, she can expand her sanctum (or the one she shares with her cabal). This is more than simply a matter of hiring more servants, paying for a construction contract and making a few trips to the hardware store — she needs to take the appropriate actions to achieve her goal as part of the story (either during the action or during downtime) and then spend experience points to add the feature or raise the sanctum's Size and/or Security dots. Some Storytellers may choose to only allow this kind of activity in the downtime between sessions, just as some Storytellers choose to award experience at the end of a chronicle chapter instead of in the middle of a story. That way,

the hard work of building and renovation is handled in a more abstract manner in the game, even if the particular defenses of a sanctum aren't so abstract.

## *Changing Owners*

A mage who shares his sanctum with others is making an even greater investment. As **Mage: The Awakening** states, if a mage in the cabal leaves that sanctum, the number of points in the collective Sanctum Merit are permanently reduced by one. With these rules, however, if the mage has also spent additional experience points to expand the physical features of the sanctum, *those spent points remain in the sanctum*. These experience points are gone from the departing mage, because they have already been invested into the features, and he has abandoned his claim on them. He can, of course, take personal Retainers and maybe even Arcane guardians (assuming their fetters or anchors can be moved or transferred; see below) with him, but he can't pick up and carry away any protective spells or reinforced metal doors he might have added.

The same is true if a mage dies — either way, he is leaving a legacy behind him. In truly nefarious cabals, this is actually a motivation to banish, oust or even kill an elderly mage who has devoted his life to building up a sanctum. It's also a reason why recalcitrant and elder masters may choose to retreat to extensive sanctums before they die. A dead mage can still leave a legacy to magical society behind, and some cities have one or two sanctuaries that have endured for generations.

Once a mage abandons a sanctum (or dies), it will deteriorate if another mage doesn't claim it as his own: Retainers will immediately seek employment elsewhere, and the building will slowly deteriorate without proper maintenance. In game terms, a completely abandoned sanctum loses at least one dot in Security each month it is left unattended; once all Security dots are gone, Size begins to deteriorate. (Either the structure actually crumbles or squatters move in, the lot is bought by a developer, it's declared a historic site and roped off as a museum, etc.). A new owner can stop this entropic descent by taking over the sanctum and performing regular upkeep.

## *Steward*

As one would expect, there's a limit to the amount of investment a heroic mage can make in a permanent sanctum. A mage can spend a lifetime without ever leaving the same city, but many mages have been known to roam the Earth in search of knowledge, wisdom and adventure. Masters and Councilors might be content enough to spend a good portion of their life in one place,

but many are more interested in gaining knowledge and power instead of anything as secular as real estate.

Despite this, some magical societies include a few mages who strive to develop truly impressive sanctums. To these mages, political power seems fleeting — if a mage creates and defends a sacred space that is truly useful to a magical order or the local Consilium, power and influence will come to him in time. These paragons are called stewards, the watchmen of great sanctums. Their lives are devoted more to developing their refuges and fortresses than their own magical acumen or secular knowledge.

In game terms, a steward is a mage who spends most of her experience developing her sanctum (or her cabal's sanctum). Although magic can be useful for a steward, she spends most of her time tending her sanctum, so most of the time, its defenses are her defenses. If she is to be at the center of a story, plot or intrigue, it invariably relates to the location to which she has devoted her life. Stewards are also known for developing rotes that prove especially useful for the defense of their sanctums. Kindly stewards are quite willing to teach these rotes to initiates — especially students who are willing to repay their masters and orders by protecting these sacred places.

These exemplars often feature prominently in the shadowy history of magic. For every academy where magical scholars teach initiates, someone must make sure the grounds are maintained and the school's defenses are secure. For every dojo where ancient masters of martial arts pass on legendary wisdom, the humble gardener or geomancer who tends to the refuge is as important as any mere martial artist. Ancient druids tend sacred groves where mighty magics are preserved. Reclusive scholars maintain fantastic retreats near the thresholds to Verges or Portals, creating elaborate libraries of knowledge. Guardians of the ancient ways



watch over the last ruins of their Atlantean heritage, protected by the secret forces of ancient prehistory. Any mage can contribute to a sanctum while she lives there, but a steward spends lifetimes there.

Stewards are willing to make additional sacrifices for the sake of their sanctuaries. After all, a mage's life is fleeting, but the sanctum she creates is her legacy. A steward who wants to permanently enchant part of her sanctum may need to "relinquish control" of some of the spells she casts on it (see p. 120-121 of *Mage: The Awakening*). This requires her to sacrifice a Willpower dot so that her incantations aren't limited by the maximum number of spells she can maintain (based on her Gnosis). It takes time and experience to regain that lost will, but it is a sacrifice a steward is willing to make.

In the modern world, many cities (though by no means all) have one or two stewards in residence. A mage who gives her life to developing a major sanctum gains a position of respect and authority within her realm, and, to a lesser degree, outside of it. Magical orders depend on the strongest sanctums they can find, so, when such places are threatened, the tactical wisdom or insight of a steward is greatly valued. A city's Consilium enforces the sanctity and privacy of sanctums within their realm, and testimony from stewards at council trials maintain those standards of civility.

### *Moving a Sanctum*

A mage in danger may need to move his sanctum, even one in which he has devoted a great deal of time and effort to develop. By definition, a sanctum needs to be in a fixed location — simply casting some spells on the interior of a van or RV just isn't going to be good enough. Given enough time, a mage or cabal can move a sanctum's resources from one location to another, but it isn't easy, and it carries a price.

The rule is similar to the one used when a mage leaves a sanctum he has shared with his cabal. When a sanctum is moved, it permanently loses one Merit dot, either in Size or Security.

### *Elements of a Sanctum*

A sanctum is only as secure as the lock on its door and the thickness of its walls. Such precautions won't stop a determined mage with the proper rituals, of course, and Space magic has a way of working around such limitations. Nonetheless, if the purpose of a sanctum is hiding a mage's secret life from watchful eyes, solid physical defenses have their uses.

Although stories about sanctums don't typically involve detailed floor plans and measurements of square

footage, sometimes a mage really just needs to smash down a door. After all, a sorcerer unleashing a lightning bolt or ball of flame with Forces should know whether her vulgar violation of the laws of physics can punch through the window or wall. A sanctum's Security rating gives a good guideline of how thick the walls, doors and windows around the sanctum really are.

The Sanctum Merit includes a Security rating to generalize how intense the sanctum's locks and encryption are for a mundane intruder, but you should still feel free to detail the specifics of your security system. The Security rating takes dice away from dice pools for breaking inside, but you can always upgrade the locks you're using on a sanctum. Whether the front door is secured with a cheap padlock from the local hardware store or a state-of-the-art electronic security system, the Security rating still represents the number of dice taken away from any dice roll to crack the system. Physical locks require Larceny Skill rolls; electronic security often requires a Computer Skill roll.

Of the features listed below — outer walls, interior walls, doors, door locks, windows — the Security dots invested in the sanctum determine their Durability. Some of these can be enhanced by purchasing the Sanctum Materials Merit, described on p. 86.

Note that the Security trait can reduce the mundane dice pools used to assault a sanctum directly, but the Trait doesn't prevent spells that rivals cast against the mages who live in that sanctum. A mage who attempts to blast down a door with a ball of fire must contend with the door's Durability and Structure, as explained above. A mage who uses Space 2 to sympathetically attack a mage within the sanctum does not need to contend with the sanctum's Security dots. (Magical wards, though, will protect the place; see p. 87).

### *Outer Walls*

The substance and thickness of the sanctum's outer walls are assumed to be made of brick or stone, with a Durability of 3. If Security dots are bought for the sanctum, they apply to the outer walls like so:

Security Dots	Substance	Durability
•	Brick (reinforced) or metal	4
..	Reinforced brick or metal	5
...	Reinforced	6
....	Reinforced	7
.....	Reinforced	8

### *Interior Walls*

Interior walls are assumed to be made of wood or plaster, with a Durability of 2. Mages can improve the interior walls of certain rooms within their sanctums

with Materials dots. The dots listed below apply to a single room. (The number of rooms in a sanctum is based on the sanctum's Size dots; see the Sanctum Merit, p. 86-87, in *Mage: The Awakening*.) However, players can purchase Materials dots repeatedly to cover more than one room.

Materials Dots	Substance	Durability
•	Wood (reinforced) or stone	3
..	Metal, or reinforced wood or stone	4
...	Reinforced wood, stone or metal	5
....	Reinforced stone or metal	6
.....	Reinforced metal	7

### Doors

One wooden door (Size 5, Durability 2, Structure 7) per room. Security dots increase the thickness of each door.

Security Dots	Substance	Durability	Structure
•	Wood (reinforced)	3	8
..	Wood (reinforced) or metal	4	9
...	Reinforced	5	10
....	Metal only, reinforced	6	11
.....	Metal only, reinforced	7	12

#### Options:

- Each additional door per room = one Materials dot
- Increase the Size of all doors by +1, or a single door by up to +3 = one Materials dot

### Door Locks

Each door has a basic metal lock (Size 1, Durability 4, Structure 5). Security dots improve the locks.

Security Dots	Quality*	Durability	Structure
•	-1 die	5	6
..	-2 dice	6	7
...	-3 dice	7	8
....	-4 dice	8	9
.....	-5 dice	9	10

\* These dice penalties are applied against rolls made to pick the locks.

#### Options:

- Increase the Size of all locks by +1, or a single lock by up to +3 = one Materials dot

### Windows

One to two glass windows per room (Size 2, Durability 1, Structure 3). Security dots thicken the glass or add protective shutters.

Security Dots*	Substance	Durability	Structure
•	Glass (reinforced)	2	4
..	Glass (reinforced)	3	5
...	Wooden shutters (Durability 2)**	3/5***	5 (4)†
....	Wooden shutters (Durability 3)**	3/6***	5 (5)†
.....	Metal shutters (Durability 4)**	3/7***	5 (6)†

\* Note: Attempts to jimmy the windows from outside suffer a -1 dice penalty per Security dot.

\*\* The shutters are assumed to have slats that allow people inside the sanctum to peer outside. Shutters are the same Size as the windows they protect.

\*\*\* The first number is for the glass window alone; the second is for the window with the shutters closed.

† The first number is for the glass window; the number in parentheses is the Structure of the shutters.

#### Options:

- One to two additional windows per room = one Materials dot

— Increase the Size of all windows by +1, or a single window by up to +3 = one Materials dot.

— Bulletproof glass: +1 Durability against bullets per Materials dot (+3 max)

### Example of Security and Materials

The sanctum of a mage who has invested three dots of Security has the following features:

— Outer walls: reinforced stone or brick (Durability 6)

— Interior walls: wood or plaster (Durability 2)

— Doors: reinforced wood (Size 5, Durability 5, Structure 10)

— Door locks: -3 dice to any attempt to breach the locks (Size 1, Durability 7, Structure 8)

— Windows: reinforced glass with wooden shutters, -3 dice to any attempt to jimmy the windows (Size 2, Durability 3 for the glass/5 with shutters, Structure 5 for the glass, 4 for the shutters).

Dots of the Sanctum Materials Merit (see below) can be spent to increase the thickness of the interior walls, the number per room and/or Size of doors and windows, as well as the Size of the locks. This Merit can also be used to add bulletproofing to the windows.

### New Sanctum Merit

For many chronicles, simply knowing a sanctum's Size and Security dot ratings is enough. If you need more specific information, these additional rules will

help. Included here are new Merits for adding features to a sanctum.

### *Guardian Ghost (•• to •••••)*

**Prerequisite:** Sanctum

**Effect:** A wise mage fears what he doesn't see as much as what he does see. While an empty corridor in a sanctum may look like an easy opportunity for a quick raid, it's entirely possible that spiritual forces are guarding it, hiding in Twilight.

A Twilight ghost has been anchored to an object or room within the material sanctum and commanded to guard the entire sanctum against intruders. The ghost will only heed the commands of its masters (i.e., anyone who has contributed Merit dots toward the purchase of this Merit); the ghost will treat all others as hostile unless commanded by its master to exempt a person from its ire.

The masters do not need to be able to converse with the ghost (it can understand their commands), but they can't see it or hear it without using the Death 1 "Speak with the Dead" spell, unless the ghost uses a Numen like Ghost Sign or manifests. (They can command it to do so.)

The dot rating of this Merit represents the power of the ghost.

Dots	Attribute Dots	Max Essence	Numina
••	5	10	1
•••	10	15	2
••••	15	20	3
•••••	30	25	4

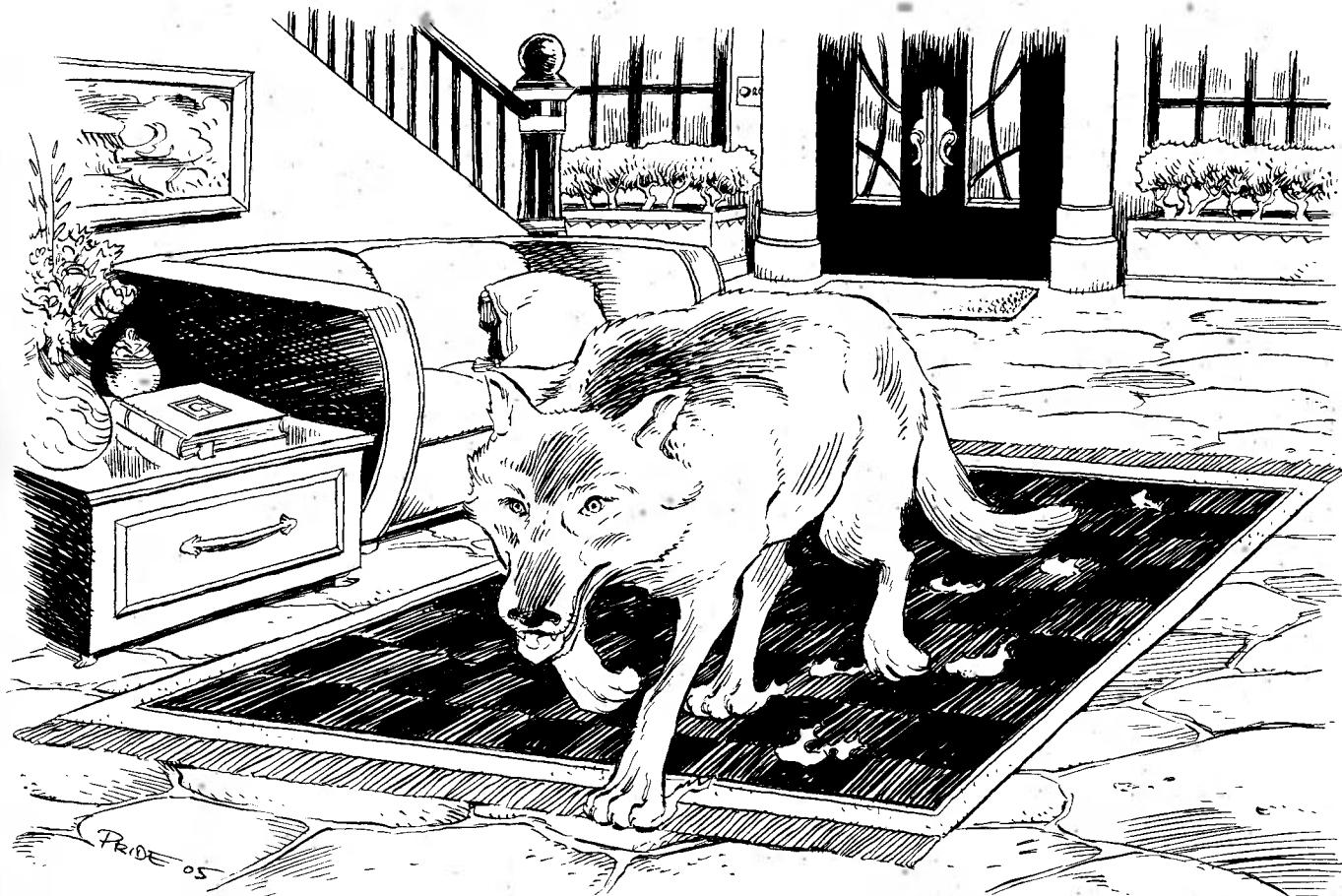
The player or Storyteller creates the ghost, distributing its Attribute dots among its Power, Finesse and Resistance traits, and choosing its Numina.

**Drawback:** Ghosts can be controlled by other mages using the Death Arcanum. They can also be driven out by an exorcism, which even a Sleeper can perform. (See "Exorcisms," p. 214, in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.) If that happens, all dots in this Merit are lost.

### *Guardian Retainer (• to •••••)*

**Prerequisite:** Sanctum

**Effect:** This Merit is exactly like the Sleepwalker Retainer Merit (see p. 116 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), in that it gives the mage a Sleepwalker servant, but this one is trained mainly for combat. Usually a minimum of two dots is needed to make a guardian of any value. (One dot might provide a good lookout but does not represent a worthy fighter.) The guardians can be sentries, soldiers, undercover agents, black suits or watch-



men — whatever role is needed to defend the sanctum. They take their orders from anyone who is a legitimate owner of the sanctum (i.e., anyone who has contributed Merit dots toward the sanctum's Size or Security).

A sanctum's Size describes how many bodies can be comfortably sequestered inside the sanctum. Generally, you can fit two guardians per room. Any more than that and morale might be less than desired, giving the guardians a chance to simply break and run if the action gets too heavy.

**Drawbacks:** Guardian Retainers will only defend the sanctum, not perform errands like other Retainers; this is the price for their willingness to die defending the sanctum.

### *Guardian Spirit (●● to ●●●●●)*

**Prerequisite:** Sanctum

**Effect:** A Twilight spirit has been fettered to an object or room within the material sanctum and commanded to guard the entire sanctum against intruders. The spirit will only heed the commands of its masters (i.e., anyone who has contributed Merit dots toward the purchase of this Merit); the spirit will treat all others as hostile unless commanded by its master to exempt a person from its ire.

The masters do not need to be able to converse with the spirit (it can understand their commands), but they can't see it or hear it without using the Spirit 1 "Spirit Tongue" spell, unless it uses a Numen to materialize.

The dot rating of this Merit represents the power of the spirit.

Dots	Rank	Dots Attribute	Max Essence	Numina
..	1	5	10	1
...	2	10	15	2
....	3	15	20	3
.....	4	30	25	4

The player or Storyteller creates the spirit, distributing its Attribute dots among its Power, Finesse, Resistance and Influence traits, and choosing its Numina. The player or Storyteller also chooses its Ban.

**Drawback:** Spirits can be controlled by other mages using the Spirit Arcanum.

The spirit's masters must provide the spirit with one Essence point per day (using Prime to convert Mana, or taking it from another source) or else the spirit will become surly. It can still be commanded, but it will seek to be freed from its bondage. If the spirit cannot harvest properly aspected Essence at the sanctum, the spirit will slowly lose Essence each day until falling into slumber and forced across the Gauntlet. If that happens, all dots in this Merit are lost.

### *Sanctum Gauntlet (● or ●●)*

**Prerequisite:** Sanctum

**Effect:** A sanctum is more than brick and mortar, flesh and blood. The Shadow Realm surrounds it, enabling creatures unseen to lurk in spaces outside the world we know. Unless these spirits have the strength to Materialize across the Gauntlet inside the sanctum or the ability to peer at its inhabitants, the Shadow Realm is of little consequence to mages unconcerned with shamanic magic.

The Strength of the Gauntlet in a sanctum depends on just where the sanctum is located. The Strength of a sanctum in the midst of a modern downtown is probably 5. A sanctum out in the wilderness might be Strength 2. The Storyteller determines the beginning Gauntlet Strength based on the sanctum's location. This Strength can be modified up or down by buying Merit dots.

Gauntlet Strength*	Merit Dot Cost
-2	2 dots
-1	1 dot
+1	1 dot
+2	2 dots

\* Minimum Strength of 1. A Verge cannot be created around the sanctum with this Merit.

### *Sanctum Materials (varies)*

**Prerequisite:** Sanctum

**Effect:** Materials dots are used to enhance various sanctum features, described in "Elements of a Sanctum," p. 83-84, such as increasing the thickness of interior walls (Security dots determine the thickness of the outer walls), adding doors and windows and even strengthening these structures. The costs per dot are listed with the various features, above.

A mage who wants to increase the Materials involved in her sanctum must (as part of the story) spend time and effort on the additional construction. If this is not conveniently handled during downtime, she must find workers, someone to shop for the additional materials and so on. The Storyteller determines the time it takes to make these additional improvements.

### *Computer Network*

Modern sanctums can (and should) integrate modern technology. Although there will always be a few anachronistic mages who insist on living without electricity or running water, computers have been common enough in every aspect of human life that they can be found in sanctums as well. That doesn't mean mages use computers to their full potential. Some mages think of browsing the web with the same casual air as they would regard brewing a cup of coffee in the morning. More-progressive

mages live on the bleeding edge of technology, using computers for everything from routine investigations and research to secure long-distance teleconferencing and Voice Over Internet Protocols (VoIP).

The best guideline for measuring the computer network in a sanctum depends on the mage's Resources Merit. If several mages are sharing a sanctum, either use the Resources of the most computer-savvy character (the one with the highest Computer Skill) or the mage with the highest Resources (if he agrees to buy whatever his "sanctum sysadmin" requires). A character's Resources gives a default measure of the equipment bonus a character gets when using the Computer Skill with the sanctum's network (although the character cannot get a Computer equipment bonus higher than his Computer Skill).

#### Resources Dots      Computer Skill Dice Bonus

• to ..	+1
... to ....	+2
.....	+3

Note that it's entirely possible that a computer-savvy character might already have his own equipment that's better than this, in which case, he doesn't really need to use the sanctum's network.

The advantage to upgrading the network inside the sanctum is that the network is protected by all of the defenses the sanctum has. Any attempt to hack into the computer is penalized dice by the sanctum's Security rating. In addition, anyone who wants to break inside and steal the computer has to get inside the building first, whether they're agents of the FBI or frustrated rival hackers. The downside is that the network is fixed in that location, and anything that endangers the sanctum endangers the network as well.

## Spell

There are, of course, nearly unlimited possibilities for defending a sanctum using magic. Some of them are mentioned below.

## Wards

The Space 2 "Ward" spell is certainly the most common sanctum protection used, for it can prevent unwanted scrying. In the case of large sanctums, a mage might only be able to ward one or two rooms, in which case these places become the "safe rooms," where residents can speak and act freely without fear of magical scrutiny. A ward also blocks against unwanted Portals and Teleportation spells.

Space 3, along with conjunctional Arcana, can introduce Bans into the Ward, blocking a host of things from entering the sanctum.

Like any magic, a ward can be dispelled. Also, if a ward is completely worn down by penetrations, it can become weak or expire. The mage will need to monitor his wards and perform occasional spells to reinforce them.

## Duration and Conditions

Spells cast to protect a sanctum are usually performed as extended castings with indefinite Durations. Once cast, the mage usually relinquishes the spell so that it no longer counts toward her maximum allowed spells. (See "Relinquishing Control of a Spell," p. 120-121, in **Mage: The Awakening**.) Doing this, however, means that she can no longer control the spell, exempting certain targets from its effect. She can, of course, declare exemptions before she relinquishes the spell, but it's hard to imagine every possibility.

Another option is to add a Fate 2 component to the casting that allows the mage to turn the spell on and off with a trigger, such as a spoken word or specific gesture.

Some spells can be set for a delayed activation, using a Time 2 prepared spell. These activate at the desired time, unless Fate 2 is used to set a conditional trigger, in which case the spell activates whenever the trigger occurs, whether or not the mage is near (unless the trigger specifies the need for her presence).

## Countermagic Wards

Using Prime 1 "Dispel Magic" (or Prime 4 "Supernal Dispellation"), one or more rooms within the sanctum can be protected from outside magic by dispelling it. For example, an intruder (or guest) who tries to wear a Mind illusion or Life magic shapeshifting disguise—or a Forces invisibility—might find his magic negated as he enters the protected room.

Prime 3 "Magic Wall" can shield a place from spells; the ward doesn't dispel the incoming magic but does provide a form of cover that the spells must penetrate before they can be effective.

Like any magic, however, the spell that works the countermagic ward can be dispelled. No magical defense is completely foolproof.

## Other Arcana

A quick survey of the spells in **Mage: The Awakening** yields a number of ideas for sanctum defenses.

- **Death:** Death 3 "Ghost Gate" with a conditional trigger for when an intruder enters the sanctum can

be used to consign the intruder to the same ephemeral existence as any ghostly guardians. Death 3 "Quicken Corpse" creates zombie guardians; unlike living servants, these don't need to be fed while the mage is away on an extended trip. (A Matter 2 spell can later cleanse the sanctum of the lingering odor of rot and decay.) Death 4 "Haunting" creates a ghost guardian; see the Guardian Ghost Merit, above, for suggested uses.

• **Fate:** Fate 1 "Winds of Chance" can be used (when cast as an area-affecting spell) to lend a sanctum a degree of luck that may hinder or even deter would-be burglars or invaders. Likewise, Fate 2 "Shifting the Odds" can provide a somewhat more dramatic version.

• **Forces:** Forces 3 "Invisible Object" can be used to hide things from the sight of unwanted visitors. Forces 3 "Transmission" can be used to baffle any sort of radio or cell phone communications intruders might use. A conjunctional Forces 3 "Autonomous Servant" spell with Mind 5 and Space 2 allows the magically created servant to patrol the sanctum in the mage's absence and set off an alarm or call the mage (or the authorities) in the case of a break-in.

Forces 3 "Control Electricity" can, with a conditional trigger, shut off power to a room or the entire sanctum or vice-versa (turn on all the lights and/or security systems). Likewise, "Light Mastery" with a conditional trigger can create light whenever someone enters the sanctum — or cause the place to go pitch-black, as existing lights are extinguished.

Forces 2 "Control Sound" can increase the volume of an intruder's footsteps, making a ninja's faint footfall sound like thunder. Forces 3 "Sound Mastery" can create the sounds of police sirens, guard dogs, horrible screams, and so on, deterring intruders. Forces 4 "Transform Energy" can cause an intruder's footfalls to become pyrotechnic light displays.

Forces 4 "Friction Knife" cast over an area can make anyone moving through that area regret that he ever came. Old-fashioned mages who spurn modern technology can use Forces 5 "Electromagnetic Pulse" to destroy intruders' electrical devices.

• **Life:** Life 1 "Sense Life" can alert the mage to any unwanted intruder. Of course, higher-rated spells allow a mage to create all manner of unique guardian animals, unleashed at the mage's command. Life 4 "Trigger the Lizard Brain" with a conditional trigger can instill fear in anyone entering the area.

• **Matter:** Matter 1 "Detect Substance" can alert a mage to any handguns her guests (or intruders) might be carrying (by detecting gunpowder). Matter 3 "Alter Integrity" can be set with a conditional trigger to reinforce a door or

window's Durability in the presence of an intruder. Likewise, Matter 3 "Transmute Earth" can be used to temporarily (or permanently) transform a wooden door into a steel door. Matter 4 "Transmute Air" can change oxygen into a deadly gas, although this is best used with a conditional or remote trigger when the mage and her allies are *in absentia*. With Matter 5 "Self-Repairing Machine," a sanctum's doors and walls can repair damage done to them.

• **Mind:** Mind 1 "Sense Consciousness" can detect the presence of minds where they're not supposed to be. Mind 2 "Emotional Urging" can project a feeling of dread, sadness or anger that might deter Sleepers, although mages usually won't be swayed. Mind 4 "Hallucination" can be used by clever and imaginative mages for a number of deterrents and fake-outs.

• **Prime:** See "Countermagic Wards," above. Prime 3 "Disguise Resonance" can alter the appearance of a sanctum's resonance, making it less desirable for certain types of spirits or mages seeking passage with opposite qualities.

• **Space:** Space 2 "Apportation" can be set with a conditional trigger to send a valued object somewhere else, should someone try to steal it. Space 3 "Portal" cast over an area can send anyone who steps through a certain door to a place he didn't expect, especially if a Mind Hallucination disguises the perceived location until after the hapless intruder has stepped through. Space 4 "Co-Location" allows a mage to stay in his sanctum and travel elsewhere at the same time. Space 4 "Suspension" is a common spell for use against intruders, laid as a trap to catch them in place. Space 5 "Hide Space" is one of the most effective spells protecting sanctums from casual or even determined visitors.

• **Spirit:** Spirit 3 "Spirit Road" can be used as a Space Portal (above) to send a visitor elsewhere. Spirit 4 "Spirit Guardian" is one of the more common spells used by mages protecting their sanctums; see the Guardian Spirit Merit, above.

• **Time:** Time 5 "Future Legacy" allows a mage to shunt his valuables forward in time, so that while he is away from the sanctum, there's nothing there to steal. When he arrives back at a predetermined time, his items reappear. Time 5 "Stop Time" can be set as a trap (using a conditional trigger) to ensnare intruders, freezing them in time long enough for other guardians to arrive and deal with them.

## Paths in Sanctums

Mages walk many Paths to the Watchtowers, but mages who walk similar Paths often have similar requirements for their sanctuaries. Although any mage

can defy expectations after he returns from his first Awakening, a mage who encounters others within the sanctums of the world should be prepared for a few recurring phenomena — as well as eccentric and dynamic individuals who defy all such expectations.

**Acanthus** mages are drawn to the study of Time and Fate magic. Some mages would be content to leave an Acanthus in the role of an advisor, consulting her on different courses of action taken on the sanctum's behalf. Fate magic can be just as useful, however, particularly when setting up luck charms or curse traps around a sanctum. Time and Fate together can set up traps that trigger against particular opponents at specific times and during auspicious opportunities.

**Moros** mages incline toward the study of the Death and Matter Arcana. The stereotype for this Path is the Necromancer who commands the dead in service to his sanctum. Others may expect him to have zombies and shambling horrors at his command or ghosts of the departed enslaved to do his bidding unseen. While these stereotypes have some basis in fact, the Matter Arcanum is in some ways more useful in a sanctum. Being able to bolster doors and windows when a sanctum is under assault is a handy skill, but by no means the only one. An imaginative Moros mage can use this Arcanum to create a wider array of structures, barriers and defenses within a sanctum.

**Mastigos** mages have Mind and Space as their Ruling Arcana. Some Mastigos prefer to maintain large numbers of guardian Retainers in their sanctums, either to give the Mastigos opportunities to use their Mind magic against them or simply as a way to soothe their egotistical natures while exploiting natural charisma. Other Mastigos use their formidable command of the Space Arcanum to routinely ward and protect their sanctums against distant spells — or use that same lore to scry on their enemies' sanctums from afar during times of magical warfare.

**Obrimos** mages are often best with Forces and Prime magic. Some cabals find it only natural that a mage who's proficient with the Prime Arcanum should watch over a sanctum's Hallow. Many expect these Theurgists to lead oblations as well. While this crude stereotype sometimes forces some Obrimos into the roles, they may still use this to their advantage, making their faith (and its observance) an integral part of the sanctum's function. Other Obrimos rebel further against this "caretaker" notion. Although their spells can provide cheap electricity and power for a sanctum, the righteous Obrimos can also unleash powerful rotes when the walls of a sanctum are violated and foes are at the door.

**Thyrsus** mages hold Life and Spirit as their Ruling Arcana. Command over spirits presents many intriguing possibilities to a Shaman. She can become the sanctum's spirit warder, monitoring the Shadow Realm within and outside a sanctum's defenses. Her affinity for spirits could allow her to make pacts with spirit guardians or draw down the unseen in other ways for her sanctum's defense. A mage with Life magic can also rebel against the notion of simply being the "healer" in times of emergency. As the groundskeeper, he can attend to living things around the facade.

### *Sharing a Sanctum*

It is far more common for a mage to share a sanctum with other practitioners of magic than to create a solitary refuge. When mages do share a sanctum, the mages involved should have a very good reason for inhabiting the same place. Mere convenience isn't sufficient. The sanctum doesn't just describe where they live, worship or meditate — it defines the cabal that inhabits the sanctum. If the mages really want to just live in the same place, after all, pitching in for rent is cheaper and easier than creating a sanctum. Mages who share the same sanctum should share the same purpose for creating that sanctuary. Here are some typical goals mages have when they share a communal sacred space.

### *Investigation*

The mages specialize in investigation of the supernatural, and the sanctum gives them the resources to investigate. Their mandate may be general enough to include "anything suspicious," but, more commonly, they specialize in studying a particular type of supernatural phenomenon. As part of this, they are prepared for the night when their rivals retaliate. One does not meddle in the affairs of vampires or werewolves, for instance, without being prepared to fight them.

An investigation sanctum would benefit from excellent computers, an extensive library (with the accompanying Merit), methods of communicating with other investigators and an arsenal for defense. The Mysterium often takes credit for organizing and funding such sanctums, even if the Guardians of the Veil are more effective at doing the actual work.

### *Guardianship*

The sanctum is based around a powerful artifact, which requires a dedicated cabal to protect it. Perhaps the local Consilium has charged the cabal with this duty, and specifies the conditions under which they may use it, or the cabal's charge depends on the condition that it lets no one (other than the Consilium, of course) use

the artifact. It could actually be a cursed item, one that several rivals would kill to obtain.

A guardianship sanctum obviously has an artifact at its heart, but this sanctum would benefit with additional guardian Retainers (and maybe Arcane guardians) to defend it when the cabal is not present. The Adamantine Arrow often sponsors these types of sanctums, although they must carefully choose the mages who maintain them. After all, it's only a matter of time until the cabal falls prey to temptation and uses an artifact they weren't supposed to touch . . . .

### *Craftsmanship*

The mages of this cabal work together to create and build. Perhaps they all enhance magical weapons or animate the same servitors or specialize in fetishes containing useful spirits. Their sanctum is a workshop, where many Arcana combine to create weapons and tools used in service to the Consilium — or the highest bidder.

### *Scholarship*

The mages of the sanctum gather knowledge, usually related to a particular topic. They could be seeking hints of the true history of Atlantis, or perhaps they routinely launch into epic journeys into the Shadow Realm or Astral Space. The sanctum is their point of departure, a safe place where they can prepare for their journeys beforehand and heal afterwards.

### *Order Loyalty*

All of the mages in this sanctum belong to this same magical order, which exists to further its goals. This could easily be investigation, scholarship or guardianship. The mages have access to the sanctum on the condition that they work for an order master on the local Consilium. They are caught in the center of political strife, doing whatever they must to watch over rival orders. This might involve investigating rival mages, rushing to the aid of other mages in their order or even "eliminating" problems that would be embarrassing to their order.

### *Spiritualism*

All of the mages within this sanctum have at least some command of the Spirit Arcanum. The sanctum is prepared to deal with tasks related to the Shadow Realm. The sanctum could be located near a Verge, prepared to deal with what crosses over into this world. Perhaps the sanctum exists so that the mages can summon and deal with a particular variety of spirit, or maybe the land the sanctum is built on is infamous for its ties to a genius loci. The sanctum's spiritual landscape is as

important as its physical defenses. In fact, the Shadow surrounding the sanctum might look very different from its material realm façade. Behind carefully guarded walls, the cabal might cross over to a refuge critical to the spirit world.

### *Arcane Alliance*

This works like a spiritualism sanctum, but all of the mages have one Arcanum in common. The resources of the sanctum include those that are of vital importance to that Arcanum. For instance, a sanctum of mages who all have the Death Arcanum could be near a haunted house or a graveyard.

### *Magical Warfare*

The cabal in this sanctum is a strike force prepared for war. That means every mage should be ready for a fight and have the martial skills to back up her oaths of service. Each Path has its own specialties in combat, and they should be represented at their best. The Consilium calls in this team to deal with violent disturbances, dispatching "magical commandos" to solve problems swiftly and silently. The Guardians of the Veil sometimes sponsor this type of sanctum, but the Adamantine Arrow is particularly good at organizing these.

### *Etiquette*

When a mage visits another mage's sanctum, he can just knock like anybody else. If he's on official business, however, proper decorum is essential. When other mages ignore these protocols, such lapses in etiquette might result in a conflict resolved in the chambers of the local Consilium — or even in magical warfare.

Etiquette doesn't have to be formal or standardized, but learning it is important to mage society. Sanctums have elaborate methods for ritually, formally and magically enforcing and defining very different sets of legal precedents and Protocols, but a few general rules of etiquette are recognized in most civilized cities. Although a cabal's charter should be precise enough to hold up to scrutiny when the Lex Magica — the laws of magical society — are invoked, a breach of etiquette has very different consequences, such as grudges, loss of face or status or retribution in other social discourse. (In game terms, approaching a sanctum improperly can lead to dice pool penalties to various Social rolls involving the sanctum's cabal.)

In game terms, any story that requires mages to obey local etiquette should include the opportunity to make Skill rolls like Socialize and Etiquette for remembering such details. While these rolls are not as immediate

and deadly as damage from a firearm or an attack spell, they can influence the outcome of scenes where social interaction can go awry.

### *Granting Audience*

As described in Chapter One, sanctums containing entire cabals have Protocols that bind their inhabitants. These same Protocols specify the cabal's preferences on how visitors must approach. That doesn't mean the local Consilium is obligated to scrutinize the fastidious details of a sanctum's rules, but it does mean a cabal should make its particulars clear before it grants audiences and does business with other mages.

No matter how detailed the particulars must be, a few generalities of etiquette are observed in most sanctums. No one can force a visitor to a sanctum to be effusively polite, but the more important his business is, or the favor or boon he is requesting, the more formal his approach should be. Legendary stories tell of petitioners leaving great gifts at the doorsteps of ancient sanctums, and prostrating themselves as they perform elaborate rituals of greeting. Such fanciful tales are entirely impractical in the modern age but are still invoked in times of great importance.

The first commonly accepted point of etiquette is that a visitor approaching a sanctum on official business should announce himself first. This serves as much as a warning to the inhabitants as anything else. A messenger bearing a handwritten letter should suffice for announcing a truly important visitor, particularly a visitor from outside the Consilium's influence. Such missives may even be enchanted in various minor ways to further impress the recipient. Taken too far, though, such obsequious demonstrations are considered pompous, so casual visitors often prefer to rely on a carefully composed e-mail or a polite telephone call. In times of animosity, communiqués can serve a deeper purpose: a message could have hidden meanings encrypted inside it, including details of a mage's secret life hidden from the prying eyes of ordinary people who may intercept the message.

The second commonly accepted point of etiquette is that a visitor cannot enter a sanctum unless invited inside. A casual visit doesn't require anything more than an open door and a few words of welcome. A formal visit — that is, one for the purposes of politics or negotiation — requires something more. Mages tend to incorporate minor rituals into various important aspects of their lives, and welcoming guests is no different. A mage has every right to request a guest participates in the "welcoming ritual" when she's entering his home.

The welcoming ritual that accompanies a formal visit can be quite simple: a benediction or blessing, the wafting of smoking sage over someone walking through the foyer or getting the guest to kneel before a shrine are all typical examples. The substance of the ritual often incorporates a minor, beneficial spell, such as a simple Fate blessing or a bestowed Mage Sight that can enhance the visitor's appreciation of the sanctum. A Spirit mage, for instance, can offer to grant a temporary "Spirit Tongue" spell to a visitor who enters a sanctum protected by a spirit guardian, so that the visitor is aware of the guardian. The Moros mage he welcomes could respond by crafting a small trinket into a minor work of art with Matter magic. Such exchanges shouldn't require more than a minor (one- or two-dot) application of an Arcanum. Since they are performed in a sanctum, no witnesses are present. Covert magic is usually sufficient; a vulgar welcoming ritual might be interpreted as a vulgar gift.

### *The Voice of the Land*

Mages know that the land is much more than a setting. It holds repositories of energy that touch the Supernal Realms. Awakened the world over endeavor to seize this power for themselves, going to great lengths to control as much as they can maintain.

The Voice of the Land is rich and varied. Hallows grant the ability to tap into Supernal powers. Ley lines hold the promise of nigh-unlimited energy, drawn from the mystic dynamo of the Earth. Demesnes provide safe havens where magic can be performed without fear of Paradoxes. Loci and Verges tempt mages to frolic in playgrounds that belong to others.

The Land has much to say. The Awakened had best learn how to speak its language and, just as important, listen.

### *Hallows*

As any mage will tell you, great works of magic require tremendous amounts of Mana, and it's not always readily available. A primary concern of mages is thus finding and securing sources of supernatural energy. Without it, they are somewhat limited in the range of their spellcastings. Those who want to perform more than simple conjurings and parlor tricks need to find a place brimming with power for the taking. Once a reliable source is obtained, mages will fight like hell to keep it.

Of course, no such source of power can be obtained without difficulties. First comes the trouble of finding

an untapped source. Scouring the local region, divining for Hallows, rarely turns up undiscovered wells. Only the most adventurous (or naïve) leave home to travel the corners of the Earth searching for bountiful, *undiscovered* fountains of Mana to call their own, let alone loci that have managed to evade theriomorph notice. Most mages opt instead to either rally the troops and seize an established source or create one from scratch. The former leads to severe breaches of social decorum; the latter has the potential of yielding nothing from tremendous effort. No matter what direction the cabal shopping for energy might take, the road promises to be exasperating at best.

To find Mana, most mages cast their attentions skyward, where Supernal energies tend to collect—at the tops of mountains, towers or even modern skyscrapers. A brand-new office building's top floor might spontaneously form a Hallow at certain auspicious times. If a mage is there to detect it, he might be able to coax it into permanency. Finding Hallows involves understanding their symbolic connection to the land in which they occur as much as perceiving the raw energy itself. Some nascent Hallows are too weak to display any real signature to Mage Sight, but a mage versed in geomancy (see “Geomancy,” p. 99-100) might be able to figure out where a Hallow will occur, and then exploit that knowledge, using Prime magic, to make its faint traces blossom into a full-blown Hallow.

In mage society, there are few greater resources than a Hallow. These rare founts are prized possessions, cherished by the cabals that control them and jealously covet by those without. The envy is justified: Hallows provide a concentrated source of Mana that can transform any cabal into a regional power. So coveted are Hallows, in fact, that multiple cabals have waged war over the control of a single Hallow.

What is it about these mystical reservoirs that make them worth dying for? Just as villages once grew around reliable wells of fresh water, so, too, will a cabal prosper around the site of a Hallow. Typically, the higher in elevation the Hallow, the more powerful its flow, and the more Mana its owners can extract from it. This, however, is a general tendency of Hallows, not a rule.

Should a cabal's search bear fruit, there's little-to-no guarantee that the fruit is ripe to be picked. While most mages dream deep down of finding a pure Mana source, all but the most Panglossian of mages know they're going to have to deal with supernatural energies tainted by uncooperative resonance. Depending on how lucky the cabal was to find the source, the mages could choose to move on in the hopes of finding another,

more conducive course or stick it out and massage the resonance to their liking.

Not all Hallows are active. Dormant Hallows lie scattered across the landscape, invisible to most mages. Not even Mage Sight can detect these; once again, it takes a geomancer's skill to discern their existence. Once discovered, dormant Hallows can be awakened using Prime magic (see the Prime 4 “Awakened Hallow” spell, p. 228, in *Mage: The Awakening*).

### *How Do Hallows Go Dormant?*

Dormancy is a seemingly random occurrence that seems to stem from abuse, disuse or both. Too many alterations of resonance, over-exhaustion and infrequent harvesting practices have all been posited as possible causes, but no one knows for sure what combination of these, if any, contributes to dormancy.

What is known is that every Hallow eventually goes through a dormancy cycle, sometimes more than once. Because mages tend to be reclusive by nature, no reliable records exist tracking the frequency of dormancy at any one Hallow. Is it once a century? Every millennium? More often? Less often? Not even the Mysterium has an answer. Why dormancy happens is a mystery. Some mages blame the Abyss, and some even claim that the Exarchs are stemming the flow. Others believe that everything has its cycle of ebb and flow, a natural state that even the Awakened must accept.

Although some forms of dormancy can be corrected with Prime magic, some instances are resistant even to the Prime spells of a master. It seems that sometimes a Hallow's time has come, and no known magic can keep it awake.

### *Collecting Mana*

When a cabal gains control of a Hallow, the cabal has to decide how its Mana will be collected. If the daily Mana flow from a Hallow is not harvested, it will become imbued into material items or fixtures of the nearby landscape. If all the available items in its vicinity (five-yard radius per dot rating) are already imbued, the Mana will instead dissipate. If this keeps up for long, the Hallow might slowly lose its dot rating and then go dormant.

Tass collection is a popular method of harvesting Mana in rural Hallows, and mages are often forbidden from directly siphoning such a Hallow's Mana so that it can instead imbue into tass. Stones, plants or water thus imbued are harvested and stored within a communal sanctum or distributed to the cabal's membership per pre-arranged agreements. The problem with this ap-

proach becomes much more apparent in urban settings, where stones, plants and water are replaced by masonry, windows and plumbing. Unless the cabal intends to dismantle its high-rise penthouse one brick at a time, other options must be employed to collect the Hallow's Mana. Mages who practice the art of geomancy (see "Geomancy," p. 99-100) can sometimes influence the manner in which a Hallow will imbue nearby material items with tass.

Enter manual harvesting. The process calls for a cabal to harvest Mana *before* it congeals into tass, through oblations or Prime magic. Timing is critical: failure to collect within the required timeframe causes the Mana to infuse into nearby objects that could lead to greater efforts recovering it than would normally be exerted.

### When Tass Goes Awry

When Mana congeals into tass near a rural Hallow, most of the items the Mana can imbue are easily recovered. Branches can be broken off trees, stones can be dug up and pools of water can be collected in portable tubs. When Mana congeals near a metropolitan Hallow, there can be no end of difficulty recovering it.

Because the Mana tends to imbue objects with a keenly sympathetic relationship to the Hallow's resonance, permanent objects get imbued more often than temporary ones. The wrought-iron railing lining the balcony, for example, will become tass before the potted plant in the corner.

Animals and living creatures, however, will not become imbued this way. Although legends tell of rare Hallows that did indeed enchant creatures living nearby (from spiders who then spun stunning webs to chickens that laid Mana-filled eggs), few such Hallows are known today.

A Hallow restores Mana every day at the same time and in an amount commensurate to the Hallow's potency (see the Hallow Merit, p. 83-84, in *Mage: The Awakening*). When that time might be differs from one Hallow to the next. Hallows with an affinity for night often peak at midnight, when stars track from every horizon on a clear night. Conversely, those Hallows with an affinity for the day reach their zenith as the sun does. More subtle cues could occur as a result of natural biorhythms, such as the moments after a rooster crows, when surrounding owls begin hooting or when flowers first open their petals.

The rules by which Mana is manually harvested

depends on the cabal. Some choose to give every member a set date to collect. Others pick a specific person to perform the necessary oblations. To avoid missing a collection, cabals will often manufacture imbued items that alert the wearer when it's time to harvest the Hallow.

When an oblation isn't used to restore a mage's personal Mana, Prime spells that transfer Mana into portable vessels are used, especially at Hallows that provide sizable amounts of Mana per day. Every Path has its own methods for collecting.

Extremely fortunate cabals have at their disposal imbued items known as Mana bowls. These cups or bowls function as automated harvesters, triggering at the specified time and collecting Mana as a mage would. A mage who owns one has that much more free time to pursue other interests, and the likelihood of forgetting to harvest drops to never.

### Imbued Item: Mana Bowl (●●●●)

Size 1, Durability 4, Structure 5

**Mana Capacity:** Maximum 11

Imbued with the Prime 3 "Channel Mana" power, this metal bowl or cup (usually of copper, but it can be made of any metal) can collect the Mana from a Hallow, storing it in the form of shimmering water. Unless the bowl's owner uses the Mana, which lowers the water level, the water remains in the bowl even when it is upended.

The contingent trigger is set to automatically activate whenever the Hallow in which the bowl is placed produces Mana. (It must be within five yards of the center per Hallow dot.) Roll the owner's Gnosis +3 dice; each success channels one Mana, up to a maximum of three per use.

### Exhausting a Hallow

Hallows can be abused. Careful cabals withdraw up to the exact amount of Mana the Hallow can provide daily, but when emergencies arise, cabals might have to tap the Hallow for more than it safely allows. Though the extra energy might protect the cabal's immediate interests, doing so results in Hallow exhaustion and has definite repercussions. Mages can still tap extra energy using spells such as Prime 3 "Channel Mana." They cannot exhaust a Hallow through oblations.

For every point of Mana taken beyond the customary daily limit — up to a maximum of the Hallow's dot rating — the Hallow's strength is reduced by one dot, and it takes some time for its strength to recover.

#### Extra Mana Taken

One point over limit

#### Recovery Time

Two days

Two points over limit	One week
Three points over limit	Two weeks
Four points over limit	One month
Five points over limit	Three months

Until a Hallow recovers its strength, it produces no Mana whatsoever. Though this defies common accounting principles, remember that a Hallow is a mystical construct, not a process that follows Fallen World rules.

### *Hallow Poaching*

Unlike thieves, mages have no honor, particularly mages from different cabals. They will lie, cheat and steal when they can, where they can and from whom they can. Of all the targets chosen, the most common is a cabal's Hallow.

Hallow poaching is a centuries-old practice. As long as a poacher is skilled enough (Prime 5, Space 2) and has sympathy with the target, she can harvest Mana from a distance, but doing so doesn't come without its risks. Because Hallow poaching in this manner requires a sympathetic casting, it suffers the same drawbacks as any sympathetic spell (see *Mage: The Awakening*, p. 116); a sympathetic conduit between the caster and target forms, allowing the victimized Hallow's owner to trace the criminal drain back to its source. (Note: Hallows cannot be exhausted by the use of sympathetic spells — only their natural Mana yield can be harvested this way.)

Cabals can employ a number of measures to stop or monitor would-be poachers. One method is to have one of their number "marry" the Hallow (as described below), allowing him to restrict just who can harvest from it. Another is a Space 3 + Prime 1 "Ban" spell cast upon the Hallow, preventing Mana channeling, although its caster will need to exempt the cabal from the spell's effects or else they won't be able to channel either.

### **Cleaning the Fridge**

When Sleepers go on long vacations, they often clean out the refrigerator of all perishables to avoid spoiling. Mages who can't afford to keep one mage home to watch the sanctum practice the same idea with their Hallow by purposefully exhausting it before they leave.

Besides preventing the build-up of unregulated tass, intentional exhausting also serves as a deterrent against Mana burgling, should word get out that the cabal has left town. While this does nothing to protect valuable artifacts and books, it does guarantee the replenishment of Mana at a time the cabal can plan for.

### *Bonding to a Hallow*

All cabals aim to secure their Hallows as best they can, but those with more potent Hallows (three dots or higher) look for stronger measures than mystical alarms and mundane technology. For these cabals, the ancient practice of "marrying the land" enables them to restrict the harvesting of the Hallow to only those whom the spouse (the mage who bonds to the Hallow) deems worthy. In olden days, the king would marry the land, and it was said that as he prospered, so did the land; as he suffered, so did the land.

Bonding requires a sacrifice of time and attention on the spouse's part, and diligent observances to earn and maintain the Hallow's constant favor. Mages who share a Hallow sometimes fight over who has the right to bond to it, for only one mage can do so. If reasoned debate cannot decide the issue, then the Duel Arcane almost certainly will.

### *Hallow Bond (Prime •••)*

Through the use of this spell, the mage gains a mystical connection with a Hallow, allowing him to restrict who can harvest Mana from it.

**Practice:** Weaving

**Action:** Extended (1 success per Hallow dot)

**Duration:** Lasting (see below)

**Aspect:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana

The casting of this extended action spell can only begin at the time of day in which the Hallow normally produces its daily allotment of Mana. The mage must be present, within the vicinity of the Hallow's center (five-yard radius per dot). He needs one success per dot rating of the Hallow.

The mage's aura cannot conflict with the Hallow's quality of resonance. For example, if his aura is generally angry, he cannot marry a peacefully-aspected Hallow.

A dramatic failure at any point during the casting means that the land has rejected the mage. He cannot continue the spell and may not try again for at least a month, during which time he suffers a -2 dice penalty on all spellcasting attempts to channel Mana from that Hallow. Animistic mages believe that the Hallow has a consciousness and it has denied the supplicant; more scientific-minded mages believe that the mage is allergic to something in the Hallow's mystical composition.

If the spell succeeds, its effects are lasting — so long as the mage properly maintains a relationship with the Hallow. He must perform at least one oblation

per month per dot rating of the Hallow (i.e., a 3-dot Hallow needs three oblations per month), based not on his Path's preferences but on those of the Hallow, determined by its resonance. A resonance of pain or fear might require oblations featuring torture, maiming or death. Tranquility resonance might need meditative oblations or the tending of a garden within the Hallow's vicinity. Anxiety might be best served through rushed ceremonies and rituals, taut with emotional conflict. The mage — called the spouse — knows which oblations will appease the Hallow.

If the mage misses one of these oblations, the spell's effects are dampened temporarily, until he can perform the rite. If more than three months pass without an oblation on the mage's part, the spell expires. That mage cannot attempt to marry the same Hallow again for at least the next three months thereafter.

So long as the spell lasts, the mage can choose who can harvest Mana from the Hallow. Mages without permission cannot forcibly harvest the Hallow, except masters with a Prime 5 version of the "Channel Mana" spell, and, even then, they suffer a dice penalty equal to the spouse's Resolve.

With Prime 4, this spell can be cast upon a willing target, bonding her to the Hallow instead of the mage.

Only one mage can be bonded to the same Hallow at the same time. For another to bond to it, the current spouse must either cancel his spell or die — or else his Hallow Bond spell can be dispelled.

#### **Mysterium Rite: Marrying the Land**

#### **Dice Pool:** Composure + Occult + Prime

Of all the orders, the Mysterium most commonly maintains this ancient practice from a time when people lived more closely with the land.

## *Ley Lines*

Ley lines are concentrated currents of energy that crisscross the material realm (and sometimes, the Shadow Realm); they are powerful conductors of resonance, appearing to Mage Sight as raised veins coursing through the skin of the earth.

Ancient cultures like the Chinese, the druidic orders of northern Europe and indigenous South Americans intuitively recognized the energies that ley lines possess. But what they knew of these mystical conduits didn't hold a searchlight to what mages know today.

It's a mystery how ley lines came to be. Popular opinion within the Awakened community claims they are the remains of Atlantean influence before the Ladder broke; when traced deep enough, they presumably lead

to hidden ruins of that fabled civilization. Others think the lines might be fractured portions of the Supernal Realms trapped on this side of the Abyss. However ley lines came to be, there is no denying the prominent role they play in both mage and Sleeper societies.

## *Nodes*

A node occurs wherever two or more ley lines intersect or cross. The lines' energies form an ever-replenishing reservoir. Mages can harness the power from these nodes (using Prime 3 "Ley Lines") to run generators that supply electricity to anything wired to them or power remote locales where electricity is scarce or too expensive to bring in.

Since the resonance around nodes is usually more intense, they are often associated with legends of sacred groves and eerie grottos inhabited by living emotions. A node, like most places, has its own resonance, but this is influenced by the resonance of the lines leading into it from "upstream." The node, in turn, lends this mixture of resonance (its own resonance merging with the lines leading in) to lines leading from it, going "downstream." Imagine a node as a bucket with two or more garden hoses dumping into it. The node absorbs the resonance emptying from both hoses. The mixture is altered by the node's own resonance. Now imagine two or more garden hoses leading from the node, drawing from its reservoir. The resonance they carry is that of the node.

So, the global landscape is a network of nodes with connecting lines that flow in certain directions, each influencing the energies downstream. Eventually, of course, the energies downstream circle back around, creating a complex feedback process throughout the whole system. But that's the macro scale, which individual mages rarely work on. Occasionally, a mage will hatch grandiose dreams of coordinating mages worldwide in an effort to control this vast network, and thus control resonance in many places the world over. Such plans rarely get very far, and none has yet circled the globe (although some mages claim that the entire network is a product of Atlantean engineering).

Most mages must work on the micro scale — the nodes and ley lines crisscrossing their own neighborhoods or regions. Sometimes, the mages will need to travel well outside their territory to "fix" a node that is pumping bad resonance into their own nodes, but most mages simply have to accept what comes down the line at them.

Nodal effects differ, depending on the predominant resonance. Assuming a positive resonance, water tastes

purer, fruits are larger, vegetation is more bountiful and animals that call the node home are more feral by civilized standards. Negatively resonant nodes have the contrary effect: taint, putrefaction and disease might prevail. In suburban areas, rumors of ghosts and evil trees predominate within the node, thus spawning the “haunted house” legends that only grow stronger as time passes (even though, technically speaking, there may be no ghosts in those houses, as mages who investigate can find out).

**Example:** Two ley lines intersect in a suburban home, and one line exits the site, leading on into the city. One of the lines flowing in has resonance aspected with the emotion of hate, while the other has resonance aspected with joy. The home itself — the node — has a resonance quality of introspection. Within the node itself, the energies mix, creating a bizarre resonance of hateful, contemplative joy. The residents of the house might soon begin to discover a certain pleasant feeling whenever they contemplate the people and things they hate.

This new resonance quality is sent downstream via the single exiting line. This resonance will bleed into places it passes, and eventually empty into another node down the line.

### *Tapping a Node*

Successfully tapping a node requires the Prime 3 “Ley Lines” spell (see p. 226-227 in **Mage: The Awakening**). Mages measure a node’s power by how many lines enter the node. (For this purpose, it doesn’t matter how many lines exit the node.) Each line allows for a certain degree of free energy, as shown below. (The target number column shows how many successes are needed to tap such a node, as per the Ley Line spell description.)

Ley Lines	Node Powers	Target Number
2	A small room	One success
3	Small home	Three successes
4	Large home or mansion	Five successes
5	Office building	Seven successes

Nodes with more than five lines converging are extremely rare.

How a cabal collects the siphoned power varies. Generators that normally plug into wall outlets might have power cords enchanted to “plug” into the ground at the node. More remote cabals might use Forces magic to convert the node’s power to kinetic energy that runs windmills or turn it into heat to power steam engines or rushing water to move paddle wheels.

### *A Current of Resonance*

Whatever travesty might befall a region — be it plague, famine, war or disaster — a node’s resonance feels it,

and then sends it downstream. Likewise, whatever good befalls a region can also be sent elsewhere.

Ley lines are rarely altered by the resonance of the places through which they run, but the lines can bleed their own powerful currents into these regions, affecting them in both good and bad ways, depending on the quality of resonance the lines carry. For this reason, mages who wish to alter an area’s resonance will have to eventually take the ley lines running through the area into consideration. The only way to permanently alter a ley line’s resonance, however, is to tackle the line at the node from which the line arose. The nodes impart their resonance to the lines leading from them, and these lines in turn bleed them into the places through which they travel, eventually emptying out into another node, where the process begins anew.

Generally, only objects directly on a ley line’s flow are affected by the resonance, but if they absorb it regularly enough and then are moved elsewhere, they’ll take that resonance with them. The same is true of living creatures. A man who works in an office building with foul ley line resonance (“bad feng shui”) will take his troubles home with him, and come back for work the next day to soak up more bad vibes.

Structures in the midst of an area’s negative resonance can benefit if built on a “positive” ley line’s path. The thriving pawn shop in the poorest part of town, a successful church surrounded by strip clubs and gambling establishments and a tranquil park in an otherwise crime-ridden neighborhood are all excellent examples of how powerful a force a ley line can be.

Some historical ley lines led ancient caravans to unknowingly create roads above them. Travelers swore that the gods favored any who traversed them with divine endurance and good spirits, but mages know better. Every ley line carries with it a current of resonance that etches the landscape no matter what residual resonance the line passes through. That most great roads once rested atop a ley line with a steady, resolute resonance only proves the rule.

The resonant composition of a node determines which type of mage it attracts. Sorcerers who share the node’s aural signatures seek to establish sanctums as close to the node as possible, if not directly over it. Other mages whose signatures are similar but not exact will try to massage the node’s resonance to their liking, either by altering one line’s resonance upstream or manipulating flows like a mother adjusting water temperature in a bathtub.

### *Shape and Flow*

Mages recognize two different “shapes” of ley lines. A “dragon line,” named for a term used by the Chinese to

describe a natural line of *chi*, does not follow a straight line, but rather meanders through the landscape. Dragon lines are likely to irregularly undulate above and beneath the earth's surface, and are believed to be the "wires" connecting the surface to mythical subterranean Halls deep within the material realm's crust.

In contrast, a "straight track" is a line that has been forced to follow a certain route by means of an artifact called a Ley Marker (see below). To call these lines straight is a bit of a misnomer; few actually appear as taut, straight lines. What really distinguishes them from dragon lines are the long distances they travel aboveground before sinking beneath the surface. Mages can alter the shape and direction of a ley line with the Prime 3 "Ley Shift" spell, below.

Besides shape, another aspect by which mages measure ley lines is energy flow. Typically, the faster that energy flows through a ley line, the more intense the resonance becomes and the more aggressive it feels. Ley line flow can be rated by its Strength, from 1 to 5 dots, with 1 being rather weak and ineffectual at altering resonance where it flows, and 5 being extremely forceful, almost sure to force its resonance on to anything in its path,

even just things passing briefly through the path. The average ley line has a Strength of 2. Mages can alter this flow with the Prime 3 "Ley Flow" spell, below.

A ley line's strength of flow modifies attempts to scrutinize its resonance; the examiner gains a +1 dice bonus per dot of ley flow Strength. (Compare this to non-ley line resonance, which is not rated at all, and you will get some idea of how intense even a weak ley line's resonance is.)

### *Ley Shift (Prime ●●●)*

The mage can shift the geographical position of a ley line in a direction or shape of her choosing. While this spell moves the line's direction of flow, the spell cannot sever or destroy the ley line, or reverse its direction of flow (see "Ley Flow," below).

**Practice:** Weaving

**Action:** Extended (one success per five yards)

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Method:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana (to anchor)

Shifting a ley line is a three-stage process. First, the mage must mystically "grab" the conduit while reaching out into



the air from the appropriate direction. (She needs some form of Mage Sight to see it.) If the mage wants to move it laterally, she reaches straight out so that pulling into her body moves the line in the desired direction. If she wants to pull the line closer to the surface, she reaches down toward her feet. Similarly, pulling the line down requires reaching up to the sky. Sleepers would perceive this as extremely odd behavior, but nothing that causes Disbelief.

Once she has a grip on the line, she next pulls on the line as if dragging a large steel cable. Onlookers see the mage straining against an invisible resistance. She can drag the line five yards for each success. The spell's target number is thus determined by the total distance the mage wants to move the line.

As soon as the mage reaches the desired distance, she must finally anchor the line into its new position by investing one Mana to "peg" the line down. Imagine a tent spike that keeps a rope in place, and you have an idea what the mystical peg does to the conduit.

Once the spell expires, the ley line snaps back into its natural shape.

#### Free Council Rote: Urban Renewal

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Occult + Prime

The Free Council uses this spell in their urban renewal projects, redirecting lines to flow through the buildings, parks or roads they think can best benefit from the line's resonance. Alternatively, they redirect the line to remove its influence on a place, such as when its resonance is ill-aspected.

#### Ley Flow (Prime ●●●●)

The mage can alter the flow of energy through a ley line, adjusting the flow anywhere from a torrent to a mere trickle, or, instead, he can change the current's direction of flow, sending the current back upstream to its source node.

**Practice:** Patterning

**Action:** Extended

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Method:** Covert

**Cost:** 1 Mana

Before casting, the mage must decide whether to adjust the strength of the line's flow or alter its direction. He could, however, cast this spell twice, once to lower the strength and again to alter its flow or vice-versa.

**Strength of Flow:** When adjusting the flow's Strength, the mage manages to raise or lower the Strength by one dot per success. Most ley lines have an existing Strength of 2. To raise a Strength 2 ley flow to Strength 4 would require a target number of two successes. The mage could reduce the

Strength to zero, in which case the line ceases to flow.

The higher the Strength, the more dramatic and quick are the effects of its resonance on people, places and things in the ley line's path.

**Direction of Flow:** When reversing the line's direction of flow, making it go upstream rather than down, the mage needs one success per Strength dot of the line's flow. It is easier to reverse the flow of a weak line than a strong one. A line with a Strength of 2 would require a target number of two successes.

#### Silver Ladder Rote: Governing the Tides

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Occult + Prime

The Silver Ladder learned early about the relationship between a ley line's current and resonance. The order also discovered the subtle effectiveness that altering a rival sanctum's nodal resonance has on the sanctum's power. This spell is the primary reason why cabals patrol miles upstream to safeguard their holdings.

### Supernatural Victims of Natural Disaster

Mages aren't the only force capable of altering a ley line's orientation. Mother Nature's had more than a say in it, as earthquakes, floods and tsunamis do their part in redrawing the supernatural landscape.

While most natural disasters are, well, *natural*, there's little that can be done to prevent a ley line shift from occurring. A victimized cabal can only go out and do what it can to re-align the ley line to where it once was, although any such attempts can only last as long as the magic used.

Other disasters, however, are anything but natural. Cabals have been known to magically induce floods, quakes and tsunamis to cripple a rival and alter the regional ley lines at the same time.

#### Artifact: Ley Markers (●●●●●)

Size 2, Durability 5, Structure 7

**Mana:** Maximum 11

Generally made of stone or petrified wood, these small tombstone-like objects are of mysterious origin. Sleepers unable to perceive the hidden runes written upon them consider Markers to be traveling signposts or altars to gods long forgotten. The Awakened know better. Ley Markers set ley lines upon new paths, reconfiguring their shapes, similar to the "Ley Shift" spell, above. Unlike that spell, their effects cannot be dispelled.

Much like magnets, Markers can repel or attract a

ley line depending on the Marker's "programming." Those of a "positive" nature attract lines: once one is placed (see below), it will draw the nearest ley line to it like a magnet draws a paper clip. Those Markers of a "negative" nature repel lines.

A Marker is placed by burying it halfway in the ground, so that half of it sticks out and half is underground. Once that happens, the Marker is automatically activated and begins exerting influence on nearby ley lines (any line within 25 yards of the Marker), either attracting or repelling them. The Marker spends its own Mana, one per line it anchors. The Markers do not have to be visible to work; they can be covered by another object. In the past, mages sometimes buried them as part of the foundation of buildings.

By using a series of Markers, a mage can weave ley lines in any configuration she desires, provided she can keep the Markers from being removed. When this Merit is purchased, it comes with five Markers.

When a Marker is removed, the lines it controlled snap back into their natural shapes, a phenomenon that will rarely go unnoticed by those with active Mage Sight. Lines that have been marked for a very long time, however, are said to remain in their marked configuration.

Relocating a mage's Ley Marker is a guaranteed way to court trouble. A sanctum that depends upon a node could find its energy disrupted if the ley lines its cabal carefully manipulated to cross suddenly snap back to their natural configurations.

## *Geomancy*

Altering the configuration of a landscape through mundane means can alter the shape of ley lines whose paths cross that landscape. The "science" behind such geographical manipulation has traditionally been called *geomancy*, although spells are not necessarily involved. The most well-known form is perhaps Chinese *feng shui*, which seeks to control resonance through the manipulation of a place's architecture, interior design and overall ambience.

Ley line geomancy isn't always intentional, however. Sleeper construction projects can inadvertently alter ley lines that the Sleepers don't even know exist. For this reason, mages sometimes fight against certain construction projects that would harm ley lines — or struggle to see the projects through, if they are deemed to benefit the ley line landscape.

Intentional geomancy requires a sensitivity to ley line energies, best represented by the Prime 1 "Supernal Vision" spell, although any form of Mage Sight will

do. Some Sleepers are known to have such sensitivity, perhaps through dowsing or other folk methods.

Those mages capable of feeling these energies can study the complex methods to intentionally alter their shape and even flow. The contingencies involved are so varied and dependant on local situations that no concise guidelines can be given — erecting a post in one place might aid the ley flow, while a post could sever the ley flow in another. The only way to be sure is to study the particular area with a knowledge of geomancy, which is represented in the game through a Mental Merit.

### *Merit: Geomancer (●)*

**Prerequisite:** Occult Skill Specialty in Geomancy

**Effect:** The character has a sense for the ley line energies in the local landscape, and can apply certain principles to its particular conditions to alter the ley lines' shape and/or flow through construction, architecture, interior design, landscaping and pretty much any activity that goes on in the place.

What this means is that the character can make an extended-action Intelligence + Occult roll to figure out what steps need to be taken in the area to affect its ley energies. The target number depends on the size of the area. A single room might require only five successes, while the entire house might need 10 successes; a city block might require 20 or more successes. The time per roll is one day, during which the character studies the area and contemplates how geomantic principles might apply. Possible tool modifiers include classic geomancy manuals (+1 or +2, depending on quality), dowsing rods (+1) and even satellite imagery (+2).

**Dramatic Failure:** The character completely misunderstands the meaning and portent of certain features of the area. If his project is implemented, it will have the opposite effect than that desired (ley flow will weaken rather than get stronger, a line will be repelled rather than attracted, etc.).

**Failure:** The character fails to grasp how any activity might alter the area's ley line landscape.

**Success:** The character has a blueprint for how to alter the shape and/or flow of ley lines in the area.

**Exceptional Success:** The character's blueprint is so efficient it can save the project time and money, cutting in half the amount of work required.

Generally, altering a line requires construction that involves raising or lowering the ground level, or placing and/or removing structures. Altering the flow requires more subtle affects involving placement of objects in the area and even the look and feel (color and imagery)

of buildings and objects. In other words, this means getting permits for construction, hiring architects and workers and buying materials. Not every mage can afford this kind of endeavor. Most of them try to manipulate private builders or City Hall into doing it for them.

In addition to planning mundane projects for the alteration of ley lines, the geomancer can attempt to find undiscovered or dormant Hallows based on where he thinks they might occur, given particular conditions in an area. He can study a region to extrapolate the potential location of Hallows, and then investigate the locations he pinpoints to see if he was right. There are no set rules for this; it mainly involves the Storyteller feeding the geomancer clues that might lead him to the proper spot. The Storyteller must decide whether or not a Hallow is really possible at such a place or if it's just a dead end — or a trap that the geomancer's rivals, following the same clues, have set to spring upon him.

## Public Works Projects

Humanity's technological progress has brought about a number of changes. Foremost among them is modern transportation. With highways, rail lines and runways scratching across the landscape, it's inevitable that ley lines get crossed. Just as a person can alter the ley landscape without using magic, Sleepers can unintentionally do so. Very rare is the Sleeper who plans his housing development projects around geomantic principles.

Cabals that rely upon the resonance of ley lines to maintain their sanctums have to keep on top of city works projects to safeguard their lines from being redirected or even severed.

## Ley Hallows

Hallows and ley lines are mutually exclusive events, but sometimes a Hallow happens to lie atop a ley line. When this occurs, a ley line Hallow's cabal discovers that more harm than good can come of it.

The Hallow's resonance will be strongly affected by that of the ley line, even a weak line. This resonance will aspect any Mana or tass that the Hallow produces. This provides rival cabals a possible weapon against each other, if they can trace the line back to its node and alter its resonance, which will in turn alter the resonance of the Hallow that sits on the line's path. A rival cabal can thus poison the magical waters the cabal depends on for their spells.

Another danger is the Hallow's susceptibility to poaching. Mages downstream from the Hallow can sympathetically link to it via the ley line itself (via Space 2, giving them an Intimate connection) and harvest as if they were at the Hallow. (Of course, this still creates a sympathetic conduit that the Hallow's owners can use to reach the poachers.) This can also work as an advantage for the cabal, however, because they can likewise tap the line downstream to touch their Hallow from afar.

## Other Voices

### Demesnes

Practicing vulgar magic risks a Paradox. Even if a mage takes every precaution to prevent Sleeper observation of a vulgar spell, the vulgarity of the spell itself conflicts with the natural order of the Fallen World. Demesnes eliminate this threat, integrating the spell into the natural order and allowing a mage to perform vulgar magic without fear of a Paradox (as long as Sleepers still do not witness it). What if a Demesne occurs in the same place as a ley line or node?

A Demesne's Supernal resonance overrules any lesser Fallen World resonance. The Supernal resonance doesn't erase the Fallen resonance; the Supernal merely takes precedence over the Fallen. This is true of any ley lines passing through the Demesne. While ley lines are normally only affected by the resonance of their origin node, their resonance can be altered by passing through a Demesne, so that they deliver wholly different resonance to the next node down the line.

### Loci and Verges

Ideally, loci and Verges are supernatural places that are better off left alone. Despite a mage's magical ability, the spirits that converge here often offer more threats than rewards.

Unfortunately, the mages who have the best chance to avoid interacting with these spirits are the very same mages who most likely to do so — Shamans and others with knowledge of the Spirit Arcanum. The "Spirit Tongue" spell allows a mage to see what she might be up against at a locus or Verge. It will not, however, warn her of more material threats that might be lurking nearby — such as the werewolves that claim the locus as their own.

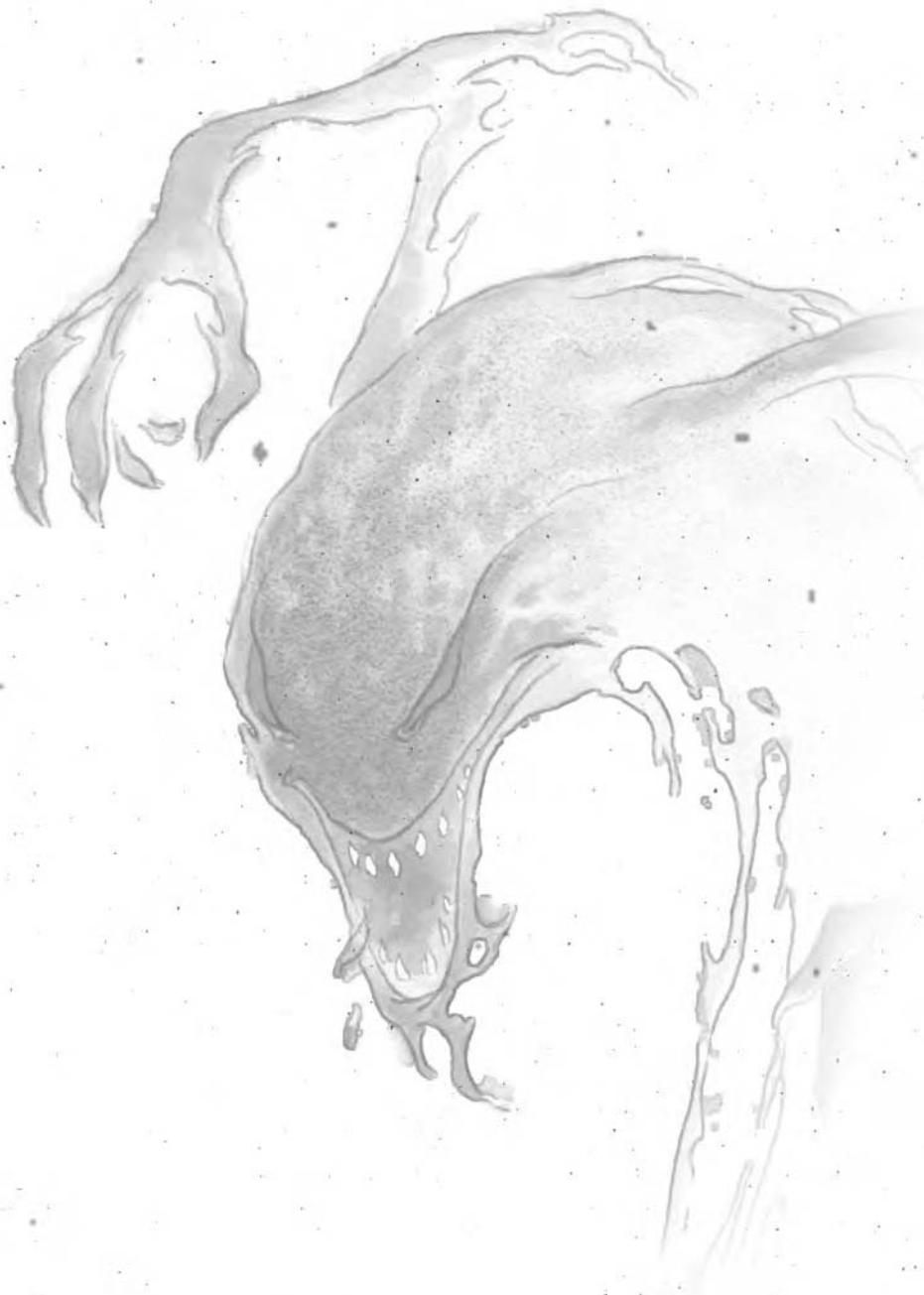
**Loci:** Loci are places of spiritual power where Essence is generated. As Essence is the lifeblood of spirits, and as both spirits and werewolves thrive on Essence, loci have a habit of attracting both of them in large numbers.

Loci also generate resonance. This is what draws the attention of mages who don't have the Spirit Arcanum lore to know what's really going on here. Mages who walk in without paying the proper respects and offend the werewolves are chased away or summarily slaughtered. This is why it's smart for a new cabal to recruit a Shaman *before* investigating strong sources of resonance or looking for a new place to call a sanctum.

**Verges:** Reports of vanishings circulate frequently through Awakened channels. Though most of these

are instances of foul play (kidnapping or murder, for example), Verges are an increasingly popular third explanation.

Verges occur where the Gauntlet weakens to nothing, allowing material beings to cross over to the Shadow Realm and spirits to pass into the material realm. Eventually, the Gauntlet re-asserts itself, but by then Sleepers and mages who accidentally walk through wind up trapped on the other side. Because they can't subsist on Essence, victims are doomed a slow death by starvation and dehydration.





# CHAPTER THREE: PYLONS AND CULTS

Manny stretched his arms and neck, hearing a pop as the stiff bones cracked. Another goddamn stakeout in a stuffy van. He looked over at Frank, who sat at the driver's wheel, staring through his binoculars. God. Does that guy ever take a break? What a freak.

"Look, uh, I gotta take a piss," Manny said, knowing Frank's reaction ahead of time. The guy didn't even look at him; he just reached down and presented Manny with an empty Big Gulp cup.

"You're kidding, right? I gotta go in this? C'mon, I'll just slip into the bushes and be done in a few seconds."

This time, Frank lowered the binoculars, swiveled his head in Manny's direction and locked his piercing-blue eyes on him.

"No activity. Nothing they might notice. We stay inside."

Manny grimaced and snatched the cup out of Frank's hand. He forcefully unzipped his fly.

"You wanna watch, too? Goddamn freak."

Frank turned away and raised the binoculars again.

"I am watching. In all directions. Don't think I can't see you. I've got eyes in the back of my head and on the sides."

Manny froze, his kidneys suddenly too shy to do their thing. He rolled his eyes carefully toward Frank. The power. The asshole was using the power. After they'd both agreed that they wouldn't do it unless they'd confronted the mutant freaks, and then they'd need it. But not against each other. They'd sworn, and Manny had kept his end of the bargain. Christ! How much radiation was Manny sucking up now, as Frank used his mutant ability? It couldn't be good.

He put the empty cup down and slowly zipped himself back up with his left hand, hopefully blocking from Frank's unnatural gaze what his right hand was doing. His fingers grasped the small derringer in his right pocket and he yanked it out, shoving it into Frank's neck. "Don't move!"

Frank didn't. He didn't have to. Manny's gun suddenly disappeared, leaving him pulling the trigger on empty air. Okay, asshole. You asked for it. Manny called upon his own power. A gout of flame engulfed Frank and backdrafted into the back of the van. As Frank screamed, struggling to open the driver's side door, the flames hit the case of Jack Daniels Manny had stashed for the long wait.

Oh, shit, Manny thought as the explosion burned off his skin and hair. Goddamn mutant powers . . .

*If aware that a man is wicked, say so:  
Make no truce or treaty with foes.*

— Hávamál, strophe 127

## *Seers of the Throne Pylons*

Most mages begin their Awakening with a journey to one of the five Watchtowers. Without guidance, some Awakened go astray. The legend says that the mystical secrets of Atlantean kings erected the Watchtowers, but the Exarchs, the secret masters of reality, have subverted the Watchtowers to their own ends. A mage may start out his journey traveling to a tower of gold, iron, lead, stone or moonlight, but lost souls who become Seers of the Throne know it is merely a marker on a much longer journey. A mage starts out walking one of the five Paths, but a Seer doesn't stop there — his ultimate destination lies farther beyond the Watchtowers at the fringes, to the Thrones sitting at the center of reality.

No mage begins his metaphorical journey as part of an order. After his Awakening, he is ready for initiation into one of the five magical orders. Some Awakened choose to forsake all of the orders. A few Awakened never even see the Watchtowers; instead, they must experience "mystery plays," wandering the streets in delusion or thrashing in dreams and nightmares. The experience is usually structured more by metaphor than dementia, as the initiate quickly learns how much of reality is manipulated by unseen forces. Seers claim that the overlords of reality recruit those who seek more than slavery to the Watchtowers, guiding them through coincidences to the sanctums of their earthly servants, the Seers of the Throne.

Even if a mage is initiated into one of the orders of the Pentacle, he may still forsake his masters or mentors after receiving a glimpse of Supernal ascension and power. More fortunate souls are recruited directly by Seer mages who explain the recruit's strange experiences using a carefully forged doctrine of metaphysical hierarchy. Masters of the Mind Arcanum (and sometimes, the Seers claim, the Exarchs themselves) grant visions and reveries of this hierarchic ideal to lost souls, giving them the paradigmatic structure they crave and the promise of an exalted position therein. And then there are mages who must survive spirit journeys or madness without anyone to guide them, forced to find their own way until visions guide them to like-minded Seers, or else the Seers find them.

In many cities, Seers maintain sanctums for new recruits from where they can forge new pylons, the Seer equivalent to a cabal. The pylon is both a marker for

the winding stair to Supernal ascension and the tower that the mages climb to reach their lofty goal. Each lost soul may interpret visions from the Heavens in his or her own way, but pylons work best when the mages within them are united by the same vision: a master plan for destroying their mage rivals.

### *Bedrock*

Seers in a pylon may have walked the same Paths as any mage to the Watchtowers. Like most mage cabals, the mages within a pylon probably come from different Paths, but they must have a reason to work together, along with a vision that unites them. The most stable pylons find a way to bring a circle of similar Seers together, uniting visionaries who share a common outlook on the world. A pylon's goals reflect this unity, allowing the mages within the pylon to share the same den of iniquity, repository of knowledge, palace to Mammon or what have you. A strong pylon usually begins with one or two Seers, and then recruits others who fill valuable roles in their occult crusade.

Unstable pylons bring vastly different mages together, united only by their need for power and ascension — a hunger for power that can eventually set them against each other if they're not careful. Such groups are disasters waiting to happen (or, in the context of the game, elaborate stories waiting to unfold). Sleepers and even other mages can get burned in the conflagrations that follow. An Enchanter might choose to turn against the Warlock who protects him, for instance, or the revelations of a Theurgist may blind him from the treachery of others who have supported and protected him. It is entirely possible for a Seer to completely misinterpret his mandate from the Heavens. As you'd expect, unstable pylons don't last for very long.

Many stable Seer pylons have at least one Acanthus mage and one Mastigos, since prophecy, scrying and psychic domination — the hallmarks of Space and Mind magic — are the most powerful tools of their society. (A pylon without an Enchanter or Warlock must find other ways to survive without these resources.) It is also possible for one Path or the study of one Arcanum to dominate a pylon, as like calls to like. Multiple Thyrus Seers can share the same playthings, seeking the rarefied pleasures of Life magic. A pylon of Obrimos Seers has the strength to forge a powerful unit, using Forces and Prime magic to overcome rivals. A pylon

of necromantic Moros can all draw from the same sources of flesh, blood or bone, and so on. Many permutations are possible.

The four types of Seer pylons detailed below are merely the most obvious. There are many other types to be found around the globe. It is extremely unlikely that any one city has all of these expressions of the Seer pylon.

### *The Forge*

In times of strife, a Seer may receive the favor of the gods, particularly if she studies the Fate Arcanum. Revelations relate that the Heavens have a grand scheme for her city — and for her. A single supernatural event can Awaken several lost souls to the power of magic, or the overlords may decide that a particular pylon's Sleeper cult must grow. The result is an Awakening in which several souls realize the mysteries of reality at the same time, completing a mystery play that leads them to the same place. This sort of pylon (and its type of sanctum) is called a *forge*, a group brought together for a specific and important purpose (or so its members believe). Their sanctum becomes a refuge prepared to condition, train and master several initiates at once.

Forges are most often orchestrated by a high-ranking Seer, who devises a prophecy, enterprise or meticulously crafted lie to explain why a group of newly Awakened souls have been drawn together. That Mentor appears before the pylon, sometimes through a thrall intermediary. He explains the blessings the Heavens can bestow and the rivals that stand in the pylon's way. The particulars can vary greatly. Whether he speaks of a war between good and evil, Heaven and Hell, law and chaos, or even an elaborate rationale involving the lost civilization of Atlantis is irrelevant — any story (true or not) that motivates these initiate Seers to unite and destroy their rivals is sufficient. The initiate Seers then become expendable in whatever crusade results. In the unlikely event that they should succeed and survive, they are recruited into a larger purpose.

**Example:** An Obrimos Seer instructs a group of the faithful about a war between Heaven and Hell. All of the recruits have visions of angels working in the midst of humankind, lost souls tested for virtue and vice and evidence of infernal magic. Their sanctum is an abandoned church, which they reclaim and fortify over the next month. They plot against



*a cabal of Mastigos demonologists, believing that their rivals seek to topple the proper order of Heaven.*

### *The Proxy*

A solitary Seer who is powerful enough to control a thrall has no doubt invested a great deal of effort, time and will into the enterprise. Paranoid practitioners are wary of meeting with other mages, but, through the guidance of the Heavens and messages passed through intermediaries, one Seer eventually finds a neutral ground for meeting with another. A proxy is a pylon designed not so much for the benefit of Seers themselves, but for the coordination of the carefully chosen and trained thralls through which the Seers work.

In this type of pylon, its member Seers rarely meet face to face; instead, their thralls act as proxies, gathering in the same secure sanctum to communicate and interact. In some variations, a single Seer organizes the sanctum, establishing it on neutral ground so she can meet with her conspirators' representatives. As an alternative, a city that has several different pylons may have one neutral ground where their representatives can meet. On rare occasions, two pylons of Seers with very different goals must set aside their rivalries and work together. A proxy pylon offers a solution.

A small pylon that serves a common purpose usually chooses a neutral sanctum that is as innocuous as possible. The basement of a church, a rented apartment or an abandoned warehouse are all archetypal examples.

**Example:** Several Seers unite against the Adamantine Arrow. They establish a dojo where their thrall warriors can spar, training for when they'll have to assault the Arrow mages.

### *The Hostel*

Social Seers welcome their brothers and sisters into their homes, often hosting events at which a pylon can share its visions and revelations. The cheerful and welcoming nature of such hospitality masks darker intentions, since the host usually has no trouble bluntly talking about the fate of pawns and rivals. Such "hostel" pylons have a purpose for meeting their local Seers, usually to coordinate them or guide them toward some end goal of their own — or to simply keep a close eye on them, to ensure that no one risks compromising the hostel's power base or territory. Toward this end, hostels usually need a carrot or stick to keep the other pylons coming back on a regular basis. Possible carrots might be the loan of well-placed thralls (such as bankers, police officers or politicians), the creation of enchanted items or access to a stunning gossip network; possible sticks include thrall assassins who can be aimed at uncooperative rivals or their thralls or simply the raw power that comes from mastery of the Arcana.

Hostels often resemble Consilii, but without the formalized power structure. Hostels act as the prime movers-and-shakers in the area, through whom others must get approval before they undertake any major project that might impinge on another pylon's interests. Hostels are power-brokers, sometimes resembling mob bosses.

In this type of pylon, although most members have their own solitary sanctums, the Seers have pooled their resources to fortify one refuge to serve as a social gathering point for other Seers in the region. This sanctum is usually maintained by one of the members of the pylon (most often the leader), and this host often devises some explanation or cover story for why her guests visit her so frequently. After all, many ordinary Sleepers are able to gather in study groups, book clubs, religious meetings and pagan practices without drawing undue attention from their neighbors.

The exterior of this façade can appear as unassuming as a suburban home, although more successful hosts maintain the sanctums as extensions of their business, religious group or dojo. A hidden sanctum within the home doesn't need to be large enough for the entire

pylon to live in for prolonged periods of time; the sanctum only needs to be big enough to host the rituals and ceremonies. The biggest advantage here is that if the host's sanctum is compromised, the other members can retreat to their solitary sanctums and regroup.

The most sinister hostels include "families" of thralls that go through the motions of everyday life. The host can appear as a loving wife, for instance, even as her family mindlessly trudges around her. Other hostels have thralls as roommates, lovers, servants or soulless attendants. Stranger variations can include the employees of a company, the creations of an artificer or, as a last resort, the corpses of shambling servants awaiting resurrection.

If the sanctum is raided or attacked, the thralls will die to defend it, but, unless the entire cabal is present, only the host risks death or capture. The rest of the hostel must martial what resources that remain and rebuild somewhere else — or strike back to avenge the fallen host.

**Examples:** Janet Evans (see p. 310-312 in *Mage: The Awakening*) has allied with a pylon of once-ambitious urban professionals. They can afford to take time off to refocus their careers, aligning themselves with the goals of the ancients. Their sanctum is nothing more than a comfortable house on a large tract of land, which is owned by the leader of their pylon. The members drive there each week in luxury automobiles to speak of their prophetic dreams. Their goal is to prove their worth to the Heavens by destroying the weakest cabal of Pentacle mages in the city.

### *Guilds*

The Guardians of the Veil assemble guilds, lodges and secret societies to slowly initiate their chosen allies into the outer mysteries of magic. Some Seers do this as well, but for the purposes of exploiting herds of thralls or gathering a cult of followers. These servants are not intended for enlightenment or ascension; instead, they are indoctrinated and enslaved to serve the will of their masters.

The thralls surround what seems to be a benevolent institution. The "inner circle" of the society is hidden within its sanctum, protected by layers and layers of expendable thralls organized for some greater purpose. Unlike the gentle hospitality of a hostel pylon's sanctum, a guild sanctum is often an elaborate affair, complete with defenses and resources. The trappings can be archaic and mystical or modern and technological, depending on the preferences of the Seers within the guild.

The inner circle of the organization is a pylon of Seers, directing employees, recruits and slaves for a common purpose: the fulfillment of a directive from the Exarchs

(or a charismatic leader who claims knowledge of the Exarchs' desires). Such enterprises are risky, however. When the pylon is exposed or infiltrated by rivals, the inner circle must divert resources to rebuilding the operation under a different guise — or defend their investment with a furious assault of all-out magical warfare.

**Example:** *On the fringes of Silicon Valley, a start-up computer company scours data networks for information, channeling the information to a carefully selected board of directors. They are members of a reclusive pylon of Seer mages, taking the information their thralls filter and using it to pinpoint possible Pentacle mage activity.*

### *Solitary Seers*

Many Seers are solitary, maintaining façades and false lives as ordinary men and women. Granted, these isolated visionaries may be more successful or financially secure than ordinary Sleepers. These Seers' loyalty to the Exarchs usually has direct and material rewards. As the defenders of the Exarchs, the Seers have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. They dream of a world in which humanity is blissfully ignorant of the existence of the supernatural — constantly distracted by material concerns and oblivious to their role as mere pawns in much-greater schemes. Material wealth and security are the least of the Seers' rewards.

Such a practitioner tends to live in an ordinary home, setting aside an isolated room within where she can meditate, perform rituals and scry for visions or guidance. The sanctum may be nothing more than a spare room, a large closet, a basement or an attic, albeit one that is kept behind a locked door and warded against various forms of intrusion. The solitary Seer leads a double life, pretending to be another sheep in the fold — while she hungers like a ravenous wolf for more knowledge and power.

Some solitary sanctums are ideal for Seers who concentrate on what the future may bring, shutting out all distractions, often with the help of props to maintain magical identities divorced from the Seers' everyday lives. A few Seers use these refuges to watch and sympathize with would-be thralls, developing what may seem like obsessions with chosen victims. Isolated from other mages, the Seers' visions for the future and relationship with the Heavens takes form.

**Example:** *A Thrysus mage is rapidly learning the limits of his Life and Mind magic. He becomes obsessed with a few soulless human victims, luring them back to his home for magical experiments. His sanctum is a trendy condominium, tastefully decorated and isolated by thick, soundproof walls.*

### *Seer Prescripts (Protocols)*

Like Pentacle mage cabals, Seer pylons create charters when they organize themselves, and choose sigils to identify themselves among their own kind. This should hardly be surprising, since they, too, can trace their history back to Atlantis, although they root for a different faction from that time. Seers, however, do not use systems as complicated or ornate as the ones traditional mages employ. Power and privilege are far more respected methods of control than charters and Rights. Despite this, Seers have interpreted some of the traditional elements in their own way, variants their rivals consider debased or apocryphal.

A Seer pylon is rarely as unified as a Pentacle cabal, since there's plenty of treachery and betrayal on the path to ascension. A pylon that's strong enough to instill loyalty and devotion in its mages is a force to be reckoned with, but even then, such a threat could become a target for a rival pylon as easily as for a Pentacle cabal. Seer Protocols — called *prescripts* — don't exist to forge stability; instead, they're a necessity to shore up an inherently unstable system. They share a few similarities with traditional Protocols — including a creed, list of duties, Directed Protocols, Interdicts and Addendums — largely because they share the same distant Atlantean origins.

The opening creed and list of duties are usually fairly straightforward. Creeds espousing control over something are the most common, and the list of duties is often little more than a recitation of the strengths and magical weaponry the pylon's members contribute to its crusade.

The Great Rights touted by Pentacle mages, on the other hand, have more sinister reflections in Seer society. Most Rights only apply to mages within the same pylon, unless the pylon takes an Oath of Submission to a tetrarchy, in which case other pylons of that tetrarchy can invoke the Rights before that pylon.

**Right of Crossing:** Among the Seers, this becomes a declaration of where their territory and areas of influence lie. Sometimes this information is revealed to other pylons, often as a prelude to magical warfare. Two pylons at work within the same territory may soon fall upon each other, each trying to prove to the Exarchs that only its mages are more worthy of ascension.

**Right of Emeritus:** This is little more than acknowledging the leader of a pylon or the Minister of a region. Such authority figures reserve the right to lash out at those who plot and scheme against them, but this only results in covert plots and open abuses of such rights.

**Right of Hospitality:** Because a tetrarchy can unite several pylons, this Right becomes a formal prescript when the Seers agree to move freely between those pylon's sanctums. When this Right is not a part of a pylon's prescript, its mages must often communicate with other pylons through intermediaries, such as acting through thrall proxies.

**Right of Nemesis:** This is a formal declaration of the pylon's greatest enemies. Some pylons specialize in particular foes, but to be honest, this is usually stated as invective against all Pentacle mages who do not bow before the will of the Exarchs.

**Right of Sanctuary:** Closely tied to the Right of Hospitality, this invective declares what access Seers within the same tetrarchy have to the resources inside the pylon's sanctum. This declaration is essential in large, strong tetrarchies, since it allows multiple pylons to work together. A pylon might, however, list only those individuals who are allowed to enter their sanctum, promising retribution against any others who violate its sanctity.

### *Seer Sigils*

All but the least powerful pylons devise sigils, for many of the same reasons Pentacle mages employ them. Seers, however, do not share the heraldic standards that other mages display, since doing so would reveal their secrets by the very symbols they share.

The only consistent standard for a Seer sigil is the emblem, which is usually an image describing the motive for the pylon's crusade. For instance, an apocalyptic pylon driven by images from the Book of Revelations could feature one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, while a pylon with a Life portfolio could feature an erotic or prurient image related to that pylon's perverse practices.

Seers use the same spells (see "Sigilization," p. 37) to imbue their sigils, and they craft enchanted items similar to sigil-marks.

### *Seer Pylons and the Five Paths*

Each Path has strengths and weaknesses to lend to a Seer pylon.

### *Acanthus Seers*

An Enchanter's style of Time magic may seem archaic, relying on anything from Tarot cards to entrails, but some Acanthus employ more modern means, searching through newspapers, computer networks or satellite television stations with seeming randomness. Powerful Enchanters meditate at the center of a web of informa-

tion, as messengers and electronic mechanisms bring to them news of the outside world.

Enchanters who twist the loom of Fate may also use archaic methods of curses, but the most powerful Acanthus cast Fate magic on their thralls, using them as agents to fulfill the Enchanters' terrible pronouncements. A fateful Enchanter would make an excellent leader for a Seer pylon, particularly if thralls flock to her cause. Yet many Acanthus prefer to be the power behind the pylon's throne. Leaders are far more likely to meet with misfortune than be treated as valued visionaries. This leads to one of two extremes in most pylons: the prophetic manipulator surrounded by willing thralls or the fearful prophet hiding behind elaborate defenses.

A pylon in which Acanthus mages outnumber mages of any other Path can cast powerful, communal, far-reaching rituals. Working together, the visionaries can see farther into the future than they otherwise would when working alone. If they are all proficient in Fate magic, they can fabricate elaborate curses of amazing complexity and power. Combined, they pull at the strings of the puppets they control, enacting complex dramas outside their sanctum.

### *Mastigos Seers*

The Mastigos' craft depends on learning all he can about his rivals, since information empowers his scrying. A Space Seer is also dependent on others who can seize personal possessions from the sanctums of rivals, since that makes sympathetic castings even more powerful. Willing thralls hear and obey.

Scholars of Mind often require a safe place to spend time alone with their thralls or a refuge away from the very people these Warlocks exploit. The relationship between master and slave can take any number of forms, so a sanctum is often a façade to prop up this relationship. A sanctum could be a professor's study, a businessman's retreat or the dungeon of a dominatrix: each has very different requirements. Mastigos Seers are typically very social creatures, so many prefer to be near a place where they can manipulate their favorite victims.

Because the soul journey of a Mastigos Seer leads through Pandemonium, many retain the trappings of demonology as part of their craft, disguising their crusades for the Heavens as infernal magic. Undisturbed, a Mastigos may even act as a spy within a respected order, directing his pawns from the safety of his sanctum. With Mind, he is ready to obscure the memories of witnesses. With Space, he can communicate with distant allies.

Pylons in which Mastigos Seers outnumber mages of all other Paths are fairly common, since their order

recruits mages hungry for power, particularly those skilled in scrying and psychic manipulation. One typical pylon has access to a large herd of thralls, inviting them in large numbers to attend conditioning ceremonies, classes, exotic parties, or other suitable fronts for mind control. Another variant isolates the Warlocks in a place where they can maintain their vigilance, piecing together disparate pieces of information to assemble a complex analysis of what's happening in the city around them.

### *Moros Seers*

A Moros Seer schooled in Matter magic could have a workshop, a sculptor's studio, an artist's retreat or a butcher's freezer to supply what she needs. Moros Seers are usually the best acquainted with a sanctum's physical defenses, not only directing their constructs in its defense, but also fortifying doors and walls to resist magical attacks. True Necromancers and masters of Death magic require less savory tools, and so are often left undisturbed to attend to their work.

A pylon in which Moros Seers outnumber mages of all other Paths has the tools and materials to create masterworks. Behind heavy fortifications, the Necromancers mass-produce weapons of warfare, collaborating on formidable enhanced items. Unusual pylons might even accept unliving reanimations as lesser residents of the sanctum.

### *Obrimos Seers*

Theurgist Seers maintain the trappings of their chosen religion within their pylons. Doctrines may be taken from secret societies or false religions manipulated by the Seers (or the Guardians) long ago. Other Obrimos Seers are attuned to different elemental forces of reality. A classically trained Seer might need a brazier of fire or pool of water within his sanctum; more modern theurgists need access to electricity, radiation or even more esoteric energies.

A pylon in which Obrimos mages outnumber mages of all other Paths can function for all intents and purposes as a fringe religion or devoted cult. A system of faith unites the Theurgists, and acolyte worshipers attend them. Powerful wellsprings of magical energy are ideal locations for these sanctums. Reverent and elaborate rituals unfold as the Seers gather Mana, using it to fuel their ruthless campaigns against Pentacle (or even Seer) rivals.

### *Thyrsus Seers*

Thyrsus Seers need access to ephemera or flesh, so a sanctum must have a place where slaves or spirits can

be confined and trained. Similar to Mastigos mages, Shamans prefer isolated places where they can be alone with their thralls. Conditioning and domination takes time when it's done correctly. Devoted Thyrsus Seers also seek very specific states of consciousness for prolonged periods of time. Their sanctums hold all they need to either indulge in excess or protect themselves in deprivation.

Pylons in which Thyrsus Seers outnumber mages of all other Paths are dedicated to pleasures, pain and all manner of physical sensations. Dominance and submission are defined in rituals — and in other social activities. Sanctums dominated by Spirit mages rely on a thin Gauntlet. Mage and spirit interact with painfully obvious demonstrations of who is the master and who is the servant.

### *Ministries*

A Pentacle Consilium is usually the most powerful gathering of mages in a given city. Despite the best efforts of the rivals Seers, the five major magical orders are organized enough and powerful enough to vigilantly defend the cities they're in. The Seers of the Throne must respond by acting in a different arena — suborning Sleeper thralls and manipulating key officials to engineer the machine of modern society. The largest and most successful Ministries — the Seer equivalent to orders — extend their creeds across several countries.

Each Ministry specializes in a certain Arcanum, working to destroy traditional rivals who study those same magical methods. To ascend to the higher ranks of a Ministry, a mage must routinely succeed in the tasks the Exarchs have given him (usually conveyed by the leaders).

Each Ministry also has different standards for marking how well a member has divined the will of the Exarchs. This mostly involves sheer power on the mage's part — if she has gained such power, she must be favored. It can also be displayed in cleverness with strategies and tactics, in coordinating other mages and even in holding sway over Sleeper society. In some cases, divining the will of the Exarchs comes in the form of visions and dreams the mage experiences. Of course, many Seers try to claim such visions, but only those who proclaim them and then see them come true repeatedly are accorded the highest status within a Ministry, looked upon as prophets by their brethren. Even if it is discovered that the prophet engineered the whole thing, from vision to accomplishment, his status is undiminished — anyone capable of such a feat must still hold the favor of the Throne.

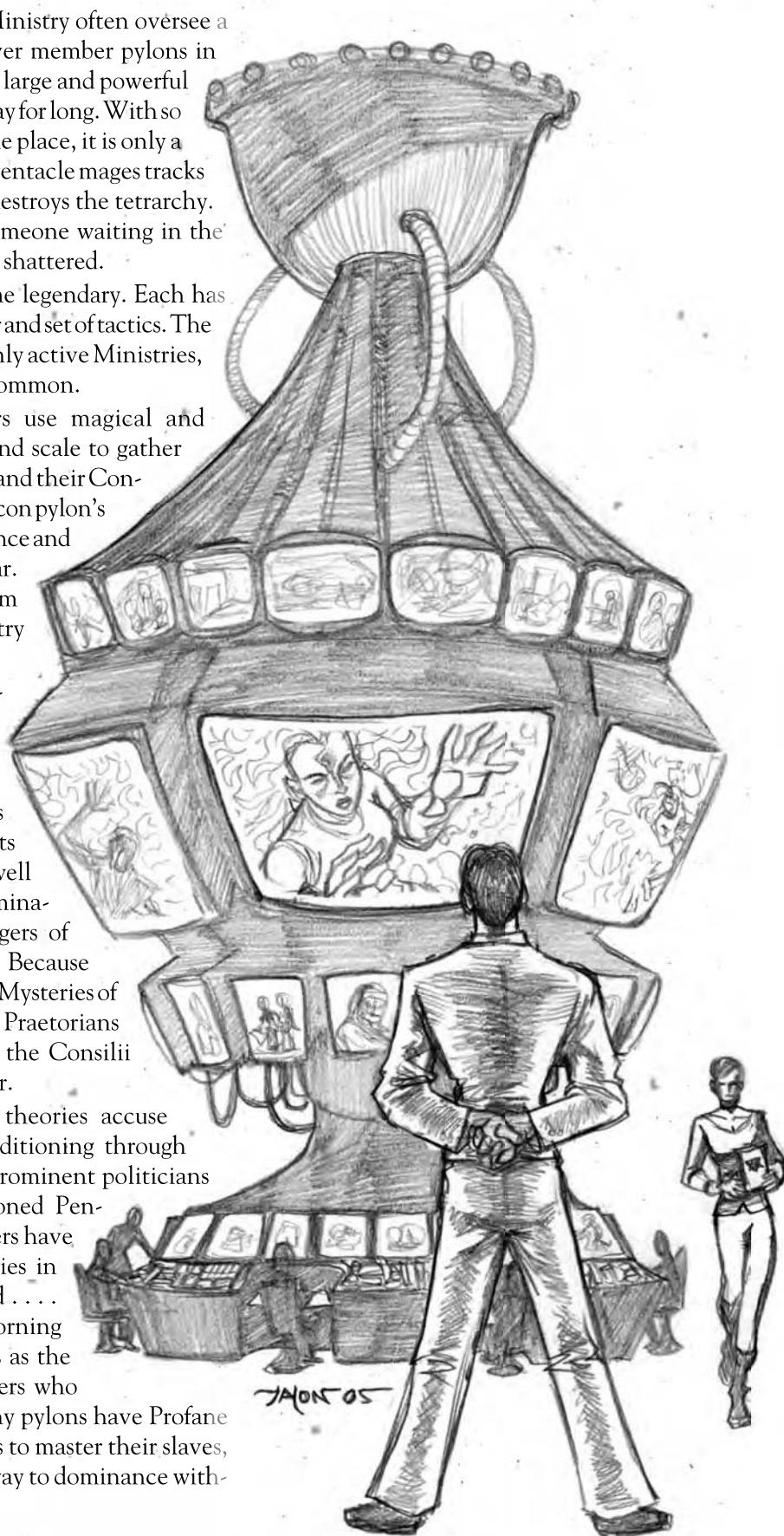
Those with high status in a Ministry often oversee a tetrarchy, holding influence over member pylons in a large geographic region. Truly large and powerful tetrarchies don't tend to hold sway for long. With so much power concentrated in one place, it is only a matter of time before a cabal of Pentacle mages tracks down the center of power and destroys the tetrarchy. Nonetheless, there is always someone waiting in the wings to rebuild what has been shattered.

A few Ministries have become legendary. Each has developed a distinctive character and set of tactics. The following are by no means the only active Ministries, but they are among the more common.

- **Panopticon:** These Seers use magical and mundane surveillance on a grand scale to gather information on Pentacle mages and their Consilii around the world. A Panopticon pylon's greatest strength lies in surveillance and gathering information from afar. Just as the Exarchs watch from the Heavens, this subtle Ministry works best at a distance.

- **Praetorian:** This paramilitary Ministry specializes in weaponry and warfare, both magical and mundane. Its thralls include patriots and fanatics retrained and conditioned for its cause. Its Sleeper soldiers are well armed, and through mental domination, are educated in the dangers of the hidden world around them. Because Praetorian Ministries betray the Mysteries of magic to the unAwakened, the Praetorians tend to be actively hunted by the Consilii wherever these Ministries occur.

- **Unity:** Wild conspiracy theories accuse these Seers of widespread conditioning through mass media, the abduction of prominent politicians and the conversion of imprisoned Pentacle masters. Perhaps these Seers have merely implanted such memories in the converts they have released . . . . A Unity pylon specializes in suborning and dominating soulless thralls as the Seers warp the minds of Sleepers who get in their way. Although many pylons have Profane Urims, artifacts that allow Seers to master their slaves, the Mind Arcanum shows the way to dominance without such artifacts.



## *The Pyramid Scheme*

Ministries are run from the top down. Within a Ministry, each member fits into a rank based on earned status. A lower-ranking member from one pylon might be subservient to a higher-ranking member from a pylon in another city. This sort of extended geographical control is not easy to maintain, and the system breaks down often when Seers in one region resist the dictates of those from another. Order depends on the force of personality and raw power the higher-ranking members can bring to bear against those of lower rank, helped along by promises of advancement for loyal soldiers.

Each Ministry has an inner circle at its center, as one pylon sits at the apex of an occult pyramid. At the very top, a single Minister schemes and dreams: he is the all-seeing eye watching over the landscape surrounding him. Each Minister is a valuable investment for the Seers of the Throne, so these powerful few tend to be extremely reclusive and heavily defended. They communicate with cabals through intermediaries, continuing the chain from Heaven down to Earth.

A Minister's sanctum must be self-contained and secure, complete with layers of lesser mages to attend to his defense and preservation. It is an obvious tactic to place a soul stone in the center, creating a Demesne where the Seer's command over reality is absolute. Freed from Paradoxes, Ministers face the temptations of exploiting more powerful magic. Ministers with the Life Arcanum seek immortality, while those with Mind magic instill absolute obedience, and so on. Such isolation can breed fanaticism, since the Minister is only attended by his innermost circle.

Lacking the guidance and support that the traditional magical orders of the Pentacle can call upon, most Ministers become ruthless and paranoid. Should one fail, another ambitious circle of Seers may take his place. Rival pylons can even war with each other to prove they are worthy of such ascension.

## *Banisher Cabals*

Not all mages welcome the Awakening. Banishers deem it a curse, one for which they must atone by destroying magic wherever it resides. Driven by paranoia, most Banishers work alone, but the more enlightened recognize that strength comes in numbers.

Banishers will ally with others who share their inherent desire to destroy all things magical. Be it Banisher partnerships or full-fledged religious communes with a single-minded drive to fulfill misperceived prophecies, Banisher cabals represent a dynamic threat to Awakened

across the board, so much so that Banisher cabals can provoke Pentacle cabals and Seer pylons to put aside differences to combat them.

The formation of a Banisher cabal varies. Most Banisher cabals begin out of conflict, with one Banisher trying to destroy another. Other cabals come about through clever recruiting tactics that play on a Banisher's (and Sleepers') insecurities and doubts about her true purpose.

## *How Banisher Cabals Begin*

Banishers don't advertise their "affliction" for all the world to see, so there's no surefire way for one Banisher to identify another. Usually the two sides do their damnedest to take one another out, but, on occasion, something might be said by one to another that signals their common goal ("Die, magic scum!") and gets a partnership started.

The vast majority of Banisher partnerships begin by accident. The Banishers might be stalking the same Awakened target and get to talking. One Banisher might be stalking the other and learn that his quarry is hunting a third in similar fashion. They could even be hunting each other, unaware that they share the same hatred for all things mystic. In the event that the two parties can put their distrust aside — a tall order considering how paranoid Banishers can be — a partnership develops whose joint endeavor proves far more efficient than their singular approaches could ever be.

Occasionally, the justification for joining forces holds a deeply religious context. Some Banishers believe a higher power is responsible for giving them the Awakened's dreadful curse, and it's their obligation to fulfill a divine edict and use their tainted power against others who abuse it for their own diabolical ends.

## *Excess Baggage*

Mages come from disparate backgrounds, so not everyone goes through Awakened life unnoticed. Some Awakened pick up Banisher hunters who pursue them across state and international lines to fulfill personal vendettas or wrongs the hunted isn't even aware she has committed.

The longer a Banisher fails to bag his quarry, the more likely the mage is to turn complacent in her role as the hunted. Time also improves the odds that the Banisher runs into another like-minded individual, one who will be more than happy to ally with the hunter to take his quarry down.

It's not unheard of for two pursuing hunters to have their paths cross. Should their quarries interact, so too

will the stalkers. Woe to the two mages whose fates brought these conspiring forces together!

### *Single Banisher Wanted...*

Banisher cabals that are looking to expand their rosters might take a more aggressive approach toward recruitment. Posts in obscure occult publications, online web blogs or local newspaper classifieds generate interest from new Banishers seeking an explanation for their newfound condition. Anonymous tips to lone Banisher investigations earn the tipster a small measure of trust when the tips pay off. Some Banisher cabals even go so far as to establish "rehab" groups for people whose lives have been turned upside-down by illogical events, then carefully explain the truth behind the events and how the cabals can help stop them from ever happening again.

### *Return to Sender*

Mailers and advertisements don't always work to a Banisher's advantage. Guardians of the Veil use similar tactics to run initiates through the Labyrinth in an effort to discern whether they have what it takes to join their ranks. Depending on the context and superficial messages of the advertisements, some Banishers take the announcements at face value and wind up fulfilling spurious agendas for the very mages they wish to destroy.

When a potential recruit answers the call, the cabal's leaders take the recruit aside and relate to him by telling their own tormented experiences of Awakening. They answer whatever questions the recruit might have about his new condition, incorporating the cabal's dogma into the answers. Eventually, the lure of camaraderie, coupled with the cabal's hatred for magic, draws the recruit into the fold.

Banisher cabals don't take rejection well. Should a Banisher recruit turn down a cabal's offer to join, she becomes the newest target on the cabal's list, and vice versa. With the advantage of controlling the situation from the get-go, cabals almost always come out the better over lone individuals.

### **The Mad**

Banishers reject their condition because they see magic as evil. For most Banishers, this comes as a result of really bad Awakenings. The rest likely came to this conclusion after coming face to face with the Mad. They epitomize everything Banishers despise: callous disregard for the power they possess, self-serving motives that endanger more than they aid and chaotic

natures that can't be relied upon to be anything but chaotic.

Granted, Banishers think this way about *all* mages. Still, Banishers' lifelong pursuit to destroy mages happens to serve the Awakened community as a whole, at least insofar as the Mad are concerned.

### *Organization*

Banisher cabals come in many styles, but they can be segregated into two general classifications. *Partnership cabals* are cabals with at least two or more Banishers working together toward a common goal. *Cult cabals* — or simply cults, for short — mirror religious Sleeper offshoots that follow obscure prophecies, gods and credos the rest of mainstream society would consider deviant. Within each classification is a diverse range of outlooks and methods that make it difficult for mages to pin any one description to these groups as a whole beyond that of "Banisher."

### **The Battle Against Evil**

As Banishers get more experience, they tend to focus their talents in specific directions. Some view themselves as deathly avengers helping spirits pass on to their final resting places. Other Banishers turn their attentions toward protecting a select class of people, such as women or children. Sorcerers who engage in magic where the protected class commingles become Public Enemy Number One, and are handled with extreme prejudice.

Religious cults take these concepts a step further, describing mages as betrayers of divine obligation. To religious cults, the battle goes beyond class. It signals a *jihad* against everything that represents evil. Mages are agents who have been cursed by God and use that curse against Him; there is no greater glory than combating sorcery wherever it's practiced. The contrary might also apply: a few Banishers consider their gifts to originate from Satan, and their only hope of salvation is to turn that gift against its sender and his minions. (Some see this in reverse: magic is the Adversary's arsenal to be used against all other willworkers who would dare stand between him and his revenge upon God.)

Whatever the justification for the fight, Banishers pursue it with unequivocal passion and diligence. The Awakened falsely consider Banishers to be much like the Mad. Banishers' focus and dedication show they are anything but.

## *Partnerships*

Partnership cabals arise when two or more Banishers distrust one another but not as much as they distrust all other Awakened. Something in these Banishers' encounters lead each to view the other as a temporary ally who could provide aid against targets too powerful for one to handle alone. This trust, however, goes only so far, as paranoia often proves to be the partnership's ruin. In the interim, a partnership can create quite a buzz within an Awakened community, though few partnerships know enough to be cognizant of their impact.

### **Creeds**

Partnerships always start with the same common creed — destruction of their enemies. To the partnerships, nothing else matters. Should one partner pursue a goal that deviates from this singular focus, that Banisher better have a damn good excuse lest her partner teach her the difficult and painful lesson that the partnership is over.

Enduring partnerships develop deeper pursuits. Because the bulk of a partnership's time is spent stalking a target, Banisher partners have plenty of time to converse about their respective pasts. They discover shared interests or biographical similarities that don't necessarily have to do with magic, which allow them to relate on a more "human" level. Perhaps both were victims of family abuse or succumbed to narcotic addiction. Something as trivial as liking the same sports team could be just the commonality the Banishers need to ease tensions and push the partnership on to the next level.

Not all Banisher cabals are bad. They could affect a Sleeper community favorably. Vengeance for past wrongs done unto the Banishers or atonement for past deeds that can't be undone compel some partnerships to protect the Everyman. While the Banishers rid the countryside of sorcerous threats, these secondary pursuits help the partnership stave off the madness that afflicts so many other Banishers who work alone, in constant paranoia.

### **Protocols and Sigils**

Partnerships don't use such formalities as Protocols, even if the partnerships were to discover that tradition. The closest these Banishers might come is casting Fate or Mind spells on one another to manufacture temporary trust between them, but they don't recognize these spells with a formal name or title.

For similar reasons, Banisher partnerships don't use sigils; with no outside community, Banishers have no use for symbolic sigils of partnership. To hang out a shingle is to invite trouble on trouble's terms, not theirs.

## **Sanctums**

Partnerships are eclectic and find residences according to how long the partners have been together. Young partnerships distrust each other implicitly. Predictably, Banishers don't usually divulge the location of their personal sanctums to their partners. Instead, they choose to meet at a neutral location to plan their next moves, then retreat back to their sanctums through the most circuitous means possible, while at the same time doing what they can to trace the others to their homes.

If the partners are nomadic, they'll share the same hotel room to save money and keep track of their partners' comings and goings. Each partner is responsible for her food and sundry supplies in order to prevent tampering. Travel occurs in the same vehicle, heirlooms are swapped as collateral to ensure no trickery or credit cards are torn up to ensure neither makes any unauthorized purchases. Indeed, Banisher partners spend as much time watching each other as they do tracking mages. It's an uptight life that Banishers lead, and one that polarizes them, for better or worse.

Under favorable circumstances, partnerships transform into family relationships. Experience teaches the Banishers that the rigors of magical existence extend beyond the here and now. Partners must rely on one another to remain strong in the face of desire and help each other focus on the ultimate goal of mystic destruction. They might get attached to a particular area and decide to dwell there in a permanent sanctum. Besides the safety this arrangement affords, they'll be able to monitor how each copes with her growing Arcane prowess. Left unchecked, it could lead a Banisher down the wrong path to everyday sorcery, forcing the partner to take her down himself. What's more, a permanent residence gives the partners a personal stake in keeping their neighborhoods Awakened-free.

Unlike standard cabal sanctums, partnerships use few spells to keep themselves safe. The most common mystical safeguards are spells alerting them when magic is being used within the area, like simple Prime spells that trigger the moment magic is detected nearby. Banishers tend to prefer mundane gimmicks like tripwires, cans on strings and broken lightbulbs strewn about the floor to warn them when unwanted visitors drop by unannounced.

There is also a dearth of enchanted items in these sanctums. Loot recovered after a successful raid gets noted and destroyed as soon as the Banishers discern how the items operate. The partners' "library" could be nothing more than stacks of books haphazardly arranged on bookcases, waiting to be skimmed over and

tossed into a fire. Mages lucky enough to get the drop on a partnership can sometimes leave richer than when they walked in.

### Tricks of the Trade: The Stakeout

In the absence of an available target, some Banishers obtain a fresh trail by mystically tracking for Hallows that provide supernatural fuel. Since many mages are paranoid about having their Hallows picked clean by other mages, they use magical traps and alarms to alert them when someone is using magic *within* their homes. They usually forget that not everyone is trying to get *into* their sanctums, giving intuitive Banishers the opportunity to detect the traps from the outside.

Common sense tells a Banisher not to enter a target's home: far better to catch the target on neutral ground where he least suspects it. By employing a simple stakeout, Banisher cabals learn a lot, thanks in large part to oversight and mage arrogance.

### Rites

Partnerships conduct few rites, and even then they aren't consistently used from one cabal to the next. A team huddle right before a major strike is common, as is a celebration after a successful campaign, but neither incorporates any magical element of note.

### Banisher Rites

It requires mastery to make a rite. Banishers abhor magic so much they rarely rise to mastery. Therefore, very few Banishers have rites of their own (and wouldn't share them if they did).

### Cult Cabals

Cults develop for a myriad of reasons. Some cults evolve out of longstanding Banisher partnerships that grow into religious pertinence. Other cabals begin through the efforts of an especially charismatic Banisher who amasses his own Sleeper congregation. It could even be that a Banisher was already part of a cult when she Awakened. However the cult began, what once was an instinctual pursuit becomes religiously defined — so much so that the Banisher willingly relinquishes control of his fate into the hands of an adopted divine being.

What makes a cult dangerous is its unified zeal. Partnerships pursue a target with one eye on the part-

ners. Cults have all eyes on the quarry, increasing the probability of success and making it all the harder for the victim to escape. To complicate matters, the vast majority of a cult's roster is made up of Sleepers. This throws Pentacle mages for the biggest loop. Focused on supernatural threats, they rarely expect to be targeted by Sleepers "in the know." This is a particularly rough lesson for mages who look out for Sleeper concerns, as these mages could find it morally taxing to combat those they have personally sworn to protect.

### Positions

Unlike partnerships, cults have a hierarchy devoutly recognized by all members. In this way, cults mimic cabals and pylons. But the similarities end there. The titles listed here are descriptive and in no way reflect the actual titles used by every Banisher cult. What the position-holders are actually called differs from one cult to the next, but the basic archetypes remain consistent.

**Leader:** The head of a cult church. The leader preaches to the flock, sees to it that all understand who the true enemies are and sets the training regimen the flock will need to recognize and smite these same enemies where they live. Most leaders are Awakened, but there are exceptions.

**Catechists:** Catechists teach followers how to defeat the church's enemies. Since few cult members are Awakened, instruction focuses on mundane techniques to take out the supernatural. Many Sleepers who experienced Disbelief wind up joining in an effort to put order to their now-jumbled lives. Instructors teach these Sleepers that magic does indeed exist, and it must be extinguished in order for humankind to persevere.

**Bookkeepers:** Bookkeepers make sure that the mundane needs of the cult are met. They take donations from the flock and invest them toward food, shelter, electricity and other resources needed in the fight against sorcery. They make sure bills and registration fees are paid, invoices are properly filled out (if the cult operates a business front) and payrolls are filled out for others in the flock who need weekly or monthly stipends. While far from a glamorous job, bookkeeping is one job that every successful cult couldn't do without.

**Scouts:** Scouts are cultists — Awakened or Sleeper — trained to identify mages on sight. If a scout can't use magic to track her quarry, she keeps an ear close to the ground by paying off indigents to eavesdrop on potential targets and trendy media reports for inconsistencies, then reports back with her findings.

**Soldiers:** Soldiers are Banishers and Sleepers trained to combat the enemy. They learn the arts of stealth,

weaponry and ambush to secure their quarry and dispatch him as efficiently as possible.

**Flock:** Primarily composed of Sleepers, the flock is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the church. Cooking, cleaning and daily chores monopolize the flock's time. In return, the Banishers they serve reward them with instruction and guidance on how to become a soldier or scout of the church.

### Creeds

Cults pursue creeds based on their religious crusades. A cult devoted to the belief that every other Awakened mage has sold his soul to demons aims to exorcize them from the enemy and chase spirits away so the mages can't consult with these "agents from beyond." A cult that believes its power must be used to seal any and all gateways to Hell might misinterpret a Hallow as one of these portals and try to shut it down at any cost. Whatever the religious context, cults strike with singular force and a passion greater than any standard cabal could ever hope to achieve.

### Protocols and Sigils

Cults have no formal Protocols or proper sigils. Most cult "sigils" are nothing more than decorations used to visually appeal to the simple-minded. Since it would take time to learn the nuances of Atlantean symbolism—time no Banisher would bother to waste on so trivial a topic—cults don't bother beyond superficial symbolism.

### What's in a logo?

A cult might unknowingly employ a design that represents evil or ill will within Awakened circles. After surreptitious research, the true intent of the cult comes to light, and the cult finds its efforts thwarted before they can really begin.

More experienced Banishers can identify sigils used by other cabals as magical symbols, but nothing more than that. Unaware what the sigils actually mean, Banishers might adopt similar symbolism for their churches and advertisements as bait, hoping the local mages come around to investigate and thereby reveal themselves to the congregation. It's been rumored that a hapless Herald met his end because he misread a Banisher's sigil and outed the entire Consilium to the cult. Most mages dismiss this story as an Awakened legend, but there are those who keep their guards up just in case.

### Sanctums

Whereas partnerships prefer to reside in their own individual sanctums, cults opt for a communal alternative,

one that allows the entire cult to stay close and offers as much protection from external threats as possible (and allows the leaders to maintain control over cultists' behavior and exposure to outside information). In rural areas these compounds can become self-sufficient, enabling the flock to live in relative anonymity and seclusion from the outside world. Privacy also affords more flexibility during training sessions. Magical techniques can be practiced in relative safety, and more barbaric methods of restraint can be honed where prying eyes can't spy.

Within a suburb or metropolis, churches offer a better alternative, with Sleeper cultists dropping by several times a week to listen to sermons or receive instruction from cult elders. Founders still encourage recruited Banishers to stay in communal housing where they can receive tutelage and be checked on at regular intervals. Though privacy is difficult to come by, the anonymity of the city makes tracking them down all the more frustrating.

Wherever the cults might be located, they tend to draw negative attention. Disapproving relatives often seek to rescue family members from the cult's clutches. Law enforcement agencies inquire into the cult's business practices to determine if it poses a terrorist threat to the community. This unwanted attention also draws the eyes of their prey, who would otherwise be oblivious to the cult's activities and intentions were it not for the spotlights upon them.

To get the heat off, some cults go into a self-imposed hibernation, doing the bare minimum to maintain appearances and assuage critics that their aims are altruistic. But zeal has a habit of rearing its head at the most inopportune times. Only the most dedicated and controlled Banishers can deny their passions long enough to recede into anonymity. If successful, their rewards are that much sweeter.

### Rites

Cult rites unite the cult to its religion and against its enemies. Rites rally the warriors preparing for battle, instill righteousness in those with self-doubt and demonstrate how faithful its members are to the cause. Though no two cults practice the same rites, the following are some of the more popularly observed classifications. While these rites are not proper rites, as mages would define them, the cult rites gain their power from the faith their participants invest in them.

*Initiation rites* mark the start of a novice's quest for true purpose. Not as important a rite to Sleepers as Banishers, initiation reinforces the cult's doctrine within the initiate's mind, helping him focus on the enemy and providing definition to that which had long been undefined.

*Soldier rites* celebrate the promotion of a novice to the rank of soldier within the cult. Years of training finally pay off as the novice prepares to fight the enemy for the first time. Observed prior to a major battle, a warrior rite often serves as a rallying cry for all soldiers, with the promoted Banisher the focal point of this celebration.

*Victory rites* celebrate triumphs on the battlefield. Survivors swap stories of perilous moments during the fight as well as any tactics the enemy used that took them by surprise. The survivors ceremonially destroy enchanted items looted from the enemy's corpses and sanctums and burn tomes containing forbidden lore in ritual bonfires to guarantee that the instruction of this magic can no longer infect other sorcerers afflicted with the curse of Awakening.

*Death rites* mourn the loss of any who fell during combat with the enemy. Survivors share tales of the fallen's deeds, memories from training and what the loss might mean to the cult as a whole. When conducted in conjunction with a victory rite, the death rite gives the victorious an opportunity to say final farewells to their comrades as the survivors celebrate the triumph over evil.

## *Politics*

From the outset, let there be no confusion — Banishers are seldom politic. With a strict desire to destroy other mages, Banishers go straight for the sword, stopping only to question a prisoner who can lead them to their next victim.

In the rare event that words prove faster than spells (and rare means *rare*), relations will progress in a manner that depends on which cabal types are involved.

## *Partnership with Partnership*

Nothing solidifies a partnership of Banishers faster than encountering another Banisher partnership. Like a doubles tennis match, partners take turns sifting through the other cabal's statements and actions to discern true motives, while at the same time keeping their own intentions as close to the belt as possible. With both sides reluctant to believe or disbelieve, most Banishers eventually compromise and agree to work together to combat a common foe. Once the foe is taken down, the partnerships split to go their own way for good — or turn on one another until only one is left standing.

These truces always catch mages by surprise. Used to avoiding one cabal, the introduction of a second, completely unknown Banisher cabal working off the same information as the former tests the targeted mages to their limits. The outcome is never good. Should the

mages survive, they neither survive whole nor ever understand what went awry. As far as they know, the Banishers called in reinforcements, a sobering thought that has only served to keep Banishers high on mages' "Most Wanted" list.

## *Partnership with Cult*

Not all partnerships have fleshed-out philosophical ideas of why they suffer as they do, so it comes as quite a shock to encounter cults with fully defined notions on why they exist and what their purposes are. Predictably, the partnership's reaction will be black or white.

Younger partnerships that have worked together for a limited period of time lack the depth of consideration required to digest a cult's rhetoric. Instead of viewing the cult's ideals as anti-mystical, these partnerships perceive the cult's members as former Banishers who lost their way. In contrast, seasoned partnerships are more likely to sympathize with the idea of putting their curses into a religious context. Their willingness to work with (or even join) the cult then hinges on whether the church's dogma matches with theirs. If not, the two sides could reach a compromise similar to ones reached by two partnerships.

The repercussions of such a union depend on which group was encountered first. A mage cabal forced to deal with the partnership seldom survives a truce between a partnership and a cult; the unexpected swell of Banishers squaring off against them is too overwhelming to withstand. But if the mages are used to dealing with the cult, two more Banishers won't make that much more of a difference: the mages are already on high alert. Hunting tactics taught by the newcomers, though, could make life much more interesting for the players' characters.

## Banisher Hunting Tactics

The following are some common tactics used by Banishers to find, track and destroy their quarry:

**Lures** — Banishers who managed to raid sanctums are often surprised at the sheer volume of occult paraphernalia they find. Rather than burn the items, they use these treasures to draw out the greedy. Feigning ignorance, Banishers sell items at garage sales and book fairs, then track the purchaser home and watch him for suspicious behavior. The technologically inclined prefer online auctions, not only for the possibility of attracting more fish, but because they can always get a physical address to get their tracking off on the right foot.

**Patrols** — Banishers often cruise a neighborhood in search of suspicious activity. With Mage Sight, they can discern oddities that Sleepers might overlook, like dramatic resonance shifts or mystically strong locations. Paid Sleeper "eyes and ears" could also provide information about behavior or goings-on that would otherwise pass unnoticed.

**Staged Scenes** — Similar to lures, this tactic puts the Banisher cabal in direct danger, as the

Banishers set themselves up as bait by conducting occult crimes that actually aren't. False reports to local news agencies announce a fabricated crime or veiled occult activity that prompts local mages to investigate. This is an especially favored technique of low-key cults, who set up one or more Sleepers as victims or witnesses. Banishers watch to see who visits the Sleepers, then follow the visitors home and continue surveillance from there.

### *Cult with Partnership*

Unlike partnerships, cults are set in their ways. If a cult encounters and recognizes a Banisher partnership for what it is, the cult will make a pitch for the partners to join its ranks. It could even play the partners against one another in an effort to at least recruit one of them. When recruiting fails, the cult often gives the partners

an ultimatum — help the cult destroy a targeted mage or die. Most partnerships take up the offer and beat feet the moment the task is complete.

### *Cult with Cult*

Most interactions between cults occur when one moves in on the other's "territory." With numbers to support them, the founders of the home cult will, in no uncertain terms, inform the other cult what punishments await those who transgress their authority in the specified area. If the interloping cult is small, it usually steps aside and moves on. This is rarely the case if the interloper is larger: like a metropolitan turf war, the two sides will battle it out until one side remains.

Because cults have a more public profile than partnerships, victimized mages can identify an impending turf war through leaflets, news releases and Internet postings. Mages will foment animosities between the cults in hopes of alleviating their Banisher woes, then sweep through to dispatch the weary victors. With all the cults' focus on winning their claims to the area, the cults at the center of the conflict seldom notice the manipulation.

But mages need to watch out should they fail to destroy the victorious cult. If the visitors prevail, the mages have replaced a known enemy with the unknown, and could likely wind up worse off than they would have been had they not meddled in the first place.





# CHAPTER FOUR: STORYTELLING

A single 60-watt lightbulb lit the foyer when Councilor Brand arrived, compliments of the motion sensor set up in the entryway. A butler quietly took Brand's overcoat and hat, then retired to an antechamber at his master's nod of dismissal. Brand let his mind dwell on the fading echoes of the butler's footsteps before adjourning to the drawing room.

Inside, his cabal-mates rose in unison, their anxious eyes looking for hints on Brand's face of what transpired at the Consilium hearing. Betraying nothing, Brand gave each of them a level look, then crossed the room to the wet bar. He heard several of them fidgeting behind him.

"Well?" inquired Horace.

Leave it to a libertine to be impatient, thought Brand.

Brand replaced the whiskey decanter on the tray and turned to face them.

"The offer was rejected."

Cora's shoulders slumped. "We're sunk."

"Screwed," Horace agreed.

Danae shook her head. "No. This isn't right. You're shitting us, aren't you, Brand?"

"I'm afraid not."

He took a seat and stirred his drink with a few deft turns of his wrist. Silence followed as the sense of impending doom threatened to overwhelm the sanctum's gentle resonance. It was Brand who finally broke it. "To hell with the Consilium." And with that, he downed his drink.

Cora blinked. "We can't do that! Can we?"

A smirk spread across Horace's lips. "Sure we can."

"But what about the Provosts? They're going to demand our heads!"

"Perhaps." Brand said it as a parent might agree with a child who claimed the sky was silver.

Horace gestured for the others to leave the room with him.

"C'mon. We've got better things to do with our time than question a Councilor."

Cora and Danae wanted to protest, but a warning glance from Brand made them change their minds. Without a word, they departed.

Horace stopped at the door and allowed himself a grin.

"Seeing things my way for once, old friend?"

This time, Brand answered with sincerity. "Perhaps."

Horace winked and left Brand to his thoughts. Tomorrow. Tomorrow, the Game begins.

*Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it.*

— Hannah Arendt

Mage politics can become quite convoluted. First, you have the cabal's internal politics ("I want to be in charge!"). Next, you have politics between cabals ("You're messing with our Sleepers' resonance!"). Above this looms the politics between cabal and Consilium ("You have broken laws!"). The final stratification — and one players are least likely to get involved in, but don't put it past them — is the politics between Consilii ("One of your cabals broke our laws!"). Numerous layers, and all going on concurrently.

How does a Storyteller sort through them and keep each one in play without overwhelming her players? The better question might be, "Ever learn to juggle?"

**The World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Mage: The Awakening** cover the Storytelling basics for you. This chapter will provide you with insights on establishing a political backdrop for your players, balancing these against the players' characters' dynamics that develop independently and keeping everyone interested in — or at the very least, aware of — the "larger picture" and their roles in it.

## *Mages, Cabals and Consilii*

Magic is all about control: control over the Arcana, control over one's own desires and control over one's property are three popular expressions of control, but by no means the only ones. Magic also breeds an inordinate amount of pretension within its select circle of practitioners, so it should come as no surprise that politics run rampant. Everyone has the best solution to a problem, and damn those who dare disagree!

This is the canvas you as Storyteller have at your disposal. A substantial start, but how do you begin painting onto it a coherent chronicle?

## *Starting Simple: The Player Cabal*

Even if you know how political your players intend to be, it's a good idea to run the first few games without too much external politics. This enables players to get comfortable with their characters and put some intra-cabal politics out of the way. A simple ploy is to pit players' Virtues and Vices against one another. A temperate mage might chastise a greedy one about her fixation on obtaining tass. A lusting willworker might get sick and tired of hearing a faithful priest condemn his carefree lifestyle.

Another simple device is to highlight the inherent differences of approach between Paths. What does an Obirimos mage do when a Stygian mage ignores his attempts to provide advice? Would a Primal actually like seeing a Mastigos mess with people's minds? Simple conflicts that cater to the fundamental differences between mages and their origins provide plenty of fodder with which to get the chronicle started off on the right foot.

To open future avenues for bigger politics, keep your players' characters' cabal multi-order. Set limits as to how many from one order account for the cabal's overall number, and if you really want heavy politics, have all five orders represented. This provides you with flexibility to infuse more politically charged storylines and also allows players to contest with one another from the get-go.

## *Throwing Order into the Mix*

A mage in a cabal should begin the chronicle with internal conflict. Not only does he have a responsibility to his cabal-mates, but he also has a responsibility to his order. Often, the goals of the two don't mix.

This is your first political hook. You can pull each of your players aside and inform them what their orders expect of them. Silver Ladder characters should strive to run the cabal (even if they're not the official or titular head). Free Council characters should aim to establish a democratic system. Characters from other orders might be persuaded to seize control of the cabal themselves so that their orders' agendas could be addressed all the quicker. By instilling a sense of obligation within your characters, you can jump-start the politics without having to go to too much effort.

At a caucus, members of the player's order might offer him a solution to his cabal's current problem. Naturally, the solution comes with a price, but one that can be paid at a later date. Generally, this promise furthers the order's goals. The greater the aid, the greater the promise asked in return. Should the player falter on a payment, future aid also dries up: the order's resources might be allocated to another project, contacts haven't checked in as regularly as they used to or profits weren't as great this quarter as they were last. Whatever the excuse, the player should understand that this is exactly what it is — an excuse to demonstrate the player's poor standing in the order. Either the player accepts the cold shoulder or toes the line and betrays the cabal to some degree in order to regain previous perks.

Once the leadership is chosen, more than one character will have failed her first goal. Rather than be overly harsh, convince the players that this is but one battle in an ongoing war for Order supremacy. Diplomacy, subversion and sabotage might all be viable options to force the cabal to accomplish a player's expectations. Should the player fail to fulfill these expectations or choose to ignore them, you can introduce the external pressures an order places upon a cabal-mate and see whether the camaraderie of the cabal is strong enough to resist.

You can always go back to this basic political tool whenever other storylines finish or fall into a lull. It gives you a brief break from heavy plotting and allows you the chance to stir some embers. This is especially useful if you notice your players have gone too long without an internal spat. Friends like to occasionally poke sticks at one another. Giving them a chance to do so keeps the game fresh and offers a nice respite from high-strung politics with Storyteller characters.

### The Human Factor

Mages are human. They have the same emotions, dreams and heartaches that any Sleeper bears. That mages have the power to control or create all three doesn't always help, either. In fact, that power can exacerbate the problem.

Use character flaws, derangements and background relationships to the fullest advantage.

Human drama like lost loves, love triangles, jealousy and betrayal stimulate marvelous internal conflicts that players will have to either overcome or deal with through the course of a chronicle. Even if a conflict is apparently "water under the bridge," poke at sensitive in-character nerves on occasion, if for no other reason than to remind players that their characters are regular Joes and Janes at heart.

The ideal way to establish these plotlines is through familiarity. Storyteller characters should be set up long in advance and in a benign setting before they're used in political plots. For example, what if a character learned that her love was in fact a double agent? Perhaps he's having an affair with another player's character. Whatever the scenario, make sure that the player has an emotional investment prior to pulling the rug from under her. The impact will be that much more dramatic.

Besides, there's no greater political motivator than emotion. Factor in enough emotionally based storylines, and you have political fodder for months to come.

## Establishing the Political Backdrop — Cabal on Cabal

Once the cabal's internal politics stabilize, the cabal's attentions will shift to other cabals in the region. How the cabal interacts with these cabals will have serious political repercussions down the road.

### Caught in the Middle

Consider a rivalry between two neighboring Storyteller cabals. Hearing that a new cabal has set up shop in the area, both could separately send emissaries to the players' cabal in search of support for their cause. Which side will the players' characters give allegiance to, if any? You can ramp up the conflict by pointing out, in no uncertain terms, that refusal to take a side earns the cabal two enemies, rather than one.

Better still, you could have one Storyteller cabal accuse the other of being Scelesti or Tremere. How do the players' characters go about confirming the allegation? What if the accusers are right? Do they dare meet the accused cabal's ambassador? It's a high-wire walk the characters will tread, determining which side is right and who should be wronged.

### Deal-Breaker

A neighboring cabal makes an agreement with your players' cabal to exchange knowledge. The players' characters fulfill their end of the bargain, but when they get the other cabal's contribution, the information isn't what was promised. How will the characters resolve this?

Another approach has the Storyteller cabal fulfilling its duty as promised, but, before the players' characters can give what they owe, they realize that the other cabal has ulterior motives for wanting the knowledge. Do the players' characters fulfill the deal or renege?

### Smear Chronicle

When rivalries between cabals get too heated, mages will resort to the lowest common denominator in order to stand victorious. If this means slinging mud to do so, far better to stand caked in dirt than to be curled up in the corner of a room under a pile of shit.

You can ramp up a rivalry with your players' characters by spreading vicious rumors about their cabal and membership. Into each rumor, add just enough truth to reasonably make other Storyteller cabals wonder. When a character missteps socially, fire off a salvo of insults that

puts the cabal's reputation under scrutiny. This will force characters to react in order to save face or drag the rival deeper in the mud.

This can also heat up internal politics, as public gaffes could cause a dramatic shake-up from within.

### *Meet and Greet*

Players' characters can gauge the political climate in their new Awakened neighborhood by sending their own emissary to other cabals. If done with the proper respect, the characters' cabal can establish some useful allies when political troubles hit later. If done poorly, the players' characters could find themselves butting heads and without friends in the Consilium.

Waiting to see what the players' cabal does could also allow you to educate the players — at their pace — about the current political tides within the region. Knowing which cabals like or hate each other provides the characters with clues on how best to work the system to their advantage, and, by pressing the right palms, they can make deals that enhance the cabal's library, resources or political standing in the area.

How do they find new cabals to talk to before the Consilium gets around to meeting them? Reward players who keep an ear open within occult circles with tips on fresh blood in the region. Evidence of new arrivals could also exist during routine scans for resonance shifts in the immediate area, odd reports in periodicals and the ever-popular chill down the spine when walking by a seemingly innocuous location.

### *Order Is Everything*

The responsibilities of one's order always play a part in cabal-on-cabal interactions, as colleagues in other cabals might be willing to put order before cabal on characters' behalves. It's a dangerous game to play, particularly if a fellow Ladder or Guardian expects a character to pay off on what he promised. Characters will soon learn the intricacies of mage politics, and you would be advised to keep careful notes on key relationships between each cabal in the region.

### *Ramping Up the Drama — The Consilium*

Consilium involvement in a chronicle should never be handled lightly. Ideally, the easiest way to introduce the Consilium is through a Storyteller-played Herald character. This representative of the Consilium can welcome the cabal to the neighborhood and inform the

characters of the latest news and edicts in the region. For chronicles that start with players' characters in an established cabal, this can be a bit trickier to brush aside. In these situations, you're better off detailing the Consilium's membership, notifying the players' characters of who they would or wouldn't know and giving an introductory breakdown of the current position of the characters' cabal within the Consilium.

To simplify matters, especially with players new to *Mage*, put the players' cabal at the bottom of the totem pole: expectations will be low, mistakes won't be magnified as greatly and there's plenty of room for political growth. As the chronicle matures, so too should the Consilium's role. Below are a few scenarios to consider when deciding how to use the Consilium in your game.

### *The Punisher*

The Consilium takes the Lex Magica seriously. While the offender's cabal metes out most punishments for problems within the cabal, grander offenses that affect one or more other cabals will fall under the purview of the Consilium. Should the offender be found guilty, the cabal should expect frequent visits from Sentinels and Heralds who make sure that penances are carried out and offenders have learned their lesson.

What are grand offenses? Anything picked up by the media qualifies, as does anything that requires extreme measures to silence witnesses, destroy video or otherwise expend great effort and the pulling of multiple strings to cover up. Other possibilities include bad exchanges of knowledge or lore or enchanted items that put sensitive information into the wrong hands (i.e., Sleepers, Banishers or other cabals with a vendetta against a third). See "Lex Magica," p. 55, for more details.

### *The Arbitrator*

Sometimes, disputes between cabals reach an impasse, and the Consilium is asked to adjudicate. This offers you an excellent opportunity to set into motion serious political intrigue. Will the Consilium render a fair and just verdict, or will the Consilium show favoritism for one side over the other? Perhaps the players' characters' cabal has an in with several Councilors. Rival cabals won't care for that and may call the Consilium to task. If the players' characters are the screwed parties, they may spark a rebellion against the Consilium. Or, maybe the verdict was fair, but the loser refuses to see it as such. However you choose to go with this, the opportunities for stirring the pot will certainly keep your players involved for some time.

From another perspective, which side will the Consilium favor? Unlike a faceless bureaucracy, the

Consilium is made up of people with their own opinions, opinions that just happen to mean a little more than most. Sentiments will be swayed, depending on the two sides involved, whether characters have politically trafficked with one or more voting cabals and whether precedents have been set in-game or in the background. In the event that the balance goes against the players' characters, they might be able to pull out a favorable verdict by cashing in on promises or setting up deals that might cost them mightily but keep them out of the fire — for a little while, anyway.

### *The Assembly*

The growing popularity of the Free Council could be a major theme in your chronicle. While the Consilium wields singular power over many regions, a secondary Assembly of representatives from all cabals can put serious political pressure on the Consilium, especially when the Councilors pass a controversial edict into regional law.

The benefits of an Assembly are twofold. First, it gives the players a direct voice against the Consilium. The second outcome is the conflict this organization presents to the other orders, particularly if what the Assembly strives to accomplish matches their own goals. Does the Silver Ladder elder of a cabal support this groundswell or go against it in favor of a strong Consilium?

### *Changing of the Guard*

When you have a number of players' characters vying for positions as Councilors, Provosts or even the Hierarch, a popular tactic to open doors is weakening the Consilium's authority. Scandals, deaths and futility could be utilized to free up positions. Grassroots campaigning on the part of players' characters could result in edict changes or even a complete overhaul of the Consilium's membership. Whatever the method, this will inject new blood into the game, especially if the characters earned the changes.

### *Dueling Consilia*

This is an especially useful tactic to use when one of the players is a Herald. A neighboring Consilium caused harm — economic, sociopolitical or supernatural — to your players' characters' Consilium. In response, the Hierarch has sent the characters' cabal to the other Consilium to demand recompense. Not only does this get the cabal out of the sanctum, but it also puts a substantial burden of responsibility on the players' characters' shoulders. Will they crack? Will they try to get a deal of their own out of it? This is a great way to test your players' political fortitude and savvy.

### **The Puppet Consilium**

If you really want to shake things up, set up your players' characters' local Consilium as a puppet regime that's run through the offices of a neighboring Consilium.

In the beginning, the characters will be too busy reconciling internal differences and getting to know the neighbors to pay any attention. As the game wears on, drop hints that things aren't quite right.

Perhaps the local Consilium refuses to demand justice from an out-of-line cabal from the neighboring Consilium. It raised the flag on a local cabal, so why not this one? Maybe a Herald suspects something, reveals her suspicions to the character and then goes missing. Coincidence? Leave enough clues for the characters to know otherwise.

When this plot is properly revealed, the players' characters will not only have a great storyline to pursue but also new avenues of political direction to follow up on and positions they can possibly secure for themselves.

### *Consilium Chronicles*

If you've run political games before, you likely noticed that the most dynamic politics taking place are those between the players' characters. Each has a personal motivation to succeed and will go to great lengths to see his or her goals achieved. Compare this to what motivates your Storyteller characters and you'll immediately see the difference — they usually aren't nearly as passionate. Storyteller characters are there to provide a challenge for your players' characters, not to accomplish goals at any cost. Without personal vested interest, the Storyteller characters' political aspirations are superficial in comparison.

To jumpstart politics, veteran Storytellers of *Mage* might lean toward running a Consilium chronicle, in which players take on the roles of Consilium heavyweights. You'll still need to have Storyteller characters to fill in cracks and initiate external storylines, but the bulk of the politics will be player-generated and far more intriguing.

### *Setting It Up*

You can arrange this kind of chronicle one of several ways. These are by no means the only options available, but should give you a good start.

#### **Multiple Cabals**

Get multiple players' cabals together and run them on different nights. You can choose to have the cabals

be part of the same Consilium, split them up between neighboring Consilii or utilize a combination of the two. This will broaden the political scope of the game and lead to interesting crossovers, as one group's actions could impact another.

### **Consilium Cabal**

Although it is rare for the highest-ranking mages of a Consilium to share the same cabal, it's not unheard of. Players can take on the major roles in a Consilium, and their decisions will affect cabals throughout the region. How will the players take criticism of their rulings? What will they do if an Assembly attempts to usurp their power? Will they bow to pressures from a disgruntled neighboring Consilium? This is not a game for the politically faint of heart.

### **Pyramid**

A pyramid is a combination of the first two options, with one cabal serving as Consilium and smaller ones running underneath. Consilium characters can also be members of lesser cabals. Decisions made by Consilium players will have a direct impact on regular cabal characters and result in player's character vs. player's character political conflicts. This scenario also allows you as Storyteller to examine the full breadth of political intrigue from inter-cabal to inter-Consilium. To really mix it up, you can hold annual gatherings called by the Consilium in which the players' characters in all games converge to politic face-to-face.

### *Provoking Political Strife*

Mage politics are brutal. Demonstrate this by provoking your players to have their characters act against each other's characters. Naturally, expectations based on magical orders can take the fore.

### **Following Orders**

In a standard chronicle, it's the Storyteller's responsibility to issue the orders' agendas to the players' characters. If you have players' characters as Councilors, they are the ones who issue these agendas. This puts the power in the hands of those who should wield it and forces other characters further down the pyramid to follow through. This is also a great way to get player-to-player interactions rolling early on in the chronicle.

### **Peer Pressure**

Sometimes all a player needs is a nudge. Have local Storyteller cabals petition players' characters lower on the totem to push for changes within the Consilium. This can translate into the creation of a Free Council Assembly or promises of positions should the cabal support a Storyteller character as a replacement Councilor.

If the character already holds a position, bribery could be another approach. Perhaps a lesser cabal — players' character or otherwise — knows a player's character's dark secret. How far will the victim go to keep her secret hidden? Other background information could be used in a similar fashion. To guarantee you have material to work with, encourage all of your players to take flaws for their characters and write up enemies into their backgrounds so you can dredge them up when the political timing is right.

### **Conspiracies**

This is one that you can play on every level. Minor cabals might suspect a grand design brewing in Consilium shadows. Maybe these rumors have reached the Consilium itself to generate distrust between the Hierarch and her Councilors. Create a juicy background for a major Storyteller character that'll prove to be his downfall, and involve other Storyteller characters throughout the region to thicken the intrigue. All the better, get a player's character or two in the mix, to boot.

### **Tenuous Truce**

Cabals relish opportunities to stick it to a rival cabal. Sometimes, however, circumstances arise that are urgent enough to convince bitter enemies to set aside their differences and form a brief truce to address the problem at hand. Often that problem is an outside threat to a long-disputed territory; having fought each other so long for ownership, neither side is willing to let a foreign entity steal it from them.

Other threats that could unite rival cabals include supernatural creatures like werewolves, vampires, Seers of the Throne or mages belonging to Left-Handed legacies. Whatever danger a threat might pose, rivals intuitively know that a truce between them can only go so far. Should a potential threat begin to subside, who will be the first to break the truce? What if one side opts to use the threat to its advantage?

The greater the rivalry, the greater the chance of betrayal. Depending on what's at stake, you can instill your players with a healthy dose of paranoia by using this plot device in your chronicle.

### *Sparking a Chronicle*

Having trouble coming up with a political chronicle to run? Here's an introduction to one that you can use to establish a political backdrop. Feel free to use

this story hook in its entirety and run with it, borrow elements for your own chronicle or use it as a general template to spark your own ideas.

## *Fringe Benefits?*

History has a nasty habit of accumulating on a region, regardless of the attitudes visitors new to the area might bring with them. Your players' characters learn this lesson the hard way as they are gifted with a deed to a small Hallow on the fringe of a sprawling metropolitan suburb, unfamiliar territory for most (if not all) of the characters. As their current sanctum has no Hallow, the opportunity is hard to pass up.

Though their goals might be modest — to establish a sanctum and stay out of other mages' ways until the characters are settled — Storyteller cabals of the Consilium to which the players' characters will belong see an opportunity to expand their own influence. How will the players react to their characters' sudden thrust into local politics?

### **Local Characters**

Characters who Awakened and studied in the local Consilium will have more background at their disposal than the new arrivals. Parse out details as you see fit, with greater detail provided for storylines you want to introduce immediately. As the chronicle progresses, you can feed additional information to the locals (within reason) to get secondary storylines rolling.

## *The Setup*

Once you've established the reasons why the characters have formed a cabal together, a package arrives for one of the players' characters. It's a deed to a plot of land with written instructions on how to transfer the deed to his name. According to the letter, the land has a dormant Hallow in a small wooded area. It marks the delineation between urban and rural, offering him what appears to be a prime opportunity to get settled in relative privacy. Haste is essential, as unclaimed Hallows are few and far between; certainly someone will note the property's disorder and try to capitalize upon it.

Following through on the instructions, the players' characters' cabal secures the legal rights and moves in near the Hallow. No sooner do they do so when the first intruder come snooping. If the characters succeed in perceiving the spy, they will get nothing more than a passing glance before Space Arcanum whisks him (or was it a her?) off to parts unknown. Attempts to follow

will be difficult, but not totally impossible; the magic leads to the metropolis' center over 20 miles away. An hour will pass, then a larger retinue of mages will pay the cabal a visit at their Hallow, albeit prepared for the worst. Failure to perceive the spy will result in a kinder visit, as the cabal's nature (i.e., they're not Banishers or Seers) will be discerned and the risk factor diminished.

The visitor, it turns out, is a Herald from the Consilium under whose aegis the Hallow's greater territory falls. After the formalities of residence are taken care of, the Herald confirms the cabal's rightful claim of the property and informs the membership of the local edicts. The first one mentioned deals with a node (see p. 95-96) known as Ground Swell, located in the heart of the suburb; the cabal is not allowed within one mile of the location. The Herald gives no reason why this is so, but only emphasizes the importance of compliance. Those mages who are particularly empathetic will note that this is a personal issue for him.

The second edict mentioned is a warning to avoid contact with the cabal on the north side of the woods from where the players' characters currently reside. This cabal belongs to a neighboring Consilium, one whose Hierarch is demanding restitution for imagined offenses. Should anyone petition on her behalf, the Herald advises, take it for the grain of sand that it is and politely shy away. Again, no further details are given. The Herald doesn't care as much about this edict as the first. This can be misinterpreted to mean that the edict isn't as important to follow.

Before he leaves, the Herald takes the characters' names (and orders, if offered). If any characters share the same order as the Herald (Guardians of the Veil), the Herald will take particular note.

## *The Orders*

Each player's character will be contacted independently within the first day or two of arriving and shall be escorted to the respective mage (all of them Councilors) in charge of the order. Again, delay intra-cabal politics until after all characters have met with their orders. Housing issues, resonance tweaking on the Hallow and impressions of a nearby ley line should keep players busy, especially as security measures are put in place.

### **Adamantine Arrow**

Arrow players will receive details about the conflict between two Demesnes on opposite sides of the Ground Swell node. Because the Guardian Councilor is a member of one cabal and the Mysterium Councilor is a member of the other, the Hierarch (a Silver Ladder)

saw fit to keep the territory off-limits until the two sides could come to an accord. As only one Arrow is involved — on the side of the Mysterium — the Arrow Councilor's bias is understandable but still guarded.

### Free Council

Free Council players' characters are pressed to play pivotal roles in their own cabals (if they aren't already). Already two of the five other local cabals have Free Council leadership. Should the players' cabal follow suit, they can create a strong Assembly to challenge the Hierarch's increasingly questionable decisions, particularly when they concern arbitration between a Free Council cabal and a non-Council cabal. The prejudice is blatant, and no other cabal is willing to speak out about it.

The Free Council characters stay out of the Ground Swell issue, as Free Council mages are members of both cabals vying for the spot. When the Free Council Councilor learns that a colleague is close to the periphery with the other cabal, she may suggest that the character disregard the second edict ("It's to cover his ass, it is!") and truck with the nearby cabal to glean more information.

### Guardians of the Veil

Whereas the Free Council Councilor suggests breaking the second edict, the Guardians' Councilor will outright order it. Guardians need to know what the conflict is so they can determine what threats exist and how they might best be squelched. The Councilor seems to be a solid supporter of the Hierarch, though the assignment could easily lead a character to believe that this support might be lagging.

The Guardian also gets the scoop on the conflict over Ground Swell. Previously controlled by the Councilor's cabal, the node was infected by taint and caused the spells used to draw power to fizzle. Since the resonance doesn't harmonize with the Councilor's cabal any longer, the power drawn is diminished dramatically. That is, if the Mysterium Councilor's cabal didn't keep severing the ley lines by tapping into the power themselves. The character's assignment is to spy on any Mysterium colleagues the character has to discern any scandalous secrets that would undermine the Mysterium Councilor's authority and thereby convince the Hierarch to abolish the first edict.

### Mysterium

Mysterium characters discover their Councilor's lust for the Ground Swell node. His cabal set up shop near the phenomenon in order to study an interesting anomaly; not only is there a node on the site, but there is also an underground locus that is a veritable beacon

for spirits. In order to study spirits and their social dynamics, the Mysterium Councilor would like to keep Ground Swell untouched by mages so this research can be done in as "wild" a manner as possible. Naturally, the public line is to secure power for itself. As long as the first edict is in place and the Councilor's cabal continues breaking the prime ley lines into the node, spirits will be less likely to act contrary to their nature due to foreign intrusions.

### Silver Ladder

It's all about the status quo for Silver Ladder players. The Hierarch has enjoyed his position for over a decade. The recent rise in prominence of the Free Council within the region is vexing, to say the least. If one or more colleagues of the Silver Ladder characters belong to the Free Council, they are told to keep the colleagues from ascending to leadership positions within the cabal.

Keeping the rival Hierarch's allegations from spreading throughout the Consilium is also of utmost importance. Silver Ladder characters are expected to keep cabal-mates in line on this, especially given the cabal's proximity to the other Consilium. Discussions with other Silver Ladders, however, will convince others of lower station within the order to persuade the characters to find out more; though the Hierarch and Councilor insist the allegations (whatever they are) are baseless, that doesn't mean they're speaking the truth.

### *Taking It from Here...*

These order assignments should keep your players busy for a while and provide a few story hooks that the players can latch on to in order to progress other storylines. This also supplies you with some flexibility. If you're not ready to introduce spirits into your game, initial searches through the woods prove fruitless. Not ready to introduce another Consilium? Introduce this hook later when you're ready (an especially intriguing way to do so is to have the Hierarch issue the second edict out of the blue). However you decide to approach these story hooks, they will give you a strong political foundation on which to build, especially when internal cabal politics begin to stabilize and it's time to take the action outside.

## *Sample Cabals and Sanctums*

The following sections presents three sample cabals: an Atlantean tradition cabal, a Seers pylon and a Banisher cult. These cabals are designed to fit into any chronicle, regardless of location, and present different types of challenges to the local political order.

## Pentacle Cabal: The Daedelus Elect

The Daedelus Elect is an urban cabal specializing in lore gathering and uses its collective knowledge to further a political agenda. The cabal's leading order affiliation is to the Free Council. Although the Daedelus Elect lacks true clout, the cabal is slowly growing in power, an issue that upsets the oligarchs running the local Consilium.

The Elect style themselves "heirs" to the Chosen of Avalon, a cabal that built Diogenes Lantern, the Elect's sanctum. However, the Elect are not a true heritage cabal; they actively spurn their predecessors' ideals, using the title of heir only to justify possession of the sanctum.

### Where Are the Elect?

The Daedelus Elect and their sanctum have been designed so a Storyteller can place them in any city or region. For instance, if a Storyteller is running a Boston chronicle, the Elect could be placed in nearby Providence or Concord.

### Background

At the end of the 20th century, the Mysterium drafted a novice mystagogue cabal into finding an Athenaeum lost 50 years ago. The mystagogues' greatest rivals in the territory, the Guardians of the Veil, scrambled to marshal their own allies — two other cabals — to thwart the search.

The result was a debacle. All three cabals got caught in a political firestorm that destroyed their standing in the Consilium and attracted the attention of a Seer pylon. The battle against the Seers broke the cabals, leaving a handful of scattered survivors.

"B," one of the mages manipulated by the Guardians, met with his opposite number from the Mysterium. The two men found they had more in common than each thought, and they both renounced Consilium politics. They gathered the remnants of all three groups together and formed a new cabal — the Daedelus Elect.

Working together, the mages of the Daedelus Elect found and now occupy the lost Athenaeum, converting it into a libertine Lorehouse. Bit by bit, they're parceling out its treasures, regardless of what potent, mystical or bizarre artifacts they unleash. However, not even the Elect know the true story of what founded their sanctum. Should they discover truth, they'll learn that some secrets are best left buried.

### Story Hook — Gone But Not Forgotten

The Seers were driven off but never fully defeated, and are slowly rebuilding their resources to launch another assault. They've been trying to find the Elect by baiting other cabals. The Seers' newest lure is an enchanted scroll exposing a link between an artifact in Diogenes' Lantern and a powerful Abyssal spirit known as Neuntoter's Bane.

Those who touch the scroll are "tagged" with a subtle tracking spell that follows them when they look for the Elect's sanctum. (This Space 1 "Finder" spell is concealed with a Death 2 "Suppress Aura" spell, which levies a -5 penalty on any attempts to discover the spell by scrutinizing the scroll. The concealing spell itself requires a Perception spell with at least Potency 6 before it can be detected.)

Characters could obviously find the planted scroll, but they'll most likely encounter it when it's already in play. Perhaps several cabals want the scroll as leverage against the Elect. Perhaps the Elect are already involved, either trying to find the scroll or stop someone else from finding it. The reasons the Elect might have for suppressing the scroll are highlighted in their sanctum's history below.

### Theme

The Elect are devoted anarcho-syndicalists who want to create a cooperative commonwealth centered around collecting lore, artifacts and other enchanted items for the common good. "From each according to their ability, to each according to their need" is the credo they live by.

Their name comes from the Greek inventor and craftsman, Daedelus, who built the Minotaur's labyrinth and escaped from the island by building a pair of wax wings. The cabal sees Daedelus as an inspiration for creativity breaking down the shackles of oppression.

And yet there's another side to the story. Daedelus' hubris led him to kill his more talented nephew; this tradition of hubris was passed down to Daedelus' son, Icarus, who died trying to outdo his father by flying too close the sun. The cabal sees these stories as cautionary tales about the cost of pride. They call themselves Daedelus' Elect so that they remember it was pride that cost them the lives of their friends.

### Sigil

The Elect's emblem is a raised fist. On the cabal's banner, the members' three orders are represented with

their proper symbols, and the cabal's seven honoraries are represented with seven stars.

The foundation includes the cross, chalice and shield symbols, corresponding to the Elect's recognition of the Great Rights of Crossing, Hospitality and Sanctuary.

The arch bears two symbols that show the accomplishments of the Elect (self-awarded, since they spurn Consilium politics): a small skull to honor their victory against the Seers and a book to show their discovery of the Athenaeum.

The motto, in the High Speech, sits below the foundation and loosely translates to "Freedom for One, Freedom for All."

### *Protocol*

As is seen on their sigil banner, the Elect honor the Great Rights of Crossing, Hospitality and Sanctuary. Most of their lesser rights have to do with who gets access to the contents of the Lorehouse and when. There's also a dense section on how to best throw parties.

Specific interdicts comprise a set of punishments laid out for people who violate the good of the community. The least of these punishments is forcing the offender to scour his body for Mana to "feed" some of the artifacts kept in their Lorehouse. (Diogenes' Lantern has no Hallow of its own.) Most of the medium-range punishments involve forced tasks, usually finding new sources of tass or trinkets for the Lorehouse. The worst punishments have never been invoked but are rumored to involve artifacts within the Lantern and are said to be worse than death.

### *Rites*

The Elect gather in an Assembly called the "Parliament of Rooks," along with syndics from any other interested cabals. However, the Daedelus Elect are best known for their parties, set up in a mockery of Victorian values. Depending on their guests, they can be excruciatingly formal or over-the-top Monty-Python-style farces.

During this gathering, they allow guests access to the Hall of Trophies, which holds selected treasures from the Athenaeum. The selection changes for every party.

In addition to the normal festivities, Sister Jehoel leads three ceremonies during the year: Devil's Bane, a banishing rite at Halloween; the Epiphany, on January 6th, celebrating Awakening; and the Assumption, on August 15th, to bless any new ventures.

"B" always throws a raucous banishing rite on May Day, in accordance with International Workers Day. Inevitably, this gets him into trouble when he tries

to interfere with Consilium-run territories or local Sleeper-led corporations.

### *Members of the Elect*

The current membership of the Elect consists of seven images from three different orders.

*"B"*

**Quote:** "I hold this truth above all: 'I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free.'"

**Background:** After being turned down for tenure, Professor Jonathan Barkens turned to reading as a source of solace. After devouring books by Bakunin, Diamond, Huxley, Orwell and Quinn, Barkens became convinced that a "conspiracy of the mind" prevented him from advancing in his career. While at his old college library (borrowing the book *Viruses of the Mind* by fellow academic Richard Dawkins), Barkens went up a staircase into a tower he'd never seen before. When he emerged, he had Awakened.

It turns out Jonathan was right — the college was being used by a Seer tetrarchy. A Guardian cabal rescued Barkens from the Seers' grasp and, feeling indebted to the Guardians, Jonathan willingly participated in their hunt to find a lost Mysterium Athenaeum. The Guardian running the cabal willingly eliminated Sleepers to keep the Athenaeum secret. Horrified, Jonathan and two other cabal members, "C" and "A," broke ranks to report the Guardian to the Consilium. Their complaints went unheeded.

When the Seers came after Jonathan, "C" and "A," Jonathan managed to rescue "C" and "A" from imminent death and then rallied the other two cabals to defeat the Seers. This made Jonathan the *de facto* founder of the new cabal and its Heart.

"B" now finds himself with a unique opportunity with the Lantern. He plans to use it for all it is worth.

**Description:** "B" is in his late 60s, a spry academic. He prefers casual clothing and has the air of someone who is comfortable with himself and his surroundings.

His nimbus manifests as the smell of old books and a strange warping effect that makes "B" seem to be out of phase with the world.

**Storytelling Hints:** Barkens is a thoughtful man and quite worldly. It's easy to forget that, in the arcane world, he's relatively new. His shadow name comes from the book *Story of B* and means "Blasphemer." He is more than willing to blaspheme against the "traditional" Atlantean hierarchy, which he holds to be an outmoded and stale institution.



**Dedicated Magical Tool:** A PDA with a brass cover inscribed with Atlantean runes

**Real Name:** Dr. Jonathan Barkens

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Free Council (formerly Guardians of the Veil)

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 5, Wits 2, Resolve 5

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

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Politics) 5, Investigation 3, Politics 2, Science (Psychology) 4

**Physical Skills:** Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny (Sleight of Hand) 2, Stealth 1

**Social Skills:** Empathy 3, Expression 2, Persuasion 4, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Contacts (Local College Administration, Professors), Encyclopedic Knowledge, High Speech, Inspiring, Languages (German, Latin, Mandarin), Library (Famous Artifacts, Folklore, Politics) 3, Sanctum (Shared) 4, Status: Free Council 2

**Willpower:** 10

**Wisdom:** 8

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Fate 2, Mind 3, Prime 1, Space 1, Spirit 3

**Notes:** Fate – The Perfect Moment (•), Shifting the Odds (•); Mind – Aura Perception (•), Misperception (•), Multi-

Tasking (•); Prime – Supernal Vision (•); Space – Spatial Map (•); Spirit – Spirit Tongue (•), Gossamer Touch (•), Rouse Spirit (•)

**Mana/Per Turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 3 ("Misperception," Mind •)

"A"

**Quote:** "Fuck you and the system you rode in on."

**Background:** There are few clues to "A"'s past — she deliberately destroyed records about herself and her background to "free herself from society's tyranny." By the way she talks, she appears to have been well educated and spent some time among willworker society (though this could be just pretense). Now, she's a hard-ass punk who serves as the cabal's Farseeker (or "Scrounger"). She cast off her name in favor of the Anarchy symbol.

**Description:** Short, black, razor-cut hair sets off her angular face, stocky body and mean disposition. "A" bears no body modifications but still manages to project herself as one tough young woman.

Her nimbus manifests as brilliant red sparks shedding off her as she moves.

**Storytelling Hints:** "A" acts as the active catalyst of the Elect, constantly pushing the boundaries of magic, culture and common sense. It's evident that if others don't keep her in check, her activities will quickly become self-destructive.

**Real Name:** Unknown

**Path:** Obrimos

**Order:** Free Council

**Abilities:**



**Phreaking (dice pool 7)** — “A” uses this skill to hack into communications networks. She’s been known to auction off to other cabals the mundane information she garners from this hobby.

**Sleight of Hand (dice pool 9)** — “A” had been good with sleight of hand, a childhood hobby, even before Awakening. Stage magic became a way of expressing herself. She is, however, not above using it to steal things without a whisper of magic.

**Counter-Surveillance (dice pool 7)** — Due to her extensive experience with phreaking, “A” often helps “the little guy” stick it to the authorities by teaching people how to spy or block from being spying on. She has also proudly doled out such information to other cabals, to use on the Consilium or their enemies.

“C”

**Quote:** “In the beginning they said there was light. Well, there ain’t much left of it now.” (Quoting “Beg Your Pardon” by Crass.)

**Background:** Rebecca Chase was a mildly successful standup comedian whose intensity was likened to word artists like Bill Hicks or Henry Rollins. She Awoke unexpectedly on the London Tube, experiencing her Awakening as one extended shamanic initiation. Now, she studies cities as if they were jungles made of stone, finding power in the most unusual places. “B” is her on-again, off-again lover.

**Description:** A rail-thin black woman with an easy smile, “C” has well-groomed dreadlocks and ornate tattoos, which are actually a stylized map of the London Underground.

Her nimbus is a cool breeze wafting from her direction.

**Storytelling Hints:** “C” is the most social of the cabal, but she treats people much as an anthropologist would; she sees no distinction between humans and animals or nature and the city, so her observations strike many “civilized” people as strange, especially when she notes things like the mating habits of hominids at Starbucks.

**Real Name:** Rebecca Chase

**Path:** Thyrus

**Order:** Free Council

Abilities:

**Expression (dice pool 9)** — “C” may appear caustic in her ramblings, but she is extremely insightful. She is the *de facto* representative of the Elect to the local Consilium and is more than willing to represent other cabals as well, especially if she feels their voices are not being heard by the Consilium.

**Shadowing (dice pool 7)** — “C” has the unnerving ability to hide herself in a crowd, and, from there, she pos-



sesses the equally unnerving skill to follow whomever she chooses. She is at her best working with “A,” who taught her counter-surveillance techniques.

**Urban Survival (dice pool 8)** — “C”’s trip into urban shamanism have made her a master at thriving in that style of environment. While she might have no connections to the black market, she certainly knows the places where the best food or items get dumped and can rattle off the addresses of virtually every shop (legit or otherwise) in the city. She’s willing to share this knowledge with other struggling cabals for a small price.

*Sister Jehoel*

**Quote:** “There is a light within you. One must simply cut away the impurities to find it.”

**Background:** Jessica Sorel grew up near Los Alamos, New Mexico, under the tutelage of New Age parents. She Awoke after visiting the site of the first atomic test at Jornada del Muerto, where she received a vision of the Watchtower of the Golden Key inside the first atomic blast. Temporarily blinded by what she’d seen, she wandered away from the site in a daze. There, she was found and trained by Adamantine Arrow mages, along with Mark Darnet (now Brother Sariel, below).

The Guardians of the Veil procured the services of Sister Jehoel’s cabal as part of the Guardians’ quest for the lost Athenaeum. Sister Jehoel’s cabal was used as “cannon fodder” when the Seers attacked. Her life and that of Brother Sariel were spared through the actions of the mystagogue known as Longshanks.

Feeling indebted to Longshanks (see below), Sister Jehoel saved his life from a Mysterium assassin. She joined with him and “B” when they formed the Elect.

Now, she struggles to match the clean power of what she saw in her initial vision with the impurities of the human soul. Much like the alchemists of old, she hopes to find a way to transfigure humanity into a bolder, brighter form.

**Description:** Sister Jehoel dresses simply in loose fitting, nondescript clothing; her stringy blond hair mostly covers her eyes.

Her nimbus is a wreath of roiling flame and shadow, manifesting as a hot wind accompanied by an increase in static electricity.

**Storytelling Hints:** Sister Jehoel is usually withdrawn, watching people and, if speaking, asking them about their flaws in intimate detail. This behavior changes if she's paired with Brother Sariel on a mission. Then, she's in control and moves with a righteousness that burns from within her.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** A small gold knife, inscribed with angelic script

**Real Name:** Jessica Sorel

**Path:** Obrimos

**Order:** Adamantine Arrow

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 5

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

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

**Mental Skills:** Crafts (Alchemy) 4, Investigation 3, Occult 3, Science (Chemistry) 4

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl (Blind Fighting) 3, Stealth 1

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Empathy 3, Expression 3, Persuasion 4



**Merits:** Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style: Kung Fu 3, High Speech, Language (Latin), Library (Famous Artifacts, Folklore, Politics), Meditative Mind, Sanctum (Shared) 2

**Willpower:** 8

**Wisdom:** 8

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 10

**Gnosis:** 3

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

**Rotes:** Fate — Quantum Flux (•), The Perfect Moment (•); Forces — Read Matrices (•), Unseen Shield (•), Transform Energy (•); Life — Cleanse the Body (•); Prime — Supernal Vision (•), Magic Shield (•), Celestial Fire (•)

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

**Armor:** 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces •)

**Magic Shield:** 3 (Prime •)

### Brother Sariel

**Quote:** "The fiery tongue of God will strike you down!"

**Background:** Mark Dornet was raised as a God-fearing young man, and his Awakening in a family-owned mortuary only served to reinforce certain beliefs about Hell and damnation. As an Adamantine Arrow and a follower of the Lead Coin, he is committed to serve those around him with fierce devotion and stands as the Fist of the cabal. While he does not respect most of the Elect for their "loose" beliefs, he does believe in Sister Jehoel, hoping one day that she will return the love he holds hidden in his heart.

**Description:** If Mark had not become a mage, he would have been a marine. Young and slight of build, he wears his hair in a military style and keeps what muscle mass there is in fine tone.

His nimbus is a bright golden aura, highlighted by a pair of glowing wings that spread out from behind him.

**Storytelling Hints:** Mark is the youngest of the cabal in both age and worldly experience. He wears his heart on his sleeve, much as he doesn't want to. He is most similar in temperament to "A," though he'll fervently deny it.

**Real Name:** Mark Dornet

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Adamantine Arrow

Abilities:

**Interrogation (dice pool 7)** — Brother Sariel's fanaticism



makes him a dogged interrogator, and he is not afraid to uncloak his nimbus for maximum effect. He is especially angered by injustice; other cabals have sometimes taken advantage of this to elicit his help against Sleepers. Brother Sariel interrogates them, passes along what he's learned and then takes the heat if the Consilium objects to his treatment of mundanes.

**Medicine (dice pool 6)**—Before his Awakening, Mark had a passing interest in medicine; Sister Jehoel made sure he followed up with it once he joined the Adamantine Arrow. Now Brother Sariel is a passable field medic and improving every day.

**Firearms (dice pool 8)**—Brother Sariel has been using firearms since his youth, and his expertise has only increased since he began on the Moros Path. He rarely tries to kill his targets, though he's not adverse to it. He just thinks it's not his place to take the life of one of God's children without good reason.

### *Longshanks*

**Quote:** "A capital idea. Let's try and work on that together."

**Background:** Arthur Tutold was a promising physics student, who generated decent-sized grants even as an underclassman. One day, he walked to the top of the tallest tower in the college and threw himself off. A crash into several trees saved him from an instant death, but he was pronounced dead on the way to the hospital. To everyone's surprise, he woke up 15 minutes later.

For the next five years, he traveled to different colleges, absorbing a subject from each, and then vanishing without a trace. Knowledge-wise, he collected the equivalent knowledge of a doctorate in physics,

anthropology, organic chemistry, engineering and history. Finally, the Mysterium caught up with him and started teaching him real magic.

Longshanks' cabal, the Celestial Mirror, was the one who got the assignment to find the lost Athenaeum. His cabal-mates died saving Diogenes' Lantern from the Seers. Longshanks was barely able to save a couple of members from the third cabal involved, and the effort almost cost him his own life.

Under any other circumstances, he would have gone solitary, but several long discussions with "B" led him to join the Daedelus Elect. His decision to help the Elect find the Athenaeum caused one of the orders (he thinks it was the Guardians) to try and eliminate him rather than risk him revealing the Athenaeum's position. Thankfully, Sister Jehoel saved his life from the intended assassin.

After that, Longshanks threw himself in wholeheartedly with his new "family," working as the new Eye of the sanctum. Sister Jehoel never told him that the assassin who tried to kill him was from the Mysterium. Instead, Longshanks assumed it was another botched attempt by the Guardians to hide their secrets. Should this fact ever be revealed, Longshanks will be devastated and likely seek some form of payback.

**Description:** Tall and lanky, Longshanks looks like an oversized scarecrow. He dresses conservatively, slicks his hair back and has a pair of large glasses perched on the end of his nose.

His nimbus is a series of swirling motes, like trapped fireflies buzzing hypnotically around his body.



**Storytelling Hints:** Since Longshanks is unaware of his order's betrayal, he acts as a mole for the Mysterium. The others don't suspect because Longshanks is a natural chameleon; he mimics his social surroundings. He often quotes Kropotkin or Marx and can argue with the most vociferous Free Council member. Longshanks' greatest concern is that some of the more dangerous artifacts in the collection have yet to surface. He has no idea how right he is.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Silver-leafed book with matching pen

**Real Name:** Arthur Tutold

**Path:** Acanthus

**Order:** Mysterium

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 3

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

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 4, Computer 2, Science (Physics, Anthropology, Organic Chemistry, Engineering, History) 4

**Physical Skills:** Drive 2, Brawl 1, Larceny (Security Systems) 1, Stealth 1

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2, Persuasion 4, Socialize 1, Subterfuge (Lying) 3

**Merits:** Ambidextrous, Dream 1, High Speech, Library (Famous Artifacts, Folklore, Politics) 3, Occultation 3, Sanctum (Shared) 3, Status: Mysterium 1

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 8

**Virtue:** Charity

**Vice:** Lust (for knowledge)

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 9

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Fate 1, Life 1, Matter 2, Mind 2, Time 3

**Notes:** *Fate* – Interconnections (-); *Life* – Analyze Life (-); *Matter* – Discern Composition (-), Simple Transmutation (-); *Mind* – One Mind, Two Thoughts (-), Emotional Urging (-); *Time* – Perfect Timing (-), Flip of the Coin (-), Temporal Shift (-)

**Mana/Per Turn:** 12/3

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

## Using the Daedelus Elect

The Elect can be flamboyant and open about their work or pose a dark undercurrent to any Consilium chronicle. Because the Elect's sanctum is Mana-poor, the cabal frequently throw parties where they loan or sell enchanted items for tass. In general, this is the

primary way people encounter the Elect. Other ways include being hired out to find an artifact (or tass) for the Elect or working against them while hunting for the same artifact. The Elect can be quite dangerous — Brother Sariel has murdered both Awakened and Sleepers before, though he doesn't particularly like to. The only true joy "A" has is in stirring up trouble — the bigger the better. If that weren't enough, there are also other dark influences that can certainly come into play, described below.

### The Athenaeum: Diogenes Lantern (Sanctum Size ●●●●, Security ●●●●)

The history of the Daedelus Elect is intrinsically tied to the Lorehouse they inherited, Diogenes' Lantern. The story begins with Wayland Smith, a late 19th-century Mysterium mage with a rep as an adventurer and collector of arcane lore. He believed, rightly or not, that some children's rhymes were encoded with clues to arcane treasures. Though his reasoning seemed peculiar, no one could deny that he came back from traveling with some very interesting enchanted items.

In 1888, a series of grisly murders rocked Wayland's birthplace. Wayland grew concerned that a Necromancer cabal was "encouraging" the killings with Death magic. Unwilling to see his city suffer, Wayland put together his own cabal, the Chosen of Avalon, and went to war. The Necromancers were caught unprepared. The Chosen of Avalon slaughtered them quickly, leaving the sanctum and associated storehouse intact.

Flush with victory, Wayland triumphantly claimed the sanctum and entered with his cabal to cleanse the place. Few know exactly what happened, but fewer than a third of the mages escaped. Even fewer of the escapees remained sane; some claimed that the house was a living thing, feeding off their minds.

Protected by his own unique enchantment (a gift from Wayland's spiritual benefactor; see p. 136-137 below), the terrified Wayland burned the place to the ground, but found himself unwilling to abandon the site. Despite his better instincts, he decided to build an Athenaeum on the ashes of the old sanctum.

## Story Hook – What Was Left Behind

Despite Wayland's best efforts, several artifacts from the horrific sanctum survived intact. These were later added to the Athenaeum that Wayland built. Because of these leftover items, a Verge exists in Diogenes' Lantern. On certain times of year, the artifacts call nightmare entities

to the Lantern. The entities then use the Verge to cross over.

The sanctum's old Edgetender used to maintain wards that prevented these manifestations, but she's long gone and the wards have been slowly degrading. It's only a matter of time before the dark spirits, which were the same ones that brought the Necromancer's sanctum to life, begin re-appearing in the neighborhood. What will the characters do if the walls of their own sanctum start to come alive?

Wayland oversaw the construction of an elaborate structure, rooted in Masonic geomancy and Western ceremonial magic. He ensured that wards concealed the building from occult scrying. Imbued items supported the wards so that it would be at least a century or more before they would decay. Finally, he and his remaining cabal members sacrificed pieces of their souls to create a strong Demesne linking the sanctum to the Aether, Arcadia and Pandemonium.

The end result was a storehouse of knowledge that held the results of Wayland's travels, the acquisitions of his com-

patriots and, soon, even donations from the Mysterium. Wayland was selected as Curator of the new Athenaeum, overseeing two Censors to protect the area.

On occasion, Wayland would host guests at the Athenaeum, as much of it had been converted into a Victorian gentleman's club. They would share stories well into the night, and the accumulated social capital of this "adventurer's club" ultimately got Wayland a position in the Consilium.

Up until 1914, Wayland's leadership kept the Lantern's political power growing. Unfortunately, age finally caught up with the Chosen of Avalon. During World War I, Wayland was buried after being felled by a stroke. The last two members of the cabal died a month later.

The local Guardians of the Veil, always nervous about an Athenaeum in their midst, conspired to wipe away the sanctum. Their schemes materialized in the 1940s, when a fire swept through the area, reducing much of it to rubble. Diogenes' Lantern, hidden by the still-active Space 5 "Labyrinth" and Mind 4 "Hallucination" spells, was officially considered lost. It remained that way until the early 21st century and the arrival of the Elect.



One danger posed to anyone dealing with the Atheneum comes from the founder of the sanctum itself, Wayland Smith.

### Wayland Smith

**Quote:** "My dream is dead and soon you will join it . . ."

**Background:** In 1838, the year after Queen Victoria was crowned, young Freddy Merrick joined the First Anglo-Afghan War. On its brutal battlefields, Merrick Awoke. For the next decade, he plundered the region, looking for enchanted items he could sell or use.

In Persia, Freddy met an Arcadian mage who promised Freddy that a child's story would alter his destiny. Soon after, Merrick stumbled across a legend of a knight who took a jinni back to Europe. While tracing him, Merrick found a connection between the legend and the "Pied Piper of Hamlin." He used the rhyme to find the spirit in question — actually a Persian spirit claiming to be Aka Manah (see below) and was led to more wealth than he could spend in a century. The spirit also granted his body longevity, although of a kind Merrick would come to regret.

Many of Merrick's activities after finding the entity are known: the creation of Diogenes' Lantern, his adventures and rise in political power. What is not known is that Merrick's cabal-mates hated Merrick for the debacle that killed off their friends. When Merrick was felled by the stroke, they knew he wasn't dead — Manah's spells saw to that. They buried him anyway.

Still alive but now thoroughly insane, Merrick spies on his sanctum using the Space Arcanum. He hates its current inhabitants with a passion. To drive them out, Merrick has been finding ways to weaken the wards protecting the sanctum (usually by manipulating other cabals to do his dirty work). He knows that once the wards fall, the spirits that animated the original sanctum he burned down may arise, eating everyone.

Almost as devastating, Merrick has nearly finished clawing his way out of his grave. When that happens, a very powerful, very mad mage will be loosed.

**Description:** A desiccated corpse of a man in his late 30s, with maddened eyes and twitching movements. His dress is a very conservative, Edwardian-era tailored gray suit.

Merrick's nimbus manifests as swirling ghosts, voices, dirt and bones.

**Storytelling Hints:** Freddy is insufferably arrogant and properly British, and hates the idea of anarchists running his home. He enjoys dealing with Silver Ladder mages and will listen to them more than others. His spirit-granted longevity keeps his body from dying or aging



naturally — even when it suffers extreme deprivation (such as being buried in a grave for nearly a century). The sensory deprivation has, however, driven Freddy mad, along with atrophying some of his bodily functions. He cannot feel pain (he ignores wound penalties) and does not need to eat or drink, but his body stinks of rot. He can be killed, however, through massive physical trauma, putting Aka Manah's curse to an end.

**Real Name:** Freddy Merrick

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Mysterium

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 5

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 2

**Mental Skills:** Academics 5, Crafts 3, Investigation 5, Occult (Necromancy) 4, Politics 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Firearms (Rifles) 5, Larceny 2, Survival (Desert) 4, Weaponry 3

**Social Skills:** Expression 3, Persuasion 4, Socialize 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Destiny 1 (Bane: "the pall of the grave will always dog your steps" — which is one of the reasons Freddy has to dig his way out instead of using magic), Dream 4, Fighting Finesse, Languages (Latin, French, Egyptian, Sumerian), Resources 5

**Willpower:** 7

**Wisdom:** 5

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 4

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 8

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 4

**Arcana:** Death 3, Life 3, Mind 4, Prime 3, Space 3, Spirit 4

**Notes:** *Death* – Speak with the Dead (•), Entropic Guard (•), Devouring the Slain (••); *Life* – Pulse of the Living World (•), Body Control (•), Honing the Form (••); *Mind* – Third Eye (•), First Impressions (•), Imposter (••), Supreme Augmentation (•••); *Prime* – Analyze Enchanted Item (•), Activate Enchanted Item (•), Magic Wall (•); *Space* – Finder (•), Conceal Sympathy (•), Multispatial Perception (••); *Spirit* – Coaxing the Spirits (•), Peer Across the Gauntlet (•), Control Spirit (••), Harm Spirit (•••)

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

**Armor:** 3 ("Entropic Guard," Death •)

**Magic Shield:** 3 (Prime •)

### *Lord of the Howling Wastes*

**Quote:** "Master, tell me your desires and I will grant them. All I seek in return is freedom."

**Background:** There is a puppet-master working behind the scenes of this drama, an entity that will stop at nothing to gain its freedom.

The spirit that Freddy caught claims to be Aka Manah, a spiritual personification of desire that tempted the Persian prophet Zarathustra. While the truth of this claim is in doubt, the spirit's power is not. Aka Manah is a considerably potent creature associated by mages with the untamed desires that lay waste to the soul.

The creature was first summoned by Persian mages to deal with Crusaders. The mages found its price too high and banished it to the uninhabitable desert outside their city.

In the late 13th century, the town of Hameln hired a knight to kill a Neuntoter, a vampiric harbinger of disease and death. The knight journeyed to Jerusalem to retrieve a blessed dagger but was sidetracked into Persia on his way home. There he encountered and captured the banished spirit, mistaking it for a legendary *jinni*, binding it to the artifact dagger.

The power of both the dagger and Aka Manah was necessary to defeat the Neuntoter. As payment, Manah demanded freedom but the knight refused – he

had seen how dangerous the spirit was. Aka Manah exacted revenge by luring 130 of the town's children to their death.

Almost 600 years later, following the story of the Pied Piper, Merrick tracked down both dagger and spirit. Promising freedom, he extracted long life and wealth from Manah but then reneged on the deal. Merrick then brought both the artifact and entity back home.

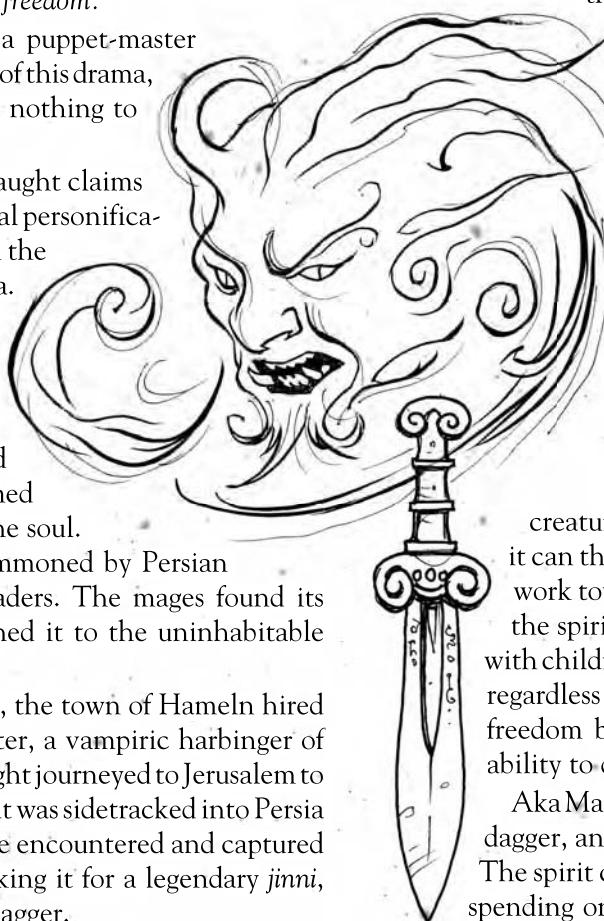
What Merrick didn't know is that Aka Manah has been using him to free itself. The spirit influenced Merrick's decision to keep Stygian artifacts from the burned-down sanctum, and Aka Manah has been using those residual death energies to eat at the wards containing it. In 1916, the spirit gained enough power to inflict Merrick with a stroke just for petty revenge. Thirty years later, Aka Manah aided the Guardians of the Veil in burning the neighborhood down.

Now the spirit looks for new groups of mages to manipulate. It has no problem making grandiose promises to lure them into helping it and destroying the dagger that binds it. Whether the mages will uncover the spirit's plot or have to face a very potent spirit in the heart of a city has yet to be written.

**Description:** In the spirit's natural form, Aka Manah appears as a whirlwind of debris that shows glimpses of things the witness desires. The spirit can appear as a stereotypical "genie" if that will get it its way, though it actually has no relation to the *jinni* of legend.

**Storytelling Hints:** This amoral creature is quite fickle and reckless. While it can think strategically, it is more likely to work towards instant gratification. If freed, the spirit would find other people, starting with children, and begin granting their desires regardless of the harm it causes. It desires freedom because, to it, freedom means the ability to do whatever it wants.

Aka Manah is currently bound to an ancient dagger, an artifact buried in the Athenaeum. The spirit can leave the dagger temporarily by spending one Essence; Aka Manah is then in the state of Twilight, where the spirit can roam up to 100 yards away from the dagger (but no farther). The only way to release Aka Manah is to destroy the dagger, something the spirit cannot do itself (nor can it



directly cause harm to come to the dagger). The spirit's Size is 1, its Durability is 7 and its Structure is 8.

**Rank:** 4

**Attributes:** Power 12, Finesse 12, Resistance 9

**Willpower:** 9

**Essence:** 15 (max 25)

**Initiative:** 21

**Defense:** 12

**Speed:** 34 (species factor 10)

**Size:** 10

**Corpus:** 19

**Influences:** Desire 5

**Numina:**

Blast (12 yards range, dice pool 24, lethal damage)

Master of Fate – This Numen allows Manah to powerfully manipulate a person's destiny to grant her wishes. All of these will come true in time, but they may come at a great cost; for example, asking for longevity will prolong the person's life but it will not save him from strokes or other debilitating illnesses, and any fatal ailments or accidents will automatically transfer to the people he cares about. Aka Manah may not use this Numen on itself; the spirit can only use this Numen in the "service" of others, but only at their request. The spirit must spend two Essence per wish, and can only use this Numen a maximum of three times per person.

**Ban:** Aka Manah is vulnerable to Obrimos magic (which, to the Persian mages who first banished him, represented the power of Ahura Mazda, the supreme light of the universe). Aka Manah cannot contest or resist Obrimos spells.

## *The Harris House: A Seer Estate*

On the outskirts of many of the nation's largest cities, the filthy rich pay handsomely for prime real estate. Their ideal home relies on a compromise: an estate close enough to the city for a quick commute (no doubt by sports car or chauffeured limo) but far enough away to give the illusion of isolation. In a world where supernatural power can elevate the wealthy to the status of occult demigods, many cities have a few lavish estates within driving distance that host mages with the Midas touch. Some estates are far enough outside city limits to skirt the local laws — or the hidden laws of the true powers at work. The Harris House is one such refuge, an elegant fortress defended as much by wealth, power and influence as it is by magic.

Although this estate has a few particulars that distinguish it, other similar refuges exist. The "mage's estate" is an archetype of modern myth and magic, even when

the estate is dressed up in the trappings of classic horror stories or recent horror movies. Harris House became powerful through the ambition of one tormented Seer, but any mage who forsakes the quiet ways of Atlantean wisdom for the temptations of avarice could isolate himself with similar surroundings.

If you're seeking inspiration for similar estates, films like *The Devil Rides Out* or *The Ninth Gate* can provide it. For a deadlier or more modern variant, consider the sort of antiquated fixtures shown in mansions from *Resident Evil*, *Fatal Frame* or even *St. John's Wort*, a Japanese horror film inspired by the survivor horror genre. Without the shambling zombies and deathtraps, some of the rooms inside would look right at home in the neglected corners of a mage's estate.

### **The Estate**

Harris House is a sanctum with Size 5 and Security 3. It has the following features:

- Outer walls: reinforced stone (Durability 6)
- Interior walls: wood (Durability 2)
- Doors: reinforced oak (Size 5, Durability 5, Structure 10)
- Door locks: –3 dice to any attempt to breach the locks (Size 1, Durability 7, Structure 8)
- Windows: reinforced glass with wooden shutters, –3 dice to any attempt to jimmy the windows (Size 2, Durability 3 for the glass/5 with shutters, Structure 5 for the glass, 4 for the shutters).

### **History**

William Harris masquerades as a respectable man. After all, he's a businessman who can buy and sell respect. Like many of his kind, he's elaborated on the facts of his rags-to-riches, only-in-America story. His real name is Arthur Norris. At the age of 21, he was forcibly removed from a private university and committed to a sanitarium. Any diligent cabal can discover that William Harris is actually Norris, and research the details of his dementia: his elaborate paranoid visions revealed an unseen world of demons all around him. After years of treatment, he returned to school and finished his degree in business. As if by magic, he then cashed in on a series of brilliant investments.

Many years later, he finally understood the reason for his transformation. His first episodes of insanity and confrontations with demons were his spirit jour-

ney, culminating in his Awakening. Lacking proper instruction from an older mentor or the intervention of a Consilium, he prayed to the Heavens for guidance — and was answered. The beings that appeared to him he first mistook for fallen angels — demons — but now he's sure that they were the Exarchs themselves. What Mr. Harris lacks in instruction, he has more than made up for by recruiting insightful, fanatic and sometimes expendable allies to his side.

The building he now inhabits once belonged to a wealthy industrialist who had more of a flair for ostentation than a sense of taste. After the owner's mysterious and sudden death, William Harris purchased the building in the early '70s at a respectable price. Antiquated and tasteful decor made way for a redesign worthy of the decade. For almost 10 years, the interior of the building combined classical design with '70s flair. The result fit well with Harris' demented genius, nourished by a culture in which concepts like psychic power, biofeedback and ancient astronauts were inexorably creeping into the mainstream. Thirty-five years ago, Harris maintained the façade of a poseur dabbling in black magic — a rather shallow pretense that wasn't all that far from the truth.

Mr. Harris was (and still is) a hedonist, combining his lust for pleasure with the trappings of demonology. He has become far more subtle over the years, but his impulses have not changed. During his experimental years, the estate housed the sort of revelries one would expect for the era, albeit with a little more sophistication. Harris' flirtation with cocaine and the rock music scene were mercifully brief. Instead, he nursed a weakness for women with long hair and longer legs, especially the weak-willed sort who were willing to participate in sexually charged rites in exchange for drugs and money.

The "coven" Harris managed to attract was a circle of would-be witches who rotated in and out of his bed as well as the lives of lesser poseurs on the periphery of his society. Because Harris was reckless in his personal affairs, two of his romps resulted in illegitimate children, both daughters. At one point, the Guardians of the Veil also investigated indiscretions committed by the castoffs of his pylon. A brief investigation led them to a magically inept cabal of Sleepers — but missed the fact that the patron who brought them together had true magic at his command.

Wasted years burned out the followers in his entourage, honing them down to a handful of loyal cultists through natural selection. He eventually attracted some real mages, who were impressed by his skill and dedica-

tion. They introduced him to their order, the Seers of the Throne, and Harris found what he had been grasping for since his visions in the sanitarium. He knew then that his dreams and nightmares had "called him to the Throne." His meeting with these mages reminded him that the attainment of wealth, sex and influence were only steps along the path of a longer journey. While sleeping off the effects of epic and ecstatic rituals, apocalyptic dreams were again tormenting him. Visions hinted at a higher power that could guide him to real magic and those who practiced it.

The imagery of his dreams came straight from the Book of Revelations, which Harris quickly re-interpreted to suit his own style of demonology. Harris became fixated on the imagery of Four Horsemen riding out to battle. Rather than interpreting them as portents of doom, he sought out four mages to represent them: Seers worthy of the inner circle of his own pylon.

Over the course of several years, similar dreams led lost souls — Awakened souls — to the iron gates of his estate. Most of his Sleeper consorts burned out one by one, as their good looks faded and their many varieties of addiction ruined their already addled minds. One by one, fellow Seers arrived at Harris House with visions of the future, and made an alliance with a man wealthy enough to make their dreams come true.

Harris is now in his late 50s, and his investments have allowed him to retreat further from both the city and reality. Like many refugees of his era, the excesses and poor judgment of his youth have been replaced by an experienced and calculated façade. His two daughters were sent away to private schools, and their contact with their real father has been kept to a minimum. Even the local Consilium is unaware of Harris' presence, since he is reclusive enough and distanced enough to escape the Councilors' notice. He has replaced his unAwakened sybarites with subtle practitioners who commute out to his estate regularly. Four of them reside at the estate for several months each year. At these times, the sanctum hosts the pylon's most potent rituals.

Yet all is not well in paradise. The pylon's latest castings have revealed younger Seers Awakening in the city, individualists and upstarts who have been far more reckless in their manipulation of thralls. These solitary practitioners have even begun acting directly against mages, commanding thralls to scout out the homes of their traditional rivals. Harris has faith that such minor skirmishes serve a greater purpose. Lesser Seers must sacrifice themselves so that their traditional magical rivals — the mages who form the Atlantean orders — reveal where they are and what they can

do. Maybe the gods are using these pawns to weaken his enemies. If that's true, it is a sign that the time for watching and waiting is over. The Four Horsemen of his personal apocalypse will destroy the magical societies that remain.

### An Apocalyptic Pylon

William Harris is part of a group of Seers united by religious fervor and belief. The members of his pylon are mages who have reconciled the apocalyptic beliefs of their Christian faith with their loyalty to the Exarchs. These mages believe that their vengeance against enemies is the will of God (or in some cases, the will of the gods).

Prophecy and its interpretation are integral aspects of their magic, and Fate magic serves as the basis of their portfolio.

Harris believes his dreams are a mandate to assemble his Four Horsemen, although the pylon's prophetic Acanthus member, Elijah (see p. 146-147), does not agree. In fact, Elijah is withholding information. It is inevitable that the two should part ways, but not before Harris wreaks considerable havoc on the Pentacle mages living closest to him.

#### *William Harris* Master of the Estate

**Quote:** "You were foolish to think that you understood the ways of magic. Outside the petty kingdoms of your failed Atlantean orders, the gods themselves watch from the Heavens — and the forces of Hell wait below."

**Background:** When Harris first had nightmares of Pandemonium, he was completely unprepared, descending into madness. No sagacious master mage or beneficial magical order was there to save him or show him the way. Instead, he spent a year in an asylum, alone in dreams that he now believes were bestowed by the Exarchs. He concluded his soul journey without ever leaving the facility, but, when he walked out, he had an air of command worthy of his noble birth. Insights into the Mind and Space Arcana had changed his outlook on life.

Revelations from the Fate Arcanum also facilitated a few lucky breaks on the stock market, bringing him enough money to return to a position of status. Isolated in the estate he renamed Harris House, he was alone with his troublesome thoughts — and desires. Without the oversight of a Consilium or the guidance of others, he dabbled in the Dark Arts of infernalism, soon gaining more power than he could wisely control.

The result was another period of degeneration, as he bought and sold what he needed to pursue his hedonistic desires. Attracted to his wealth and persuaded by Mind magic, an entourage of 13 gullible Sleepers gathered in his first coven. Years of decadence, sexual conquest and scandalous infernalism burned them out one by one. As he gathered magical strength and power, others came, attracted to his charisma and patronage. As his methods became more subtle, he soon found others who shared visions, others who convinced him to join the Seers of the Throne. Now he has culled the herd of would-be followers to four true mages. They are his Four Horsemen of a magical apocalypse he would unleash upon the nearby city.

**Description:** Harris has the bearing and manner of an English aristocrat. Like many Mastigos, he's a control freak who's fanatic about his appearance. He coifs his fair hair just as he did 30 years ago, slicking it back to reveal his widow's peak. His high cheekbones, narrow face and pale blue eyes give him a slightly delicate air. The inevitable onslaught of aging has made him slightly gaunt and softened his blonde hair to a pale yellow off-white. Although the decor of his refurbished mansion is modern, he has a penchant for old-fashioned, well-tailored suits. He speaks with a very slight English aristocratic accent and acts with subtle displays of impeccable manners.

Harris is an old man, but whenever he performs vulgar magic, he has the same youthful, vibrant appearance he had when he first turned to the Dark Arts. He doesn't just appear younger: he is a supernaturally handsome man, a paragon of the upper class invested



with unearthly power. There was a time when weak-willed young women would give their lives and souls to him, and when he reveals his true strength, they will do so again.

A youthful appearance is only part of this mage's nimbus — it is sullied by the sulphurous stench of brimstone.

**Storytelling Hints:** Harris is reclusive, but still civilized enough to receive guests. When absolutely necessary, he entertains in his home, inviting men and women who may be of use to him. Putting them at ease with a leisurely dinner offers plenty of time to subtly reshape their minds and memories to his will. His most valued guests are Seers who have either Awakened in the city nearby or traveled great distances to meet him. Harris chooses his guests carefully, scrying with Space and Prime for potential allies. Recruits who are foolish invariably die in some minor conflict with another pylon, weakening his rivals. Those that succeed are watched from a distance, and then invited to serve in one of Harris' cautious schemes.

Harris is egotistical enough to think he is still in command of his sanctum, but those beneath him know that his chances of ascending to command of a Ministry are unlikely at his advanced age. He must eventually unleash an epic campaign of destruction on his rivals if he hopes to ascend to further power before he dies.

The four mages who serve him don't need to wait that long, though. When he is weakened, they will scheme to seize the estate for themselves. Whether they do this by impersonating his heirs or taking one of his daughters as a thrall is a matter of choice. The mages could work together or tear the pylon apart. Either way, the sanctum's temporary weakness presents opportunities for mages who want to destroy it.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Silver-handled cane

**Real Name:** Arthur Norris

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

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

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

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

**Mental Skills:** Academics 2, Investigation 1, Occult (Demonology) 4

**Physical Skills:** Drive (Sports car) 3, Firearm (Pistols) 1

**Social Skills:** Empathy 1, Expression 2, Persuasion 4, Subterfuge 4

**Merits:** High Speech, Library (Demonology), Sanctum 8

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 5

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Lust

**Initiative:** 4

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Fate 2, Mind 5, Space 4, Time 2

**Notes:** *Fate* — The Evil Eye (•); *Mind* — One Mind, Two Thoughts (•), Third Eye (•), Emotional Urging (•), Mental Shield (•), Misperception (•), Mental Wall (•), Multi-Tasking (•), Psychic Assault (•), Telepathy (•), Befuddle (•), Breach the Vault of Memory (•), Read the Depths (•), Telepathic Control (•), Network (•), Possession (•), Psychic Domination (•), Psychic Reprogramming (•); *Space* — Spatial Awareness (•), Scrying (•), Ward (•), Ban (•)

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

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

## *The Grounds*

Unless mages are invited inside Harris House, they'll have a difficult time reaching the estate's inner sanctum. High walls surround the periphery of the estate, enough to discourage casual entry but not intruders gifted with determination or supernatural acumen. (Climbing the walls requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll, but with a -3 dice penalty to the roll.)

An iron front gate looms in the driveway. Two Sleeper guards are on duty in the booth beside it. The booth has a Potency 3 "Mental Wall" spell to protect the guards (as long as they stay within the booth) from Mind magic that isn't initiated by the master of the estate. Anyone approaching the gate would find it difficult to dominate or control these guards. The master of the estate routinely rips the guard's wills apart during the course of their employment to reinforce their conditioning. The security guards are soulless, but they have enough presence of mind to not admit anyone who isn't personally invited to the grounds. Harris has the wealth and social station to back up his obsession with privacy. Unless intruders ambush the guards and murder them in cold blood, the intruders will need to get over the wall before they can enter the estate.

The distance between the outer walls and the house is at least 300 yards. It's a long hard run, considering the circumstances. Motion sensors activate lights near many of the obvious paths. Guard dogs prowl the estate, completely obedient to their master's voice. While it might be easy for a determined cabal to overcome the guard dogs (see "Dog," p. 203 in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), any use of magic on the surrounding guards alerts the Seers inside, thanks to a conditional Prime 1 spell.

## *The Ground Floor*

Most of the rooms on the ground floor are sedate and tasteful enough to appear innocuous. The daring excess of the 1970s has long since been replaced. Every few years, Harris hires an interior designer to update the decor. One of his former paramours also corresponds with him regularly about galleries in New York and London. Based on her advice, he invests in paintings, displaying the most remarkable ones in his home.

From the moment guests walk into the foyer of the building, anyone familiar with modern art would notice Harris' status as a collector. Two paintings are prominently displayed. The first painting changes each year, chosen to match whichever style is fashionable. The second is religious in nature, portraying the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Harris has studied religion almost as assiduously as he has occultism, so he is quite capable of discussing Christianity with those who believe in it. His faith is a façade, however (as anyone who succeeds in an Intelligence + Empathy roll after spending time with him can tell).

The large open area beyond the foyer was once ideal for the elaborate gatherings he hosted in his younger days. Its marble floor is routinely polished by obedient servants, along with the dozens of steps of the adjacent sweeping staircase. Looking down on the room, a seven-foot-tall portrait of a young maiden gazes down calmly. She has the bearing of a Greek goddess, but she is wrapped in black robes. Her countenance appears on various *objets d'art* throughout the house. Observant visitors might note that she is dressed rather like the Fourth Horseman featured in the foyer's apocalyptic painting.

Rooms to the west and east lead to a dining room and library, respectively. Once, Harris' reveling admirers behaved scandalously in these very rooms, but now his gatherings are more austere. Instead of raucous music and laughter, a grandfather clock sonorously marks off time, as it has for decades. Harris has gone to great pains to seem conservative, and the carefully arranged decor on the ground floor echoes this. He has personally chosen and approved every painting, sculpture and swatch of fabric to reinforce this image. Like many Warlocks, Harris maintains the habits of a meticulous control freak — but in this case, his cultured façade conceals monstrous appetites. On the whole, the entryway does a wonderful job of concealing the horrors of Harris House in the rooms beyond.

## *The Study*

Harris has two libraries in his home. One is on the ground floor near the central staircase; the other is

behind a locked door on the upper story. The more public library on the ground floor has volumes chosen by a professor of literature and a research librarian. Both were contracted specifically to buy the books and arrange them, but Harris hasn't touched those volumes in years.

His private study on the upper story is his true masterwork, containing rare volumes detailing the history of magic, including a few penned in the High Speech. Some of the lesser works are reproductions, but a keen eye would fathom that some of the original volumes discuss subjects related to the field of demonology. A neglected section contains works scavenged from the '60s and '70s; the more commonly referenced volumes are part an occult library (providing the benefits of the Library Merit).

## *Doors and Windows*

Most rooms in the estate are illuminated by sunlight streaming through large windows. Harris prefers privacy, but throws the heavy curtains obscuring them aside when he's in the mood. Reckless mages might think the easiest way to enter the building is by smashing through these large windows, but that would be a deadly mistake. Harris tasks his initiates with casting many minor spells. One reinforces the structure of window glass, either tinting the windows, reinforcing them (+3 Durability) or causing their shards to damage whomever shatters them (a Matter 2/Fate 2 spell).

The doors are made of oak; their ancient deadbolts are difficult to circumvent (subtract three dice from Larceny rolls). Entry is even more difficult because of Matter spells cast by one of Harris' trusted allies. When the ward is activated on a given door, only a mage of Harris' inner circle can speak the password to open it. A determined intruder can bypass these defenses (their Potency is 3), but for most rivals, the only way to get past these barriers is for someone inside to open them. Unfortunately for Mr. Harris, one of the mages of the inner circle is prepared to betray him — a dangerous gambit that will either ensure the traitor's ascension (he believes) or invite retribution.

## *The Goddess*

Harris is lucky enough to own a Profane Urim (see **Mage: The Awakening**, p. 309-310). It is locked away in a room on the ground floor, behind a passageway that leads under the central staircase. Save for the evenings when Harris entertains his inner circle, the door is magically sealed. The same type of spell that seals the inner doors seals this one; only Harris (and those with him) can enter. The door is as heavy as the

front doors, although Space magic can sidestep it. (It must first overcome the Potency 2 ward that prevents Space spells.)

Opening the ponderous door reveals a room decorated in marble and chalcedony. Candles and fiery sconces illuminate the polished walls. The light shines on the marble statue of a beautiful young woman. A black robe marked with arcane symbols—the Profane Urim—has been draped across her nude form. The hem is studded with gems, and she bears an ideogrammic symbol over her left breast. The oil painting over the central staircase portrays the same woman with similar robes, but this time her likeness has been captured in the style of a Classical Greek sculpture. She reaches toward Heaven, as though holding a hand out to the gods themselves.

This Urim is special in that it allows anyone within a 15-yard radius to use its powers. When gathered around the Urim, the Seers of Harris' pylon find it remarkably easy to commune with their thralls. After sealing the door, the Seers recline on cushions around the elegant statue. Each mage then drapes a silken cloth over his or her eyes, seeing and sensing through a dedicated thrall in the nearby city. The statue also serves as the center of the sanctum's Hallow. The pylon's oblations are usually centered around either observing their thralls or manipulating them through various pleasant and painful activities. Like any dedicated Seer, they are content to lose themselves for hours in meditation while dominating their conditioned playthings, servants, second skins and slaves.

Each mage of Harris' pylon also has an affectation relating to a method of psychic control. Elspeth, the hedonistic Thrysus (see p. 147-148) divests herself of clothing, writhing naked on the marble during the task. The estate's youngest mage, Ophelia (see p. 144-145), kneels on the floor playing with porcelain dolls and occasionally animating them with Matter magic. Harris himself sits on a throne at the far end of the room, immaculately dressed and concentrating completely as his senses leap from room to room in the estate. Far away, his dominated thralls reverently await the surrender of identity that comes with psychic possession.

When the Harris House is under attack, the Seers may choose to retreat to this inner sanctum. It is protected by a Space ward, but it has been worn down to only Potency 2. Harris means to restore the ward, but hasn't gotten around to it. (He doesn't expect trouble.) Harris is powerful enough to also have control of his servants from afar, seizing their minds, seeing through their eyes and sensing through their skin whenever he deems fit.

## *The Upper Story* *The Chamber*

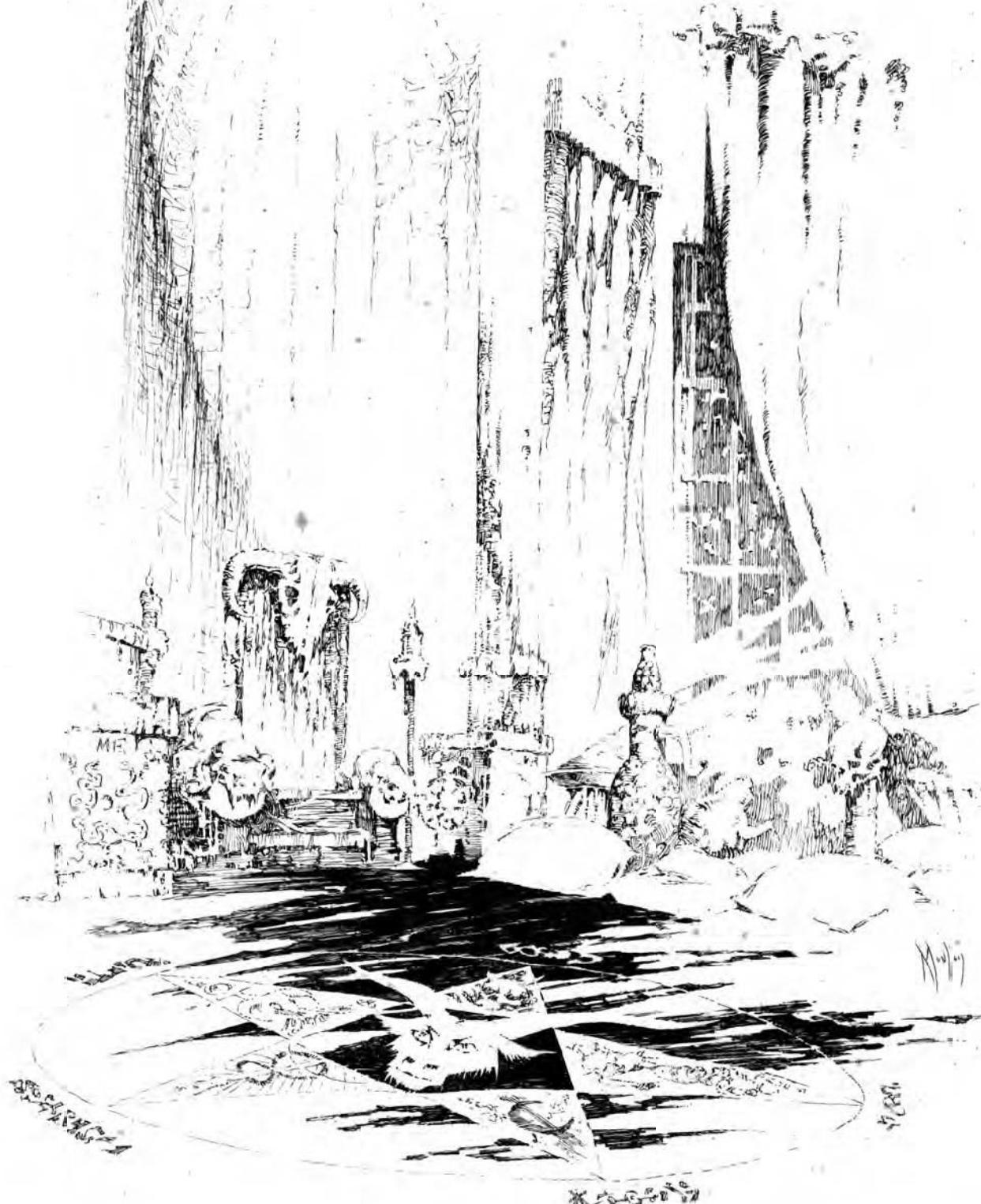
In the northwest corner of the building's upper story, Harris has maintained a secluded solarium that has not changed much in the last 30 years. Heavy drapes are usually drawn across the windows, and Matter spells have strengthened the glass (+3 Durability). The room may draw suspicion because no light can enter it: the windows have been stained jet black, as can be seen from the outside. The floor has the sheen of dark marble, swept and polished by reverent servants and the minor spells of Harris' initiates. Intruders who enter this room would probably consider this to be the sanctum sanctorum, obviously the refuge of a demonologist. This theory is not far from the truth, but Harris is no mere diabolist.

A magically inscribed pentagram scars the marble, complete with a carving of a goat's head at its center. Out of habit, many of the items Harris has arranged in this room correspond to a dated interpretation of Satanism, perhaps as seen in the popular media of the 1970s. The walls are adorned with masks, paintings with horrific imagery and a few shining weapons that are more ornamental than functional. Harris used this room often 30 years ago, but he only really enters it now when all four mages of his inner circle are present.

The only prop that is essential to the rituals performed here is the central pentagram. Names have been written at each of its points in High Speech. Only one of the names is permanent: an Atlantean name Harris chose decades ago. The names of the four Seers in his pylon—his "Four Horsemen"—are written beside the other four points. It is here that the mages meditate and petition the Throne for guidance. The site has been dedicated by decades of rituals; gullible Sleepers who aided the early rituals believed they were calling on forces below. Now Harris is more aware of who he addresses above him, but the trappings of his old rituals remain as a focus for his craft. Harris knows this ritual room appears suspicious, and though he does not want to be exposed as a diabolist, the revelation pales compared to his true status as a Seer of the Throne.

## *The Girls' Room*

A child's room has been preserved on the second floor, conveniently located down the hall from the Chamber. The sheets on the bed are still replaced by the servants each morning, and the shelves of dolls and stuffed animals arranged on all four walls are lovingly dusted. An elaborate wooden dollhouse rests in a corner



of the room. The room is rarely used except when one of the Four Horsemen chooses to reside there. Her name is Ophelia. Fulfilling the role of the Fourth Horseman, she is a six-year-old girl obsessed with Death. She bears a frightening resemblance to the Goddess portrayed throughout the house. Harris dreamed of her long before she arrived, and now reveres her more than his own daughters. Few know that she has collaborated with another mage to reshape her own face in the image of the Goddess — who bears an amazing resemblance to Harris' eldest daughter.

Ophelia uses dolls in her spells. She has perfected the art of animating the dolls as her servants, choosing them carefully for specific missions. She knows that they are expendable and actually treats some of them quite poorly. The ones that survive their secret missions often return without limbs (or heads) and their clothes are stained or torn. The best ones return clutching items stolen from carefully chosen victims. With a little Matter magic, it isn't hard to sculpt their faces to resemble the victims she has manipulated and harassed over the years. Sometimes she enacts small dramas in the dollhouse featuring these victims. A few of her playtime stories are actually rather prophetic about what the Heavens have in store for those who oppose her.

The little girl first developed her talent for Matter rotes and animation by experimenting with the stuffed animals in her room. The death of her first pet, however, presented a more challenging opportunity. Distraught over this unexpected event, she refused to believe they could not continue to play together. Ophelia and Harris have buried several of her former pets in the backyard, in case she should ever want to play with them again. Her experience as a Necromancer grows stronger with each passing year. Matter is her highest-ranking Arcanum for now, but her skill with Death magic will soon overtake it.

### *Ophelia, The Fourth Horseman ("Death")*

**Quote:** "Do you want to see my new doll? I want to name her after you. Look! She even looks like you . . . ."

**Background:** Ophelia Awakened at a very early age. She was only five years old when the bad dreams started. Her parents consoled her, never realizing how vivid her visions of Stygia really were. When the family pet died, they were ready to finally talk to her about death, completely unaware of how much she already knew. Her parents drove her aging German shepherd to the vet one last time. The next morning, it came back . . . .

**Description:** Ophelia likes pink. She likes bows and ribbons and braids, and she smiles as brightly as any

six-year-old girl. If she were 10 years older, you could say she was in denial, but really, she knows more about the truth — the "real world" — and life and death than most adults do.

Since the mysterious disappearance of her parents, Harris has treated her as he would his own daughter. Thanks to a few Life rituals, Ophelia now even looks like his daughter. Every week, he buys her a new doll, which she carries around everywhere — for about a week, until she puts it up on the wall and forgets about it. The painting in the foyer of his estate, the marble statue that holds Harris' Profane Urim and the six-year-old girl all have the same cherubic countenance. None of them are what they seem.

When Ophelia casts vulgar magic, the truth behind the façade is revealed. When her nimbus can be seen by other mages, the pink clothes fade to black, and the little girl's skin becomes deathly pale, almost like porcelain. Her hair darkens and lengthens, but the cherubic smile remains. At any other time, she appears as a happy little child, but when she reveals her magic, she reveals the soul of a Moros mage.

**Storytelling Hints:** This little girl is well behaved, obedient and smart. In fact, she's smart enough to maintain an appearance as a perfectly normal, well-adjusted child. If she were to walk around in black velvet, Mary Janes and stripey socks like Wednesday Adams, others would guess that something was wrong with her, and that simply wouldn't do.

Ophelia has a very, very vivid imagination, which she acts out with her extensive collection of dolls. Only then are her true thoughts revealed. She wouldn't dare



admit that the people around her are as expendable as the old dolls she has cast aside. In fact, people are as expendable as the parents she cast aside—the first two victims the family pet killed when it came back.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Sewing kit

**Real Name:** Ashley Fischer

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

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

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

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

**Mental Skills:** Craft (Dolls, Taxidermy) 2, Occult 2

**Physical Skills:** Stealth 4, Survival 1, Weaponry 2

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge (Mean-Little-Girl Tricks) 4

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Dream 2, Occultation 3

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 7

**Virtue:** Hope

**Vice:** Envy

**Initiative:** 7

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 1

**Arcana:** Death 3, Matter 4, Space 1

**Rotes:** Death — Shadow Sculpting (•), Speak with the Dead (•), Quicken Corpse (...); Matter — Dark Matter (•), Animate Object (...; see below), Repair Object (...), Reconfigure Object (...)

**Mana/turn:** 10/1

**Armor:** 4 ("Unseen Aegis," Matter ..)

*Spell: Animate Object (Matter ●●●)*

Just as a mage using Death 3 "Quicken Corpse" can reanimate a dead body, so can a mage with this spell animate an inanimate object, such as a doll, stuffed animal or even a car.

**Practice:** Weaving

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Prolonged (one scene)

**Aspect:** Vulgar

**Cost:** None

A simple success affects an object of Size 5 or less. Each +5 Size requires an extra Target factor. Additional successes are applied to the spell's Potency, which is used to fend off attempts to control the object by other mages using this same spell.

The object can move and perform simple actions. It has a very limited artificial intelligence, allowing

it to perform routine, simple functions on command, such as picking up items and carrying them across the room. The object can handle only one such command at a time. With Fate 2/Time 2, the object can be pre-programmed with one single function that the object performs on its own.

With Matter 4, the object has the artificial intelligence of a dog, and can be trained just as well. At this level, the object can be commanded to attack someone, although its dice pool depends on the spell's Potency. Objects that are capable of picking up weapons, such as action figures with articulate hands, can wield them. (The animate object's Strength for lifting things is equal to the animating spell's Potency.) Use the object's normal Size, Durability and Structure for when the object is attacked. If the amount of damage delivered to the object's Structure exceeds its Durability rating, it suffers a -1 dice penalty on all actions. Once its Structure points are completely damaged, it is broken and can no longer function.

If the mage desires his animate object to have better sentience, he needs to use the Mind 5 "Psychic Genesis" spell.

Note that this spell only allows objects to move within their normal capabilities—it does not allow a statue to bend its arms or work its legs (that requires the Plasticity spell cast in combination with this spell). However, a wind-up car could turn its own crank to propel itself, or a stuffed animal could move its own arms and legs, even in the absence of an armature or mechanism by which these limbs could normally be moved.

**Silver Ladder Rote: Helper**

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Occult + Matter

Silver Ladder mages use this rote to create butlers, maids and other menial laborers from simple stick-figure armatures they pre-craft for this purpose.

*The Master Bedroom*

The Third Horseman, Elijah, is quite humble about his role in the pylon, despite the fact that he is perhaps more important than the master of the estate. A prophetic Time mage, Elijah has the clearest and truest visions of the will of the ancients. His prayers with the infinite have had a telling affect on his psyche, however, resulting in acute hypochondria and agoraphobia. He rarely ventures outside the walls of the estate, usually preferring to isolate himself in a bedroom on the second floor. His visions often include horrible plagues and diseases unleashed on an unsuspecting populace, although he is oblivious to the fact that they are the result of his own fears, madness given form through unconscious castings of Time magic.



Elijah dreams of other mages, usually gaining glimpses into the lives of those who may Awaken as Seers. With Time magic, he has seen a new generation of mages Awakening in the city. Harris has interpreted Elijah's dreams as a mandate to destroy these rivals. William has failed to understand the true meaning of Elijah's visions. The prophet has predicted that younger and stronger mages will kill Mr. Harris very soon, but does not dare share that information with the master of his pylon. Instead, Elijah is waiting for the moment when a cabal breaks inside the estate and kills Mr. Harris.

Elijah knows that Ophelia has been named as the heir to the estate. While Harris is outraged by the presence of several younger Seers in the city, Elijah dreams of uniting them. He does not care if Harris dies; in fact, Elijah is even willing to aid mages who can kill William. Once that happens, Elijah wants to work with Ophelia to rededicate the estate, abandoning the archaic infernalism William insists on practicing.

### *Elijah, The Third Horseman ("Plague")*

**Quote:** "Lamb's blood on your door won't help you now, jackass."

**Background:** When Elijah was young, he was sickly—or at least thought he was. His overactive imagination contrived all sorts of dire illnesses that he was on the verge of contracting, and overprotective parents indulged him in his need for isolation and a rarefied environment. As a sullen teenager, he locked himself away for hours, reading his Bible and other religious works while he attempted to solve the mysteries of the universe. After his Awakening, he enjoyed a brief period

of good health, even as his parents suddenly contracted a mysterious illness no doctor could diagnose. Since then, several of the elders and authority figures who have doubted him have met with misfortune. Elijah was insightful enough to find his way to others of his kind—mages who know that in order for the virtuous to rise, the wicked must fall.

**Description:** Elijah is a short, quiet, unassuming 18-year-old who prefers an innocuous appearance. He has a standard uniform of a plain T-shirt, ratty jeans and battered Converse sneakers that he wears from every day. He's rarely without a book in his back pocket or his worn Bible under his arm.

His nimbus makes him appear sallow, sweaty and feverish, as if caught in the throes of a terrible disease.

**Storytelling Hints:** The prophet of this pylon knows his religion well, but has chosen to focus on the portions that fit with his fatalistic attitude. Elijah spends a great deal of time in seclusion imagining dire things that could happen to people he doesn't like. He has started to leaf through Harris' treatises on demonology, daydreaming about the sinister imagery contained within them. When punished by a magical Paradox, Elijah's ill health returns, which only increases his need for seclusion and bitter vengeance. This prophetic mage treats his sanctum like a fortress, hiding behind its walls as he plots out his magical attacks.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Bible

**Real Name:** Aden Crey

**Path:** Acanthus

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

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

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

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

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Religion) 2, Investigation 2, Occult (Christianity) 3

**Physical Skills:** Firearms 1, Stealth 4

**Social Skills:** Expression 2, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge (Faking Illness) 4

**Merits:** Dream 5, High Speech, Occultation 1, Resources 2

**Willpower:** 8

**Wisdom:** 5 (phobia: agoraphobia)

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Fate 2, Spirit 1, Time 4

**Notes:** *Fate* – Interconnections (•), the Sybil’s Sight (•), Exceptional Luck (•), the Evil Eye (•), Swearing an Oath (•); *Spirit* – Exorcist’s Eye (•), Spirit Tongue (•); *Time* – Temporal Eddies (•), Postcognition (•), Divination (•), Shifting Sands (•), Present as Past (•), Prophecy (•), Temporal Pocket (•)

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

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Range	Clip	Size	Dice Pool
Lt. pistol	2 (L)	20/40/80	17+1	1	5

**Armor:** 4 (“Temporal Dodge,” Time •)

## *The Basement*

Harris keeps a “pet” in the basement, usually a submissive and willing woman with a few very specific desires. Degraded in chains, his willing captive derives pleasure from confinement. Other Seer pylons have built their entire system of rituals on the relationship between master (or mistress) and slave, but Harris merely maintains this hobby as a diversion.

Most of his pets are selected by Elspeth, the Second Horseman in his pylon. A pale and malnourished creature, her Awakening presented new opportunities for indulging her desires. In recent years, she has taken up the habit of living in the basement when guests are not kept there. She suffers there for months at a time. As a Life mage and hedonist, she attains her most intense insights when deprived and restrained for extended periods of time.

The rest of the year, the young woman lives in the city nearby, searching for potential thralls and “pets” for Mr. Harris. After all, a willing captive makes for an excellent subject in the practice of Mind rotes, although most captives must be mentally reconstructed and released after a few years of manipulation. There have been a few occasions when she has had to confine intruders against their wills, but this personal dungeon has enough straps, chains and other bondage devices to restrain half a dozen unwilling guests.

Elspeth’s formidable command of Life magic should make her a useful healer, but she hasn’t bothered to learn healing rotes. She prefers to work her magic over time, insisting on bed rest or confinement for those she attends. Her fortunate patients can choose whether to heighten or deaden the pain and pleasure of the experience during the process. Unfortunate victims of her ministrations have no such choice. They linger in the basement for as long as necessary, tormented by Elspeth’s ministrations and Harris’ Mind magic.

## *Elspeth, The Second Horseman (“Famine”)*

**Quote:** “See that slave over there? The one with the vacant gaze staring at the floor? She was sitting where you

are right now. And soon, you’re going to be just . . . like . . . her.”

**Background:** Elspeth was once a victim, though she now claims that she never started anything she couldn’t finish. By the time she was 17, she could pass for 21, and it was a talent she worked for all it was worth. Unable to learn from her mistakes, she moved from one abusive relationship to the next, always somehow finding a way to heal and move on. The pattern came to an end when she stumbled upon an isolated community within the local club scene. She’d found a supportive yet deviant group that salvaged what was left of her psyche. Playing the role of a submissive slave redefined her self-esteem — until her Awakening brought out rage and pain she never realized she had repressed. Enraptured by her newfound power, she has since turned the tables: her former friends in “the scene” have long since become her thralls, and she knows their weaknesses intimately.

**Description:** Tall, frail and slender, Elspeth has an icy stare and exudes a aura of cruel beauty. When she interacts with the outside world, her long golden hair, pale blue eyes and sensuous lips conform to expectations of what feminine beauty should be. Yet underneath a façade of helplessness, she is driven by the same ruthless ambition that empowers her magic. When it suits her purposes, she may suddenly surrender to throw her rivals off guard — but, in an instant, a flash of magic can give her newfound strength and resolve. She finds games of dominance and submission endlessly amusing. While experimenting with improvised magic, she finds new ways of bestowing pleasure and pain — along with the temptations true magic can bring.

Elspeth is frightening to watch when her nimbus manifests. Her body appears pale and gaunt when she surges with magical power, showing the sacrifice she made to reach her state of enlightenment. Her nimbus sometimes manifests the same wounds and bruises she bestows upon others.

**Storytelling Hints:** Elspeth was once unstable, but she has since developed a sense of control that’s easily the equal of any Mastigos. She meditates in a state of submission, attaining some of her greatest insights when restrained and starved. When she uses the Profane Urim to control her thralls, she sympathizes with the pain they suffer, because she has suffered greatly in her own past. Although she won’t put herself in any situation where she doesn’t feel safe, she has no qualms about sacrificing her slaves to further her own schemes.

Appearing helpless works to her advantage, but when she must demonstrate her strength, power and will, she can become imperious, demanding and strong-willed in



a heartbeat. She wants to transform herself from a victim to a role of absolute dominance. Within the pylon, she has a talent for instilling obedience in her thralls, and she carefully chooses how she will sacrifice them to destroy her rivals or further her own rise to power.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Surgical restraints

**Real Name:** Helen Burnett

**Path:** Thrysus

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

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

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

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

**Mental Skills:** Medicine 3, Occult 3, Politics 1

**Physical Skills:** Firearms 1, Larceny (Locks) 3

**Social Skills:** Persuasion (Seduction) 4, Socialize (Clubbing) 3, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Contacts (Fetishists), Dreams 2, Occultation 2, Striking Looks 2

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 6

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Lust

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 3

**Arcana:** Fate 1, Life 3, Mind 2, Spirit 1

**Notes:** *Fate* – Interconnections (•); *Life* – Analyze Life (•), Cleanse the Body (•), Healer's Trance (•), Body Control (•), Self-Purging (•); *Degrading the Form* (••), Transform

Self (••); *Mind* – Aura Perception (•), Emotional Urging (•), First Impressions (••), Mental Shield (••), Voice from Afar (••); *Spirit* – Exorcist's Eye (•)

**Mana/perm turn:** 12/3

**Armor:** 3 ("Organic Resilience," Life ••)

## *The Attic*

Harris House has an unusually large attic, which now houses an unusual collection of medieval arms and five full suits of metal armor. These suits of plate armor are rarely disturbed except when they are used by Adam, the pylon's First Horseman. The former Adamantine Arrow mage animates them to patrol the estate. He refers to them as "knights," trudging them through the hallways on drills in the dead of night.

## *Adam, The First Horseman ("Nar")*

**Quote:** "I've been building an army out of armor and steel. Every soldier I make fights until it is beaten into scrap. You can beat them, but you can't break them. They learned that from me."

**Background:** Adam was initiated as a warrior of the Adamantine Arrow, quickly gaining a reputation as a martial mage willing to sacrifice for a good cause. Driven by idealism, he stood on the front lines of conflict whenever possible, but was also willing to vigilantly guard his order's most valuable artifacts. It unfortunate, then, that others exploited his fanaticism. For years, he suffered wounds and grievous injuries in crusades led by older mages. As his body was battered and broken, his masters received praise and accolades. Adam first joined the Seers for revenge against a Consilium that had become corrupt. Now he animates soldiers to fight for him, pushing them to destruction — not unlike his former masters.

**Description:** This martial mage has the body and build of a lithe barroom brawler. He's tall and thin, but has just enough lean muscle to intimidate any who stand against him. Despite more healing magic than he can remember, he still bears scars from a lifetime of fights. His close-shorn hair and the penetrating gaze of his steel-gray eyes add to his crude good looks, despite his broken nose and two missing teeth. Adam refuses to accept any magic that would remove these battle scars, since they serve as a reminder of the sacrifices he made for those who never appreciated them.

When casting vulgar magic, Adam's body is surrounded by the faint outline of a suit of metal armor. Whenever he shrugs off a blow that could cripple or kill a lesser man, an astute mage might hear his nimbus as well: a sound like a steel sword glancing off plate mail.

**Storytelling Hints:** This Moros warrior is no longer willing to fight to the death to defend mages with more power and privilege than he possesses. Harris values Adam for his martial skills, but this respect isn't reciprocated. The wise soldier takes refuge in Harris' estate so he can further develop these skills. When the leader of the pylon dies, Adam will either stand by the mages in the pylon he trusts or move on to another one willing to war with the Adamantine Arrow.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** An armorsmith's hammer

**Real Name:** Jack Aarons

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Seers of the Throne

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

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

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

**Mental Skills:** Craft (Armorsmith) 3, Occult 1

**Physical Skills:** Brawl (Kicks) 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Swords) 4

**Social Skills:** Intimidation 4, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Disarm, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Style: Kung Fu 4, High Speech

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 6

**Virtue:** Justice

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 9

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 7



**Gnosis:** 2

**Arcana:** Life 2, Matter 4, Space 1, Time 2

**Notes:** Life – Self-Healing (•); Matter – Craftman's Eye (•), Dark Matter (•), Steel Windows (•), Unseen Aegis (•), Alter Accuracy (••), Animate Object (•••; see p. 145), Armor-Piercing (••), Alter Efficiency (••••); Time – Flip of the Coin (•)

**Mana/turn:** 11/2

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Broadsword	3 (L)	2	–	11
Small hammer	2 (B)	1	–	9

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

### *Adam's Knights*

Size 5, Durability 4, Structure 9

Adam animates these suits of armor (riveted together to form a single whole) with the Matter 3 "Animate Object" spell (see p. 145).

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Broadsword	3 (L)	2	–	11

### *Encountering Harris House*

The Heavens guide other Seers to the Harris House estate from time to time. Elijah typically has visions before each occurrence, and Harris interprets each revelation, deciding how to use this new pawn as part of his plans and schemes. Most visitors are wise enough not to contact the estate in person; instead, guests control thralls who approach the iron gates. Harris maintains contact with allies in other cities as well, representing himself as a patron to several wayward souls. This means that, any time of year, Harris House may receive an unexpected guest.

It is only a matter of time until a traditional cabal of mages makes the connection between a dangerous Seer they encounter in town and the patronage—or rivalry—of Harris House. Any one of the Four Horsemen could be involved in some intrigue in the city. If that Seer is detected, a resourceful cabal could track their rival back to the estate. An alternative story could involve a lone Seer causing trouble in the city, and then swiftly and suddenly dying at the hands of Harris' thralls. Either way, the cabal that actually finds Harris House would no doubt consider it suspicious.

A cautious cabal should use mundane means to research the building's owner before raiding the building. Investigation reveals Mr. Harris' time in a sanitarium, meteoric rise to fame and scandalous rejection of high society. Anyone with connections to the Guardians

of the Veil learns of an abandoned investigation into a "cabal of Sleepers" attempting to dabble in black magic 30 years ago. There should be plenty of time for research and preparation for such scenes, but be ready for your cabal's first infiltration of the estate.

Attempting to contact Harris socially should be difficult but not impossible. If he stands to benefit from a meeting with a powerful stranger, he may be willing to invite one or two guests into his home, just long enough for him to test their psychic defenses and evaluate their strength. Actually crossing the walls of the estate without permission is treated as an act of aggression. (Even the city's Consilium should find this act questionable if the intruders have no proof of misdoing.) The intruders' first encounter with guard dogs, reanimated guard dogs or (worst of all) Adam's knights should catch the intruders off guard. It should be unlikely that a cabal reaches the Chamber (on the upper story) or the Goddess (on the ground floor) the first time they attempt such a raid.

When Harris' anger is roused, he responds with typical Seer tactics. He summons his Four Horsemen if they're not present, arming himself for magical warfare. Ophelia scouts out the homes and friends of rival mages, using her dolls to snatch sympathetic items that can aid in magical scrying. Elijah attempts to predict what rivals will do, an action that should result in additional defenses against the cabal's most likely modes of attack. Elspeth has a relatively large herd of thralls, beautiful women and handsome men who take an interest in the lives of these rivals. Adam prepares for the final assault, reinforcing Matter enhancements to the house and placing his knights in position, should the estate come under attack. As for Mr. Harris, he isolates himself with his Goddess during times of war, coordinating his pylon and directing his thralls from a position of safety.

Like many confrontations with organized Seer pylons, the results should be a race against time. The players' mages can organize a raid on the inner sanctum of Harris House, but they probably won't reach the inner sanctum the first time. Harris then responds by going on the offensive, attempting to locate the sanctum of the rival cabal and exposing their secrets first. If he can find their sanctum, a wave of lightning-fast raids should be followed by the attention of watchful thralls. Harris will not mobilize Adam's knights against a rival sanctum unless he is certain of success.

As for your players' characters, they should be prepared to justify what they are doing to the local Consilium each step of the way. For all appearances, William Harris might appear at first as either a wealthy Sleeper exploited by mages

or a Warlock living outside the Consilium's realm of influence. Using magic to attack the sanctum of another mage is a serious act. If the cabal can prove a connection between a dangerous Seer (such as one of the Four Horsemen) and Harris, the cabal can justify a raid on his estate. Failing such proof, a reckless attack is an unwise action meriting censure from the Ruling Council. Harris has been watching and waiting a long time, but an aggressive cabal can transform him into a formidable enemy well prepared for magical warfare. Harris House has stood for decades. The events of your story should determine how much longer it remains a refuge for the Seers of the Throne.

## *Banisher Cult: Hearth of Truth and Balance*

To the casual Sleeper, the Hearth of Truth and Balance is an odd commune whose members keep mostly to themselves. Separated from the bustle of modern society, they hearken back to the simpler ways of the Vikings, praying to the old gods and goddesses of Norse tradition in search of signs that will point them the way to Valhalla.

What Sleepers don't know is how these Ásatrúar intend to get there. Whereas their tamer brethren pursue the Six-Fold Goals of the Norse Ásatrú religion — right, wisdom, might, harvest, peace and love — the Asatruar of the Hearth pursue what they consider to be the True Goal: the resurrection of Baldur, God of Truth and Balance, slain by the Trickster God Loki. The Hearth aims to destroy all evidence of Loki's influence in preparation for Baldur's return. Led by Erik Hanssen, a Banisher who believes his Awakened condition is a curse bestowed upon him by the Trickster himself, the cult scours the region for any of the Awakened who errantly deem Loki's touch a gift rather than the blight it truly is.

Though the Banisher mages are a small percentage of this Ásatrú congregation, the Hearth's numbers continue to grow. Predominantly made up of Sleepers, its strength comes not in occult power but in its dedication to a divine purpose. The Hearth of Truth and Balance will triumph and shall stop at nothing to see its vision realized.

## *Baldurborg*

The cult resides in a large commune beyond city limits. Almost 50 strong, most live in wooden huts assembled in the same style and method as were the ancient Viking longhouses of Norway and Greenland. Because the cult existed as a standard, contemporary Ásatrú hearth long before Hanssen took over, many of the structures

have modern conveniences like plumbing and piped-in electricity. Paranoia about Loki's chicanery led the new head Gothi (priest) to cut off the latter modern amenity in favor of water-, air- and solar-powered alternatives.

In keeping with the Old Ways, the Hearth of Truth and Balance does what it can to be self-sufficient. Members grow their own vegetables and keep a modest dairy farm. A sizable flock of sheep provides wool, and, together with a henhouse and chicken coop, the Hearth's meat is provided for. Sales of handcrafted Norse novelties to local retailers have created an almost Amish relationship between Baldurborg and the city, though the Ásatrú absolutely reject tourism for fear of offering recon opportunities to Loki's many minions.

Maintaining a link to the water, the town is situated near a major tributary. Since the city claims the primary harbor, Baldurborg settles for a narrow coastline that suits the inhabitants' way of life well. Despite the lack of fishable waters, shallow longboats go out every morning to ply the river out of respect for the gods and the Old Ways. This practice inevitably attracts the occasional tourist or local onlookers, who often sit along the shore and watch the "quaint" anachronisms with binoculars. The Hearth fumes at them, but members know better than to make trouble by directly driving the onlookers away.



## Story Hook – Midnight Run

A recent storm swells the riverbanks, causing a poorly conceived and very old cemetery to flood.

Knowing this event would likely happen, the players' cabal treks out into the night to see what goodies float up to the surface. As the characters investigate, someone notices the fog bank rolling in along the water. One of the players' characters swears she saw a Viking longboat's prow, but, just as soon as it appears, it's gone.

This story hook provides an easy way to introduce the Hearth of Truth and Justice into a *Mage* storyline. Did the Ásatrú also predict what might happen in the cemetery? Did the players' cabal perform any vulgar acts that betrayed their true nature to the Banisher cult?

It won't take long for the players' cabal to learn about the Ásatrú commune up the river. What matters is how the players' characters go about investigating. The Ásatrú have learned to let mages' curiosity be their own undoing. How this storyline progresses depends wholly on your players.

## *Baldur's Longhouse (Sanctum Size ••• Hallow ••)*

Central in Baldurborg is Baldur's Longhouse, residence of Erik Hanssen and two other Loki-touched who managed to overcome the Trickster God's temptation (William and Sonja). Though this is the newest structure in the commune, one wouldn't know it by looking at it. Built after Hanssen took over, it was constructed in keeping with Old Norse methods and with all the trappings enjoyed by ancient Viking chieftains.

In the heart of the longhouse is the sacred hearth, a two-dot Hallow perceived by the cult as a recovered relic left by Loki for his devoted children. Because of its religious link to evil, use of the Hallow is strictly regulated. The Awakened Banishers ring the hearth with stones, branches and rotted vegetation gathered from commune property, wait for them to become Mana-infused tass and then destroy them as sacrifices to Baldur. Only when fighting the forces of Loki do the Banishers recover Mana for themselves; as they see it, the use of Loki's gift against his agents and him is the purest way to regain balance and resurrect Baldur to his rightful place with the gods.

Erik, William and Sonja are the only three allowed near the sacred hearth; their families must make do by cooking on peripheral fires set up on opposite ends of the longhouse. Exceptions occur during solstice and equinox rituals, when the town elders are welcomed into the longhouse to participate in the ceremonies.

Baldur's Longhouse is the only structure in Baldurborg with mystical protections. Dedicated to Thor, talismans alert the Gothar of occult activity in or around the Hallow by crackling with sparks when magic is at hand.

## *Personalities*

Compared to most cabals, the Hearth of Truth and Balance has a small Awakened membership of three. What makes this cult dangerous, however, is its number of faithful followers. Though only few of them are Sleepwalkers (Harald and Lissel; see below), their devotion to Norse heathenism allows them to accept more occult events than normal, although this doesn't exempt them from Disbelief or make them any less capable of being witnesses for Paradoxes.

### *Erik Hanssen*

**Quote:** "As we stand here united, so shall we stand before Loki's Misguided. Tonight we strike with the power of Mjolnir and with the wrong done unto Baldur fresh in our minds! FOR BALDUR!"

**Background:** Erik Hanssen grew up in a reclusive

commune on the banks of a Norwegian fjord. His parents adopted the Ásatrúar way of life only two years before his birth. Many nights his mother sang him to sleep with tales of the Old Norse gods. At the time, Loki wasn't the loathsome character Erik now knows the god to be but rather a jester, whose tricks and pranks did nothing more than infuse humor into a humorless court of deities.

Erik's parents were ardent protesters against excessive logging of the Norwegian forests. When Erik was of age, they took him with them and encouraged him to protest alongside them. By age 11, he had been taken in by the authorities five times, performed dozens of sit-ins and sugared four gas tanks.

When Erik turned 14, his life completely flipped for the worse. Lashes that tied a stack of logs together snapped loose, freeing the two-ton trunks to crash into his parents at the base of the embankment. Their loss sent Erik reeling for answers. Despite the elders' insistence to the contrary, rumors circulated that their deaths were no accident. The teen refused to accept that the Norns would allow his parents — devout Ásatrúar — to die without warrior honor. Betrayed by his gods and community, Erik invoked the right of a man and left the commune to seek spiritual direction.

That journey took him throughout Europe where he learned about the many forms of Christianity. Though he found their practices quaint ("One God? Who are they kidding!"), he discovered that his former faith in the Norse gods had dimmed but never faded. As if by divine intervention, he discovered a small hearth off the Spanish coast and decided to give Ásatrú a second go. Because of his ancestry, the Spanish accorded Erik great respect. His ego boosted, he again proclaimed his faith and became even more devout than before. However the gods chose to direct his life, he would concede to their wishes — a cog in the grand design the Norns laid out for him.

Little did he know that the path would be rife with conflict. On the eve of his 20th birthday, the gods upturned his life once more. Erik experienced the mystery play of Awakening. To him it was an epic journey that took him along the fjords of Norway on Viking long-boats. He could see the hands of Thor and Odin lead the dying warriors off to Valhalla. In the shadows, Erik discerned the trickery of Loki and warned his fellow warriors to beware of the temptations that awaited them. Erik survived the worst that the seas could offer and touched shores he had only heard about in legends.

By far the most tragic moment of Erik's journey came when he witnessed Loki's mistletoe dart pierce Baldur's

heart, slaying the god of justice as no other weapon could. Drawing a corollary between his parents' unjust death and that of Baldur, Erik chased the Trickster through the forests of Asgard to the World Tree. Into it Loki fled and Erik followed. What he beheld was breathtaking — a litany of runes detailing mighty warriors who had come before him. Awed, Erik forgot about Loki and scribed his own rune into the Tree. As he finished the final etch, his hand slipped and the stylus he was using pierced through his palm. Only then did he notice that the stylus was a petrified stick of mistletoe.

Rather than interpret his journey to the Supernal Realm as a gift, Erik believed his newfound powers were a curse from Loki, who tricked him into stabbing himself with the only weapon that could slay Baldur. When Erik discovered others who used the curse as if it were a gift, Erik vowed to undo Loki's control over Midgard by ridding the world of mages. Erik started up his own hearth, one dedicated to helping Baldur's resurrection at whatever cost. Erik drew other hearths into his own by charismatically persuading the congregation of what he experienced, demonstrating how the curse could be turned against Loki and convincing them to join his cause.

Eric serves as the Hearth of Truth and Justice's chief Gothi. Though Sonja and William have some say in how Baldurborg operates, the ultimate decisions rest solely with Erik.

**Description:** Erik is a tall, broad-shouldered man in his mid-20s whose long, blond hair is seldom untied. Though his gait is imposing, his penetrating blue eyes are more so, convincing even the strong-willed to



second guess themselves before defying his authority. Often garbed in traditional Viking attire while in Baldurborg, he dresses to blend in when on the hunt for the Awakened in the city — a difficult prospect given his unforgettable appearance. He attracts more than his share of women and isn't afraid to take advantage of his looks, especially if the woman happens to lead him to any of Loki's agents.

Erik's nimbus emanates as burning embers from his fingertips.

**Storytelling Hints:** Two parts the strong, silent type and one part the playboy, Erik has a habit of breaking women's hearts and pissing men off just by being in the same room. He doesn't give a shit about anything that doesn't lead to his vanquishing the Awakened, but, once on the trail, he'll use any means necessary to get what he wants, ranging anywhere from seduction and manipulation to raw physical coercion. He seldom travels through the city alone, often taking two or three Sleeper Ásatrúar with him on patrol. Should he cross paths with William or Sonja outside of Baldurborg, he ignores them outright, except when they converge on a target or one of them is in need of aid.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** A half-dollar-sized wooden token with the rune for Baldur burned into it

**Real Name:** Erik Hanssen

**Path:** Thyrssus

**Order:** Banisher

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

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

**Social Attributes:** Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Norse Heathenism) 4, Crafts (Construction) 2, Investigation 2, Occult 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Survival 3, Weaponry (Axes) 2, Weaponry (Daggers) 2

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 4, Socialize 4, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

**Merits:** Hallow (Shared) 2, Inspiring, Languages (English, Spanish), Sleepwalker Retainer (Harald Magnussen) 3, Sleepwalker Retainer (Lissel) 3, Sanctum (Shared) 3, Striking Looks 2

**Willpower:** 6

**Wisdom:** 7

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Wrath

**Initiative:** 5

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 11

**Health:** 8

**Gnosis:** 1

**Arcana:** Fate 2, Life 2, Forces 3, Spirit 1

**Notes:** None

**Mana/Per Turn:** 10/1

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Brawl	(B)	—	—	6
Axe	3 (L)	3	9 again	9
Dagger	1 (L)	1	—	8

**Armor:** 1 (Leather) and/or 3 ("Unseen Shield," Forces ..)

## Story Hook – A Fatality of Fortune

A recent spate of disappearances jolt the county. Unbeknownst to the general public, every crime scene has one thing in common: a sprig of mistletoe left behind, shaved into the shape of a small dart.

With the appropriate contacts, the players' cabal is also aware of this calling card. In addition, they also know that one of the victims is a prominent mage who's already met his end.

This story hook can go in a number of directions. Perhaps the victim was integral to a political storyline. Did the other side assassinate her? Or do other cabals suspect that the players' characters are guilty of the kidnap/murder? Clues will slowly reveal the truth, but what will be the political cost?

*Sonja*

**Quote:** "Though you die in battle, you shall never know the glory of Valhalla!"

**Background:** The strong arm of the Hearth, one would think that Sonja's upbringing was rife with turmoil and hardship. Her origins couldn't be any more to the contrary. A weak constitution kept her indoors most of the time, so she grew up playing with dolls and hosting tea parties for stuffed animals in Hartford, Connecticut. It was a perfect childhood that got interrupted when her father took a new job and moved the family to the Arizona desert.

Forced to spend the majority of her time outside (no central air), Sonja gradually acclimated to an active lifestyle. She joined a Girl Scout troop, earned all of her badges and, upon graduation, joined the Army to become a Ranger. She was sent to Iraq to participate in Operation Desert Storm.

While on a recon mission, she and her partner were discovered by an Iraqi scout patrol. Shots were fired and both were hit. As Sonja lay there dying, she experienced

her Awakening, one that was profoundly traumatic as her assailants raped her while she was in the midst of her journey. By the time she came to, the rapists were dead. Her partner bleeding to death, Sonja ignored her trauma long enough to drag him and herself to safety.

She spent the next three months blaming herself for what had befallen her. Though she recognized she'd undergone a change, she interpreted it as a punishment for sins of the past and sins to come. What had she done to earn such torture? She possessed the power of death, but why? The answer awaited her in Arizona.

Never big on religion, Sonja attended a multicultural fair celebrating the county's diversity. Most of the booths were neo-pagan, but one in particular caught her eye. The man running the booth wore Norse furs and leathers, and his wife was anything but feminine. The confidence she exuded drew Sonja in. Several months later, she became a full-fledged Asatru.

The Old Norse legends provided most of the answers she sought, but there was still something missing. Erik Hanssen filled that void when she met him at an Althing celebrating the summer solstice. When he described Loki's curse to her, everything clicked. She knew exactly what had befallen her and pledged her loyalty to Erik's cause.

Now a Gythia (priestess) of the Hearth of Truth and Justice, she prepares the congregation to fight Loki's thralls, teaching the congregation martial tactics, stealth maneuvers and firearms techniques that will help restore balance to Midgard and help Baldur return to his rightful place in Asgard.



**Description:** Sonja is a specimen of physical prowess. She looks like a tomboy turned tom-man, with powerful shoulders, rock-hard muscles and a general presence that Odin would envy. Despite her figure, she moves with surprising alacrity and can react with lightning efficiency. She prefers to wear men's garb (even outside of Baldurborg) and dares anyone to question her refusal to play up her femininity.

Sonja's nimbus causes plants around her to wither.

**Storytelling Hints:** Sonja is all business, all the time. When she speaks, it's to dictate commands or to announce her intention to kill the person directly in front of her. She doesn't go out on recon missions, so the only time the players' characters will see her is defending Baldurborg from invasion.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Lead mace

**Real Name:** Sonja Brower

**Path:** Moros

**Order:** Banisher

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

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

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

**Mental Skills:** Crafts (Metalwork) 3, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Science (Metallurgy) 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Climbing) 4, Brawl (Blocking) 5, Firearms (Longbow) 4, Stealth (Moving in Woods) 3, Survival 3, Weaponry (Mace) 4

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 4, Streetwise 3

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Languages (Norse), Disarm, Fast Reflexes 2, Fighting Finesse (Mace), Hallow (Shared) 2, Sanctum (Shared) 3

**Willpower:** 5

**Wisdom:** 6 (Irrationality)

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Lust (for violence)

**Initiative:** 9

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 14

**Health:** 10

**Gnosis:** 2

**Arcana:** Death 2, Forces 1, Life 1, Matter 2

**Rotes:** None

**Mana/Per Turn:** 11/2

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Brawl	(B)	—	—	9
Mace	3 (B)	2	—	12

**Armor:** 1 (Leather) and/or 2 ("Entropic Guard," Death ..)

## Story Hook — Shafted

A local cabal falls victim to a brutal attack that burned the cabal's sanctum to the ground and killed every member to a mage. The only evidence recovered at the scene are two scorched arrow shafts. Deeming a resolution to this heinous crime of the utmost importance, the Consilium orders the players' cabal to investigate.

Through the course of their research, they discover similar cases in nearby counties, but unlike the latest victims, the previous targets were Sleepers. What thread do all the victims share in common? Is the latest incident the last or a precursor of more to come?

The Hearth knows it dealt a severe blow to Loki. It will watch who investigates to determine its next target. Will they manage to get the drop on the players' characters, or will the Hearth slip up and become the prey?

## William Henricks

**Quote:** "The Norms don't listen to the wails of the condemned, so quit your whining and die with dignity!"

**Background:** William led an idyllic life in San Diego. He had the perfect wife, perfect kids and a perfect job maintaining a laboratory database for a prominent pharmaceutical company. He published two short stories within a year's time and had time set aside to pursue the great American novel. With visions of becoming the next Tom Clancy, life was great.

Then he Awakened.

Had William's experience been halfway decent, he would've viewed his transformation as a reward for good living. Instead, Awakening ruined his life. Thinking he was driving a horse-drawn carriage into a stable, William drove his car into his bedroom and killed his wife. It wasn't until after he Awoke that he realized what had happened. Arrested and found guilty of manslaughter, he was sentenced to two years in prison. He lost custody of his children, livelihood and freedom — and all because of a dream that turned into a waking nightmare. Understandably, he viewed his Awakening as a punishment, one he strove to comprehend for the sake of his own sanity.

He didn't so much find religion as religion found him. Serving on a work detail for the prison's small publishing house, William was responsible for putting together promotional mailers. One such mailer caught his eye, not because of what it said, but for what it portrayed — a radiant tower gawked over by a macabre

man in a jester's cap. The similarity to his dream tower was too great to ignore. He noted the promoter of the pamphlet — an out-of-state religious commune called the Hearth of Truth and Justice — and sent them a request for additional information.

Not only did the Hearth send him more pamphlets, but they were hand-delivered to him by Erik. After a brief conversation, William knew he had the answer he was looking for. The Hearth kept in touch with him during the rest of his incarceration, then helped him transfer to their commune upon his release. He has served as a faithful follower ever since, directing his writing talents toward promotional materials in an effort to swell the ranks and convert other Ásatrúar hearths to Baldurborg's philosophies.

**Description:** William is a lean, wiry man in his early 30s. Prematurely balding, he's given up the fight and shaved his head bare, a look that makes him appear older than he actually is. Unaccustomed to traditional Norse attire, he appears out of place in Baldurborg performing daily chores in the dairy farm or on the fields. Thankfully for him, he's permitted to focus all of his attentions on Hearth writing projects and online research for potential "Lokiite" activity within the immediate region. When he leaves the commune he dresses in suits and casual work attire that help him mix with white-collar company.

William's nimbus causes people in the same room to momentarily see a mirror image of William standing beside himself.

**Storytelling Hints:** The newest of the three Hearth Banishers, William is also the oldest. He doesn't jump to conclusions, keeps his feelings close to the cuff and acts conservatively when in doubt. He prefers computers to people, but this doesn't mean he's a social slouch. He can carry a conversation with strangers in short bursts before getting disinterested or distracted by technical jargon. He keeps a locket with pictures of his two sons in his pocket at all times, and has a habit of pulling it out when bored or reminded of children.

**Dedicated Magical Tool:** Steel ballpoint pen with leather grip

**Real Name:** William Henriks

**Path:** Mastigos

**Order:** Banisher

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

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

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

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Research) 4, Computer (Internet) 5, Investigation (Puzzles) 3, Occult 2, Science (Physics) 3



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

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2, Expression 5, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1

**Merits:** Contacts (ISP Operators, Publishing Houses), Eidetic Memory, Hallow (Shared) 2, Languages (Norse), Resources 2, Sanctum (Shared) 3

**Willpower:** 7

**Wisdom:** 8

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Pride

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 10

**Health:** 7

**Gnosis:** 2

**Arcana:** Fate 1, Mind 3, Prime 1, Space 2

**Notes:** None

**Mana/Per Turn:** 11/2

**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Brawl	(B)	—	—	3
Dagger	1 (L)	1	—	5

**Armor:** 1 (Leather) and/or 3 ("Misperception," Mind ..)

### Story Hook — Too Close to Home

An endeavor undertaken by the players' cabal doesn't go according to plan, killing a young boy who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. It turns out that the boy is one of William's sons. When William reads about his son's fate on the

Internet, the father suspects that an agent of Loki is responsible for the death and beseeches Erik to mobilize the Hearth into action.

How you set this story hook up will dictate how your players' cabal reacts. Did another cabal frame the players' cabal? Was the boy's death an unfortunate accident with no one at fault? Or does fault rest squarely with one or more players? How will the Hearth investigate the incident? Will another cabal get involved? The possibilities are unlimited, but they all lead to the same conflict: the Hearth will find the mages and will do their best to take them out.

### *Harald Magnussen (Sleepwalker)*

**Quote:** "The sheep won't shear themselves."

**Background:** Harald used to be the Gothi of his own hearth before Erik arrived on the scene. Though Harald occasionally pines to be in charge again, he accepts that the gods favor Erik and Sonja over him and is more than willing to tow the line.

Admittedly, he was shocked to witness Loki's curse in action, but he has grown accustomed to it and has a renewed respect for the gods' powers. He privately disagrees with Erik's dismissal of the Six-Fold Goals, practicing them privately with a few other Ásatrúar from his original hearth.

Harald also serves as Seneschal for Baldurborg, traveling into town once a week to pick up supplies and foodstuffs that the commune can't cover on its own. His genial disposition keeps many from looking unfavorably

upon the Hearth of Truth and Justice, a good thing considering the Hearth's often-violent agenda.

**Description:** Harald is Baldurborg's fatherly figure, a grizzled man whose Norse upbringing in Norway prepared him well for life away from the fjords. An injury sustained from a mule's kick makes him favor his left side whenever he walks, and other nips and scratches mar his body with the scars of farm life.

**Storytelling Hints:** Harald is the most common visitor to the city, yet he seldom arrives incognito. Players' characters new to the area will immediately note his Viking attire and learn scuttlebutt from word on the street about the "cult down the river." With his high profile, Harald has learned to note the particularly nosy. He'll offer to give pamphlets about the Hearth and have more mailed out if the inquirer's interested.

#### Abilities:

**Animal Husbandry (dice pool 8)** — Harald knows his way around a farm. His acumen with livestock has gone a long way toward making Baldurborg as self-sufficient as it is.

**Bard (dice pool 7)** — Harald takes pride in teaching the children and new recruits of Baldurborg about Norse mythology and customs. His nightly fireside yarns draw the multitudes, even those who know the stories by heart.

**Empathy (dice pool 8)** — Dealing with the public is Harald's forte, as is recognizing agents of Loki. Based on the questions Harald's asked, he can gauge the inquirer's true motives. It's been Harald's experience that the overly inquisitive are also the most likely to be the Trickster's minions. Those who arrive into town with Harald wait for his nod before following the nosy ne'er-do-well back to his sanctum.

**Subterfuge (dice pool 7)** — As attuned to other people's emotions as he is, Harald has learned to keep his own secrets secret. He answers just enough to satisfy a question without divulging too much. Should the questions get too pointed, he maneuvers himself out of it with a deftness politicians would envy.

### *Lissel (Sleepwalker)*

**Quote:** "I believe in you, Erik. You and the Gods."

**Background:** Lissel was a poor girl of the streets who hadn't a penny or family to her name. Orphaned at an early age, Lissel learned to rely on no one but herself and God. Self-taught in reading and math, she passed out of high school, obtained an associate's degree in Accounting and secured a part-time job doing book-keeping for a family-run dry cleaning business.

That's where she met Erik Hanssen.





Shortly after their fortuitous encounter, she left her job and joined the commune as Erik's betrothed. She willingly does all of the household chores so he can focus on the war with Loki. Though the paradigm shift from Christianity to Ásatrú hasn't been the smoothest, she's intent on doing Erik proud.

She spends the majority of her time in Baldurborg, but does join Harald once a month for a trip into town to cash checks and make deposits. On these occasions, she also picks up the latest buzz on the street from old friends and drops by the dry cleaners to pay her respects to the people who introduced her to her handsome and blessed Viking warrior.

**Description:** Lissel is a beautiful girl in her early 20s, with long, blonde hair that cascades down to her waistline. One wouldn't know of her hardships to look at her. She dresses up when she goes into town, but

maintains a simple appearance in Baldurborg out of respect for her place at her husband-to-be's side.

**Storytelling Hints:** Attempting to act as a proper wife should, Lissel tries to deny herself the youthful pursuits young women of her age are wont to succumb to. Most of the time she succeeds. This proper behavior falters, however, whenever she's flustered or disrespected by strangers. This is when she lets loose with invectives that would make an HBO stand-up comedian blush and tips her hand about her street urchin background. Attentive players' characters will notice her relationship to Harald, but only if they follow one or the other out of town as they head back to Baldurborg.

#### Abilities:

**Cooking (dice pool 6)** — Lissel learned early how to make unpalatable food palatable. Since moving to Baldurborg she's incorporated these lessons into contemporary cooking. She often brings meat pies and pastries for her homeless friends, offerings that the gods reward with valuable information to further the Hearth's goal.

**Stealth (dice pool 8)** — Despite her attractive looks, Lissel knows how to lose herself in a crowd. With strict rules of engagement in the city, Lissel does what she can to make sure few, if any, people know of her relationship to the others in Baldurborg. Harald is the face of the commune for a reason, and she intends to keep it that way.

**Streetwise (dice pool 7)** — Not as savvy as she once was, Lissel still knows her way around town and can get the goods on the movers-and-shakers of blue-collar society. Her relationship with the city's indigents also gives her access to information the reckless might assume to be unheard, especially back-alley discussions where dumpsters provide the only shelter and keep their residents out of public view.

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