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ARMIES

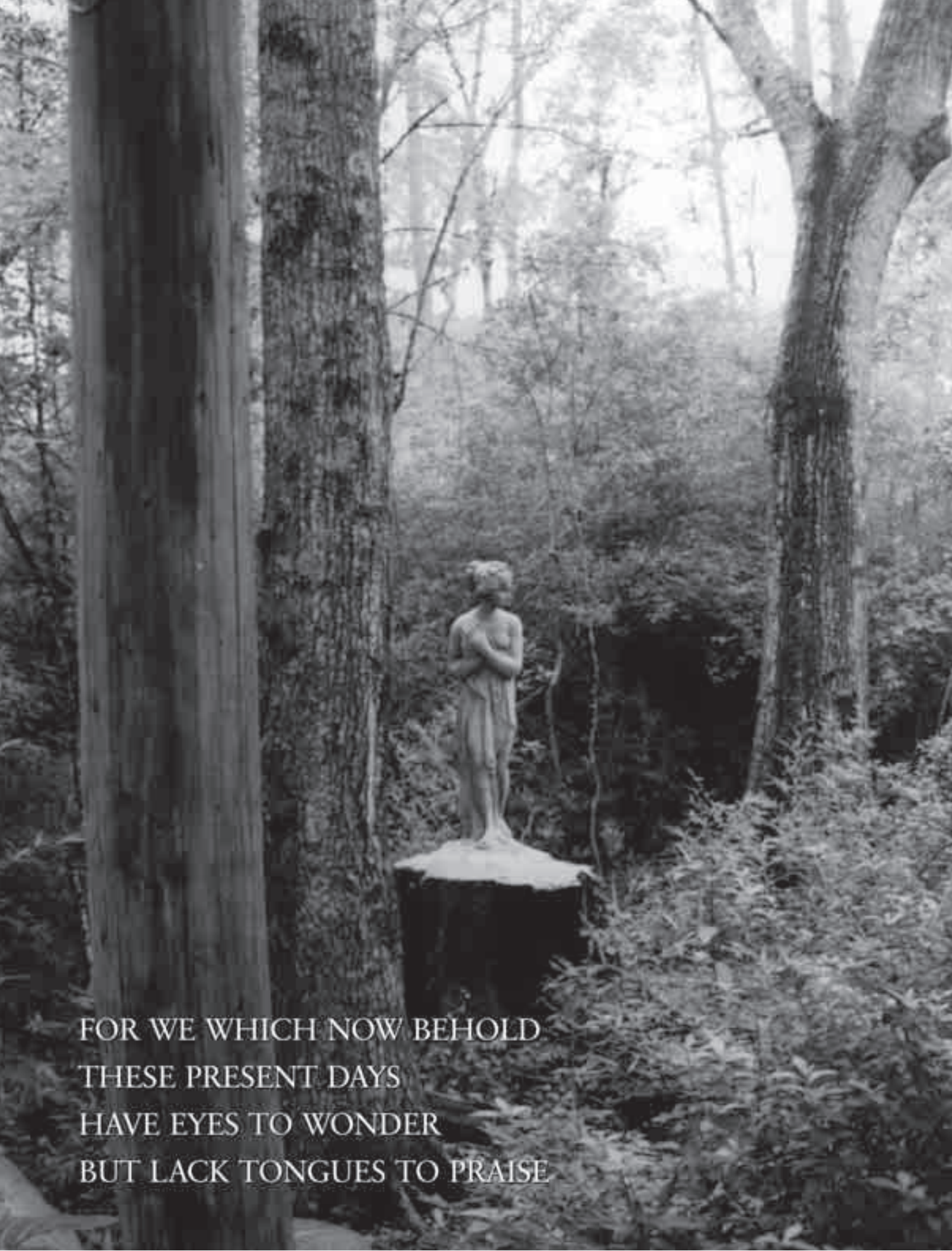
# POSTMODERN MAGICK

THE UNNATURAL SOURCEBOOK



BY  
TIM AKERS, TED CABEEN, MICHAEL DAISEY, TIM DEDOPULOS, KENNETH HITE,  
JOSHUA KRONENGOLD, DANIEL KSENYCH, NICOLE LINDROOS, MICHAEL D. MEARLS,  
RICK NEAL, LISA PADOL, JAMES PALMER, JOHN SNEAD, GREG STOLZE,  
TIM TONER, CHAD UNDERKOFFLER & IAN YOUNG

FACE



FOR WE WHICH NOW BEHOLD  
THESE PRESENT DAYS  
HAVE EYES TO WONDER  
BUT LACK TONGUES TO PRAISE

ATLAS GAMES PRESENTS

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ARMIES

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# Who Did What:

**Tim Akers:** Annihilomancy

**Ted Cabeen & Kenneth Hite:** Getting the Juice

**Michael Daisey:** Oneiromancy, 101001101

**Tim Dedopulos:** Medicine Bag, Pentecost Ritual, The Dealership, The Nomad Raphael

**Kenneth Hite:** Demon Stration Tape

**Joshua Kronengold & Lisa Padol:**  
Fu Hsing Hwang

**Daniel Ksenych:** Hex, Recorded for Posterity, Infomancy, Carnals, Team Salvation, Unidentified Foreign Ontology

**Nicole Lindroos:** Irascimancy

**Michael D. Mearls:** Taste of Ashes, Revenant: Ghost Writer, Carthage & Rome

**Rick Neal:** Proxy Rituals, Thanatomancy, Wooden Nickels, Gremlin Factory, The Grail Knights

**Lisa Padol:** Eustace Crane

**James Palmer:** Magick and Insanity, Unique Schools, Icomancy, Personamancy, Urbanomancy, The Alter Tongue

**James Palmer, Chad Underkoffler & John Tynes:** Bibliomancy

**John Snead:** Amoromancy, Kleptomancy

**Greg Stolze:** Creating Formula Spells, Ritual of Union, Cryptomancy, Automata, Thaumophages

**Tim Toner:** Portal Glyph, Revenant: The Wronged, Mal Gusano, The Knocking Box

**Chad Underkoffler:** Crystal Courage, Purifying Bath, Cartesian Curse, Transcription Volume, The Crying Doll, Skeleton Keys, The Cardboard Palace

**Ian Young:** Magick Theory, Revenant: Faeries



# TWO THOUSAND ZERO ZERO

BY JOHN TYNES

THE FERRY *COHO* from Victoria docked at Port Angeles, Washington, at about six o'clock in the early evening of Tuesday, December 14, 1999. The weather was crisp and cool. Downtown Port Angeles spread out low and flat along the water's edge, a swath of small, functional buildings containing diners, supermarkets, bars, and stores. Power lines sliced the sky above into a humming grid, leaving few intact vistas to affect the eye.

Aboard the ferry, parallel lines of cars took their turns at departure. The noise on deck was that of a rumbling beast as dozens of engines started up and impatient drivers tapped their pedals. Gradually, the cars moved onto the shore and began struggling through the customs checkpoints.

In a blue rental car, a lean man with dark hair drummed his fingers on the steering wheel. Despite the cold weather, he was perspiring. He glanced at the checkpoint up ahead, at the other drivers, at the town beyond, at his watch, at anything and everything around him.

This was taking too long. He was anxious.

The man had spent the last month in Vancouver getting ready for today's trip to Seattle. The drive between the two cities is a bare handful of hours, but he had multiplied the length of the journey by heading west to Victoria, then taking the ferry across the border to Port Angeles. From here, he was still a couple hours away from Seattle, including another ferry ride. It was an inefficient way to travel—unless you were looking for a border a little more porous than the one that lay directly south of Vancouver.

Unless you had something to hide.

He wiped his brow and shifted in his seat. He needed to go to the bathroom. Breakfast was not agreeing with him. The food twisted in his gut and made him uncomfortable, occasionally giving him brief stabbing pains of indigestion. This was not a good time to be ill.

Finally it was his turn. The light turned green and he pulled up to the gate. A woman in a dark blue uniform leaned slightly out of her window.

"Citizen of where?"

"Vancouver," the man said quickly, then stammered: "Ah, I mean, Canada."

"What's your destination today?"

"Seattle."

"What's the purpose of your visit?"

"I'm seeing friends."

"Long way around, isn't it?"

The man stared blankly at the agent. He shook his head slightly.

"Vancouver to Seattle, I mean. Why'd you come through Victoria?"

*Steady. Steady. Remember the line.* A smile, not convincing. "I wanted to see the ocean." Indigestion again. A flinch. His hand fluttered to his stomach and pressed softly against the shirt, a wince from the discomfort.

The agent nodded. "It's pretty, isn't it? Now sir, please pull over into the declaration lane over here. We just need to ask you a few more questions."

"I-I don't understand," the man said. His stomach rumbled and he pressed against his gut more firmly.

"Just pull the car over here, sir. Follow the white lines."

The man's face was a strange torrent of conflicting emotions. He smiled, shook his head, looked around, and then threw the door open, jumped out, took off running, the car left behind, the agent on the phone, other people running now, chasing him, and he was onto American soil, out of the customs area, on the street, dodging between cars, whipping around corners, men and women in dark blue uniforms running behind him, he was chasing a dream but the dream chased him, at an intersection he grabbed at the handle of a car door, yelling at the driver whose eyes grew large, he beat on the window, the car accelerated and pulled away, he stood in the street and yelled, and then he went down, borne down to the asphalt by people with guns and authority and the will to use both, and as he struck the street the panic and the discomfort and the tackle were all too much and he shot a stream of diarrhea into his pants, the morning's breakfast finally wrenching its way out of him.

Back at the checkpoint, agents had moved the car out of the way and were searching the trunk.

They found a box with a jar full of liquid inside, packed in sawdust, along with sacks of powder and small circuit boards with the faces of cheap digital wristwatches attached, and they called the ATF and the bomb squad and just about everybody else they could think of.

It was a while later before they found the crumpled-up fast-food sack tossed in the back seat, full of the paper garbage from the man's disagreeable morning meal. There appeared to be nothing of interest in the sack until they dusted it for prints the next day, in the hopes of finding evidence of a hypothetical passenger/accomplice, and even then only the fingerprint technician bore witness to the paper's secret: the word ANXIOUS briefly fluoresced under his lights, then faded away. He blinked his eyes and re-checked the bag, but there was no sign of the mysterious writing. The technician chalked it up to an optical illusion.

This was not entirely accurate.

THE STREETS OF JERUSALEM were crowded as Brother Henry and six of his fellow believers walked steadily towards the Mount of Olives. "He is coming!" Henry shouted to those with him as well as to those he passed. "His time is near!" It was Friday, December 17, 1999.

None of the seven members of the Church of the Risen Christ had ever been to Israel before; they hadn't even been to Canada. That morning they'd gotten off the plane from Sioux City—via St. Louis, New York City, and London—and fumbled their way through customs without incident. They brought no weapons save their faith.

The Uzis and pipe bombs, on the other hand, were acquired locally from contacts in the Christian millennialist network.

Unlike the border agents in Port Angeles, the Israeli police were not wearing uniforms. They wore ordinary street clothes. Some talked on cell phones. Others snacked on fruit. They entered the busy street in ones and twos, gradually forming an invisible cordon around Brother Henry and his followers.

When the group reached a nearly empty intersection, it took only six seconds for the police to drop them all with palm-sized tasers. Within a

minute they were handcuffed, disarmed, and packed into an armored van, which drove off down the busy streets. A minute later, it was as if they had never even been there.

While the police carried out their operation with precision and skill, they failed to notice the paper sugar packet that fell from Brother Henry's pocket when he dropped to the street, his eyes rolling back in his head and visions of apocalypse fading from his thoughts. It was just an ordinary sugar packet, a remnant from a meal at the airport in NYC. It had the familiar golden arches on the side, along with a word written lightly in pencil: BETRAYED.

It turned out that Dick Lawson, a millennialist from Tucson who moved to Jerusalem a year ago to help funnel weapons and munitions to those of like mind, had a change of heart that morning after the Church had come and gone. He turned himself into the police and divulged the identities of everyone he'd helped—including Brother Henry's crew just that morning.

The Israeli counter-terrorism officer who watched Lawson's confession interview said a silent prayer. The radiant light in Lawson's eyes was unmistakable to one of devout faith: the man had been touched by God.

This was not entirely accurate.

AGAIN AND AGAIN, around the world, it was the same story. Terrorists, would-be and otherwise, with plans for millennial mayhem, were landing behind bars as quickly as they landed at airports. Officials in the White House gave a few guarded leaks, claiming that a very quiet global round-up of suspected terrorists was underway, the result of an unprecedented joint sweep by the major nations. It was all part of the careful preparations for New Year's Eve, the result of months and years of hard work.

This was not even remotely accurate.

The arrests were happenstance. A mis-sent email, a fumbled customs declaration, an angry spouse, a curious neighbor. Men and women on the verge of committing insane acts of violence to usher in the new year were dropping the ball, getting exposed, arrested, held for questioning. Bewildered but grateful law-enforcement personnel locked

the doors and threw away the keys, at least until after the celebrations were over.

In truth, the total number arrested was not that great. A few here, a few there, perhaps fifty people around the world all told. But they were fifty people with designs on New Year's Eve, and their designs had been disrupted by the whims of chance.

No one noticed the fact that every single arrestee had, somewhere in their possessions, a receipt, a food wrapper, or an empty sack from the world's largest fast-food chain. It was, after all, the world's largest fast-food chain. The golden arches were ubiquitous, and so was their debris. It went in the evidence lockers with the spare change, the packs of gum, the house keys, the wedding rings, to be promptly forgotten and ignored.

No one noticed—except for Alex Abel.

THE THREE PEOPLE in the bar would have drawn stares in a lot of places. But this was the French Quarter of New Orleans, and it was Friday night, one week before New Year's Eve. The bald, severe woman, the glowering man in black robes with a hook where his left hand used to be, and the bandanna-wearing burnout were just more freaks in a freak scene. They'd spent the last two hours here at Club Shim Sham, a funky nightclub, trying to hook up with some guy with the unlikely name of Buck Spade. At least, that's what Moonglow had claimed, slurring his words from the bourbon and fingering his bead necklace from Guatemala.

"He's gonna be here, babe, just chill. You're too damn intense."

Kim Naylor sighed and took a sip of her bottled spring water. The pervasive stench of alcohol and cigarettes was making her nauseous, but Moonglow insisted this was where they had to meet his contact. Anyway, the street outside was even worse—it seemed like the entirety of New Orleans was a boozing, smoking, meat-eating party town and Kim, a dedicated vegan, couldn't wait to get the hell out of here.

On the far side of the little upstairs lounge where they waited, Uriel Sterne was chatting up some Gothed-up college girls. Kim wasn't too fond of him, either—his whole dark-sorcerer schtick got

tiresome, as did the fact that he used it to get laid both early and often. She'd have long ago bagged on this whole scene, but there was the small matter of her indentured servitude to Alex Abel and his New Inquisition, the reason why she was forced to work with this crew who called themselves the Weather Channelers. The name, needless to say, had not been her idea.

Eventually a crazed-looking old guy sauntered in and embraced Moonglow enthusiastically. Kim perked up, but it turned out this guy's name was Jeeter, not Buck. He and Moonglow spoke quietly for a couple of minutes, then he split.

"Well, hell!" Moonglow barked. "Buck ain't coming."

"No, really?" Kim said sarcastically. "You mean one of your so-called contacts flaked on us? Again?"

"Now look, darlin', this ain't hardly my fault. Buck ain't coming 'cuz Buck is dead."

Kim got suddenly serious. "Who killed him?"

Moonglow laughed and shook his head. "No, no. He had lung cancer. Died 'bout six months ago."

"I thought you told him we were coming?"

"Well, I passed the word through the usual channels. Nobody said boo."

"Uh-huh. Great." She looked up at their other companion across the room. "Sterne!" she shouted harshly. "We're leaving!" Kim stood up and shoved the water bottle into a pocket of her jacket.

"Now hold on, babe. We can still talk to Buck. Jeeter says he's been hangin' out at the Juice Bar."

"I thought he was dead."

"He is. Let's just go and this'll all make a lot more sense."

Uriel sauntered over grimly and cocked an eyebrow. Kim folded her arms across her chest and glared at Moonglow.

"It better."

BACK ON THE STREET. There were people everywhere, getting drunk and partying. At intersections on Bourbon street, groups of young men threw beads and screamed "*Show us your tits!*" at women on balconies overhead, a practice not confined to Mardi Gras. Moonglow led his companions stumblingly along, slurping bourbon out of a plastic to-go cup. "It's down



here," he said, gesturing vaguely. "Cross from the police station." Kim filled in Uriel as they walked, though he showed little interest in her complaints.

Eventually Moonglow stopped in front of a residence, next to a pay phone and a street sign leaning at about sixty degrees. "Here we are!" he said happily. "The Juice Bar!"

Uriel and Kim looked around blankly. There was no sign of any such place; there weren't even any businesses open in this stretch of the street. Kim shook her head in disgust.

"What is this, Moonglow?" Uriel said tensely. "Another joke?"

"It's no joke, man! We're here. Watch!"

Moonglow stepped between the street sign and the French-styled iron kiosk that held the pay phone, then turned around to face his companions. He grabbed the pole of the sign with his right hand, and then placed his other hand on the knob atop the kiosk. His eyes lit up with excitement and he swayed a little.

"Oh yeah!" he bellowed. "Love that Juice Bar!"

"Fuck this," Kim muttered savagely. "I am so *sick* of his shit."

"Wait a second," Uriel said thoughtfully. "Let me try, Moonglow."

Moonglow released his hands and smiled, staggering back into the street for a moment. "It's all yours, man!"

Uriel stepped forward, facing the street. He caught his hook on the sign pole and gingerly reached towards the kiosk with his other hand. Then he jerked the hand back suddenly.

"What is it?" Kim asked, curious now.

"It's the Juice Bar!" Moonglow shouted.

Uriel brought his hand back atop the kiosk, let it hover there for a moment, and then grabbed the knob. His eyes grew large and he shook a little, then seemed to steady himself.

"Oh . . ." he murmured. "That's strong."

"*What?*" Kim demanded.

Uriel's voice was a little distant. "There's . . . ah . . . some kind of current here . . . electrical current. I think it comes from the iron. When you ground yourself to the sign pole . . . it just blows through you . . ."

"Love that juice!" Moonglow said. "I told

you, it's the Juice Bar!"

"There's something else . . . oh . . ." He dropped his hands and stepped away, breathing a little heavily. "Moonglow, what is this place?"

"It's the ghost-to-ghost hookup, man! The cemeteries of New Orleans are the batteries and these here are the terminals. Make the connection and bam, you got a trunk line beyond the veil!"

Uriel's features hardened. "So this is how we reach your friend, then? You expect me to give the keys to my soul to the dead of this city?"

"You said it yourself, man. As long as you're grounded, they can't getcha."

Kim eyed Uriel warily. "Do you have the dagger?"

"Of course," he spat. Uriel fumbled in his cloak for a moment and produced a worn bronze knife about a foot long. "What is this man's name again?"

"Buck Spade," Moonglow said. "He'll be expecting you."

"Delightful." Uriel glanced around briefly to make sure no one was watching, and then drew the knife quickly along his right forearm. He winced briefly. The blade came away with a thin line of blood on its edge. Kim noticed the numerous white scars there, where Uriel frequently fed his knife.

Finally Uriel stepped back into place and gripped the knife in his teeth. Then he caught his hook on the sign pole and grabbed the knob on the kiosk and shut his eyes tightly. The blade of the knife snagged on the left edge of his lip and a trickle of blood ran down his chin.

A long minute went by. Kim kept her focus on how no one walking by should bother looking too closely at Uriel and, as with so many things in her life, it just sort of worked out that no one did.

Uriel let go—carefully, simultaneously, crisply. Breaking the circuit.

Stepping away from the Juice Bar, he took the knife and wiped it off on his sleeve, then slipped it back into his robes. He shook his head a few times to clear himself and then took a deep breath.

"The Ritual of Light," he said. "Mak Attax found the Ritual of Light."

SITTING TENSELY in his downtown Seattle office, Alex Abel reviewed the report from New Or-

leans. He'd come here from Chicago a month ago after the World Trade Organization fiasco had briefly shut down the city; some of his advisors pegged the semi-riots as being rooted in an energy channel from an unknown source. The capture of a terrorist at the Washington-Canadian border a week ago reinforced his suspicions, though they had still pointed at nothing definite until his generous law-enforcement payola brought him word of the seeming global crackdown on millennial terrorists—and the niggling detail common to all the arrests. A detail that pointed at a source for this odd flurry of activity, and that was now confirmed by his agents.

*Those fools at Mak Attax are up to something,* Abel thought to himself. But what interest did they have in capturing terrorists? Privately, Abel was envious; Mak Attax had exposed and put away almost as many dangerous individuals in two weeks as Abel had in the history of TNI. It was an amazing coup, but seemingly out of Mak Attax's bailiwick. For some time now, Abel's only real concern about Mak Attax was that they might expand their agenda into something pragmatic, instead of endlessly diddling around with their usual brand of naïve foolishness. Perhaps this had at last come to be.

He set the Weather Channelers' report down and paged through the last three months' worth of discussion on the secret Mak Attax email list. There was nothing unusual there, no mention of any counter-terrorist plan or anything that resembled a code for same. Abel silently congratulated the leader of the upstart cabal. *Superconductor must have a second list for real work. He's smarter than I thought.*

Then there was the Ritual of Light. Like so many rituals, it had been just a legend. Supposedly, it created some sort of a bond between people. Some sources suggested the bond allowed for mental communication, while others thought it merged souls or somehow strengthened the user's connection to the statosphere. Descriptions were maddeningly inconsistent, even in original sources from before the fall of Troy. His best researchers could do little more than shrug their shoulders.

Abel rubbed his face for a moment. His best guess was that whatever Mak Attax was planning,

it would happen on New Year's Eve; stopping so many millennial terrorists suggested that they perhaps wanted to usher in a bloodless celebration. But where? And to what end? He needed more inside dope and he wasn't getting it.

*Well,* he thought. *I can at least keep them out of my backyard.* He put in a call to the mayor's office.

OFFICER BOB and Cage tooled through the streets of suburban Chicago in a rental van. It had been three months since the chaos mage Neal Brinker left them bleeding on the side of the road and ran off with a lottery ticket worth twenty-three million dollars, and they had done nothing since but hunt him.

It hadn't done a damn bit of good. Brinker had gone to ground, leaving no trace. They'd shaken down every guy and his dog who knew Brinker, and none of them were any help. The trail was cold, and the pair was tired of the assignment. But Abel refused to let them off the hook.

"Let's eat," Cage said wearily. "I need a break from the trailer parks."

Bob scanned the horizon for the familiar golden arches. "All right. Burger time."

"Aw, not again."

"You read the orders. Three combo meals a day 'til January one."

"Jesus, I'm sick of this crap. These freaking mystic burger flippers are really pissing me off. We don't even know what the hell they're up to."

"Which is why we have to eat burgers again. But hey, tomorrow's New Year's Eve and then we're off the hook."

"Yeah, until his holiness decides he still needs more data. Christ. We can't even use the drive-through!"

Bob hooked a turn and drove another block to the restaurant. He and Cage got out and stretched, then sauntered inside, bored. Five minutes later they had their lukewarm food and oversized soft drinks and found a booth near the front counter. Cage shook his head. "Nothing, man. Fucking waste of time."

His colleague sat in silence, staring off into the distance and munching absently on french fries.

"I been eating this crap since I was a kid but I

swear, after tomorrow, never again. I'd rather go vegan than eat here again. Goddamn apple pies."

Bob, still looking out the window, broke into a smile.

"What? You think it's funny? I haven't had a shit in two days! This stuff jams me up. I'm sick of it!"

Bob turned and looked at Cage, still smiling. "You're off the hook. Listen to that twerp at the counter. Listen to what he's saying to everybody in line."

"What, 'you want fries with that?'"

"Listen."

Cage listened. He heard the beeping of the fryer, the clatter of metal spatulas, the busy movements of the staff, and under it, the droning, disaffected voice of the checkout clerk taking orders, making change, and offering vague thanks. It took several transactions before Cage finally clued in. He looked puzzled.

"Something about . . . I think he's saying 'You have a safe and happy New Year's Eve.' Is that what you mean?"

"Almost. That's almost what he's saying."

"So what is it?"

"He's saying *you'll*. *You'll* have a safe and happy New Year's Eve. Not *you* like, 'I wish you a safe and happy,' he's saying definitely, 'You *will* have a safe and happy.' Motherfucker's geasing them!" Bob started laughing.

Cage reached in his pocket and pulled out a cell phone. "*Pork chops*," he muttered as he dialed. "*Freaking pork chops for dinner tonight*."

ACROSS THE CHICAGOLAND AREA. Throughout Illinois. Over the midwest. Around the nation. Circling the globe. Restaurant after restaurant. Customer after customer. *You will have a safe and happy New Year's Eve*.

THE FIRST FIREWORKS of the new year erupted in Tonga as thousands of people dressed in white stood before the royal palace and read a prayer to their king. Among them was a quiet young man with a goatee and Buddy Holly glasses. He had come a long way to be here. As the crowd started up the prayer, he joined them. But the words he spoke

were different. The prayer unspooled into the ears of the crowd, the words changing in subtle ways under the man's equally subtle direction, and a swelling sense of joy began to gather in the hearts of those present. The prayer was by now completely altered, but the overwhelming energy of the emotion ensured that no one noticed. The feeling grew stronger and stronger, massing over the crowd, until Derek Jackson, the leader of Mak Attax, led the chorus in the final words of the Ritual of Light and the energy took wing into the sky—and across the global television networks covering the dawn of what was popularly known as the new millennium.

It spread like a virus. It got into the wiring of the satellite trucks first, then hijacked the transmissions, then shot into space to infest the orbiting reflectors, then raced back down to dishes around the globe, through control boards, re-broadcasters, optic fibers, hard lines, television sets, and eventually into the hearts and minds of the people of planet Earth.

As the new year made its creeping passage across the surface of the world, joy followed with it. They felt it in Sydney, in Moscow, in Paris, in the Valley of the Kings, and on to New York and Rio and Chicago and Vancouver and beyond.

(It faltered a bit in Seattle, where the mayor had canceled the evening's festivities. But soon it moved on, none the weaker.)

United by global telepresence and by the veil of life and death that hangs around us all, the people of Earth got down and partied. There were no bombs, no explosions, no mass shootings, none of the predicted horrors. There were fireworks and drums and food and drink and kisses and thanks.

And for the stretch of a day the Earth and the statosphere verged together. Harmony settled over the landscape in small, loving ways that few people paid much attention to consciously, concerned as they were with the minutiae of their lives. But when that harmony eventually lifted, it left little pieces of itself behind, crystals in the earth to be discovered and treasured, new blessings for a new age.

On the first of January, Derek Jackson was back at work.

Flipping burgers.



**C H A P T E R   O N E**  
**M A G I C K**  
**T H E O R Y**



"DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW."  
—ALEISTER CROWLEY

"EXTREMISM IN THE SERVICE OF ART IS NO VICE."  
—THE RAHYAB



**Postmodern:** of, relating to, or being any of several movements (as in art, architecture, or literature) that are reactions against the philosophy and practices of modern movements and are typically marked by revival of traditional elements and techniques.

**Magick:** the use of means (as charms or spells) believed to have supernatural power over natural forces.

—*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

## These two definitions neatly sum up

the essence of magick in *Unknown Armies*. The current revival of magick is a reaction to the cold, stodgy, rational, science-bound nature of the modern world. The contemporary world of the occult has been turned on its ass. The staid, inflexible old schools are being displaced by vigorous new adepts who are reintroducing wild, intuitive, and impulsive methods that have been lost or ignored for ages.

Postmodern magick is a reaction to the stagnant status quo in both the world at large and the occult sub-culture that creeps about the world's pale underbelly. Unprincipled in the classic, hermetic sense, it borrows freely from all eras, movements, and traditions. To respond to the criticisms of occult pundits and traditionalists, of course there's always been sex magick, and pain magick, and magick from intoxication. However, these old arts aren't practiced in the modern milieu—they've lost their link with contemporary society and have thus lost their power. With the rise of postmodern magick, young turks have rediscovered the old themes and constructed entirely new frameworks to support their ideas.

This is the story of magick: who practices it, why and how they do what they do, and how it all came to be.

## Why Magick?

Let's get something straight from the get-go—adepts just ain't normal folk.

Right, they can work real magick, and that ain't normal. Pretty obvious statement. But it goes much deeper than that. Magick might be viewed in much the same manner that one views the archetypes that make up the Invisible Clergy, which is to say that certain popular ideas—deeply in-

grained themes among humanity—manifest themselves in the community at large as rare abilities. However, where an archetype manifests in a particular individual as an avatar, a school of magick manifests as a subset of laws governing reality, which can be taught to any individual so inclined to believe and learn. While archetypes are manifestations of personal identity, schools of magick are manifestations of personal perspective—"what it is" versus "what it means."

Magick itself isn't really the thing that keeps them from being normal, though. It's the root of the magick, the obsession, that has run the barbed-wire fence between them and us. It helps to understand whom we're really talking about here. Most people just call them "adepts," but we're really discussing two different types of people—adepts and prodigies.

Adepts are just what the name implies: people who have made a concerted effort to become adept at what they do. They make up the bulk of magick-slingers. Their obsession has laid bare some kind of essential truth about the world that compels them to learn everything they can about it, to ingest it, to take it into themselves and make it a part of them. That isn't to say that innate talent doesn't play a significant role with these individuals, but the name does emphasize their conscious decision to pursue and develop magick as a way of life. Obeying that obsession carries with it a cost, though: a sacrifice of ever hoping to live a normal kind of existence.

Prodigies, on the other hand, don't have the luxury of making that kind of decision. Unlike your average adept, the power and drive isn't necessarily something they want—it's something that wells up from inside them and needs to find expression. For them, magick is as natural and pervasive as blinking their eyes or licking their lips.

They couldn't stop it for long if they tried. Magick manifests in prodigies as a natural expression of their peculiar way of viewing the world, and like the obsession of most adepts, it takes its toll on the day-to-day life of its practitioner.

So why would someone take the plunge to become an adept? The reasons are as many and as varied as there are adepts. For most adepts, it's the lure of the power and how it can transform the landscape of the world. For prodigies, it's the drive from within, the need to express the power that defines who they truly are. In most cases, though, the prospective mage is a lot like the assholes you knew from school who were always running for student-body office and who eventually went on to hold public office. On some level, they honestly view themselves as doing the right thing, that they're somehow responding to a higher calling. Fundamentally, though, they just get turned on by the idea of seeing themselves in a special position, wielding a power and authority above that of mere mortal ken. It's a pretty piss-poor reason to take on a job that has such an impact on everyone else around them, but assholes are always lining up for their chance. All in all, when it comes to the reasons for becoming an adept one may invoke the immortal words of Shakespeare: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em." Thus is it ever with magick.

## The Adept's Life

Forget everything you've seen on *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Jeannie*. Regrettably, the practice of magick isn't the ticket to an easy and amusing life. Your average adept is faced with the same daily responsibilities as the next guy—the same bills to pay, the same rotten job, the same chores as the rest of us. So, it's about as likely that you'll run across an adept at the post office or the grocery store as it is that you'll find him presiding over his cabal of powerful mystics. The magickal vocation, however, is a demanding one, and spares little time for a 9-to-5 job, rush-hour traffic, and yard-

work on weekends. Faced with the economic realities of daily survival, you're likely to find adepts pushed to one or the other of two unsavory fringes—poverty or crime. Why such desperate extremes? Because the obsession of the adept can't accommodate the time-consuming distractions necessitated by a "normal life," and few people or institutions are willing to sponsor research grants for the study and practice of applied occult metaphysics.

Poverty is one of the most common traps for the adept. After all, these are people obsessed with magick, not with their jobs. If their job weren't eating up all of the time they should be devoting to the pursuit of magick, then their preoccupation with magick would dominate their attention to the point where their job performance would suffer. So, what is the career path of the working adept like? It's typified by a string of undemanding, low-paying jobs, interspersed with sporadic bouts of unemployment and infrequent attempts at holding down a more responsible and better-paying job that inevitably grinds to a messy halt as the devotion to magick gets in the way. The fortunate ones can manage the balancing act and get by with a fair modicum of comfort. These aren't your more proficient and notable mages, though. For the less fortunate, it's a hand-to-mouth existence as they scramble just to make it from one day to the next, but they're afforded more time to actually practice what they preach. Oh, and what about a personal life? If an adept ever had one to begin with, he can generally count on generous doses of resentment from loved ones, animosity from rivals, and the eventual estrangement from just about anyone for whom he ever cared. This is the sort of demand that the practice of magick places on the adept, and the sort of sacrifice that the adept must make to support his obsession. It's a modest life for the dedicated adept.

Modesty doesn't wash with everyone who practices the art, though. Since part of the lure of magick is the chance for power to wield over the unwitting masses, there's often a certain lapse in moral restraint on the part of the adept. Put

plainly, we're talking petty crime here. Given the power that many adepts possess, the decision to line one's pockets by manipulating those around them isn't a difficult one. Confidence scams, fixing bets, and outright robbery all become a little too easy when one holds power over another person's thoughts or memories, or can temporarily control probability. Through the expenditure of few minor charges, maybe a significant charge here or there, the adept's fiscal situation can be stabilized comfortably. This, in turn, affords him the opportunity and time to practice his art and more than makes up for the expenditure of relatively little magickal resources. It's a simple matter of economics.

Of course, not every adept is the greatest long-term planner, and there's no guarantee that a life of crime is going to keep him in scratch. Remember, that obsession of his may get in the way of "doing crime" as well as holding down a respectable job. The number of adepts who are both petty criminals and poverty-stricken is distressingly high.

Some schools of magick lend themselves well to the pursuit of the almighty dollar—notably, Plutomancy. By its very definition, Plutomancy is predicated on profit *as* magick. Blessed as they may be to combine their vocation with financial reward, Plutomancers are still barred from leading lives resembling anything "normal." They may have a steady income of both cash resources and charges at their disposal, but their taboo prevents them from actually using the money in any but the most modest fashion. Ultimately, constrained by the inherent practical and fiscal limitations of their vocation, they face the same temptation that many adepts from other schools face—whether or not to ally themselves with some sort of benefactor, a sponsor.

## Sponsors

Make no mistake, finding a sponsor in the occult underground is no easy task—they're few and far between. To call them "benefactors" is to use the term euphemistically, and is also stretching the eu-



ANDREW BAKER



phemism to its breaking point. However, it's a time-honored tradition for an ambitious adept to lend their services to like-minded causes in exchange for the management of their more mundane and trivial affairs. Think either "court magician" or "gun for hire."

One of the budding new employment opportunities to emerge in the latter days of the post-modern occult era is the New Inquisition. While not strictly criminal in nature, it certainly employs criminal means toward its shadowy ends. Most adepts who find themselves on the payroll of Alex Abel didn't get the gig by seeking him out and handing him an application. No, Abel almost always comes to the adept, knowing that the struggling mage needs the work, offering the perfect solution to his problems, taking care of any complicated business troubling the adept, and setting him on the easy path. It's a relief to have all the loose ends taken care of, with all the time in the world to pursue the truly important matters and work the art—until the New Inquisition needs the adept for a job.

Working on retainer for a hardcase like Abel isn't all shits and giggles. You have your stipend to keep you afloat, all those nagging problems in your life are tidied for you, and you're free and clear to devote your life to that all-important obsession, right? Well, not so fast. Bear in mind that Alex Abel knows where you live—if he needs you to take on an assignment, he isn't going to wait for proper business hours to get in touch. Oh, and there's no turning down a job, either. If you have a problem with the morals or ethics of the assignment, it's not as if you reserve the right to question the work and back out of your agreement. After all, you're in debt deep to the man. Either you make peace with the deal laid out before you, or Abel will do it for you. It's strictly business in the New Inquisition.

If the mercenary life of the New Inquisition isn't to your liking, there's always the non-profit route. A number of highly motivated cabals exist to further their particular goals, and the support of their adepts is simply in their best interests. The Sleepers are perhaps the most prominent

among such cabals. The money isn't great, but you're given the chance to do what you love for a good cause. In the case of the Sleepers, the cause is the preservation of magick itself. Faced with the potential backlash of an ignorant and frightened community at large, the so-called "sleeping tiger," the Sleepers are dedicated to keeping a low profile on the unnatural in general and magick in specific. Other alternatives could include the likes of the Pornomancers, or even the True Order of Saint-Germain, or perhaps those secretive government agencies everyone's always whispering about but no one ever seems to encounter.

The type of support an allied adept may expect from an organization like the Sleepers depends mostly upon how deeply involved she is with the cause. At its highest levels, association with the cabal may mean aid and sustenance provided directly from the administrative coffers. At the lowest rungs, the cabal may provide only the most rudimentary assistance—occult contacts and fixing outstanding favors owed to others. Generally speaking, most adepts working for a cabal may expect assistance that falls somewhere in between—periodic help with finances, contacts, and resolution of any loose ends that may bring the adept to harm. Essentially, the more the cabal has invested in the adept, the readier it will be to invest more to insure her continued welfare. It's an atmosphere of meritocracy, where the adept who puts forth the most dedicated effort may expect to reap the most benefit. Ironically, this same dedicated adept must also understand the implications of her involvement, how indebted she is to her superiors, and how inextricably bound and beholden she is to act on their behalf. Ultimately, the only significant difference between working for a cabal like the Sleepers and the New Inquisition is one of personal ideology versus mercenary motive. Basically, when you're in tight with the cause you're not afforded the luxury of picking and choosing your assignments—you do what the cabal needs you to do, and you work out how you feel about it on your own time. It's helpful to *believe* in the cause you work for.

On the more mundane end of the spectrum, the mob is always looking for a few good men. However, while the world of organized crime would seem like a ready-made opportunity for an ambitious adept to make a living, it's actually a remarkably uncomfortable fit for the mystically inclined. Certainly, there have been prominent adepts who have established themselves among the ranks of the major gangs and crime families, but they generally suffer a significant degree of discrimination. As virtually all organized crime is structured along ethnic lines, that same ethnic heritage invariably carries with it traditions and superstitions that promote a distaste, distrust, and fear of the supernatural. In addition, the mob's orders are unlikely to contain much understanding of the adept's powers; "Make Vinnie's car invisible" is a depressingly probable directive for the mob to issue, and they're unlikely to be sympathetic when you patiently explain that you just can't do that. On a more practical level, someone trying to keep his finger on all of his underlings is going to find himself challenged by someone whose very nature is to bend the laws of reality in his favor.

One may contend that the organization of the mob doesn't differ significantly from that of the New Inquisition. Both are, arguably, organized hierarchies of criminal activity. The important difference, though, is knowledge and understanding. Alex Abel has gone to great lengths to understand the nature of the occult and the unnatural—his understanding may be imperfect, but he's of an open mind to embrace and control magick. For your average mob boss, however, a magick-wielding adept is a wild card, a loose cannon who is obviously of some use to the business but too much of an unknown quantity to be trusted with any real responsibility. Since the boss doesn't understand the nature of the adept's magick, the innate paranoia of running a crime syndicate sets in. He's likely to view these unfathomable powers as a threat to his own security. In a business where it behooves you to keep tabs on who might be on the make to displace you at the top of the heap, some hotshot adept's mojo is go-

ing to throw up great big red flags. Furthermore, as the occult isn't by nature a moneymaking institution, it's just not the cut of the pie crime bosses are out to take. Power is always good to seize, but, ultimately, money is the real driving force behind organized crime—magick isn't the end goal as it is for the occult underground.

## The Daily Grind

So how, exactly, does an adept "practice" his art? For most, it's a daily application of their chosen way of life, of building charges and expending them in bids for personal profit and power. Gone are the days of the wise old mage toiling in his laboratory, exploring the mystic secrets of the universe. Instead, today's adept is more akin to a high stakes gambler—charges are built up on the assumption that they'll *have* to be used, not stockpiled or spent in study and experimentation. The beauty of the art is not in its theory, but in its execution. For the individual adept, this execution is colored by the nature of his magick. It may prove instructive to observe the daily practices of an average adept to help get a feel for how the ebb and flow of magick affects their lives.

The first order of daily business for the competent adept is to build up a charge. When he gets up in the morning, the adept has to assess how much power he has on hand and what sort of threats the day may bring his way. Declaring one's self as a mage is something like strapping a six-shooter to your hip and calling yourself a gunslinger—it's an invitation to every nut and freak out there who's sniffed a hint of the occult to test his mettle against you. So, you have to make sure you're loaded for whatever the day may bring. Maybe you have enough residual charges racked up to carry you through, but it never hurts to have a few more in your pocket. Depending on your mystic predilections, the early part of the day is spent on historical tours of the city, a few well-placed sales on the stock market, a quick shag or two, hitting the bottle early, jaywalking through rush hour traffic, or slamming your fingers in the car door a few times—and that's just the schools

of magick in the rulebook. The exact method of charge harvesting is going to vary according to the adept's personal tastes and habits. In its own little way, though, regardless of who the mage is, the process of picking up a mystic charge takes on a sort of work-a-day ritual, though without all of the formalized trappings of the classic, hermetic methods.

The next order of business for any self-respecting adept is to jockey for position with the other hard fellows in the occult underground. You have to understand that the occult underground, by simple virtue of its hidden, secretive nature, breeds an intense competition and paranoia. When an adept gets wind of someone—or something—sniffing around his neighborhood or staging some kind of mystical operation, he has to assume the worst and arrange a counter-threat, even if the perceived threat is actually just some poor fellow trying to cover his own butt against yet *another* threat. The appearance of an unnatural being may prove useful to an adept, or it may attract the unwanted attention of others. Rumors of ancient rituals surface from time to time, fuel for the fires of ambition for any adept. The arrival of another adept in town, especially from the same school, bodes competition for the mystical resources available or for the metaphorical size of the adept's fish in his particular small pond. Bear in mind that any hint of the unnatural or the occult is a potential resource to be cornered and secured. Even if it's something that can't be kept in your pocket, any secrets that can be garnered from it may prove valuable, either in use or in trade.

The final and possibly most important order of business is that of establishing some sort of mystical defense. Any mystical activity, if it isn't the adept's own, has to be viewed as a threat. If not today and not directed specifically at him, the offending mojo may prove a danger tomorrow or the next day when someone else has gained enough mystical momentum to want the adept out of the picture. It's difficult to classify or describe exactly what constitutes as threat to an adept's well-being, because the very nature of the

occult underground defies description, and it's this sort of vagueness that helps feed the paranoia. Basically, a long-lived adept keeps a mental checklist of potential threats at the forefront of his mind:

- Is it after me?
- Is it unnatural?
- Is it another adept?
- Is it someone working for another adept?
- Is it someone who has it in for magick and those who work it?

For the cautious and conscientious adept, any answer in the positive is enough to warrant a defensive response. Ultimately, his job boils down to keeping his hide in one piece long enough to see the sun rise tomorrow and start the whole process over again.

## Why Now?

The single most pressing question on the minds of adepts today is, "Why now?" Why is the magical snowball growing so fast and gaining so much momentum in this occult *fin de siècle*? To place this question in perspective, it's important to bear the following three axioms in mind:

- The potential for magick has always existed
- Magick is, in essence, obsession made manifest
- Pursuit of obsession has always been easiest in secret, or in an environment that is permissive and supportive, or in an environment that at least disregards individualistic bents

From these axioms, we can derive the theorem that magick has always been, though its prevalence has waxed and waned over the ages, and that it generally conforms to the prevailing attitudes of the day.

The earliest schools of magick known emerged as cults that venerated and emulated the deeds of prominent archetypes. In essence, the early schools were synonymous with early religion. There were,

## Mancy, Magy and Urgy . . . Revisited

Right about now you might be wondering about that whole -mancy/-magy/-urgy convention again. Have all the known schools of magick from time immemorial been saddled with the suffix “-mancy”? In a word, no. In general, the insistence upon the use of this suffix to describe any magickal process is the result of a relatively recent revival of archaic tradition. Frankly, it’s also the province of the less-educated adepts of today’s occult underground.

After falling into disuse with the Modernist adepts of the Age of Reason, the use of “-mancy” as a general indicator of magickal processes was revived during the great Victorian occult fluorescence. As was the case with many of the arcane “rediscoveries” of the period, correct usage and context was thrown out the window—if not fabricated from whole cloth—in favor of an impressive façade. The first recorded use of this convention was applied to the newfound school of Plutomancy. Eager to paste a veneer of credibility onto the occult world, virtually every form of magick known or rumored, modern or ancient, has been given some sort of “classical” appellation, almost always including a “-mancy” at the end. Never-you-mind that they may carelessly (or ignorantly) combine Greek with Latin, or English, or Hindi, or whatever—at least it sounds respectable.

of course, exceptions to the trend of adoration of the archetypes, such as sacrificial magick—known today by the appellation of Thanatomancy—where the very act of sacrifice gave rise to power. The school of Personamancy also traces its roots to these ancient days, when the donning of ritual masks lent the individual the power of the people or beings he chose to imitate.

During the Hellenistic period of Greece and Egypt, the first of what are now commonly considered the classic old schools usurped the seat of magickal preeminence from the ancient mystery cults. The school was Alchemy, and the change was essentially a shift of the occult away from an overwhelmingly religious venue to an increasingly codified and rational treatment. This period also gave rise to the mysterious Cryptomancy, an outgrowth of the old Greek mystery cults that had gradually de-emphasized the veneration and imitation of the archetypes in favor of the power that secrecy itself held.

The centuries that followed were the heyday of such famed and notorious schools as the Kabbalism of ancient Palestine, Western Necromancy from the Dark Ages of Europe, and Goetia from the Renaissance. Each school was, in turn, representative of a new movement in magick that inevitably found itself on the receiving end of this

same transition to a new magickal model, getting pushed to the fringe and hung out to dry. Together with Alchemy, however, we now consider them the classic “old schools” of magick—widely known, but little-practiced.

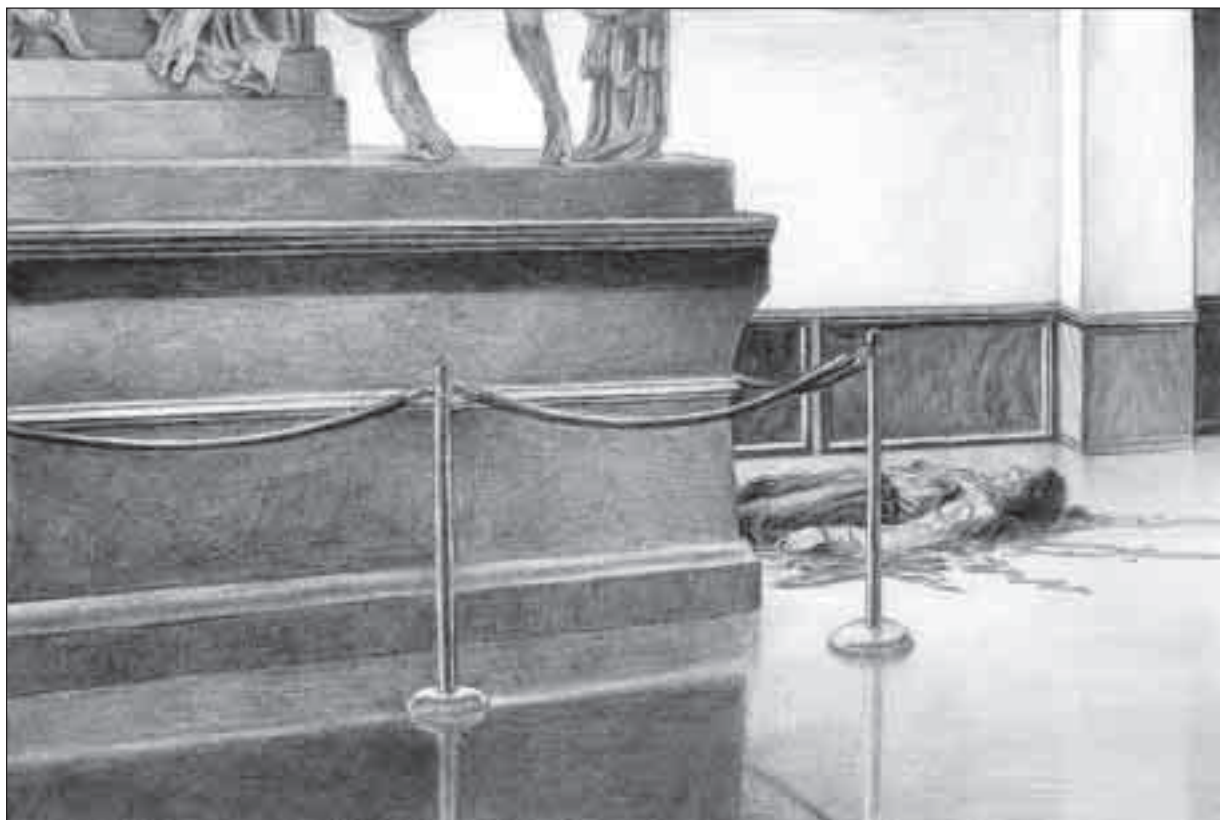
Getting back to the real issue at hand, the very term “postmodern” indicates that there was a “modern” movement in magick as well. Ironically, the “modernist” schools of magick, while viewing those that came before them as “old-school,” are themselves now considered old-school by their postmodern successors. (And in truth, they weren’t “modernist” in the accepted definition of the term in any event; but like the whole -mancy business, it’s what the occult underground is grumblingly stuck with.) Being an issue of semantics anyway, the shift from old-school to new-wave is ongoing and constant. However, the first baby steps into the Modernist schools of magick, and away from the true “old schools,” occurred with the advent of the Age of Reason. The newfound emphasis on precision and causality led to the eventual formation of new schools founded on similar principles. Some contend that Alchemy was just such an effort, but, in truth, all of that stuff about spiritual perfection and transformation made it just as soft and gooey as any other old school.

Mechanomancy is perhaps the most relevant example of the early Modernist schools, though not known by this name until relatively recently. It is old enough that contemporary adepts commonly deride it as old-school, yet it features all of the emphasis on intellectual precision prevalent in its modernist day. Mechanomancy—known in its heyday as *The Way of Cogs*—is almost a poster child for the Age of Reason. Not only can man define his universe, he can model it in his own creations. Such sentiments still ring true today, which accounts for the fact that it is still practiced. Another example of a school birthed during the Enlightenment is Bibliomancy, book-based magick, a school that flourished with the widespread availability of the printed word. As the breadth and span of human endeavor could be catalogued in the volumes of one's library, so, too, could one call upon that catalogue to magickal effect.

An example of a school that did not survive to the present, one that was much more a product of its environment and time, was the Path of

Indelible Liberty, magick based on autonomy and freedom of the human soul. It flourished briefly during the revolutionary heyday of the 18th Century and in the freebooting Caribbean among the pirates, only to fade as the mood of revolution gave way to the chores of governing and administering the newly freed people. Similarly, most schools of magick that were relevant to the mood and ethos of the time have either dwindled into obscurity, to be practiced by romantics and anachronists, or have died altogether.

The earliest postmodern schools are considered quite stodgy by today's fast and loose occult standards. They were, however, quite the radical outgrowth of old school hermetic and Masonic traditions held in such high esteem at the end of the 19th Century. While social clubs like the Golden Dawn were attempting to revive the old hermetic arts, a few bold visionaries struck upon the notion of blending the ritualistic concepts within a modern context, while junking the actual methods. After all, by the early part of this century the Golden Dawn had been plugging away at



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the mystic arts for decades but the best they had managed was to inspire a rather fantastic amount of infighting among its members and former members. Perhaps, these visionaries thought, the problem was that the Golden Dawn had been fixated on the past, when it was contemporary concerns and more pragmatic methodologies that were the keys to power.

The first to emerge was the school of Plutomancy, born during the latter days of the great American robber barons and their industrial empires. Abandoning the calculated, ritualistic methods of the old school, and casting aside the rational, mechanistic models of the Modernist schools, Plutomancy placed great truck with the intuitive association between money and power. Not only did money grant the base power to purchase goods and services, but the very ebb and flow of the fiscal resources themselves—aggregated in the miracle of the tickertaped stock market—created a whole web of mystic energy and meaning that tied everyone who carried a wallet or purse together. Creating a new set of rites and spells to tap into the actual meaning of money, the first Plutomancer opened the door to a new age of the occult.

Cliomancy developed shortly thereafter, inspired by the events of World War I—history in the making, fixed in the minds of more people worldwide than ever before. To monopolize his discovery, the school's founder, Dugan Forsythe, masked his new art with a shroud of horseshit worthy of his contemporary, Madame Blavatsky. Claiming an Atlantean pedigree, Forsythe managed to appeal to the spiritualist sentiments of wealthy and gullible benefactors while simultaneously discrediting the school in the eyes of would-be adepts who might compete for the same resources. To this day, the cloud of the Atlantean ruse darkens the reputation of Cliomancy. However, the school was still founded on essentially the same principles as Plutomancy, that contemporary meaning was the real root of occult power. To utilize the power that lay within that meaning, the adept must create a repertoire of contemporary spells that place the power within a modern context.

A transition period occurred around the middle of this century, when postmodern schools became less tied to specific concepts and more intuitively linked to ways of life. Entropomancy is representative of the period, when adepts found meaning in the constant flux of order and chaos, of life and death, that surrounded World War II. Like the discharged army airmen who, following the war, took to the highways in motorcycle gangs to recapture the rush of excitement and danger they experienced during battles in the air, Entropomancers needed to find some kind of meaning in everyday life. The meaning that they sought derived from putting their fortune on the line, whether financial or mortal well-being. Wherever risk could be found, so could one find an Entropomancer, literally getting a charge out of danger. This same period similarly gave rise to Urbanomancy and Kleptomancy, which also key into the way of life of the adept. As with so many magicks, one could arguably tie these schools to much more ancient practices, as there have long been both cities and thieves, but the Urbanomancer is the virtual "lord of the city" by very modern ways and means, as is the Kleptomancer a very modern thief in both practice and execution.

The truly postmodern schools didn't really begin to crop up until the social order of the day was evolving so quickly that an air of permissiveness freed the practitioners of magick from all modern conventions. In a time when adherence to any specific tradition was disdained, or simply disregarded, they began to look nostalgically to the past for inspiration. Where earlier hermetic revivals had failed to conjure any significant results due to their slavish devotion to recreating and re-living the old glories, the postmodern schools held no such pretense. The old themes served more as inspiration than anything else, and were cut and spliced with modern sensibilities, styles, and fashions. The resulting syncretism has led to some of the more profound schools of contemporary magick, which some may cynically dismiss as petty, revivalist cults. Amoromancy, which calls upon the power of romantic love; Dipsomancy, which draws upon mil-

## Becoming an Adept

Once a campaign is underway, it is possible for a non-adept PC to take up the way of magick. While this is discussed mechanically in the rulebook, it's worth taking a more meaningful look at some types of people liable to discover the mystic path.

### The Blank Slate

Not everyone has an obsession. Sad, but true. However, some of these people have potential. Once exposed to the reality of magick, they realize that they've finally found something to be obsessed about. Pretty soon, they're like junkies—they can't get enough of the stuff.

The Blank Slate begins the game with no obsession and no obsession skill. Additionally, he gains no compensation for being so humble and self-effacing. If you're playing a Blank Slate character, you're going on nothing but the promise from your GM that sooner or later you're going to get clued-in on "the Big Secret."

The Big Secret will probably become evident by means of a profound magickal experience—a rank-4 stress check or higher in the Unnatural. Your character then gains the Obsession proto-skill of Magick at a nominal 01%. You don't have to peg a specific school of magick yet, unless you're already aware of one with which your character is obsessed. Your new Obsession skill is still pretty fragile at this point, so it will not give you the benefit of flip-flop rolls and you are not yet able to cast magick. You'll need to narrow down a specific school of magick, find a mentor, and spend *at least* a year as an apprentice. Finally, you'll need to develop at least one Failed point and one Hardened point in The Unnatural, just like any other adept, before you can actually cast any magick. During this apprenticeship, your obsession skill still hasn't learned to shave and you may not yet flip-flop rolls.

### The Prodigy

In many ways, the Prodigy is a lot like the Blank Slate, except that he already has a clue about how the world really works. The Prodigy starts the game already obsessed with some oddball facet of the

*continued on next page*

lennia of seeking power through intoxication; Epideromancy, which blends ritual blood-letting and mutilation with modern trends in body manipulation and masochism; Iconomancy, which Hollywoodizes the ancient Chinese tradition of deifying cultural figureheads; Oneiromancy, which puts a new twist on the age-old practice of ecstasy through exhaustion; and Pornomancy, which draws upon the time-honored tradition of generating power by objectifying sex. Each of these schools has had many counterparts throughout human history, but each is vibrant, powerful, and, above all, new because of its relevance in a modern context.

The environment of freedom and permissiveness that has pervaded the occult underground

has also given rise to new schools that are very much the product of today's ethos: Annihilomancy, which sets its sights on the truth by destroying all the extraneous crap that fills the adept's life; Infomancy, which taps into the pulse of modern information culture; and Irascimancy, which harnesses the anger and tension of modern social confrontation. Each new day sees the birth of another potential school of magick—these are only a handful of such schools, made noteworthy by virtue of the fact that they have been learned by adepts other than the founder.

In recent years, the era of postmodern magick has seen a proliferation of adepts, in occult phenomena, in competition, and in confrontation within the occult underground. This escala-

world that has a profound parallel with magickal processes, but he's still essentially clueless about the reality of magick. What it takes to push these people over the edge, to turn them from dupes into dukes, is a revelation that their obsession really is tantamount to magick itself. Again, a rank-4 stress check or higher in the Unnatural is sufficient to lift the veil from their eyes. At this point they realize that their mundane obsession was a mere pallid shadow of the Truth. With something more compelling to drive them, they re-direct their obsession onto a "corrected" path, and begin to pursue an actual magickal vocation.

Once aware that they're onto the trail of real magick, they must go through essentially the same process as the Blank Slate—find a mentor or forge a new path; lose their previous obsession skill in favor of an obsession with a school of magick; gain 1 Failed and 1 Hardened in the Unnatural; study for a year or more to learn the new school (with no flip-flops). Finally, he'll emerge as a new adept.

### The Loon

Ah, yes . . . the power of madness. As the name may suggest, the Loon is someone who has been pushed over the edge due to exposure to the Unnatural. A Loon may start the game with any Obsession, even something not remotely related to magick. The real crux of the matter, however, is that your character must gain a whopping five (yes, 5) failed stress checks in the Unnatural, and he must have been exposed to at least one stress check of rank-4 or higher during his lifetime. To put it bluntly, you go barking mad because your whole worldview has been turned on its ass.

While most people just go feeble and fragile when confronted with madness, your character is the rare individual who finds truth at the root of his breakdown and becomes compulsively obsessed with his new revelation. It won't help get you released from the psychiatric hospital any sooner, but it will open any of a number of other new doors for you. If this is the path you choose, your old Obsession is left behind like last week's trash, and you cleave to your newfound Obsession—probably a school of magick.

From this point forward, it's the usual rigmarole—lose your old Obsession, gain a Hardened notch in the Unnatural, find a mentor, spend the time to learn the new skill, *etc.* Maybe you will have put your life back together again, maybe you'll still be bat-shit crazy, but now you've got an edge.

tion is due in great part to the permissiveness of the day that supports the belief necessary to work actual magick. It's also due in part to the general *laissez faire* attitude that contemporary society has developed toward the occult. The single key event that set the occult underground on fire, however, wasn't the establishment of a new school of magick, or a powerful new organization of adepts, or a general change in social consciousness. The match that lit the fuse was the revelation manifest in a simple videotape—the ascension of the Naked Goddess, caught live and in color. When word of this event got loose, it was as if every self-doubting, would-be-adept suddenly received a pat on the back and an approving nod from God Himself, or in this case, the Goddess Herself. "You're not crazy—what

you're doing is *real*." That's an awfully important revelation to someone who's trying to work out the higher, spiritual relevance of wanting to pound carpet tacks under his fingernails.

What, then, is the future of magick? Will it be the evolution of new schools based on changes in social morés? Will these new schools one day displace contemporary schools as being "old-school"? Will more schools of magick crop up as cults surrounding other ascensions to the ranks of the Invisible Clergy? The history of magick has never been certain—it has always been in a state of flux. Now that the powers on high have tipped their hand, though, the stakes have been raised monumentally, and more people than ever are trying to get into the game.



## Magick and Insanity

Let's face it, adepts aren't the most stable bunch of people in the world. Very few of them could pass a standard battery of psychological tests, and those that could are mostly just good liars. They live in a strange, underground world where the borders between reality and fantasy are easily blurred, and they develop all kinds of problems as a consequence. This chapter looks at why and how adepts take the dive off the ship of sanity into the ocean of madness.

### Magick out of Madness

Many adepts are already mentally disturbed when they begin their magickal careers. Indeed, it is often their very madness that allows them to become adepts in the first place. The essence of magick is perceiving the world differently. Normal people don't believe that being drunk makes objects float around you, or that cities are alive, or that you can make people's faces melt by cutting

your arm open. Adepts do, and in believing so they impose their will upon reality, changing the world around them to match their own delusions. Often they believe that they are discovering truths hidden to the rest of dull mankind, but the reality is that these truths are self-created.

A key link between magick and insanity is the concept of symbolic logic. Many disturbed people make conceptual links based on metaphor and simile rather than conventional reasoning. Magick works by similar reasoning, taking things that are metaphorically true and making them literally so. For instance, Mechanomancy functions around the old idea of "putting your soul into your creation" and Pornomancy on the use of sex as a metonym for the whole of desire. Consequently, the logic of madness often blurs into that of magick.

Some magick, then, simply begins as the personal disorders of occultists, accidentally projected into the statosphere. The adept-to-be attempts to validate his madness by giving it ritualistic trappings and imposing a thin veneer of occult prac-



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tice and, hey presto, he has a school of magick. Many individuals who become adepts this way in fact reinvent existing schools, sometimes with their own personal quirks. It has been noted by theorists that the spontaneous discovery of a particular type of magick, such as Entropomancy, seems to become considerably easier once one person has made the initial discovery, even if this individual is completely unknown to the other practitioners. Perhaps this is merely an illusion created by the fact that magickal schools tend to arise out of particular social conditions, or perhaps the first breakthrough opens some kind of cosmic door.

## Madness out of Magick

Practising magick, of whatever type, is extremely hard upon an adept's sanity. Not only will they regularly encounter unnatural events and beings, but the time and effort needed to build charges and avoid breaking taboo is hard on any attempts to maintain a healthy social life. In their obsession, many adepts slowly lose their ties with ordinary society. After all, it's difficult to talk to your friends about the demon you summoned last Thursday without them starting to give you odd looks and asking if you've ever thought about counseling.

As a result, many adepts slowly become more and more isolated from mundane society. Those that do attempt to keep up mundane contacts and friends often find themselves developing a kind of split personality, expressing more negative aspects of themselves in their magickal life. Others simply cut off contact with the mundane world, immersing themselves completely in the underground. They begin to regard mundanes as inferiors, looking down upon their inability to perceive things "properly," and their social skills suffer as a consequence.

In game terms, an adept who attempts to maintain a regular, mundane life should probably be subject to periodic Self-3 checks until sufficiently hardened. Those who isolate themselves, however, need to make repeated Isolation-3

checks, and possibly, when faced with normal society, Helplessness checks.

It should be noted that any adept who tries to talk seriously to a therapist about magick will, in almost all cases, be treated as severely delusional. While this may prove an effective legal defence, it also stands a very good chance of getting the adept committed, an extremely unpleasant experience. Mental asylums, particularly underfunded or badly run ones, are often breeding grounds for magick when an adept is brought in. Ritual practices often spread through the entire community of patients, due to the strong-willed nature of the adept imposing itself upon the impressionable group consciousness. Effectively cast by a whole group of people, these spells can have extremely odd and unpleasant effects, often infecting the staff with the shared delusions of the patients.

## Obsession

Clearly, the disorder that most characterizes adepts is obsession-compulsion. All adepts are obsessed, in some way, with magick and the subject material of their school. This is more than just a strong interest; magick, for every adept, is their heart and soul. There's no such thing as a casual magician. This obsession manifests itself in many ways. Most adepts collect items related to their school with the devotion of a *Star Trek* fan; Plutomancers accumulate great collections of old coins, economics texts, and *Monopoly* bills found on the street, clockworkers buy and disassemble machines and sort the bits, Cliomancers have huge stacks of maps, glossy guidebooks, and fragments of historically significant buildings. The organization of these collections varies from adept to adept; some are great piles of junk in the adept's garage, others are neatly filed and cross-referenced. Many adepts also go through the daily newspapers and clip out any article tangentially related to their obsession, or which looks as though it might have an occult connection.

Most everything an adept sees should be characterized in magickal terms appropriate to their

## Schizophrenia & Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD)

As noted in the rulebook, these are complicated subjects, and nobody really knows that much for certain about either. It can be said, though, that schizophrenic individuals appear to have an easier time grasping magickal thinking than non-schizophrenics. Some occultists have speculated that schizophrenia may in fact be a remnant of an early ability to perceive the statosphere, and that the voices and images classically seen by schizophrenics may in fact be a dimly perceived echo of the machinations of the Invisible Clergy.

Sufferers from MPD (which, it should be re-emphasized, is not a form of schizophrenia) occasionally have a separate personality which is an adept and manifests in particularly threatening situations. Often this personality arose during childhood as a result of magickal abuse by a parent. The other personalities can still accumulate charges and accidentally break taboo, as the universe still regards the individual as one soul. Some diagnosed cases of MPD are, in fact, the result of demonic possession, occasionally by a deceased parent or sibling who wishes to “protect” their relative from danger, and who doesn’t feel that the real personality is fit to do so.

school. For instance, a tough bouncer might be described as “probably hard enough to be a real risk” to an Entropomancer, but “doesn’t look as though he’s worth much” to a Plutomancer. The GM might even want to deliberately slip certain words related to the adept’s obsession into the ordinary speech of GMCs, such as “place” and “harvest” for a Cliomancer, as their characters would naturally be looking out, consciously or unconsciously, for such terms.

Most adepts are also compulsives, filling their lives with hundreds of tiny little rituals and superstitions vaguely related to their school. Sometimes these originate in a genuine danger, such as the habit of checking bills for signatures. More often they are just irrational compulsions stemming from the adept’s obsession. Plutomancers, for instance, often insist on arranging their change in a particular fashion when they get home, creating little patterns of pennies, dimes, and nickels on their dressers. Many Entropomancers can’t get up in the morning until they’ve rolled a 6 on the die they keep by their beds. Quite a few Urbanomancers won’t walk down a street with three left turns if they can possibly help it.

If these compulsions can’t be performed, the adept often becomes extremely nervous, sometimes even suffering a full-blown panic at-

tack. Many of them believe that these compulsions act in some way to help their magick and to defend them from enemy adepts. This is partially true; the more fixated an adept is, the easier it is for him to impose his will on the universe. On the other hand, compulsions also draw attention to the adept and allow somebody studying him to make a reasonable guess at his school. Compulsions also draw off the excess energy created by carrying charges for a long period of time. If a player doesn’t fully characterize his character’s compulsions, feel free to start sticking him with minor paranormal manifestations, as his forceful obsession leaks out of his psyche into the statosphere rather than being safely channeled through ritual.

## Individual Schools

As a guide for both GMs and players, the behavioral quirks and obsessive pathologies of every school of magick presented in the rulebook and in this book is discussed in the following sections. Players should look for opportunities to roleplay accordingly, or else to devise their own quirks and pathologies suitable for their particular characters. GMs should keep these notes in mind for GMC adepts, and also as a hedge against players who treat their adepts like normal people who

just happen to mutilate themselves, play in traffic, drink constantly, *etc.* There is nothing *normal* about an adept.

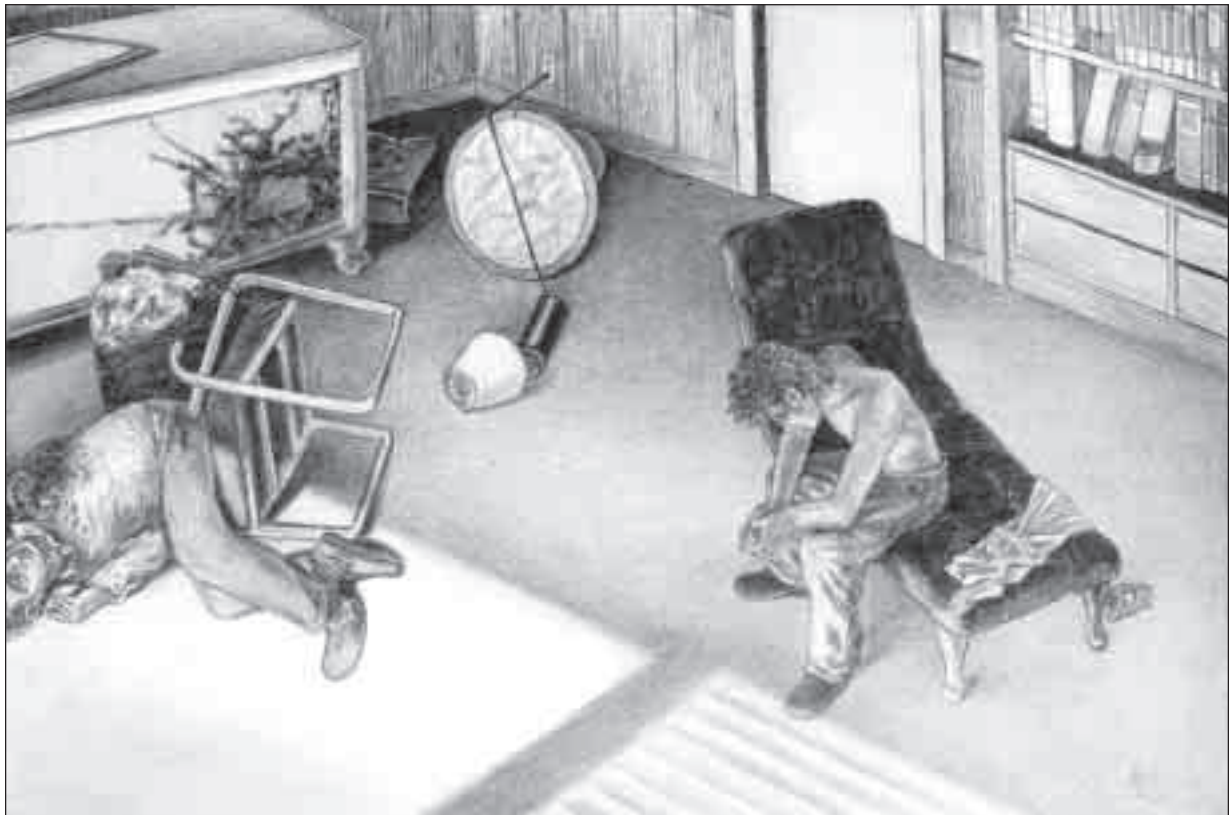
### Amoromancy

When conversation among the magically savvy turns to those adepts known for being vicious, bloody, self-destructive, and just all-round plain nasty, heartbreakers generally take the prize. Regularly messing with the feelings of others requires the adept to be monumentally self-obsessed in order to avoid the consequent emotional fallout. Those drawn to practicing this school, therefore, generally have a very high degree of superficial empathy, in that they can understand and manipulate the emotions of others, but a very low degree of real empathy. They are essentially solipsistic; the only person they can conceive of as actually “real” is themselves. Consequently, they have few problems inflicting pain, emotional or physical, upon others.

In extreme cases, Amoromancers lose all feelings of empathy, even the most basic biological

urges. A hardened heartbreaker could blandly torture a pregnant woman to death. Conversely, however, their own desires become all-consuming. As heartbreakers generally have a high degree of personal charm and few problems in obtaining what they want, their egotism is often overwhelming. Some literally believe that the universe revolves around them, that all the world is a creation of their mind, and that their needs are paramount. When they can't get what they want, therefore, they snap, throwing tantrums of unbelievable proportions.

Those heartbreakers who are not actually sociopathic have different problems. Thankfully for the human race, most people don't just want to be loved, they want to love in return. As personalized love is fatal to Amoromancy (and, indeed, difficult for any adept—hell, for anybody, but worse for adepts), they generally sublimate their desire to love into abstract ideas, rather than individuals. Some heartbreakers adapt a cause passionately, or work with children or the disabled, directing their affection towards a wide group rather than narrow indi-



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viduals. A few are intensely religious, in a strongly erotic and mystical fashion—think of the Song of Songs, or the poems of St. John of the Cross.

Spontaneous Amoromancers are quite common, and generally the result of a failed and passionate love affair. Falling in love is a fairly overwhelming and somewhat traumatic experience, and having it suddenly shattered even worse. The shock of a suddenly broken love can leave somebody convinced that love itself is a sham, that their love was the only true love in the world and now it's gone, and other such self-indulgent if understandable reactions. Most of us get over it; Amoromancers brood about it, twist a hard little core of rejection and misery around their romantic failure, and set out to prove all love a sham. This happens with unexpected, sharp rejection, rather than long-term degeneration of a relationship—coming home to find your wife gone, your boyfriend suddenly announcing he's gay, that kind of thing. Unsurprisingly, quite a few Amoromancers are accidentally awakened into magick by other Amoromancers using them to get charges; as worldviews go, heartbreak is a virus.

## Annihilomancy

Give it up. Burn it down. Forget your possessions, your friends, your family. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Become pure. Become free.

You wish, buddy. Purity's a dangerous road to walk, and for every annihilist who achieves true enlightenment, there's a hundred who end up trapped in their own ego. They're true believers, fanatics, madmen, and very little stops them.

Spontaneous awakenings into this school happen every week. People grow weary of their lives all the time; look at the number of voluntary disappearances in the U.S. alone. Sometimes, as they take the plane to Colombia, or throw the match on their gasoline-soaked apartment, or finally tell their husband he's a prick and they hate the children, they tap into something greater.

Spontaneous annihilists tend to have the same attitude towards the lives of others as a fundamentalist has towards an abortion clinic. Having "freed" themselves, they have a burning, religious desire to "free" others, and are not particularly discriminating in their choice of targets, tending to generalize from their own previous situation. A woman who escaped from an oppressive husband and children might see all marriages as shams, for instance, or a former corporate shill believe that all jobs numb the soul. Destroying the "shackles" of others, they are near-blind to the devastation they cause.

Adepts who voluntarily seek out and learn this school are a rather sad bunch. Often, they are vulnerable, insecure people, mildly interested in the occult, who find their current lives unsatisfactory, but don't have the courage to give it up themselves. In many ways, it's a coward's school—it's always easier to destroy than to build, after all. The simple, pure nature of Annihilomancy appeals to them, combined with the fact that many annihilists are dangerously charismatic, like a snake-handling preacher on speed. Annihilist philosophy is pretty close to fascist ideology, and many annihilists end up sublimating their ego to their teachers, becoming little clones of their mentor. Ironic, really.

Annihilomancy is all about self-reliance, but many adepts take this too far, and believe it's about being *entirely* alone—which is a fairly terrible thing. Sternos generally justify their lack of relationships and possessions by rationalizing that they need nothing but themselves. Bring on those Isolation and Self checks. As the adept progresses along the road of destruction, their adoration of their own, unsullied ego becomes greater, and they start to develop a vicious messiah complex. At a low level, this means they will regularly refuse offers of help, have a greatly exaggerated idea of their own skill, and are generally obnoxious. As it gets worse, they can begin to view themselves as actual gods.

Sometimes, the reverse occurs. The annihilist realizes that the last thing that must be cast off is the burden of their own ego. Shedding their ego,

they literally lose their minds, becoming nothing more than blank, empty shells. In a less-harmful version of this, the annihilist merely regards their own personal comfort as of no importance, and tries to act on abstract, broad principles rather than the petty demands of their own personality.

## Bibliomancy

Bookworms are often mad, but mainly in a harmless, self-absorbed, slippers-and-dressing-gown kind of way—shuffling about the place muttering to themselves, fixated on getting their next book. The sort of person who you would call *eccentric* rather than *insane*. There are, however, very nasty exceptions.

Spontaneous Bibliomancers are sometimes individuals who spent a long time manipulating language, and suddenly experienced a terrible disillusionment with it—an adman whose campaign goes too far, a literary critic who suddenly realizes he's never written the novel he meant to. They experience a brief breakdown, where all text appears as nonsense, and then semi-stabilize in their focus upon books. These Bibliomancers tend to produce wild, disturbing events, and the type of texts they collect are disturbingly perverse.

Some people, too, find relating to books easier than relating to people. When somebody has no friends other than fictional ones, and can find comfort only with a musty old tome, then the distinctions between the fictional and the real sometimes blur. These Bibliomancers tend to speak about their collections in disturbing sexualized terms, and to have extreme difficulties talking to others face-to-face—the internet, which reduces conversation to easily manageable text, has been a blessing for them.

Trained Bibliomancers, far more common, tend to have learnt their magick from an academic mentor, and to live quiet, retiring lives. Their fixation upon their libraries is often extreme, exceeding even the standard degree of adept obsession. Obviously, it is very common for a bookworm to become so obsessed with a particular text that he will literally kill to acquire it. Often,

too, they come to see their libraries as an extension of their minds, a physical representation of their memory. Lost love over here, Grecian knowledge over here, and so on. Intruding upon their libraries, therefore, triggers extreme, even homicidal, defensive reactions. In really far-gone individuals, the destruction of part of their library can actually result in them losing the corresponding memories.

## Cliomancy

Cliomancers are generally seen as a relatively together, stable group. Their charge-building, after all, is relatively harmless, and most of them are instructed by an elder Cliomancer rather than bursting spontaneously into magick. There are, however, exceptions.

Disturbed individuals drawn to Cliomancy have often learned to associate their own traumatic experiences with the location in which they occurred, thus providing them with a sense of the relationship between place and action which allows the principles of Cliomancy to be easily grasped. Consequently, they are often mortally afraid of, or sickly fascinated with, a particular area or type of building. They often see locations as existing simultaneously at all points in time, and will talk about events associated on their chosen charge-gathering sites in the present tense. Occasionally they become fixated with the suffering of the past, planning grand magickal schemes which will somehow “rescue” the victims of history, a la Stapleton and *First and Last Men*. Some attempt to repeat the trauma inflicted upon themselves or historical figures on new victims in the same location, in order to strengthen the power of the site.

Knowing as they do how easy it is to influence a mind through magick, Cliomancers often develop a conviction that their thoughts are not their own, instead attributing them to a computer, major TV figure, or, for those more in the know, Angela Forsythe. Some accept this supposed control willingly, others struggle desperately against it, and will take totally irrational actions just to

prove their own free will to themselves. Cliomancers also occasionally develop a disproportional sense of territoriality, defending their sites and home with an animalistic devotion. In extreme cases, degenerate cliomancers have been known to live constantly upon important sites or mark their territory with their own blood or urine. The Atlantean myth invented by Dugan Forsythe has also led to a number of mental disorders among cobweb farmers, some of whom have elaborated the Atlantean myth considerably and sublimate their own egos to the supposed will of hallucinated Atlanteans. Others become paranoid, believing themselves pursued for stealing Atlantean secrets, and occasionally developing a fear of the sea, or, in extreme cases, water.

## Cryptomancy

What is truth? All Cretans are liars, says Epimenides the Cretan. Was that a lie? What does Cretan mean anyway? Does a word mean anything? I am a homosexual; what does that mean? Who am I? What is real? Are all cryptomancers fucked in the head, or what?

Don't think about the word too hard; it might go away.

Cryptomancy was always tough on the mind. Secrets are harsh on their keepers, and many a fine mind has snapped under the strain. With the postmodernist assault on the fundamental idea of truth, things have got even rougher.

Cryptomancers generally respond in one of two ways to their problems. The first is to lose all sense of ambiguity whatsoever. Things are either true or false, right or wrong. These adepts have no time for moral shadings; they hold their beliefs absolutely. If one of these cryptomancers is an atheist, they never even say "Jesus Christ!" unless they're deliberately lying. They have a hard time coping with advertising. Sometimes they snap and tear posters down or shatter TV screens, screaming into the crowd "It's lies! It's all lies! And none of you care!" This tends to be the attitude of the German Cryptomancers, reinforcing the British belief that the Germans have no sense of humor.

The English school, on the other hand, has more eagerly embraced madness. Some of them have come to see truth as something applicable only in particular circumstances—except for them. Everything in the universe is ambiguous and ever-shifting, apart from themselves; they are the only real, true thing in the world. Their egos are often huge, and they literally believe that just by thinking something, they can make it so.

Apart from these considerable problems, Cryptomancers also suffer from the burden of secrets. Keeping secrets places a lot of strain on people, and the impulse to tell someone can become overwhelming. Perfectly innocent individuals have had Cryptomancers sit down next to them on the subway, lean over, and whisper in their ear what the CIA was doing in Tibet in 1969. Most of the time this has no result, other than somebody thinking the Cryptomancer is crazy. Occasionally it leads to disaster, either for the adept or their unfortunate confessor.

## Dipsomancy

Believe it or not, an awful lot of Dipsomancers are alcoholics! Amazing, really. More specifically, they tend to be the real hard-core, long-term alcoholics, those who suffer from the *delirium tremens* (more popularly known as the DTs), vicious hallucinations, tremors, and sweating usually suffered in the late stages of alcohol dependence or during withdrawal, and which has around a ten percent death rate. During this period, the borders between reality and the adept's own fevered imagination are lowered, and it is fairly easy to take the first trembling step into magick. Adepts who came into Dipsomancy this way tend to favor spectacular, blatant effects, kicking back several charges at once then running magick off them, rather than trying for a more steady, controlled intake. These poor souls have often forgotten why they started drinking in the first place, and their entire personality revolves around alcohol.

Those adepts who are not already alcoholic when they are taught Dipsomancy tend to devel-

op a classic psychological dependency on booze very fast. Trying to drink in a systematic, safe fashion purely for mojo is nearly impossible; the temptation to take just another sip is always there. GMs with boozehound players who seem to be treating drinking as just charging up their magickal batteries should start placing increasing temptations to drink in their way; emphasize alcohol, bars, and glasses in your descriptions of locations, and perhaps even require Mind rolls to avoid taking another drink.

Since their effects tend to be so blatant, long-term boozehounds often have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality. They will sometimes believe themselves to be casting magick when they are merely fantasizing, mistake obvious holograms and special effects for magickal phenomena, and run screaming from men in monster masks. Really bad cases may become convinced that everything around them is secretly magickal—computers are run by little demons, electric lights are souls trapped in glass, *etc.*

Some dipsomancers consider themselves connoisseurs, seeking out only the finest vessels and liquids for their magickal consumption. These types often become obsessed with the myth of the Holy Grail, believing that taking communion from it would give them almost infinite power. They obsessively seek out Arthurian sites, legends of the Grail, rumors of miraculous healing and beautiful maidens, and so on. Many of them have changed their name to “Perceval” and are in the habit of asking innocuous old men with war wounds “What ails thee, father?” (See the Grail Knights, p. xx.)

## Entropomancy

Whoohoo! Bodybags are widely seen as the resident crazies of the underground, with little regard for their, or anyone else’s, safety in their perpetual quest for danger. This is half-true. They’re crazy alright, but they’re crazy like a fox.

Spontaneous Entropomancers tend to be people with a very strong sense of fate. They don’t really believe in chance; everything, as far as they

are concerned, has some cause or meaning. They are often classic paranoids, attributing every random incident to the manipulations of the CIA, the Illuminati, witches, or, for those more in the know, the Invisible Clergy. They have little rituals of their own which, they believe, ward off these negative forces. Many of them are from persecuted groups—or at least see themselves as being persecuted—and find in chaos magick a way of asserting their own individuality and self-control. They are fascinated by patterns, especially “natural” ones such as fractals, and love mathematical chaos theory.

Chaos mages who actively seek out teaching tend to be insecure individuals, mainly men, who feel the need to assert themselves through extreme risk. Many of them took up dangerous activities—parachuting, playing mumble-peg, Russian roulette—in order to draw attention to their otherwise fairly unremarkable selves, or because they were already perceived as “odd” and wanted to be seen as being cool in their weirdness. These types don’t last long; a desire for attention is not a good thing in the underground.

Among long-term Entropomancers, the most common attitude is an unholy delight in risk, with little or no regard for personal safety. This is not a classic death wish, but rather an absorption of the adept’s ego into a glorified, almost religious, randomness. Generally these adepts didn’t really like themselves in the first place, were unhappy with the course of their lives, and distrusted their own decision-making faculties. Randomness becomes a kind of authority figure to them, taking responsibility out of their hands. They decide everything, no matter how small, randomly, and consider *The Dice Man* their bible.

## Epideromancy

Most other adepts consider bodybags and fleshworkers hot competitors for being the greatest lunatics in the occult underground. Certainly, fleshworkers are by far the most likely magicians to be mentally disturbed; regularly injuring yourself is simply not a sane or healthy thing to do. Many



Epideromancers begin as regular self-injurers. Reasons for self-injuring (or “cutting”), the most common form of which involves cutting at the arms and face, are varied and produce different approaches towards magick.

Those fleshworkers whose original motivation was an urge to punish themselves for perceived wrongdoing or the desire to symbolically release bad feelings by “opening up” their skin tend, for instance, to produce powerful blasts which express their own feelings of self-loathing upon their unfortunate victims. Those who self-injured for the desire simply to feel something, or through a masochistic pleasure in “the rush” are often regular users of *The Flesh is My Servant*, in order to enjoy the temporary boost of sensation. They will often acquire and then burn numerous charges in a short period of time, just for the feeling it gives them.

The most common motivation for the prospective Epideromancer, however, is that their body is often the only thing they have left to control. In choosing to injure themselves, at least

it’s them who’s making the decisions, rather than their doctor/father/priest/boss; it’s the only way left for them to maintain their identity. This is a powerful motivation for many kinds of body modification/mutilation, from tattooing through to anorexia, and obviously this desire for self-control blends easily into the logic of conventional Epideromancy. This type of fleshworker tends to have failed marks in Self and Helplessness, and to be subject to strong periods of depression.

Those adepts who learn Epideromancy from another develop a whole different set of problems. In order to justify their self-mutilation, they often develop a belief in the worthlessness of the flesh. They see their bodies as tools, a temporary shell they happen to inhabit, deadening them to both physical and emotional pain. As the memory of their bodies slips away, they lose their basic human feelings of empathy, and become capable of inflicting terrible atrocities on others.

If a player seems to be treating his character’s body as just another game statistic rather than a



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fundamental part of his being, the GM should feel free to begin inflicting Self checks upon him. Those who become hardened suffer the results described above, and will begin to slowly harden in the other Madness Meters until sociopathic. Failure will most likely result in the adept becoming increasingly protective of his body as a resource, to the extent where he develops a critical fear of injury that he has not inflicted himself, and will be unwilling in the extreme to take any risky action.

### Iconomancy

In the old days, some people used to dedicate themselves completely to one saint, striving to imitate them in all possible ways, collecting icons and relics associated with them, and constantly invoking their name. Now the lonely and unfulfilled, those looking to get in touch with something higher than themselves, do the same with media celebrities. Ninety-nine percent of these poor unfortunates remain mundanes, sadly tending to their little obsessive shrines; a very few break through into magick. These tend to be the most disturbed, such as those who breed up fantasies that their beloved Princess is alive and talks to them, or that the actor they're stalking really, really loves them, and shows it by secret messages in the blinking patterns of traffic lights. Absorbed in their total adoration, they sometimes suddenly find themselves assuming the powers of their chosen deity.

Of course, these individuals are generally restricted to only gathering minor charges and to spells relating to a single celebrity. Mostly they don't realize they're practicing magick at all, taking their sudden attractiveness and talents as a logical consequence of the favor of their icon. Some eventually do broaden into fully-fledged Iconomancers, generally by discovering some terrible, terrible fact about their icon. Massively disillusioned, they either build up even more elaborate fantasies to convince themselves their icon is still "pure," or finally realize that their powers have nothing to do with their icon and everything to do with themselves.

Those stalkers who are actually trained in Iconomancy tend to have a much more blasé attitude towards their icons. They are forced to simultaneously worship them and undermine them, maintaining a mixture of a servile and detached attitude. Over time, their attitudes towards others begin to bend strangely. They develop elaborate fantasies about people they know, one day seeing them as nearly godlike, another day believing them guilty of hidden fearful perversions. Another common problem is a gradual sense of identification with a particular icon—adopting their dress style, speaking like them, even having plastic surgery for a closer look—until they end up believing themselves to truly be Marilyn or Elvis.

### Irascimancy

Anger's very useful, psychologically. It's good to be able to blow a fuse sometimes, to let it all out in one long rant, or scream, or pillow-ripping frenzy. Keeping it bottled up so you can use it, that's not good. Over time, Irascimancers accumulate an awful lot of anger. Not being able to express it properly means that, instead, it spills over in little pieces. Most furies are constantly tense, irritable, and grumpy—or completely, weirdly passive, calmly accepting whatever's thrown at them. Both types tend to snap eventually, taking everybody out with them in a sudden outpouring of wrath. Since doing so costs them their magick, they tend to explode using mundane techniques: guns, bombs, fists.

Spontaneous Irascimancers tend to be those who have been badly hurt by life, but are unable to express their anger in conventional ways. Maybe they still love their ex so badly they can't shout at them, or their boss could crush them if they said a word against him. Anyway, their anger slowly rises inside them, getting greater and greater, until they think "Why are they getting away with this? What's going on? Shouldn't something bad happen to them after they hurt me so much?" A responsive universe promptly obliges.

Over time, the burden of guilt at the consequences of their magick is such that these furies begin to channel their repressed anger against

themselves. Many of them punish themselves for their wrongdoing, beating their hands against walls, refusing to sleep, or even, in some cases, self-flagellating. Others suffer quiet despair, often committing suicide after a spell causes particular destruction. Self-loathing Irascimancers also occasionally drift into Epideromancy or Entropomancy, resulting in complete and utter insanity.

## **Kleptomancy**

Have you ever wanted something really badly? So badly that you'd do anything for it? So badly you'd kill for it? So badly you'd go mad for it? That's how spontaneous Kleptomancers start. They want love, or the Hope Diamond, or their own house. Then they realize one day that they're not good enough to get it the honest way, so they're going to have to take it—but not all at once, because they're not up to it, but instead bit by bit, lots of little thefts before the big one. Ironically, they often come to lose this obsession as they get more and more caught up in theft for its own sake.

Kleptomania and the consequent adrenaline buzz are obviously the main hazard for long-term adepts, as described in the main text, but there's other problems. Kleptomancers come to look on everything as a temporary possession: emotions, reason, bodily traits, life. They find it hard to understand people placing an ultimate value on anything, and have difficulty coping with concepts like vanity, religious belief, and family heirlooms. The worst cases sometimes believe that you can take anything, and it'll only hurt the victim for a little while—hell, he can always get a new one, and he's probably insured. A surprising amount of Kleptomancers are rapists, and some are casual murderers, normally with a strong belief in reincarnation. He'll get a new life soon, won't he? Sure, people might miss him, but they'll soon get a new husband/father/son. No harm done.

## **Mechanomancy**

Almost nobody takes up clockworking for power and glory nowadays, and spontaneous develop-

ment is nearly unknown. Clockworking originally developed from the metaphorical association of time with mechanical devices due to the linguistic coincidence of "clockwork," and the rationalistic, ordered view of the universe that this entailed. Now that modern technology has moved beyond this paradigm, and automatic devices are no longer figures of wonder but a common part of our lives, modern incarnations of this insanity tend to take a different form. However, it is not unknown for mental patients to have a bizarre fascination with time, and when one of them starts tinkering with the old toys in the asylum, who knows what might happen?

Still, almost all modern clockworkers were instructed by a mentor at a young age, often a family member. This gives them a whole set of problems. Firstly, after studying their mentor's technique intensely for so long, they tend to unconsciously pick up something of their mentor's mannerisms and ideology. Of course, said mentors often went through the same process with their master, so a clockworker may well have been the unconscious inheritor of quirks going back two hundred years. Clockworkers also tend to inherit a defensive, secretive attitude about their work, due to the memory of past persecutions. This can develop into full-blown paranoia, the adept becoming convinced that everyone is out to steal his secrets. Many Mechanomancers live isolated, solitary lives as a result.

Asperger's Syndrome, a mild form of autism characterized by difficulty in social interactions, a high I.Q., and an obsession with certain narrow fields is quite common among clockworkers, perhaps passed down through the family lines common in the school. These adepts have difficulty coping with speech inflection, often misreading other's intentions, and tend to react inappropriately in social situations, such as hugging every person they meet. Some clockworkers are more severely autistic. Strangely detached from the world, they find the self-created reality of their automata somehow more satisfying and realistic.

Practicing Mechanomancy is a fertile breeding ground for insanity. After all, what defines us more

clearly than our memories? The first memories to be sacrificed are normally those of childhood, which are often seen by the adept as just useless baggage. However, childhood is also a time which forms our adult character, and as the adept sacrifices these memories, they begin to lose the underlying elements of their personality. They find themselves acting in a certain way for what seems no reason, a highly disturbing experience. They distrust themselves, never certain what forgotten past experience might be haunting their actions. Some clockworkers choose instead to sacrifice memories of traumatic experiences, thinking that, in doing so, they will bring themselves peace. Sadly, this also leaves them hopelessly underprepared to face life; without being toughened by earlier experiences, they begin to find any frustration or pain overwhelming. This is another motivation for the reclusiveness of many clockworkers.

Clockworkers also often become fixated on time. They ration their time ruthlessly, and are obsessed with filling every moment of the day with activity. Their houses are filled with timetables,

calendars, filofaxes—and lots and lots of clocks. Those clockworkers who spend a great deal of time with their automata find that the difference between “alive” and “dead” begins to blur. Either they will talk to machines, no matter how simple, as though they were alive, or they will begin to treat people as machines, and be surprised when they do not respond in the way the adept expects. Their inhibitions about killing drop as they think that, well, the person can always be rebuilt.

As clockworkers sacrifice more and more memories, their self slowly disintegrates until all that is really left is a collection of mannerisms with no underlying motivation. In the end, they begin to regard even themselves as only a machine—they can feel the clockworks inside their head, slowly ticking away, and know that they could break down at any moment.

### Personamancy

Spontaneous Personamancers are normally people who have been forced by their environment to de-



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velop two or more very different personas, or who have learnt to use appearance to manipulate others. Many were children who had to create a separate personality for school, coming from a social background radically different from their contemporaries—such as a miner’s son on a scholarship to Yale, or a minister’s daughter on a deeply deprived estate. Often they are fantasists, creating fabulous backgrounds for themselves and living off the result. Many are consummate social climbers and charming manipulators, who assume a different role before everybody they talk to; Iago and Steerpike are idols to them. Obviously, many come from the worlds of espionage, diplomacy, or the theater. Eventually they come to believe that their acting can influence more than just other’s opinions—that it can actually change who they are.

These thespians tend to get caught up in their roles. Unable to distinguish between their faked and real personalities, they slowly become merely a mirror of the perceived desires of those around them. They’ll be whoever you want them to be, whatever pleases you. Particularly badly gone Personamancers are occasionally kept as slaves by depraved adepts. Alternatively, these adepts sometimes develop a Hollywood version of Multiple Personality Disorder, unconsciously dividing their minds into slots for each of their roles. Occasionally, too, an adept will manifest one of his own fantasies rather than the role he was trying to assume.

Those who actively sought out a teacher for the school tend to be long-term occultists with a deep interest in archetypes. Lacking the strong will and experience with shifting personalities of spontaneous Personamancers, their original persona rapidly disappears. They can stick in a role for hours; if they temporarily gain a doctor’s skills, they’ll pretend to be a doctor for the entire day, or until someone reminds them of who they really are. Bad cases lose real motivation of their own, and can be pushed around very easily by others. Some of them assume a particularly strong persona, such as that of an Avatar, and are completely dominated by it. This makes them pathetically simple targets for demonic possession.

## Plutomancy

To most occultists, Plutomancers appear to be the most well-balanced of all the adepts. This is because modern society is already fixated on money. It dominates every aspect of life, whether we like it or not, and it’s possible in many circles to justify anything, no matter how morally dubious, by recourse to the bottom line. In a world like this, people obsessed with money are admired, not locked up.

Plutomancers are generally not the stereotypical ’80s corporate shark, however, but a more subtle and disturbed breed. To the yuppie, money is a means to an end, a way of acquiring more status, more flashy toys, prettier women, a bigger car. To the Plutomancer, money is an end in itself. Most Plutomancers are from either very poor or very rich backgrounds. Both can recognize the power that money gives, and are can make the critical breakthrough that the value of money depends on having it, rather than spending it.

Over time, many Plutomancers begin to believe that they can have anything and anyone. They hate the notion of free will; it becomes almost inconceivable to them that, given their money, their will can be denied. They are unable to sustain relationships that are not purely commercial, and find it hard to conceive of others doing so. Particularly bad cases begin to perform Canute-like acts defying nature, convinced that the force of their cash is sufficient to bend the very elements to their will.

Some Plutomancers also develop a strange conviction that monetary worth equals moral worth, and believe it is their duty to obey those with more money than them. Sometimes they look for these commands in hidden messages in billionaires’ TV appearances, autobiographies, or stock ratings; sometimes they seek more direct authority. Bill Gates, George Soros, and Donald Trump have all had the unpleasant experience of being confronted by unshaven men with fistfuls of bills clutched in their hands, demanding to be given their next command.

## Pornomancy

Certain segments of the occult underground like portraying all Pornomancers as beautiful nymphomaniacs who delight in engaging in vigorous sex with anyone they meet. Like the Victorian belief that prostitutes took up their trade out of a love of sex, this is more or less a total myth. Pornomancers' attitudes towards sex tend to be, in fact, similar to that of prostitutes: it's a tool, not a pleasure. Pornomancers are not obsessed with sex, they are obsessed with desire—more specifically, with desire manifested in the form of the Goddess.

Spontaneous Pornomancers are, at the moment, entirely unknown, with the exception of Daphne Lee. With the increasing popularity of the Goddess's films, it's entirely possible that someone outside of the cult might spontaneously make the breakthrough, but for now the only way to learn Pornomancy is through the Sect of the Naked Goddess. You don't just learn magick, you also join a religion.

Many Pornomancers, like most prostitutes, have problems with sex. Often they were abused as children, or have had, at some point, to use sex as a means to an end. Sex has become, for them, a largely joyless activity. Those Pornomancers who don't already have sexual problems soon develop them, largely because of the somewhat degrading nature of many of the Pornomancy rituals. Reenacting porn scenes is not, in any way, a pleasant experience. Add to that a taboo that forbids any other sexual relationship and you can see why most Pornomancers develop a cold attitude towards sex, except when it's lit up by the power of the Goddess.

Worship of the Goddess provides an acceptable substitute to sex; the ecstasy of magick is as good as any orgasm. Like any religion, it provides many of its worshippers with an empowering and vital experience. For some, however, their identity gradually becomes subsumed within that of the Goddess. They begin to imitate her in all possible ways: dyeing their hair, changing their outfit and mannerisms, getting plastic

surgery, and so forth. Just as many of the mentally ill become convinced they're Jesus or God, a few Pornomancers begin to believe that they are, in fact, the Goddess.

The rare male Pornomancers have their own set of problems. Firstly, contrary to teenage fantasy, they have little more pleasure than the female adepts in the recreation of porn scenes, which generally finish with mechanical masturbation onto the female partner's breasts or face, and certainly have little tenderness or affection. They also find it much harder to experience the ecstasy that female adepts get when channeling the Goddess, resulting in them having an even more unemotional attitude than the women do. They also suffer from the fact that, while they have to act a superior role during the sex scenes, they are often treated as inferiors by some more extreme members of the Sect due to their gender. Consequently, they frequently develop a submissive attitude towards women which rapidly changes to an often threateningly aggressive one when they receive any hint of sexual interest from an outsider.

## Urbanomancy

Urbanomancers are almost entirely spontaneous; it's very hard to learn the school from a master unless you have natural inclinations towards it anyway. Masters push, rather than train. To be a rat, you've got to have a very personal relationship with the city. It has to be everything to you, lover, friend, enemy. Urbanomancers have very little time for other people. Crowds matter to them, not individuals. Urbanomancers were almost always loners before becoming adepts, the kinds of folk who'd walk the streets or ride the tube for hours, simply staring at people's faces or the cracks in sidewalks. People who knew that the city wanted them to serve it.

Apart from their social isolation, Urbanomancers are among the most stable adepts in many ways. Their city, really, gives them everything they want. If you take an adept away from his city, of course, he can break down completely.

Normally he can hold out for a few days, but he gets edgier and edgier, and starts attempting to rearrange things around him to mimic his city—emptying trash over sidewalks, or spraypainting graffiti, or planting trees in a particular fashion. Eventually he'll simply snap, collapsing into a cataclysmic heap, the whole purpose of his life gone.

Urbanomancers develop so close a relationship with their city they begin to mimic the stereotypes associated with it. New York urbanomancers are noted for being ironic, chaotic, and energetic. San Franciscans sometimes undergo a shift of sexual orientation. Occasionally, an adept will become so closely linked with the city that their minds become directly tapped into it, filled with the knowledge of a thousand thousand past lives. A Turkish Urbanomancer from Istanbul might suddenly begin speaking in Greek, or a Roman Urbanomancer, in a confusion of imagery, find himself obsessed with the intrigues of the U.S. Senate.

## Unique Schools

Sure, an awful lot of schools come with big kicks, powerful magicks, sanity-bending charge-gathering techniques, and a bevy of wannabes queuing up to learn them. Some adepts practice ancient techniques, passed down from master to apprentice throughout the generations, or cutting-edge new sorceries that draw upon the fierce paradoxes of modern life. But not all magick is like that. Much of it is minor, somewhat pathetic, and restricted to single individuals. Many of them don't even know they're doing magick, either because it simply doesn't fit into their self-image or because they're too crazy to notice.

There's a woman called Florence Blacker, a retiree who lives in a lovely home in Florida. She loves little china statuettes, the type advertised in the back of Sunday magazines. Loves them to bits—quite literally, because Florence has a very, very strong grip, and too many of her beloved statuettes end up in pieces on the floor. She cries every time it happens. What Florence Blacker doesn't know is that her statuettes move around

at night when she dreams about them, arranging themselves into the positions she wants, living, breathing, coupling. She also doesn't know that magazines with ads for new statuettes spontaneously find their way to her mailbox, or that she owns the miniaturized, transmuted body of Roger Bacon, or that the unfortunate burglar who broke into her house one night found himself pinned under a thousand tiny hands and fed into the garbage compactor. Florence loves her statuettes, and they love her back.

Florence is a typical example of what more canny adepts call a **mageekian**—somebody so obsessed with a particular, fairly minor aspect of life that they spontaneously generate magick around themselves. Obviously, there's a great many obsessed people out there; what sets mageekians apart is that they have that tell-tale element of paradox. It doesn't have to be much: a fur-collector who's allergic to animal skins, a historian of Florence who's never been there, a devotee of *Star Trek* who hates all the actors. Any of those might have the crucial spark.

It helps if, somehow, the obsessive comes in contact with an artifact related to their obsession, such as the Penny Black enchanted as a spying device by a 19th century Cryptomancer, or the toy phaser that, after a Dipsomancer got hold of it, fired real lasers. Generally the mageekian isn't aware of the magickal nature of the item and it merely sits in their collection. But it serves as a powerful focus for their latent energy, and sometimes destroying it can cancel their magickal powers.

The effects produced by mageekians tend to be of a minor scale, and reflect the latent fantasies they hold for their obsession. Generally, they unconsciously produce one or two minor effects per week. If they were to suddenly achieve some fantasy strongly connected with their obsession—sex with William Shatner, for instance—they might produce a much stronger effect. Mageekians very rarely realise that they perform magick, and, in the rare cases where they do, generally assume it is innate in their obsession rather than produced by themselves.

In game terms, mageekery must be an Obsession skill, like other forms of magick, and falls under Soul. For a PC, the GM rolls the character's skill pretty much at their whim; twice a week is about right. Any successful roll produces a minor effect of the GM's choosing. A matched success produces a stronger minor effect, roughly equivalent to the spending of 3 minor charges, and an OACOWA results in a significant, though generally subtle, effect. Many mageekery magicks take place while the adept is sleeping. It does not particularly manifest under stress.

Much more dangerous than mageekians are **madi** or **whirlpools**. These are seriously demented individuals, often schizophrenic, whose personal madness bends the world around them. Madi do not possess enough logic to actually consciously practice magick, but their warped vision can infect the statosphere and break down the narrow boundaries between the occult and the mundane. Under the influence of a whirlpool, streets have developed teeth, loving parents have become cruel abusers, and  $2 + 2$  has equalled [*5(sex)/typewriter*].

Madi have no power of their own; they can only manifest effects when magickal energy is used nearby. Whenever a charge is spent or a ritual performed and a madi is nearby (within thirty-three feet for a minor charge, thirty-three yards for a significant, and three point three miles for a major), the madi effectively receives an equivalent charge of their own, which immediately produces some effect linked to their own unique view of

the world. It is rather dangerous to cast major magicks near lunatic asylums.

Finally, of course, there are those adepts who practice perfectly decent, well-worked out, occult schools of magick, but whose subject matter really, well, just doesn't appeal to anyone else. It's just too odd or pathetic for anybody else to want to learn it from them, and they are known in the underground as **quirks**. Most notably, a magick that treats UFO mythology in the same way as the medieval British treated elves, including the invocation of Greys for occult purposes, has been developed spontaneously by at least eight individuals in the USA alone. Unfortunately, they've all been rather socially awkward souls, and the whole overenthusiastic nature of their belief in space masters who have traveled thousands of light years to probe their rectums strongly impedes the ability of the school to develop beyond single practitioners.

A typical example of a quirk is Horace Godson, a hairdresser who developed an interest in the legendary and magickal qualities of hair, such its ability to enchant others, its association with strength despite being so weak itself, and the magickal abilities linked to the hair of certain mythical being such as elves. After getting involved in the occult underground a little, he's worked this up into a full-blown school of magick, Trichonomancy, but it's just too silly for anybody else to really take seriously. You might not think so little of it when your hair stuffs itself down your throat and chokes you to death, of course.







**C H A P T E R   T W O**  
**M A G I C K**  
**P R A C T I C E**



"WE HAVE, THEREFORE, TO RESOLVE TO CONQUER OR DIE."  
—GEORGE WASHINGTON

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS MAGICK. THERE ARE ONLY LIES."  
—EUSTACE CRANE



## Creating Formula Spells

Formula spells are great, aren't they? Reliable, predictable, dependable—not adjectives that get much play in the occult underground. Naturally, many adepts who've had successes with spontaneous effects want to make those effects into trusty formulas. Unfortunately, this is hard to do with an established school of magick. In fact, the more established a system is, the harder it becomes to develop new formulas.

When Daphnee Lee had the flash of insight that let her create Pornomancy, it was an ecstasy of mystic creation. It seemed to her that endless effects were possible in that first second, when the reality of the Naked Goddess seemed to make everything in the world make sense. However, as soon as she decided one thing that Pornomancy stood for, as soon as she set any priority at all, it necessarily cut off options. Everything couldn't be the most important thing; once the most important thing (the central paradox) had been realized, many options became contradictory, impossible, or (worst of all) irrelevant. The more detailed the school became, the more it defined what it *couldn't* be. A system of mystic thought has to stand for various things, and since every idea has antithetical ideas (taboos and heresies), definition reduces possibility. For every thing a school can do, it rules out hundreds or thousands of other ideas.

What you run into is a kind of progression where it gets more and more difficult to shoehorn new effects into the old concept. The first several formulas are very easy, but they get harder and harder as time goes on. By the time a dozen rote spells are developed, the idea has become fairly specific and restrictive.

Of course, the same school can mean very different things to different people, so it's easier to make up new formulas if you don't have your beliefs cast into someone else's mold. The more formula spells you learn, the more pegged down your vision of the school becomes. This has two effects. One is that it makes it harder to learn other rote spells. The other is that it becomes harder to cast spontaneous magick. But we'll get to that

presently. Right now, you probably want the rules for making formulas of your own.

## Mechanics

Once you've decided you want to formulize an effect your character can do as a random spell (see UA, p. 79), spend 1 experience point every time you cast it successfully after that. When you've spent five points that way, you can attempt a ritual to formulize the spell. (If you cast the spell randomly without spending the experience point, that does not count towards the five-cast minimum but neither does it disrupt your plans for the formula.)

After your five successes, you've kind of got the hang of the effect and you can script a ritual to symbolically tie the action to your understanding of the system. This should be pretty elaborate—and after all, it's more fun to come up with a baroque and involved ritual than to just do some point twinkling. The symbolism doesn't have to make sense to anyone but your character, but you should be able to justify or explain every part of it. Naturally, you have to spend some charges (explained later) and there's no guarantee of success.

If you've done the spell five times, your GM has to have a pretty good feel for its effects, so she tells you how much it will cost you to cast the spell once it becomes a formula. Usually you'll see the charge cost go down, though it can (rarely) increase if the GM decides she's been letting you off easy. If the spell is going to be a minor-charge spell, you spend its cost plus one significant charge. If you already know fourteen formula spells (either minor or significant) you have to pay more. Specifically, it's another significant charge to get the fifteenth spell, two charges for the sixteenth, and so forth. Spend the charges, make a roll against your skill. If you succeed, the spell becomes a formula. If you fail, you lose the charges and get a significant unnatural effect or two. (Your GM may give you bonuses to your skill percentile if your ritual is particularly elaborate or cool—her choice.)

To make a significant formula spell, you can spend one major charge and roll for your ritual. Or you can spend the spell's cost plus two significant charges, along with *two* additional significant charges for every rote past fourteen—so if it's your fifteenth spell, that's two extra. Your sixteenth is four extra, and so forth. If you botch this roll, you lose *all* the charges you're carrying and you get a loose major unnatural effect (or its equivalent in significant and minor effects) rolling around, too.

Any time you complete one of these rituals, you have to take a stress check against the Unnatural. It's a rank-5 check if you're trying to create a minor-charge formula. If you're going after a significant spell, it's a rank-10 stress. You make this check regardless of whether the ritual succeeds or fails. (Though if it fails, you may have to make some Self or Helplessness rolls as well.)

## Mechanics Outline

- I. Cast the spell as a random spell five times, spending an experience point each time. Your GM decides what the spell should cost as a formula.
- II. Develop a ritual that ties the new effect into the current system.
- III. Perform the ritual.
  - A. Minor formula.
    1. Calculate the cost in charges.
      - a. Spend the minor charges the formula version costs.
      - b. Spend an additional significant charge.
      - c. Spend one more significant charge for every formula spell you know past fourteen (including the new one).
    2. Roll against your skill.
      - a. If it succeeds, you get a new formula spell.
      - b. If it fails, you lose the charges you put up and unnatural phenomena occur.
    3. Make a rank-5 Unnatural stress check.
  - B. Significant formula.
    1. Spend one major charge *or* calculate the cost in charges.
      - a. Spend the significant charges the formula version costs.
      - b. Spend two more significant charges.
      - c. Spend two more significant charges for every formula spell you know past fourteen (including the new one).
    2. Roll against your skill.
      - a. If it succeeds, you get a new formula spell.
      - b. If it fails, you lose *all* your charges and unnatural phenomena occur.
    3. Make a rank-10 Unnatural stress check.

**Example:** In the course of his jobs (as cop and as Sleeper) Cletus Crowe meets a lot of people. He's got no particular gift for remembering names, so one day he decides to use Cliomancy to remember the name of someone he encounters whom he's met before. It's not a use of the spell Trivia because the fact he's trying to dredge up isn't common knowledge, but (his GM decides) it does fall within the random magick domain of Cliomancy because it deals with history and memory. Cletus casts the spell for four minor charges, and it's useful. He decides to formulize it.

The next five times Cletus uses his spell (which he starts calling "Total Recall") he spends an experience point as well. This represents him thinking about the spell, studying it, and concentrating on how and why it *has* to work. When he's spent the five points, he's ready to try a ritual.

Cletus decides that for his ritual he's going to read every entry in an antique phone book from his city. His GM decides that being able to remember someone's name is a pretty mild trick, so she says the completed formula spell costs but a single minor charge. However, his ritual is going to require a significant charge just to get started. Furthermore, Cletus already knows fifteen formu-

la spells. Total Recall will kick him up to sixteen, so that's two more significant charges (one for his fifteenth spell, one for his sixteenth).

Cletus slogs his way through the phone book, spends three significant charges and one minor one, then rolls against his Cliomancy: 50%. Sadly for him, he rolls a 97 and fails even with a flip-flop. Unless he can re-roll for some reason, he can kiss his experience points and charges goodbye—and probably say “howdy” to some form of significant unnatural effect.

## Learning New Formula Spells

Learning a new formula from someone else is a lot easier than building one from scratch. At least, it's easier in terms of the objective effort of gaining the spell. One must, however, consider the bullshit rigmarole that any given teacher is almost certain to inflict on a given student. Mileage varies, of course: one teacher may agree to teach you a new formula for a flat \$20,000 in gold bullion. Another may require favors of a more personal

nature. A third could set up a simple exchange like “Wanna learn my spell? Okay. But you gotta get all wetworky on this punk who pissed me off. Bring me his heart and I'll teach you the spell. No, the ears ain't good enough.”

Once the mentor has been mollified (or compelled, if you're into that sort of thing), it takes about a month of the standard mystic training hooplah—riddles, weird mental exercises, chanting, meditation, *etc.* During this time, the student is expected to be studying about eight hours a day. At the end of that time, spend 5 experience points for a minor spell, or 10 for a significant one, and it's yours.

## Drawbacks of Formula Spells

As stated earlier, there's a problem with getting your magick to do something specific and reliable: it becomes harder to do things that are spontaneous and unique. Magick is like a map that creates the land it describes. When a section goes from *terra incognita* to a known quantity, all



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the other things that *could* have been there are, by definition, no longer present.

Thus, an adept who gets too hung up on certainty has a tendency to calcify. His definition of his particular -mancy becomes stagnant, rigid, and predictable.

In game terms, it becomes harder to cast spontaneous spells. An adept can know fourteen formula spells and still retain enough flexibility to work well on the fly. Once a fifteenth formula is learned, that adept takes a -10% penalty to his skill when casting spontaneous works. Each additional rote spell increases the penalty by 10%, until the adept loses the ability to do any impromptu effects.

There's a way out of this, of course: what an adept loses in flexibility, he can compensate for with raw power. Each 10% of penalty can be bought off with a minor charge—for that one spontaneous spell.

(Note that ignorance doesn't make spontaneous magick any *easier*. If you only know three formula spells, it doesn't give some farcical +100% skill boost with off-the-cuff sorcery. Similarly, paying a minor charge can only *offset the penalty*. It can't make a spell any easier if there's no penalty.)

## Rituals

### Minor Rituals

#### Crystal Courage

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Ritual Action:** Draw a pentagon in ink made from linden ash, silver oak ash, and cat's blood on a maple hardwood floor during the dark of the moon. Lie at the pentagon's center. A pure halite crystal of rhomboid shape must dangle from an iron tripod by a green thread above the point over the angle which brackets your head. Say the words "huggun-ra avanti" three times. (No one knows what this means.)

**Effect:** Crystal Courage can drain the fear right out of a person's psyche and place it in a crystal where it can do no harm to the person's mind. The performer of this ritual will feel a rush of en-

ergy as part of his fear leaves him. Crystal Courage will eliminate one failed mark in the Madness Meter register that controls the performer's Fear Passion, and grants one Hardened mark in that register. The halite crystal itself is charged with raw fear, and tends to attract astral parasites, demons, and entropics (see UA, pp. 147-150). The crystal may only hold one fear, and may be released by saying the words "tiganto voosh-ma" and touching the crystal to the bare skin of the target. (No one knows what those words mean, either.) The target immediately suffers a Rank-5 stress check against the Madness Meter register of their Fear stored within the crystal. This "empties" the crystal, which may not be used in a Crystal Courage ritual again. If a crystal is shattered before releasing its load of fear, the holder risks being attacked by an astral parasite.

#### Medicine Bag

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Ritual Action:** To create a Medicine Bag, you need to collect together some ingredients. The first is the head of a plastic action figure toy, such as G.I. Joe. Fantasy characters from cartoons are fine, so long as they are fully human. The toy must be decapitated in the rays of the dawn sun, using a razor blade, and the body burnt. The head is set aside.

The second component is the corpse of a small animal killed accidentally on a road or highway and left there for at least a week. The third is a small ball purchased from a person who has used it to play a sport; golf, squash, and table-tennis balls are all acceptable. The seller does not even have to be any good. A ball bought from a five-year-old will do, as long as it fulfills the other conditions.

The final ingredient is a pill stolen from a pharmacy. The thief must remain alone and unobserved—from the moment she enters the building until the moment she leaves it again, no human gaze may fall upon her. The pill must be circular, white, and only available on prescription. One pill may be taken during the theft, and nothing else.

Gather together the ingredients and place them along with any small seven non-perishable items no more than twenty years old in the zippered compartment of a leather handbag or fanny-pack. The zipper must be fastened and then sewn shut. Every dawn and dusk for ten days, the bag must be held up to the rays of the sun. At all other times, it must be kept in darkness.

At dusk on the tenth day, as the sun is setting, a red cross in a white square must be painted onto the bag no less than 1" across. This must be completed before the sun vanishes completely, but does not have to be geometrically precise. At the moment the sun sinks below the horizon, the bag is activated.

**Effect:** While a Medicine Bag is being worn, it confers several health benefits. Blood pressure, cholesterol, and histamine are all lowered to levels commonly considered safe. Illnesses run their course in approximately 75% of the usual time, and the wearer is rendered completely immune from the common cold. If a disease would normally prove fatal, there is a 10% (non-cumulative) chance that the wearer's disease will instead go into indefinite remission. Finally, injuries heal more quickly, with the bag giving the injured person two extra wound points back each day and speeding the recovery time of broken bones by 10%. For these benefits to take effect, the Medicine Bag must be worn at least 23 hours out of every 24. If the bag is ever opened, it loses all its powers and the contents cannot be reused.

### Portal Glyph

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Ritual Action:** Mark a door in some significant way, such as writing on it, taping a sign to it, or even hanging a bent hanger on the door handle. Once the door is marked, whisper "Qui sum?" and go through the door. The ritual fades in ten minutes.

**Effect:** Anyone pursuing you will automatically pass over the door in question in favor of looking in another direction, no matter how absurd such a decision would be (*i.e.*, ignoring the only door in a hallway and instead searching the ventilation system).

### Purifying Bath

**Cost:** 4 minor charges

**Ritual Action:** Prepare a container of water large enough to fully submerge the bather, filled with warm water from seven specific seas (the Mediterranean, the Dead, the North, the Baltic, the Caspian, the Red, and the Black). To this water is added aromatic oil of aloe, the blood of a lamb, rowan ashes, strawberry wine, iron filings, a piece of tarnished silver, powdered garnets, and fresh basil. The bather must engage in at least fifteen repetitions of a ritual ablution, washing the head, chest, and genitals, in that order. Then the bather must soak in the cooling mixture for one hour. Using a towel woven from a mix of wool from black sheep and black goats that is exactly as long as the bather is tall, the bather must dry himself completely. The bather must emerge from the bath, dry off, and wrap his head completely in the towel, leaving no part of the head exposed to the air. He will then fall asleep. When he awakens after a thirty-minute nap, he will make his roll to see if the ritual is a success and if he receives the benefits of the bath. The towel can be reused, but is effective only for a single person. If ever used by another, even in a mundane fashion, it is useless forevermore.

**Effect:** This ritual allows the bather to temporarily "cleans" his aura for three days. The practical purposes of this cleansing are many. An entropic or astral parasite may be dislodged during a Purifying Bath as it loses its astral "grip" on the bather; if the ritual is successful, the bather may make a check against his current Soul stat at +20% to shuck the tormenting entity. (The parasite does not automatically reattach at the end of the three days; it would have to be attached again.) A Purifying Bath can dull the pain of the Pornomancer Blast spell and, combined with magickal or mundane healing, can return the Wound Points lost to it. An adept can take a Purifying Bath to disguise the fact that he can work magick, provided he does no magick during that time. Any attempt to use Sense Aura on someone who has recently had a Purifying Bath suffers a -30% shift to the skill level the first day, a -20% shift the second day,



and a -10% shift the third day. Aura traces can be eliminated, so that a murderer can sever the mystical connection to his victim—the magickal equivalent of wiping for fingerprints—making him undetectable as a murderer through magick. Note that this latter effect only works if the user is cleansed at the time of the crime; it will not retroactively remove his trail.

### **Taste of Ashes**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Ritual Action:** Collect a handful of the victim's feces. Burn the feces and collect the ashes. Add a pinch of the ashes to any food or drink while chanting the victim's name twenty times. If the victim should partake of the enchanted food, he is affected by the curse. To counter the effects of this ritual, the victim must prepare a three-course meal. Once the meal is done, he must reduce it to ashes. Then he takes the ashes and mixes them with his feces, collected after the curse took affect. The victim must eat the feces-ash mixture to stop the curse.

**Effect:** Taste of Ashes is an old-school ritual that causes everything the victim eats to have the taste and consistency of coal ash. The ritual affects the taste of food, drink, and anything else that the victim puts in his mouth. Liquids taste as if ash has been mixed in with them. The victim still derives sustenance from whatever he eats; it just tastes terrible.

## **Significant Rituals**

### **Cartesian Curse**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges, plus minor charges for duration

**Ritual Action:** Take any three of the following: a nonentity's eye, a quart of blood from a lycanthrope, the brain of an adept, the heart of an avatar, the breath of a ghost, the spittle of an Un-speakable Servant, or the pinky finger of a golem. Put them into a bronze kettle with a hard-boiled heron's egg and weld the lid on. Using an iron

spike, punch three holes in the lid; each hole should be the corner of an equilateral triangle. Plug the holes with a mixture of beeswax and fuller's earth. Use gold paint to connect the plugs, forming the triangle. Starting at noon on the first day of the month, dig a pit exactly one yard square and one yard deep. Put the kettle in the center of the pit. Kill a large animal—any large animal will do—and spill all of its blood into the pit and over the kettle. Fill the pit half-full with charcoal and douse it with mineral oil. Using a bow and palette, light a fire at least one mile away from the pit. Light a pine torch from this fire and walk with it to the pit. Drop the torch in the pit, but do not look at the flames. Allow the pit to burn for twenty-four hours, then remove the kettle from the pit. While the kettle is still hot, make the roll, expend the charges, and crack open the kettle—but gingerly. If the ritual has been successful, the shell of the heron's egg will be speckled an angry red color. To release the Cartesian Curse, the egg must be cracked on bare flesh. Whoever is touched by the noxious black goop that emerges from the egg is struck with the Cartesian Curse. More than one person per egg can be affected, if there's sufficient spatter.

**Effect:** French mathematician Rene Descartes said once, "*Cogito ergo sum*" (I think, therefore I am). He was right. The target of this ritual ceases to exist (as for Reality Erase, see UA p. 147) whenever she is distracted or her attention is otherwise shifted away from her awareness of self: whether by surprise, a failed Self check, or other occasions as GM decides. In relaxed situations, a conscious victim can maintain her reality indefinitely. The victim must constantly reassure herself that she exists, usually by inserting herself into everything she does, says, or thinks. Imagine a steady stream of soliloquy: "I like this car, I enjoy many forms of sports, I can play pool, I think monkeys are funny. I, I, I, me, me, me . . ." This reassurance of existence can also be accomplished by staring at oneself in a mirror (giving rise to an alternate name for this ritual, the Narcissus Plague). But as soon as the target fails to think of herself, she phases out.

People who witness a phase-out suffer a Rank-6 check against the Unnatural. Witnesses to a phase-out get an odd feeling that something is missing from the world while the victim is temporarily erased. After the first time they witness a phase-out, they will be able to recall memories of the phased-out victim, even if the rest of the universe doesn't seem to.

The length of this "phase-out" is equal to  $[100 - \text{Soul stat of target}]$  minutes, doubled for each minor charge that the adept who formulated the egg plugged into it. The overall curse wears off over time, with the duration of "phased-out" periods being halved each day. Once the phased-out period lasts less than a second, the Curse is lifted. Also, the more people who can recall a phased-out person the less time the victim spends phased out, as reality uses their memories to start reweaving itself. Treat each witness as a +5% to the victim's Soul stat for purposes of duration calculation; the invoker of this curse—the one who throws the egg—does not count as a witness.

Victims of this spell phase back in at the same point as they phase-out; if a material object is in the space that had been vacated, the victim will appear nearby in an appropriate fashion. Thus, when traveling in a car at high speed, the ritual victim phases-in in the front seat of the car rather than suspended in mid-air somewhere back along the highway. This is magick, not physics. When sleeping, victims of this spell phase-out for the allotted time, phase-in at the end of the period, and immediately flicker back out.

During phase-out, a conscious victim is aware of "being muffled by the Void of Nothingness." Time seems to pass slowly, and the entire feeling is akin to being completely imprisoned in a roomful of opaque gray-black jello. There is no need to breathe while phased out, but the victim feels as if she is suffocating. Also, since the Void of Nothingness is utter sensory deprivation, there's a chance that the victim will go mad from failed Self, Helplessness, or Unnatural checks. Unconscious victims have other peoples' dreams—lots of other peoples' dreams, all at once—when they

phase-out. All sorts of interesting garbage can be placed into the character's subconscious.

**Example:** Jimmy Fleshshredder (Soul of 60) is hit by a Cartesian Curse that has been pumped with 1 minor charge. On the first day after being Cartesian Cursed, whenever Jimmy is distracted from his own existence or his thoughts, actions, or words cease to reinforce his reality to himself, he phases out for an hour and twenty minutes ( $[100 - 60] \times 2 = 80$  minutes). The next day, he'll phase-out for 40 minutes at a stretch, then 20, then 10, then 5, *etc.* If Jimmy's buddies Fritz and Otto witnessed the phase-out, their memories of him shorten the duration of this curse to one hour ( $[100 - 60 + 5 + 5] \times 2 = 60$  minutes). The next day, he'll phase-out for 30 minutes at a stretch, then 15, then 7.5, then 3.25, *etc.*

### Hex

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Ritual Action:** Coat two crow feathers in a paste made from sour milk, the bile of an imprisoned man, the ground-up bones of a dog, and the blood of the target. Bind the feathers to your feet using strips of a sheet that has covered a dead woman. Cover the floor of a room with broken glass, sharp stones, and other jagged materials. On a day whose numerological value is ten (based on a recognized calendar of your choice), dance wildly on the floor in complete darkness screaming specific chants. Repeat on a day whose value is nine, then eight, and so on down to one. At the climax of the chanting on the last day, shout the name of the target and spit on the floor.

**Effect:** The target of the Hex will suffer a -5% penalty to all skill rolls linked to one stat of your choosing, with the exception of their Obsession skill. The penalty manifests through disruptive synchronicities whenever the target attempts to use a cursed skill. The trigger on their pistol jams, they trip on a piece of debris while running, an annoying radio-jingle keeps interrupting their thoughts, loud background noise distracts them, whatever.

You can remove the hex from the target at will, which makes for a good bargaining tool.

Otherwise it lasts for one month per significant charge spent at the time of casting. The Hex cannot be prolonged with new charges after the initial casting; it's all or nothing.

### The Pentecost Ritual

**Cost:** 12 minor charges and 3 significant charges

**Ritual Action:** The base ingredients for the ritual are the tongues of people who speak more than one language fluently. A dozen whole tongues must be harvested from people who spoke at least 20 different languages between them, including Mandarin, English, Hindi, and Arabic. The “donors” need not be alive when the tongues are taken, but the tongues must be fresh when the ritual commences—no more than two days old at room temperature or a week if refrigerated. Do not freeze any of the tongues.

Put the tongues into a large wooden pestle and mash them together with a mortar which has a handle shaped like an owl's head. They must be mashed and stirred together for twenty-

four hours without pause. Every two hours, the stirrer must add a minor charge and at least a tenth of a pint of their own blood into the bowl, which is soaked up by the tongue mash. During all of this time the entries from a dictionary must be continually read aloud in alphabetical order. The dictionary does not have to be English, but it does have to be long enough to support the twenty-four-hour recitation; if the last entry is reached before then, the ritual will fail. Similarly, the stirrer does not have to do the reading, and both stirrer and reader may be relieved by colleagues providing neither activity actually ceases. All the blood must come from one person, so if the stirrer does take a break someone must siphon some of her blood off for each two-hour mark. The minor charges can come from any combination of participants, however.

At the end of the twenty-four hours, all the unread entries from the dictionary must be torn from the book and laid on a silver plate blessed by a priest of any religion, and the paper they are written upon burnt. The ashes are then added to



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the pestle and three significant charges spent on the mixture. Providing that none of the tongues came from a person who was born on a Sunday (their local time), the mixture will reduce and clarify into a sparkling blue potion which must be decanted into a crystal container.

**Effect:** The Pentecost Ritual is the stuff of legend itself. While under the effect of the ritual, what you say is understood by every human within hearing range, regardless of whether they speak your language or not. They understand the meaning you are trying to convey, rather than hearing a confusing literal translation. If you use poetic phrases, idioms, or cultural metaphors, they are converted into similar embellishments that the hearer understands. Best of all however, if you are trying to convince people of something, they will hear the type of language and level of eloquence that they need to hear, making them tend to want to agree with you. It is a power that has been sought down the centuries by kings and politicians, priests, demagogues, generals, salesmen, and academics alike, but few have ever mastered it, despite the relative simplicity of the ritual.

When the entire potion is drunk, it confers the Pentecost effect upon the drinker, subject to certain limitations and dangers. In practical terms, the speaker is sympathetically understood by anyone who understands a human language and gains a +25% shift to any Soul skill used during that time. Listeners want to hear what the speaker has to say. The speaker's voice may be amplified without spoiling the effect, but not recorded or transmitted to another location. The ritual effect ends when the speaker stops talking for more than five seconds, although the effect the speaker's words had on others continues.

There is a price, however. At the end of the effect, the speaker is left unable to communicate directly or indirectly with anyone or anything for an amount of time equal to the amount of time spent talking. She cannot read or understand speech, sign language, the meaning in pictures, or anything else. Similarly, she cannot express her cognition in any form whatsoever. Everything is gibberish, both in and out. If she expects the ef-

fect she can make allowances, let herself be led away and shepherded along. Either way, the strain requires checks against Isolation, Self, and Unnatural stresses—at rank-4 if the effect is expected, or rank -7 if it is not.

### **Recorded for Posterity**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Ritual Action:** Place two standard videotapes (VHS or PAL, depending on your locale) in a sealed metal box. Douse the box in a flammable liquid and set it on fire. Once the fire has burnt itself out, submerge the box in salt water overnight. The next day, record your image on the two tapes. The scene must be lit with candles and there must be enough light to register the image on the tape. Add a soundtrack of your choosing, either during the filming or in post-production. Play the videotapes in an alternating loop on a television with a screen at least 19" in size. (Only videotapes will work. DVDs or computer-based imaging do not satisfy the ritual criteria as they have not yet acquired the iconic personal mind-share of videotapes.)

**Effect:** If you are in the same room as the tapes while they're being played and you appear the same as your image (clothing, hairstyle, within ten pounds of weight, *etc.*), you are protected from magicks that attempt to change or damage your body. A piece of you has been stored and rendered immutable by the ritual. This does not guard against magickal attacks that do not cause direct damage, such as the poltergeist effect of Dipsomancy blasts (see UA, pg. 87) or the flaming objects of Annihilomancy (see p. xx). It does prevent magickal healing from having any effect.

If the tapes are muted or stopped, or you leave their immediate proximity, the effect cuts out until they are turned up, restarted, or you come back into their presence. If the tapes are destroyed while you are using them you will suffer damage equal to the roll of two dice.

Note that videotapes generally provide a maximum of 8 hours recording/viewing time. This means that the ritual will offer protection for up

to 16 hours without stopping and rewinding, assuming you've got the equipment to automatically play the tapes in sequence. In addition, the quality of the recordings will degrade past magickal fidelity after ten plays. Using a shorter, higher-quality recording time will double this lifespan for each increment of improved recording speed you use, so four-hour recordings will last for twenty plays and two-hour tapes for forty.

### **The Ritual of Union**

**Cost:** 6 significant charges

**Ritual Action:** The Ritual of Union takes place in a specially prepared area referred to as “the arena.” The arena begins as a chalk oblong, formed by placing two sticks 381.75cm apart and tracing an oval around them with a loop of cord whose circumference measures 822.3cm. (This yields an ellipse with two foci—one at each stick.) A series of arcane glyphs (of no known historical provenance) are then inscribed along the interior and exterior of this border. Both the border and the glyphs are drawn with chalk. The color of the chalk does not seem to matter. There is no known instance in which the ritual was attempted with something other than chalk.

Once the arena is prepared, two participants must remove all clothing and enter it. It is absolutely crucial that no foreign material enter the arena with them: eyeglasses, dental fillings, pace-makers, artificial hips, and such must all be removed. Otherwise, the ritual will assuredly kill both participants, instead of just one.

When the two naked participants enter the arena, they stand at the two sticks—that is, the twin foci of the ellipse. One (it does not matter which) says “Tukla muhk?” The other replies “Saboten.” (As with the glyphs, the origin of these words is unknown, but it is important to the ritual for both to know that one phrase is a question and the other an answer.)

After speaking the words, each must run towards the center of the ellipse and fling himself (or herself) headlong into the body of the other. As they do this, both must concentrate on willing

the ritual on to completion. If the willpower of either wavers, the ritual fails.

**Effect:** When the two participants strike one another, two things occur. The lesser effect is that the chalk line and letters explode into straight, fierce, azure flames. These flames burn until the greater effect is complete, generally leaving their figures burnt an inch deep into their surface.

The greater effect is that the two bodies combine into a single mass, much as two clay wads flung together with great force distort and fold into one another. After a brief period of roiling metamorphosis, this fleshy form resolves into the body of one of the ritual participants. This sole survivor of the ritual then passes out. The resulting coma can last between one and three days.

While these visible effects are quite dramatic, the unseen results are even more impressive. The two souls and minds enter a desperate combat, from which only one emerges intact. That triumphant self decides which body it wants to occupy, and can furthermore plunder the talents and experiences of the loser at will. The losing soul is completely devoured by the winner.

**Side Effects:** There are several side effects to a successful Ritual of Union. First off, the arena becomes permanent. Any future ritual casters can use it without going through the chalk and rope rigmarole.

Secondly, and more importantly, transgender rituals (that is, those undertaken by one man and one woman) can have severe repercussions for those pursuing gender-specific avatar roles. Naturally, a Masterless Man who uses this ritual to seize a female body is going to lose his connection to the ronin archetype, as is a female soul connected to the Flying Woman if she changes into a male body. These disconnects can produce unnatural phenomena. The severity of the phenomena depends on the strength of the connection. A minor connection—particularly one of which the avatar was unaware—would produce minor phenomena, if any. A suddenly disconnected godwalker could produce a storm of effects, biblical in scale.

It should be noted, however, that those who make cross-gendered exchanges are often in a superb position to connect to the Mystic Hermaphrodite archetype.

**In Game Terms:** Any adept who performs this ritual successfully loses all charges. Anyone who succeeds at casting this ritual makes a rank-8 Self check.

At the moment of impact, both participants make a single Soul roll. The highest matched success wins. If both succeed but neither was a match, the higher roll wins. If both fail, the higher non-matched failure roll wins. If both rolls are matched failures, the spell produces a fused, monstrous mass of tangled limbs with both faces, both brains, and both bodies melted together (see the nearby boxed text).

Once the winner has won the conflict, he can pick which body he wants to use from then on. If he picks his own, his Body and Speed scores don't change. If he picks the other one, he gets that body's Speed and Body, and his old body is gone forever.

The winner can also steal skills from the loser. This is pretty rewarding, since he gets the skills without all that tedious work and study, but it can also be dangerous, because digesting ten years' worth of learning in a one-second gulp can do weird things to your brain. Physical skills—meaning those based on Body or Speed—go down fairly easy. They only require a rank-5 Self check, each. (That is, if you steal three skills, you make three rolls.) Intellectual, Mind-based skills are a little more personal. Each of those is a rank-7 check, again on Self. Soul skills, with the firmest link to personality, are rank-10 Self checks, as are any obsession skills (no matter their base attribute).

Those are just the problems with learning *any* skill. Certain skills may involve other checks, depending on the GM's judgement. For instance, stealing a skill in "Torture" is probably going to imply a Violence check or two.

Incidentally, stealing an obsession skill doesn't let the winner flip-flop it. There's no way to get *two* obsession skills with this ritual. He just gets the skill at the same level the victim had it,



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## The Fused

### Significant Unnatural Creature

The Fused are unnatural creatures created by those who attempt the Ritual of Union and drop the ball in a big, bad way. A Fused has Body and Speed scores equal to the worse of the two combined people. However, it does possess Wound Points equal to the *sum* of the two Body scores.

Fused are all totally nuts, to the tune of being blown in all five gauges. They have all the skills of both “parents,” along with a Soul and Mind score equal to the highest from each. Also, if the two donors were adepts, the Fused has *both* schools of magick at its disposal. (Which would drive it permanently crazy, if it wasn’t *already* permanently crazy from having a pair of brains folded into each other like two hairbrushes getting slapped together.)

Since they’re not only the product of a rare ritual, but of a disastrously double-failed rare ritual, there are probably no more than one or two of these sad, distorted creatures in the world. There may not even be *any*. Still, one can never be sure.

without the obsession perks, and his own obsession skill remains unchanged.

(Certain skills that are a function of a particular physical frame—for instance, a skill like “Lovely Visage”—do not require a stress check, but also can’t be taken unless the winner steals the loser’s body. Use common sense.)

Those who make a cross-gender switch also have another rank-7 Self check to face. However, if they aren’t already following an avatar path, they get the skill Avatar: Mystic Hermaphrodite at 10% for free. This degrades pretty quickly if they don’t keep up with it, of course.

**The final question is:** How much of the victim’s memory does the victor want to swallow? Mechanically, here’s how it works. The victor takes a skill in “Memories of (name here).” For every 10 points he takes in that skill, the rank of the Self stress check increases by 1. So someone who only takes a hazy impression—like something they watched on TV one time (skill 30%)—only has a Self-3 check. Someone who takes a high degree of recall (skill 70%) has a Self-7 check. This new skill is a Mind skill.

Incidentally, this skill can be used to pretend to *be* that person, if the body was also stolen.

**GM Advice:** Be careful if you let PCs get hold of this ritual. It can, in a single episode, make a character twice as effective or more. If your players are doing something stupid like having two PCs

do the ritual, with the loser’s player generating a new character, it’s clear that they’re monkey-wrenching the system. Feel free to ratchet up the Self checks for people who use this ritual more than once, and always make sure you stress the risks. No one who takes part in this gets to complain afterwards because their character got irrevocably toasted by a single die roll.

That said, there are a couple dandy plots you can hang off of this hook. The most obvious is the adept addict who uses this ritual every couple decades to get a fresh new body and another set of skills. It only takes a couple times to get very versatile (not to mention bugshit crazy).

A lovely turnabout you can use with a complicit player goes like this. You establish the villain who’s using the Ritual. He challenges one of the PCs (hopefully one with a nice healthy body or enviable skills) to stop him by getting into the arena. Sure, it’s incredibly dangerous, but it also offers the chance to slay this badass in a single go.

Before the session with the confrontation, talk to the player. Find out if he’d be willing to play this psycho villain—if the ritual fails. After all, the villain could easily win the contest, take the PC’s body, steal enough of his memories to pass, and proceed to subtly junk the party from within. If your players are typical, they won’t suspect the personality switch when they see that their old buddy the player is still in charge of that body.

One final consideration with the Ritual of Union is that it's important to stress the intimate, personal nature of the consumption. A player who wins in the arena can theoretically be making a dozen Self stress checks. Don't bore the other players by turning this into roll-o-rama while they sit on their hands. (That's why the winner passes out; it gives you an excuse to do a one-on-one with the player while his character is briefly out of commission.) Instead, emphasize the memories that come with each skill. This is your chance to really mess with the PC's head: he's just *volunteered* to have alien memories dumped into his skull. Don't just roll through it. Describe the loser's life from the inside.

## Proxy Rituals

From the earliest religions, priests have acted for their gods. Emissaries act for rulers, spokesmen speak for companies, and knights champion ladies on the field of combat. The ritualistic transference of identity surrounds us in our daily mundane lives. In the occult underground, the rituals of identity take on a more potent aspect. By assuming the trappings of someone else's identity in a ritualistic manner one can become the other person for certain purposes.

Consider the King of the Bean ritual. A randomly chosen man is treated like a king for a period of time, given a crown, obeyed without question, and granted every wish. Once he has fully assumed the identity of a king he is killed, as the kings of old were killed, to ensure a good harvest. The effect: the farmers get a good harvest, the real king gets to keep living, and bean-boy gets a taste of the good life. Everyone's happy.

In the occult underground, these rituals are one of the easier secrets to uncover. Unlike other rituals, it is possible for a person to invent their own proxy ritual if they follow certain underlying magickal principles. Of course, this takes a lot of trial and error and a real dedication to the task, but we are talking about obsessive people, aren't we? There exist a number of detailed versions of these rituals, codifying all the necessary ingredi-

ents and ceremonies, which have been devised by people through the years. They generally have names that indicate the belief systems of the person who developed the ritual. Some examples are The Corsican Experiment, Geminant, Le Chevalier, and The Soul's Mirror. All of these essentially do the same thing.

In the world of *Unknown Armies*, these rituals allow one person to act as a magickal proxy for another person. If performed properly, a proxy is indistinguishable magickally from the real person. This confuses scrying and other location and detection spells. It also allows the actions of the proxy to have the same magickal effect as the actions of the real person. If a Cliomancer's willing proxy arrives in an area with a Cliomantic charge, the Cliomancer can harvest that charge. The proxy cannot cast Cliomantic spells, but the Cliomancer may cast a spell on himself that affects the proxy.

## Making A Proxy

Proxy rituals are not a set of rituals in themselves. Rather, they are the building blocks that knowledgeable people can use to construct a ritualistic transfer of identity. Things are going to start getting a little tangled now, so let's define a few terms to make the process a bit easier to understand.

- **Original:** The person whose identity is going to be assumed.
- **Proxy:** The person who will be assuming the identity of the original.
- **Caster:** The person performing the ritual. This may be the Original, the Proxy, or a third party.
- **Connection:** Something which is symbolic of the identity of the Original.
- **Temporary Proxy:** A Proxy which lasts for about one day. The ritual requires one minor charge per connection and may be performed by non-adepts under the usual minor ritual rules (see UA, p. 81).
- **Permanent Proxy:** A Proxy which has no set duration. This ritual requires one significant



charge per connection and may only be performed by adepts.

To create a Proxy, you need a number of Connections. Each Connection is rated by a percentage score and you need a total of 100% to perform a proxy ritual. Less than that and you don't have enough of a tie to the identity of the Original to effect a transfer. Moreover, each Connection used requires the Caster to expend one charge, either a minor charge for a Temporary Proxy or a significant charge for a Permanent Proxy. The time needed for the ritual is thirty minutes, plus five minutes for each Connection used. Examples of connections include:

- Consent from either the Original or the Proxy: 40%
- Consent from both: 80%
- The birth name of the Original: 10%
- Blood from the Original: 15%
- Item of importance to the Original: 1% (button) to 10% (family heirloom)
- Mimicry of the behavior or dress of the Original by the Proxy during the ritual: 5%
- Blood relation between the Proxy and the Original: 5% (cousin) to 30% (twin)
- Physical presence of the Original: 20%
- Representation of the Original (photograph, doll, *etc.*): 10%
- Physical presence of the Proxy: 10%
- Representation of the proxy (photograph, doll, *etc.*): 5%

Thus it becomes obvious that a proxy ritual can eat up a large number of charges in some circumstances. Ideally, the ritual is carried out between two consenting parties in the same location, which would require two charges and forty minutes. In the worst-case scenario, you might have a pile of buttons from someone whose name you didn't know and would spend one hundred charges and close to nine hours to establish a proxy connection.

Once the Connections are selected, they must be used in a ritualistic manner by the Caster to

transfer the identity onto the Proxy. For example, the Original may ceremonially give his name to the Proxy, and begin using it to refer to him. The Proxy may ritualistically dress himself in the clothes of the Original, or put a picture of the Original over his face. Once the ritual is complete, the Caster makes a roll as with any other ritual (see UA, p. 80). Success indicates that the ritual is a success and that the proxy relationship is established. An OACOWA reduces the number of charges spent to half. Failure means that the ritual didn't take effect, but no charges are expended. A BOHICA results in the process working the wrong way: the Original takes on the identity of the Proxy.

Once established, a Temporary Proxy lasts for one day, plus an extra hour for each 10% worth of Connection established above the 100% necessary for the ritual to be performed. A Permanent Proxy lasts until the relationship is broken as described later, or some other magickal means is used to sever the link.

## Proxy Uses

So, what good is a Proxy once you've got it? Well, they show up as if they were the Original to all magickal scrying, detection, and location. Create a Proxy of yourself and you lose any sort of mystical pursuit that may be aimed at you. Create five different Proxies, and whoever is looking for you has to sort through five different options while still missing you. Think of it as mystic chaff for psychic radar screens.

Aside from that, Proxies can also take the place of the original for magickal purposes. Remember that Cliomancer with a proxy? If you're old and bedridden, it's much easier to have a young set of legs go out and gather up your charges every day. If your Proxy gets in trouble, you just cast some magick on yourself and he can feel the effects.

There's also the matter of sacrifice. This is where things can turn dark. An Epideromancer with a Proxy can hurt his Proxy for charges. The Original experiences the pain, but the Proxy is the

## Dermott Arkane and Renata Dakota

Using the above guidelines, Dermott Arkane would create his daughter/Proxy/decoy fairly simply and cheaply. His consent (40%), plus his presence (20%) at her conception would form the basis. Her being his daughter (25%) would strengthen the bond, which would be cemented by giving her the anagram of his name (10%) and using his own blood in the ritual (15%). This would give him a total of 110%, which, with five minor charges, would give him a Temporary Proxy for 25 hours. He's a little more ambitious, however, and wants a Permanent Proxy. Either Arkane or one of his flock would spend five significant charges at the end of the ritual and roll against his school of magick. Success, and Renata Mers Dakota is born, a Permanent Proxy for Dermott Arkane.

one with only one eye. Naturally, it's kind of tough to find someone to willingly take on this role, and the police tend to frown on kidnapping and mutilation. But for the truly psychotic it is possible, and it can be a source of great power. Thanatomancers (p. xx), as well, might use a Proxy ritual to bestow the proper identity on their victim before the sacrifice to boost the charge they get. Ever wonder why so many serial killers keep calling their victims by someone else's name? Now you know.

How about a Proxy attack? A nasty Plutomaner is chasing you. Establish yourself as his Proxy and donate a thousand dollars to charity in his name. Then you've got some running time while he tries to recover some charges to hurt you with. Want to clip a Flying Woman's wings? Use a proxy ritual to transfer her mystic identity to a meek little woman who's in an abusive relationship and watch the Original fall quickly out of grace with her archetype. Or, quick and dirty, set up a Proxy of someone you don't like and hit them with a significant blast.

### Proxy Dangers

Before you get all starry-eyed with the potential, keep in mind that a proxy relationship, even a permanent one, is a fairly fragile thing. If something happens that causes the Original to assert his own individuality, or causes the Proxy to affirm her own identity, the link weakens. Not all at once, but the weakening will be there. If someone is try-

ing to sever a proxy relationship that they are a part of, allow them to roll their Soul score with a negative shift equal to any excess Connection percentage the relationship had. For example, should Renata try to free herself from Arkane's influence she would roll her Soul score with a -10% shift, because the original total from the ritual described was 110%. Success breaks a Temporary Proxy bond, and forces a Permanent one to go dormant for a day. If a Permanent Proxy bond is kept dormant for an entire week straight, the bond dissolves.

Examples of things that can challenge a bond are having to identify yourself as the Original, or having to give your real name if you're the Proxy; referring to the other half of the relationship as a separate individual; stating that you are acting as a Proxy; and outright rejection of the relationship. Renata never had a Social Security number because that would reinforce her individuality and weaken the proxy bond, possibly breaking it.

Proxy rituals can be a tremendous source of power and flexibility in the game. Players and GMs should keep in mind that the establishing of a proxy can be time-consuming and expensive, and maintaining a proxy is difficult. Also, keep in mind that the effects of the proxy ritual are entirely metaphysical: the appearance of the Proxy and the Original remain the same, and mundanes gain no special powers from acting as the Proxy to an adept or avatar. Still, these rituals can be a handy piece of work.



## New Schools of Magick

### Amoromancy (Love-Based Magick)

Love is magic. People have known this fact for thousands of years. Love has given some ecstasy and driven others to murder or suicide. Almost everyone wants someone to love them. The popularity of personal ads and dating clubs shows that many people are willing to spend a great amount of money and effort chasing the dream of true love. While most are incredibly happy just to find love, a few odd and twisted individuals see love as a means to an end. Amoromancers have learned that the act of attracting people's romantic interest, and even their undying love, is an incredibly powerful force which can be used to produce impressive effects.

This school of magic is quite subtle. It affects emotions and perceptions, but is normally useless against purely physical obstacles. It is important to remember that Amoromancy is not closely related to Pornomancy. Amoromancers can neither affect nor gain power from lust or physical desire.

Love is about obsession, devotion, and fascination, not merely sex. The slang term for Amoromancers is *heartbreakers*.

**Amoromancy Blast Style:** Targets of this blast suddenly feel that the Amoromancer is all of their ex-lovers rolled into one. Overcome with anger, shame, and repulsion, the victim experiences a mild heart attack. He must flee the Amoromancer's presence, probably in tears, to avoid the stabbing pains in his heart that her proximity causes. Fortunately, Amoromancers have difficulty producing direct effects, including injuries. Producing even a minor blast requires a significant charge. However, if the Amoromancer has ever gotten a charge of any sort from interacting with you, then he can turn it into a *significant* blast. It's the ones we love who hurt us most.

### Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Flirt. Anytime you flirt with someone successfully enough that they respond positively, you generate a minor charge.

Unfortunately, you cannot gain more than one charge a month off of any individual. If you want lots of charges you're going to have to flirt with many people. As with most types of magick, no charges are generated if you use magick to attract someone's interest. Also, the person must actually be emotionally or intellectually interested in you. Lust or purely physical desire does not generate a charge. Only true romantic interest possesses the proper power. If the potential for love isn't there, you gain nothing.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Cause someone to become infatuated with you. If you can attract someone's attention enough that they are willing to go out on a serious date with you, you gain a significant charge from them. However, you can't generate another minor or significant charge from this person for another three months. If some poor fool is willing to date you every three months, while you flirt with and date other people, you can keep getting charges off of her. However, in time she is likely to get suspicious or annoyed. Once again, you gain no charges if the other person's only motivation for seeking you out is lust. Your target must have a significant degree of actual romantic attraction towards you.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Cause someone to fall madly in love with you. You need to get the person to the state that he's taking you to see his parents and seriously considering marrying you. As soon as he says and *really* means those three magic words—"I love you"—you get your charge. Of course, unless you are willing to give up all of your other charges for the duration you will also be flirting with and dating other people while you woo this poor sucker. Also, once you gain a major charge from someone you can never gain another charge of any type from her. Once you capture her heart, it's time to break it and move on.

**Taboo:** Falling in love. If you ever fall in love with someone, or even if you end up dating or getting charges off only one person for more than a month, you lose all your charges. You can avoid all romance and keep your charges, but you can't be monogamous.

**Random Magick Domain:** Amoromancy is about obsession, love, and hate. By extension, Amoromancy also relates to the entire range of human emotions, and to perception and communication. If you want to make a speech that a crowd will listen to and remember, Amoromancy is what you need. To a lesser extent, Amoromancers can also affect the emotions and perceptions of animals. Amoromancers are great at making vicious guard dogs ignore them or love them. However, Amoromancy cannot be used to affect the physical world directly. Amoromancers have difficulty using their magic to directly cause physical injury, and cannot use it to move a pencil. While machines and objects may inspire avarice or desire, they are incapable of love.

**Starting Charges:** Newly created Amoromancers start with four minor charges.

## Amoromancy Minor Formula Spells

### Check Me Out

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** For the next thirty seconds or so everyone who can see you clearly stares at you. Open violence or other significant distractions negate this spell within a round, but even in the midst of a gun battle everyone glances at you briefly. In more relaxed circumstances, everyone in range looks carefully at you and thinks how intriguing, interesting, or attractive you seem. This feeling fades when the spell ends, but careful use of skills like Seduction or Act Charming can keep this impression going with a potentially compatible partner. This spell is a great way of distracting a room full of people for a short time.

### I'm the One

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** If a person or group is looking for someone who they have never met, and you cast this spell, the target or targets instantly believe that you are the person they are looking for. This deception continues until the real person comes along and

convinces the people of their error, or until you make it clear (accidentally or on purpose) that you are not the person in question. You can cast this spell on anyone from a woman looking around a restaurant for her blind date to police searching for a fugitive. Couriers looking for the person they are supposed to deliver a package to and cabbies looking or their next well-paying fare are also possible targets for this spell. If the person you cast it on is not currently looking for someone, the spell fails and you spend no charges. This spell does not inform you what person or type of person the target is looking for; should someone be out for vengeance on a hated rival, look out.

### **Sow Discord**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** You can make your target temporarily become irrationally annoyed with or angry at someone he is talking with. This annoyance or anger only lasts a couple of minutes, but if the target acts on these feelings he may well start a serious argument. If the target is discussing something of any import with his companion or companions, the disagreement centers on this issue. For example, if two people were planning out a robbery, the one targeted by the spell would suddenly disagree with all of the other person's plans. Once the spell ends the feelings of anger and disagreement vanish, but many people choose to continue an argument rather than admit they are no longer sure of their reasons for arguing.

### **Instant Wallflower**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** For the next five minutes, everyone mostly ignores you. Everyone knows that you are present, but they believe you are not worth dealing with. Even if they need to notice you, they won't remember your face. Guards won't let you in without proper I.D., but they won't care if you are loitering near a restricted area. People notice you if you are waving a gun around or being threatening and react accordingly. However, afterwards they still

won't remember your face. Also, if you duck around a corner and drop your gun, even the police overlook you as someone harmless and not worth questioning. If questioned closely people who interacted with you describe you as looking extremely average and undistinguished.

### **Life on Cloud Nine**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** This spell causes the target to lose herself in happy, highly distracting thoughts for the next five minutes. While in this daze, targets of this spell do not particularly notice the world around them. The target is also extremely compliant to minor requests like being asked to switch seats, move a few feet over, or give you some change. Someone affected by this spell also follows anyone who attempts to lead them. Once the spell has worn off, all such requests will be completely forgotten. It is possible to maneuver someone into your car, pick his pocket, or even loosely handcuff him using this spell. The effects of this spell are immediately broken if the target is shoved, manhandled, injured, or exposed to extremely loud noises. Individuals who are currently in combat or other situations that demand intense concentration cannot be affected by this spell.

### **Can I Borrow That?**

**Cost:** 4 minor charges

**Effect:** You can get someone to let you borrow something. Not only would your friend lend you her coat, a total stranger would lend you his car. You'll need some sort of story as to why you need to borrow the item, but it doesn't need to be a particularly good story. The person you borrow the item from expects it back in no more than a day or two. For items like coats, CDs, or pens, forgetting to return them or returning them late is rarely a problem. However, everyone with even the slightest grain of sense wants to know your name, address, and phone number before they let you borrow their car or their credit card. Items the person is currently using

will not be loaned out, nor unique or highly valuable items like top-secret documents or famous works of art. Similarly, items the person can't imagine you would have any reasonable use for, like fissionable materials or high-powered weaponry, are off-limits. However, almost any normal item from t-shirts to yachts is freely given.

## Amoromancy Significant Formula Spells

### Look the Look

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** Appear to be a particular type of person for the next hour. Everyone who has any interaction with you does not question the fact that you are this type of person. You could appear to be a doctor, an NSA agent, or a buff blonde guy (even if you are really a skinny black woman). This spell cannot be used to disguise you as a particular individual, only as a type of person or general appearance.

### Love Hurts

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This is the Amoromancer minor blast. In addition to the direct blast effect, the intense emotions generated by this spell means that the target must flee your presence for the next 5 rounds or suffer a -20% shift to all physical actions. As mentioned earlier, if you have ever generated a charge from interacting with your target you can make this into a significant-damage blast.

### Who's That?

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** For the next hour everyone who interacts with you treats you as if you are extremely fascinating and highly charismatic. Store clerks chat with you, children and small animals follow you home, and lonely people want to talk to you. If you want to strike up a conversation with someone, get an official to bend the rules for you, or even have a secretary let you in to see a famous movie star or

politician all you need is this spell and a good story for why you *really* need that particular favor. People you ask favors of would not risk their lives or even their jobs for you, but they will be happy to talk with you, and if you have a good story they do as much for you as they would for someone they really cared about.

### Foot in Mouth

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** For the next half-hour everything the target of this spell says is taken in the worst possible light. The target's exact words remain unchanged, but reprimands seem overly harsh and pointless, expressions of love sound false, and sincere professions of innocence seem like clever deceptions. Everyone who listens to the target feels the same way, but the target is unaware of the effects of the spell (except by observing the effects it has on others).

### Tell Me Your Troubles

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** If you cast this spell on someone, you can convince them to talk about their problems with you. You suddenly seem like the best and most sympathetic listener in the entire world. While you can obtain considerably more information from someone in a bar or bus station than from a guard who is on duty, this spell will convince anyone to talk to you. Once the person begins talking, you can ask leading questions and expect to receive at least some answer. However, the target is only interested in talking about people or events which he finds troubling in some moral, emotional, or practical fashion.

### You're My Obsession

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** The target of this spell becomes completely obsessed with you. This person is suddenly overwhelmed with the desire to meet you and talk to you. If she can follow you and find some way to

talk to you she does so. If you manage to lose her then she continues to attempt to find you, and acts the same way until she can arrange for some way to talk to you in person. Phone calls and letters can be used to set up the meeting, but the actual meeting itself needs to be face to face.

Purposefully removing any possibility of meeting you (like leaving town) even for a day is a rank-5 Self test for the target. Similarly, *not* driving to another city if she thinks that's where you are is also a rank-5 Self test. Once the person actually has a chance to meet you and talk with you for several minutes the obsession ends, and the subject's feelings towards you depend upon the results of this conversation. If the person cannot manage to meet you, the effects of this spell end after a month. While the spell is in effect, other relationships the person may have are likely to suffer.

### **Please Protect Me**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** The target of this spell temporarily becomes devoted to you and is willing to literally fight and die to protect you. The target won't attack her friends or risk death merely because you ask, but if anyone threatens or attacks you, she defends you. The degree of defense is usually commensurate with the type of threat. Someone who insults you gets yelled at or maybe punched, while someone who attempts to use a weapon on you ends up injured or dead. For the duration of this spell the target is extremely protective and extremely reluctant to leave your side. To cast this spell you must touch the target's skin. This spell lasts for thirty minutes. At the end of this time the target is confused with her actions and may become angry with herself or possibly with you. Being subjected to this spell is a Helplessness-7 test if the target previously disliked or hated you.

### **Self-Loathing**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

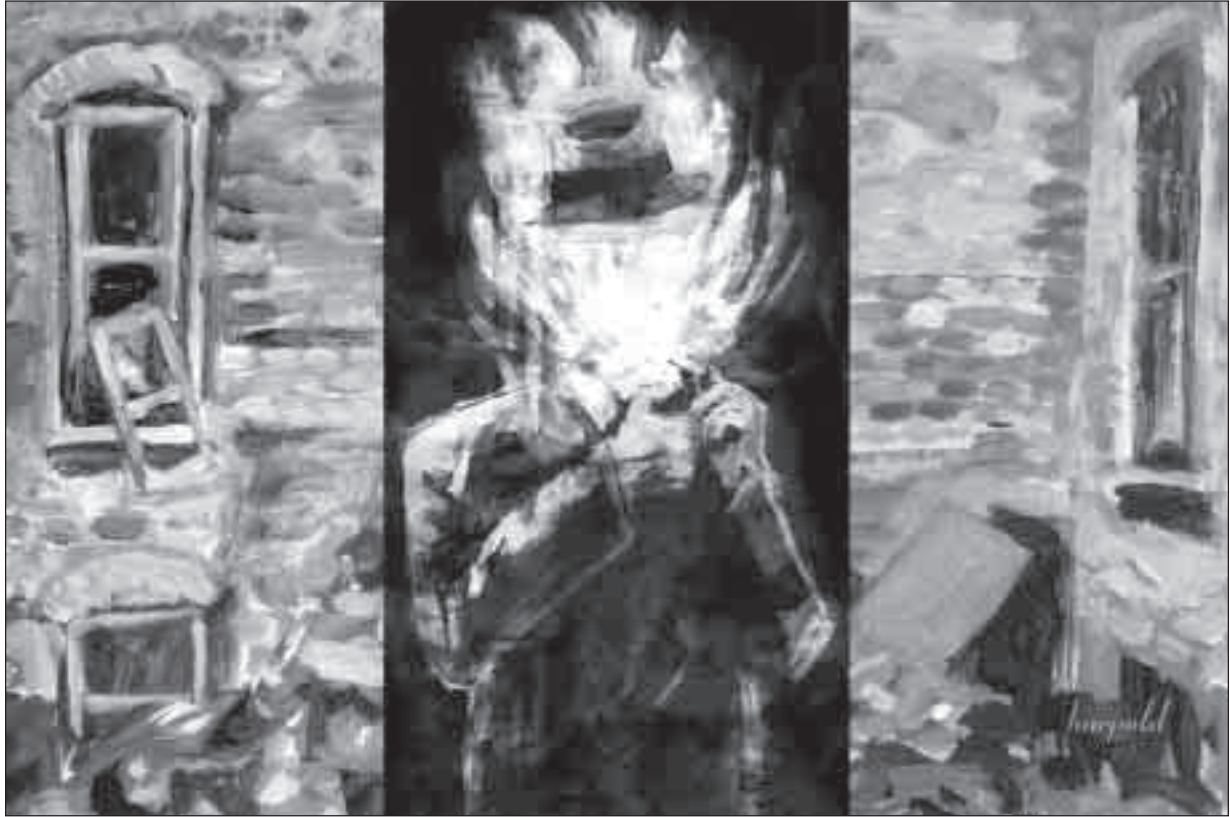
**Effect:** Everyone has done and thought things they are ashamed of. This spell summons up a

large array of such incidents, as well as dredging up all sorts of other embarrassments, lost loves, and similar problems that the target is upset about. In short, this spell makes people suicidally depressed. This depression comes on suddenly but the effects will take time to build to severity. If the target was already upset, confused, and depressed he is likely to go off and immediately attempt to kill himself. Otherwise, the effects take up to several hours to become serious enough for the target to act. After this time, the target needs to make a Soul check.

Targets who succeed in the Soul check do minor-blast damage to themselves. Perhaps they partially cut their wrists, slam their hand into a wall, or slip off the chair while attempting to hang themselves. Once injured, the target comes to her senses and the depression lifts. Targets who fail the Soul test truly fall prey to the depression and seriously attempt to kill themselves. These people take significant-blast damage from their efforts. If they survive, they also immediately come to their senses. If someone close to the target notices this depression and attempts to talk the person out of suicide, the target should receive bonuses to her Soul test. If for some reason the target is physically prevented from attempting suicide, the effects of this spell dissipate after the target has slept. As a side effect of this depression, if the target is involved in combat or any other similar strenuous activity she must flip-flop all rolls and take the worst option. Severe depression seriously impairs your performance on almost all tasks.

### **Amoromancy Major Effects**

With a major charge Amoromancers can permanently change how everyone reacts to a single person, including major public figures. A charismatic and popular person can suddenly be loathed by all, while a nobody can suddenly intrigue everyone they meet and become some sort of celebrity. You can also create true love or deep hatred between any two people, turn anyone in the world into your willing slave, or obtain a single favor (of any magnitude) from anyone in the world.



MATT HARPOLO

## Annihilomancy (Destruction-Based Magick)

The cherry end-table, antiqued lace doily, and turn-of-the-century lighting device. Matching three-piece cushy love seat and divan, fastidiously doiled and fluffed. Exquisite Matisse over the divan, coffee table, magazines fanned out, carefully diverse to demonstrate the owner's renaissance upbringing. Egyptian wall hangings, precisely casual draperies. The dust ruffles, tea cozy, novelty spoon collection, printer's boxes carefully dusted and stuffed with one-of-a-kind salt shakers, a spray of flowers, subtle wallpaper, clever doormat.

Clutter. Trash.

The office affair, the one-night stand, the once-friends and occasional-companions who drop into and out of your life daily, forgettably, leaving no impression or regret. One thousand things, filling your life every day, demanding your attention, in need of dusting, maintaining, purchasing, collecting, taxing, arranging, and complementing. The jetsam of a thousand days,

pushed on you, occupying you, distracting you from life. Clean the gutters, walk the dog, oil the car, rake the leaves, flush the pipes, rewire the garage.

Somedays, it's too much.

Sometimes, you feel like dousing the whole goddamn thing in gasoline and lighting a match.

*Good for you.*

Annihilomancy is about truth, about clearing out the clutter, burning down the lies of responsibility and public expectations, and focusing on the essential nature of life. While the school's whole mojo is based on destruction, destruction is not the goal. It is the *means* to a goal. And that goal, simply enough, is truth. No façades, no lies, no presuppositions, no acts. Pure truth. Things get in the way because they give us unnecessary weight and responsibility, burdening us with our social position and the accompanying expectations. Relationships, while not necessarily a sham, nevertheless stand in the way of enlightenment. As long as you have someone else to depend upon, you can never learn the value of



yourself. The annihilomancer's path to epiphany is a downward spiral, a series of losses and purges that take the practitioner lower and lower. Enlightenment lurks in the basement of a burned-out building, not the cloud-crowned peaks of some distant mountaintop.

*If you want to conquer a thing, destroy the thing.  
If you want to know your life, destroy your life.*

This is how it works. Annihilomancers get their power from setting things back to the primal zero, by brushing aside the trappings of contrived modern life. Sure, they destroy things, they ruin lives, they break up empty marriages, but they aren't simple vandals. They're zealots, devoted to a primal reality. Only by losing everything can you know what really matters. Annihilomancers are also known as **annihilists** or **sternos**.

**Annihilomancy Blast Style:** You would think that a school of magick based on cathartic destruction would have a real kick-ass blast. Well, we wouldn't want to disappoint you. We wouldn't want to miss an opportunity to make your life difficult, either. See, the trick is that destruction isn't terribly picky. You might call it a jealous god. Annihilomancers aren't allowed to pick a target for their blast. Rather, they act as ground zero for a blast radius effect. Every object in range of the blast that is of emotional significance to someone spontaneously combusts. Credit cards, money, family pictures, wedding rings, that favorite t-shirt, all up in flames. Blast a Quik-E-Mart full of interchangeable snacks and not a thing will light up except the gawking employee's wallet. Blast a beloved home and watch it *all* burn down.

## Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Destroy one minor personal possession. Burn your favorite shoes, tear up a picture of your best friend, or some other small but somewhat valuable item. The value of the thing is not based on material worth, but rather on the emotional worth of the item to the owner. This is not limited to physical objects. Terminating friendships would provide a minor charge, though they would only need to

be passing acquaintances. Simply letting the relationship fall into disrepair doesn't count. The friendship must be severed, permanently and suddenly. Alternatively, providing the service of purification to someone else would also generate a charge. Simply collecting other people's shoes and burning them wouldn't count, as you have no idea how much those people cared about those specific shoes. The item must be of emotional value to the person you're "helping" and you must be aware of that value. You don't need their permission, obviously. The same goes for relationships. Ruining a friendship between two people would provide a minor charge. Someone's career would also count here, as long as the destruction is not a firing offense; for a minor charge, you would only need to blow a task, erase some vaguely important documents, put laxative in the boss's coffee, and so forth.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Destroy one item of great value. Again, value is determined by emotional worth, not monetary, though something that someone has poured a great deal of their hard-earned cash into usually carries with it significant emotional value. Good examples are cars, a collection of favorite books, that manuscript you've been working on, and so forth. The items don't have to be yours, but then again you're not likely to call the police if you burn your own couch. Someone else might react differently. Relationships count here, too, though they need to be close friends. Getting rid of the best man at your wedding, breaking up a solid marriage, or alienating a childhood friend would do rather nicely. Career path eradication still counts; for a significant charge you would have to tell the boss to go fuck himself, erase the database and all the backups, insult the mothers of the trade delegation from Japan in their native tongue, or reroute all the office supplies to Omaha. Something that will seriously set the whole company back, in other words, will do for a significant charge.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Destroy everything that you own, slash all ties to everyone you know and care about. End it all. Bring down the curtain.

Leave town and walk naked into a new city with nothing and start life from scratch. Or—do it for someone else! Destroy their possessions, make their friends abandon them, cut them off from the helping hand of society. This process must be complete and requires careful planning and much time. **Taboo:** Deny the urge towards destruction inherent in any inanimate object. An annihilomancer can not change the oil in his car, repair his gutters, fix his roof when it leaks, or put out a fire. Things fall apart. He has to let them.

**Random Magick Domain:** The annihilist burns to reveal truth. Specifically, they burn things to reveal truth. They rip down façades, expose lies, and uncover the essential reality by throwing everything else out. As such, annihilists may perform random magick that deals with destruction, but also with revelation.

**Starting Charges:** A beginning annihilomancer starts the game with four minor charges.

## Annihilomancy Minor Formula Spells

### Burn the Illusion

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This allows the annihilist to discover the intent, conscious or otherwise, behind one recorded statement. The statement may be a written document, an audio recording of a speech, or any other recorded media. (But not a live broadcast or speech—it must have occurred earlier and been captured in some form.) The length of the statement is fairly limited, usually a single paragraph or idea. The annihilomancer can comprehend what the source really meant or intended, even if the meaning was unconscious.

### Clutter Buster

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** There are so many little things in life that heap themselves up into piles and drag us down. Old newspapers, catalogs, junk mail, plastic forks, and special once-in-a-lifetime coupon offers redeemable anywhere. Such things need to be got-

ten rid of. A normal person would recycle them, or just throw them out. A sterno, of course, burns them. This spell affects an area centered on the annihilomancer, out to twenty feet in radius. Everything of absolutely *no* emotional value, like plastic dinnerware, explodes and burns rather brilliantly. This fire is complete, quickly engulfing the objects and then extinguishing itself. As with Lesser Cleansing, the adept is not immune to this effect; it is safest when cast in the nude.

### All Things Shall Pass

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This effect puts the power of destruction at the adept's fingertips. By touching any fairly small inanimate object, she may turn it into a fine white dust, instantly. The object may be no larger than her hand.

### The Facts Laid Bare

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This spell gives the annihilist a one-word answer to any one question. The method of asking and answering varies from annihilomancer to annihilomancer, but a common example would be burning a piece of paper containing the question, with the ashes settling to form the answer. You should feel free to customize this as you see fit.

### Lesser Cleansing

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This is the annihilomancer's minor blast, as described earlier. It costs two minor charges to initiate and extends to ten feet. Every minor charge burned beyond the activation cost increases the area of effect by an additional five feet. Items of some emotional value—even if the caster is unaware of such value or even of the items' presence—burst into flames and burn until the fire is extinguished or dies on its own. These flames are mundane in nature and can be quenched by any usual method. Damage to individuals varies depending on what flames up. The

adept using this spell is *not* immune to its effects—but you don't care about the clothes on your back anyway, right?

### **Pas Encore Vu**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** By touching an inanimate object, the annihilomancer is able to generally tell how it will be destroyed. This knowledge comes in the form of a brief hallucination, with sights, smells, and sounds. Unfortunately, no time frame is given and the images tend to be a little blurry.

### **Superficial Karma**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This spell requires careful timing, and is seen as an educational tool for the masses. Whenever someone slights someone else for superficial reasons—perhaps because they smell or because their shirt is ugly—the annihilist may cast the spell. For twenty-four hours, people react to the target in the exact same way he treated the person.

**Example:** Danny refuses to dance with a girl because he thinks her nose is a bit odd. Zero, our happy annihilomancer who hangs out in bars waiting for such an opportunity, drops Superficial Karma on Danny's ass. For one day, everyone blows Danny off and makes comments about his nose just before he's out of earshot. Maybe he learn a lesson, maybe not.

## **Annihilomancy Significant Formula Spells**

### **Feed the Fire**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** Destruction is all around us, but it usually doesn't escalate. Two friends disagree on what to have on their pizza. A glass breaks. Annihilists are always glad to see this sort of destruction, but they rarely find it satisfying. This spell lets them crank up the damage meter a little. The friends start throwing punches. The glass shatters, spray-

ing shrapnel into the eyes of innocent bystanders. The exact effects of this spell are purposefully nebulous, and are designed to encourage creative application by players. Anything that is destructive, be it an argument, the decay of a tree, or a straightforward auto accident, can be aggravated and blown way out of proportion by this spell.

### **Purification**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This is the significant blast of the annihilist. Base range is now twenty feet, and each significant charge spent in addition to the first increases the range by ten more feet. Damage to individuals varies depending on what inanimate objects flame up next to them or on them. The adept using this spell is *not* immune to its effects.

### **Weight of the World**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This is a helpful reminder of how much junk you have. Casting the spell on a target gives him a certain, shall we say, magnetism. Everything of little or no emotional significance nearby flies through the air and sticks to him—whether it belongs to him or someone else. Newspapers wrap around his legs and cheap baseball cards fly from their protective cases and attach themselves to his hands. The exact result of this depends on the surroundings. If this is done in a museum full of rare artifacts, there are very few valueless things lying around. Casting Weight of the World on someone who is standing in a college dorm room, knee-deep in the careless refuse of scholastic life keeps him occupied for quite some time. Better yet, laying this spell on someone in a junkyard full of worthless, yet extremely heavy, pointy trash could prove fatal.

### **Chink in the Armor**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** This spell allows the Annihilomancer to see flaws in any one person or thing. These can

be structural flaws in a building, a hidden addiction in the preacher's wife, or some other key fault that could bring the whole situation down. Note that this only reveals one flaw—but it's the biggest one, the most critical one.

### **The Other Foot**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** A truly maniacal spell, The Other Foot plays games with someone's emotions. The next time the target enters into a really shallow relationship, either for sex, money, or whatever, that relationship suddenly becomes the most important thing in his life. Conversely, the other person in the relationship blows it off. Their parts in the game are reversed.

### **Pants on Fire**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** For one day the target of the spell is unable to lie to the person that trusts him most. He thinks he's telling the lie, and everyone else hears

the lie, but the one hears the truth behind it. Baby, do you love your man?

### **Behind the Mask**

**Cost:** 4 significant charges

**Effect:** It's helpful to be able to see behind the masks that people put on in their social interactions. This spell is a stepped-up version of Burn the Illusion, but it operates in real time. For half an hour the adept hears things as they are meant, rather than how they are presented. Lies fall flat, poseurs are exposed, and politicians speak their minds. This can be a little tricky, because you don't hear what they actually say. Everyone else hears "We're beginning our descent into O'Hare . . ." while you hear ". . . in flames." Tricky thing, that truth.

### **Annihilomancy Major Effects**

Light yourself up and level a city block. Start a cult of voluntary simplicity, or destruction, or both.



## Bibliomancy (Book-Based Magick)

Books are wonderful things. A fine book invites admiration and even envy in the eyes of the literate sophisticate. Most anyone has a few books lying around, but lots of people have a *lot* of books, and take some pride in their ownership. Book collectors even fetishize them to a certain degree, admiring the quality of their paper, their style of type, or the nature of their binding. Books are emblematic of their day, encapsulating the academic, cultural, and even aesthetic values of the time and place where they were born. When assembled into a collection, the juxtaposition of multiple books encapsulates even the personality and life story of their owner—by browsing the titles in a person’s bookcases, you can read the person.

Throughout history, books in every form have represented power. In ancient times, merely being literate was a mark of status for many cultures. Because books could preserve a set of beliefs beyond the lifetimes of their creators,

they became the objects of battles within religion, politics, and academia. Sometimes books were champions of persistent ideas, while at other times books were victims of changing morés or revisionist histories. Before the printing press, ownership of a book meant you possessed knowledge and power inaccessible to others. After the printing press, books became a way to unify cultures. A beloved book could be held up as a symbol to rally around. A hated book could be burned to represent the desired destruction of the ideas it contained. Banned books could be smuggled into lands that disavowed them, becoming a printed virus that could undermine entire societies. Cherished books could be read by millions—even billions—and their ideas take root thereby.

Bibliomancers understand the significance of books. A collection of books is itself a symbol of knowledge, wealth, and prestige, magnifying the importance of any single book by the presence of its companions. The ultimate book collection, the library, is a potent symbol of power—and so too

for the Bibliomancer, whose Library is both the source and the repository of magickal might.

Every Bibliomancer is a rabid book collector. Whether it's a centuries-old grimoire or the latest bestseller, a book can confer power to its owner. Bibliomancers devote their lives to studying and acquiring books. Actually reading a book is relatively unimportant—it's the *ownership* of the book, and the symbolic hold on power that represents, that really matters. Bibliomancers are often called **librarians** or **bookworms**.

The central paradox of Bibliomancy is that even though one may read a book and transfer its knowledge and power to memory, the physical book itself must still be kept and cherished—because it is the book *itself* that matters. Bibliomancers collect huge Libraries around themselves, much like the shell of an oyster. And like an oyster shell, a Bibliomancer's Library is usually immobile, strongly defended, and full of pearls (of wisdom!). Attempting to attack a Bibliomancer in his Library is stupidity of the rankest sort.

**Bibliomantic Library:** A bookworm's Library is the center of his power. He can use it to charge himself up, to store those charges, and to use those charges for spells. The downside is that his Library also limits his power: a bookworm only has access to the symbolic powers contained within the books of his Library, the number of books in his Library limits the number of charges he can hold, and he must remain in proximity to his books to use his magic.

A Bibliomancer always builds up a sizable collection of books before even stepping into the path of the school—it's the love of books that creates the adept, not the other way around. His Library must consist of at least a thousand titles, organized by whatever system appeals to him: alphabetically, by topic, by Dewey Decimal, by the Library of Congress method, or even by color. The Library must be clean, well-lit, and attractive in its presentation. This usually entails lots of bookcases, and if at all possible the Library must be a room of its own; if that is not possible, then at least the arrangement of the bookcases and other furniture must serve to delineate the space.

The physical space of the Library is as symbolically important as the books themselves.

For the purposes of Bibliomancers, any printed and bound material (including scrolls) is a "book." Thus magazines, photocopies, and even comic books can be considered books; computer disks, "books on tape," and electronic files are not. However, Bibliomancers are not satisfied with books in poor condition. They want only the finest copies, and are always happy to acquire a better copy of a title than they currently have.

All Bibliomancers know the minor ritual Seek the Lost Tome (see UA, p. 81). The ritual, revealing the location of a formerly owned but now missing book, is passed down from teacher to pupil as part of the Bibliomantic school. It is rumored that there is a significant ritual known as Seek the Hidden Tome; this ritual is said to allow the caster to locate any book that exists, and previous ownership is not a prerequisite. All bookworms drool for such a ritual, and follow any leads or rumors regarding it relentlessly.

**Charge Storage:** A bookworm's charges are limited by the number of books he has. Minor charges require 100 books per charge, significant charges require 500 books per charge, and major charges require 2500 books per charge. Thus, for a bookworm to retain 1 major charge, 2 significant charges, and 5 minor charges, his Library would have to contain a minimum of 4,000 books. If his Library is full and he generates a charge without increasing the size of his library, the charge is lost.

**Proximity Restrictions:** A bookworm must remain near her Library, within a number of feet roughly equivalent to her Soul attribute, or she loses access to her charges. The charges remain with the Library, but the Bibliomancer cannot access them.

However, it is possible for a bookworm to take her charges with her in a Traveling Library. At any time while in her Library, the bookworm may transfer a charge into a single book. A minor charge requires a host book worth at least \$100 by bookseller standards, a significant charge a

\$500 book, and a major charge a \$2,500 book. If the book leaves the bookworm's immediate possession the charge is lost; typically the book is carried in a briefcase or backpack. If the bookworm reshelves the book into her Library, the charge transfers back into the general collection. Even while a charge is in the Traveling Library, the master Library must still possess enough books to store the charge.

**Book Theft:** If another bookworm steals a book holding a charge from an unwilling Bibliomancer's Traveling Library, the charge is lost. However, if the book is of sufficient value to generate a charge for the thief, the charge earned is *doubled*. The two Bibliomancers cannot be allied and the theft can not be permitted or forgiven by the former owner—it must be a genuine theft. Stealing books from a bookworm's master Library also provides this doubling effect if the books are valuable enough, but such a theft does not reduce the number of charges held by the Library unless the total number of books is reduced below the minimum needed to hold the current charges; if this occurs, charges are lost beginning with the least-powerful ones until the number of books and the charges they hold are once again in balance. Needless to say, Bibliomancers do not trust each other, and eagerly steal each other's books whenever possible.

**Bibliomancy Blast Style:** Bibliomancers have no blast of their own, but can “borrow” the blast of other schools through the use of the Book Burn spell (see p. xx). Because of this, Bibliomancers frequently ally themselves with other adepts, trading information for blasts.

## Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Acquire at least \$100 worth of books by the same author, or in the same genre, or covering the same topic—in short, a minor but meaningfully contiguous collection, rather than just a random stack of books. A single book of that value also suffices. Alternately, obtain a single book of any value that has been signed by the author, or get a living author to

sign a book you already have in your Library. If you already own a copy of a book you buy, you only get the charge if the new copy is superior to the one you have; a hardcover can replace a paperback, a book in good condition can replace one in bad shape, a signed copy can replace an unsigned one. You must immediately sell or give away the inferior copy.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Acquire a rare book worth at least \$500 by bookseller standards. Again, this can only replace a book in your collection if it is a superior copy.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Acquire a one-of-a-kind book, such as the real *Necronomicon*, the Q Gospel, the Copper Scroll, the *Red Book of Westmarch*, the *Voynich Manuscript*, the gold discs of Mormon, the typed pages of *On The Road*, or the authentic diary of Howard Hughes.

**Taboo:** You must never damage or destroy a book, even one you do not own, or all the charges in your Library are lost. Also, you must not sell, loan out, or give away any title in your Library, unless you are replacing it with a superior copy—in which case you *have* to sell it or give it away.

**Random Magic Domain:** Bibliomancy is concerned with the power of knowledge. It is powerful magic for finding things out, for illuminating or obscuring the facts of something, and for influencing events that are knowledge-dependent.

**Starting Charges:** Newly-created Bibliomancers start with three minor charges and a Library of one thousand books. The player should come up with a list of the dozen or so most valuable books in his collection, for purposes of the Traveling Library—and also so GMC Bibliomancers will have something to steal!

## Bibliomancy Minor Formula Spells

### Let Me Check My Notes

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** A Bibliomancer has a magickal connection to his Library, and may spend a minor charge to retrieve any information contained within its books. This spell allows total photo-

graphic recall of any piece of information, provided there is a book that contains it within his Library. The bookworm must identify the target information he wishes, and the Library work from which he intends to retrieve it. “George Washington, from the W volume of *Encyclopedia Britannica*.”

If the Bibliomancer expends an additional minor charge, he may search all the works of his Library for a composite of all information contained therein on a single subject. Knowledge does not translate into proficiency, however; Notes could help the adept decipher a few sentences in a foreign language or understand the use of a piece of medical equipment, but it would not make her a fluent speaker of the language or turn her into a brain surgeon.

### The Sorrows of Young Werther

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** Imposes a particular mood upon an individual, as though they had just read a Library book of your choosing and strongly identified with the main character. This lasts only as long as the target would normally feel that mood; typically the events of daily life free them of the mood in an hour or so, but if they are inclined towards that mood anyway the effect may be more lasting. It confers no specific knowledge or awareness of the book or its content. A second minor charge makes the effect twice as intense, leaving the target incapable of doing anything practical except dwell on the mood, whatever it may be; however, the mood may still be broken as normal.

### Speed Reading

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** By spending a minor charge, a bookworm may absorb all of the information contained within a single target book—which need not be part of his Library—into his mind. The Bibliomancer retains total photographic recall of the work for around thirty minutes, which then fades to a nor-

mal level of recall, just as if he had read the book in a mundane fashion. It does not impart actual ability, such as speaking a language or fixing a car, except insofar as a single reading of a book on that topic would do so.

### Booking Glass

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** Take a book you own. Open it and stare hard at the words, concentrating on another copy of the same edition that you know the location of. Wait until they resolve themselves into images—you can now see “through” the other copy of the book, as though it had a set of moveable eyes. The effect lasts for five minutes or until you close the book, and does not confer any sense other than sight.

### Book Learning

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This spell allows the use of any mundane skill recorded in the books of the adept’s Library. It is similar to the Cliomantic spell Instant Zen Master and the Dipsomantic spell God Looks Out For Drunks, allowing you to use your Bibliomancy skill in place of any other normal skill, including the ability to flip-flop rolls. The skill only works for one check and then fades away.

This means that a Bibliomancer can use Book Learning to “tap” his Library to Fence like D’Artagnan, Notice like Sherlock Holmes, Seduce like James Bond, Speak Basque like a native, and so forth. If the bookworm does not have the target book in his possession, the skill gained is at a -20% shift. A clever bookworm will take several Learning-worthy books along in his Traveling Library.

### It’s Right There in Black & White

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** When a bookworm needs to see what the immediate future of some specific topic holds, he



merely picks up a book, burns two charges, and riffles through it. Some of the words on the pages draw his eye until they form a complete sentence in the adept's mind, pointing at what will happen in the next twenty-four hours with regards to the desired topic. Typical topics might include the adept himself, another person he's interested in, an item, or a location. The nature of the text influences the quality of the information; a book with a symbolic content or title connection to the topic is much more specific. A bookworm interested in events at the mayor's mansion will get more out of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* than out of *The Jungle*. For their own future, adepts usually pick a single book that has personal meaning and use it for all such attempts; with repeated use, that copy of the book provides better and better information. They may likewise designate certain other books for other common topics. Players should keep a record of such preferred books, but keep in mind that only the specific copy provides cumulative improvements in accuracy. The book used need not be in the Library.

### **Blur the Lines**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** There are many facts out there that would be dangerous if they saw the light of day. Blur the Lines allows the bookworm to obscure any one fact from a single target, making it difficult for the target to come across it. This is very similar to the disappearance of all information regarding the true identity of the Naked Goddess. The obfuscation occurs by happenstance or bad luck—the needed page seems to be ripped from the telephone book, ink is spilled over the name on the signed confession, databases lock up and crash the system when it comes across the Blurred address, no one seems to know the identity of that Cigar-Smoking Man, *etc.* Data obscured by this spell is once again available to the target in twenty-four hours. If the spell is pumped with a significant charge, the fact can be Blurred from everyone.

## **Bibliomancy Significant Formula Spells**

### **Read Between the Lines**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** The short version: by spending a significant charge, you can ascertain whether or not a single stated fact—*not* a question—is true at that moment in time. “Joe is alive,” would be valid, but “Is Joe alive?” would not be.

The long version: it's not as simple as that. When you cast Read Between the Lines, you are granted a vision of the abstract reality behind the fact you wish to judge. These visions are believed to be glimpses into the statosphere, a look at the probabilities behind the machinery of the universe. As such, they are ever-changing, cloudy, and maddeningly vague to our limited human perception. In normal life, when asking about the veracity of a mundane fact the result is either “true” or “false.” When magick gets involved, results can vary from “sorta true” to “almost totally but not quite false.” Evaluating facts that have to do with Avatars return a solid “maybe.” And any fool silly enough to attempt to Read Between the Lines on a fact having to do with an archetype or the Invisible Clergy directly is really asking for it; you're opening up a channel between your mind and the statosphere, so don't get pushy.

### **You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** Make an inanimate object look like another inanimate object for fifteen minutes. This isn't invisibility, this is changing the way observers think about the subject. Though they may be looking at a chair, the part of their brain that would normally say “chair” is saying something else, like “motorcycle.” The object appears as itself in photographs, reflections, video cameras, and so forth. There is a -50% shift to Notice “something odd” about the affected object, less if the object is in an incongruous area (a motorcycle in the living room).

**Book Burn**

**Cost:** 2 significant, plus any other charge requirements

**Effect:** Cast this on a book in your Library and carry it with you; the book you use has to be worth at least \$1000 by bookseller standards. The next magick spell, ritual, artifact power, or avatar channel directed specifically at you is absorbed by the book, preventing the magick from working. You must have the book in your hand or otherwise touching your bare skin for this to occur. At any time thereafter, you may open the book and release the magick against a target of your choice; target eligibility (line of sight, known by name, whatever) is as with the original magick. You must spend the same number of charges the original caster did to release the power. If you do not have enough charges, the power is lost but you lose no charges. You have no way of knowing how many charges you need except through experience. Effects not powered by adept charges (such as avatar channels or artifact effects) require two significant charges to set free. A single book may only hold one power, but once the power is discharged the book may be re-enchanted with Book Burn. No one may use the power from the book except the bookworm who juiced it up, although anyone else who opens the book erases the power by doing so. As with your Traveling Library, the power is lost if the book leaves your possession—that applies both to an untriggered Book Burn spell and to a spell you capture. The GM may determine what magick can be absorbed and how it works when released.

**Cross-reference**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** Gathers & correlates any and all extant

and available printed information on a living target into a blank book, much like those sold in most local bookstores or stationery stores; the text appears in your handwriting. The information retrieved must be printed on paper, so electronic files do not generate data for you unless hardcopy also exists. If there is too much information to fit in the book, the type becomes smaller until there is enough room. (Rumor has it that a Bibliomancer once cast this upon a business rival, unaware that the man was secretly the Comte de Saint-Germain. The pages of the book turned black, and he was arrested while trying to steal an electron microscope.) This reference work bears the target's name as its title and the bookworm as its author. The book goes back to being blank after half an hour, but two more significant charges make it permanent.

**Aphasia**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** Deprives the target, who must have just spoken in the presence of the adept, of the ability to use language. They become unable to speak coherent sentences, read, or understand what people are saying to them. It's worth rank-7 Isolation and rank-5 Helplessness checks. The effect lasts until the target sleeps.

**Bibliomancy Major Effects**

Discover any desired piece of information, no matter how well-concealed. Obscure any fact such that it not only drops off of the world's radar, but looks as if it never existed. Learn any skill. Translate or decode any representation of knowledge. Trap a person in a book forever, making them a character and retroactively rewriting every copy in the world with the altered text.



## Cryptomancy (Deceit-Based Magick)

The Cryptomancers are widely feared—and at the same time, widely suspected of being extinct. Even those most certain of their destruction have to harbor a seed of doubt, suspecting that the lords of lies might have successfully exaggerated the stories of their own demise. Similarly, those most afraid of the Cryptomancers cannot help but consider that, like Oscar Wilde’s sphinx, the greatest secret of the Cryptomancers may be that they have no secret.

As it happens, both factions are wrong. The Cryptomancers (**crypts** for short) are still around, but just barely. The modern age has not been kind to them.

The Cryptomancy pedigree is long and illustrious, stretching back to the Greek mystery religions.

It’s worthwhile to note that ancient Greek culture was different from modern culture in a number of ways. When examining the history of Cryptomancy, it’s important to particularly stress two of these elements: their attitude towards epistemology and their attitude towards homosexuality.

Homosexuality was normal in ancient Greece. A deeply androcentric culture, they believed that the male human form was the height of perfection. Women were okay for producing children, but it was generally young men who were considered beautiful.

Greek philosophical epistemology (the theory of how things can be known) was almost the inverse of modern scientific epistemology. The modern scientific method says that one should observe the world as it is, then develop a theory that accounts for observed data. The Greeks believed that the senses were imperfect and misleading. The way to learn how the universe worked was through inward contemplation.

One fruit of this epistemological vision quest was an appreciation of the role of Avatars. When the Greeks found that by imitating the “gods” they could develop supernatural powers, they did what anyone would do: formed cults and religions. When the full impact of the channels became apparent, they (again) behaved predictably: they made their religions secret in order to keep the power for themselves.

The power of the mystery cults served Greece well for many years, until the Romans came along. The very few mystic scholars who know what was really going on back then have several explanations for the Roman conquest of Greece. Some say the Romans had better Avatars. Some say the Romans followed different Archetypes, which were less prone to provide insight and enlightenment but far better equipped to sack cities and rout armies. Still others think the Greeks learned *too* much, and that their capture was engineered by Archetypes fearful of Greek godwalker ousters.

In any event, the Greeks were captured. This wasn't the end of the mystery cults, though—not by any means. They'd been put down, but not out, and there was still enough power present to attract ambitious patrons.

Ideally, the mystery cults were all about following the Archetypes. In practice, they were about following the Greek *perception* of the Archetypes. Thus, the celebrations of the cults had a distinctly Greek flavor, including a hearty appreciation for the sexualized male form. It was this homosexual element that would be both the salvation and the nemesis of the mystery cults. As the years progressed, it provided them with a number of recruits who were less interested in ancient mystic wisdom than in an opportunity to meet attractive young men who were sworn to secrecy about their association.

The twin pillars of power and pleasure kept the mystery cults vitally alive in the Roman army—the very people who had first unseated them in Greece. However, their strength was challenged on two fronts: religious and military. The religious challenge came from Christianity, and the military challenge came from the decay of Rome.

During the decline of Rome, there were three major foci for the mystery cults: Londinium, Germania, and Rome itself. Roman mystery cultists abroad managed to convert a few natives to their beliefs, and those beliefs caught fire in what would later be England and Germany. Initially they were guttering, hidden flames—but the spark was there. Meanwhile, the main cult in Rome fell upon hard times. The Christians had little patience for secrets or paganism, and when Orthodox and Roman

Christianity started to be challenged by Gnostic Christianity, they became intolerant of homosexuality as well. (Gnostic Christianity denounced the physical world and considered reproduction a sin. Naturally it didn't take many generations for the other branches of Christianity to outnumber the Gnostics.) The church that later became Catholic cracked down hard on heresy, and kept at it for decades and centuries, as did the Greek Orthodox church. The original mystery cults of the Mediterranean became weak enough that the Inquisition could eradicate them down to the last man. (Some suspect that the elimination of accumulated mystery cult lore was the true motivation for the various sackings of the library at Alexandria.)

The only remnants were the mystery cults in Germany and England, which had hundreds of years to mutate. The emphasis on homosexuality had only become amplified as the years passed—though it was still possible to access the powers of the Archetypes. As their societies and cultures adopted Christian homophobia, the emphasis of the mystery cults gradually shifted. Where initially the secrecy had been the means, and Avatar powers the ends, there was now a complete inversion. The cult orbits shifted to a focus on *secrecy itself*, with the Avatar channels seen as an effect of blurring the line between truth and falsehood.

Both the Eastern (German) sect and the Western (English) sect evolved towards a crypto-centric philosophy, but they differed radically in their approach. The German Cryptomancers held that the truth was sacred, and must therefore be kept from the soiled hands of the uninitiated. To protect the precious truth, they spoke it only to one another, and spoke only lies to those outside the cult. The English, on the other hand, came to believe that lies were the outlines that defined the truth, and must therefore be used carefully, not casually. The English Cryptomancers focused on lies more than secrets, and permitted themselves to lie only as a sacred element of their secret-keeping—not casually. On all other matters, the English Cryptomancers enforced absolute truthfulness.

Even as their philosophies diverged, identical social pressures forced both groups into a parallel

structure. The inner core of both cults were adepts who not only knew the greatest secrets, but who believed them enough to perform magickal feats. For every true adept in each cult, however, there were dozens of non-adept “hangers-on” who had no faith—but who were homosexual and who joined the cult as a safe way to meet others with the same inclination. (Incidentally, both cults accused the other of pirating their structure.) In both societies, the true adepts were rather free with theory, ritual, and initiation. After all, if it produced the desired effects (the creation of a new adept), well and good. If it didn’t, well, nothing was really lost. Despite philosophical arguments (and a few fights that went beyond mere words), the two sects remained in contact and exchanged ideas, rituals, and formulas. They disliked each other, but remained allies—for both knew that discovery by greater society was certain destruction.

As the years passed, the Eastern branch grew while the Western branch shrank. (After all, it’s easier to keep a secret if you lie all the time than if you’re compulsively honest.) That all changed with the Nazi rise to power. Since the Nazis targeted homosexuals for destruction (along with Jews and Gypsies), a large number of German Cryptomancers were caught up in the general holocaust. The inner core of adepts had magick resources to fall back on, but it was their compulsive lying that kept them safest. When the mundane outer circle of Cryptomancers were caught, many broke under torture and gave up the names of their fellow “deviants.” The Cryptomancers who had faithfully lied all the time, even to each other, were safe from betrayal. Those who had not were captured.

A fraction of the inner core of German Cryptomancers escaped the Nazis, fleeing to Africa, free France, or England. Some got along long enough for their English “cousins” to help them get passage to America, but eventually there was a conflict.

The English Cryptomancers claim that the Germans adepts betrayed and attacked the English branch because they feared the British honesty would betray them to the Nazis in case of invasion. The German branch makes no single claim (since they’d have to lie about what they

truly believe), but some of the very few outside observers who know anything about it think the Westerners actually attacked the Eastern Cryptomancers first. It’s an open question whether they did it to keep their own secret from being imperiled or to finally settle the old philosophical question about truth or lies. In any event, the two camps of Cryptomancers battled it out in England. Eventually, the German Cryptomancers either fled or died, but not before inflicting terrible casualties on their English brethren.

The two branches hate each other to this day, but their numbers are small enough that there’s comparatively little conflict between them. German-style Cryptomancy is practiced (rarely) in France, North Africa, and the United States. There’s little left of the once-great Eastern Cryptomantic secret society. A few Cryptomancers even went back to Germany after the war, but the circumstances they found were so bad that they were unable to recreate their cults. The oldest of them still know the signs and countersigns, but few are in contact with one another.

England is the stronghold of Western Cryptomancy, and there are still small cabals working as a secret society. Most practitioners outside Great Britain are isolated individuals, not members of a social network. They know the magick, but don’t care about the social element.

Both branches of Cryptomancy suffered terribly in WWII. Things didn’t get much better afterwards. The sexual liberation of the sixties made it less necessary for homosexuals to hide their preference, and that robbed both branches of their usual recruiting structure. The death-blows for Cryptomancy, however, may have come close to the millenium’s end.

Modern Cryptomancy (as of WWII) assumed a firm barrier between truth and falsehood, and gained power by blurring that line. However, with the advent of mass media, the possibility for misinformation and the manipulation of perception has skyrocketed. The common perception of truth and lies is becoming muddied, robbing the Cryptomancers of their opportunities to meddle with it. That was bad enough. Then along came post-modernism.

Postmodernism (and deconstructionism and poststructuralism) called the entire notion of communication into question. By association, the ideas of truth and falsity, honesty and lies, were also tainted. How can a Western Cryptomancer tell the truth, if communication is so inherently corrupt that honesty is impossible? How does an Eastern Cryptomancer's lies set him apart, if everyone is unintentionally lying all the time?

The future of Cryptomancy is an open question. The attrition of the school over the last few decades has, perhaps, made it ripe for a total usurpation that would obliterate the school's magickal power and establish a new, postmodern form of Cryptomancy in its place. Until then, the remaining Cryptomancers marshal their forces for the battle to come, whether that battle is between the rival schools or with the notion of truth itself.

### Eastern School Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** The Eastern School of Cryptomancy builds charges by fooling people with pointless (but elaborate) lies. Giving a cabbie a false name isn't enough: the lie has to have a strong emotional element. Telling the same cabbie a long, involved story about your recent (and imaginary) divorce would work—if he believed it. Cryptomancers often work in concert to create these “scenes.” For example, two Cryptomancers might go to a restaurant and get into an argument in which they pretended to be brothers, one of whom was cuckolding the other. Naturally, you can't get a charge from a lie if you use magick to persuade someone the lie is true.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** A larger and more elaborate lie must be crafted to yield a significant charge. Unlike a scene, which only has to happen once, this lie has to hold up for at least a week and convince at least a dozen people. It works if it has a powerful emotional element (like the minor charge routine) but a significant charge can also be had if a deception is used to *prevent* an emotional reaction. The most common historical example, of course, is Cryptomancers who were closet homosexuals. As long as they had a

dozen people fooled into thinking them hetero, they automatically got a significant charge each week—presto homo! This wouldn't work today unless the gay Cryptomancer lived or worked within a largely homophobic community.

**Generate a Major Charge:** A major charge can only be had from a massive fraud, something that convinces a lot of people.

**Taboo:** Eastern Cryptomancers can only tell the truth if they know their listener already knows or strongly suspects it. Saying “The sky is blue” won't rob an Eastern crypt of his charges, for example. However, they cannot tell the truth to someone who is completely ignorant of it, unless that person is known to them as another Cryptomancer. (That's one reason the German Cryptomantic conspiracy was stronger than the English for so long—its members could only be truly honest with one another. Not to say they always were, but they were at least allowed to be.)

**Random Magick Domain:** The Eastern school's concentration on truth and lies supports its random magick. Eastern crypts are very versatile when it comes to concealing the actual and revealing the fictional—or vice versa. At its most potent, the line between true and false can become so misty that intangibles pass from one side to the other. (A mundane example of this can be found in deep-cover operatives who begin to become what they pretended to be. A cop who infiltrated the KKK, for example, might find himself developing racist attitudes in spite of himself.)

**Starting Charges:** A beginning Cryptomancer starts out with one significant charge.

**Unique Limitation:** Every crypt casts Cryptomantic spells as if his Cryptomancy skill was 10 points lower than it is. If Ernst has Cryptomancy 40%, he casts the spells from his school as if he had Cryptomancy 30%. For the purposes of using the skill penumbra or casting rituals his skill is 40%, but due to the widespread doubt and uncertainty of modern life, Cryptomancy is less potent than it once was.

### Western School Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** The English school of

Cryptomancy pays more attention to the “secrecy” element of their philosophy. Consequently, they gain charges by learning secrets. A Western Cryptomancer can pick up a minor charge by noticing someone’s ATM code, by finding out that someone’s planning a surprise party for her husband, or by finding out just who it was that faxed his ass to the office manager. No charge is gained through a voluntary sharing of confidence: it’s necessary to learn the secret *in spite* of resistance. (A Cryptomantic priest, for example, wouldn’t rack up loads of charges by listening to confession because he’s putting forth no effort to ferret out the secrets—but a Cryptomancer *pretending* to be a priest would be set.) Naturally, using Cryptomantic magick to learn secrets directly is cheating and won’t yield a charge.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** A significant charge comes from learning an important secret—something that would cause real trauma (be it emotional, financial, or physical) to reveal. Uncovering a felony would probably count, for example. A *second* significant charge can be gained by revealing the secret to someone inclined to act on it. (If you find out that your neighbor lost his job and is only pretending to go to work because he hasn’t told his wife—that’s worth a charge. Telling your chiropractor about it won’t get you that second charge, but ratting him out to his family certainly would.)

**Generate a Major Charge:** Discover and widely publicize a secret that more than one person would kill to protect. For instance, if you got it in print that O.J. was framed, not by the LAPD, but by a murderous mystic cabal whose real target was O.J.’s personal paranormal pal Kato Kaelin—that would be worth a major charge. Unless you published it somewhere that no one would pay any attention or presented it as fiction, of course.

**Taboo:** An English-school Cryptomancer loses all his charges if he knowingly tells a direct lie. Lies of omission and half-truths are perfectly fine (not to mention a deft change of subject) but consciously saying something that is factually untrue violates taboo. (Interestingly, a Western Cryptomancer can lie like a rug in print or on paper. Only the *spoken* lie is taboo.)

**Random Magick Domain:** The Western crypts concentrate on secrets and concealment—not only of person or property, but of ideas. They are therefore empowered to defend concepts against discovery, or (conversely) to dig out the meanings hidden by others. At higher levels of skill, this can apply not only to that which is intentionally hidden by human beings, but to the concealed patterns of reality itself.

**Starting Charges:** A starting Western Cryptomancer has one significant charge.

**Unique Limitation:** Every crypt casts Cryptomantic spells as if his Cryptomancy skill was 10 points lower than it is. If James has Cryptomancy 40%, he casts the spells from his school as if he had Cryptomancy 30%. For the purposes of using the skill penumbra or casting rituals his skill is 40%, but thanks in part to Freud, Heisenberg, and Nixon, Cryptomancy is significantly weakened.

## Common Minor Formula Spells

These are minor spells that both schools may use. Each school also has its own custom minor spells, described later.

### Hands of the Gods

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This spell attunes the Cryptomancer to the unique vibrations of a particular Archetype. The adept briefly gains one of the benefits of being an Avatar; the universe flows his way for a while, in accordance to the tendencies of the chosen Archetype. In game terms, the crypt can make a single use of the lowest-level channel of a particular avatar. If the crypt uses this to take on the aspect of the Fool, for example, he could use the ability to find a common object. He would not have any of the Fool’s other channels, however, and he could only use the “object getting” power one time. However, it would automatically be a success.

There is an important limit on Hands of the Gods: the Cryptomancer can only gain the powers of an Archetype he knows about. Most Cryptomancers (if not all) are unaware of the true na-

ture of the Naked Goddess, so they are unable to channel her. Similarly, if an adept had never heard of the Demagogue, he would not be able to use the Demagogue's channel.

Both Cryptomantic sects retained knowledge of the Fool, the Pilgrim, the Savage, and the Merchant. The Eastern school had also learned of the Masterless Man, the Flying Woman, and the Mystic Hermaphrodite before being driven from Germany, while the English crypts have knowledge of the Executioner. Individual Cryptomancers have made their own observations, especially those who follow the English school.

### The Gods' Forgotten

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** The Cryptomancer must touch her target in order to cast this spell. (If this is being done in combat, use the modifiers described for the Epideromancer spell *Warping*—see UA, pp. 93–94.) When cast, the individual briefly vanishes from reality. Only the Cryptomancer remembers him being there, until he reappears. (This has similarities to the unnatural phenomena of “missing time” and “reality erase”—see UA, pp. 145–6.)

The disappearance doesn't last long—two combat rounds, to be precise. For each additional minor charge spent, this duration can be extended by one round. Seeing someone reappear after vanishing, and realizing they were “unhooked” from reality, is a rank-5 stress check against the Unnatural. (The caster doesn't make this check, but any friends of his who see it have to do so.) If the spell is cast on you, no time seems to pass—it's just a brief hiccup, like an editing error in a film. The spell's target only makes a rank-2 Unnatural stress check after coming back.

The vanished person reappears right where he vanished, unless something's been put in that space in the intervening time. If there's enough open space nearby, the person reappears there. If the blockage is light enough, it just gets batted aside when he comes back. If there's no way the obstruction is going to move, the person rematerializes in the closest open space.

### Hermes' Tongue

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** A Cryptomancer who casts this spell before telling a lie develops an uncanny memory for every detail of every lie he's told before. This is remarkably helpful for keeping your stories straight. It doesn't improve the Cryptomancer's Lie skill or increases his ability to look honest, but it does help prevent the contradictions and logic errors that give away so many untruths.

If a follower of the Western tradition uses Hermes' Tongue before telling a lie, that lie does not violate his taboo.

### Truth's Hammer

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** When you cast this spell and tell someone the truth, they know it. They may rationalize away something they actively *want* to disbelieve, but at some level they know that what you said is right and that they're living in denial. (Therefore, denying a truth that was backed up with Truth's Hammer requires a stress check against Self. The difficulty of the check depends on the truth told and how distressing it would be to acknowledge.)

Furthermore, followers of the Eastern Tradition may tell the truth with this spell and not violate their taboo by doing so.

### Eastern School Minor Formula Spells

These are unique to the Eastern school. Western Cryptomancers may not use them.

### Foolish Eyes

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** By casting this spell, the Cryptomancer can make one object look like another object of roughly the same size. A banana can look like a handgun or a book, an umbrella can appear to be a jeweled scepter, or a one dollar bill can look like a hundred. The effect lasts as long as the Cryptomancer is holding or touching the object,



is awake, and wants the illusion to continue. By spending another minor charge, the illusion can be extended for about three minutes after the crypt stops touching it or falls asleep.

This spell does not work on anything living, nor can an inanimate object be made to resemble a living being. Also, it's merely an illusion—a baseball bat turned into a sword will not cut anything, and a banana that looks like a handgun will not fire. Attempting to use the disguised object in a way that reveals the deception breaks the spell.

### **Sacred Voice**

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** To cast this spell, the Cryptomancer must lock eyes with his target. As long as the two of them maintain eye contact, the target cannot lie. (Blinking doesn't break the spell, but looking away does.) The target is under no compulsion to answer, but if he does speak, he can't knowingly tell an untruth.

### **Western School Minor Formula Spells**

These are unique to the Western school. Eastern Cryptomancers may not use them.

### **Eyes of Athena**

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This spell gives the caster insight into the skills and priorities of one person he looks at. By looking with the Eyes of Athena, a crypt can get a vague impression of what a person does well and how that person defines himself. If the spell is successfully cast, the GM gives the caster a description of the target's obsession skill. (GMs—don't just tell the name. No one in the real world has Hack Writer 42% as a skill. Instead, there are just people who sit around at word processors and make stuff up for kicks and nickels.) If the target has no obsession skill, the GM describes his highest skill or skills. Note that if the obsession skill is magical, it's especially important to show, not tell. (How

much cooler is it to say "you get a brief vision of her cutting her arm . . . but as the blood flows out, it spreads across her skin, turning her from black to white" than to say "she's an Epideromancer"?)

### **Eyes of Hecate**

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This spell lasts about an hour. While it's in effect, the crypt has the skill Aura Sight (see UA, p. 43) at a level equal to his Magick skill.

### **Common Significant Formula Spells**

These are significant spells that both schools may use. Each school also has its own custom significant spells, described later.

### **Bond of Secrets**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This spell must be entered into voluntarily by all participants. Everyone involved must share a secret. No one outside the circle of the spell is allowed to know the secret. It can be something as simple as a password or a secret handshake, but if it is ever discovered (or betrayed) the spell is broken. When the spell breaks, it's a rank-4 Isolation check for everyone involved. Furthermore, if someone deliberately breaks a Bond of Secrets (even under duress or torture) it's a rank-6 Self check.

While the spell is in effect, the participants in the bond can lend each other emotional strength, even if they're not physically present. Specifically, if any member of the group makes a stress check, and any other member of the group is more hardened in that category, the stressed member can resist the check as if he had one more hardened notch.

**Example:** Fabrice, Julio, and Gunter enter into a Bond of Secrets. Gunter has 3 hardened notches in Violence, as does Fabrice. Fabrice also has two hardened notches in the Unnatural. Julio has three hardened notches in the Unnatural and one in Helplessness.

	Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness
Fabrice	3	2	0
Julio	0	3	1
Gunter	3	0	0

If Fabrice is confronted with a rank-3 Violence check, the spell does him no good because no one else in the circle is more hardened than he is. If he would normally have to take a rank-3 Unnatural check, however, he is exempt because Julio's hardening shields him. Similarly, Gunter can avoid any rank-1 Helplessness check by falling back on Julio's experiences.

Obviously, this spell becomes more useful the more people are involved. However, each new person also makes the secret harder to keep, and becomes a threat to the entire spell.

### Heart of the Gods

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This is an improved version of Hands of the Gods. It still allows one use of an Avatar channel, but instead of the lowest rank of channels, the Cryptomancer can use the lowest *two* ranks of channels. If a skill roll is required, use Cryptomancy instead of the appropriate Avatar skill. As with Hands of the Gods, a thorough understanding of the archetype is required. It should also be noted that misfortune tends to befall Cryptomancers who frequently use this spell on archetypes whose nature goes contrary to their own lifestyle. A Cryptomancer slave dealer would be advised to eschew channeling the Flying Woman: borrowing power from Invisible Clergy and using it against that archetype's agenda is not a wise act, nor a safe one. In the same spirit, a land developer would not want to attract the attention of the ascended Savage.

### The Gods' Prison

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** This ramped-up version of The Gods' Forgotten removes a person for hours, not just moments. When cast, it knocks someone out of reali-

ty for a number of hours equal to the result of the roll. Its duration cannot be extended. The same stress checks are required for friends of the exile when he comes back: it's an effect of their mind suddenly remembering "Oh yeah, I had a good friend named John, and that weirdo made him fuckin' *vanish!*" Ordinary bystanders who see someone appear out of midair may make stress checks of their own.

### Sacred Invitation

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** While other Cryptomantic spells allow one to borrow the abilities of an Avatar, this spell allows the caster to temporarily *become* one. For twenty-four hours—no more, no less—the caster's Cryptomancy skill is replaced with an Avatar skill of the caster's choice. (Naturally, the caster can only assume the role of an Avatar he's familiar with—where he knows the taboos and behaviors.) The caster cannot cast Cryptomantic spells while the Sacred Invitation is in effect. However, he also cannot lose charges for violating Cryptomantic taboo. If he violates the Avatar restrictions and suffers a skill penalty, however, that same penalty is permanently applied to his Cryptomancy skill when it returns.

If a Cryptomancer is already an Avatar, this spell allows him to channel a second archetype on top of the first. There's a lot of benefits to this, of course, but the mental dissonance is powerful, requiring a rank-8 Self test.

### Celestial Blindness

**Cost:** 4 significant charges

**Effect:** While this spell is in effect, its victim cannot access or use any form of magickal power. An adept cursed with celestial blindness cannot cast spells or use random magick. An avatar under this spell cannot use channels. The only exception is ritual magick, but even there the cursed individual casts them like a normal person, not with the advantages of an adept or avatar.

This spell lasts a number of minutes equal to the caster's Soul stat. Note that it does not re-

move the lingering effects of spells, nor does it affect artifacts in the target's possession, nor does it protect the target against other people's magick. All it does is cut the victim off from their own spells or channels.

There is a thin silver lining to Celestial Blindness: while the spell is in effect, victim adepts may violate their taboos without losing charges. Similarly, avatars can go "out of character" without endangering their connection to the archetype—after all, the connection is already in abeyance.

## Eastern School Significant Formula Spells

These are unique to the Eastern school. Western Cryptomancers may not use them.

### Liar's Seed

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This effectively allows the Cryptomancer to lie without talking. By casting the spell, and then either touching or looking at its target, the Cryptomancer can place an untrue idea in that person's head. The person generally thinks it's his own idea. If the implanted lie is illogical or unpalatable for some reason, the target dismisses it as a wayward thought. The more reasonable and enticing the deception, the more likely the target is to believe it.

### Transformation

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** Once the German Cryptomancers had mastered the ability to make one thing look like another, it was only a matter of time before they gained the ability to make one thing *become* another. For a little while at least.

The restrictions on Foolish Eye apply to Transformation as well: only inanimate objects can be enchanted, the size must remain about the same, and the spell is broken if the caster falls asleep or lets go of the item. However, within those parameters a brick can become a cell phone, a baseball bat can turn into a razor-sharp sword, or a pumpkin can become a television—and the transformed item will be

fully functional. You can make a phone call with that brick, cut someone's head off with the baseball bat, or watch the news on the pumpkin.

For an additional minor charge, the transformation can extend for about three minutes after the adept releases the object or stops paying attention to it. (This is useful when turning a banana into a pistol, for example. Only the crypt who spends the extra minor charge can make the bullets last once they leave the pistol's barrel; three minutes later, the guy you shot has gunshot wounds filled with banana.)

## Western School Significant Formula Spells

These are unique to the Western school. Eastern Cryptomancers may not use them.

### Hermes' Blessing

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** Hermes' Blessing allows the comprehension of any spoken or written language. It doesn't teach you German or let you speak German, but with this spell on you, you would understand any German you heard or read.

Once cast, this spell lasts twenty-four hours. Every additional significant charge increases the duration by another day.

### Taste the Darkness

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** When a Cryptomancer casts this spell and looks at someone intensely, an indistinct impression forms, giving the sorcerer an inkling about that person's most closely kept secret. The spell does not *reveal* the secret, but it does give the taste of it. A closet drinker conveys shame, need, longing. A criminal who got away with it might smell of mingled fear, victory, pride, and shame. The general type of secret (sexual, political, historical, criminal) is revealed to this spell, as is the general motivation for keeping the secret (such as duty, fear, power or suspicion).



MATT HARPOUD

## Iconomancy (Idol-Based Magick)

Every people have their Gods, and ours are the famous. We may have abandoned the worship of Apollo, Isis, and Odin, but we sacrifice instead at the altars of Elvis, Marilyn, and JFK, or the revolutionary trinity of Che, Mao, and Lennon, or the twinned do-gooders Diana and Theresa. We all recognise their images; they have their attributes, their shrines, and their cults. Their faces stare down from our walls like household gods. They were once mortal, but now they have passed into a greater realm altogether.

In many cultures, a mortal becoming a god is no big shakes. The Chinese have always been particularly fond of deifying the famous. Quan Ti, the popular god of literature, warfare, and money—thus covering the three favorite Chinese pastimes—was a historical general, for instance. Often the purpose of deification was a pragmatic one; Mother Mu, a notorious elderly busybody, was deified immediately after her death by the Emperor and given the task of erasing the memories of

those about to be reborn, in order to counter a wave of Lotharios across China who were claiming to have been married to girls in previous lives in order to seduce them.

Unsurprisingly, a school of magick grew up around the worship of these individuals, seeking, much like the Naked Goddess cult, the remnants of their mortal lives, mimicking their actions, drawing out the contrast between their immortal and mortal status. But come the twentieth century, these adepts found that their mojo just wasn't working anymore. The old gods were too remote, details of their life too hard to come by. New gods had to be found, and the celebrities of the West provided exactly that. Rather than being called gods, they were now referred to as Idols.

Modern Iconomancy is most often practiced in Asia, though it is known in the U.S. Many Western Iconomancers have drawn inspiration from voodoo and santeria, and often use terms drawn from these religions—such as Rada and Petro, referring to the good and bad sides of an Idol. Iconomancers are a curious lot. Often they have little life

of their own, instead sublimating their desires through the slavish imitation of their Idols. This has led to them being nicknamed **stalkers**.

It should be emphasized that, unlike Pornomancy, Iconomancy is not dependent upon the idol in question being a member of the Invisible Clergy. It draws its power from public perception, not mystical reality; the Idols have no metaphysical existence outside of the Iconomancers. Many Iconomancers are or eventually become avatars of a type appropriate to their chosen idols, however. **Iconomancy Blast Style:** Iconomancy has no formalised blast. However, most Idols have a negative, destructive side—especially those who took their own lives—which can be focused upon an enemy. Often the effects mimic the manner of the Idol's death.

## Stats

All Iconomancy charges are dependent upon one particular Idol, and can only be used to cast magick that draws upon the power of that Idol. Iconomancers may worship and gain charges from multiple Idols, but tend to focus upon a single Idol for the purpose of garnering significant charges. You should record your charges along with the name of the Icon from which the power was drawn—such as “*1 Marilyn Minor, 2 Duke Significant.*”

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Perform a two-hour-long ritual of worship before an image or images of an Idol. Often, especially in the case of dead musicians, this involves song and dance. The duration needed is reduced considerably—to only fifteen minutes—if the ritual in question involves a significant rite of passage such as marriage, a baptism, or a funeral.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Discover some important fact, or acquire some item, that contradicts popular perception of the Idol or is an uncomfortable reminder of their humanity—such as a gun owned by John Lennon, or that Che Guevara's gaze into the distance was the result of constipation. Alternatively, permanently modify some part of your body to resemble your Idol. (A tattoo

of the idol will not suffice; we're talking plastic surgery or other gross bodily alteration here.)

**Generate a Major Charge:** Be present at the death of an individual who will later (at the GM/destiny's decision) become an Idol. Often this destiny is obvious; several famous assassinations are suspected to have been arranged specifically for this purpose. Some stalkers are just incredibly lucky, and happen to be present at the demise of somebody whose death will, in itself, make them famous. There are rumors about the paparazzi who witnessed the death of Princess Diana, but thus far they are only rumors.

**Taboo:** Iconomancers cannot become famous in their own right. If their image appears on any national medium—including the internet—they lose all their charges and cannot gain more charges until their image leaves the public domain.

**Random Magick Domain:** Iconomancers can produce any effect that their Idol, while alive, could, magnified to mythic dimensions.

**Starting Charges:** Iconomancers start with six minor charges based on Idols of their choice.

## Iconomancy Effects

Iconomancy, unlike most schools, does not have a list of standardized spells. Instead, adepts channel various Idols—famous, deceased individuals—and can produce effects appropriate to the public beliefs surrounding their Idol. Several sample Idols and some effects appropriate to them (capitalized and bolded for your convenience) are listed here; players should produce details of the Idols that their adepts particularly favor. Major effects are listed for these Idols, despite the impossibility of a PC ever obtaining one, as examples and because some old stalkers still carry a lovingly preserved major charge from one of these deaths. In general, a minor charge will get you a +10% shift to a skill appropriate to the Idol, three minor charges a reroll, and a significant charge allow a small permanent increase—say 2%, and not more than 10% in total for a given skill.

In order to qualify as an Idol, the person in question must be both famous and dead. Their

image should also be instantly recognizable to at least a hundred million individuals, and their name and life familiar. Kitchener, for instance, would not qualify; even though his face became widely known through famous recruiting posters, most people didn't have a clue who the face was. They must also be held in high esteem by a reasonable percentage of those who know of them; Hitler has not become an Idol, for instance. Finally, they must have died after World War Two, preferably tragically. Some Iconomancers are trying to modify the school to accommodate living Idols, but none have yet succeeded. One stalker has reportedly drawn upon Jack Dawson, however, an unremarkable stoker on the *Titanic* around whom a legend has been created by the recent movie, which heralds some interesting developments in the school. It should be noted that, strangely, no-one has yet been able to channel the Lizard King, Jim Morrison.

### Marilyn Monroe

Marilyn is the embodiment of barely concealed sexuality, charm, and wit. She may only be channelled, in Her positive aspect at least, by female Iconomancers or male transvestites; Her negative aspect may be drawn on by anyone. Many of Marilyn's effects resemble Pornomancer spells. She can be invoked for bonuses to skills involving seduction and appearance. A significant charge kicks up the **Short Skirt** and drives a man wild with temporary desire, lasting until the next sunrise or sunset, unless he makes a Self-6 check. **Her Way of Saying Thank You** invokes Marilyn in Her negative aspect for two significant charges; the spirit of Marilyn can be forced upon a female target, arousing in her, unless a Soul check is made, a strong desire for attention, sexual and otherwise, no matter what the source. A Major charge from Marilyn could cause anybody (or anything) to fall absolutely in love with the adept. Similar effects can be gained using the images of other female Hollywood stars of Marilyn's stature and fate.

### Charlie Chaplin

Chaplin's image is a powerful icon of the Fool, and he can be invoked for bonuses to clownish humour and charm. He is a surprisingly recent Icon, having only died in 1977. **The Great Dictator**, for two minor charges, allows the adept to publicly parody and humiliate a target to the degree that the victim receives a permanent -20% shift to any social dealings with anyone who's seen the adept's performance; beware large-scale performances, however, lest the school's taboo kick in. **Pratfall**, for two significant charges, reduces damage just taken from any source to zero, provided the player can describe some vaguely comic way for him to avoid the damage. ("Noticing my shoelaces are undone, I bend over just as the wrecking ball swings down and trip over my own feet!") A negative invocation, **Modern Times**, costing three significant charges, draws upon the sad memory of Chaplin's persecution by the House Un-American Activities Committee to strike out at anything marked with an American symbol. If used on an individual—such as one unlucky enough to be wearing a Stars and Stripes t-shirt—this does damage as a significant blast; if used on an inanimate object (such as a vehicle bearing an American flag) it destroys up to a man-sized amount of material completely.

### John F. Kennedy

JFK is the herald of a new age, the shining beacon of 1960s hope. He can be invoked for bonuses to skills involving inspiration, courage, and liberal values. Two minor charges gives a male adept JFK's legendary ability with women, **I'm Your President**, causing them to be naturally drawn into seductive conversation with him. A significant charge is needed for the **Family Look**, allowing the adept to appear to be a member of the Kennedy clan for the day. Invoked in His negative aspect for three significant charges, JFK can cause the **Curse of the Kennedys**. The target will, within the year, be embroiled in some public scandal involving a woman. Some believe Clinton to have

been a repeated target of said curse. A major charge from JFK could cause your magickal abilities to be permanently inherited by your descendents.

### **Mohandas Gandhi**

Gandhi-ji is a powerful saint respected by numerous religions, and can be invoked for bonuses to physical endurance and diplomacy. **Satyagraha (Passive Resistance)**, for two minor charges, can only be cast after the adept has taken, without resistance, a physical attack from the spell's target, and forces the attacker to cease attacking the adept and, indeed, immediately submit to any one reasonable demand. They can resist on a successful check against 10x their number of Hardened Violence marks. **Hunger Strike**, for three minor charges, allows the adept to go without food or drink for a week. **Embracing the Untouchable**, for a significant charge, causes any one socially excluded individual, such as a homeless man in the USA or an Arab in Israel, to be unthinkingly accepted as an equal for a day. On the negative side, **If India Wants A Massacre, She Shall Have It** channels Gandhi's responsibility for the bloodbath of Partition into a vicious stirring-up of mob sentiment, causing, at a cost of four significant charges, a bloody city-wide riot directed against any group of the adept's choosing—although there must be pre-existing resentment against the group.

### **Elvis Presley**

Presley is the King of Rock and Roll. Adepts who invoke Him are granted a fraction of his talent, allowing bonuses to musical and performance skills. **Love Me Tender**, costing two minor charges, will make the adept sexually irresistible to any one target for an hour; two significant charges makes this **Hunk of Burning Love** and has the same effect on any one gender. Four minor charges could produce **Join the Army**, which causes the target to abandon whatever they're doing and join up with the nearest civic organization—this could mean volunteering at a soup kitchen or manning phones for public television—for three hours after sign-up before the

victim comes to her senses. **Stalin in the Sky**, for two significant charges, calls on Presley's ecstatic vision of the dictator in a cloud formation to trigger a vision, chosen by the adept, in the mind of a target; the adept cannot control the effects of this vision, but a clever choice could result in all kinds of behavior or belief. For three significant charges, Presley can be channelled to produce the **Dionysian Pelvis Frenzy**, sending any crowd the adept is currently playing for into a frenzy of drink, sex, and quite possibly murder. Individual members of the crowd can only resist through a successful Mind check, reminding themselves of their rational nature. Invoked negatively, **Call Dr. Nick** for four significant charges sends the target into an uncontrolled drug and alcohol binge for six hours that causes wound points (from substance abuse or resulting mishaps) equal to the sum of the spell roll; a matched success does damage equal to the full amount of the roll. A major charge from Presley would allow you to escape death once, no matter how unlikely the circumstances.

### **Mao Tse Tung**

The power of the Great Helmsman is especially popular, unsurprisingly, among Chinese Iconomancers, and can be invoked in order to grant bonuses to skills dealing with direction, control, and organization. Three minor charges will evoke the memory of the **Long March**, allowing the caster to walk without tiring for as long as desired, the spell ending when he stops. For a significant charge, the power of Mao can subordinate any individual's will **For the Good of the State**, resulting in their willingness to follow any order from a superior, no matter how morally repulsive. This applies only to one order, the rightness of which will not be questioned unless another person directly challenges the victim, in which case they must also make a Self-8 check. Invoked negatively for two significant charges, **Collectivization** can inflict symptoms of famine upon a victim, doing damage as a standard significant blast and also adding up to fourteen pounds to the adept's weight.

### John Wayne

The spirit of the Duke lives on for some Iconomancers, who draw upon Wayne's renowned image to add to skills involving courage, determination, and sheer damn poise. Three minor charges can be spent for the effect of **True Grit**, which adds the caster's casting roll to his wound points for the remainder of the day. Any damage comes off these points first, and said damage is erased when the points go away. **Walk the Walk**, for a significant charge, imposes a deadly swagger into the adept's step which strikes cold fear into those unused to battle. Foes must make a Violence-3 check every time they attack him, and regardless of the results are at -10% to all attacks; the effect lasts for an hour. **They Nuked The Duke**, for three significant charges, negatively draws upon the bitter irony of Wayne's irradiation and fatal cancer by his beloved government during the making of *The Conqueror* too close to a former nuclear test site. It results in the target's unknowing betrayal by whatever organization—not individual—he loves most, within the next year. A major charge from Wayne might be used to make the adept permanently immune to failed results in Madness checks.

### Princess Diana

The People's Princess is the new saint of peace and compassion, a modern Kwan Yin or Virgin Mary, and can be channelled for bonuses to skills dealing with healing, aid, and empathy. For two minor charges, the adept or someone near to him can be **Touched by Her**, healing a number of wound points equal to the total of the casting roll; a significant charge ups this to the full number rolled (like the difference between a minor or a significant blast). It can also heal disease, at a cost proportional to the disease's severity. **Flowers**, for two significant charges, creates a blanket of roses—living if cast on soil, cut if not—that induce peaceful feelings in all around; a Violence-5 check must be passed to take aggressive action near them. Invoked negatively for two significant charges, **Fast Car** curses

the victim with a -30% shift to their Driving skill the next time they are in a dangerous situation on the road. A major charge from Diana might allow you to destroy all stocks of one particular type of weapon worldwide.

### Richard Nixon

Nixon's recent death and partial rehabilitation has allowed him to be channelled by certain Iconomancers of a right-wing political persuasion for bonuses to a wide range of interpersonal skills—diplomacy, acting, and outright lying being prominent. He is one of the darker Idols, and it is unwise to invoke him trivially. A rare positive invocation, **Breaking Down the Great Wall**, for two minor charges, grants the adept understanding of any one foreign culture, allowing him to avoid social blunders—for instance, it would allow an understanding of when it would be appropriate to bow in Japan. The knowledge gained lasts for a week. **Eighteen Minutes**, for a significant charge, blanks up to eighteen minutes' worth of video or audio footage containing the adept's image, anywhere in the world—a Major charge can delete actual memories.

Invoked negatively, **CREEP**, costing three significant charges, unleashes the forces of entropy upon an unsuspecting target, resulting in a number of vicious, though not physically harmful, setbacks equal to the tens digit of the adept's Iconomancy check, taking place over the next month. A car might break down at a crucial moment, or a valuable ally suddenly turn against the victim. These entropic forces are visible to those with Aura Sight as small gremlins with the faces of various members of the Nixon re-election committee, which sabotage, steal, and whisper rumors to dreamers. They can be destroyed using mundane weapons, if you can see them, but they are fast and have a vicious bite (Speed 65, Body 20, Dodge 30, Struggle 30, +3 damage with teeth). If the CREEP roll is a matched failure, the target is immediately made aware of the adept's attack on him, his name, and his current location. Such are the perils of Nixon's dark name.





## Infomancy

Infomancy concerns itself with the manipulation of encoded data to produce new information. The connections, combinations, and meanings that arise from such tampering generate novel insights and perspectives, which in turn generate magickal possibilities.

Modern society is thick with data. Endless streams of regulated and prefabricated information are continuously downloaded into public consciousness through TVs, radios, newspapers, books, and the internet. This mediascape blankets the perception of society. It directs, shapes, and often limits the meaningfulness of daily life. Infomancers harvest this field of word, image, and sound, stealing parts of the whole either selectively or randomly and splicing them into new pictures of reality. In doing so, they can change reality itself. These techniques are popularly known as culture jamming, and to adepts as hacking the *anima mundi*. Abracadata. Presto memetics.

The strength of Infomantic charges depends on three things: the degree of disruption and/or reconfiguration of the data, the significance of the information being manipulated, and the number of people who experience the jam. These factors work in combination to amplify the Infomancer's signal, increase the interference within the field of meaning, and, in turn, switch the transmitter (the adept) into a receiver of magickal power. In the case of a public hack some time may have to pass before the charge is accumulated. If the disruption is ongoing, however, it may continue to generate charges over time as long as a new audience experiences it.

The Infomancer cannot simply create the data being reconfigured. Creating and then jamming original information just adds more noise to the signal (or signal to the noise) rather than *changing* it. Making up something to portray a politician as an idiot is no good, but tweaking the politician's message to reveal its true idiocy is just fine.

For some Infomancers this style of magick is a deeply political pursuit involving the overthrow

of dominant ideological systems and the liberation of expression and communication. These dataactivists are often referred to as **infohighwaymen**. For others, Infomancy is a postmodern artform—the **dataists**. Others still are mischief-makers and pop-culture junkies, sometimes calling themselves **media barons**.

**Infomancy Blast Style:** The brain and nervous system is kind of like a personal home entertainment unit. Two spherical cameras for image-capture, a microphone on each side of the head for picking up audio, one big speaker on the front to project sound. Inside there's a fully equipped editing suite, graphic design software, and recording equipment. Transmission, reception, living media. And as such it is subject to being jammed, which is the function of the Infomancy blast. By screwing with the neurological signals in a target's brain the blast wreaks havoc on the body's internal perception of itself. The heart thinks it's a lung, the right leg starts acting like the left, and the fingers each move in a different direction. The end result is that all the conflicting information washes out into noise—or as far as the target is concerned, pain. It's a disturbing thing to watch (or maybe a little funny), like an epileptic fit on fast-forward.

## Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Disrupt and reconfigure your own experience of the media. Channel surf continuously for three hours straight. Follow the links on a chain of websites selected by some lunatic criteria until you hit a page written in a foreign language, or pornography, or a political candidate. Cut up the front page of a newspaper and rearrange the words until you get something autobiographical. Listen to a simultaneous recording of seven drive-time radio shows backwards.

Or perform a small-scale culture jam on a public source of information. Deface (or “facelift”) an outdoor ad in a way that exposes its implicit values. Blackout every other sentence on the front pages of a stack of newspapers. Post a suitably shocking doctored photo of a public figure at an intersection or on an internet news-

group. This technique may generate multiple charges over time, depending on its exposure.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Create a large-scale disaster in the public infocology. Hack a highly trafficked website and alter its text and/or graphics. Launch a computer virus that translates files into Esperanto. Disrupt a local TV or radio broadcast. Inject a critical phrase into the cover story of a widely read magazine. Conduct a city-wide poster campaign of celebrities being quoted out of context on sensitive topics. These types of jams may also rack up multiple charges over time, as well as attracting the attention of the authorities.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Detonate a media-bomb on a national scale. Jam the president's state-of-the-union address. Interfere with a live broadcast of the Super Bowl. Run a subversive anti-commercial in a prime-time slot. If you're good enough to go global, each nation you shock and/or amaze should get you a major charge.

**Taboo:** While carrying charges, your mind is tuned to a different frequency than the standard information signal. It's this non-linear, probabilistic state of awareness that allows you to tap your magick. If during this time you process a sufficient amount of “normal” information, the new wave collapses. Reading a book or article, watching a TV program or a movie, closely attending to a painting or photo, listening to a song, and so on, realigns your consciousness with the mundane world and drain your charges. Hearing live music or readings, or having a conversation for that matter, doesn't violate taboo; it's when the data is packaged and transmitted in a media format that it enters the realm of infomancy.

The danger zone for charge-loss depends on the quality and quantity of information being processed. A brief note isn't a problem, but if it reveals the answer to a question that's important to you it could be. A crude drawing is okay, unless it's something like a map or blueprint. A single advertisement doesn't have enough real information to pose a threat, but an infomercial would do it. Infomancers who try and push their bandwidth by watching all but the last thirty seconds of a

show or closing the book right before the last page gets burned. As long as the majority of the meaningful content has been absorbed, the taboo is breached. Even reading, viewing, or listening to a single set of data out of sequence can still trip you up. If you “get it,” you’ve lost it.

Music, televisions, pictures and the like that are in the background or periphery aren’t a concern as long as you don’t directly attend to them. **Random Magick Domain:** Infomancers operate through the transformation of ideas. They work magick that affects perception and cognition. Infomancy changes how people see things. It only mixes up what is already there; it doesn’t create or destroy, and it isn’t good for affecting the physical world.

Convincing a crowd that the burning match you’re holding is a raging fire. Making someone who is guilty of a crime believe that everyone is looking at them with suspicion. Transforming a drawing of a gun into the real thing—or at least making it look that way. Shooting someone with an illusory gun won’t actually do any damage, but the target might lay down on the spot *believing* they’ve been shot. Ideas can become real if people believe they’re true.

## Infomancy Minor Formula Spells

### Changing Channels

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** You can switch one skill rating with another for your next non-magickal action, including your Obsession skill (thus allowing for flip-flops). For an additional minor charge you can cast this spell on a willing target. And for a third minor charge you can switch channels on an unwilling target (though they get a Mind check to resist).

**Example:** You’ve been cornered in an alleyway by a nasty enforcer. It’ll take him two rounds to reach you. Not being much of a scrapper, you decide to blow your charges in the hopes of finding a version of this episode where you don’t get your butt smeared. In round one you switch your measly 10% in Flailing Wildly with your 60% in

Infomancy (including Obsession bonuses). In round two you spend three more charges to switch the enforcer’s Beat You Senseless skill at 70% with his 15% Poker skill (note that the first switch does not apply to the roll for casting this spell because it’s a magickal action—the switch hasn’t been used yet). In round three, when you and the enforcer square off, your Flailing Wildly skill is at 60% and his Beat You Senseless skill is at 15%. Of course it’s only for one round—so make it count.

### Download

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This spell allows you to transfer a copy of one of your skills into another person, while retaining the skill for yourself. The transfer involves rewriting the information of one of the target’s existing skills, effectively replacing it with your skill. The target’s skill must fall under the same stat as the skill you’re downloading. Their knowledge of French temporarily becomes your understanding of Physics. They cannot access the previous skill while the spell is in effect.

The download will last for one hour in relaxed situations, five minutes in tense situations, and five rounds during combat. If a situation intensifies the duration shifts downward accordingly. The reverse, however, does not hold if things calm down.

**Example:** You’ve downloaded your Computer Programming skill to a friend so that you can both work on deciphering an encrypted file. The transfer has overwritten his Grease Monkey skill. You’re not on a deadline or under pressure so this is a relaxed situation. For 20 minutes your work proceeds apace, when suddenly your office is stormed by a gun toting ass-kicker-for-hire who’s come for the file. While you move to fight him off your friend keeps working—with only five rounds of access to your programming skill. After four rounds of fancy mojo-slinging you send the hit man packing. The situation is relaxed again but your friend still has only the equivalent of one round left to use your skill.

**Narrowcast**

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** Transmit your thoughts to a specific person for up to 10 seconds or for one round during combat. This can include a series of words and/or images. Unless you identify yourself during the transmission, the target won't know where the information is coming from, only that the data suddenly appeared in their head.

By sending shocking, brutal, or offensive thoughts into someone's mind you can force them to make a stress check (see UA, p. 67) of some sort. The rank may be 1 or 2—your choice—but there is a catch: because you're willfully focusing on a traumatic experience, you must also make the stress check at the same level as the target.

**Scramble**

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This is the Infomancy minor blast. It stirs up a neurological storm in the target's brain. All sorts of conflicting and erratic signals get sent to their body, which hurts like heck.

**This Just In**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** By uncovering hidden synchronous cues in the media you can gather information about your immediate situation. You must be in the presence of some form of encoded information and must "mix it up" to pull out the prize. This includes such acts as random channel- or station-flipping to form sentences out of sound bites, tearing up a newspaper and scattering the pieces before you into non-linear poetry, and reading the names of chemicals from an ingredients label backwards until a word forms. The information you divine will be brief but useful, such as directions to a location, a phone or building number, or a name. It may require some deduction or tactical misperception on your part to apply it to your situation.

**ljack**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** This spell hijacks the audio media in your presence and in the presence of a person of your choosing to create a two-way communications link-up. You speak into a radio, television set, stereo, and so on, and the other person will hear your voice coming from a device at their location and *vice versa*. The two pieces of tech being co-opted need not be the same, but the media must be active in order for the spell to work. The TV must be on, the radio playing, a CD spinning. Your exchanges are audible to anyone in the immediate vicinity (depending on how loud the volume is) of the hijacked media source; the speaker's voice noticeably cuts in on the current soundstream.

The person on the other end of the line must be a willing participant—the spell does not work for eavesdropping. You get five minutes of airtime.

**Infomancy Significant Formula Spells****Doctored Records**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** You can alter the content of any single media artifact simply by touching it. You can add to, erase, or change a portion of the stored information, such as a scene in a movie, an article in a magazine, a song on a cassette, or a program on a disk. To affect the entire artifact (rewrite a novel, alter an entire hard drive, re-shoot the whole film) you must spend an additional significant charge. This spell only affects the single object you're touching, not every copy of the information. While it does not affect transmission signals in and of themselves, you could alter the hard source of the material, such as a videotape containing a sitcom at the network or the computer files for a web page. The change is permanent, subject of course to someone's later revisions or erasures.

### Negativland

**Cost:** 1 significant charge per hour

**Effect:** A scrambling field is generated around the target that prevents them from accessing or receiving information. Print smudges and blurs, phones cut out, computers crash, TVs show only static, and radios emit only noise. This effect also applies to anyone in the target's presence who is accessing the same sources, including anyone who is accessing information in the vicinity of the target (an adjacent room, for example) with the intent to relay it to them.

The field lasts for one hour per significant charge spent.

### Programmed Response

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** The target of this spell is subliminally programmed to react a certain way in the presence of a specific stimulus. The reaction must be a simple, direct form of behavior that doesn't require any real thought. They might start giggling uncontrollably at the sight of a tie, speak gibberish when dealing with women, drop whatever they're holding when they hear clapping, or run away from people wearing glasses.

The reaction can last up to three rounds and cause up to a -10% penalty on appropriate skill checks, as long as the stimulus is present. The response is a one-time affair; additional reactions require further programming. Targets cannot be programmed to inflict damage on themselves or their allies—directly, anyway. A target driving a car who begins counting his age on his fingers because he saw the moon could cause some serious hurt.

### Upload

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** You gain any skill that you do not already possess at 50% for five minutes or three rounds during combat. The new skill takes the place of an existing skill under the same stat. The GM

may select which skill is re-engineered or have you roll randomly.

### Endorsement

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** The target of this spell suddenly begins to actively promote a person or idea of your choosing. They speak highly of the "product," espousing its benefits and trying to convince others of its value. Given the opportunity, they attempt to associate with and gain the favor of the person, or apply the idea—so long as doing so doesn't put them at immediate risk.

This commercial runs for a period of three days. If the target somehow realizes, or is made to realize, that they've been hooked they may make a Mind roll to try and overcome the spell (once per hour, or once per round during combat).

This spell does not reduce the target to a nonstop blabbermouth. He will simply take every reasonable opportunity to spread the good word.

### Virus

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** The Infomancy significant blast is a higher-grade version of Scramble. The neurological disruption takes root in the target's brain and runs rampant through all of their cognitive and bio-control systems.

To calculate damage, roll for the blast as normal. If successful, the total of the two dice added together is how much damage the target takes each round until the amount equals the percentile number rolled. Excess damage above the roll is ignored.

**Example:** You drop Virus on a victim with a roll of 37. The target takes 10 (3 + 7) points of damage for three rounds and 7 points in the fourth round (10 × 3 = 30, plus the remaining 7 = 37).

The virus has the additional effect of causing a -5% penalty to all skill rolls attempted by the target while they are infected. However, at any point after the first round of the attack the target may take an action to make a Mind roll; if successful, they purge the virus and suffer no more ill effects.

### Big Brother is Watching

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** This spell allows you to conduct a form of surveillance on a specific individual over the course of one twenty-four-hour period. Whenever the target engages the media—by reading a paper, listening to a CD, watching television, and so on—you immediately know their location. Furthermore, you receive information about the location based on what senses the target is using to perceive the data. If they are listening to music you hear whatever

other sounds are present. If they are reading you get an image of their surroundings. TV provides both visual and audio information.

### Infomancy Major Effects

Permanently gain skills or bestow them on another. Change something's popularity with the public, for better or worse. Completely alter all records of a person or event. Access and process all information on a subject. Temporarily override a national medium.



MATT HARPOLO

### Irascimancy (Anger-Based Magic)

Anger is the greatest impetus for change. It is more immediate than love, more genuine than altruism, more sustainable than terror. Many other emotions make their crossroads through anger—grief leads there, as does hate—and the Irascimancer strives to harness the prime magickal energy that goes along with it. Wielded as a weapon or contained just beneath the surface, anger is at times almost a palpa-

ble thing that gives off a vibe and leaves its sticky signature in the air between friends and strangers alike.

Irascimancers generate charges by interposing themselves in arguments, conflicts, and confrontations. They cannot gain charges from a fight they mundanely benefit from, but instead soak up anger that's redirected at them or that is the result of their senseless aggression. A counselor or a conflict mediator is the perfect front for an Irascimancer trying to charge up.

The disadvantage to harnessing anger for magical charges is two-fold. Anger is exceptionally volatile and it is impossible to hold a significant charge for very long. An Irascimancer can't express his own anger without losing his charges, and must walk the fine line of holding the seething rage he has so painstakingly collected while not numbing himself down to the point that he becomes hardened to the riches of tragedy and injustice life has to offer. Anger is also exceptionally draining, serving as fuel for the magickal fire but burning out just as dramatically. Irascimancers live in a bi-polar state of being either flush with volatile energy or utterly drained, despondent, and exhausted. Irascimancers are sometimes called **furies**.

One universal restriction on Irascimancy is that it requires eye contact with the target. The person must see the Irascimancer and register his presence. Making split-second eye contact with someone you are passing on the street is enough, but an ambush from the shadows in a dark alley is not going to work. As evil as those telemarketers who call your house during dinner might be, they're safe from a fury's blast as long as they stay on the other end of the phone line. They'd probably get an earful, nonetheless; Irascimancy is all about confrontation.

Irascimancy attracts two kinds of people. The overwhelming majority of people attracted to this school of magick are former romantics: the saps, the softhearted, and those sentimental fools who are so easily wounded and swayed by passion. They're the people who expected more of the world than it would give them. In order to feel pain, betrayal, and eventually rage, one must first be slashed open at the softest part of one's soul. Immature practitioners are the impatient sort, firing back at the world that failed to live up to their expectations and making immediate change. Theirs is the world of bloody revolution. More-mature Irascimancers are far more threatening. These cold-hearted calculators can swallow their anger so far down that you could meet them for beers every week for a year and never suspect that they were plotting your destruction until that day

you meet their eyes and see the flash of righteous fury, about one whole second before your heart explodes in your chest. Irascimancers are grudgeholders of the highest order.

**Irascimancy Blast Style:** An Irascimancer's blast is wielded like a hateful stare turned solid. It works like a strike, from the inside. The victim of a blast is hit with red-hot pokers of pain centered in the torso; anger squeezes the heart, the stomach, or the guts, upsetting the natural flow and rhythm of those organs. The fury's blast might narrow a victim's windpipe like an asthma attack, fill his stomach with roiling bile and acid, twist his intestines with piercing, cramping spasms, or seize his heart in a vice-like grip. The victim of a fatal blast is squeezed until his organs are crushed or ruptured. It ain't pleasant, and it ain't instantaneous.

It is possible to gamble with the Irascimancer's blast spell for extra damage. After rolling to see if the blast is successful, you can choose to roll another die. If it's even, that damage gets added. If it's odd, the spell does *no* damage and the charge is lost as well. You can choose to add up to five dice in this fashion, even adding them one at a time once you see the result of the last roll—but any odd roll kills the effect immediately (see *The Evil Eye*, UA, p. 91). This blast is particularly effective against someone who is in a frenzy. When used on a target who has failed a stress check and is having a frenzy response, a number of extra damage dice are rolled equal to the level of the stress challenge the target failed. (**Example:** If your target just failed a rank-3 Violence challenge and is in a frenzy, you can roll three additional damage dice.)

## Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Generate one charge by making someone—anyone—angry with you in a way that doesn't mundanely benefit you. It's up to the GM as to what qualifies as angry, but it has to result in some level of personal discomfort and inconvenience. If you try to earn the bus driver's wrath by playing your radio loudly from the hand-

icapped seats, it doesn't earn you a charge if you wanted to get off the bus now anyway. Trampling the neighbor-lady's petunias won't gain you a charge unless she sees you doing it and confronts you about it; then it's only good for a charge if she demands recompense for what you've done or if you suffer some other inconvenience, such as her unwanted scrutiny and baleful stares. You cannot gain charges from a fight that you spent charges to start or to divert.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Hijack an existing argument between two or more people in which they turn their anger toward you, such as at a support group. "I think you're both acting like spoiled babies," is the type of comment that might turn the attention of a sparring husband and wife on you instead. Adding fuel to the fire only generates a charge if you get burned in the process; you can't spend charges to gain charges.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Manage to attract the attention of a crowd of people, at least one hundred-to-one against you. Political rallies, abortion protests, and South American soccer games are all potential charge-ups, though there is quite a great risk that extreme bodily harm can result from such encounters as well.

**Taboo:** You can't express anger, even about things that might really matter to you. That energy is earmarked—it's the battery from which you fuel your magick. Want to have an angry confrontation with the guy who royally screwed you? Better hope you're not carrying any charges, brother, because they're about to dissipate. Have to use your Rage passion? Tough luck—whether you succeed or not, your charges just burned up. (A tough GM might just go so far as to insist that the player stay true to his character's mindset and apply the penalty when the *player* spouts off because the pizza's late.)

**Random Magick Domain:** Irascimancers recognize that anger is the battering ram of human emotions. They enjoy feeling anger and they enjoy it when others are angry. Their power works by breaking open the barriers imposed on us by the rules of culture and civility, by redirecting primal energies. Irascimancy provides the bumper against

which the forces of nature can go ricocheting off in unexpected directions.

**Starting Charges:** New Irascimancers start with three minor charges.

## Irascimancy Minor Formula Spells

### Churlishness

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** Kids are in touch with their anger in a way that adults haven't quite had time to beat out of them. No one embraces the anger of the moment like a tantruming two-year-old or a surly, slighted teen. This spell taps into that long-forgotten powerhouse of childhood rage. The target becomes like an angry child, whose retorts are on the level of "You're not the boss of me!" and "Oh yeah? Well, you're stupid and I don't like you anymore." Glib comebacks and complicated manipulations take a back seat for one minute (or one combat round) to tears and foot-stomping. This does not stop a combat attack, but it reduces any verbal volley to youthful bluster.

### Enemy Roulette

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** Redirect a fight or argument that is already in progress. This simply turns the energy of the fight in a different direction. The new target can be either the next nearest person or, in the absence of a human target, could be an animal or an object. The spell lasts for two minutes, or two combat rounds.

### Zero Tolerance

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** The target of this spell spontaneously activates his Rage passion, with the usual dice benefits. Whatever that person's personal bogeyman is, whatever issue makes him see red, that's the thing that springs to mind. The target gets raving angry and might attack—verbally or physically—any person or thing at hand that has even the vaguest,



most irrational connection to his Rage passion. Depending on how irrational the sudden flare of anger is, or the severity of its results, the GM may assess a Self check against the bewildered but furious character.

### **Anger's Vice**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This is the Irascimancy minor blast. As described earlier, the organs in the target's torso are squeezed. This spell works on anything with functional organs; it's particularly effective against humans and animals. Demons, revenants and other non-physical entities aren't directly affected by this spell unless they are in possession of a body when it is cast. This blast can be gambled for more damage as noted earlier.

### **Imagined Sights**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** Perfect for starting a little trouble, this spell doesn't so much create false memories as it tints actual memories to be seen in the most malicious way possible. You trigger the spell by making a reference to a third party who becomes the focus of the target's rage. The third party does not have to be in the same physical vicinity or in your sight, but does have to have some connection to the target of the spell—the target will not become angry at someone he's never heard of or never had any contact with. The victims of this spell see even the most innocuous disappointment as part of a sinister and calculated personal attack. The target reacts to you as a neutral party, but something about your words reminds them of some minor irritation that they now see as a deliberate slight. "You know, now that I think about it, that bastard never did answer my e-mail. Who does he think he is, making me wait this way? I always knew he was jealous of my position, but if he thinks he's going to get away with this he's got another think coming!" They are driven to pursue the issue as long as you are in the vicinity, unless they are somehow stymied by circumstance for

longer than ten minutes; if that occurs, they suffer a rank-3 Helplessness check and the spell ends.

### **Rusty Dagger**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** The target of this spell suddenly believes that his buddy, partner, or cohort has just betrayed him. Like a rusty dagger in the heart, the victim feels betrayed and poisoned against someone else nearby whom he'd previously thought was on his side. If his buddy is holding a gun, he believes that gun is pointed at him; if security just burst through the door, he believes they're chasing him, and so on. The effect lasts for one minute or two combat rounds.

### **Little Book o' Grudges**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** When you cast this spell, pick someone who has wronged you in some way, even if you don't know the target's name ("That asshole who cut me off in traffic at Little Five Points!"). The person and their transgression are entered into whatever passes for your grudge book, whether that be a spiral notebook that fits in your pocket or a black leather-bound book locked with an elaborate silver clasp and wrapped in velvet under your pillow. The next time you cross paths with this person, their first die roll in your presence is at a -10% shift.

## **Irascimancy Significant Formula Spells**

### **Dividing Line**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** The old cliché that there is a thin line between love and hate is true enough to fuel this spell. When you cast this spell on a person, his dearest love becomes the target of his immediate wrath. The dearest love can be a person (his mother), a place (the old family homestead), an item (the journal he kept in Europe), or an organization (his church). The spell lasts for one hour.

When this spell is in effect, the person feels a need to lash out against that which he'd previously held dear. Perhaps he "realizes" that his mother has been manipulating him all along, or the diary records and glorifies a shameful episode of decadence and frivolity. If the object is immediately at hand, the target of the spell suffers from a compulsion to act against his love (whether by verbally assaulting his dear mother or by tearing pages out of the diary). If the compulsion cannot be immediately satisfied, the target might set off with the intention of acting on it but if he has to fly across the country to get to the old family homestead, the psychic dissonance of the situation will become apparent before he arrives. A person who has acted against his dearest love in this way will need to make a rank-4 stress check against Self once the spell ends. This spell's duration can be extended with the addition of another significant charge. The feeling of wrathfulness is an emotional impulse that can be resisted, but only with effort; a little anger is always going to leak out.

### Poison Pen

**Cost:** 1 significant charge, plus the charge cost of the imbued spell

**Effect:** This spell is a remnant of the days when the written word itself was afforded much greater significance than it is now. Words in the modern day are, as they say, cheap. The Poison Pen allows an Irascimancer to fling his fury far and wide by binding a spell into a letter, fax, or email which activates when the target reads it. The spell must still be cast, and the charges spent, while in eye contact with the intended victim. All charges must be spent at the same time; the Poison Pen and the specific spell that will take effect are cast simultaneously. Once the charges are spent, the message must be written and sent on its way within twenty-four hours. The imbued spell activates whenever the recipient reads the charged missive.

### Toil and Trouble

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** The target of this spell comes to believe that another person has stolen something from him that is rightfully his. The object in question does not have to be a tangible thing. It could be wealth, a job, another's respect, a friend, the last piece of cake, or God's blessing. The target will do whatever it takes to "get back" a little something from this thief, whether it's telling some cruel personal secret, passing on unfair criticism to someone else who matters (such as that person's spouse or boss), revealing that person's weakness for liquor, stealing his bible, or spitting in his drink. The caster suggests a particular victim to the target when the spell is cast, though the victim need only be described generally if the caster does not actually know the name—wife, boss, best friend, *etc.* If the target can not gain satisfaction before sunrise or sunset (whatever is more distant), the spell wears off.

### Withering Glare

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** Stops a person from continuing an action for one round. Withering Glare only works if you can make eye contact, at which point the target feels a jolt like the breath being forced from his body. On a successful Body check, the target may continue to act at a -30% shift.

### Fires of Fury

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** This is the Irascimancy significant blast. Unlike Anger's Vice, this spell can affect targets without working organs, as long as the target has something that could be considered a torso. This spell can affect clockworks, homunculi, and golems, for example.

### Thin Veil

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** This spell refers to the thin veil of civility that masks anger in polite society. When you cast this spell on a person, no matter how courteous

their behavior, people respond to them as if they are speaking through the clenched teeth of rage. This is a particularly good vengeance spell to use against that smooth-talking bastard who stole your girlfriend, or that two-faced politician who is trying to swing a deal that screws with your plans. The target of this spell is forced to use his soul-based skills such as Lying or Charm as if they were unskilled. The spell lasts for twenty-four hours.

### **Mob Mentality**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** There is strength in numbers, and for those times when the numbers count, someone has to serve as a catalyst for change. The caster must target the spell on himself and then give an impassioned statement to an already-assembled crowd. The speech must be concise and contain one motivating thought, such as “Voting for Brent MacBin is the only responsible choice for each of us assembled here tonight. Go out and do the

right thing!” Each person the caster is able to make eye contact with *while he is speaking* finds the oration deeply motivating and wildly endorses the caster’s plan of action. This spell is not effective through a television camera or other gadget meant to broadcast to masses of people. Likewise, it’s not possible for the caster to appeal to a stadium full of people with whom he can’t make individual eye contact, no matter how brief. Those people the caster wishes to sway with this spell must be able to both see and hear the Irascimancer clearly. The effect on those converted lasts for twenty-four hours—time to get to the voting booth!

### **Irascimancy Major Effects**

Bring about a revolution. Exact bloody vengeance upon a single figure whose actions have rankled the collective unconscious (Jeffrey Dahmer’s death in prison may have been such an act of retribution).



MATT HARPOLO

## Kleptomancy (Theft-Based Magick)

When you steal from someone, you take a portion of their energy and their power. The very act of taking something belonging to someone else and making it yours is a primal violation that everyone who steals or is stolen from knows far too well. Kleptomancers are merely people who have realized that the charge most thieves and all kleptomaniacs get from a successful theft can be used to create magick. Kleptomancers steal. Usually, they steal a lot. Most Kleptomancers are never at a loss for minor charges since the majority are actual kleptomaniacs who steal even when they don't need the charges or the items being stolen. For some Kleptomancers stealing anything works, but the most dedicated are particularly enamored with difficult and complex thefts. After all, stealing gold from Fort Knox is more impressive than stealing a box of crackers from a supermarket.

The central paradox of Kleptomancy is that it is never possible to steal enough. The theft itself is more important than what is being stolen.

More than one wealthy and powerful Kleptomancer has ended up in prison for stealing a cheap watch. Since Kleptomancers can actually steal magic from other magicians, the slang term for them is **power thieves**. Most adepts don't like Kleptomancers, and even fewer trust them.

**Kleptomancy Blast Style:** Kleptomancers steal some of their victim's life force. This is a very subtle blast. Without warning the victim feels weaker, throws his back out, or tears a ligament. In a more-damaging attack they may even have a sudden heart attack or hemorrhage. A medical examination reveals that something in the victim's body just gave way.

### Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Steal something. Anything will work as long as it is currently owned by someone, is regarded by the owner as having some value, and costs less than \$100. Stealing a candy wrapper from the trash doesn't count, but stealing a candy bar or even a pencil from a store or person does. However, the theft must be no-

ticed—or at least noticeable. Stealing a paper clip from a supply closet is never noticed, but if you steal one holding together someone's report your victim notices it pretty quickly.

As with generating any charges with Kleptomancy, if you are caught and must return the item you also lose the charge. If you have already spent that charge, you lose the next minor charge you gain. The power of theft works both ways. Also, no charges are generated from items which you steal using magick or which you hire someone else to steal. You can use magick to help with your getaway, but the theft itself must be purely personal and non-magickal. If you steal something minor from another adept of any school who currently has one or more minor charges, you gain *two* minor charges since you also steal one of hers.

**Generate A Significant Charge:** Steal something that is valued at \$100 but less than \$1,000,000. Stealing something worth \$200 will gain you one significant charge, as will stealing something worth \$100,000. If you are ever caught, you lose your next significant charge. If you steal something significant from another adept who currently has one or more significant charges, you gain *two* significant charges since you also steal one of hers.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Steal something of value that is absolutely, famously unique or something that costs at least a million dollars. If you are ever caught you lose one major charge; if you don't currently have any major charges you lose your next 10 significant charges. If you steal something major from another adept who currently has one or more major charges, you gain *two* major charges since you also steal one of hers.

**Taboo:** Kleptomancers have two taboos. If they are ever caught, they lose the charge they gained from the theft (not to mention the possibility that they end up in prison). However, the most serious taboo is that Kleptomancers can't stop stealing. Kleptomancers who go more than a week without successfully stealing something and not getting caught lose all of their charges. Once you are on this path you can literally never steal enough.

**Random Magick Domain:** Kleptomancy is about movement, misdirection, perception, and subtlety.

You can cause people to overlook or not recognize someone or something. You can also cause a door you need to get through to have been left unlocked, and you always lose your pursuers in a chase. Kleptomancy allows you to perform just about any feat of misdirection that a stage magician can, only better. Kleptomancy isn't about performing physically impossible feats or transforming items or people. You can hide in nearly plain sight, but you can't make a pig fly.

**Starting Charges:** Newly created Kleptomancers have four minor charges.

## Kleptomancy Minor Formula Spells

### Instant Locksmith

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** You can open any lock. All you need to do is fiddle with it for a minute or so and presto, it opens. This spell works on locks of all sorts, from cheap suitcase key locks to high-tech retina-print locks. If it keeps something shut, you can open it. Unfortunately, this spell does not deactivate any alarms or traps that may go off when the lock is opened. If a door or other opening is held shut by multiple locks then this spell must be used multiple times. If a door is welded shut or barred from the other side, this spell has no effect. This spell only opens locks that can be operated from where the caster is located. Only physical locks are affected; this does not give you the password to a computer or the PIN number to a bank card.

### Out to Lunch

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** The target of this spell temporarily loses track of what he was doing and stands around mildly confused. During this time the target won't notice much of what's going on unless it looks obviously important (fire, gunshots, being yelled at by her superior, *etc.*). This distraction only works for approximately fifteen seconds in normal circumstances, and only lasts for one

round in combat. This spell also ends as soon as someone known to the target tells her what she should be doing. However, you can use this spell to allow you to easily sneak past a distracted guard, or you could simply offer the guard a candy bar and walk on by like you know where you are going. Either way, the guard won't bother with you. If asked, the guard remembers that someone walked by him, but he won't remember what the person looked like.

### **Loser**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** You can cause someone to temporarily lose something. It doesn't actually make the item go away—it's just that no one can notice it's there. This item must be no larger than a purse or small briefcase, and the victim can't be currently using the item or have it in direct contact with her skin. You can make someone lose a gun in a holster, but not one that he is firing. For the next fifteen minutes the target won't be able to find the item, even if it's in his pocket or right in plain sight. No one else can find it, either, except for the Kleptomancer, who can either take it without being noticed or who can reveal it to those present, breaking the spell. Once the spell ends, the target suddenly remembers where the item is. (Note that while you can use this to steal something, you can't gain a charge from this theft.)

### **Steal Breath**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This is the Kleptomancy minor blast. Targets of this spell suddenly feel like they have had all of the wind knocked out of them. In addition to the damage caused by this spell, the target suddenly can't breathe and must desperately gasp for air. For the next full round the target of such an attack can do nothing except stagger, crawl, or merely lie still and attempt to breathe. However, one round later the target recovers his wind and can breathe and act normally. A medical exam of

the target reveals that he somehow experienced a throat spasm and pulled a muscle or two.

### **Detect Traces**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** You can pick up information about the previous owner of a stolen object. The more important the item is to the person, the more information you receive. Stealing a stapler from someone's desk gets you her name, a few images of her home and workplace, and nothing else. Stealing someone's favorite watch, wedding ring, or lucky rabbit's foot also reveals what the target's favorite type of food is, what bank she uses, an image of her favorite bar, and the fact that she is having an affair with the bartender. With the exception of the target's name, all information provided by this spell is fairly general. It is impossible to use this spell to obtain detailed information like internet passwords, safe combinations, or the name or address of that bartender. Essentially, this spell gives you a vague overview of the person's life with few actual specifics.

### **The Little Switcheroo**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** You can exchange the locations of any two small objects that you can see. Both objects must be of roughly the same size and shape, and neither can be larger than a grapefruit or a large handgun. You must be able to see both objects clearly, without external aid, so the objects must normally be no more than five yards from you. Also, objects that are firmly attached to another object by bolts, screws, nails, or other fasteners cannot be moved with this spell. You don't have to touch either object to work the spell. You simply gesture and they switch places with each other. If there isn't room for one of the objects to fit into the space left by the other object, the spell does not work. Also, the switch never occurs when anyone other than the caster is looking at either of the two objects. Once you cast the spell, the switch occurs the instant no one is looking at either object; even the blink of an eye is long enough.

## Kleptomancy Significant Formula Spells

### Downtime

**Cost:** 1 or 2 significant charges

**Effect:** You cast this spell and for the next half-hour electronic security suddenly cannot notice you. Alarm systems won't register your presence, security cameras won't show your image, and tamper alarms on locks won't register that you have opened them. Even infrared goggles do not reveal your presence. Best of all, the electronics act like they are functioning normally and show everything else without distortion. If you spend one significant charge this ability only affects you. However, if you spend two significant charges it also affects up to half a dozen companions, as long as none of them strays more than two or three yards away from you. The only problem with this ability is that you can't operate any electronic devices, including computers or modern cars. Such devices do not work for you. Even a telephone does not register you dialing it or speaking into it. You can still watch TV or read a watch dial, but you can't change channels or reset the watch until the spell ends. Anyone affected by this spell simply don't exist for any electronic device.

### Hide in Plain Sight

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** As long as you move slowly and don't attract attention to yourself, you can remain completely unnoticed; you aren't invisible, just ignored. Engaging in combat always attracts attention to yourself. If someone is actively searching for an intruder then they receive a -40% shift to all of their Notice checks to spot you. No one else has any chance of seeing you. However, this spell does not affect your reception in video cameras or your image reflected in mirrors (but see Downtime). It lasts for up to fifteen minutes but is canceled as soon as you enter combat, talk above a whisper, or otherwise draw attention to yourself.

### Stolen Disguise

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

If you steal an item of clothing or something else that is worn, you can impersonate the person you stole it from. You look, sound, and even smell exactly like the person whose clothing you stole for the next hour. Even the person's favorite dog believes that you are them. If you do not act in character, observers may think that the person is upset, ill, or even insane, but they are certain of your identity. The only limit on this spell is that you must steal something that the target wears frequently. The sweater she last wore 5 years ago won't work. This spell can be extended by thirty minutes for an additional significant charge. No re-roll is necessary: you simply need to spend that charge within half an hour after the spell was cast. This can be perpetuated indefinitely, providing you have the charges to keep it going.

### The Big Switcheroo

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** Like the Little Switcheroo, this spells allows you to exchange the locations of two objects you can see. The difference is that you can exchange any two objects or living creatures up to the size of people or motorcycles. As before, both objects must be of roughly similar size and shape, but can otherwise be quite different in composition and appearance. If desired, you can be one of the objects that is switched. You can only switch objects or people that you can see clearly without electronic or other artificial aid. You can switch something seen in a mirror, but not something seen on a television monitor. In general, you cannot switch objects further than twenty yards away because you cannot see them clearly enough. As with the Little Switcheroo, the actual exchange occurs at a moment when no one except the caster is looking at either individual or object.

### Steal Life

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** This is the Kleptomancy significant blast. It operates just like Steal Breath only it does significant-blast damage and the caster gains a small portion of the stolen life. When this spell is cast, the caster gains wound points equal to the sum of the dice, up to the caster's maximum. As stated above, when the blast is used on living targets they develop a sudden serious medical condition.

However, this spell can also be used against mechanical and electronic devices. It works on everything from a car to a computer. When used in this fashion a successful roll causes the device to break down. The better the roll, the worse the breakdown. A mechanical failure caused by a roll of 05% might require only a kick to repair, while a roll of 70% would send a car into the shop for major repairs. You do not heal wound points when you use this spell against a device.

### **Steal Memories**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** You can steal one of the target's memories. The target no longer remembers the incident and you do, exactly as if it happened to you. You must specify a memory that the target possesses. If she doesn't have such a memory you still waste one significant charge. "The memory of the combination to your safe" won't work, but "the memory of the last time you opened your safe" would work just fine. Stealing a seriously traumatic memory can cause the target to recover lost stress notches. However, you must then attempt to resist the same stress. Also, while you are aware that the memories you steal are not your own, suddenly having a new set of memories in your head is in itself a rather stressful experience. Each use of this spell requires a Self-5 check. You must also steal an item of personal value from the target to perform this spell, though you gain a minor charge for doing so. For purposes of this spell, a memory consists of an unbroken span of recalled time roughly similar to a scene in a movie; a memory of a summer spent abroad would be too much, but a conversation with a girl in a Budapest café during that summer would be fine.

### **You've Got a Rep**

**Cost:** 4 significant charges

**Effect:** You can temporarily steal someone's most intangible possession—her reputation. For the next twenty-four hours everyone reacts to you as if you had the same reputation as the person you stole it from and everyone treats your victim as if she had no reputation at all. This spell does not affect people's memories or knowledge of you or your victim, merely how they react to the two of you. The target's spouse and business contacts all remember who he is, but typically claim he is acting differently and respond to him as they would to a spouse or business partner who they didn't know particularly well. Even the target's dog treats her like a stranger. Similarly, security guards that have known the target for years start checking her badge and otherwise treating her like they are dealing with someone they had little experience with. Most targets of this spell rapidly become angry and defensive, further increasing the effect of the spell.

Similarly, while everyone remembers you they will suddenly start treating you according to the stolen reputation. This reputation affects everyone you meet, even total strangers. If your victim was known to be painfully honest and truthful, everyone assumes that you are the same way. However, unless you know someone's reputation well, you could be in for nasty surprises. If someone's reputation depends on who they are with, yours does also. If someone is known to his family as loving and kind, while his business partners know that he is a heartless double-crossing bastard, then your friends and family treat you as if you were loving and your business associates treat you like you're heartless and double-crossing. Also, you do not gain any portion of your target's memories or identity. The target's associates may treat you with the same degree of trustworthiness as they would the target, but they won't know your name or who you are. When the spell ends the reputations revert to normal, but all actions taken while the spell was in effect are remembered by everyone involved.



## Kleptomancy Major Effects

Make any object smaller than a large truck vanish permanently. Call any object smaller than a large truck into your possession. Instantly appear anywhere in the world you wish to be. Gain the abili-

ty to become unseen be people or electronics at will. Steal any single quality from someone. This quality can be anything from their memories, to their youth, their eyesight, or their musical talent. You permanently gain the quality you steal, and they permanently lose it.



THOMAS MANNING

## Oneiromancy (Delirium-Based Magick)

An old-school name with a new-wave face, Oneiromancy was once the classical magickal art of divination by means of dreams, used by the Greeks, Romans, and a slew of other dead cultures. No one's certain when that all went by the wayside, but it was certainly before the 20th century. Aside from some artifacts and dusty rituals, nothing remained of Oneiromancy. Until now.

The new-school Oneiromancers sprang onto the scene just a couple years ago, pioneering a kind of magick predicated on exhaustion and delirium. If the old world saw dreams as prophecies and visions then these new-wave dreamers view

dreams as a door and a tool—by walking the knife-edge between the waking world and physical collapse, Oneiromancers can script the dreams of others with feverish intensity. From there it is a small step to making them reality.

Oneiromancers gain charges by being sleep-deprived and physically exhausted. The more time an Oneiromancer spends exhausted, the more charges they accumulate. It's that simple. Of course, you have to deal with being half-conscious and messed up all the time, but that's the price of power. Oh, and don't ever slow down—all your mojo vanishes the moment you rest up, or if you snarf too much coffee and swerve back into total wakefulness. It's for their ass-draggin' appearance that those in the Underground

who've heard of Oneiromancers call them sleepwalkers.

Sleepwalking is a weird schtick. Adepts get to control perception, alter the environment, and twist minds inside-out, but they can't ever rest, sleep, or dream without exposing themselves to danger. Like Dipsomancers, an Oneiromancer has wildly fluctuating charge levels—but boozehounds just need a drink when they wake up. If an Oneiromancer gets knocked out it can be a long time before they even have one charge, making continued life an interesting proposition.

Like Pornomancers, Oneiromancers only come from one source: the performance group 101001101 (see p. xx). Any Oneiromancer must either be a member of the group, a former member, or one of the orphaned adepts that 101001101 periodically leaves in its wake.

**Oneiromancy Blast Style:** Nightmares, which kick in the next time the target sleeps. The sleepwalker doesn't design the content—the blast just walks into the target's mind and curls up around their subconscious, looking for the weakest areas. What results is so horrifyingly intense that the waking world doesn't seem real to the target anymore. This causes physical damage in whatever form the nightmare inflicts, and mental damage in the form of stress checks. Minor blasts inflict tortures like dreaming your fingernails are pulled off—and your hands come away bloody. Significant blasts have no experiential time limit; it's possible to dream you spent six months in a Vietnamese POW camp and wake up to find your body suffering from scurvy, tooth loss, and dysentery while your poor mind is spread across the inside of your skull like chunky salsa. God help those whom a sleepwalker lays more than one blast on before they take a nap.

The downside is that the Oneiromancer blast only works once the target is sleeping. Until then it simply waits, provoking insomnia in those wise enough to know what's waiting for them. The poor bastard has only two recourses: the sleepwalker can turn the hanging mojo off with a thought, or the victim can stay awake until the sleepwalker breaks his taboo and goes to

sleep herself. In either case, the blast dissipates harmlessly.

## Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Stay awake for an hour from the time you start being impaired by exhaustion. You get another charge every hour, on the hour, that you take an impairment penalty. See the boxed text on p. xx for a guide to how exhaustion works. If you negate the exhaustion penalty for the hour (by drinking coffee, for example) then you don't get that charge; you must suffer to power up.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Stay awake for twenty-four hours from the time you start being impaired by exhaustion. You get another significant charge every twenty-four hours thereafter.

**Generate a Major Charge:** In a strange throwback to the old-school Oneiromancers, a sleepwalker must speak and then witness a prophecy fulfilled to gain a major charge. No one is certain what the ground rules are, because the ones who do know are long dead, but it isn't easy—telling a guy he's about to come into some money and then handing him a quarter isn't going to do squat. The prophecy and its fulfillment must both be spontaneous and meaningful. There may be a new-wave way of gaining a major charge, but no one knows what it is.

**Taboo:** Rest. Any time your impairment from exhaustion hits zero, or you fall asleep or unconscious for any reason, you lose all the charges you've got. Nod off for a moment and you've got no charges. Drink a lot of coffee and accidentally drop your impairment to zero—oops, you're powerless. Using magick to act without your impairment penalty (like the spell Black Coffee) does not violate the taboo, but pretty much anything else leaves you running on empty.

**Random Magick Domain:** Visions, delirium, and exhaustion. The essence of Oneiromancy is perception, whether it's sensation, hallucination, or dreams made real. An Oneiromancer can use the warping of his own senses to change others. They can make you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste the impossible, but spend their time terrified of their

## Sleep Exhaustion

Oneiromancers have a kick-ass ability to really screw with the competition, if only they weren't so damn tuckered-out all the time. Here are the guidelines for modeling exhaustion in UA. They are exceedingly similar to the rules used for alcohol consumption, which may not be totally accurate but it makes the rules quick, playable, and easy to remember.

The average sleepwalker can stay awake 12 hours before incurring penalties. Now, we all know people who look chipper after 16 or 20 hours, but since sleepwalkers *want* to get tired, it hits them faster—they aren't entirely rooted in the waking world to begin with.

For every hour after 12 they take a cumulative -5 shift to Mind- and Speed-based skills, and at this point they start accumulating charges. The penalty also applies to any Soul-based skills that require attention to detail, and Body skills involving fast physical coordination like Fighting. The penalty can be stalled for every hour that they drink two cups of coffee, take a snort of cocaine, gobble two Vivarin, or use some other comparable quantity of stimulant (though don't forget that some uppers affect their stats—see UA, p. 138). Chugging four cups of coffee (or whatever) stalls impairment for two hours, so it's possible to front-load with stimulants and not have to worry about impairment for hours to come. Stimulants can also be used to erase existing penalties, at a rate of -5 removed per two cups of coffee, *etc.* An Oneiromancer with a -15 penalty could take two snorts of coke and drop back to a -5, or drink six cups of coffee and have zero impairment.

Things start catching up with them over time. After 20 hours, the penalty per hour increases by another -5. So if a sleepwalker gets busy and can't get enough caffeine in his 26th hour, he gets a -10 shift. After the 36th hour it's a -15 penalty, and it continues to accelerate by an additional -5 per eight hours above 36—the Oneiromancer needs to constantly be stimulated and cautious of his wakefulness or he nods off. GMs should feel free to impose partial penalties for sleepwalkers who don't do quite a good enough job of keeping their buzz lit.

**Example:** Mister X wakes up at 8 a.m. At 9 p.m. he takes his first -5 penalty (for the 8-9 p.m. hour). Three hours later, at midnight, he's racked up an additional -15 penalty for a total impairment of -20. 4-5 a.m. marks his 20th straight hour, by which time he'll have racked up a -50 impairment. (Had he been drinking two cups of coffee every hour from 8 p.m. onward, or wolfed down a total of 40 caffeine pills, he would not yet be suffering any impairment at all.)

Once the character has accumulated -50 points in total penalties, start making Body stat checks for him (with no penalty) every hour. If one is failed, the Oneiromancer has nodded off for a moment and now all his charges are gone. Even a moment of unconsciousness violates the taboo. In 101001101 this first lapse is called "being spent" and the Oneiromancer usually tries to slink away to safety so he can sleep.

Though it appears there is no upper limit to wakefulness if your character sat still and was attached to an IV cocaine drip, the GM should be devious. In reality sleep sneaks up on people, as anyone who has spent time cramming in college can attest. As your fatigue begins to play tricks on you it can become difficult to know what you were just doing a moment earlier, much less track whether or not you've been sleeping . . . and Oneiromancers love to sleep, even though it empties them. The penalties creep up, even to the cleverest. Once passed out, an Oneiromancer sleeps for 12 hours of intense REM dreaming so long as nothing disturbs him, and then the whole cycle starts over again.

One upside: because they are symbolically intertwined, sleep-exhaustion impairment never affects the Oneiromancy skill itself.

own dreams. What a Sleepwalker can't do is clarify—their magick obscures, alters, and distorts, but never directly informs. Despite being able to break your mind, an Oneiromancer would never be able to *read* your mind.

**Starting Charges:** New Oneiromancers get no charges, but all they need to do is wait.

## Oneiromancy Minor Formula Spells

### Black Coffee

**Cost:** 1 charge

**Effect:** You can perform your next action without your exhaustion penalty. If you use this in combat, remember that you need a round to cast the spell, and the next round you can take an action free of penalty.

**Alternate Effect:** If you fail an exhaustion-related Body check (usually against passing out) you can spontaneously attempt the spell. If the spell fails, you deal with the failed test. If the spell works you ignore the failure. This is essentially a magickal reflex that Oneiromancers pick up pretty quickly, and it tends to save their bacon.

### Forty Winks

**Cost:** 1 charge

**Effect:** You make someone momentarily nod off. This is perceived by the target as a temporary disorientation. Standing people won't fall, but wake with a start after a moment. (Tired people in a quiet situation might just *stay* asleep if they're sitting or lying comfortably; this is up to the GM.) If the target makes a check of any sort in the thirty seconds after the spell goes off, the first such check will be at -30%.

### Don't Close Your Eyes

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This is the Oneiromancy minor blast. It can only be cast on conscious people, and it will only kick in once the victim goes into natural sleep. It causes minor-blast physical damage in the

form of the victim's nightmare—slashed wrists, burn marks, bruises, or indefinable pain in cases where no overt violence was performed. The nightmare's content is beyond the control of the caster. It triggers a rank-5 Unnatural stress check, and another rank-5 challenge in whatever area the nightmare most applies to.

### Twiddle the Knobs

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** This spell lets you edit someone's perceptions as though you had access to a control panel in their head. You can change one setting (increasing the volume, decreasing brightness, changing hue so everybody starts turning green) for casting of the spell by up to 50%. Think of it like a television or stereo system: brightness, contrast, hue, bass, treble, and stereo separation are all viable knobs for twisting. The effects last until you sleep. Generally one application of this spell won't cause a skill penalty, but repeated applications certainly can, depending on the effect chosen. Madness checks are a possibility.

**Example:** Angel Rahyab drops four Twiddles on Dirk Allen. She decreases the available light he sees to 25% normal (two Twiddles—the first halves it to 50%, then the second halves that to 25%), cranks up his hearing half-again as loud (one Twiddle), and halves the treble (one Twiddle).

You can't create illusions or stimuli—other Oneiromancer spells do that. Remember that it takes one combat round to cast each Twiddle the Knobs. Note that Twiddle can be used on the sleepwalker himself, to heighten hearing in certain ranges, increase night vision, and many other applications devious players are probably already thinking of.

### I Can't Move

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** Give others your current exhaustion penalty. This works better the more tired you are—you can affect 1 person for every 10% of exhaustion impairment you have. You can stick it on

anybody in sight. Repeated castings are cumulative, so it's possible to knock people out with this spell. Your own exhaustion penalty does not decrease.

### **Subliminal Flash**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** You can grab any single sensory stimulus you like and implant it into the subject's subconscious. Unlike Entropomancy's Edit the World (see UA, p. 92) this is a change in sensory content, which the subject perceives as quick, subliminal flashes and clips. This results in a -10% shift to all of the target's rolls, or the caster can try to hone the effect by choosing a flash that the Oneiromancer knows will affect the target strongly (the smell of a lover's perfume, for example) and get a -20% shift. The spell lasts until the subject goes to sleep. Only by passing a Mind check will the subject actually recognize what he keeps seeing blink across his vision, or hearing whispered in his ears. Note that effective use of this spell in combination with other Oneiromancer spells can certainly cause additional stress checks.

## **Oneiromancy Significant Formula Spells**

### **No Sleep 'Til Brooklyn**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This is the Oneiromancy significant blast. It follows all the rules of the minor blast—it can only be cast on conscious people and only regular sleep sets it off. It does significant-blast damage, however, and causes a rank-5 Unnatural stress check for magickal attack as well as two rank-7 stress checks in areas that the nightmare touched on. A Brooklyn that made the victim think they had been trapped alone in a Soviet prison and found themselves eating their cellmates to stay alive would have stress checks in Isolation and Self as well as the Unnatural, for example. Yes, it's very unpleasant.

### **Shadows and Fog**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This spell makes you blend into your environment. After casting you can remain undetected so long as you do not engage in any sort of sudden movement (normal walking is okay) and don't traipse into an area where vanishing would be impossible—crowds, forests, and dark alleys are great, while an empty theater stage under hot lights is bad. People are at a -50% shift to see you if you are walking, and -70% if you are standing still and making some attempt to hide. This spell has no effect if you end up in a combat situation, but otherwise lasts until you go to sleep.

### **Dream Made Flesh**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** Makes everything a sleeping person is dreaming real. It's a troublesome spell, because the sleepwalker doesn't get to choose what happens—anything in the subject's dreamscape emerges to impose itself on the physical world, with no control over results. The emerging elements are real in a sense, but have little substance—they're more like animated images and puppets made of light than they are solid bodies. Nevertheless, they can cause stress checks depending on what is dredged up by the spell. This spell can also be used on people who are in a heightened trance-like state or who have a -50% exhaustion impairment. Note that these manifestations do not show up on any recorded media. You have to be there to witness them.

**Alternate Effect:** This spell can be combined with the Oneiromancer significant blast to inflict itself on everyone within 10 yards that is either in a rave-trance, sleeping, or hypnotized—in this case no actual damage is inflicted, but stress checks are possible. This is often used to create the terrifyingly beautiful denouements to an evening at 101001101 (see p. xx).

**In the Hole**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** This gruesome spell rips all of the victim's senses away, creating a perfect sensory-deprivation tank. The subject can not see, hear, smell, taste, or feel anything. This generally causes the collapse of the subject, and may provoke Isolation and Unnatural stress checks at the GM's discretion. The spell lasts for a number of rounds equal to the number in the ones place in the roll. You can resist the Hole by rolling under your Soul stat and discarding any total under 30 (unless the spell was cast during combat, in which case there is no minimum target). If you fail, at least you won't feel it when the sleepwalker pointblanks you, and you get to try again for every round you're still alive.

**Lucid Dreaming**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** Similar to the pornomancy spell Synchronicity, Lucid Dreaming allows the caster to put himself into a trance-like state which will take the sleepwalker to the solution he needs. The caster has no memory of the trip, and "wakes up" at the location, clue, or puzzle piece that provides an answer. Note that the caster's idea of the problem

he'd like a solution to and the spell's do not always coincide, and the "answer" may be symbolic. Dreams rarely speak clearly and the trance the Oneiromancer enters in this spell violates their taboo—so when they come out they won't have any mojo to count on.

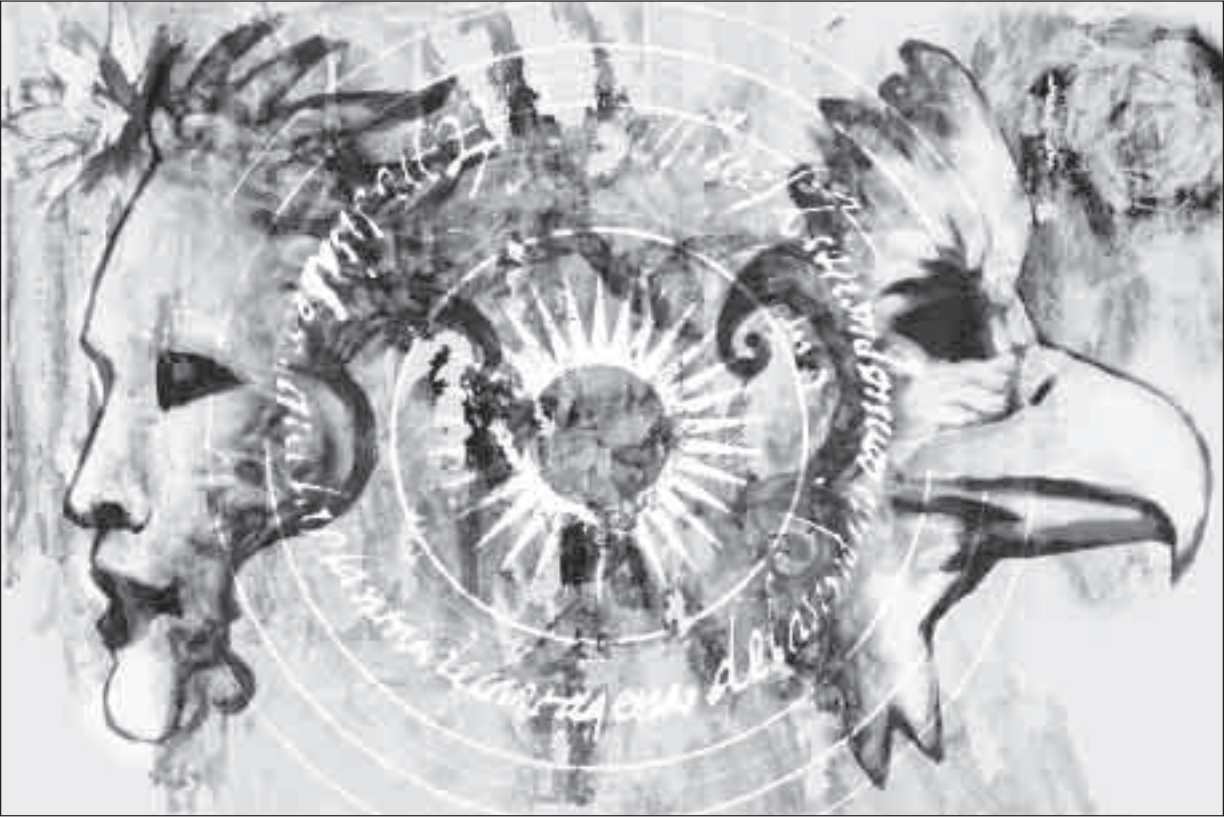
**Up All Night**

**Cost:** 2 significant charge

**Effect:** Allows the Oneiromancer to do something he definitely doesn't know how to do. This spell induces a half-sleeping state (additional -10% impairment) in which he can substitute his skill in Oneiromancy for any other one skill, so long as he has absolutely no useful knowledge of the skill. Becoming an expert driver isn't usually possible, as most sleepwalkers can already drive, but using Up All Night to do brain surgery is certainly plausible. The skill lasts an entire hour, but the additional impairment lasts as per usual.

**Oneiromancy Major Effects**

Making dreams completely and totally real, including fictional or mythical beings. Creating or resculpting a landscape to suit your tastes. See all possible futures clearly in a prophetic vision.



## Personamancy (Mask-Based Magick)

Since the beginning of ritual, masks have had power. They change who you are, allow you to assume the role of a beast, or a king, or a God. They were an integral part of most ancient drama, and still command attention today. Think of Zorro, of comic book superheroes, of bank robbers and guerillas—and, more recently, of Darth Vader and of Jason from *Halloween*. Masks, used properly, inspire both respect and fear.

A mask is more than a piece of wood or plastic. It is a whole new identity. The ancient Greek for “mask” was the same word as for “face”—donning the mask meant you became someone else entirely. Personamancy draws from this shifting of identities, the changing of the adept’s very self. It is closely linked to many senses of the word “play,” and all Personamancers are actors in one way or another. They are nicknamed **thespians**—pronounced with an emphasis on the first syllable.

Some Personamancy spells, rather than having an instantaneous effect, are in fact rituals that cre-

ate an artifact, keyed to the caster, out of a mask. Upon wearing this mask, the spell effect is automatically activated. These masks last as long as the Personamancer lives, providing a great source of power. They can only be worn by their maker. Their disadvantage, obviously, is that it is not always convenient to be wearing or carrying a mask, and they take some time and effort to create in the first place as the mask must be hand-crafted by the adept. Personamancy automatically includes a degree of craft skill, although any adept who develops a separate Mask-Crafting ability may create masks for one charge less; this requires a second successful Magick: Personamancy check per spell.

One of the dangers of Personamancy is becoming too closely identified with a role. At the GM’s discretion, a Personamancer who plays a part for too long may start having to make Self checks. If permanent madness results, the Personamancer identifies herself completely with the role she is playing.

**Personamancy Blast Style:** The victim begins to doubt their identity, torn apart by a thousand tiny

nagging doubts, insecurities, and worries. The physical damage manifests as blood-red cuts on the face of the target—and if it kills him, the blast completely tears his face off. This also forces a Self-5 check for the target.

## Stats

**Note:** Personamancy spells cannot be used to help in getting charges. As normal, no free lunches.

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Pretend, for an hour, to be something or somebody you are not. You must have an audience that is aware, at some level, that you are acting for this; sitting on your floor and pretending to be a flower doesn't cut it, nor does walking through a crowd disguised as someone else. Clearly being an actor is a good way to build charges, but a particularly vigorous game of Charades can also be helpful, or playing with children. It is possible to generate charges by acting in front of a mirror, effectively acting as your own audience. However, this tends to worsen the problem of identification discussed earlier. Another way to generate minor charges is to act deliberately contrary to one of your Passions, but this, obviously, racks up the Self checks viciously fast. Yet another way is to wear a mask for an entire day, including at least one lengthy appearance in public—a good way to get arrested, if you're not careful. Costume parties and Mardi Gras are godsend.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Pretend to be somebody else for a day, including convincing at least one person familiar with the person you're imitating. This imitation must not cease even out of the eyes of others.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Fool an audience of at least ten million people into thinking you are a major public figure—for instance, successfully posing as the President for a TV broadcast.

**Taboo:** If you ever show your truest self in front of another person—in other words, act on one of your Passions—you lose all the charges you're carrying.

**Random Magick Domain:** Personamancers deal with identity: who we are, who we pretend to be, who we wish we were. A thespian could cure your

alcoholism, revert you to childhood, or force you to make the same mistake over and over again.

**Starting Charges:** Newly created Personamancers have four minor charges.

## Personamancy Minor Formula Spells

### The Basics

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** The Personamancer takes on the facial appearance of any one individual of their choosing, who they must have had the chance to observe for at least five minutes. Multiple charges or castings affect voice, walk, and other such characteristics. Lasts for an hour.

### Here's My I.D.

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** Flash an I.D. card—library, video, police, it doesn't matter—at the target. Unless they make a Mind check at a -10% shift, they are convinced the card is what you say it is. "FBI, ma'am."

### I Play One on TV

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** Provided that you are acting like a member of a particular profession—doctor, lawyer, whatever—you gain any one appropriate skill at a level equal to your Magick: Personamancy. It wears off as soon as someone challenges your authority—"Are you really a plumber?" for instance, or asks for your credentials—or after a number of hours have passed equal to the sum of your spell roll.

### Strip The Mask

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** The Personamancer places her hands by someone else's face and lifts an imaginary mask from the target. His true self is immediately revealed for the next minute. The target is inclined to act as he really wishes and is incapable of deception regarding his true self: an uptight busi-



nessman suddenly snaps at his colleagues, a closeted gay man openly scopes out another male, a politician reveals that he hates the public. However, it can also be used to reveal demonic possession, unspeakable servants, and the like. It's said that one Personamancer cast this on the CEO of an unknown Fortune 100 company and revealed something ancient and terrible; not a single person in the room left sane.

### **Visage of Terror**

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** To the victim of this spell, you appear to lift a mask from your face, revealing a horrifying form beneath—what that form is depends upon the target's fears, although the most commonly reported horror is simply a blank, featureless face. This forces an Unnatural-8 stress check, and probably triggers the victim's Fear passion.

### **I Am, Therefore I Think**

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** You convince yourself, temporarily, that you are in fact the role you're playing, to the extent that attempts to use lie detection upon you, mundane or magical, automatically fail. The spell must be given a duration of up to a day when first cast, and cannot be cancelled before then. (After all, you don't know you're a Personamancer during that time, do you?) You gain skills based on abstract characteristics that your role would have, such as "Determined" or "Lovable Guy," but not the role's physical or intellectual abilities.

### **The Mirror Crack'd**

**Cost:** 4 minor charges

**Effect:** This is the Personamancy minor blast.

## **Personamancy Significant Formula Spells**

### **I Am Not Who I Am**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** Changes some significant aspect of your personality, chosen by you, until the next sunrise or sunset. It can make cowardly men brave, shy ones forward, or relieve an alcoholic's yearning for drink. For an extra charge, it can be cast on someone else, who gets to resist with a Soul check unless they are a willing target.

### **The Tulpa Method**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** For the next half-hour, you appear to be whoever the person viewing you expects you to be. If she's waiting for her lover, you look and speak like him; if she expects her worst enemy—well, you're it. This spell affects everybody who looks at you, even those who know you have the spell up—which can be confusing to your allies if they run into you unexpectedly. This functions in a very similar way to the Plutomancy spell I'm The Man, except that you do not necessarily appear as a figure of authority; you may well seem like an equal or even, in many cases, a servant.

### **Mask of the Man**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** Creates a permanent artifact mask of a human target chosen by you. While you wear this mask, you appear in all ways—shape, walk, voice, even petty physical mannerisms—to be your target. If you ever encounter your target when wearing this mask, it permanently loses its power.

Shaping a mask from scratch generally requires at least a few hours' effort for a paper mask, and a couple of days for a wooden one, providing you have the necessary crafting skills. A sympathetic item such as a personal possession or a body fragment belonging to the target (locks of hair are common, although blood and semen will do fine) is necessary for the spell's crafting. As with many sympathetic magicks, a body fragment (not a personal possession) of a target's close blood relative of the same sex also works.

**Identity Crisis**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** You must pretend to place an imaginary mask on the victim of this spell for it to work. For the next twenty-four hours, the victim appears, in a subtly irrational fashion, to be an impostor to all who know him. Nothing he can do completely convinces them otherwise; a nagging doubt always remains. The extent to which they believe he is an impostor depends on context. A spouse is likely to merely behave edgily, a security guard deny access, a bodyguard (especially one who knows about magick) arrest or even shoot. Obviously, this spell causes a lot of stress checks.

**Mask of the Beast**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** Creates a permanent artifact animal mask that grants a single ability of the beast it depicts at a level equal to your Personamancy skill—or raises an appropriate stat by 20%. For every three extra significant charges invested in the artifact's creation, an extra ability can be granted. A spider mask, for instance, might grant the ability to climb walls, provide superhuman agility, generate poison, or the power to spin webs from the adept's behind.

For an extra two charges, abilities attributed to the beast in legend may be granted; a badger mask might grant the power to strike people blind or a panther mask allow the adept to issue forth sweet breath, attracting other animals. Cat masks are quite common, sometimes with the attached ability to suck the breath from a baby, slaying the child and causing the adept to gain a significant charge. Obviously, only the most unscrupulous of adepts use this ability.

As with Mask of the Man, the mask must be hand-crafted and incorporate a body part of the appropriate animal; fur is most common, although tusks and teeth are also popular (a hinged and toothed mask imbued with a tiger or wolverine's bite can be extremely vicious, delivering the equivalent of firearm damage). It is possible, although extremely difficult, to create masks of entirely mythical

animals—this requires some body part which was, at some point, believed to belong to the legendary beast. For example, you could use a narwhal's horn dating from the Middle Ages to create a unicorn mask, or a dinosaur fossil to create a dragon mask.

**Mask of the God**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** Creates a permanent artifact mask that, when worn, temporarily makes you an avatar of your choice, with a skill equal to your Magick: Personamancy; while you wear it, you cannot use your Personamancy, just the avatar skill. This spell is more likely than any other to cause identity problems, as the power of the archetype is channelled through an unprepared mind. If the caster is in sympathy with that archetype anyway, problems are less likely to occur. Also, if you break the avatar's taboo while wearing the mask, the mask loses all its power, forever.

These masks are extremely beautiful, and require at least a week to craft, along with a successful Mask-Crafting skill check; if you don't have that skill, you can't make this mask. Failure does not waste the charges, but does require another week's work and fresh materials for another attempt. The sympathetic item required must come from a true avatar of the archetype, and be in some way associated with the archetype itself—such as a Fool's butterfly pendant. If the archetype itself is associated with masks, as in the case of the Executioner, and an avatar's symbolic mask can be obtained, the spell requires only 2 significant charges.

**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead**

**Cost:** 4 significant charges

**Effect:** The significant blast.

**Personamancy Major Effects**

Create a mask which convinces a madman he's sane, permanently steal the identity of another, create a mask which your spirit will inhabit after your death, force somebody else to become an avatar.



## Thanatomancy (Death-Based Magick)

Life and death: the ultimate dichotomy. One is necessary for the other. One is produced from the other. Death comes out of life, and life feeds on death. This paradox has fascinated humanity since the dawn of understanding, since humans first understood the difference between the two. The moment of transition, when a life ends and a death occurs, is the ultimate magickal moment. This is the threshold of being, when one thing changes into another, a movement between opposites. This is the source of what may be the oldest and most powerful magick in the world: Thanatomancy.

The power to end a life is the ultimate power over life. He who can destroy a thing, controls it. But the ending of a life must be conducted with the proper attitude of respect and reverence. One should not approach the ending of life lightly or unprepared. One must wrap the event in the ritual and ceremony that such a fundamental change deserves. Not for the Thanatomancer is the ran-

dom, messy, unconsidered death that happens in the world, for that shows a disregard for the importance of the event.

The earliest practitioners of this school were the priests of the old religions, who understood the importance of transactional sacrifice to change the world. Little, everyday magicks were fed by the day-to-day sacrifices of animals. When the greater magicks were required, a member of the village would give their life for the good of the community. When nothing else would do, the chieftain or the shaman would lay down their lives to produce the kind of magick that would preserve the lives of the tribe or destroy an overpowering enemy.

Thanatomancy is not much practiced these days, as the availability of willing human sacrifices has rather declined and the trail left by the murderous requirements of unwilling sacrifices would soon lead the authorities to the Thanatomancer. Even a rash of animal deaths in a given area would attract a lot of official attention to the adept's activities and, indirectly, to the rest

## Yes, It's As Horrifying As It Sounds

This school of magick is quite nasty. Practitioners tend to either be quite low-powered or else homicidal maniacs. The violence checks demanded by the acquisition of charges alone tend to make the Thanatomancers a pretty unsavory bunch. This school is intended primarily for GMCs, as they make wonderful bad guys for the players to defeat. Players and GMs may want to think twice before allowing PCs to practice this school of magick.

of the occult underground. The only real practitioners in western civilized areas are either circumspect people who only sacrifice animals, or flamboyant types who are generally hunted down by serial-killer task forces and soon killed or captured. It's the activities of these latter Thanatomancers that have earned the practitioners the nickname **Butchers**. The hunt for serial killer butchers generally ends with the adept either spending all his charges and being captured, or killing someone non-ritually and having all their charges drain away. If you think it's hard for a Thanatomancer to gain charges in the modern world, try picking one up in prison.

**Thanatomancy Blast Style:** Thanatomancers can place the deaths they inflict on their sacrifices onto another living creature. The manifestation of this is the spontaneous appearance on the target of the wounds that caused the sacrifice's death. A Thanatomancer who kills his sacrifices by cutting their throats and letting them bleed to death causes deep cuts to appear on the throat of the blast target, while one who burns his sacrifices alive causes blisters and charring to manifest on his target.

### Stats

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Sacrifice a small mammal or bird in a ritual lasting one hour. Sacrificial rituals are highly personal things, and each Thanatomancer has his own ritual. The ceremony culminates with the death of the helpless sacrifice. Once the sacrifice is dead, the Thanatomancer removes a small piece of the body, usually a claw, tooth, or feather, which serves as the container

for the charge until it is expended. The Thanatomancer needs to have this fetish with him to use the charge.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Sacrifice a person in a ritual lasting two hours. If the sacrifice is willing to die in this manner, the Thanatomancer gains two significant charges. For the sacrifice to be willing, it must consent to the sacrifice with a full knowledge of the pain and suffering it will endure during the ceremony. If it changes its mind at any point during the ritual, or calls for it to stop even once, the sacrifice is worth only a single charge; unwilling sacrifices grant the same. As with the minor charge, the Thanatomancer removes a fetish from the sacrifice to store the charge until he uses it.

**Generate a Major Charge:** Sacrifice a significant person in a ritual lasting twelve hours. A significant person may be someone famous, like the President of the United States or a movie star; someone mystically powerful, such as a godwalker or an adept holding a major charge; or someone personally important to the Thanatomancer, such as a spouse or child. As with the previous sacrifice, a willing victim is worth two charges. Again, the charge is stored in a fetish taken from the body of the sacrifice until it's used.

**Taboo:** Killing someone without using magick or the sacrifice ritual drains all charges from the Thanatomancer. If proper reverence and respect are not shown for death, its power deserts the Thanatomancer. Only by applying the knowledge of death that has been acquired through magick, or using the death to power the magick, can the Thanatomancer maintain

## A Note on Sacrificial Rituals

Sacrificial rituals are ceremonies that Thanatomancers use to sanctify the taking of a life, and to dedicate the death that they inflict to the purpose of their magick. Each Thanatomancer has a unique sacrificial ritual for each type of charge, based around similar themes and symbols, but increasing in complexity with the power of the charge acquired. Different Thanatomancers have very different rituals that are based on a personal understanding of the meaning of death, and may not use the rituals of another Thanatomancer to gain a charge. Ceremonies used by Thanatomancers do, however, contain certain common elements:

- **Personal Preparation:** The Thanatomancer must ritually prepare himself for the sacred duty ahead of him. This may range from fasting and prayer, through sweat lodges and bathing, to dressing in black leather with sharp metal studs: any act that readies the Thanatomancer mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for the sacrifice.
- **Preparation of the Sacrifice:** The subject of the sacrifice must be readied, as well. This may involve a ritual purification of the sacrifice, or the stalking and capture of the victim, or even the mutilation of the victim. The act must be one that renders the sacrifice appropriate to the Thanatomancer.
- **Reverence of Death:** The Thanatomancer must express, in some way meaningful to himself, his subservience to and service of death. This can be prayer, self-mutilation, or anything that, in the mind and heart of the Thanatomancer, shows the proper respect for this greatest of all mysteries.
- **Subjugation of the Victim:** To mirror the above requirement, the Thanatomancer must perform some act that establishes the inevitability of his death and the lack of appeal or mercy. The victim must be shown that he is going to die, with no chance of reprieve or rescue. Examples of this range from explaining the situation to the sacrifice to torturing the victim.
- **Execution of the Sacrifice:** The life of the sacrifice is ended. This qualifies as pointblanking (see UA, p. 61) and requires the stress checks specified in the rulebook, plus any checks required by the other acts of the sacrificial ceremony. Thanatomancers, especially the avid ones, tend to be rather unbalanced people.

It is suggested that each Thanatomancer character have a detailed description of his or her personal rituals of sacrifice, one for each type of charge, addressing each of the items above.

the delicate relationship with death that grants him power. Any other killing shows a disdain for the act of death, and a contempt for the event that is death.

**Random Magick Domain:** Thanatomancy is all about the transition from living to unliving. This grants the Thanatomancer the power to affect the mechanisms of life and to control the dead. Spiritual communication also falls into the bailiwick of the Thanatomancer.

**Starting Charges:** Beginning Thanatomancers

start play with five minor charges, and the appropriate fetishes to store them.

### Minor Formula Spells

#### Die Like a Dog

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This is the Thanatomancer minor blast. It causes the target to experience the death of a sacrificed animal. Because of the difference be-

tween the way an animal experiences the world and the way people do, this blast only does damage equal to the sum of the dice when cast on humans. Animals, however, receive damage equal to the Thanatometry roll. This blast is effective against non-corporeal beings, doing damage to the Soul stat.

### Salving the Soul

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** When this spell is cast, damage to the Soul stat of the target is healed. The amount healed is equal to the sum of the dice rolled when the spell is cast. The target does not need to have a corporeal form for the spell to affect it.

### The Healing Spirit

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** Like Salving the Soul, this is a healing spell. It heals physical damage equal to the sum of the dice rolled when the spell is cast. This type of magickal healing is known for the extensive scars that it leaves when it works.

### The Calling

**Cost:** 3 minor charges

**Effect:** The Calling summons a demon. It does not grant any sort of control, but does allow the Thanatomancer to communicate with the summoned spirit. No Thanatomancer has ever been able to summon the spirit of one whom he has killed personally, but other demons may be summoned by name.

### The Tethering

**Cost:** 4 minor charges

**Effect:** Choose a non-corporeal spirit in the area. This can be either a summoned spirit or one that just happens to be nearby. If the Thanatometry roll is a success and is higher than the Soul stat of the spirit, the spirit will be anchored to the area or to an object at hand indefi-

nitely. The Thanatomancer chooses the binding locale and it may be of any size. It must, however, have clearly defined boundaries: a room, a house, a city, a bottle, or the area covered by a rug. The spirit cannot leave the area, or affect anything outside of its boundaries.

### The Sundering

**Cost:** 5 minor charges

**Effect:** This spell splits a spirit from its current anchor. A possessing demon is cast out, one of the Snowfallen is sent on to her rest, a Split resumes its true form and leaves, a ghost haunting a house is sent back to the Cruel Ones. This spell has no effect on spirits who were never living, such as astral parasites or Carnals (see p. xx). Only those who once existed as human beings are affected.

## Significant Formula Spells

### Borrowed Death

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** Borrowed Death is the Thanatomancer significant blast spell. It causes the target to experience the death inflicted on the sacrifice that provided the charge to power this spell. It can be targeted on an insubstantial spirit, doing damage to its Soul stat. If cast on an animal, it only does damage equal to the sum of the dice.

### Compulsion

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** This spell forces a demon to obey the commands of the Thanatomancer. The effects last until the next midnight. Until that time the demon must follow the orders, answer the questions, and serve the purposes of the Thanatomancer. Demons tend not to like this, however, and do their best to twist the orders against the intent of their captor unless it also serves the purposes of the demon. Either way, the bondage

will be remembered and the demon will do its best to exact revenge. Therefore, many Thanatomancers try to destroy the demon before the spell expires.

### **Stolen Life**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** The Thanatomancer uses the life taken from the sacrifice to either become one year younger or to stop further aging for six months. This is the lure that draws people to this dark school: using this spell can grant you effective immortality, at the cost of one murder per year. Tempting stuff.

### **The Trade**

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** By giving up the power from the death of one of his sacrifices, the Thanatomancer can prevent the death of someone else. This must be cast at the moment that the beneficiary of the spell dies, whereupon the life-force stored in the Thanatomancer's fetish leaves instead of the life of the target. This can prevent death from any cause, and restores 10+1D10 wound points. Note that there is but one chance to cast this spell on any dying person. If the Thanatomancer misses the moment of death, the spell does not work.

### **The Binding**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** A nasty spell which binds a summoned demon into a freshly killed body. The demon can animate and operate the corpse but cannot voluntarily leave it. The body does not decay, but neither does it function as a living being: the heart does not beat, it doesn't need to breathe or eat, and it does not digest food. The demon can simulate these things with practice,

but damage done to the body, including the fatal wound, never heals. Destruction of the physical body either frees the demon or destroys it utterly, depending on the success of the Thanatomancy roll that bound the demon. If the roll is lower than the Soul stat of the demon, destruction of the body frees it. If the roll is higher than the Soul stat of the demon, the destruction of the body destroys the spirit of the demon, as well.

### **The Face of Death**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** The close association that the Thanatomancer has with death can be made visible to others. By casting this spell, the Thanatomancer makes his calling manifest to all who can see him: he becomes their personification of death. (This spell can be focused on a single target instead of everyone in sight, in which case it only costs 1 significant charge.) Those viewing this manifestation must make a rank-10 Helplessness check at being faced with the inevitability of their own mortality. Those who fail will be unable to attack the Thanatomancer; they must freeze or flee. If they roll a matched failure on their Helplessness check, they pass out for a number of minutes equal to the Soul stat of the Thanatomancer. If the check is a BOHICA, the victim suffers a heart attack, losing 75% of their total Wound Points, and collapsing. If he survives this, the cardiac patient must make a Body Roll at a -30 shift to keep from passing out. Medical attention is a real good idea at this point.

### **Thanatomancer Major Effects**

Kill a group of people, stop the aging process permanently, return to the prime of life, banish all ghosts in a city, raise an army of undead, eliminate a disease, resurrect a corpse, *etc.*



THOMAS MANNING

## Urbanomancy (City-Based Magick)

Cities are complicated things. Thousands upon thousands of people, acres upon acres of concrete, the sewers beneath, the skyscrapers above, the tangled ecology of rats and pigeons and the bloody feeding chain of the streets . . . all forming a huge, chaotic, living organism. Graffiti, traffic, crime, McDonalds, riots, parks—they all come together, if you look at them closely enough. Urbanomancers can see the patterns of the city, probe them, and push them into new shapes. They know that the true city is the one they see in their dreams, and that if they push hard enough, they can make those dreams come true.

Urbanomancers always know the mind of the crowd. They sense the thin gaps between districts, the gaps you can fall into. They keep albino alligators and mutated rats for pets. They know why time becomes a thick as treacle late at night on the subway. They know what happens if you knock on the small green door at 92nd and 4th. They read the names behind the names. They can send you to Rat's Alley, and you really don't want to see what's

been made from the dead men's bones. No Urbanomancer would ever go to St. John's Wood at night.

The word "urbanomancer" combines Greek and Latin, which annoys grammarians and old-school occultists. Most Urbanomancers couldn't care less, and think the correct term—"Polisurgist"—sounds dumb. Their nickname is **rats**.

Urbanomancers are much like Cliomancers: not much immediate use, but quite deadly over time. A GMC Urbanomancer (particularly a councilman, who can rack up *tons* of significant charges) against a PC group in his city would make for an interesting game. You can't find him, you can't get out, you keep ending up where he wants you to go, cars keep crashing near you . . .

**Urbanomancy Blast Style:** The city senses it doesn't like you and lashes out. Bricks dropped by builders, a dog's bite, a sly knife in the crowd, a car accident. It's a useful style for casual attacks, but it only works when the target is in the right place at the wrong time. If you put a blast on a target when you're in the middle of a fight in his house, it's not going to take effect until he drives to work tomor-



row. Of course, if your target's chasing you through a crowd it might be a little more immediate.

## Stats

**Note:** Each Urbanomancer may only ever be attuned to one city, which must contain at least one hundred thousand people.

**Generate a Minor Charge:** Study the city for four hours. This can be anything from walking the back alleys and noting down the patterns of the trash cans, to staring from your window at the faces in the crowd, to going over the crime and fire maps and finding how they spell out a word.

**Generate a Significant Charge:** Interfere with the city in a significant way—block a major intersection, cause a bomb scare, increase policing in a crime-ridden area, organize a concert that attracts thousands of people. Alternatively, get part of the city named after you—a street, a building. Depending on how important it is, this could bring you in anything from a charge a year to a charge a day, regularly. Town planner is a *fine* job for an Urbanomancer to have.

**Generate a Major Change:** Permanently change a large part of the city. Starting the Great Fire of London would qualify, or being responsible for the addition of a subway system. Alternatively, get the city renamed after you.

**Taboo:** An Urbanomancer's magick fails completely outside his chosen city, but he still retains his charges for when he returns. Being outside the city is uncomfortable, however—it's like a chain-smoker trying to go without a puff for a while. At first it's just unsettling. Then it gets uncomfortable. Eventually it gets downright unbearable—he needs his city. Force of habit and addictive sensation get the better of the Urbanomancer and he becomes an outright basket case. Skill shifts of -10% or -20% might be appropriate, depending on how long he's been away from his city, and perhaps Helplessness and Isolation checks might eventually be in order.

Also, an Urbanomancer loses all charges if he ever touches the earth on which his city is built. This means parks, for instance, are generally safe places for those hunted by a rat. Throwing a handful of local earth at the Urbanomancer also works.

**Random Magick Domain:** Anything that draws upon the forces of the city—not specific individuals, but groups, crowds, and so on. Gaining information about the city.

## Urbanomancy Minor Formula Spells

### Brick Chameleon

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** The Urbanomancer, as long as he remains still, appears to be a part of the urban landscape—a trash can, lamppost, or whatever. Many an Urbanomancer has spent a panicked moment standing very still and thinking “I’m a mailbox.”

### Day Pass

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** This allows you to use any public transport system completely free of charge and as effectively as possible. Barriers open, conductors fail to notice you, you make all your connections, and so on. It lasts for one journey to a desired destination, chosen at the outset of the spell. A minor variant of the spell lets you avoid heavy traffic while driving to your destination.

### Spraypaint

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** You can leave a message concealed in any part of the city, which can only be read by people meeting the qualifications you set when casting the spell (e.g. “Brenda Lawson” or “all members of the New Inquisition”). You must be in the area you intend to leave the message when you cast the spell. For 3 minor charges, you can have the message find your targets, which it will, provided they are in any city.

The message may take many forms—sprayed and seemingly illegible graffiti, chalk marks on the pavement, a song sung by passing children, the scurrying sound of rats that suddenly resolves itself into words. The message can be up to twenty words long. The downside to this spell is that any Urbanomancer passing the area where you left the mes-

sage knows Spraypaint has been used there, and can spend a minor charge to read the message himself. The message stays present for up to a week.

**Example:** Leo Theophilus, a noted London Urbanomancer, wishes to contact Dirk Allen. He casts Spraypaint, using 3 charges, and the ragged garbage around the Chicago park bench on which Allen is downing a bottle is blown by the wind for a few seconds, landing in the shape of words.

### Streetwise

**Cost:** 1 minor charge

**Effect:** You can divine any fact about either the city itself or the groups within it, but not about individual inhabitants. For instance, you could learn where all the entrances to a building are, what percentage of the population would support Jeffrey Archer for mayor, or which gang controls the area between Fortescue and Montgomery. You couldn't find out whether John Appleby would support Jeffrey Archer for mayor, or where he lived—though if you knew he was a member of, say, the Islington Freemasons, you could find out where they met and work from there.

### Face in the Crowd

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** You disappear into an existing crowd. Your features do not change—you just become incredibly hard to spot, another part of the great teeming mass of humanity. All attempts to follow or detect you are at a -50% shift until you leave the crowd.

### Vermin's Eyes

**Cost:** 2 minor charges

**Effect:** You must be holding a rat, pigeon, or similar urban animal to cast this spell. You now see through the eyes of that animal, and exert control over its actions, as long as the actions remain natural for that animal—for instance, you could direct a pigeon to a particular area, but not have it attack somebody. This effect lasts until you cancel it, but you can't switch back and forth between your vision and the animal's; as soon as you change back, the spell is over.

### Break Your Mother's Back

**Cost:** 3 minor charges.

**Effect:** This is the Urbanomancy minor blast. As described earlier, the city, through whatever normal-seeming means, attacks the target, if they're in a situation where harm could occur.

## Urbanomancy Significant Formula Spells

### Alone in the Crowd

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** The target of this spell becomes a pariah for a week. Nobody attacks her or openly mocks her, but everyone subtly avoids her. If she's in a crowd, people keep a distance of at least a foot. Conversations are kept as short and sharp as possible. The only exceptions are close friends and family, who treat the victim normally. Isolation and Helplessness checks are probably in order for the target.

### My Turf

**Cost:** 1 significant charge

**Effect:** An immensely important spell, this establishes your magical dominance over a particular area—this can be up to a square mile of the city, but it must be defined by clear boundaries, such as “Platt Fields” or “Kingsford.” You automatically sense any magick cast within that area, and can specify one other type of event to sense—criminal activity, a member of the Sect of the Naked Goddess entering, and so on; you can add additional types of event-sensing for one minor charge each. This spell has to be renewed once a week and can only be cast on one area at a time. Its desired effects may be revised, increased, or decreased at each renewal.

Use of My Turf on an area including a significant Cliomancy site allows the Urbanomancer to drain charges from that site as a Cliomancer would, if he's the first to harvest the site on a given day. However, a Cliomancer who gets there first and drains a charge from that site also drains—but doesn't receive—an equivalent charge from the Urbanomancer whose turf it is. Urban-

omancers and Cliomancers hate each other, and fight very subtle and very long magickal wars.

### **Wrong Turn**

**Cost:** 2 significant charges

**Effect:** This ensures that the target of the spell will, the next time they travel in the city, end up where you want them to provided it's a public area. This can be just by your house, in the middle of the worst part of town, whatever. As usual, crowds, traffic, and coincidence force this upon them. The only way it can be avoided is by the casting of a different travel spell. Resisting it any other way just makes the effects more obvious and possibly more painful—being hit by a car and taken by ambulance to just outside the adept's house, for instance, where the ambulance then breaks down.

### **The Madness of the Crowds**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** This starts a riot. There must be pre-existing tension over some issue—possibly created by Urbanomancy, admittedly—for the riot to explode around. You can specify the area in which the riot starts, and the targets against which the mob directs its wrath, which must be appropriate to the tension you drew upon to cast the spell. The riot forms within half an hour of you casting the spell, after which point it is completely out of your control.

### **Napoleon of Notting Hill**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** This causes any individual to rise to a position of power and respect within his neighborhood. This happens within three months. The exact position cannot be chosen by the caster, but depends upon the individual—it could be community spokesperson, gang leader, borough representative, head of the Neighborhood Watch, *etc.* You can cast this spell upon yourself. The target can quite happily go further on her own merits once given the initial boost, of course, or just as easily piss it all away once attained.

### **Ragged Warriors**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** Long-time homeless people begin to lose their identities, merging into the patterns of the city and becoming susceptible to Urbanomantic control. This spell lets the Urbanomancer send his mind out to control one of these poor wrecks. The target must be on the adept's Turf (see *My Turf*, p. xx) at the time of casting or be otherwise detectable by magick. The Urbanomancer cannot control his own body at the same time and must cancel the spell to return to himself. On the other hand, for every additional significant charge spent an extra homeless person can be controlled at the same time.

There are two downsides to this spell. First, the people controlled are not going to be fine physical specimens. The caster can use his own physical skills, but they'll be limited by the Body of the targets, which will likely be 20 + d10 or so. Second, it's an extremely evil and disturbing thing to do. It's a Self-6 check to cast, Self-7 to control more than one individual, and Self-8 and Helplessness-10 for the targets if they realize what's going on.

In some big cities, there are homeless who have lost all their individuality to this spell and who just sit there, rocking gently, until one Urbanomancer or another decides to use them as a tool.

**Example:** Julius, a corrupt councilman and Urbanomancer, is seriously annoyed by some intrepid PCs who are operating in his Turf one night. Spending six significant charges, he leaps into four street people and sends them against the PCs.

### **Traffic Accident**

**Cost:** 3 significant charges

**Effect:** This is the Urbanomancy significant blast.

### **Urbanomancy Major Effects**

Cause somebody to become mayor of a city, start riots in several cities across the world, lower the crime rate across America, form a new building in the middle of a city which nobody notices wasn't there before . . .

## Getting the Juice

Regardless of how they go about it, getting a charge is probably the most important event in any adept's day. Hence, few adepts can go very long without obsessively trying to get more. The following guidelines indicate how many minor and significant charges an adept of each school can expect to get in an average day, week, or month and how long they can keep them once they've gotten them. These guidelines are, needless to say, purely for the GM's convenience. ("Okay, after three weeks of research and beating up informants, you find out that the secret entrance to the Hancock Building is accessible during the new moon." "Sweet. How many charges did I gather during those three weeks?" "Uh . . .") Although many things can alter them upward (a rich magickal environment, a Mystically Significant Charge-Gathering Artifact) or downward (injury, competition from other dukes, a day job), all that's truly necessary to do either is GM fiat.

**Amoromancy:** In a large city an Amoromancer can most likely go out on the town and flirt every night. In smaller towns and cities, though, a heartbreaker rep sticks harder. In a full night on the town, she can pick up between 1-5 minors. If she's willing to forgo 2 minors a night and one or two nights a week, she might get 1 or 2 significant charges each week as well.

**Annihilomancy:** Most Annihilomancers own little and care about less. By wandering through large company offices, visiting friends, and slipping through open doors, sternos can light up 1-4 minor charges per day. Significant charges are trickier, requiring planning, but 2 a month should be possible without extreme effort.

**Bibliomancy:** Bibliomantic charges mostly depend on money. With a large income and [bibliofind.com](http://bibliofind.com), minor charges go for \$1200 a dozen. Without such resources, charges must come through book signings and lucky finds at used bookstores. In a large city, or a major college town, a bookworm can expect 2-5 minor charges in a week of signings and hunting in free time. 2 significant-charge books usually turn up at used bookstores each month at 10%-30% of value.

**Cliomancy:** History is everywhere if you know where to look, and Cliomancers know it. In even a reasonably interesting location (Memphis, Minneapolis) any Clio should have 1-4 minor charges she can get every morning as well as 2-3 significant sites that she is contesting with other Cliomancers. Major locations (Chicago, LA, London) are richer both in charges and competitors.

**Cryptomancy (Eastern):** Eastern Cryptomancers have a significant taboo restriction. Novice Cryptomancers break taboo about once a week through simple requests. After the taboo they should accumulate 3-5 minor charges a day and 1-3 significant charges if they can keep that many deceptions up and going..

**Cryptomancy (Western):** A Western Cryptomancer can easily pick up between 2 and 4 minor charges a day with little effort. Enterprising crypts can get many more. Significant charges are more work and 2 or 3 significant secrets a week is realistic.

**Dipsomancy:** A Dipsomancer's charges are as close as his hip flask, powerful as his cup, and last as long as an alcoholic buzz. A boozehound can get about 18-25 charges per day, but can't really keep them more than a day or two before he accidentally sleeps them off.

**Entropomancy:** A bodybag usually has trouble keeping the charges she gets on an everyday basis, since she often has to use them to get out of the jams she risks herself into. Over a week though, she should be able to accumulate between 3-7 minor charges and possibly a significant charge. All her other charges were probably spent recovering from the more painful risks of the week.

**Epideromancy:** Depending on how quickly you can heal, a flesh mage can generate plenty of charges.

On average it takes a week to heal the wounds from 4 minor charges or one significant charge without first aid. If you can patch up the wound yourself, this can go much higher depending on your First Aid skill, and how badly you actually hurt yourself.

**Iconomancy:** Investing free time brings Iconomantic dividends. Barring the occasional transition charge, an Iconomancer can expect to have time for 2-3 minor charges a day. Significant charges, however, generally require research. Stalkers can uncover 2-3 significant charges each month while holding a steady job. Full-time research may net between 5-8 charges a month.

**Infomancy:** Infomancers have little problem obtaining charges. However, in this media-saturated world, it's also difficult for them to retain them for more than a couple of days. An Infomancer can usually pick up 1-2 minor charges in a free day by modifying his own perceptions and 2-3 more by messing with others'. Significant charges require more work and planning, but dataist dedication can arrange between 5 and 8 significant media disruptions each month.

**Irascimancy:** Irascimancers have a significant problem retaining the charges that they get. Some can totally suppress their anger at any time. Most usually end up breaking taboo once or twice a month, particularly because they're almost constantly surrounded by anger. Still, furies can stoke 3-4 minor charges each day, and 1 or 2 significant charges each week.

**Kleptomancy:** Theft is both easy and common, and Kleptomancers are never at a loss for something to steal. A good thief could easily get 3-8 minor charges and 1-2 significant charges per day. A more casual Klepto could get 1-4 minor charges at work each week and 2-4 significant charges each month without getting caught.

**Mechanomancy:** Simple. Each day of Mechanomantic work is a minor charge towards the current project.

**Oneiromancy:** Sleepwalkers don't accumulate charges over time. They have a number of minor charges equal to the number of hours they've been increasing their impairment and a significant charge for every 24 hours they've been impaired.

**Personamancy:** Personamantic charges are not too difficult to get as an actor or street performer at virtually any time. While still holding a job or doing other research a Personamancer can get 2-6 minor charges per day and 1 or 2 significant charges each week, as long as they're willing to spend the time.

**Plutomancy:** Plutomantic charges strongly depend on income. If you can arrange to get weekly or daily pay for a lucrative job, many charges will flow in. In general, a wealthy Plutomancer can arrange to get 5-10 minor charges a week and 1-2 significant charges per week.

**Pornomancy:** The availability of willing partners empowers Pornomancy. A cabal of Pornomancers could easily rack up 2-4 significant charges every day. More isolated groups or individuals can arrange 1-2 minor charges per day and 1-2 significant charges each week with unknowing partners.

**Thanatomancy:** Thanatomancers have a real problem with publicity and escalation. If they're willing to lie low, they can quietly get 1-3 minor charges each day through small animal sacrifice and careful disposal. It's also possible to get a significant charge or two every year with tons of preparation. Five a year is Ted Bundy. Anything more than this will quickly come to the attention of the relevant authorities.

**Urbanomancy:** Urbanomancers must take care where they walk in their wanderings of their chosen city, as many of the most important urban landmarks are located within city parks or other natural spaces. Regardless, your average Urbanomancer can get 1-2 minor charges per day looking out the window or wandering around, and 3-4 significant charges a month without being identified as being responsible for the disruptions.



**C H A P T E R   T H R E E**  
**U N N A T U R A L**  
**B E I N G S**



"I NEVER SAW A WILD THING SORRY FOR ITSELF."  
—D.H. LAWRENCE

"THAT WHICH IS BORN IS BORN TO SUFFER.  
THAT WHICH IS MADE IS MADE TO SERVE."  
—PARACELSUS





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## Automata

The ultimate goal of many mechanomancers is to create life—a creature that cannot readily be distinguished from a natural, biological version of the creature. The highest peak of aspiration for such would-be Gepettos (or Frankensteins) is the creation of a mimicked *human* life.

Such progeny require a major charge to create, and are known as Automata. (The singular form is Automaton. In the U.S., this often gets corrupted into “Automatic.”) On the surface, they look like ordinary people. They even feel like human beings when they touch you—their skin feels like flesh, they have body heat and the fine coating of oil that allows humans to handle objects with such dexterity. However, Automata don’t sweat, they never get sick, and most of them need not eat, sleep, drink or excrete (though some can do so cosmetically). Some are anatomically correct: Others are smooth between their legs, like a Ken doll.

There are many different types of Automata, depending on what their creator designed them for. Some are combative in nature and (conse-

quently) may have installed blades or prongs that can pop out like a cat’s claws. Others are designed to be perfect mimicks of humans, right down to tears and the emotions that cause them. Indeed, some Automata *are* human beings—or were, before being transformed into unchanging mechanical beings by the application of clockwork magick.

Automata are the apex of the mechanomancer’s art: Consequently, they have some unique problems that other clockworks don’t face. For one thing, they face stress checks (along with the other perils of self-awareness). More prominently, they are universally plagued with engine limitations.

Basically, there are two ways to go when providing power for an Automaton. One is to build a regular power-train, which will eventually run down if not externally recharged. The other possibility (for those who have mastered free energy techniques) is to make an Automaton with a perpetual motion engine: the problem with this (as with all free energy engines) is that they tend to overcharge and explode eventually. (For more information on perpetual motion, see p. xx.)

Normal Automata have a particular action that powers them up: it could be something simple, like having their left knee bent and straightened fifty times. Some even have keys—they literally get wound up. Others require more complicated actions to recharge (the most prominent example being Catherine the Great’s Automaton Ivan, who was quite literally a sex machine).

These Automata usually need human help to get wound up—otherwise, it’s a zero-sum equation, with the energy they gain from bending their knee or turning the key paid for by the effort it takes them to complete the action. In the modern age, of course, many Automata have developed ways to recharge themselves with Rube Goldberg-style devices hooked to generators or car engines. The danger with such mechanical solutions is (again) overcharging.

Overcharging is more common with perpetual motion/free energy Automata, of course. Their problem isn’t getting someone to crank their knee



(or whatever). They get energy all the time: the problem is using the energy before it overwhelms their ability to contain it. If they can't do so—boom. (Thus, while free energy Automata are quite formidable, they don't tend to last as long as the regular models.)

The most interesting thing about Automata is that a number of them have become skilled mechanomancers in their own right. Some were taught, some learned themselves by examining their own mechanical guts, but all Automata seem to have the potential to learn Mechanomancy much more easily than human beings can.

Some have become so skilled that they have even been able to cannibalize their own parts in order to construct children. These second generation Automata are usually built fully grown, and can incorporate characteristics of two (or more) parents.

Regardless of their origin and nature, there are a few characteristics that Automata cannot disguise. One is that they have no auras. More prominent is a soft mechanical sound that accompanies them everywhere. It's a different sound for each Automaton: it could be a ticking sound, or a whirring grind, or a very faint tinkling.

Interestingly, all Automata can be destroyed by immobilization. Standard Automata run down if they can't get re-wound: free energy Automata overcharge until they explode.

### **Standard Automata (Significant)**

Tick tock, tick tock . . .

**Points:** 100-300  
**Body:** 20-120  
**Speed:** 20-120  
**Mind:** 20-70  
**Soul:** 20-60

Each regular Automaton has a pool of stored energy—typically they can hold enough for several weeks or even a month, but it can go as low as three days or as high as forty. In game terms, they have a number of points. When they get recharged (by whatever means) they gain a point. Every day of operation costs a point. Further-

more, they can choose to spend points on temporary bursts of speed or strength. Spending one point gives them a 10% increase in their Speed or Body stat for a single roll. Up to five points can be spent on a single roll, though this does make it possible to burn out pretty quick.

These points can also be used to increase some skills (GM's discretion—generally, only skills where increased speed and strength give a substantial advantage, like Athletics, Drive, Dodge, Struggle, or a Firearms skill). However, because this requires a finer touch, only a single point can be spent on a single action.

If an Automaton runs out of these energy points, it “winds down” and is unable to move, think or act until it gets some more points.

Automata share the normal clockwork resilience against bullets, but their power train can be vulnerable. Any time an Automaton takes damage from an attacker who rolled a match, their energy capacity drops by one point—permanently.

### **Perpetual Motion Automata (Significant)**

Tick tock, tick tock, BOOM!

**Points:** 100-300  
**Body:** 20-120  
**Speed:** 20-120  
**Mind:** 20-70  
**Soul:** 20-60

Like their less manic brethren, Perpetual Motion Automata have a pool of points that they use to operate. However, in their case, they receive two free points every day, automatically.

If an Automaton generates energy that surpasses their capacity, they take 1d10 of damage per excess point. Furthermore, they permanently lose a point of capacity for every die of this particular damage roll that comes up “1”. This can lead to a nasty chain reaction fairly fast—especially since, like other Automata, they can never hold more than 40 points and many can hold far less.

When a Perpetual Motion Automaton is destroyed, all its energy is released in a single burst of power, just like when any free energy clock-

## Perpetual Motion PCs

There are a few small changes to the rules if an automaton PC decides to take a perpetual motion engine. Any time the PC rolls a match on a Speed or Body based skill, total the dice and permanently add the result to the PC's Speed. When the PC's Speed stat reaches double the level it started at, boom. (You might want to note this down when the character is generated.)

work buys it. (The nuts and bolts of those bolts going nuts is described on p. xx.)

If a Perpetual Motion Automaton manages to wind down by spending all its energy, it is stuck, motionless, until someone decides to restart it by opening it up and making a successful Mechanomancy roll. (No simple knee crank for them!)

### Automata as Player Characters

A player may want to take an automaton as a character, if he's adventurous, or jaded, or if he subconsciously suspects that he's sexually inadequate and has to try to make unbeatable roleplaying game characters as some form of compensation. They can be a lot of fun, especially if your game is a little more high powered or "pulpy." Just a cautionary note to would-be world-beaters: An Automaton PC has a lot of advantages, but they come with unique disadvantages as well. (Not least of these is deep suspicion on the part of the Sleepers. Being jumpy and paranoid types, the Sleepers usually express this suspicion by either enslaving or dismantling any Automatic they can lay hands on.)

To create an automaton PC, simply follow the rules in *Unknown Armies*, as adjusted by the following Restrictions and Benefits.

#### Restrictions

- Automata do not have, and can never get, obsession skills. The only school of magick they can ever learn is Mechanomancy, and even that they can't obsess on (it just makes sense to them "naturally").
- The player only gets 200 points to build a character's stats with, not 220.
- Automata cannot have a Soul stat higher than 60.
- They can never be Avatars.
- Being mechanical beings, they do not naturally heal. They have to repair themselves, if they can.
- Since they have no evolved instincts and were not raised in any culture, Automata do not start with any of the normal free skills.
- Beneficial spells that specifically affect flesh, the mind, or only work on "living beings" do not affect Automata.
- Automata automatically start out with a failed notch in each of the following gauges: Self, Helplessness, The Unnatural.
- Every Automaton must purchase a Body skill in "Power Train." This has to be at least 3% and can never be more than 40%. This skill never gets rolled: it represents how many day's worth of power the Automaton can hold. If this skill is ever reduced to 0%, the Automaton dies.
- Every day, the Automaton must expend one point of power just to survive and keep moving.

#### Advantages

- Guns do damage like hand to hand attacks, because Automatics don't have an integrated blood and nervous system like human beings.
- Spells that specifically affect the flesh, the mind, or only work on "living beings" do not affect Automata. (If there's any question, the GM decides and is perfectly free to contradict herself at a later date.)
- Automata automatically start out with a hardened notch in each of the following gauges:

- Self, Helplessness and The Unnatural.
- Automata start out with a Mind based skill in “Mechanical Tinkering” at 30%. Naturally, this skill does not work on electrical or high tech devices. A car or a wind-up alarm clock could be fixed: a VCR could not.
  - Automata can fix themselves. If the Automaton spends an entire day absorbed in self-repair, it can make either a Mechanical Tinkering or Mechanomancy roll. If the roll is successful, the Automaton gains back hit points equal to the sum of the dice (so if you rolled a 14, your Automaton would repair 5 points of damage). This assumes the Automaton has privacy, tools, and some easily obtained spare parts, of course. Furthermore, seeing the Automaton at work can be cause for a Madness check.

- Unlike normal, starting characters, a beginning Automaton character can have stats higher than 70 and skills higher than 55%.

Fitting an automatic into a group can be easy or hard, depending on the narrative structure. If the PCs are all the lackeys of an Unspeakable Servant that is free of its onetime master’s bondage and now strives to achieve some unguessable end, integration is pretty simple: An Unspeakable Servant might have decades to recruit agents, and would certainly recognize the utility of an Automaton. Similarly, at least two Automatics have signed on with Alex Abel. They’re not even out on the streets, putting their metal carcasses on the line for the big boss man: He just wants his one mechanomancer hiring to examine them. As far as Abel knows, he might have other Auto-

## Free Energy Machines

Every half-bright physicist knows that you can’t create energy *ex nihilo*—that it’s a violation of the laws of nature to get more energy out of a system than went into it. It just doesn’t happen: violates Newtonian law. Nuh uh, no way, thanks for playing.

Mechanomancers, on the other hand, know that physicists are full of bullshit and that it’s not that hard to trick the universe into bleeding a little extra energy into a system here and there. The result is called a “free energy” machine—a device that, once started, runs forever and gets faster as it goes.

The drawback to free energy machines is not that they’re impossible. The problem is, they’re unstable. For instance, suppose you have an engine that drives a steel wheel in a circle. Because it’s a free energy machine, the wheel gets 10% faster every day. That means that it doubles in speed every 10 days. If it starts out at a leisurely one revolution per minute, it speeds up to 2rpm in ten days, then 4rpm in twenty and 8 and thirty. That’s not so bad. But it’s an asymptotic function. (Great word, eh? It means “something that doesn’t just get steadily faster, it gets faster at a faster rate.”) Our steel wheel hits over *a million revolutions per minute* after only six months. Or it would if it hadn’t passed the tolerances of its materials long before that, burned up all its lubricants, melted the bolts holding it down, and shot through the dim-bulb mechanomancer’s basement wall.

There are all kinds of ways to vent or harness the extra energy, but you can only fight geometric progression for so long before it overwhelms you with sheer math. On the other hand, sometimes you *want* your clockwork to have a short life and a violent death. In that case, free energy is ideal.

Rules-wise, it takes an extra significant charge to put a free energy engine in a clockwork. Whenever that clockwork rolls a match, the total of the dice is added to the clockwork’s Speed score—permanently. When the clockwork’s Speed score hits or surpasses *double* its initial Speed score, it blows up. Roll one die for every ten points of Speed the clockwork has, up to a maximum of ten. Everyone within ten feet takes the total in damage. Everyone within twenty feet takes half the damage. (GMs may adjust this for people who are shielded, dodging, protected by the corpses of their colleagues, *etc.*)

matics in TNI who just haven't identified themselves as such.

If your narrative structure is less immediately paranormal, an Automaton might be less suitable—or it might just be less open about its true nature.

There's another option open to mature players who really trust their GM. If a player has opted to have a character without an obsession (for whatever reason), the GM may decide that the character is an Automaton and *doesn't know it*. (The scenario book *One Shots* contains something of this nature.) It takes quite a bit of narrative hopscotching to explain how such a being could be ignorant of its nature and still be unattached to its maker, but it's far from impossible. Finding out, however, is a rank-10 Self challenge.

## Carnals

Sex crimes leave a foul taint on the place where they've been committed. When the crime is particularly violent and brutal, this taint may be strong enough to give birth to a carnal. Carnals are the physical embodiments of the psychic residue left by sexual violation. They appear as abominations of moist, pulsing flesh contorted in violent, corrupt, and often vaguely suggestive shapes. Witnesses' accounts speak of veiny bags of skin, writhing tentacles, and barbed protrusions of bone and cartilage. They often excrete glistening fluids with a damp, musky odor. Carnals may bear some twisted resemblance to the features of the crime that spawned them.

Carnals are solitary, haunting an area within a few city blocks of where the crime took place. They manifest every few weeks to re-enact the assault in bizarre ways. This most often takes the form of a savage attack on a target that has some physical, historical, or psychological similarity to the original victim. The carnal overwhelms their prey and ravages the body, usually resulting in a bloody death. Between assaults, carnals are immaterial; the power of the trauma, once spent, needs time to build again before it is strong enough to make them corporeal.



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Carnals may be attacked by physical and magickal means when they are in their material form. Reducing them to 0 wound points destroys their current body—which then disappears—but it does not remove the psychic scar of the crime. Within a few weeks, the carnal appears again. It is speculated by some that a type of exorcism may be possible to heal the lingering damage of the crime and permanently banish the carnal. This would most likely require a magickal act that somehow involves making peace with the original event that created the carnal. Alternately, it may be possible to fight carnals on the astral plane, or to capture or damage their “souls” via magickal means. They can be summoned like demons, but only if the summoning occurs in the location of the crime and if the summoner specifically knows what it is he is calling up; otherwise, a demon will show up instead. Carnals have too little sense of identity for a summoner to latch onto casually.

Those with a Soul stat of 70 or higher may feel a disturbing, damp feeling when they are at a location haunted by a carnal. Anyone who shares

significant characteristics with the victim, or was the victim of a sexual assault, feels like they are being watched.

### **Carnal (Minor)**

The sins of the flesh.

**Points:** 50+ a percentile roll (1-100)

**Body:** 30-70

**Speed:** 40-70

**Mind:** 10-20

**Soul:** 10-30

**Notes:** Damage from a carnal's attack is equal to the sum of their Body roll + 3. All carnals possess the skill Stealth at 60% when in their physical form.

### **Revenant: Faeries**

The fae folk have been the subject of countless legends, myths, and tales from many cultures worldwide. Few accounts of them ever match from one to the next, and if there is any consistent feature among the tales it's that the actual details are all remarkably inconsistent. Common themes that run throughout them, however, comment on faeries' impish behavior, capriciousness, prodigality, and amorality. Probably the greatest obstacle for humans trying to describe an encounter with the fae is that they have no point of reference—they haven't a clue what they're talking about. The truth of the matter is that this overlooked point of reference lies in a moment of loss.

The loss of a child to the unknown is a heartbreaking event—it's this very loss that leads to the creation of the revenants known as Snow-fallen. A similarly heart-wrenching loss is the stillbirth of an anticipated child, the death of a beloved baby that the parents will never come to know. Sometimes the intensity of this loss is enough to prevent the child's spirit from departing to whatever reward it is due. Instead, the soul of the stillborn infant becomes a truly rare form of revenant—a faerie.

Faeries are a bewildering lot. Being made up of the stuff of souls, they are able to remake their image however they please. Few faeries ever look alike, though periodic fads and styles do make the rounds of fae circles. In the rare event that one ever catches a glimpse of a faerie, it is usually diminutive in stature, delicate in form, and a wonder to behold. Having developed in their own stunted culture, faeries are not constrained by such adult human notions as patience, generosity, justice, or morality. This is not to say that they are unsophisticated and don't develop their own codes of conduct, but they have developed them without the benefit of the wisdom of elders and human history. Thus, their mentality and behavior are quite alien to the average human perception. Many who have had the dubious fortune of keeping company with the fae and expecting fair and consistent treatment from them tell tales of utter terror experienced at their hands.

Actually encountering the faeries is a remarkably difficult challenge, for they lack true physical forms and can seldom be seen on this side of the



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veil of death. Faeries exist in a sort of netherworld of their own creation, part daydream, part nightmare, part archetypal vision of “that most perfect place” that lies within us all. This world is usually visited unintentionally—in spirit, if not in body—by humans who find themselves in the right state of mind. Deep sleep, head injury, drug-induced euphoria or poisoning, mental illness—all have proved to be means of visiting the land of the fae via places where the skin that separates our world and theirs is stretched particularly thin.

On occasions rarer still, individuals in such states of mind are able to draw faeries through to our side, if only for a very short while. The way in which they manifest in our world is an unusual one. Lacking physical bodies of their own, faeries must construct one to house their ephemeral spirits using a weak form of poltergeist-like telekinesis. Able to manipulate only the slightest of materials, faeries construct their temporary physical forms from such gentle and whimsical materials as gossamer silk, dewmists, flower petals, and butterfly wings. Of course by that same regard, plenty of fairies construct their bodies from some considerably-less-delightful materials like dust, lint, wads of hair, dead insect chitin—anything light enough to be blown about by a gentle breeze. It’s really just an issue of environment.

As mentioned previously, faeries are a remarkably capricious lot, and they feel little or no compulsion to express kindness and understanding toward humanity. Rather, they are far more likely to express such characteristics as curiosity, covetousness, vanity, and jealousy. Generally, faeries are out to have a good time and they don’t particularly care how it’s done, nor do they appreciate anyone standing in their way. On the rare occasion that they can be plied with questions about their true nature, a faerie is as likely as not to lie to you and tell you whatever it thinks you want to hear. Furthermore, faeries aren’t actually aware of their true origins, and since they don’t suffer the effects of age they aren’t particularly interested in where they’re going, either.

Faeries are known for remarkably macabre and inhuman senses of humor; inflicting confu-

sion, anguish, or pain on someone for the sake of entertainment is simply par for the course. Faeries have a keen intuition for human emotions and desires, even if they don’t fully comprehend them, and are able to create illusions with their telekinetically constructed forms so realistic that the victim feels compelled to act upon them. Faeries may lure a lustful man over a cliff with the image of a beautiful nymph; they may take the form of a departed loved one, only to shock or humiliate the victim; they may trap an individual and make him think he’s been abducted onto a flying saucer as they experiment upon his live body. Run-ins with the fae seldom work out in the human’s favor.

For all of their deviousness and amorality, however, there is an up side to meeting the faeries. Their souls are so pure, so delicate, so untouched by the corruption of our world that anyone who can capture and devour one in physical form finds ten years of his life restored—the age of a decade melts away as the faerie dissolves in his belly. Rumors to this effect circulate throughout the occult underground occasionally, inspiring great quests to pierce the skin between our world and theirs, to grab the prize of newfound youth. However, anyone bold enough to try to eat a faerie once would be simply foolish to try it again. Word travels fast among the fae, and they’re onto the common motives of humankind. If you’re looking forward to shaving off another ten hard years of aging, you can bet that the faeries are trying like hell to discover a way to find you first.

### Faeries (Minor)

Lost infants

**Points:** 100 + percentile roll

**Body:** 5-30

**Speed:** 35-90

**Mind:** 20-80

**Soul:** 40-90

**Telekinesis:** A faerie may move and manipulate objects totaling no more than the faerie’s Body stat in ounces, with a range equal to the

faerie's Soul in inches. Such objects are, of course, so small and lightweight that any human can seize them, destroy them, or what have you, and the faerie will be unable to resist. A clever faerie can use even small items to mess with humans—hiding car keys, for example, or sending a large marble down a victim's throat to choke him.

## Revenant: Ghost Writer

Ghost writers are demons with a yen for the creative arts. While other demons love to seize a body and embark on taco-thons or killing sprees, ghost writers want nothing more than peace, quiet, and a clean pad of paper. A ghost writer is probably the most manageable sort of demon. They aren't apt to piss off their host too much, since their channeled creative works are pretty vulnerable when they aren't in charge of a body. So rather than go for a brute-force method, most ghost writers take a kinder, gentler approach. Ghost writers prefer to possess a sleeping victim. That way, they can safely see to their art, get their hosts back to sleep, and leave them none the wiser the next morning.

Not all ghost writers come back to toil away in obscurity. Some decide to try mailing out that manuscript, be it a crackpot manifesto, love letter, or short story, with the victim's name and address attached as contact info—how else will the demon hear back? After all, no one is going to buy a story from a dead person. If the victim is lucky, he won't get much back other than a form rejection letter. If his karma is exceptionally bad, he may have to answer a few questions about the death threats he's been mailing to prominent politicians. Rumors erupt now and again in the occult underground that the latest hot, new writer is hosting a demonic author, but no one has ever managed to find conclusive proof in any instance.

Ghost writers follow the rules for possession just like normal demons. However, ghost writers have one nasty little weapon at their disposal that run-of-the-mill demons lack: Ghost Author, the



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ability to alter a victim's normal, conscious writings. Most ghost writers never have to use this, but if a host gets serious about kicking the demon out, or if the demon feels it's hot on the trail of finishing its final masterpiece, a demon trots this skill out. Ghost Author lets the demon control its host for about an hour whenever the host tries to write anything. Usually, a ghost writer takes the opportunity to continue its work, but a cruel or vindictive one may just insert insults into its host's e-mails or fire off a letter of resignation to the host's boss.

Rarely, a ghost writer will manifest talents other than writing. TNI has on file the case of Rudy Gallante, a high school drop-out and auto mechanic who spontaneously quit his job and began painting full-time. After selling several works, Rudy was found dead in his studio apartment, a human heart and stomach stuffed into his mouth along with the bloodied, illegible remains of his latest work in progress. TNI was ready to write it off as a typical occult hit until the lab work came back. The heart and stomach were Rudy's; an au-

topsy revealed that both organs had been removed with surgical precision, though Rudy's body bore no incisions. The only conclusion that TNI's resident coroner could come to was that something had pulled Rudy's organs up through his throat and then stuffed the painting in. The only untouched portion of the painting bore the work's title: *The Cruel Ones*.

### Ghost Writer

Dedicated Artist

**Points:** 100 + a percentile roll (1-100)

**Body:** 0

**Speed:** 30-70

**Mind:** 30-80

**Soul:** 30-80

**Ghost Author:** This skill allows a ghost writer to temporarily seize control of its victim for an hour at a time. The ghost writer may only attempt to use this skill when its victim attempts to write anything. To use this skill, follow the regular rules for an attempted possession, except use this skill in place of the ghost writer's soul. Ghost writers that exhibit a talent other than writing, such as painting or sculpture, may use this skill when their victim engages in the appropriate art. Ghost writers do not use this skill for their normal possession-creation sessions—only when they want control of a waking, resisting host.

**Notes:** All other rules for demons from their entry in the UA rulebook (pp. 147-149) apply to ghost writers.

### Revenant: The Wronged

A man stands on the steps of a courthouse, surrounded by a media uncomfortably twitching with the realization that they've made this man's life a living hell—and he was innocent all along. He stares mournfully into the cameras. "Where do I go to get my respect back?" There are no

answers. The man has been wronged, but there is no one to blame. Whenever his name is spoken, a hushed silence follows. Perhaps the stories were true. Perhaps he really was guilty. Perhaps the police didn't dig deep enough. Can you ever trust him again?

Over time, the man gets his life in order. But it's never the same. The system worked—he's an innocent man. But oh, the look on the faces of the girls working at the store. Could it be possible that people would actually think him capable of such things? Could there be some blemish within himself that he does not see, but that others do? He spots a penny on the ground and, out of habit, he stoops to pick it up.

And notices, though the sun burns bright in the heavens, that his shadow is gone.

He enters a nearby café and finds a seat near the counter. He senses what is coming, and his lawyer has taught him the value of a good alibi. His shadow could return at any time, fresh from another bloody crime of which the man himself is innocent.



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The Wronged is a nasty revenant that dwells unseen in the shadow of someone falsely accused of a serious crime. In life, the Wronged was itself falsely accused, and lived the rest of its days with that stigma. Now it craves vengeance on a world that unfairly hated and feared it, drawing energy from the hatred and fear the world has for its new and innocent host. To stay alive, it must stoke the fires of that hatred, repeating the crime the host is suspected of and thus keeping it fresh in the minds of the populace. When it leaves the host to commit a crime, it takes his shadow with it.

Because its power does not come from the host, the Wronged cannot be controlled or dispelled by that doubly-stricken individual. The host will sense a tormenting kinship with the entity, knowing that the crime is to be repeated but unable to warn anyone against it. He will receive glimpses of the crimes in his dreams, and may eventually believe that he really *is* responsible. (Each re-enactment causes Stress checks, and may finally result in sociopathy or psychosis.) Even the inevitable death of the host will not stop the wrath of the Wronged. Instead, the Wronged moves on, and seeks out another hounded soul. Meanwhile, the throng of accusers transfers their hatred onto some other innocent, and the cycle begins anew.

The Wronged is a little tougher than most revenants. It can cause six examples of minor unnatural phenomena a day and two examples of significant unnatural phenomena per week. It can also cause one example of major unnatural phenomena per month, which it generally uses to manifest and commit its horrible crime. When it manifests, it has the Body and Speed stats of its host and looks identical. It is affected by magick as a demon would be.

Potentially, a Wronged could be laid to rest by convincingly clearing the host's name—which means the original criminal would go to jail and the public would forgive the accused. The Wronged's crimes are unlikely to make that possible, unfortunately, and the public is not known for forgiveness.

## The Wronged (Significant)

Avenger of the Wrongly Accused	
Points:	30 + a percentile roll (1-100)
Body:	0
Speed:	0
Mind:	10-40
Soul:	50-80

## Thaumophages

Arguably the most powerful weapon in the Sleepers' arsenal is the spell that creates a Thaumophage. This ritual (penned, it's said, by the Comte de Saint-Germain himself) captures an Astral Parasite and turns it from an annoyance into a truly *colossal* annoyance: A creature that eats magick.

While not as physically dangerous as the naturally occurring Thaumovore (as described in *One Shots*), Thaumophages are even more ravenous, capable of swallowing up all of an adept's charges—significant, minor, and major—in a single gulp. Fortunately for all concerned (including their creators) the transformation from Parasite to Thaumophage requires a definite and permanent binding into an object, location, or individual. Any time an adept tries to gain a charge from that person, place or thing, the Thaumophage awakens and drains off all the adept's charges instead.

So if (for example), the Sleepers created a Thaumophage in Red Square (and they have), any cliomancer who tried to reap Red Square for charges would not only gain nothing, he'd *lose* any and all charges he was holding. Similarly, if a sorcerer got the cup that gave Socrates his last drink of hemlock, he could bind a Thaumophage into it and permanently ruin it for dipsomancy.

Thaumophages automatically succeed at their charge-sucking, but other than that they're pretty defenseless. They're vulnerable to Soul Sipping, especially since they can't run away when injured. (Yes, this means that a Dispomancer who drinks one down can take a skill in Drain All Your Charges If You Try To Charge Up Off Me.) Bargain of Pyrrhus offers no protection, but some payback: The creature still gets all your charges, but then drains itself and loses its future ability to



RICHARD PACE

feed. After a few days (or weeks, depending on how many charges it got) it withers and dies. A Plutomancer probably couldn't kill one with random magick, but would have a real good chance of moving it into a new container (possibly himself). Cliomancy, Pornomancy, Epideromancy and Entropomancy have no good way to deal with Thaumophages (though they rarely threaten bodybags), and Dipsomancy random magick doesn't have much effect either.

Mechanomancers are in a bit of an interesting position when it comes to Thaumophages. If an object occupied by a Thaumophage is incorporated into a clockwork for its historical properties, the clockwork fails to function. (For instance, if the above mentioned Socratic cup was put into a philosophy machine.) If the Mechanomancer is aware of the Thaumophage, however, he can "short circuit" the curse by using the Thaumophage itself as an element in the clockwork. (The Socratic cup couldn't be put into a philosophy machine, but it would work rather well for a machine that's supposed to be a pain in the neck to sorcerers.)

Even in death, Thaumophages are dangerous, because when killed they release all their charges in a storm of unnatural phenomena. The phenomena are generally random, and their severity all depends on what type of charges were held—and how many.

When seen on the astral plane, Thaumophages look a bit like what you'd get if you took a lamprey eel, enlarged its mouth until it could swallow a hubcap, then turned it inside out so that the organs and teeth were exterior.

### Thaumophage (Minor)

Astral Killjoy

**Points:** 110-200

**Body:** 30-60

**Speed:** 20-50

**Mind:** 10-30

**Soul:** 30-60





# CHAPTER FOUR

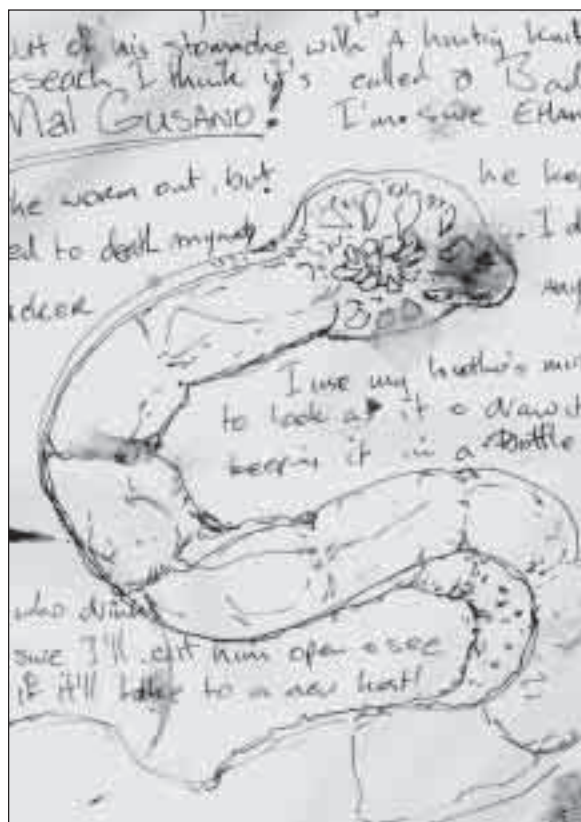
## ARTIFACTS



"IT IS A PRETTY, PRETTY THING; IT IS A FIRE, IT IS A COAL,  
WHOSE FLAME CREEPS IN AT EVERY HOLE."  
—GEORGE PEELE

"YOUR HARE WANTS CUTTING. MAY I SELL YOU SHEARS?"  
—THE BAD MAN





## Minor Artifacts

### ***Mal Gusano (The Bad Worm) (Minor)***

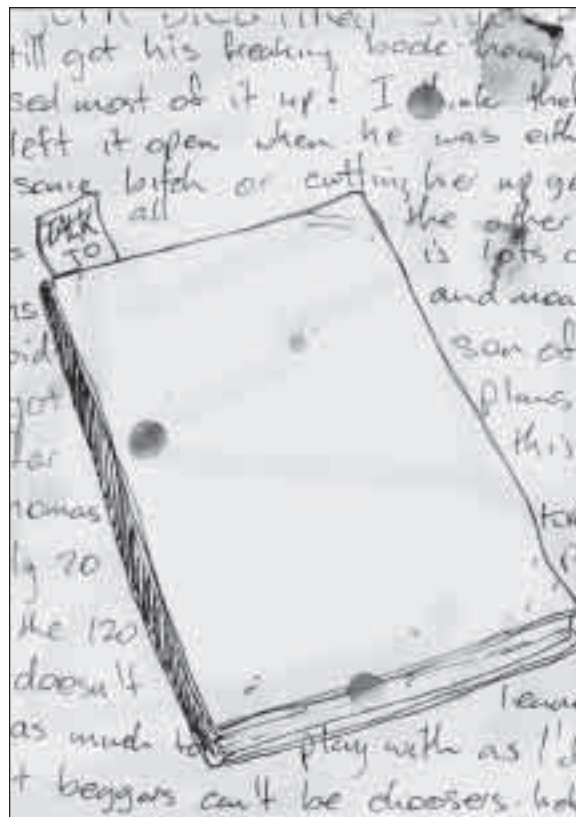
This annoying parasite is often placed in various types of hard liquor as ticking time bombs for incautious Dipsomancers; they're similar to Wooden Nickels (see next page) but, appropriately for their targets, much more disgusting. Bad Worms are harvested from tapeworms which reside in the digestive tract of someone (or something) that eats the cirrhotic flesh of a Dipsomancer's liver, and cannot be seen without a magnifying glass. For most people, it flushes through the body as an unfertilized egg. But the moment it enters a Dipsomancer who is holding a charge, it immediately undergoes metamorphosis into a tapeworm-like creature that absorbs every third charge the Dipsomancer generates; the adept suffers all the penalties of getting intoxicated from that shot, but none of the magickal benefits. (Note that the host is unaware that this drain is occurring unless he begins counting charges gained and spent and realizes there's a discrepancy.) These hideous crea-

tures can live for one week off a single siphoned charge, but perish if they go a week without one. Thus, a Dipsomancer who drank nine shots while carrying a Worm would have to go sober for a solid month to finally kill it: three weeks to wait out the three charges the Worm absorbed out of nine, and a fourth week to finish it off. The easiest way to get rid of the worm is through surgery, since an unwitting Dipsomancer is liable to charge up the Worm for months with just a single binge.

### **Transcription Volume (Minor)**

A Transcription Volume is a blank bound book, much like the ones you can find at your local bookstore or stationary store, that can transcribe a conversation within its presence. It can record one minute of conversation per page; page counts vary but are usually at least a hundred.

The book starts with a bookmark jammed between the front paper of the book and the first page. To begin recording, one must merely re-



move the bookmark. All spoken words or noises that would be audible to a human listener in the book's location are copied down in the owner's handwriting on the pages of the book, but the sources of the sounds are not identified. To stop the transcription, one need only place a bookmark between the pages currently being filled with text. You can run out of pages just as you can run out of tape on a recording cassette.

## Wooden Nickels (Minor)

"Don't take any wooden nickels." Which came first, the saying or the Nickel? Everyone's got a different opinion. Some say that the accumulated belief in the saying spontaneously produced the coins, but that doesn't really explain the other denominations. Some say that, after years of having to pay a Plutomancer for access to a really good site, a pissed-off Cliomancer happened upon a major charge and really went to town, vengeance-wise. Some even talk of a powerful Plutomancer taking a little trip through the House of Renunciation, and coming up with these false coins to show his one-time compatriots the error of their ways. All that anyone really knows for certain is that these little devils are in circulation, and Plutomancers hate them with a passion.

They look like coins carved out of wood, usually painted the correct color for their type. They come in all denominations and nationalities, and often pass from person to person unnoticed. That's because they only activate when received by a Plutomancer.

When a Plutomancer receives a Wooden Nickel, he cannot get rid of it. Throw it away, and it reappears in your pocket. Lock it in a safe, and you find it in your change purse. Give it to a bum, and it's stuck to the bottom of your shoe with gum. This is bad, because it causes the Plutomancer to hemorrhage charges: each time a Plutomancer with a Nickel casts a spell, one extra charge of the appropriate type is expended. If there aren't enough charges of the appropriate type stored by the Plutomancer, all the appropriate charges are expended and the spell fails. GMs



should keep track of extra charges leeches away by the coin, and only inform the player when they try to over-extend themselves. This can cause a nasty surprise.

There is no known way to destroy a Wooden Nickel, and, given the kind of obsessive research Plutomancers have done on the damned things, it's generally accepted that they are effectively indestructible. The only way for Plutomancers to rid themselves of these items is to spend them for something worthwhile, and have them accepted by the vendor as legal tender. Not too bad for a nickel or a quarter, but how are you going to get rid of that Wooden Krugerrand? Of course, if you get stuck with a Wooden Krugerrand, you probably deserve what follows.

**Example:** Dwayne Bridge is a Plutomancer who currently has six significant charges and a Wooden Nickel. He casts Fortune's Wheel, expending one significant charge. The GM makes note that he has actually expended two but doesn't tell the player, who then casts Devaluation, marking off two more significant charges

and (he thinks) leaving three. The GM notes that Dwayne spent three charges on the effect and has only one left. Finally, Dwayne casts Bankrupt Will, marking off another significant charge, but he's not worried. He still has two left. The GM, however, removes the last remaining charge and informs Dwayne that his spell didn't work. Now Dwayne has to figure out why.

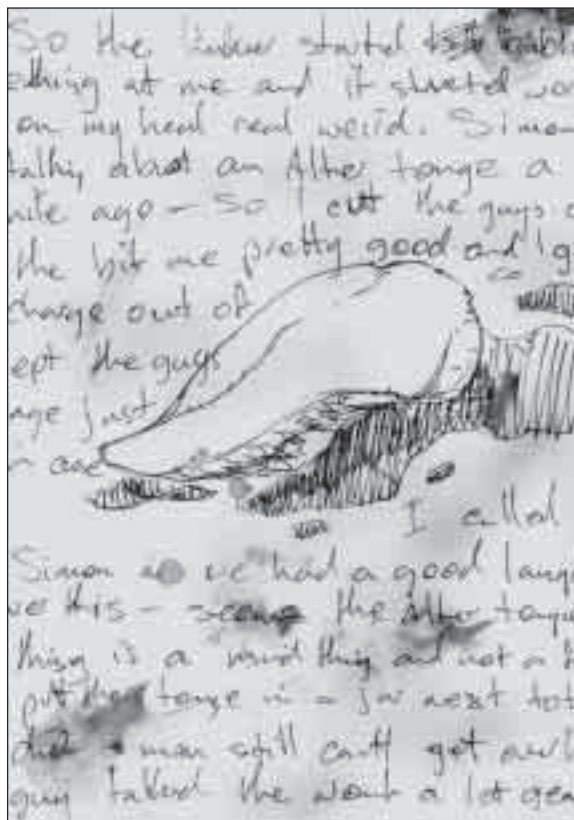
## Significant Artifacts

### The Alter Tongue (Significant)

Robert (Bobby) and Virginia (Ginny), the Alter twins, were by any standard odd children. Their mother had died penniless in 1922 when they were four years old, nobody knew who their father was, and their only living relative was a half-mad uncle who kept them locked up in an old barn in Ohio. Sealed in near-total darkness, all they had was each other. They were found by the outside world when they were twelve, their uncle was imprisoned, and they were sent to an orphanage. They'd been tried on a kindly foster family, but it hadn't worked out; their "weird chatter" freaked their new mother out.

They were as near to identical as brother and sister can be, and they spent all their time together, only occasionally talking to the other children in the orphanage. They had their own toys, their own games, their own superstitions—and their own language. A lot of kids create their own private dialect, usually just a few backward phrases or onomatopoeic words, but the Alters were more complete than that. Their language became known as the Alter Tongue—in their language, it was called *haltolmish*, "the language belonging to us." It was self-contained, had a complex grammar and wide vocabulary, and owed nothing to English (*halreymish*, "the language belonging to others"). Its main peculiarity was that it made little distinction between nouns and verbs; to name something was to act upon it. The twins spoke English well enough after a couple of years, but the Tongue was their true world.

It was a powerful language. It had sprung out



of nothing, as though the primeval speech of Adam and Eve had been reborn, and it was infectious. Soon the other orphans were using stray phrases, and the eight staff found themselves saying "Would you like *caybi* ('drink')?" to visitors and asking their partners to "*sustol*" ("touch me in a sensitive place"). Before long, they decided to split the Alters up. Bobby begged one of the staff to "*sushem rietol*" ("protect me against being separated from myself"), but they went ahead anyway. After Bobby wouldn't stop screaming and Ginny went catatonic, they decided it was a bad, bad idea and put the pair back together—and the Tongue kept spreading.

The Tongue was more than just a language. It was the whole mindset of the twins. Using the Tongue changed you, brought you closer to the other users, made you accept that there were only two types of people, *tol* and *rey*, and that outside there was only a sea of darkness. The only hope was to cling to the other users of the Tongue. It broke down the walls between our world and the statosphere, cracking the fragile linguistic illusions



that keep us blind. By the time the twins were sixteen, the subtle shades of the Tongue linked the whole orphanage together, denoting relationships both material and personal, and forming strange sexual bonds between staff and children. The staff had closed off their personal lives, and spent all their time at the orphanage, dominated by the Tongue.

The orphanage itself slowly began to change. It looked normal from the outside, but inside it was dark and threatening, with walls of straw and the sound of rats in the corners. Shapes would be flickeringly visible in the darkness: a king, a fool, an axe, a courtesan, and many others. The occasional visitor couldn't see most of this, but would leave with a sense of something great and terrible just beyond their vision, a whole realm of unseen terrors, and perhaps would start muttering a favourite saying of the twins, "*meime reubi aostrol*" ("the darkness is safer than the light"). Once back in the normal world, the Tongue would usually drift from their memory—though a word or a phrase would sometimes re-emerge, and the world would seem that much darker.

Then a different kind of visitor showed up. He wasn't particularly well dressed, but he had an air of authority about him. He strolled right in to the Alters' room where he talked to them—in the Tongue—for about forty-five minutes. After hearing their story, he smiled. Then he killed every last person in the orphanage, regardless of age, and burnt every word they'd written. He didn't bother disposing of the bodies. The police found them two weeks later, along with a note in elegant Edwardian script saying *Not Yet, I Think*.

What the mysterious visitor didn't know—or perhaps had chosen to ignore—is that the Tongue was recorded. It's on just a few old wax recording disks made by a student linguist back in the 1930s. They're sitting on a shelf in Ohio State University, just waiting for some unfortunate researcher to find and play them. If it got onto the radio, the consequences could be quite horrendous. Unfortunately, Mak Attax have got wind of the existence of the discs, and, unaware of their nature, think they might be just the thing for

bringing magick to the general population. Close your ears.

Although the large-scale effects of an Alter Tongue outbreak are difficult to speculate on, the effects on an individual character are relatively easy to express in game terms. If a character is exposed to a conversation in the Tongue that lasts at least a few minutes, that character must make a Soul check. If the check succeeds, the Tongue does not take hold. If the check fails, the character begins using Tongue phrases, even picking up on whole words and rules of grammar that weren't in the conversation he heard. This effect grows over time. The character may make another Soul check every week, and a success will erase the Tongue's pernicious influence. Each failure reduces the Soul stat by a -10% shift for purposes of checks against the Tongue only. Should the character's Soul stat for the checks reach 0, the Tongue is forever imprinted on his brain. Soon a shabby-dressed man may come to call.

A character under the influence of the Tongue suffers a steady stream of Unnatural phenomena as per UA, pp. 144-146. The degree and frequency of these phenomena is up to the GM, but they should generally worsen with time. Each phenomenon generally triggers one or more madness-meter checks, depending on the nature of the event. Early instances will only be experienced by the victim of the Tongue, but as they grow more dramatic, others may see them too. Typically the victim retreats from the outside world, both to contain the strange effects from others and to focus on exploring the mindset that comes with every syllable of the Alter Tongue.

## The Crying Doll (Significant)

The Crying Doll is about 9 inches tall and formed of plastic—just your basic girl's fashion doll. The skin of the doll is painted a rusty-red color (dipped in blood?) and covered with cryptic sigils and bizarre glyphs; the yellow hair of the doll has been hacked into a crude bob. A lanyard of red yarn wraps around the doll, knotted at its neck and around its ankles. This lanyard allows the

Crying Doll to be worn around the neck (see the cover of *Lawyers, Guns, and Money*). Some wits have christened the Crying Doll “Occult Underground Barbie.” Some believe the Doll to be a tool of long-forgotten child adept, others believe it to be an Epideromancer or Pornomancer caught in a bizarre curse, and still others think it is an exotic clockwork of unknown origin.

The Crying Doll is sensitive to magick. It can serve as a combination magickal Geiger counter and litmus strip. Within thirteen yards of an adept, it cries salty tears. Within thirteen yards of an avatar, it sobs quietly, easily detectable by the holder. Within thirteen yards of an Unnatural creature (demon, clockwork, revenant, Unspeakable Servant, *etc.*), it moans. Within thirteen yards of an artifact, it shivers uncontrollably. Each of these responses intensifies as the Crying Doll is brought closer to the source of its discomfort.

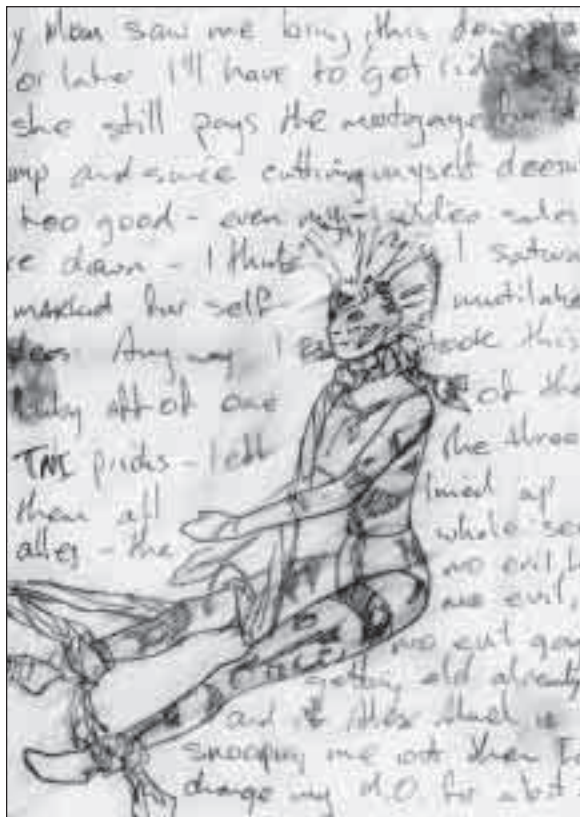
Of course, this makes the Crying Doll difficult to use in public by a large portion of the occult underground—mostly because waving around

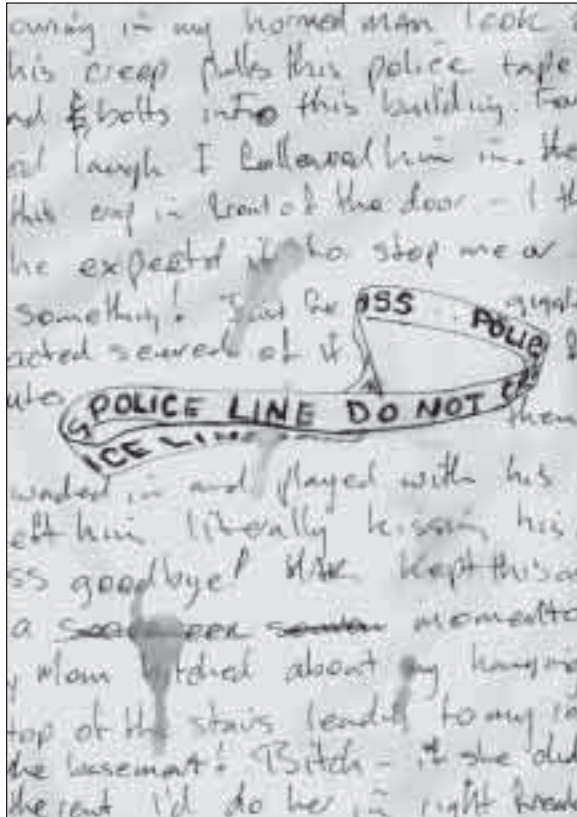
a mutilated toy doll tends to draw the wrong sorts of attention. There is a rumor that if the weird markings on the Crying Doll’s skin can be deciphered, they are instructions on how to “teach” the doll to ignore the presence of particular stimuli. This could range from a simple roll against Magick, Avatar, or Occult Lore, or it could detail a long and complicated ritual—that may do something completely different than rumor has it.

## Demon Stration Tape (Significant)

To city residents, mystery buffs, and fans of cop shows, the yellow “Police Line Do Not Cross” tape is the visual emblem of the barrier, the boundary space between Our Side and Bad Things. This has given it the mystical juice once held by cornmeal, silver chains, red silk cords, and lines in colored chalk—it’s the default “magic ward” of the postmodern magickal underground. The most powerful version consists of police tape taken from an actual crime scene, or at least tape that’s been energized by riding around in a prowler car. (Tape bought from mail-order catalogs, or taken from condemned buildings, requires a significant charge to imbue it with power.) The adept writes any well-known charm of protection on the reverse side of the tape (the 23rd psalm, one of the Names of God, “Mister Giancana will be steamed after I call downtown and tell him about you,” *etc.*) in blood or permanent marker (depending on the degree of “oomph” needed) and stretches the tape across a doorway or around a small area. No demon, whether possessing a human, trapped in a bottle, or floating malevolently through the air, can cross the tape or even touch it until it is broken by somebody (or something) else, or unless the adept crosses it first. Demon Stration Tape is a limited-use artifact, and loses all charges if broken (though not if crossed).

Variants of the Demon Stration Tape include specialized versions for one specific demon (using the demon’s name in the charm on the tape’s reverse), which actually damages the named en-





croaching demon (it loses a number of Soul points equal to the tens digit of the Magick skill of the tape's creator each time it touches the tape or tries to cross it); versions designed for entropics, revenants, astral parasites, and other unnatural entities; and "confusion" tape in which the object is to keep the demon busy and distracted rather than prevent his entrance. For the latter, the adept writes a paradox or palindrome on the back side of the tape and fastens it in a cross or Moebius loop where he wishes to delay the demon. The paradox of a tape cross reading "Do Not Cross" (or of the Moebius loop) forces a Mind check on the entity in question. If the check succeeds, it can stop looking at the tape after one round. If the check fails, it must continue to stare at the puzzle, although it may make a new check after a number of minutes equal to the adept's Magick score. Some nervous adepts keep confusion tape crosses active wherever they are, and some very nervous ones shoot anyone who stares at the tape for too long.

## The Gremlin Factory (Significant)

As the first decade of the twentieth century approached its end, Mechanomancy was facing a crisis. The machines of the last fifty years were becoming more and more complex and less useful for the construction of clockworks. The increasing dependence on electricity and the burgeoning of electronics not only decreased the usefulness of items for incorporation into clockworks, they also were starting to produce effects that had hitherto only been possible through the use of magick. Nothing upsets a Mechanomancer like obsolescence.

That's what drove Gustave Koenig to his work. At least, that's what the letter said. It was a letter that he had apparently written for himself to read every morning before he started to work on the machine. It outlined the idea he had had, and the methods he would use, and his reasons for giving up so many huge chunks of his memory to work on the strange, fiddly clockwork that didn't walk, or talk, or play music, or do anything useful. The letter also listed such trivialities as his name, address, where his money was hidden, and where he had to go to buy food. Gustave was always a very methodical man.

The machine he finished in 1908 showed the genius that he once had, and the power of his anger. He built a device to point out the flaws in the overly complex machines built by modern methods, something to tip the balance back to the old, reliable clockworks.

He built a machine that manufactures Gremlins.

The Gremlin Factory is a wooden cabinet, roughly the size of a modern-day filing cabinet. The top lifts on a hinge to reveal a hopper, the side has a series of dials, switches, and sliders, and there is a small cubbyhole on the front at about knee-height. The back of the cabinet opens to reveal an incredibly dense web of gears, cogs, arms, and drive belts.

To use the machine, the Mechanomancer fills the hopper with a large variety of very fine clockwork parts, places a small bottle in the cubbyhole,

and starts the machine. Over the course of an hour, the machine transforms the hopper full of parts into a bottle full of Gremlins, too small to be seen by the naked eye. By adjusting the controls on the side of the Factory, the Mechanomancer is able to fine-tune the Gremlins for greater efficacy against specific types of machines. Once the bottle is filled, it should be sealed to prevent the Gremlins from spilling out before you're ready. To use the Gremlins, the bottle is emptied onto the target machine and the little devils go to work.

Fine-tuning the Gremlins requires that the Mechanomancer make a Mechanomancy roll while adjusting the controls on the Factory. On a successful roll, the Gremlins cause the target machine to operate at a reduction equal to twice the sum of the dice for 24 hours. For example, with a successful roll of 35, the Gremlins cause a reduction of 16% in the target machine. A matched success causes a reduction equal to four times the sum of the dice, and an OACOWA renders the target machine inoperative within five minutes.



Reductions are applied to all aspects of the machine's function, and as a threshold to the skill roll to use a machine. For example, if a car had been infected with Gremlins causing a 16% reduction, its top speed would be reduced 16%, its stopping distance increased by 16%, and any successful roll to drive the car that was less than 16 would cause the car to stall.

Baseline Gremlins, which have not been fine-tuned, cause a reduction equal to the sum of the Mechanomancy roll in the performance of every machine they come in contact with for 12 hours. This means that if the Gremlins above had not been fine-tuned for a car, they would cause an 8% reduction in performance in any machine. If custom Gremlins are introduced to a machine that they were not tuned for, the reduction they produce is equal to the tens digit of the normal reduction. For example, if the above Gremlins, tuned for a car, were introduced into a computer, it would cause only a 1% reduction.

There is rumored to be a book containing a series of Gremlin recipes for specific targets, and for special Gremlin properties such as self-replication and infection. The recipes are said to consist of the proper parts to place in the hopper and the settings for the controls. Such a find would be of immense value to the possessor of the Gremlin Factory.

## The Knocking Box (Significant)

After the Black Death ravaged Europe, killing entire villages in a fortnight, towns stank with psychic corruption long after the last corpses were buried. All attempts to exorcize the souls of those who lingered failed; the accumulated psychic weight of the tragedy was too massive for them to pass on.

Two monks carved this small box out of wood supposedly taken from the True Cross and lined its interior with the finger bones of Saint Quirinus, patron saint of protection from evil spirits, possession, and obsession. They traveled into these blighted areas and rapped thrice on the box. The sound proved irresistible to the spirits,



who found themselves pulled into its depths. It remained in the possession of the Vatican for several centuries, where it was often used to spiritually cleanse scenes of mass murder. It was sent to Dachau after the war, but disappeared in transit. No one has seen it since, though the Order of Saint Cecil (see UA, p. 19) considers its recovery to be one of their most important projects.

The Knocking Box seems to be an unimpressive wooden container, fashioned out of rich chestnut. It measures two inches tall by three inches deep by four inches wide, with a simple hinged top. There is a snug latch that prevents it from flopping open casually, but there is no lock. The bottom is inscribed with Middle High German writing giving the name of the box (*Der klopfende Kasten*), the instructions "Knock Thrice," (*Klopfen drîes*), and the warning "Do Not Open" (*Enoffenen niht*).

To activate the Box, the user knocks on it three times. Any demon or revenant within earshot of the rapping must make a Soul check, suffering a -20% shift if the user has a Soul of 60 or

higher. Failure on this roll means the entity is drawn helplessly into the box, where it joins the thousands of screaming souls so trapped. These souls are beyond the reach of humans and adepts alike, and vice versa. They can not be summoned, attacked, nor conversed with.

The problem with the box is as it has always been—there's no place to put the spirits permanently. Originally, the monks who created the Box had a ritual for discharging the souls into the afterlife, thereby laying them to rest. But this ritual did not survive their deaths, and the Vatican soon had no idea how to activate this power.

Meanwhile, the spirits are waiting inside, and they're pissed. All it will take is a simple human hand to open the box, a postmodern Pandora, to set off an atomic bomb of spiritual energy.

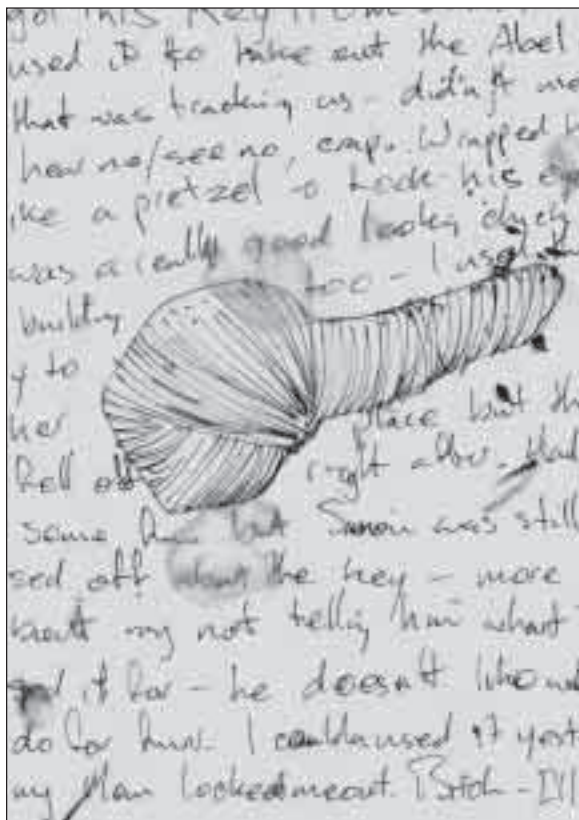
How bad is that? Every human in a 10 km radius would be possessed by not one but *several* demons, vying for control. Every animal in a 100 km radius would pick up stray spirits, eventually resulting in numerous lycanthropes mucking around with reality. Individuals with a Soul stat of 80 or higher who were within a 1000 km radius would become trouble magnets, randomly attracting and causing unnatural phenomena wherever they went.

Naturally, the demons in the Knocking Box are as nasty as they come. They are people who died in agony, and who were then imprisoned in a null space teeming with thousands of other miserable souls for centuries on end, souls who had nothing better to do than torment each other. This has led the few occult scholars who have researched the Knocking Box to wonder—is the Box, in fact, Hell?

## Skeleton Keys (Significant)

Skeleton Keys are not rare artifacts by the standards of the occult underground, where skullduggery is a way of life. Skeleton keys can open any lock or fastener, be it a combination lock, gurney restraint, electronic keypad, Boy Scout knots, whatever.

The ritual for creation is somewhat uncommon, but available for a price. The adept must be



gin with a key that he owns and has had in his possession for at least a month. He cannot know what the key is to or for; keys from junk shops are ideal. Using only his left hand, the adept must grease the key with the marrow of a thief, then wrap the key completely in black thread. It must then be buried for one month in the grave of a watchman, security guard, or policeman. The adept must urinate upon the buried key four times, once each week. After digging up the key at the end of the month, two significant charges must be expended (only one if the adept is an Entropomancer) and a roll made against the adept's Magick skill. Failure means the charges are lost and the burial procedure must be performed again, though the same key, marrow, and thread may be re-used for the new attempt.

If successful, the threads covering the key change from black to bone-white. The Skeleton Key also seems to be cold to the touch. Skeleton Keys are limited artifacts, and can be used a number of times equal to the sum of the dice on the adept's Magick roll (see UA, p. 180). In addition,

Skeleton Keys are quirky. When trying to get “into” something—like a safe, a car, or an office—a Skeleton Key does not work if the holder has tried to open or seen another person try to open the lock within the past twelve hours. When trying to get “out of” something—like handcuffs, a jail cell, or an automobile trunk—the Skeleton Key is more forgiving: it does not work if the lock or restraining device has been tested within the last minute. In either case, the Skeleton Key must touch some part of the lock, knot, keyhole, *etc.* to function.

After the last charge on a Skeleton Key is used, the white thread unwinds and falls off the key, which no longer seems cold to the touch.

## Major Artifacts

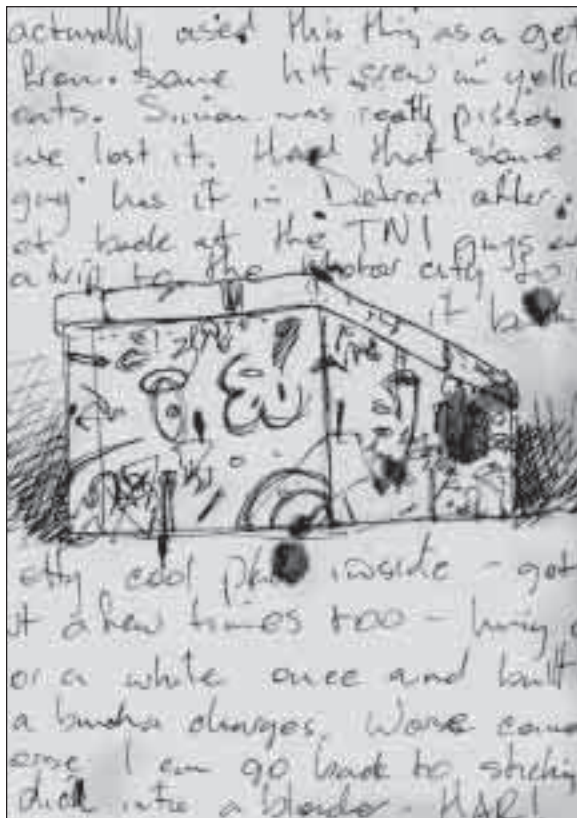
### The Cardboard Palace (Major)

Picture a crumpled and dirty shoebox, held together by duct-tape and spit. Arcane runes and symbols in several colors of ink (well, it *could* be ink) cover its battered surface, nearly obliterating the logo of the obscure brand of tennis shoes the box once held. This is the King Box, and whoever holds it becomes the master of a magical demesne that exists outside of the real world—the Cardboard Palace. The origins of this artifact are unknown. The best guess of occultists suggests that it came into being naturally in the backwash of a tremendous magickal conflict between the former godwalker of the Pilgrim, two claimants to the disputed position, and a handful of mixed adepts.

The Cardboard Palace is a sprawl of cardboard tunnels and chambers existing outside of normal reality, built from the volume of all the scattered cardboard boxes in a five-block radius around the King Box. Every cardboard box in that area with four sides and a bottom is now time-sharing its unused volume of space with the Cardboard Palace. This unused space is grabbed, stitched together into a seamless whole, and becomes available for the use of the holder of the King Box. If something fills one of the component boxes, the available space in the Palace decreases. If more empty boxes are introduced into

the radius, or the King Box is moved to a place with more boxes, the Palace gains space. (Garbage day can be especially traumatic to those within the Palace.) More information on the Cardboard Palace can be found in the boxed text nearby.

The holder of the King Box gains a number of magickal abilities while holding the Box. All function with a successful Soul check. He can sense partially empty or completely empty boxes within a five-block radius of the King Box. Within this radius, he can use any of those boxes to open up to ten access points—called Gateway Boxes—into the Palace, and can close them just as easily. He can use Gateway Boxes as “portholes” to peer through; he can see anything the mouth of the boxes face. The Palace’s floor plan can be changed with a thought (this ability has no effect on the physical boxes in the Real World, only the ersatz reality of the Palace’s interior). He can know the positions of all living things within the Palace at his wish. He can even close off all the exits, and seal the Palace away from the world.



The holder of the King Box is truly the master of his domain.

But there are a few catches to this power. The King Box cannot be taken into the Cardboard Palace. It cannot go through a Gateway Box; the King Box simply sits mundanely in the Gateway Box. This means that if the holder of the King Box wishes to enter the Palace himself, he must leave the King Box outside for any passerby to claim. Furthermore, the King Box may only be hidden by mundane means. Any attempt to disguise or hide the King Box using magick just does not work. The final catch is that when unattended, the King Box has a nasty habit of moving around on its own. This isn’t actual floating in midair or sliding along the ground; it’s more like if you lock the King Box in your safe one night, that’s the night your house gets burgled.

The King Box is “always on,” constantly utilizing the unclaimed volume to create the other-space of the Cardboard Palace, even if the King Box is stomped flat. Of course, flattening the King Box has negative effects on those inside the Palace (see boxed text). The flattened box returns to its battered shape within minutes.

Finally, the King Box cannot be destroyed permanently—it always comes back together, though perhaps a little shabbier and more beat-up. No matter if it’s torn into a million pieces, burned to ash, or dissolved in acid, it always reforms. However, the magick of the King Box dies for everyone who is within its five-block radius when it is “destroyed.” They may never use the magickal powers of the King Box, nor enter the Cardboard Palace ever again. Simply flattening the King Box to shut off the magick does not count as a “destruction.”

(Incidentally, the King Box brand of shoe is that of Reebok *Incubus*, a woman’s running shoe on sale from early 1996 through early 1997, when someone finally pointed out what “incubus” meant and a horrified Reebok pulled the shoe from the market, claiming baffled ignorance as to how they had managed to release and market a shoe for women named after an evil woman-raping devil. While there appears to be no particular

link between the concept of an incubus and that of the Cardboard Palace, it could be inferred that the psychic dissonance attached to this spectacu-

larly humiliating and public corporate flame-out made the shoebox a natural focus for the energies of the Palace.)

## The Cardboard Palace

Anyone can enter the weird other-space of the Cardboard Palace at any time, provided they can physically fit through the open side of a Gateway Box. Smaller openings that are physically impassable can still serve as spy-holes or windows for those inside the Palace and the holder of the King Box. Each Gateway Box bears a mark (a burn, a stain, a stencil, a label, *etc.*) that resembles a three-pointed crown. Gateway Boxes are usually one end of a short shaft or duct that leads to a room or a cross-corridor in the Cardboard Palace proper.

Once inside the Palace, it is much like the interior of a small ranch house made entirely out of cardboard. Despite having so many openings to the wind and weather, the Palace is constantly a pleasant temperature—warm in winter and cool in summer. The ceiling is usually 7' to 8' high, and like the floor it is springy, stable, rust-colored cardboard with random debris embedded in the walls (shoe soles, coins, car keys, teeth, shell casings, *etc.*). Unfortunately, the walls are not really solid. As the Cardboard Palace “borrows” the unused volume of boxes within its radius, the walls distort and shift as boxes within the five-block range get full, get empty, are taken outside the radius, or are destroyed. Placing your hand against a wall when it shifts is akin to sticking it into the whirring blades of a fan. It’ll sting, and next time you could lose a finger.

An additional oddity about the interior of the Cardboard Palace is that magick cannot affect those within the Palace. This is because the Palace is outside of normal reality; it’s a small, cobbled-together ersatz-reality. Thus, the Blast customization Long Distance (see UA, p. 79) cannot affect its target while he’s within the Palace. Unfortunately, the blast will “wait” until the target exits one of the Gateway Boxes to unload; a foresighted adept could possibly prepare countermeasures while within the Palace to blunt such attacks. A similar delay affects such spells as Gnostic Gossip or Urban Legend (Cliomancy), Now I See (Dipsomancy), Long Distance Call (Entropomancy), *etc.* Adepts cannot cast spells within the confines of the Cardboard Palace, unless the holder of the King Box allows it. Avatar channels are unaffected by this.

As available component-box volume drops, the hallways and chambers of the Cardboard Palace get narrower. Thus on garbage day the corridors of the Palace grow thinner and thinner as boxes are removed from the radius of the King Box, and the “finger in the fan” effect changes from mild stinging blows to razor-keen lacerations, as the travelers within cannot avoid touching the fluctuating walls. (A reasonable rule of thumb could be a die of Wound Point damage per corridor traversed.) Eventually, the walls will be too close together to allow passage; anyone attempting such would be cut to ribbons.

If the King Box is ever crushed flat, the reddish floor and ceiling move towards each other quickly, leaving only a few scant seconds to scamper back into the real world through a Gateway Box be-



fore the two meet and crush whatever lies between them to a fine paste. This will destroy any material object or being secreted within it; debris is either embedded into the reddish ceiling and floor, or ejected back into the real world randomly within the King Box's radius.

As a King Box moves further and further away from a Gateway Box, the connecting hallway from Gateway to Palace proper gets longer and thinner, until the Gateway Box is outside of the five block radius of the King Box's power. At that point the connection snaps like a rubber band. Anything in that corridor finds itself in one of three places: still within the Palace, facing a dead end; vomited forth with great force from the former and now mundane Gateway Box; or somewhere in the real world within the radius of the King Box. If the King Box has no Gateway Boxes within its radius, either through moving too far away from the Gateway Boxes or if the holder has purposefully closed the Gateways, those within the Cardboard Palace are trapped until either the holder opens a new Gateway, they come into range of an old Gateway Box (possibly opened by a previous holder of the King Box), or they breach the ceiling or floor.

The reddish floor and ceiling of the Palace can be breached in exactly the same manner as one would apply to a normal piece of cardboard: it can be cut, torn, punched through, *etc.* On the other side of the cardboard is a flat gray fog. Anything touching the fog disappears. Usually, the object or person is ejected from a random Gateway Box or appears somewhere within the five-block radius of the King Box, but there have been a handful of people who have just never come back, and at least one individual who seems to have come back *changed*, perhaps by the House of Renunciation. The side walls of the Palace cannot be cut, torn, or ripped because they're not always there. They flux too fast to be held. However, walls, floor, and ceiling can burn. If the walls are set alight it will have tremendous results: all of the cardboard boxes being utilized by the King Box will catch on fire.

The Cardboard Palace is the ultimate tool for breaking and entering. Simply approach the building you wish to enter while holding the King Box, concentrate to sense the boxes within the building, use the magick of the King Box to open one of them as a Gateway Box, open a second Gateway Box nearby, set down the King Box, and run through the Palace. Of course, if someone comes along and steals the King Box while you're within the building, suddenly he can control the Gateways, and you could be well and truly screwed.

Some of the more benevolent holders of the King Box have used it as a sanctuary or refuge for their friends. At least one avatar of the Merchant ran it as a "no questions asked" motel/convention center for select clientele. Miserly folk have used it as the ultimate safety-deposit box. And a few sadistic types have used it simply as a amusing death trap to slay their enemies: a rat's maze that obeys their every command.



**C H A P T E R F I V E**  
**S U P P O R T I N G**  
**C A S T**



"IF IT HAS TO CHOOSE WHO IS TO BE CRUCIFIED,  
THE CROWD WILL ALWAYS SAVE BARABBAS."  
—JEAN COCTEAU

"TALK THE TALK. WALK THE WALK."  
—PARAGON





JOHN ATKINSON

## 101001101: The Rahyab

### Minor Cabals

#### 101001101

101001101 (which is 333 in binary and certainly an innocent, meaningless coincidence) is the name of the post-rave performance-art group that has rediscovered Oneiromancy.

Commonly going by the shorthand 101 (one-oh-one) they leapt into the London rave scene just as it was starting to die down in late 1996, led by the twin Oneiromancer founders Angel and Amir Rahyab. Their members travel all over the world, holding huge parties that mix mundane techno-rave, customized pharmaceuticals, and Oneiromancy to create a magickal dreamscape that is more than the sum of its parts.

Some call it the Ghostlight, or the Raving, or other Important Capitalized Nouns, but at its center is a motley collection of half-digested personas and creative urges that have been molded together by the consensual will of the troupe. It's by this light that the greatest nights of 101001101 are

held, and it is the conversion of other artistic types to this new medium which 101001101 holds as their highest calling.

Eclectic artists, high-school misfits, hangdog junkies with undamaged brains, club kids, and not a few gamers who have problems with the difference between fiction and reality form the unstable core of 101001101. There are nearly a hundred members, of which about ten are full-fledged Oneiromancers—the remainder are flunkies, bouncers, and “riders.”

Riders are 101001101 members who have been fully attuned to the consensual hallucination and so can be “ridden” by allied Oneiromancers in a fashion similar to demonic possession. This can make even low-level members of 101001101 extremely dangerous, as they can suddenly show skills, traits, and magical abilities at any moment.

In many ways, the consensual hallucination that 101001101 is building is symbolically based on and around modern computer networks, sim-

ilar to the techno and electronica movements. Angel and Amir are the processors, their adepts are servers, and low-level functionaries are a kind of peripheral; the former enemies who are wiped clean, left in a coma, and fed on hospital tubes would be extra hard drives. If 101001101 cared about words anymore, they would probably work out an elaborate naming convention for all these situations, but they're rapidly evolving past that.

Here's how a 101001101 party usually goes down: a huge number of people, hand-picked by the Oneiromancers, receive elegant business cards with no identification, simply engraved with a phone number. In addition to the usual suspects mentioned above, 101001101 always ends up with a pretty large number of regular ravers and partygoers. This is actually essential, as the stresses caused by minds cracking apart helps feed the magickal frission that grows the consensual ghostlight.

Calling the number leads to an answering machine that tells them to come to an abandoned mill, an old car-assembly plant, a decaying warehouse, or whatever venue the troupe has chosen. They show up for a rave and get something much more—their own visions recycled, amplified, and fed back to them. 101001101 wants only the most imaginative artists it can find, and then uses Oneiromancy spells and rituals to pull their creative visions out and spray them across the floors and walls of the altered spaces they perform in.

What happens in a 101001101 performance? Hard to say. The troupe includes talented dancers, acrobats, visual artists, and eclectic types recruited from Burning Man and other alternate-art festivals, mixed with great techno and magick. Though the lineup is constantly changing, they currently have a man who sets off high-powered fireworks all over an asbestos suit he wears, a contortionist with vestigial arms, and a blind midget

## Stereotype Blues

Sometimes the best way to define something well is to step back and unequivocally say what it isn't. Let's take a second and make certain we're all writing on the same page.

101001101 is not the Borg. They don't want to assimilate the human race—just the most interesting people in it. At the moment no one is a part of 101001101 who doesn't want to be, though there have been a few accidents along the way.

101001101 doesn't squash individuality, any more than the internet does. They'd argue they are promoting better art and communication, and they could be right.

101001101 isn't trying to destroy anyone's mind. While their shows do cause damage to some "unsophisticated" minds, continued exposure makes the person part of 101001101, which cures any mental damage caused by the shows. (Or at least you won't care.)

101001101 isn't Lovecraft. They aren't showing people visions of Art That Man Was Not Meant To Know, unless they don't like you very much and want to crack you like a day-old egg. 101001101 parties are surreal but definitely enjoyable if you don't push too hard or accidentally see something you aren't ready for.

101001101 doesn't give a shit about other schools, cabals, the Clergy, or anything in the occult underground. Ever. Focused on their inner space, sleepwalkers are far too busy forging a new future for human consciousness and art. (Other cabals may force their hand in time, however.)

GMs are encouraged to subvert player expectation. Make 101001101 likable, friendly, and earnest—though they have more teeth, they're very much like Max Attak in their sincere devotion. Getting a PC to slowly join 101001101 can provide hours of endless fun.

who can sing in the fashion of a castrati. Hell, maybe he is.

Think Jim Rose's Circus mixed with the Blue Man Performance Group and then make it much weirder. 101001101 only does interactive pieces, and they excel at wrapping the action around participants until their boundaries start to fray. It should feel so strange that PCs are certain magick's the culprit, only to discover that 101001101 doesn't start using Twiddle the Knobs and Dream Made Flesh indiscriminately until after midnight. If they're still there then, things really start dissolving and it's time to pull out the big guns. Let them meet different versions of themselves, dead friends and loved ones who are plucked from their subconscious, relive traumas as well as "Your Life's Greatest Hits," the whole sordid bag. Have a ball.

The head of the troupe are Angel and Amir Rahyab, a pair of fraternal twins, a boy and girl of Iranian descent who now literally have only one mind. They emigrated from Tehran to London in 1995 and seem to have been magickally aware from their arrival—no one is certain when or how they reinvented Oneiromancy, and they aren't talking.

Angel and Amir grew up sharing a secret language—a mixture of grunts, glottal stops, and nonsense syllables that formed the skeleton for a personal vocabulary they shared. (Although it's not the Alter Tongue [see p. xx], it's a similar phenomenon.) Widely studied by psychologists, twins sometimes develop a unique language structure based on feedback—by listening to each other, they create words and grammar forms based around babytalk that reinforce one another. Definitions bloom and before long a complete system that sounds like gibberish allows the two to communicate fully with one another.

At this point, all members of 101001101 speak to each other exclusively in their own language, an amalgamation of the twin's original secret language and low-level ambient telepathy that passes through their "network." They can still speak to outsiders, but that ability is becoming harder and harder to retain as the system develops.

One of the side effects of constant exposure to the personality-eroding effects of 101001101's new-wave magickal dreaming is a steady deterioration in ego, which makes the network of members susceptible to demonic possession and erratic behavior. Many of the "orphaned" sleepwalkers are sensitive artists whose souls were short-circuited by exposure to 101001101 but who did not join the group. For the leaders, the changes have been much more extreme—they have fused into one mind with no walls between them, sharing all things in a communion so intimate the self has no place.

Despite appearances, 101001101 is not a deliberately sinister group by any means. Though radical in their methodology and backed by potent magick, they are devoted not to power but an idealistic, somewhat naïve belief in the power of creativity—they aren't into magick for the guns and cheap thrills. 101001101 is an extreme performance troupe, and believes that through magick we can unlock the door of greatness. The fact that this door often leads to mania, embolisms, and ego-destroying visions are all minor details that 101001101 hope to work out in time.

Other groups are barely aware of the existence of 101001101, but that will change as the sleepwalkers move onto the scene. Based primarily in Europe, they are already raising the ire of the Sleepers, who can scarcely believe the magickal wreckage left behind in the wake of 101001101 performances. Amir and Angel have seen the a third-generation copy of the Naked Goddess tape, but what effect that has had on their desires is unknown.

The Rahyab believe that Oneiromancy is the first magickal art form of a new age, and 101001101 is dedicated to this vision at any cost.

## The Rahyab, Oneiromancer Supreme

**Summary:** Someone once said, "Life is a constant tension between self and society." No two people in this life are more aware of that than Angel and Amir, the savant leaders of 101001101 who rely on constant mystical tension to keep the machinery of their minds from tearing them apart.

Amir and Angel are impeccably dressed fashionable twins of Iranian descent. Sultry, beautiful, and immaculately toned, they have the presence of catwalk models and twice the attitude. The two are of such similar build and size that from behind it is difficult to tell them apart.

Issues of singular or plural tense tend to dissolve in the presence of the Rahyab (as it sometimes calls itself), who is a composite being formed of the two. They were raised in a modern Skinner box—an elaborate palace that had little outside stimulus and no parental supervision. Outside of their inattentive parents' gaze, the two taught one another their own language, raised each other, became incestual lovers, and somewhere along the line discovered Oneiromancy. While this doesn't happen to every batch of neglected twins, it happened to these two. Speculations on their parent's motives and motivations would be rife if anyone knew their origins.

Here's the real kicker: the Rahyab has been sharing one soul since 1998. They are scrupulous in referring to themselves as two separate individuals when dealing with anyone from outside the inner circle of 101001101, and for good reason—they know that dynamic tension between them is the key to keeping their magickal network healthy.

As a consequence, Angel and Amir are constantly vying against one another, playing out elaborate games of love and chance. Amir takes lovers in order to make Angel jealous, and chooses them perfectly because he *is* her—and she sleeps with the same people to avenge herself. Angel has soured business deals Amir has set up, and hired thugs to set up hits on him, which usually ends disastrously for the hit team. By conniving against one another they keep their rapport fresh—and though they are one being, by submerging surprises in their collective unconscious they can spring traps against one another. To say the least, PCs should be encouraged not to sleep with, work for, or assist Amir or Angel in their daily backstabbing unless they want to be tied up in a very sick version of *The Grifters* or *Who's Afraid of Virginia*

*Woolf*. GMs may have a very different idea about what would be fun.

People who have been keeping score at home may notice that a male and female twin who are in a constant magickal union-opposition sounds an awful lot like an incredibly potent avatar for the Mystic Hermaphrodite (see p. xx). The Freak, Godwalker for the Mystic Hermaphrodite, has been known to attend 101001101 shows and has met with the Rahyab. Everyone is still breathing, and no one else knows what the score is, but open hostilities seem to have been ruled out for the moment—probably because the mystic propwash from the Rahyab's proximity to the Mystic Hermaphrodite has been subsumed in their practice of Oneiromancy rather than taking them down the path of the avatar.

**Special Note:** Due to their dual nature, the Rahyab share a single “pool” of stats, which they divide between themselves at will. The brackets represent standard distribution between Amir and Angel, respectively. Note that this can change at any moment—so Amir can go from a 30-Mind clod to a 75-Mind sophisticate in a flash. This can make conversations strangely inhuman, and also results in some physical discrepancies that look impossible, like Angel picking up a bodybuilder by the throat. The short answer is that they look impossible because they are—when the twins swap traits, they do it whole hog. Also, skills listed below are only the ones the Rahyab retains for itself—if they (it) decide to, they (it) can pull new skills from others in the 101001101 network at will. Although they can move these stat points around at will, each must keep at least 20% in every stat. They can, however, put their stats above human maximum (100) for up to thirty seconds at a time; they then have to drop back to human limits for thirty seconds before amping up beyond the limit again. At the extreme, one twin could have Body 85, Speed 115, Mind 90, and Soul 140 for up to thirty seconds, or Speed 100 and Soul 100 for as long as they like.

**Personality:** Aquarius—charismatic, idealistic, and otherworldly.

**Obsession:** Breaching the barriers between dream and reality.

**Wound Points:** 140

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Mundanity. Librarians, office clerks, people that don't appreciate great works of art.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Division. Angel and Amir can't even conceive of the terror of being separated.

**Noble Stimulus:** Creativity. At their heart they truly believe that 101001101 can and does raise art and artists to a new level, for the betterment of the human race.

### Stats

**Body:** 105 (Wiry) [55] [50]

**Speed:** 135 (S) (Whiplike) [65] [70]

**Mind:** 110 (Unconventional) [55] [60]

**Soul:** 160 (Untold Depths) [80] [80]

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Erotic Dancing 65%, General Athletics 25%, Struggle: 20%

**Speed Skills:** Dodge 35%

**Mind Skills:** Fringe Art and Performance 60%, Know A Little About Everything 45%

**Soul Skills:** Damn, I'm Sexy 60%, Oneiromancy 80%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
5 Hard	10 Hard	4 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard
2 Failed	2 Failed	4 Failed	5 Failed	2 Failed

### Possessions

The Rahyab has no tangible possessions it cares about, but one unique mental feature bears noting, as it affords a lethal advantage for an Oneiromancer—the Rahyab is incapable of sleep and never suffers impairment from staying awake, though it gains charges anyway. As such it is *constantly* accumulating charges, many of which power 101001101 events, but it always has at least 5 significant and 50 minor charges at hand. It appears to be utterly tireless.

On the downside, it is entirely possible that were the Rahyab to “crash” by sleeping, going unconscious, or being killed, the 101001101 network would die out as well, psychically maiming its members and possibly ending Oneiromancy as a school in one blinding instant.





### The Dealership: Helen Simpson, Julie Collier, Juan Martinez, the Bad Man

## The Dealership

Whatever you want, whatever you need, it can be yours—for the right price. From a small basement suite in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village, the Bad Man runs the Dealership, where anything and everything can be bought and sold. Whether you’re after your lost youth, the location of the True Cross, or simply the name of your father, you can be sure that the Bad Man will be able to help.

The Dealership is the ultimate bring-and-buy stand. A high-level avatar of the Merchant (see UA, p. 173), the Bad Man appears to be in his early 30s, a strongly charismatic man with neat light-brown hair, a ready smile, and perfect teeth. He is always polite and friendly, with impeccable manners and an immaculate suit. The Dealership trades in dreams and miracles, although if you want an untraceable gun they can provide that, too. The system is simple. You tell the Bad Man what you want, and if you have something he needs, you provide it in return. More commonly, he swears you to an unspecified favor to be called

in when he needs it. If you’re wise, you make sure there are firm boundaries to that particular deal, or it may turn out that the favor he needs is the donation of thirty years of your life. The Bad Man is more than willing to haggle, but always angles for the best deal.

If your request is unusual or difficult to fulfill, the Bad Man can still track down whatever you want. It may take some time, but he has yet to fail one of his customers. At any time, there may be as many as four or five deals awaiting closure, and often the price of a deal is to help close another one. You may find yourself paying for your luxurious new head of hair with the favor of donating a portion of your muscular strength.

Sometimes, there’s simply nothing for it but to go out and do some detective work. If a client wants to get hold of one particular orange ’59 Chevy that she went to her prom night in, someone has to go and find the damn thing. That can mean a favor that involves six months tracing car records and cash sales across nine states, followed by a week-long

truck journey hauling the scrap-metal cube the car has been compressed into all the way from Texas back to NYC. Still, it's a small price to pay for getting rid of your rheumatism, right?

The Bad Man's client ledgers are so complicated that they defy belief. Whenever a client explains what she needs, the Bad Man spends several minutes consulting his books, working out which of his debtors has what she wants, and if none seem applicable, where he can get hold of it. Most deals can be completed within a few hours, but a minority may take days or even weeks to fulfill. Only the ones that are impossible to complete are turned down. Some deals are simple, an easy trade of one thing for another. Others, however, may involve a cobweb-like network of trades and countertrades as the Bad Man tries to get everyone in a position where they get what they want and he can still make a healthy profit. Still, he's very good at what he does, and he's skimmed a lot of profits off the side.

Naturally, these profits include a wide range of personal enhancements. The Bad Man is strong, fast, smart, and charismatic—unbelievably so—multi-talented, ludicrously skilled, and immensely hardy. In addition, the Bad Man enjoys the services of his sales staff, who are totally in his thrall. Accepting perpetual enslavement in return for services rendered, they're his front-line team, the people that his customers meet first.

If you know where to look, the Dealership is not too hard to find. Wedged underneath a deli in Greenwich Village, it consists of a set of basement-level offices open from nine to five, with unusual hours by arrangement. A small wrought-iron staircase leads into the lobby area, where Julie Collier sits at a reception booth behind a bullet-proof security window. The décor is corporate bland, with a polished wooden floor, light tan walls, and expensively neutral art pieces. Not many people are aware that the door contains a small clockwork scanning device that accurately identifies the offensive capabilities of people passing it and relays the information to Julie through a little talking frog brooch she always wears on her collar.

Dangerous individuals—including adepts, avatars, and martial artists as well as people with weapons—have to immediately sign a magically binding contract that they will not attempt to harm or unfairly influence the Bad Man or any of his staff. People who protest the one-sidedness of this are allowed to sign a modified contract that states “. . . within the Dealership, except in self-defense,” but no time limit is permitted to the clause. If they don't play ball, they're politely asked to leave.

Two doors lead off the lobby and though they look quite flimsy, they are actually self-locking blast doors nearly impossible to break through. As soon as anyone starts trying to rip their way through, the Bad Man exits through one of several different escape routes into the subway system or other parts of Greenwich. Few humans could get through the doors. Since there is nothing particularly important in the lobby, the worst that ever really happens is that the would-be assailant takes out their frustrations on the receptionist. Julie has held the post for four months now without incident, which is actually pretty good, although she doesn't realize it. Her abusive ex-husband is enjoying a lifetime sentence without parole in a state prison on child molestation and murder charges, with predictable results; Julie is quite happy with her bargain.

One of the doors off the lobby leads to the small kitchen and staff toilets. The other leads to the main office, and only people who are relatively safe—or contractually obliged to non-aggression—get inside. The Bad Man's two full-time bonded “associates,” Helen Simpson and Juan Martinez, have their desks inside. Helen is a contracts specialist and spends her time making sure that everything her employer signs is absolutely watertight. She's very good indeed, and nothing slips past her eagle-eyed scrutiny. Juan is in charge of stock control and special operations. He keeps note of all the Dealership's tangible assets and their location—he has a small stock of the most popular items in a cabinet by his desk—and also keeps track of the various agents and missions active at the time, checking status reports and ensuring deadlines are met.

The Bad Man's office is off to one side. It's a lot larger inside than people usually expect, at least twenty yards deep. Furnishings are extremely plush, in a tasteful classical style. There are a number of significant artworks on display, including the Bad Man's most treasured display piece, the soul of one of his rivals. Entitled "Meditations," this is a living tableau on a graceful marble column depicting a vague apparition writhing and twisting in perpetual agony from the chains of fire that are wrapped around it—which is in fact exactly what is happening to it. The Bad Man paid a number of people dearly to achieve that particular revenge.

In front of his desk is a loose semi-circle of chairs for clients to seat themselves in. When he isn't with clients, the Bad Man spends a reasonable amount of his time keeping up with various markets, analyzing his books, tracking down information, and staying in touch with his more important debtors. At the touch of a button located on the arm of his chair, a bomb-proof screen crashes down across the room between the Bad Man and his clients. It destroys the table, but that doesn't really matter. Behind the chair is a concealed high-security door that opens only in response to the Bad Man's retinal print, which leads to four different escape tunnels. One opens out on a subway platform, while two more lead to shops in the north and east sides of Greenwich, and the fourth goes directly to a parking garage where an unobtrusive black sedan is ready and waiting. Needless to say, several unpleasant security systems prevent people from approaching the Dealership by any of these passages.

When you make a deal with the Bad Man, the price usually ends up being a favor. The contracts that Helen draws up are long and confusing, and take a Mind roll to successfully read, but what they basically say is that in return for providing you with what you want, you owe the Bad Man a favor which will be considered repaid when the Bad Man says so, and in the mean time you have to do whatever he asks you to without exception or excuse. Auxiliary clauses ban you from saying

anything negative or uncomplimentary about him or his dealership, or from acting against the interests of the dealership in any way.

The naïve, stupid, or truly desperate are generally the only ones who are prepared to sign such a contract, and rightly so. If you sign one of these open-ended contracts, you do his bidding for the rest of your life. Although such open contracts are never deemed discharged, the Bad Man does not usually make crippling or lethal demands. After all, his bonded thralls are generally more useful to him alive and active in the community, not standing out too much from their peers. In addition, someone driven to utter desperation might find a way to annul the contract, which would be unthinkable. There are exceptions of course—such as when he needs a new receptionist.

Shrewder clients insist on seeing a scaled list of charges, or tying down a contract to a specific term of service with limitations. The Bad Man tries to discourage this whenever possible, but if he has no choice he concedes gracefully. Such limitations may place limits on the number of times he can command service, the type of activity or sacrifice he can request, the level of personal detriment or inconvenience he is permitted to ask for, chronological boundaries on the agreement or, if the client is genuinely smart, all of the above. Sometimes, a contract requires a specific item, financial value, or service. This most commonly occurs when the client has something that the Bad Man needs to conclude another deal right away. He does not personally need money, extra life, stats, skills or other commonly available commodities, but he is always interested in acquiring interesting new quirks or powers.

Once a contract is signed, it becomes spiritually and magically binding upon both signatories to the letter of the wording, a refinement of the second channel of the Merchant avatar skill. Intangibles and other goods are transferred according to the delivery schedule attached to the contract—generally on the spot, but not always. The Bad Man does not sign a contract until he has the required merchandise ready to be deliv-

ered, so if the thing you need takes a while to track down, you have to return for another appointment at which contracts are actually signed. In the mean time, you sign a contract agreeing to the deal in principle. The only way you can back out at that point is if the Bad Man cannot complete the bargain. Otherwise, you are compelled to follow through.

In addition to the extremely high stats and skills that he has dedicated several years to trading for, the Bad Man has a number of tricks, tools, and people that he can call upon. Several powerful people owe him favors, including a number of senior policemen and judges, two U.S. representatives, a Hollywood director, and a three-star general; with their aid, he can mobilize a number of people in several different walks of life. He also has a number of thugs in thrall if he needs some dirty work done.

His favorite marketing ploy consists of handing out business cards with his name on them. If someone touches the card and thinks about something they need, the Bad Man becomes aware of that need, of the person's name, and how to get hold of them at that moment. If the need seems promising, that person gets a call. He also has a briefcase from which he can take any inanimate object he requires that could reasonably fit inside it, courtesy of a deal made with a desperate chaos mage. When he wants to talk to one of his debtors, he only has to think the person's name and they are compelled to telephone him within five minutes—a clause in their contract.

He has purchased enough youth to keep him at 32 for at least another forty years, and his lifespan has been extended to last another 250 years, if all goes well. He does not get diseased or poisoned, and bullets, blades, and bludgeons are reluctant to hurt him—attacks from those types of weapons doing only as much damage as the higher of the two dice rolled. He also has an eidetic memory, so he perfectly recalls every face, document, book, and conversation he has ever come across. Interestingly, he has no real name; he sold it to someone else years ago, erasing all details of his original identity from the world. (There *are*

other Merchant avatars out there who call themselves the Bad Man; the original tolerates them because they draw off the riff-raff.)

## The Bad Man, Dangerous Merchant

**Note:** The Bad Man has done a lot of deals to build up his stats and skills, and is fairly superhuman. He is also very dangerous in a fight.

**Personality:** (Gemini) Charming, outgoing, and entirely insincere.

**Obsession:** Networking. The Bad Man knows he can get anything he wants if he just has the right access to the right people. For him, the pursuit is more fun than the capture.

**Wound Points:** 220

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Being double-crossed.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) That he may one day find himself tied into a deal he can't make good on.

**Noble Stimulus:** Decent boss. Once someone is in his power, he won't make their life unbearable—although he could—unless it's really necessary.

### Stats

**Body:** 90 (Mighty)

**Speed:** 90 (Lightning Reflex)

**Mind:** 90 (Brilliant)

**Soul:** 90 (Charismatic)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Athletics 70%, Survivor 85%, Martial Arts 85%, Swimming 80%, Strong-man 70%

**Speed Skills:** Drive 90%, Dodge 85%, Sprint 85%, Handguns 80%, Climb 80%

**Mind Skills:** General Ed 90%, Notice 75%, Higher Ed 90%, Languages 85%, Law 90%

**Soul Skills:** Lie 90%, Seduction 90%, **Avatar: The Merchant** 87%, Persuasion 85%, Contacts 90%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
4 Hard	5 Hard	0 Hard	2 Hard	1 Hard
0 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed

### Equipment

.44 Magnum in holster, business cards, briefcase, mobile phone, sharp suit, \$25,000 in petty cash.

## Helen Simpson, Contracts Specialist

Personality: (Virgo) Meticulously accurate.

Wound Points: 50

### Stats

Body: 50 (Curvaceous)

Speed: 45 (Distracted)

Mind: 75 (Sharp)

Soul: 60 (Alluring)

### Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 25%, Struggle 30%

Speed Skills: Dodge 20%, Drive 25%, Handguns 40%

Mind Skills: General Education 55%, Notice 30%, Contract Law 75%

Soul Skills: Lie 40%, Charm 55%, Intimidate 40%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 Hard	2 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard
1 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed

### Equipment

Mobile phone, legal library, .32 pistol, sharp suit.

## Juan Martinez, Operations Manager

Personality: (Taurus) Stubbornly methodical.

Wound Points: 55

### Stats

Body: 55 (Wiry)

Speed: 50 (Coordinated)

Mind: 60 (Bright)

Soul: 55 (Personable)

### Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 35%, Brawling 50%, Lifting 35%

Speed Skills: Dodge 35%, Drive 20%, Handguns 45%

Mind Skills: General Education 35%, Notice 30%, Good Memory 50%

Soul Skills: Lie 35%, Persuade 40%, Briefing 50%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 Hard	2 Hard	1 Hard	2 Hard	0 Hard
1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

### Equipment

Mobile phone, electronic organizer, .38 pistol, sharp suit.

## Julie Collier, Ill-Fated Receptionist

Personality: (Libra) Charmingly innocent.

Wound Points: 55

### Stats

Body: 55 (Fit)

Speed: 60 (Active)

Mind: 50 (Lively)

Soul: 60 (Sexy)

### Skills

Body Skills: General Athletics 25%, Struggle 25%, Cycling 35%

Speed Skills: Dodge 35%, Drive 20%, Sprint 30%

Mind Skills: General Education 35%, Notice 25%, Receptionist 25%

Soul Skills: Lie 15%, Charm 35%, Allure 25%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hard	1 Hard	2 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard
0 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed	1 Failed	1 Failed

### Equipment

Mobile phone, nail varnish, clockwork frog brooch keyed to the front door's security system, sharp suit.



JOREN AMNISON

## The Grail Knights: Paracelsus, Joseph of Arimathea, Lancelot du Lac, Simeon bar Yohai

### The Grail Knights

Even before it was the Cup of Christ, people have searched for the Grail. It shows up in many forms through the stories of the past: a bowl, a cup, a stone, a cauldron, a maiden, a family. The Philosopher's Stone is just the Grail in another guise, as is Dagda's Cauldron, the womb, the Golden Fleece, and Ascension itself. The Grail is just about the most muddled idea in all of western occult tradition. No wonder, then, that it's so tough to find. No one really knows what it is that they're looking for.

That doesn't stop some people, though. Lancelot, in some tellings of the Arthurian stories, saw his son Galahad find the Grail and be transformed. Lancelot never saw the Grail himself, though he searched for the rest of his life. And after. See, that type of obsession doesn't stop with death, and Lancelot was a pretty resourceful man. Once his body died, he hung around and kept looking. And he found that he wasn't alone.

Lancelot formed the nucleus of a new cooperative group dedicated to finding the Grail at any cost. He found that his companion, Pellinore, had actually died several decades before Lancelot first met him but continued to follow his Questing Beast, which was just the Grail in another form. Pellinore had managed to bind himself into the body he died in, and taught the trick to Lancelot as well. Over time, they met others following the same elusive trail: Joseph of Arimathea, John Dee, Kit Marlowe, Paracelsus, and many nameless others. There was a band of Irish heroes searching for Dagda's Cauldron. A Pictish hunter was looking for the one beast that would feed his people forever. A Roman scholar was hot on the trail of Vesta's Bowl, and a Greek warrior was seeking the golden apple that started that whole mess with Troy.

The problem is, none of them agree on what the Grail is. They've put a rule in place, forbidding discussion of the nature of the Grail within the group. Last time they spoke of it, half their

numbers were looking for new bodies when the argument finally was brought under control.

Every year, between Midwinter and the New Year, the Grail Knights meet to discuss their progress over the past year and plan for the next. The location changes year to year, and next year's venue is chosen at the end of the conclave. And every year there are some missing people, some who have given up on the search and passed to their reward, some who have been destroyed, and maybe some who found their own personal Grail. And every year, Lancelot looks down from his seat at the high table, sees the empty chairs, and says, "Son of a bitch. They found it."

### **Lancelot du Lac, Relentless Questing Knight**

When he lived, he was reckoned the greatest knight of the company. He was purest in honor, chivalry, and justice. His plate metal armor was polished to a high sheen, and his long sword sang as it cut through the air. He knows that this is true. He's read it in hundreds of places.

Lancelot has been at this a long time. He's not really terribly clear on the past, but sometimes he remembers serving a Celtic warlord in Cornwall. He remembers his pride when he could finally afford a steel sword that was harder, sharper, and stronger than the iron used by his companions. He remembers the smoke-filled hall of the Chieftain, called the Red Dragon. And then he wonders how he can reconcile the two images he has of his past. He usually resolves the problem by getting drunk and watching the first half of *Excalibur*.

The second half just depresses him.

While he may once have been a pure and just man, Lancelot's quest has taken a toll on his spirit. He's had to do many things to survive that he's not proud of, and has committed such atrocities in pursuit of his goal that his mind is not what it once was. He is a complete sociopath whose only concern is the Grail. Woe to anyone who gets in his way.

(Note that, as a sociopath, Lancelot is unable to use his passions.)

**Personality:** Lancelot has two settings. One is cold and implacable. The other is killing everything in sight. He has trouble relating to others in any manner other than orders and threats. Only his goal is important to him.

**Obsession:** Finding the Grail. Lancelot's idea of the Grail is the cup Christ used at the Last Supper, the cup that caught his blood when the spear pierced his side. He's not sure what it looks like, but he'll know it when he sees it.

**Wound Points:** 90

#### **Passions**

**Rage Stimulus:** Being kept from his hunt for the Grail.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Losing track of who he really is.

**Noble Stimulus:** Fellow questers. Lancelot will do whatever he can to aid someone's quest for the Grail.

#### **Stats**

**Body:** 90 (Unstoppable)

**Speed:** 75 (Moves Like Water)

**Mind:** 35 (Battered and Bent)

**Soul:** 60 (Burningly Intense)

#### **Skills**

**Body Skills:** Killing Things Up Close 90%, General Athletics 70%, Get Back Up 90%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 50%, Getting Out of the Way 65%, Killing Things Far Away 75%, Sneak 40%

**Mind Skills:** Lived Through a Lot of History 30%, Following the Clues 25%, Tactics 35%, Security Measures 35%

**Soul Skills:** Diplomatic Speech 40%, Courty Persuasion 45%, Read Coincidences 25%, Magickal Knowledge 20%

**Read Coincidences:** This allows Lancelot to try to interpret the source of magickal interference in an area, and track down adepts or avatars who are using magick or channels.

**Magickal Knowledge:** This skill represents the information Lancelot has picked up over

the years about the players and the tools in the occult underground.

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
10 Hard	10 Hard	10 Hard	10 Hard	10 Hard
2 Failed	3 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	4 Failed

### Equipment

Lancelot tends to travel light. He always has a sword, several fighting knives, an assortment of pistols, and at least one rifle or submachinegun handy. He's kept up to date with a lot of the technical advances of the last twelve centuries, and is comfortable driving and using firearms. He quite likes both. He tends to travel around with all his possessions in the back of his Mustang convertible.

### Joseph of Arimathea, Holy Child Finder

During Christ's life, Joseph of Arimathea wasn't really free to follow him openly. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews, and declaring any sympathy at all for this rebel would have meant disaster for Joseph. He spoke out against the condemnation of Jesus in council, so they conveniently forgot to inform him of the meeting that sentenced Jesus to death.

The crucifixion hit Joseph hard. He felt guilty for not having the courage to follow his master openly, and his failure in this regard ate at his soul. He claimed Christ's body from Pilate and buried him in the tomb Joseph had bought and prepared for himself. Then he gathered up Mary Magdalene and all the wealth they both had, and skipped town. He wound up setting up a little shrine on a hill in Britain, and lived there quietly for a long time. Mary left shortly after they arrived to find a town to live in, and took her children, brothers, and parents with her. Joseph remained, trying to expiate his sin of cowardice.

The whole Grail thing that started a few years later caught him by surprise. He'd brought some nice cups and plates from Jerusalem, but the Last

Supper had been above an inn. Who knew what had happened to that particular cup? Joseph certainly didn't have it. But he started thinking about Mary, and the relatives of her dead husband. At the age of 110 years he came down from Glastonbury Tor, and went to find the Cup of Christ and her lineage. He died in the first rainstorm.

That didn't stop him, though. He knows that his only chance at redemption is to find the Grail, in the form of the relatives of the master he failed once before, and keep them safe. He has gotten quite good at possessing bodies and hiding from the Cruel Ones, and has devoted his existence to redressing the wrong he once did.

**Personality:** Joseph has all the fervor of a truly repentant sinner. He knows he has wronged and that he must make amends. He is a truly humble, devout Christian who does whatever it takes to find the bloodline-carriers of the man he failed and guide them into their birthright.

**Obsession:** Finding the Grail. Joseph believes that the Grail is a bloodline-carrier of Christ, one who has the right gifts and spirit to finish the Father's work. Only then will Joseph's work be done.

**Wound Points:** Varies.

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Being called a coward. Joseph hates to be reminded of his failure.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Failure in his quest. If he doesn't fulfill his penance, he believes he will be damned for eternity.

**Noble Stimulus:** Brave gestures. Joseph does anything he can to make sure that a brave and noble act is not in vain, nor unrewarded. He doesn't want people making the same mistake he did.

### Stats

**Body:** Varies

**Speed:** Varies

**Mind:** 70 (Driven)

**Soul:** 85 (True Believer)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Varies, plus Get Back Up at the body score of the host.



**Speed Skills:** Varies

**Mind Skills:** Been Around 70%, Notice 65%, Genealogy 70%, Research 50%, Hiding Places 40%

**Soul Skills:** Speak with the Tongue of Angels 60%, White Lie 65%, Hold Onto Body 85%, Aura Sight 85%, Make Contact 85%

**Make Contact:** This skill allows Joseph to try to possess a body no matter what the location or state of his soul. He can jump from body to body, or reach back across the veil if he's currently disembodied.

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 Hard	5 Hard	7 Hard	5 Hard	3 Hard
1 Failed	1 Failed	3 Failed	2 Failed	3 Failed

### Equipment

Joseph's possessions change whenever he needs to change bodies. He usually tries to dress in a modest, respectable manner for whatever society he finds himself in, and usually doesn't carry weapons. He will always have a journal of some sort to record his quest, although he writes it in first-century Aramaic.

## Simeon bar Yohai, Scholar of the Divine Language

Simeon bar Yohai was a Talmudic scholar in the second century. He was always fascinated with the relationships between the Hebrew letters and numbers, and the way that like numbers indicated like things. His research in this area led him to write the *Sefer ha-Zohar*, the *Book of Splendors*, which is a mystical journey through the Torah with an eye towards Kabbalistic interpretation. He found the power of names to shape the world and, as he explored the implications and applications of this secret, he became obsessed with finding the Secret Name of God.

He hasn't found it yet, after nearly two thousand years. When his own body wore down to the point of uselessness, he created a golem form similar to Ein-Sof (see UA, p. 150) to contain his soul. The golem is identical to Ein-Sof in all re-

spects, except that it is permanently under Simeon's control and cannot reproduce itself. Simeon spends the bulk of his time tracking down rare religious texts and poring over them for patterns that may lead him closer to his goal.

**Personality:** Simeon bar Yohai is a quiet, scholarly man. His existence is consumed by his studies, and he views everything else in the world as a distraction. He deals with distractions as quickly and simply as possible, then returns to his work.

**Obsession:** Finding the Grail. Simeon's idea of the Grail is the Secret Name of God, which would grant him Godlike understanding of the universe.

**Wound Points:** 150

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Distractions. Nothing makes Simeon angrier than having to leave his studies to deal with an intrusion from the outside world.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Simeon's greatest fear is that he has already found the Name but didn't recognize it.

**Noble Stimulus:** Faith. The display of true faith with no proof and the dedication to follow such faith wherever it leads touches Simeon deeply, and he feels such faith must be rewarded.

### Stats

**Body:** 150 (Rock Hard)

**Speed:** 50 (Lumbering)

**Mind:** 95 (Piercing)

**Soul:** 65 (Peaceful)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Bash Things 50%, Move It 50%

**Speed Skills:** Drive 15%, Dodge 25%

**Mind Skills:** All Knowing 35%, Spot Patterns 80%, Weird and Obscure Languages 90%, Gematria 95%

**Soul Skills:** Persuade 40%, Twist the Truth 60%, Kabbalistic Manipulation 65%, Rabbinical Knowledge 65%

**Gematria:** This skill is the knowledge and training in Kabbalistic numerology that allows Simeon to find relationships between two

people, places, or things. Once he knows the name of something, he can calculate the Gematrical value of it and find out how it fits into the world. This allows him to divine one fact about the target with each successful roll.

**Kabalistic Manipulation:** This is the practical application of Gematrical knowledge. With a successful roll, Simeon may apply a positive shift to his next Mind or Soul skill roll equal to the Kabalistic Manipulation roll, rounded down to the nearest ten.

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hard	6 Hard	4 Hard	8 Hard	3 Hard
0 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed	3 Failed	1 Failed

### Equipment

Books. Lots and lots of books. Rooms full of them. Floor to ceiling shelves, all the walls, piled on the floor, under the tables and chairs. Simeon has at least one copy of almost every version of every religious text anyone can think of, even a lot of rare and unique ones, though he has yet to find *Das Garten*. From these, he has learned every ritual listed in the rulebook and several others not noted there, including one that allows him to make a new golem body when he needs to; he keeps spares on several continents.

## Paracelsus, Alchemical Physician

A much more recent addition to the Grail Knights, Aureoleus Phillipus Theostratus Bombastus von Hohenheim, better known as Paracelsus, was a physician and alchemist in Europe during the sixteenth century. Not satisfied with what medical science could do for his patients, he applied the science of alchemy to their problems with great success, adding opium and mercury to the medical armories of the world. He traveled extensively through Europe and Asia, learning all he could about the secrets of alchemy and healing from whomever would teach him.

He became a professor of physics, medicine, and surgery at the University of Basle, where he garnered many enemies by speaking out against antiquated methods and treatments. So vitriolic were his attacks on established medicine that he was removed from his professorship, and he spent the next fifteen years wandering Europe as a teacher and healer. His personal quest was for the Sovereign Cure, the one reagent that would heal all the ills to which man was heir. After enjoying some success and acceptance from turning lead into gold, he realized that people were more interested in the wonders of wealth than of health and decided to disappear. In 1541 he faked his own death and went into hiding. Over the years he has discovered a number of formulas that can heal and cure, and even extend life (the Elixir Vitae), but not the Sovereign Cure.

**Personality:** Paracelsus is intense in his search for knowledge. He is always happy to share with a fellow seeker, but does not give anything away. He is still a wanderer, and his attitudes are shaped by the fact that he has seen much of the earth over nearly five hundred years of change. He knows that change is constant and beautiful, and loves variety in all things.

**Obsession:** Finding the Grail. Paracelsus feels that the Grail is a symbol representing the Sovereign Cure, which will heal all ills if only he can find it.

**Wound Points:** 25

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Narrow thinking. The inability of another to accept a new idea grates on his nerves.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Violence) Being hurt. Paracelsus has never died, keeping himself alive through his alchemical formulae. His body is quite worn out, and he fears any damage to its frail structure.

**Noble Stimulus:** Medical research. He goes to great lengths to find and spread cures for illness and injury, pioneering new treatments and drugs.

### Stats

**Body:** 25 (Frail)

**Speed:** 30 (Tottering)

**Mind:** 99 (Encyclopedic)

**Soul:** 75 (Caring)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Struggle Feebly 10%, Geriatric Athletics 10%, Push Endurance 25%

**Speed Skills:** Drive 15%, Try to Duck 10%, Throw Potion 30%

**Mind Skills:** Been Everywhere 99%, Medicine 99%, **Alchemy** 99%, Pharmacology 99%, Research 99%

**Soul Skills:** Charm 50%, Lie 50%, Analyze Influences 75%

**Alchemy:** The Alchemy skill allows Paracelsus to concoct a potion for just about any purpose. Notably he has the potion that he takes to keep from dying, which he must take three times a day now, and the alkahest, the universal solvent. He carries the alkahest in two separate vials that he mixes together when he wants to use them. Treat damage as firearm damage based on the Alchemy roll, with Throw Potion used to hit the target. All po-

tions are immensely expensive, so Paracelsus uses them sparingly.

**Analyze Influences:** This lets Paracelsus check a person for magickal effects. A success will reveal any magickal powers, spells, or items currently affecting the target. It will not detect inactive magick, such as artifacts that aren't currently functioning, or the ability to cast spells.

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 Hard	7 Hard	8 Hard	2 Hard	1 Hard
2 Failed	2 Failed	4 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed

### Equipment

Paracelsus travels everywhere with an alchemical laboratory of impressive proportions. He pays for this by turning lead into gold whenever he needs some cash. He always carries on his person several vials of liquids and powders that help him keep going when he gets tired, or which can be used a weapon.



**Team Salvation: Amazon, Night Watchman, Atlantean, Paragon, Speedfreak, Talisman, Spacebrother**

## Team Salvation

Martin “Marty” Davis read a lot of comic books and played a lot of role-playing games as a teenager. Marty and his friends spent much of their youth embroiled in colorful, exciting worlds of fantasy. Then they grew up and went their separate ways to school, work, and the dull day-to-day slog of reality.

Marty, however, was never content to be an escapist fanboy or to surrender his dreams to mundanity. In an effort to be more like the characters in his favorite stories, Marty worked out, trained in martial arts, and began studying magick. Marty poured over the popular literature on the subject and tried to apply the concepts detailed in the games he used to play. In particular, Marty discovered a self-published comic book called *Notes from the Underground* that seemed to contain many subtle references to the art of spellcasting. Marty took the risk that most readers never would in the face of peers, science, doubt, and cynicism; he actually started to believe in and practice mag-

ick. Eventually, he found out that it works.

Marty wrote to the author of *Notes*, Tyler Xenicz, to share his revelation and to see if the clues were intentional. A long period of correspondence ensued which culminated in Tyler admitting that the hidden messages were part-test, part-search for a pupil. Tyler was an Entropomancer. He met with Marty in person and began to teach him the formula spells of his school. Marty was thrilled. He happily devoted all his time to learning magick; unfortunately, it was at the expense of the rest of his life. Marty lost his job and fell out with his current friends. He was becoming another version, albeit a more powerful one, of an escapist fanboy.

And then, one day, Tyler terminated his teaching with the words “Nothing comes of nothing.” Then he disappeared from what was left of Marty’s life.

Marty understood, or thought he understood. He got another job and began making a new life for himself. Then he called up his childhood friends (now in their late 20s, early 30s) and told them of

what he had learned. And he explained to them—once the shock, fear, and excitement had subsided—that this was their chance to finally do something real. To be like the heroes from the stories they once thrived on and make the world a better place. To be responsible with the power available to them.

It would be risky. Tyler had hinted at another, darker, world that hid behind the bland sheen of the everyday. There were villains and agendas at work within its shadowy borders. Fighting them would threaten the careers, families, comfort, and stability that Marty and his friends had won for themselves. But that was the point. Risking everything meant you could do anything. They would need cover personas, code names, uniforms (cool outfits, no tights), and a secret headquarters to work from. They all knew how the story went. So Team Salvation was born.

Of course, the occult underground is far more brutal and horrifying than most comic books; many of the so-called “serious” adepts and cabals snickered when Salvation hit the scene. It turns out, however, that you can learn a lot about investigating and combating the forces of darkness from comics and role-playing games.

Team Salvation’s current roster includes seven members. **Paragon:** Marty Davis, a trained Entropomancer and heroic leader; **The Night Watchman:** Bryce McCain, co-owner of a private security company; **Amazon:** Alexandra Davos, Ph.D. in feminist studies, lecturer, journalist, and Avatar of the Flying Woman; **The Atlantean:** Michael Stevens, background in science, specialized in marine biology; **Speedfreak:** Mark Jorgenson, athlete, principally sprinting; **Spacebrother:** Dave Hunter, computer programmer and graphic designer; and **Talisman:** Wilson King, who, during one of the Team’s initial missions, became bonded with an artifact—a ring—that allows him to generate optical illusions.

Team Salvation relies heavily on Paragon’s magick and their own “fictional” experience to navigate the depths of the occult underground. Their diverse skill-sets, professional contacts, and creative thinking serve them well in action. A standard tactic is to simply locate any covert criminal activity and draw public attention to it, either in

the form of law enforcement or media. This doesn’t always get the perpetrators caught, but it does force them to stop what they’re doing. Salvation isn’t afraid of a little vigilantism either. If trashing a hideout, scaring a few dukes, or stomping an adept will help keep the streets safe, they’ll do it. The Team’s primary goal is simple: save the world from the bad guys.

Some of the Team’s notable accomplishments to date include uncovering and disrupting the Cult of Molten Fury (who were ritually mugging high school students), stopping a mad Infomancer from sacrificing a hundred stolen computers, and preventing a small army of clockwork pixies from dispensing poisoned candy at a rave (the attendees thought the whole thing was part hallucination/part performance art).

The Team has had to relocate their headquarters recently after what was their most notable failure thus far. Attempting to use his magick to track down the Mechanomancer behind the toxic pixies, Paragon inadvertently led the pissed-off clockworker to their front door. The place got totaled and the adept got away. Salvation’s new HQ is on the 17th floor of a downtown office building. The public location is actually a safeguard against overt actions from enemies and Bryce has the place wired up with a top-of-the-line security system. The building was chosen because of the variety of other companies and services that make their home there; every member of the team has an excuse to visit the building as part of their “secret identity’s” daily life.

Whatever became of Tyler Xenicz, and what his motivation was for seeking out a pupil, remains a mystery.

## **Paragon, a.k.a. Martin ‘Marty’ Davis**

**Summary:** Marty is a good leader. He runs a tight ship, handling the duties of organizing investigations and missions like he was born for it—or at least spent his youth training to do so. His unshakable commitment to Team Salvation is inspirational and his moral convictions, if a little simplistic, are a force to be reckoned with. He

selflessly devotes himself to Team Salvation's cause, happily taking risks on behalf of his teammates, as befits a chaos mage.

**Personality:** Perhaps a little starry-eyed, perhaps slightly unrealistic in his vision, perhaps a bit of a glory-hound, Marty is in the end a good and decent guy. His close friends may sometimes detect a hint of bitterness toward the injustices of the world, but Marty (usually) manages to turn this into a motivation to make things better.

**Obsession:** Being a superhero. Having superpowers.

**Wound Points:** 60

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** When the bad guys get away with beating up on innocents.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) That he'll turn out to be just a regular, ineffectual wannabe.

**Noble Stimulus:** Stopping the tyrannical machinations of the bad guys.

### Stats

**Body:** 60 (Stronger Than a Two-Door Hatchback)

**Speed:** 60 (Faster Than a Speeding Punch)

**Mind:** 40 (Tactical)

**Soul:** 60 (Heroic)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 40%, Kung-fu Action 50%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 15%, Dodge 20%, Bo Stick 30%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 20%, Strategy 40%

**Soul Skills:** Leadership (Charm) 50%, Lie 15%, Detect Foul Intentions 30%, **Magick:** Entropomancy 50%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 Hard	2 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard
0 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

## The Night Watchman, a.k.a. Bryce McCain

**Summary:** Bryce unconsciously channeled his youth-

ful desires to be a hero into a stint in the army. He enjoyed the training and the sense of a duty being fulfilled, but found the politics and ideology too abstract to be satisfying. Bryce left the military after his parents were killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. He used his substantial inheritance to start up a private firm, Bryce Security. This, he felt, put him in direct contact with the ills of society and gave him a chance to help cure them. Team Salvation is an extension of that possibility, and one that Bryce pursues with grim determination.

Bryce is a valuable asset to the Team. His contacts with law enforcement—many of his part-time staffers are off-duty cops—are one of Salvation's principle avenues for locating the nefarious doings of the underground. If a case stumps or confuses the police, Bryce knows that he's probably found a window in. His firm's resources, subtly directed by Bryce, also serve the Team in tracking down targets. And Bryce's own training makes him handy to have around if punches start getting thrown.

**Personality:** Bryce is a very serious guy. Some might call him dour or glum, even a bit of a wet blanket. His friends know this is a result of his parents' death and that if Bryce doesn't seem interested in fun, it's because he's intent on getting the job done.

**Obsession:** Bringing criminals to justice.

**Wound Points:** 60

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Criminals going unpunished.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Being unable to stop someone from getting hurt.

**Noble Stimulus:** Protecting those who can't protect themselves.

### Stats

**Body:** 60 (Works Out Daily)

**Speed:** 55 (Precise)

**Mind:** 50 (Focused)

**Soul:** 45 (Grim)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Basic Training (General Athletics) 50%, Hand to Hand Combat 50%, Tap Dancing 5%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 40%, Dodge 45%, Firearms 60%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 20%, Notice 350%, Criminal Law 40%, Security Systems 40%  
**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 15%, Send Chills up the Bad Guy's Spine 30%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
2 Hard	2 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard
0 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed

### Possessions

Bryce has access to a wide variety of security technology, including surveillance equipment and anti-personnel devices. His firm maintains a small armory of legal firearms.

## Amazon, a.k.a. Alexandra Davos

**Summary:** Alexandra never had any female friends who read comic books and played RPGs. Being the only girl in a group of guys who were heavily into a pretty male-centered hobby wasn't easy. Her buddies weren't the problem (most of the time); it was the stereotypes, misperceptions, and judgements from everyone else. Alexandra's the first to admit that those teenage years drove her directly to a Ph.D. in Women's Studies/Sociology and the reputation as a strong, insightful lecturer and journalist that she has today. Fighting villains in the occult underground is another way for Alexandra to combat oppression.

Alexandra is extremely well-read. Studying feminism led her into many areas of thought and research typically excluded by the modern patriarchal establishment, including aspects of mysticism and the occult. She brings this wide knowledge base, plus her connections and access as a journalist, to her service in Team Salvation. And, beyond her impressive mind, Alexandra is just plain tough. Years of struggling against prejudice can make you or break you; Alexandra has come out of it (if you ever really can) as a warrior.

**Personality:** Equal parts hardness and softness. Alexandra can crack you up with a witty joke or smack you down with a biting comment.

**Obsession:** Freeing people from oppression.

**Wound Points:** 50

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** People being treated with prejudice.  
**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) When, despite all efforts, things don't change.  
**Noble Stimulus:** Taking a stand for others' rights.

### Stats

**Body:** 50 (Resilient)  
**Speed:** 50 (Infused)  
**Mind:** 55 (Academic)  
**Soul:** 60 (Motivational)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 30%, Tai Chi 30%  
**Speed Skills:** Driving 20%, Dodge 20%, Small Aircraft Piloting 30%  
**Mind Skills:** Ph.D. (General Education) 40%, Notice 25%, Sociology 40%, History 25%, Suppressed Knowledge 30%, Mythology 20%, Journalism 20%  
**Soul Skills:** Rally (Charm) 40%, Lie 15%, Avatar: The Flying Woman 40%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hard	1 Hard	2 Hard	0 Hard	2 Hard
1 Failed	1 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

### Possessions

Alexandra has an extensive personal library. She also has a pilot's license for single-engine planes, though she does not yet own one.

## The Atlantean, a.k.a. Michael Stevens

**Summary:** Michael is the consummate scientist: rigorous, critical, skeptical, and open to possibility. This last quality tends to put him at odds with many of his peers. Mike, along with his "legitimate" work in biology (specifically marine life), has always been interested in fringe theories about psychic phenomena, morphogenic fields, time travel, and the like. He is even prepared to consider magick as an alternate form of science. After a youth filled with cosmic adventures and fantastic quests,

perhaps he couldn't be any other way. Mike believes in the possibility of a scientific utopia, where society is just, humanity lives in harmony with the environment, and all peoples are provided for.

In his guise as the Atlantean, Mike provides perspective for many of the bizarre claims and occurrences that Salvation routinely encounters. His own skills and access to laboratory equipment are useful in a forensic and analytical capacity. Mike's training in biology also allows him to provide minor medical support for the Team.

**Personality:** Michael is typically calm and centered, coolly rational and sharply observant—which occasionally comes off as arrogance. When he's presented with a scientific or deductive problem, however, he can get pretty excited.

**Obsession:** The pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of humanity.

**Wound Points:** 50

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** The abuse of scientific or esoteric knowledge to harm people who don't fully understand it.

**Fear Stimulus:** (The Unnatural) That science or reason cannot find the answer.

**Noble Stimulus:** Pursuing research or experiments for the betterment of society.

### Stats

**Body:** 50 (Cautious)

**Speed:** 45 (Methodical)

**Mind:** 60 (Objective)

**Soul:** 50 (Earnest)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 15%, Struggle 15%, Scuba Diving 30%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 15%, Dodge 15%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 60%, Notice 35%, Biology 55%, Labwork 40%, First Aid 25%

**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 15%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard

1 Failed 2 Failed 0 Failed 1 Failed 1 Failed

### Possessions

Michael always carries a small first-aid kit in a fanny pack, and typically keeps a more-extensive kit in his car.

## Speedfreak, a.k.a. Mark Jorgenson

**Summary:** Like Alexandra, Mark was something of an anomaly in the gaming community. He was a jock. When he wasn't in school or role-playing he was exercising, training, or working out. While the rest of the gang were munching on chips and guzzling pop during their gaming sessions, Mark was snacking on trail mix and drinking fruit juices. He managed to land a job with a health and fitness magazine and to have some success competing in his favorite sport, track.

**Personality:** A lot of people who know Mark used to joke that he was such a good runner because he was trying to get away from something. Mark wouldn't exactly disagree; the world as he saw it didn't offer much excitement for him. His fellow Team members know now that he was also running towards something: a future where his commitment and effort would give him the chance to change things for the better.

**Obsession:** Speed. Specifically, making things happen—making change happen—as quickly as possible.

**Wound Points:** 65

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Being restrained or held back.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Failing to get there in time.

**Noble Stimulus:** Fighting against the clock.

### Stats

**Body:** 65 (Lean Machine)

**Speed:** 70 (A Blur)

**Mind:** 45 (Uncluttered)

**Soul:** 50 (A Lotta Heart)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 60%, Tackle (Strug-



gle) 45%, Jumping 45%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 20%, Dodge 40%, **Sprinting** 65%, Throwing 60%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 25%, Notice 25%,

**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 15%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard
1 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed

### Possessions

Mark's ever-present gym bag has been known to contain anything from a pair of dirty socks to a few light weights to a skipping rope to a tennis racket.

## Spacebrother, a.k.a. David Hunter

**Summary:** Dave brings two distinct talents to his position in Team Salvation. A computer programmer/graphic designer by profession, he handles the hardware and software needs of the group, including communications, info-gathering, mission simulations, and managing the database. An actor by hobby, Dave also does a lot of the interpersonal work—he calls it “social engineering”—that operations require. This could be anything from meeting with informants, scamming his way into a building, or milking people for secrets.

Between acting and designing Dave lives in a mutable world where nothing is permanent and everything can be changed. His psychology is well-suited for dealings in the underground. He has an easy time accepting the improbable and gets a kick out of watching things morph, warp, and get downright weird. This attitude is often as much an asset to the Team as are his practical skills.

**Personality:** He's got quite a few. Dave can adopt and discard personas like most people do socks. Sometimes this is fun; other times it's frustrating. Although Dave has not discovered Personamancy (see p. xx), it would be right up his alley.

**Obsession:** Taking something that seems immutable, deciphering its inner workings, and changing it into something else.

**Wound Points:** 45

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** When things refuse to yield to efforts to change them.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Dave has an unconscious fear of losing touch with what's really going on and letting down his friends.

**Noble Stimulus:** Refusing to accept any authority's version of the way things are.

### Stats

**Body:** 45 (Stocky)

**Speed:** 50 (Meandering)

**Mind:** 60 (Fluid)

**Soul:** 55 (Mercurial)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 10%, Wriggle (Struggle) 15%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 20%, Dodge 25%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 30%, Notice 30%, Programming 50%, Graphic Design 40%, Computer Technology 40%

**Soul Skills:** Acting 50%, Go With the Flow 40%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 Hard	3 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard
1 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

### Possessions

Dave carries a laptop computer with cellular internet access to the computers at the Team's HQ.

## Talisman, a.k.a. Wilson King

**Summary:** Wilson sublimated his youthful fantasies of being a superhero into drawing them instead. He works for a small comic-book company as an artist. When Team Salvation was founded Wilson was more than happy to join, but he was always worried that he had little practical value to the group.

During Salvation's first large-scale mission—a

raid on the Cult of Molten Fury's basement apartment—a fight broke out. While Paragon, the Night Watchman, Amazon, and Speedfreak traded blows with the cultists, Wilson found a ring stashed in a closet (which seemed like a good place to be during the battle). It was made from a type of metal he couldn't recognize and had strange symbols carved into it—most notably one that resembled an eye. Eager to try anything that might make him more useful in the fight, Wilson put the ring on.

Immediately he had a feeling in his forehead like something was opening. He found that by concentrating on that spot and visualizing something, the image would appear before him, looking completely real. Wilson won the day by projecting an image of the Cult's patron deity—a volcano god—and shouting, "You have all failed me! Surrender to Team Salvation for they are the agents of my wrath!"

It was then that Wilson became Talisman, an active and important member of the Team. Amazon later identified the eye-like symbol on the ring as the Hindu tattwa for the ajna chakra, or third eye. It was about this time that Wilson realized he couldn't take the ring off. And that if he wasn't careful, pictures from his imagination would slip out of his head into the air for everyone to see. Amazon slapped him the first time this happened; you can guess why.

**Personality:** Wilson remains fairly shy and timid, despite his newfound power. He never fully relaxes, no doubt concerned the contents of his head will spill forth for public scrutiny.

**Obsession:** Being there for his friends.

**Wound Points:** 45

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Being embarrassed publicly.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) That he will prove useless in Team Salvation's quest.

**Noble Stimulus:** Defending his friends.

### Stats

**Body:** 45 (Spindly)

**Speed:** 45 (Jittery)

**Mind:** 50 (Creative)

**Soul:** 50 (Fanciful)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 10%, Struggle 15%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 10%, Dodge 15%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 30%, Notice 30%

**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 10%, Draw 40%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 Hard	2 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard
1 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed	2 Failed

### Possessions

**The Ajna Ring:** No one in Team Salvation has yet been able to discover any information about the ring beyond Wilson's own experiences with it. What is clear is that it allows Wilson to project optical illusions based on images in his mind. These images will appear completely realistic (or surrealistic, if that's what Wilson wants) but are totally insubstantial.

In order to project a vision Wilson must spend 3 rounds concentrating and make a successful Mind roll. Any image human-sized or larger reduces his chance of making the roll by 20. Anything larger than a four-door automobile is a -40. Furthermore, if Wilson wants the image to move he must make a successful Draw check for every round of movement or it will dissipate. All images will fade away after 3 rounds unless Wilson makes another Mind check. For every successive image Wilson casts over the course of a day, his mind suffers fatigue: a cumulative -10 to all Mind checks for each image after the first.

Besides not being able to take it off, the ring has one other drawback. Now that it has opened a door to Wilson's imagination, he can't shut it again. Wilson must make a Mind check whenever he's in a stressful situation or an image of what he's thinking about will flash before him. These pictures only last for a second and they don't count towards Wilson's mental fatigue, but the embarrassment is often lasting and tiring enough.



**Unidentified Foreign Ontology: Portia Jefferson, Stuey Pikwik, Horatio Bukowski, Samantha Halloway**

## **UFO (Unidentified Foreign Ontology)**

UFO stands for Unidentified Foreign Ontology. They are a network of relatively like-minded individuals who believe that humanity is on the verge of encountering an entirely new way of being—a new ontology. UFO is convinced that the current pop-culture craze over aliens and flying saucers symbolizes society’s initial attempt at integrating new concepts of space, time, consciousness, and our place in the universe. They devote their free time and resources to investigating any and all bizarre phenomena that might point to the source of these new experiences.

Members of UFO don’t necessarily believe that the new ontology is coming from extraterrestrials (okay, some of them do), but they all agree that something is coming here from somewhere else. One of the leading candidates for a place of origin is a higher-order multi-dimensional structure that encompasses the limited 4-D world of daily existence. Other popular theories include a

merging with parallel realities that evolved along radically different paths from ours, the (re-)awakening of the spirit world and a perceptible astral space, or a folding of the timestream resulting in an overlap of past and/or future worldviews. Some of the more conservative UFOperatives think that new modes of thought and behavior may be emerging from the recesses of the collective unconscious or the genetic neural systems of the brain. Debate is often a prominent part of UFO’s meetings.

UFOperatives also tend to disagree on what exactly this “new way of being” is and what it means for the planet. Will it result in access to and understanding of untold psychic powers and alternate realities? Will it unify humanity in a utopian dream? Or does it signal the invasion of a destructive force from beyond? Paradise? Disaster? General weirdness?

While UFO might not have a clear picture of what’s going on (if anything is at all) they are a dedicated bunch who sincerely believe in the im-

portance of addressing what they see as critical issues for the whole of humanity. Most of its members are intelligent and educated (not necessarily the same thing) with careers and families; professors, authors, engineers, accountants, clerks, and mechanics all pool their time and resources for research and investigation, plus they get a cool laminated I.D. card and free access to the archives at UFO's website. Of course, their ranks also attract some outright socially-dysfunctional wackos who live on the edge of consensus reality—but who better to pioneer the exploration of a totally new way of life for the planet?

Each UFOoperative tends to have their own favorite types of phenomena to investigate, from hauntings to psychic powers to fringe science to monster-sightings. They are unified in their willingness to look beyond mechanistic explanations such as aliens, unknown species, or untapped brain functions and seek a larger answer. Their consensus belief is that one single cause is behind all of these diverse, apparently unexplainable events: the foreign ontology.

### Horatio Bukowski, Exploring the Alternatives

**Summary:** Horatio was the bright and creative child of a middle-class family. He did okay in high school but never—as his teachers kept pointing out—“lived up to his potential.” He switched majors six times in college, studying everything from the arts and the sciences to history and economics. He got decent grades but never—as his professors kept pointing out—“lived up to his potential.” After he left school he found work in a variety of jobs but he never became very successful, because—as his bosses kept pointing out—he never . . .

The problem was that Horatio was bored. Everywhere he looked he saw the same things, the same faces, the same tired ideas and washed-out hopes, the same complaints and criticisms. The world seemed to be one big watery blur of mediocrity.

Then Horatio discovered UFOs. Here was something that promised—well, something *else*.

Something different and exciting. Maybe something was going on in the world that didn't fit the same old concepts, a question that didn't have a pat or predictable answer. Even the possibility that aliens were visiting Earth didn't hold Horatio's attention for long. Surely this mystery had even greater potential.

Horatio wanted to find out. And he needed a way to pay his rent. So he began making inquiries and offers, establishing lines of contact and questions. Soon he had gathered together a group of fellow enthusiasts who were willing to pay a reasonable membership fee to take part in discussions, produce and distribute newsletters and zines, and undertake investigations into UFOs and related phenomena. Horatio's skepticism towards obvious and typical conclusions served him well; he attracted a breed of seeker with depth and intelligence. This won the now-official group respect from both ufologists and the more open-minded members of the scientific community alike.

Horatio's success gave him hope. It was a hope that all of his hopes for something new and different might be realized. And—it paid the rent, gave him credibility and publicity, turned a nobody into a somebody. All told, not a bad deal.

**Personality:** Horatio craves the new. He's very keen-witted and insightful, cutting through the muck quickly to get at the heart of the matter. As a result, he gets bored of things easily. This is what drives him to seek out new possibilities.

**Obsession:** Horatio is obsessed with the idea of the Other: anything that isn't immediately recognizable or obviously identifiable. He's always looking for options and alternatives to things, even if the current status quo is working out fine.

**Wound Points:** 40

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** People who always say “that's just the way the world works.”

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Anything that proves that “that's just the way the world works.” The scientific establishment and successful de-

bunkers often make Horatio nervous.

**Noble Stimulus:** Possibility. Horatio is always willing to give a person who's trying something new the benefit of the doubt, as well as his support and encouragement.

### Stats

**Body:** 40 (Scrawny)

**Speed:** 40 (Fidgety)

**Mind:** 70 (Too smart for his own good)

**Soul:** 60 (Curious)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 15%, Struggle 15%

**Speed Skills:** Dodge 15%, Drive 15%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 50%, Notice 40%, Theoretical Physics 20%, Philosophy 15%, Psychology 15%, Desktop Publishing 20%, Research 40%

**Soul Skills:** Inspire (Charm) 30%, Lie 15%, Recognize Potential 50%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard
0 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

### Possessions

The contributions of his fellow UFOperatives provide Horatio with a nice apartment/base of operations with a decent computer and communications systems. He has a huge amount of data about strange, possibly paranormal, incidents stored on disk and hardcopy. He also maintains a sizable website with remote backups.

## Samantha Halloway, Abductee

**Summary:** On the night of her eighteenth birthday, Sam was walking through a field on her way home from a party at a friend's house. Suddenly a bright light appeared in the sky. There was a flash and then the fields were filled with all sorts of impossible things. A line of rabbits wearing feather boas doing the can-can. Strange music like whale-song mixed over a techno-drumbeat and the

sounds of internal organs. Small spheres of light flaring and fading, spinning and swirling. Trees spontaneously sprouting from the earth with entire wardrobes from different historical periods hanging from their branches like so much fashionable fruit. A complete set of dining-room furniture floating a foot above the ground with five shimmering figures seated around the table typing on keyboards and talking in mathematical formulas. Then there was another flash and everything was gone. Samantha was alone in the field. Her T-shirt, under her sweater, was on backwards.

Sam was convinced that she had been abducted. She certainly couldn't share her experience, or her conclusion, with anyone; Sam came from a deeply religious family who lived in a deeply religious community. So for the next few years she had strange dreams, wrote surreal poetry, and quietly went a little nuts. When the UFO craze hit mainstream culture Sam made cautious and covert inquiries into the field of abduction research. It wasn't until she found Unidentified Foreign Ontology (and looked up what ontology meant) that she felt closer to uncovering the truth behind that fateful night.

Samantha has since moved away from home, come to a measure of peace about her experience, and become one of UFO's leading investigators.

**Personality:** Samantha is a kind and caring young woman. Residue from her previous trauma still lingers in a certain shyness and hesitancy, but when she's on assignment Sam is eager, excitable and cheerful.

**Obsession:** Trying to understand the weird things that mainstream society refuses to acknowledge.

**Wound Points:** 40

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Dogma. When peoples' personal experiences are suppressed or belittled by authority.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Isolation) Having no one to talk to about her feelings.

**Noble Stimulus:** Helping others come to grips with frightening events.

**Stats**

**Body:** 40 (Sleight)  
**Speed:** 50 (Sprite-like)  
**Mind:** 50 (Inquisitive)  
**Soul:** 60 (Gentle)

**Skills**

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 15%, Struggle 15%  
**Speed Skills:** Driving 15%, Dodge 15%  
**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 20%, Follow Leads 30%  
**Soul Skills:** Put Others at Ease 30%, Lie 30%, Detect Residual Weirdness 30%

**Madness Meter**

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 Hard	2 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard
0 Failed	1 Failed	1 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed

**Stuey Pikwik, Omega Being**

**Summary:** Stuey is indicative of some of the more *colorful* members of UFO. He doesn't share a lot about his recent past, but scattered details about a period of "psychiatric care," a penchant for wearing tinfoil hats, and a series of letters to the president and the head of the CIA have emerged from discussions with fellow investigators. What Stuey is happy to talk about (to anyone who'll listen) is the fact that he already knows what the source of the new ontology is. It's him.

According to Stuey, his birth signaled the entrance of what he calls the first Omega Being into Earth's bio-psyche matrix. Encoded in Stuey's "chi-form" (the deep-level interface between the DNA and psyche) is the recipe for the next evolutionary quantum-leap of humanity. When Stuey emerged from his mother's womb, the trauma of birth phased his own chi-form into the planetary chi-form and scattered his latent power across the globe. Stuey's on a quest to locate all the parts of his chi-form—which manifest as bizarre phenomena—and, by bearing witness, reintegrate them into himself. When this task is completed he will regain his Omega Power and transform humanity.

**Personality:** While some UFOperatives are willing

to accept the possibility that Stuey is telling the truth, most suffer his brand of megalomania because, in the end, Stuey's a great investigator. He possesses an infectious enthusiasm and quirky charm that gets people talking. He is also a storehouse for vast amounts of information on the occult and the paranormal, whether or not you believe that he is the cause of all of it.

**Obsession:** Stuey desperately needs to seek out and observe unexplainable phenomena. After all, he has a whole world to change.

**Wound Points:** 40

**Passions**

**Rage Stimulus:** When people prevent him from accessing the bizarre, whether it's a security guard blocking the entrance to the haunted building, a TV station denying that they have the saucer on tape, or a psychic refusing to grant an interview.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) That if he fails to collect or witness any strange occurrences he will never regain his status as an Omega Being.

**Noble Stimulus:** Pursuing his quest in the face of skepticism for the benefit of humankind.

**Stats**

**Body:** 40 (Pudgy)  
**Speed:** 50 (Wired on Caffeine)  
**Mind:** 50 (Fragmented)  
**Soul:** 60 (Imaginative)

**Skills**

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 10%, Spaz Out (Struggle) 20%  
**Speed Skills:** Driving 5%, Dodge 20%, Sneak Into Forbidden Places 50%  
**Mind Skills:** General Education 40%, Notice 50%, Pseudo-science 50%, Occult Lore 40%, Parapsychology 30%  
**Soul Skills:** Disarmingly Quirky 40%, Lie 30%, Interpret Signs 30%, Theatrical Theorizing 20%

**Madness Meter**

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
0 Hard	3 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard	2 Hard
0 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed	1 Failed	2 Failed

### Possessions

Whatever UFO supplies him with on investigations. And a tinfoil hat, which he has at least managed to disguise beneath a ballcap.

### Portia Jefferson, ET's Worst Nightmare

**Summary:** Portia Jefferson doesn't seem the type to be a card-carrying member of an organization devoted to exploring the unknown. In her early 40s, Portia works as a clerk in a nondescript office that carries out the nondescript duties of some nondescript branch of government. She lives alone in an average apartment in an average part of town. No real hobbies, a few close-ish friends. So where do aliens fit into this picture of a perfectly normal and mundane life?

You see, aliens are responsible for this perfectly normal and mundane life. Portia was never meant to live a life of mediocrity like this. She was supposed to be a star, a famous tap dancer. Except that her father spent the money for her dance lessons on booze. And her mother once got so fed up with Portia stomping on the hardwood in her shoes that she hit her in the knees with a broom. And broke one. Portia was also supposed to fall in love and have a family. Except that her first husband left her for another woman. And her second husband left her after her third miscarriage. How come so many bad things were happening to someone who didn't deserve them? God certainly couldn't be responsible because God is good, right? So it must be something else causing it. The aliens. Or the Black Magicians, or Evil Spirits, or whatever secret group was behind Portia's suffering.

To the other members of UFO, Portia appears to be a dedicated, reliable operative who's willing to do the boring legwork and research that falls outside many of their ranges of interest. The real reason Portia puts up with the sludge-end of investigations is that she knows one day it will lead her to Them. And then she can make Them pay. Should she ever get hold of an alien or big-foot or whatever, the bastard's going to learn a whole new definition of pain.

**Personality:** Portia is quiet and reserved. She may seem a little cold and unapproachable but her tireless dedication and inspiring work ethic are endearing.

**Obsession:** Finding the people/beings/creatures responsible for all her problems and punishing them.

**Wound Points:** 45

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Anyone who secretly manipulates others and causes them grief.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Portia's fear, although she does not know it, is taking personal responsibility.

**Noble Stimulus:** Persevering through tedious and taxing situations to get the job done.

### Stats

**Body:** 45 (Slouched)

**Speed:** 50 (Measured)

**Mind:** 45 (Single-minded)

**Soul:** 45 (Beat Down)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 10%, Struggle 10%, Tap Dancing 5%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 20%, Dodge 15%, Firearms 40%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 15%, Notice 20%, Filing 40%

**Soul Skills:** Charm 15%, Lie 30%, Bitter Perseverance 40%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hard	0 Hard	2 Hard	1 Hard	1 Hard
2 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed	1 Failed

### Possessions

Portia carries a Smith and Wesson revolver. She has taken lessons in its use and, when imagining the target is the source of her woes, she is a very good shot.



**Dukes: Rome, Carthage, Fu Hsing Hwang, The Nomad Raphael, Eustace Crane**

## Dukes

### Carthage and Rome

For the past fifty years, the two demons known as Carthage and Rome have turned the occult underground into their personal playground. Unreliable sources, most notably the two demons themselves, claim that the pair has been around since 1100 B.C. The two refuse to reveal any other details of their past, and both are savvy enough to keep away from any mortal that has a chance of dealing with them on anything close to an equal level. The demons are obsessed with besting each other in bizarre competitions of their own design. No one has yet to figure out exactly what the two are competing over and what the eventual victor will win. What is known is that the demons often recruit both adepts and enforcers for their games, promising wealth and knowledge in return for temporary but absolute loyalty and cooperation. The goals of their games are often nonsensical or contradictory. One week, Carthage and Rome are

racing to paint the names of a dozen ancient Greek philosophers on random buildings downtown. The next, Rome is trying to unleash a horde of rats at a debutante ball while Carthage tries to stop him. Typically, their goals are contradictory (release the rats vs. stop the rats) or involve some sort of race (write all the names before the other guy) but sometimes their goals seem completely unrelated. No matter what the object of the game, Carthage and Rome seem no less dedicated to beating the snot out of each other—in the competitive sense, that is.

Most adepts believe that Carthage and Rome are on a quest for mystical knowledge and that their bizarre games are all part of some grand, mystical scheme. The truth is distressingly simple. The two demons hate each other, pure and simple. Both are obsessed with besting each other at every turn, each striving to prove that he is better at toying with humans than the other. The stakes are only that much higher, and the competition that much sweeter, when mortals are drawn into the fun.



Typically, Carthage and Rome approach anyone they hear making a demonic summons, be it for them or some other demon. If the mortal agrees to participate in their game, Carthage or Rome perform some service or give some information to the summoner at the conclusion of the game. Rarely, the two approach an unusually gifted mundane and make the same offer. While their games can get deadly, the demons have never been known to double-cross anyone. At least, no one has lived to rat them out.

## The Rules of the Game

Carthage and Rome have come up with a set of rules that their mortal players are expected to follow.

**Bygones be Bygones:** Any mortal that aids either Carthage or Rome will not be harmed after the contest is complete. Until that time, all players are fair game.

**Silence is Golden:** Any mortal involved in the games will never divulge any information about Carthage or Rome to outsiders until the game is over, on penalty of oblivion. The demons absolutely hate it when mundane authorities get involved with their games—unless they want it that way.

**What Comes Around Goes Around:** The faithful are rewarded and the traitorous punished. The demons have been known to change the game into a mutual frolic of “Torture and Kill the Punk Who Tried to Switch Sides” when people try to betray one demon to the other.

In addition, they have been known to outline bizarre, contradictory and dangerous assignments for each player, with special and peculiar conditions.

## Using Carthage and Rome in Play

It’s pretty easy to have Carthage and Rome show up and mow down the characters. That’s great, but why not just have a Mack truck run them all down? Carthage and Rome should play like Gandalf. They’re powerful, they know the score, but

they don’t have time to waste on mortals. They see humans like most of us see flies: you don’t notice them unless they’re buzzing in your face or getting in the potato salad. Then they get swatted. Carthage and Rome shouldn’t appear out of the blue and start harassing the PCs. If a character goes out of his way to contact them, then feel free to sic these two on her. On the other hand, there’s always the chance that the characters become embroiled in one of the pair’s bizarre games. Again, don’t go over the top with the two. Carthage and Rome are here to make lives difficult for the characters, but that doesn’t mean they should start possessing characters and flinging them off the nearest bridge. They offer them power and knowledge, they push all their buttons to get them involved in their games, but they don’t just kill them. That got old for these two long ago. Besides, they know that if they get a rep for slaughtering adepts no one in the know will deal with them.

## Carthage, Manipulative Immortal

Over three thousand years ago, a nameless slave lived an unremarkable life and eventually died an equally unremarkable death. Carthage, as he is known in the modern occult underground, wasn’t always the dangerous and unpredictable individual he is today. When he found himself lingering on as a demon he flitted about the world, enjoying the freedom that had been denied him during his mortal existence. When Carthage first heard the faint tug of a summoner’s call, he answered out of curiosity. When faced with the confident, experienced adept who had crafted the summons, Carthage quickly reverted to his servile mortal ways. Unlike other demons, Carthage had no strong sense of why he still lingered in the world of the living. As he had done in life, so too did he now do in death: render service to the strong. Carthage’s summoner was impressed with the demon’s pliable demeanor. He passed the demon down to his son and he to his sons after him. For generations, Carthage once more lived a simple life of service.

All was well until, during a routine summoning, Carthage quite unwittingly annihilated his current master's soul. At first, Carthage expected swift retribution from his master's siblings. It never came. Using knowledge gained through his period of service, Carthage successfully masqueraded as his ex-master. Slowly, he learned the joys of respect and leadership. With that knowledge grew the obsession that has kept Carthage hanging around over the centuries: studying the inner workings of human will, and how it can be subverted by outside influences.

Carthage's work has taken many forms. It wasn't until the mid-twentieth century when, in the midst of a decades-long funk, Carthage met Rome and the two began their "experiments" in human behavior. Carthage sees Rome as a stupid, unthinking brute. Where Rome uses the sheer force of his personality to compel obedience, Carthage is a manipulator, carefully working his subjects' fears and desires to get his way.

**Personality:** (Gemini) Standing on the sidelines of the physical world has given Carthage the perspective to look at problems and people from a detached, analytical viewpoint.

**Obsession:** Carthage is obsessed with the workings of free will and how it can be subverted by outside influences.

**Wound Points:** As per current host body.

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** People who insist on messing with his plans or not doing as they are told.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) Carthage is terrified that he will once more be forced into servitude.

**Noble Stimulus:** Over the centuries, Carthage has come to look out for the little guy who is battered about by forces beyond his control. Carthage would never let his games hurt average working-class schmoes.

### Stats

**Body:** 0

**Speed:** 0

**Mind:** 90 (Two steps ahead of everyone)

**Soul:** 85 (Knows how to push buttons)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** Brawl 40%, General Athletics (As Host), Get Back Up (Host's Body)

**Speed Skills:** Dodge 50%, Modern Firearms 25%

**Mind Skills:** Been There, Done That 55%, Notice 55%

**Soul Skills:** Lie 60%, Push Those Buttons 85%

**Been There, Done That:** Over the course of a few thousand years, it's pretty hard to not pick up at least some idea of what's going on in the world. This skill works the same as General Education, except there is little limit on what Carthage doesn't have at least some chance of knowing. Only advanced mathematics and sciences are off-limits to him. Carthage has a chance to know a little about almost any other subject, from the courtship rituals of Easter Islanders to the history of Eagle Butte, Montana. As Carthage tended to wander over the centuries rather than settle in one place and do some serious book learning, his knowledge is very wide but not particularly deep.

**Push Those Buttons:** The one thing that Carthage has learned is that people are still the same basic animals they were today as they were in 1100 B.C. He has developed an extremely refined ability to judge a person's wants, fears, and emotional state with little more than a glance. Carthage has always been fascinated with the inner workings of the human mind, and with three thousand years under his belt he has enough insight to make modern psychology look like the philosophical musings of a moody fifteen-year-old. Carthage can use this skill to determine a person's passions, obsession, and Madness Meters. Carthage has no qualms about using that information to manipulate those who become involved in his competitions.

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
6 Hard	10 Hard	4 Hard	6 Hard	0 Hard
2 Failed	0 Failed	3 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed

## Rome, Eternal Grogard

During his mortal life, Rome was a soldier. Apparently dying in battle once wasn't enough for him. Over the centuries, he has seized every chance possible to throw himself into the fray. The screams of the dying, the surge of adrenaline, but above all else his capacity to forge order out the chaos of battle, to rally and lead men in battle—this is what he craved. As far as Rome could see, he'd never run out of wars to take part in. Then, as the First World War ravaged Europe, Rome started to notice a change. His first time over the top, he didn't make it into sight of the enemy before he was mowed down by a machine gun. The second soldier he possessed sickened and died, as did the third and fourth. The fifth died in a gas attack—again, without actually engaging the enemy.

The Second World War was a little more to his liking, until the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb. Rome came to a single, horrifying conclusion: war just wasn't what it used to be. The bravest fighter had the same chance of getting killed in an artillery barrage as a cowardly, spineless conscript.

Rome wandered the Earth for a time, taking part in brush wars here and there. While he was glad to once again take up arms, he missed the grand scale and epic scope of the wars of old. When he met Carthage, he finally met an opponent worthy of his tactical and leadership skills. The two agreed upon their current aliases and worked out their rules of engagement. Faced with a brilliant foe, Rome has found a war worth fighting.

Rome is the classic battle-scarred veteran. He's crude, loud, and obnoxious. He knows the score and isn't afraid to dress someone down. When he gives a command, he expects people to follow it, no questions asked.

**Personality:** (Leo) It isn't enough for Rome to command others. He has to earn their respect and prove himself worthy.

**Obsession:** Respect. Rome's universe is built upon earning and wielding authority over others.

**Wound Points:** As per current host body.

## Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Betrayal. Nothing gets to Rome so much as a traitor, whether it is to him or to another cause, even that of his enemies.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Self) Betrayal. Rome is terrified that his control over others is all a façade, that he really isn't strong enough to earn anyone's respect.

**Noble Stimulus:** Rome always looks out for those faithful to him. He never foolishly sacrifices any that lend him support—though once the current game is over, he's no longer interested in their fate.

## Stats

**Body:** 0

**Speed:** 0

**Mind:** 50 (Tactical cunning)

**Soul:** 90 (Iron-willed)

## Skills

**Body Skills:** Brawl 40%, General Athletics (As Host), Get Back Up (Host's Body), Melee Weapons 60%

**Speed Skills:** Dodge 40%, Guns 45% Primitive Missile Weapons 35%

**Mind Skills:** Been There, Done That 30%, Notice 60%, Tactics 65%, Military History 65%

**Soul Skills:** Bark Orders 60%, Lie 40%

**Bark Orders:** Rome has fought and died on hundreds of battlefields. It takes a lot more than a few explosions and flying limbs to get him rattled. As such, he has a trivially easy time keeping his head in combat. When involved in combat or any other stressful situation (trapped in a burning building, caught in the middle of a freeway) Rome's level-headed composure allows him to calmly and authoritatively shout commands at others. Rome may use this skill to force a rattled person to obey his commands. If the target of this skill does not want to follow Rome's order, she must make a successful Soul check that is at least as high as Rome's successful Bark Orders skill roll. Remember that this only works on stressed or freaked-out people. Rome can't

just walk around town shouting at people, forcing them to obey.

**Been There, Done That:** See the description of this skill under Carthage (p. xx).

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
8 Hard	10 Hard	2 Hard	7 Hard	2 Hard
2 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

## Eustace Crane, the Skeptic

**Summary:** Eustace Crane (Stacey to his friends) has never been a happy man. All of his life, he wanted to believe in the supernatural. Unfortunately, unknown to him, supernatural abilities do not work around him. Perhaps on some level he senses this. It might explain part of his growing frustration as he searches for a genuine case of psychic phenomena or supernatural occurrence.

He always enjoyed fantasy as a child and a teenager, and once he got over his disappointment that stage magic wasn't real, he enjoyed learning how to do it. By the time he went off to college, Crane was an accomplished stage magician. At Harvard he triple-majored in physics, psychology, and astronomy. His family wasn't rich, but at this point his part-time magician jobs had turned into some pretty serious paying gigs, and with the help of some loans he still had some money left to send some back to his parents.

In the middle of his junior year, disaster struck. He got a call that his father was diagnosed with incurable cancer, and wasn't likely to live out the month. Crane flew home as quickly as possible, discovering to his horror that his mother had spent nearly all the family's money on some kind of witch doctor who had promised a cure. Furious at the scam, as well as the insult to his family's dignity, Stacey stormed upstairs, following the scent of a horrific mix of noxious smoke seeping out of his father's sickroom. He slammed open the door only to find he was too late—the scam artist's plan had backfired, leaving his father prematurely dead from smoke inhalation.

Against his mother's wishes but needing revenge for his father's death, Crane pressed charges that eventually put the "sorcerer" behind bars for larceny and first-degree murder (manslaughter in pursuit of a felony). He finished his Bachelor's degree and his Master's and Doctorate as well, but that was simply preparation for his mission in life: to put out of business, one way or another, the scam artists who people the world, cheating honest citizens out of their lives and money with their claims of "magical powers." Eustace Crane is a man with a mission.

He uses his knowledge of con games, stage magic, and physics for debunking all kinds of frauds, from faked hauntings to phony psychic powers. While Crane has no patience with or sympathy for frauds, he is sympathetic to those who are not running a con but who have simply mistaken coincidence for significance. Unfortunately, he is often convinced that genuine adepts are frauds, as their magick inexplicably fails to work in his presence.

Almost no one who knows or has dealt with him understands how much Crane wants to believe. Not his mother, nor the frauds he has debunked, nor his colleagues at Harvard, where he teaches astronomy. He has issued the Crane Challenge, offering \$1,000,000 if someone can demonstrate a provable magickal or psychic effect. Crane did not issue his challenge because he is confident that he will never have to pay, although he seems in little danger of having to do so. It is because he desperately wants to see proof of something magickal, and it would be worth the money. Crane supplied some of the money from the damages awarded him for the death of his father and his fees as a debunker. More was raised by media sponsors and various skeptical and paranormal societies.

Unbeknownst to him, Stacey Crane was born with an innate magick-quelling power. Reality itself warps around him, as does probability, and if necessary even his perceptions themselves. One thing remains constant: he never sees evidence of magic.

It's right around him that this power is strongest—adepts who try to cast spells find that

they've backfired in mundane ways, or that Crane had his attention entirely absorbed by something else and didn't notice the result. From a distance, his effects are more subtle. Magickal events which reach his knowledge somehow have mundane explanations, and evidence is either inconclusive, lost, or obviously faked—even if it wasn't.

This effect only happens if Crane can perceive the erstwhile magical effect with one or more of his senses. This includes things like television programs, recordings, or telescopes. However, the more removed from him the magick is, the subtler and less direct his effect is. If he looks at a TV program depicting true magick, the adept might end up failing, if it's live. Or, the tape might end up somehow showing something that was fakable. Or Crane might lose interest and change the channel at just the wrong moment.

**Personality:** On the surface, the stereotypical proponent of rigorous logic and pure scientific methodology. Beneath, all of the above plus a desperate longing to find scientific proof of something miraculous.

**Obsession:** The Truth. Whatever it is, Crane wants to know the truth. He feels personally wounded—and if he was taken in, betrayed—when he finds that someone's a fraud.

**Wound Points:** 60

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Scam artists.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) That there really isn't anything out there.

**Noble Stimulus:** A love for genuine magick and a sense of wonder.

### Stats

**Body:** 60 (Tough)

**Speed:** 50 (S) (Nimble)

**Mind:** 70 (Sharp)

**Soul:** 40 (Reasonably Likeable)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 20%, Boxing 50%

**Speed Skills:** Driving 45%, Stage Magic 75%

**Mind Skills:** Astronomy 70%, Notice 70%, Philosophy 30%, Physics 30%, Law 30%

**Soul Skills:** Lying (misdirection) 40%, Charm (explain logically) 40%

**Skeptic:** Magick does not work around Eustace Crane. Period. Neither do artifacts or avatar powers. Unnatural creatures will stay away. The range is limited to that of his senses. This skill provides the following reality-bending effects, in order of preference, to negate the magick that would affect Crane or to prevent him from either witnessing it or being affected by it:

- Totally negate magick within fifty yards of Eustace. Major-level magick is not negated, but may be affected by the rest of the mundane options below.
- Change non-magical probabilities, providing a shift of up to 30% in either direction. This could cause Eustace to duck so that a magickal bullet totally misses him, make him decide not to bother watching the Naked Goddess videotape, or cause a major ritual to fail because the adept blew a roll of some sort.
- Transform or move any object massing under ten pounds in the same city. This could alter evidence so that it is no longer conclusive, or cause something—such as an artifact—to be lost. (Not destroyed, just misplaced.)
- Transform or move any non-living object or objects massing under 5 tons within a mile of Crane. This could keep a building from falling down, cancel a magickal effect that's too far to affect Crane directly, or replace an object destroyed by magic.

Should a given magickal effect somehow survive all of the above manipulations, it will work and Crane will witness it, making him a very happy man. It hasn't happened yet.

**Madness Meter**

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard	0 Hard
1 Failed	0 Failed	3 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed

**Connections**

Colleagues in academia, friends in the skeptic subculture, friends in the stage-magic subculture, people whose “haunted” houses he’s fixed (generally by telling them to call in a plumber), and media connections.

**Fu Hsing Hwang, the Tai Chi Master**

There is an old man who teaches Tai Chi in the park. He’ll teach anyone who shows up, free of charge. He teaches from noon until one, every day, no matter what the weather is. What many of his students don’t realize is that he also teaches from midnight until one, every night.

These evening lessons are attended by his most dedicated students. They move in eerie precision, as if performing a precisely timed ritual. If asked, they claim that they’re just getting special lessons. At midnight. In the park.

**Summary:** Fu Hsing Hwang left the People’s Republic of China for reasons of health—specifically, the desire to avoid a fatal case of bullet poisoning. The Chinese government has been trying, unsuccessfully, to extradite him from the United States of America, explaining that his teachings were disruptive and politically motivated.

He has only recently begun teaching in the USA, and so far most of his students are Chinese. Only the midnight students learn his special curriculum; the noon students just learn basic Tai Chi, though he’ll occasionally invite one of his better neophytes to the evening sessions.

Fu Hsing Hwang is definitely building an organization while he is preaching about promoting peace and happiness through alignment with the chi force. Of course, the goal of his organization is to promote peace and happiness through chi-alignment, so it’s not all that sinister. A few things set him apart from the average weird do-gooder, however.

First, there is the political interest that the Chinese government takes in the man. They are attempting to infiltrate his organization and certain extreme elements might even consider assassination. The U.S. government is also interested in him, and may attempt to infiltrate his group as well.

Second, he really is onto something when he talks about alignment with chi force. He teaches his midnight students Enlightened Tai Chi, which can perform some very impressive effects. This could draw attention from perceptive dukes and cabals, some of whom may have pull with the government agencies interested in his organization.

Third, he is a potent avatar of the Fool (93%). This causes all kinds of havoc.

**Personality:** Wise, encouraging, gently humorous, enigmatic.

**Obsession:** Following the path of enlightenment and guiding others along it as far as they are ready to go.

**Wound Points:** 50

**Passions**

**Rage Stimulus:** Narrow-minded idiots who try to keep him from his work.

**Fear Stimulus:** (The Unnatural) Cats. He thinks they’re unlucky and interfere with the smooth flow of chi.

**Noble Stimulus:** Wants to guide people to enlightenment. He genuinely believes that his teachings help his students and will ultimately make the world a better place.

**Stats**

**Body:** 70 (Clean Living)

**Speed:** 70 (S) (Dancer’s Grace)

**Mind:** 30 (A Few Eels Short of an Aquarium)

**Soul:** 95 (Manifestation of a Cosmic Truth)

**Skills**

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 70%, Struggle 70%, Enlightened Tai Chi 70%

**Speed Skills:** Dodge 70%

**Mind Skills:** Notice 15%, Education 15%

**Soul Skills:** Lying 15%, Charm 65%, Avatar: The Fool 93%

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hard	2 Hard	0 Hard	1 Hard	0 Hard
1 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed

### Possessions

Nothing beyond the basic needs of everyday living.

### Connections

Dozens of students falling all over themselves to supply his every need.

## Enlightened Tai Chi

This martial discipline aligns its practitioners so that they are in harmony with nature. Yin and Yang forces are balanced, which means that the typical Westerner feels a loss of energy at first as she comes into alignment.

If he is to be drawn into a discussion on the subject, Fu Hsing Hwang happily explains that the energy drain does his students no harm. Quite the contrary: most Westerners have too much Yang energy. Draining the excess is like—well, imagine someone who never has extra money, but who always has enough to maintain a decent standard of living. Food, shelter, and clothing are not problems. But this person is never able to afford a vacation to the tropics, a dress-to-kill wardrobe, a well-stocked library, a surround-sound music system, or a luxury car. Indeed, she does not own a car at all if it isn't absolutely necessary for base-level survival.

Fu Hsing Hwang would explain that she didn't need any of the above-mentioned items and is probably better off without them, for she is now in better harmony with the universe. So it is with his students: they have less energy overall, but they are in harmony with nature. Their chi is balanced. And, of course, they are learning a martial art.

No one but Fu Hsing Hwang can teach Enlightened Tai Chi. His star pupils have tried taking on students but failed; perhaps it is tied to his devotion to the path of the Fool.

## Cherries

Enlightened Tai Chi acts as a skill, covered by the rules for hand-to-hand combat (see UA, pp. 58–60). For those who take it as an obsession skill, the following cherries become available.

**11: Respond to Straight with Curved:** *If he tries to hit you, make sure he hits something behind you instead.* Your opponent's next attack hits whatever you like. This can be himself, or you, or anything else in the room. You may also elect to divide up the attack among a number of targets—if your opponent has an attack of 40, you can have him attack himself at 20 and another opponent at 20 (as they both land in a heap).

**22: Purity Finds the Path:** *If your spirit moves sure enough, even the air will bear your weight.* Starting next round, you may run on any surface: walls, water, and even air, though for air, you must go horizontally—you can't slope. (Though you can jump from a non-gaseous surface). This effect lasts until the end of that round.

**33: Willow Bends, But Does Not Break:** *True mastery is when your enemy can touch you, but can't hit you.* All your opponent's attacks against you this round are nullified, as you exactly duplicate his movements.

**44: Earth Holds the Power:** *By learning Tai Chi, you learn to carry your strength in the earth, not in your body.* Your attack hits with the force of the earth itself; multiply your dice times each other, and again by your weapon's damage bonus, if any, to get your final damage.

**55: Balance in All Things:** *Practice not only teaches you to kill; it also teaches you to heal.* Heal 10 wound points of damage on anyone you can touch, once in the next day.

**66: Alignment with Chi:** *Move in harmony with nature, and nature will move in harmony with you.* Your next attack is a Tai Chi Blast. This can take any appropriate form, from the wind adding power and distance to your punch to generating an energy ball like in the video game *Street Fighter*. This attack does firearms damage.

**77: Respond to Curved with Straight:** *If he is confusing you, hit him.* Your blow stuns your opponent so that he cannot take an action next round.

**88: Speed is an Illusion:** *If your movements are correct, nothing can touch before you do.* You go first next round. And nobody can take more actions that round than you do; their extra actions, if any, are lost.

**99: The Fool is Wisest:** *When a man moves in concert with the world, he need not know what he is doing; the universe knows everything.* You may perform any one action with a skill equal to your Enlightened Tai Chi skill. This power may be held unused for seven days.

### Group Attacks

Whether or not Enlightened Tai Chi is your obsession skill, when fighting as a team with one or more fellow practitioners you each get a bonus to your Tai Chi skill for purposes of attacks, depending on what your individual and unmodified skill level is:

1-10%:	No bonus
11-50%:	5% bonus
51-75%:	10% bonus
76-90%:	15% bonus
91%+:	20% bonus

### Temperature Extremes

Enlightened Tai Chi also allows students, obsessive or not, to handle extremes of temperature. This is a straightforward roll against the skill and represents both being in harmony with nature and getting used to all kinds of weather while practicing with the master. This doesn't mean students can survive being dropped into a volcano or abandoned on a glacier. It does mean that they are likely not to bother wearing a coat unless the temperature dips below freezing, and that they would have a greater chance of surviving inclement weather until rescued.

### Energy Balance

Finally, Enlightened Tai Chi—obsessive or not—causes one's Yin and Yang energies to balance

out. This manifests as a modification to *any* percentile die roll that tends to make success more likely but the degree of success smaller. The player may choose to use this power a number of times per day equal to the tens digit of the character's Soul stat, and may make the decision after the dice are rolled but before their effects are applied. Several different modifications are possible depending on the user's Tai Chi skill level, and the player may pick and choose which to apply and whether it's to either or both dice. Using multiple modifications on a single roll still counts as just one usage. The possible modifications are:

Tai Chi skill	Result
30:	9s may become 1s
40:	8s may become 2s
50:	7s may become 3s
60:	6s may become 4s

**Example:** Rob has an Enlightened Tai Chi skill of 77. On a General Knowledge roll of 79, he could change that roll to a 71, a 39, or a 31. If his Tai Chi skill was 47, his only option would be to make the 79 into a 71.

## The Nomad Raphael, Urban Shaman

When humans finally decided to take control of the world on their own terms, they brought their own gods with them. No longer content to respect nature, they dedicated themselves to new principles. The spirits and totems of the new ways, of steel and destruction, grew in power.

The Nomad Raphael is the shaman of the new gods. His totems are the spirits that modern life has created—Car, Gun, Pollution, and Home—and the one animal that truly sold itself to humanity centuries ago: Rat, the survivor. Just like the shamans of old, his spirits tell him secrets and work mighty wonders for him. But unlike his predecessors, he is the enemy of nature.

Standing six-and-a-half-feet tall, the Nomad Raphael appears to be in his late thirties or early forties, with cropped hair. He wears neutral urban clothing—sneakers, jeans, and sweater, with a long



coat in winter—colored black. He is most easily identified by the mass of fetishes he wears around his neck threaded on pieces of string. Each one is a small totemic item, such as the wheelnut of a car, the shell casing from a revolver, or the foot of a rat. The number he wears varies, but it is never less than five, and it is never more than twenty.

Urban Shamanism is a powerful path, but an unreliable one. Unlike other schools of magick—including Urbanomancy (p. xx), which draws on similar symbologies and taboos but with a very different focus—it has no formula spells. The spirits are bloody-minded, and their favor can never be relied upon. Instead, each of the totems controls an area, and the Nomad Raphael can draw upon random magick from each one. The totems' areas of influence are:

- Car:** transport, movement, and speed
- Gun:** death, violence, and domination
- Pollution:** blighting, malfunction, and poison
- Home:** shelter, defense, and healing
- Rat:** survival, disease, and hiding

In addition, each of the totems can take the Nomad Raphael onto the astral plane. Only Gun reliably provides a blast effect, although Pollution and Rat will both consent to do so occasionally, at great cost.

Fetishes are the keys by which the totems lend their power. Each one is sacred to one of the five, and is created from an object that falls under that totem's symbolic penumbra. To create a fetish, the Nomad Raphael must steal and destroy an appropriate sacrificial offering, retaining just a small piece of the object. That small piece becomes the fetish. Car requires an auto or motorcycle, crashed into a wall or rolled off a bridge. Gun needs a fully-loaded firearm, burnt in a fire while the Nomad Raphael looks on from a safe distance. Pollution takes a drum of chemicals, opened and thrown into a river. Home demands a house broken into and burnt down. Rat, finally, insists on the stealing—or the catching by hand, without the aid of snares or traps—of a live rat and the cutting of its throat. Each sacrifice yields

just one fetish, and frequently irritates the hell out of locals, the police, and other agencies.

Each fetish can generate up to one minor charge for the Nomad Raphael a day, if it is held individually and meditated upon for fifteen minutes; he retains minor charges gained in this fashion as would any adept, spending them whenever he likes once they've been generated. Each fetish may also be drained completely to yield a significant charge, which destroys it. To generate a major charge, he must make a suitable sacrifice of an object that is also a magickal artifact of at least significant power in its own right, stolen from another adept.

Once Raphael generates a charge, he may use that charge with any of the urban spirits—not just the one that he tapped to create the charge. However, he must have an appropriate fetish to channel the existing charge through or the spirit will not cooperate. In other words, charges are generic but their usage is governed by which intact fetishes Raphael is carrying at the moment. (The exception is major charges, which may only be used with the spirit that granted them.)

To control the new world, the Nomad Raphael must forego contact with the old one. Whenever he walks upon the natural world—the grass of a city park, the mud of a freshly-dug grave, even the grassy strip of a suburban sidewalk—he offends both old and new gods, and loses all of his charges. Furthermore, in order to stay in favor with his totems, the Nomad Raphael follows a paradoxical code of behavior. He owns no more than he carries with him, although he has credit and ATM cards. He never gives anything freely to anyone, and must steal the items from which his fetishes are made, but he keeps his promises to the letter. He works against the environment to increase the urbanization of the globe, but is powerless outside the man-made world, and follows the orders of the spirits whose power he commands. If he breaks this code, his totems punish him and he loses all the charges he's holding.

The Nomad Raphael is a potent force. Although his activities often seem meaningless or in-

nocent, they are guided by spirits with a subtle long-term plan to destroy the natural world.

**Personality:** (Scorpio) Intense, passionate, and dangerous.

**Obsession:** Urbanization. He believes that modern industrial society is a vital step forward in the development of humanity.

**Wound Points:** 75

### Passions

**Rage Stimulus:** Environmentalists.

**Fear Stimulus:** (Helplessness) That mother nature will take her revenge somehow.

**Noble Stimulus:** Prevailing. He believes everyone deserves the chance to live free of the restraints of the natural world and make the most out of human potential, so he helps people to find ways to circumvent natural obstacles.

### Stats

**Body:** 75 (Powerful)

**Speed:** 60 (Swift)

**Mind:** 55 (Cunning)

**Soul:** 80 (Awe-inspiring)

### Skills

**Body Skills:** General Athletics 45%, Martial Arts 65%, Resist Pain 50%

**Speed Skills:** Dodge 40%, Drive 50%, Handguns 55%, Intrusion 45%

**Mind Skills:** General Education 30%, Notice 50%, Urban Myth 45%

**Soul Skills:** Lie 55%, Seduction 40%, Urban Shaman 80%, Persuasion 55%

**Intrusion:** This involves getting into and out of properties and places undetected. It is not a supernatural power, but rather a knack for seizing opportunities to sneak in and out of places.

### Notes

Providing that the Nomad Raphael is wearing at least one Car fetish, he can walk along roads at an effective speed of up to 70mph, each step carrying him up to 3 yards at a time. His power levels vary wildly, but he will generally be holding 20-30 minor charges and 5 significant ones, and be carrying 15 fetishes.

### Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
4 Hard	5 Hard	1 Hard	4 Hard	3 Hard
1 Failed	2 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	1 Failed

### Equipment

Automatic pistol, 5-20 fetishes, large knife, \$3000 cash.



PARTING IS ALL WE KNOW OF HEAVEN  
AND ALL WE NEED OF HELL